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
the eastern provinces, were unfitted to direct the affairs of state through the assemblies; to them Italy was a stepmother, as one aristocrat contemptuously told them. The wealthy nobles were shifting in character even more rapidly and became rampant individualists. The result was the shattering of the old political structure and the emergence of rule by one man, who could create the necessary machinery of state to restore stability and utilize within it all classes of society.

The Gracchi

Achievement of this solution required a full century from the year 133 B.C., which marks the beginning of the revolution. In that year a young man of the bluest blood, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (162–133), was elected tribune. Tiberius was deeply concerned over the disappearance of the rural citizenry, and as a sincere reformer he had a simple, quite conservative solution: a bill to divide the large state holdings of land among the poor. Unfortunately this land actually was in the possession of the senatorial group, who had leased or otherwise obtained it decades before, and since the senators were naturally unwilling to yield their plantations Tiberius faced a bitter fight. To pass his bill he had an opposing tribune deposed from office by the people, an unprecedented step; his stand for re-election to carry out his plans was likewise contrary to custom. Enraged by his threat to their position, the conservatives raised a riot in which they murdered Tiberius.

Their violence postponed the threat of reform for only ten years. In 123 the brother of Tiberius, Gaius Gracchus, was old enough to follow in his steps. Gaius had a more ambitious program. To the conservatives his measure of having the state store and sell grain cheaply to the poor
appeared to be bribery, though we might call it social welfare; less justifiable were the vindictive measures promoting the interests of the equestrians at the expense of the Senate and the provincials. Supported both by the mob and the equestrians, he revived the distribution of land, set up a plan of farm-to-market roads in Italy, and began overseas colonization. Re-elected tribune for 122, Gaius dominated Rome for two years. Then the Senate put up a demagogue who outbid Gaius for popular support, the masses turned away when Gaius tried to secure citizenship for the Italians, and on a sad day in 121 there was another riot in which the Senate charged the consuls "to see to it that the republic take no harm." This time the conservative posse killed 3,000 in addition to Gaius. From their confiscated wealth a temple was built to Concord.

It is difficult to feel sympathetic toward the measures of the Gracchi. Their view of the problem was narrow, their answers inadequate, and their reliance upon the assembly against the Senate hopeless. Still, their purposes were noble, and their destruction revealed the intellectual bankruptcy of the conservatives, who were later to rue their introduction of the weapon of physical force. Once the Gracchi were gone, the struggle for power in Rome sank to a lower plane and took on a more violent shape. The rest of the century combines the inevitability of a tragedy with the variety of a circus.

The Gracchi were followed by two political factions called the "best" or Optimates, and the "people's" or Populares; but these pretentious terms really disguised shifting groups and cliques bent on personal success. The Optimates represented the conservative senatorial group, who wished to retain and consolidate the dominant authority of the
Senate. The Populares are less easily to be described; generally their leaders could appeal to the masses, but only when they could also gain the support of the equestrians could they hope for victory at the polls. Their rallying cry was that implicit in the Gracchan program, of wrestling power from the Senate. To gain the masses they paraded abolition of debrs, establishment of colonies, and reduction in the price of grain. In this epoch of private murder and public purges, dissolution of the Roman state appeared the inevitable result, but from the distance of two thousand years we can see that the Romans were really groping their way toward a more adequate political system. Their empire they were not only to hold in this century but even to expand greatly as a result of the internal quarrels.

Sulla the Fortunate

Nearly all the famous men, including Marius, Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar, posed as Populares. This was the party for individualists, who might hope to gain for themselves the power they took from the Senate. Like most conservative groups the Optimates mistrusted ambitious men, and so only one major figure, Sulla (L. Cornelius Sulla, 138–78), can be found on their side. Sulla, however, is the first great figure of the last century B.C.; as a result of his career the Senate acquired greater powers than it had ever held before or was to hold again.

Though a scion of the old aristocracy, Sulla was born poor and therefore remained obscure until he acquired the wealth of his mistress upon her death. While enjoying the luxuries of imperial Rome, Sulla engaged upon the usual aristocratic career of political and military posts but did not rise to fame until 90 B.C. In that year the Italian allies, who
had sought Roman citizenship in vain year after year, finally rebelled. The Romans quickly granted the suffrage they had previously refused and so weakened the dangerous rebellion; then Sulla and others drove slowly into the mountain retreats of the remaining rebels and brought the war to an end by 88. Henceforth all Italy south of the Po possessed Roman citizenship and also tended more and more to be uniform in acceptance of Roman civilization.

Immediately, however, the Italian revolt gave the signal for a serious war in the eastern provinces. In himself the invader, King Mithridates of Pontus, was not a serious threat, but his attack gained tremendous support from the Roman provinces facing the Aegean, which had grown resentful under their misgovernment and now passed from the spread of anti-Roman stories and prophecies to revolt. On one day in 88 the cities of Asia Minor rose and in concerted plot killed 80,000 Italian traders. Before the year was out armies of Mithridates were in Greece, where Athens gladly welcomed the semi-Hellenized king. The danger was very real that this resourceful, daring invader might wrest all the East from Rome.

At Rome two main claimants appeared for the important military command against Mithridates. One was Sulla; the other was the great military reformer, Marius (C. Marius, 157–86). A man of little political sense, Marius was yet a good general who greatly improved the organization, equipment, and training of the legions. His further step of opening the ranks of his army to volunteers was of tremendous significance; thenceforth armies of the Republic were professional. The quality of the soldiers naturally improved, but, since they were deeply attached to the general who raised an army and gave its members their discharge bounties, they
were not very amenable to senatorial direction. Another serious result of the change was the fact that generals became steadily more independent in their provincial commands and often had to enter home politics to assure their position and secure state approval for the discharge bounties.

Since the Senate trusted Sulla the more of the two, he was elected consul and soon departed for the East. As soon as he was gone, the Populares marched on Rome, purged in blood a number of their opponents, and terrorized the city for the next four years (87–83) while Sulla was occupied in forcing Mithridates to terms. When Sulla returned in 83, a civil war ensued—the first Rome had ever experienced. Marius was now dead, his lieutenants were inept, and the end was a complete victory for Sulla.

Once in Rome, Sulla extorted unlimited powers as dictator for reorganizing the state. He cynically posted list after list of his major opponents as well as of many whose only offense was wealth; anyone killing a proscribed person could claim the due reward, while the dead man’s estate went toward paying Sulla’s 120,000 veterans their bonus. This bloodletting once accomplished, Sulla proceeded to his self-appointed task of reform. Some of his measures, which expanded the machinery of government, were excellent and endured, but his deliberate effort to concentrate all powers in the hands of the Senate was doomed to failure. The Senate itself was still an assembly of selfish, money-corrupted nobles beyond any possibility of conservative reform; Sulla himself had partially destroyed the aristocracy in the civil war and proscription. Worse, he had made the army a power in politics and had pointed the way for any ambitious man who wished to gain mastery in Rome.

In 79 Sulla felt his work was done and voluntarily retired.
Cynical, witty, brutal, he yet worshiped Fortune and believed himself a "creature of a superior power." To Sulla the whole world was absurd, and life was meant to be enjoyed without worry over principle. When he died in 78, he left an epitaph for his tombstone: "No friend ever surpassed him in kindness and no enemy in mischief." More fittingly it might have been said that he was at least unselfish enough to try to save the Republic and that at a critical point in its history he shored up the power of the state both at home and in the empire.

The Unrest of the Sixties

Before Sulla was dead ten years, the incompetent Senate had lost the position he had given it. The consuls of 70, Pompey and Crassus, wiped out the last vestiges of the Sullan system and assured the triumph of the Populares. The following decade of the 60's was a floundering period in which the main question was the leadership of the victorious party. The most prominent claimant was Pompey (Cn. Pompeius Magnus, 106–48), originally a protégé of Sulla but now linked with the Populares to get the military posts he desired. Jealous of any superior yet desiring universal respect, Pompey was an able general but politically obtuse. From 68 to 62 he was away from Rome, first to sweep out the pirates and then to deal with Mithridates, once more at war in Asia Minor. In the East Pompey was fantastically successful and engaged in a great reorganization of the eastern provinces.

While he was gone, his ostensible friends feverishly but vainly tried to build up a counterweight to the army he would bring back from the East. Crassus (M. Licinius Crassus, c. 112–53), a man of great wealth, strove to become
boss of the political machine. Cicero (M. Tullius Cicero, 106–43) was making his reputation by oratory in this period and endeavored to unite the equestrian and senatorial orders in a "concord of the orders." As consul in 63, he was temporarily successful in welding together his concord of the upper classes in opposition to the serious plot by the reckless bankrupt Catiline. But a permanent union between the pursblind gentleman of the fishponds, as Cicero called the Senators in mockery of their newly acquired passion for raising fish, and the selfish, ruthless equestrians could not last, and it soon fell apart. The entire career of Cicero, leading through glory, exile, and death, is an illuminating commentary on the limitations of a reasonable, essentially virtuous man in times of upheaval.

The Rise of Caesar

Yet another political figure in this decade, though by no means recognized for what he was to become, was Gaius Julius Caesar. The Julian clan might boast descent from Aeneas, the legendary Trojan progenitor of Rome, but Caesar's branch had never produced any great figures. Caesar himself was born about 100 and early showed sufficient ability to earn Sulla's suspicion. Finding it safer to withdraw from Rome, Caesar took the usual postgraduate course of instruction in philosophy and rhetoric at Athens and Rhodes. After Sulla's retirement Caesar passed through the normal chain of offices, spending so lavishly on gladiatorial and wild-beast shows for the populace that he was soon heavily in debt to Crassus. He seems to have acted primarily as an agent for Crassus, in which capacity he acquired a keen perception of the moods of the people. In 63 he was elected pontifex
maximus (chief priest); thereafter he was praetor and then governor of Farther Spain, where he engaged in some military operations.

If Caesar had died at forty, the modern world would know nothing of him. His life now had only fifteen more years, but events were so shaping that his opportunity had just come. In 62 Pompey returned to Italy and dismissed his army. The Senate thereupon refused to allow bounties for his veterans or to confirm his reorganization of the East. Desperate lest his reputation be ruined, Pompey turned to Crassus, master of the assemblies, and together with Caesar the two formed the First Triumvirate, an extralegal group of three would-be bosses of Rome. Caesar ran for consul for 59, was elected with violence, and then carried out the desires of Pompey and Crassus despite the opposition of the other consul Bibulus; in the end Bibulus retired within his mansion and announced each day that he found the omens bad—a statement which should have stopped public business, but did not. As a reward for his work Caesar received the governorship of the Gauls (Narbonese along the Riviera, and Cisalpine in the Po Valley).

After 59 Caesar began to rise above the level of a machine politician. As governor of the two Gauls, 58–50, he expanded Roman control to the Rhine and the North Sea; in other words he conquered modern France and Belgium and so opened up to Mediterranean civilization the land which was to transmit that civilization through the Middle Ages to the modern world. The conquest was impressive to the Romans, who had feared the Gauls since the sack of Rome. It also had considerable effect upon Caesar's military ability. At the beginning of the conquest his chief power was one of gaining his men's affection; at the end he had not
only their hearts but also a consummate mastery of the military art. During the conquest the strength of his army had also risen from two to thirteen legions.

While Caesar was in Gaul, Rome was close to chaos. Crassus sought military glory in his turn by fighting the Parthians in the East but lost both his army and his life (53). Gangs ranged the streets of Rome. Pompey, the only member of the triumvirate left in the city, was slow to act, presumably hoping that all would turn and beg his support. Eventually, after the Senate house itself had been burned in the gang warfare, he was elected sole consul for 52 and quickly restored order. By this time he had an interesting constitutional position. Sole consul, he also was governor of Spain and Libya but acted in the latter capacity by sending deputies or legates out to the provinces. As overseer of the Roman grain supply he likewise operated through deputies. His aim seems to have been to become “first citizen” (princeps) of Rome, respected by all elements and particularly by the Senate, for whom he would govern its provinces and control its armed forces. The Senate had a different view of matters. Led by the righteous but politically stupid Cato the Younger, the Senate flattered Pompey and gradually won him over, but the intent was to use him against Caesar and then, probably, to get rid of Pompey himself.

Largely through the unyielding hostility of the Senate Caesar was pushed into a position of rebellion against the state at the beginning of 49. In one rapid rush Caesar pushed down the Italian peninsula, swept aside Pompey’s half-formed legions, and forced both Pompey and the Senate to flee to Greece via Brundisium. After crushing the forces led by Pompey’s deputies in Spain during the summer—a six-week campaign of brilliant maneuver without a major
battle—he whirled back to Brundisium, where boats had meanwhile been built, and crossed to the Balkans before the end of 49. Pompey was still raising an army.

The campaign of 48 is one of the world’s military masterpieces and ended in the victory of Caesar’s inferior forces at Pharsalus, in Thessaly. Pompey fled to Egypt, where he was killed; Caesar, who followed, met Cleopatra, daughter of the last king, and spent with her almost a year at Alexandria. During this period the Pompeians gained new vigor, and Caesar had further battles in Asia Minor, Africa, and Spain before he could call the Roman world his own.

**Caesar as Dictator**

Between January 49 and March 44, when Caesar was planning to leave the city again to fight the Parthians, he spent only about seventeen months in Rome itself. This period was yet long enough for him to lay the framework of a masterful reconstruction of the state, though it was not long enough for him to show clearly his plans in their last detail. One principle of his system was that of forgiveness. Having won on the battlefield, he was sparing of his foes and assumed that they would accept the award of war as easily as he. His old army he practically disbanded after the last battle in Spain; his own bodyguard he likewise dissolved. Men who had opposed him, like Brutus and Cassius, he put into office in an effort to unite all parts of the senatorial aristocracy behind his program.

For himself Caesar visualized a position of absolute power for life—the Republic was dead. His supremacy over the Senate was open: he now controlled finances and war, he had the right of expressing his opinion first, once he even received the venerable body while sitting in a golden chair.
He essentially picked the magistrates, though the formality of election was continued. So far all are agreed, but the exact legal nature of Caesar’s planned position and the way he intended to use his powers have long been debated. From February 44 he was dictator for life, he had the inviolability of a tribune, he was pontifex maximus, and he was overseer of morals. But he apparently wanted more, the place of a Hellenistic king. Thus he secured deification early in 44, when a temple was ordered to his Genius and a month was renamed July. He seems to have desired the title of rex or king, which his chief henchman Antony twice offered him publicly in February; but public opinion was hostile to this step, and he was not to have the time to soften it.

Everything that Caesar touched he reformed along logical lines, and the variety of acts accomplished in so brief a time is astounding. He formed a series of overseas colonies to draw off the city poor and resolutely cut the number of recipients of free grain in the capital by over one-half. He reformed the local system of government in Italy along lines which became standard for all the western provinces thereafter. The calendar, which was three months out of adjustment with the solar year, he completely revised; today we still use the same calendar, altered in one small detail by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. To Caesar Rome and its empire were essentially one cosmopolitan state. He made many provincials citizens and even enfranchised the entire province of Cisalpine Gaul.

Caesar’s steps did not secure enthusiastic approval. The well to do were suspicious of his radical followers, and the traditionalists were upset even by such things as the reform of the calendar. Above all, his frank acceptance of autocracy and his cosmopolitan attitude angered many citizens. In all
these measures, however, Caesar’s dominant characteristic appears: of all great men in history he stands out as a rational creature, and as he was driven by his mind, so he expected others to be. The revolution which had brought him into power was ended, and all should accept that fact. Much now needed reforming; Caesar was not the man to pay attention to tradition or custom in his new measures.

Caesar’s strength was at once his weakness, for others were not so much rational as vengeful, jealous, or alarmed. On March 15, 44, a band of such men drew close about the dictator as he attended a meeting of the Senate, drew their daggers, and murdered him at the base of a statue of Pompey. “Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead,” cried Cinna as he, Brutus, Cassius, and the others ran out, waving their bloody daggers.

While the assassins are beneath contempt, their act was of considerable effect—not in restoring the Republic, for they had made no plans for action after removing Caesar, and in any event the Republic was dead; but in determining the character of the system which was to be. Caesar had in mind a cosmopolitan, autocratic state on the order of a Hellenistic kingdom. His murder and the events which followed were to secure for Rome a system which reflected much more clearly its own lines of political development.

The Rise of Octavian

Caesar’s burly, jovial, and self-seeking lieutenant Antony (M. Antonius, c. 82–30) immediately seized Caesar’s papers and wealth and began dickering with the Senate and the assassins, who were pardoned but soon found it convenient to leave Rome. Within a month Antony was facing the
competition of a youth of eighteen, Caesar's grandnephew. Adopted by Caesar's will as his son, this young man was thereafter called Caesar, but to distinguish him from his uncle-father we usually term him Octavian (C. Iulius Caesar Octavianus, 63 B.C.—A.D. 14). Octavian had been studying in the Balkans but returned immediately on news of the Ides of March. Though inexperienced in politics he was cool and intelligent, yet filled with anger at the murder of the elder Caesar.

Disinclined to accept this callow youngster as an equal, Antony was unwilling to surrender his inheritance or to move against the assassins. Octavian therefore turned to his father's veterans, and on the appeal of his youth and his name quickly raised an army. Complicated maneuvers, largely led by Cicero, soon had Octavian and the Senate fighting together against Antony; Cicero rose to the greatest heights of his career as orator and patriot in hurling his Philippics at Antony during the winter of 44. Cicero's plan was to "elevate and then eliminate" Octavian, but rather the reverse occurred in actual fact. Octavian first extorted the post of consul from the Senate and then joined with Antony in conference. The two agreed with a third leader, Lepidus, to take over the Roman state and govern it with absolute power as the Second Triumvirate.

Late in 43 the joint leaders came down to the city. One of the first acts was to set up a proscription list, to get money and remove enemies; and high on that list stood Cicero's name. After his murder his head was placed on the Rostra in the Forum from which he had often swayed the people, and there Antony's wife jeeringly pierced the dead man's tongue with a pin. In 42 Antony and Octavian proceeded
to Greece with an army, met Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, and in two hard-fought battles put an end to the party of the assassins.

The Triumvirs then carved up the Roman world. Antony took the East with the mission of raising money, Octavian eventually held Gaul and Spain, Lepidus received Africa. Italy was to be held in common, but Octavian was assigned the task of settling 100,000 veterans of Philippi on farms in the peninsula. Antony must have chuckled upon securing this division. He held the richest areas of the Roman world; his young colleague Octavian had been assigned a nasty task. So far Octavian had had a meteoric rise, from obscure youth to one of the three masters of the Mediterranean in less than three years, but could he thread his way among the problems now to arise?

At the outset he had to dispossess many of the farmers of Italy to settle his veterans. The result was a rebellion, which Octavian mercilessly repressed. Then he faced Sextus Pompey, the son of the great Pompey, who had gathered a navy after the death of Caesar and now held Sicily and Sardinia. Hostile to Caesar’s son, Sextus was blockading Italy, encouraging runaway slaves, and generally acting like a pirate. Octavian’s first fleet was destroyed in 38 by storm and battle, but in the following year he grimly set his childhood friend Agrippa (M. Vipsanius Agrippa, 63–12) at work building another fleet in an inland harbor especially constructed for the task. In 36 Sextus was finally smashed.

Octavian had hurdled all his obstacles—first the settlement of the veterans, then Sextus, and always the problem of governing Gaul, Spain, and Italy. The youth was rapidly becoming a seasoned leader; most important of all, he was gradually moderating his ruthlessness and so gaining a great
deal of support from the solid classes of Italy. After defeating Sextus, he returned all the captured slaves to their masters; the proscribed who had escaped were generally pardoned; in every way Octavian was indicating that he stood for order, the old Roman morality, and piety toward the gods. There can be no doubt that the years 41–36 were the most crucial in Octavian’s career and were the period in which he laid down the lines on which he was later to found the Roman Principate.

Antony, meanwhile, was rapidly losing what support he had in the West. Octavian’s propaganda machine painted his failure against the Parthians blackly but did not swing into high gear until Antony threw over Octavian’s sister, whom he had married, for the glamorous Cleopatra. While Cleopatra was gaining ever more influence over her lover and then husband, Octavian was destroying Cleopatra’s reputation not only for his fellow Italians but for all time to come. When the inevitable war broke out, Octavian had very real support from the West, most of which swore an oath to him as their leader against the Oriental menace. Agrippa directed the armed forces in a masterful campaign (31) which reduced Antony and Cleopatra at the end to breaking out of the harbor of Actium and fleeing to Egypt. There they committed suicide. In the year 30 B.C., as Octavian stood in Alexandria, he was undisputed master of the Mediterranean world. He was the same age as Alexander when the latter died at Babylon; but while Alexander had begun as king, Octavian had started as a schoolboy, his only strengths an adopted name, a cold, native intelligence, and an unswerving determination.

After a year spent in pacifying the East, Octavian returned to Rome to celebrate his triumph and to begin organizing
the system known as the Principate, which was to last for three hundred years. In 27 B.C. Octavian received the honorific title of Augustus, by which he was thereafter known. Before considering the new government of Augustus, however, let us turn back and look once more at the period we have traversed, for we stand here at a dividing point in Roman history.

The Synthesis of the Late Republic

From the political point of view the last century of the Republic is outwardly chaos. Political murder began in the days of the Gracchi, civil war and proscription in those of Sulla, gang warfare at Rome in the 60's. The solutions advanced to the underlying problems ranged from Sulla's frank acceptance of senatorial domination through Cicero's reasonable but futile concord of the orders to outright supremacy of one man. Given the primitive character of transportation and public opinion, true representative democracy in our sense was not a feasible answer; in so large a state some form of one-man rule was well-nigh inevitable, and the liberty which yielded to that rule had been essentially the liberty of the senatorial aristocracy. The provinces, the lower classes at Rome, even the Italian middle classes were willing to yield political privileges which they had really not enjoyed so long as their master guaranteed to them stability and prosperity.

In the wild days from 49 to 30 B.C. it may have appeared doubtful if the Roman world were to continue as a unit, but underneath the chaos various things were happening to secure that continuation. One was the reluctant but steady expansion of the Roman political and military machinery from the time of Sulla onward. Another was the unification
of Rome and Italy. A third was the ever-increasing yearning of the world for peace lest its civilization collapse. Yet a fourth was the vigorous intellectual outburst of the first century, which tended to unite Hellenistic and Roman in one common culture.

The period from the Gracchi through Augustus is the golden age of Roman civilization. Greece contributed from its long experience a great stock of techniques, motifs, and polished concepts; Rome brought primarily a sense of fresh enthusiasm, practical hardheadedness, and optimistic belief that new triumphs could be won. In art and architecture the Romans settled upon patterns which they explored with considerable ability; form and spirit owed much to Greek influence, but a subtly different interest in the individual, in space, and in nature can be detected in late Republican art. In literature there was a great bloom, which falls into two main periods, the Ciceronian and the Augustan. The storm and stress of the political unrest from the Gracchi down to the death of Cicero rather invigorated than dampened the minds of Roman writers, but the greatest outburst came with the certain security and peace of the Augustan regime. Though the Roman debt to the Hellenistic world is always profound, the Roman stamp yet becomes ever more perceptible in this century as one progresses through Lucretius and Catullus to Virgil and Horace.

One of the most interesting poets of the Ciceronian period was Lucretius (T. Lucretius Carus, c. 99–c. 55), who wrote only one poem, *On the Nature of Things*. That poem, however, is one of the most original and forceful in the history of literature. Brooding deeply on the stress of his times, Lucretius desired to free men from superstition and the fear of death. To do this, he preached the Epicurean philosophy
—that the world was made up of atoms accidentally coming
together; that man's soul accordingly dissolves upon death.
His poem, in six books, is scientific in tone and inevitably
arid in spots, yet the whole is filled with the intense fire of a
missionary spirit. Lucretius is unique in the ancient world in
his delight in the fierce, primeval forces of nature as dis-
played, for instance, in an ocean storm. Mocking hatred of
superstition, love, and other passions pours out in his lines,
and yet he can turn aside tenderly to depict a cow lowing
for her calf, sacrificed upon an altar. Reading his rugged
verse, one can see that though the material is Hellenistic, the
form and spirit are Roman.

In the length of his work and his generally straightforward
style Lucretius stood apart from the current trend in poetry,
which echoed the complexity and mythological conceits of
the short, highly polished works favored at Alexandria. The
greatest example of this school is Catullus (C. Valerius
Catullus, 84–54). Born in north Italy, Catullus came to Rome
and immediately flung himself into the hectic life of the
capital. In 116 short poems he reflects the giddy round of
that life as well as his deep learning in Alexandrian poetical
tricks. Yet his poems are not simply exercises; in these true
lyrics appears what one rarely finds in the ancient world—
a young soul deeply in love. Unfortunately the Lesbia whom
Catullus celebrates was one of the most wicked women in a
wicked century; and when he broke with her, his scorn was
as hot as his erstwhile love. In his savage attacks on Caesar,
Catullus reflected the political tendency of the young poets
of the day, but before his early death he had been reconciled
to the future dictator.

The overshadowing figure of the period before Caesar's
murder is the man from whom the literary era takes its
name, Cicero. Varied opinions may be passed on his political
career, but in his literary aspect all must agree with the judgment
of his contemporary, Caesar, that Cicero had advanced
the boundaries of the Latin genius.

Trained in rhetoric and philosophy at Rome and in
Greece, Cicero was widely at home in the currents of his
age, but above all was an orator powerful in swaying the
minds of the Senate and the Roman people. As an orator
Cicero set the "classic" Latin style in speeches which are
clear, rhythmical, and astoundingly varied to fit the needs
of scorn, passion, or appeal. Rome had no great orators after
Cicero's death, for the introduction of the Augustan system
eliminated the occasion for political oratory. Even under
Caesar Cicero was forced to turn from his speeches to the
writing of a host of essays and dialogues in the fields of
religion, ethics, politics, and rhetoric, all composed in his
fluent, graceful style but based almost entirely on Greek
sources. In these essays Cicero may be said to have begun
Latin literary criticism and to have formulated a Latin philo-
sophical vocabulary; and it is largely due to his work that
the Middle Ages and early Renaissance knew as much as
they did of Greek philosophical thought.

Nevertheless it will not do to set Cicero down simply as a
Greek copyist. Though his mind owed much to Periclean
Athens and more to the Hellenistic world, he had no pa-
tience with many Greek subtleties; in family customs, in
views on government, and less obviously in his concepts of
man's place in life this polished, civilized man of the first
century B.C. had inherited a great deal from the pattern of
Roman thought which had been formed before the Roman
conquest of the Mediterranean. Plato's Republic is more
profound but less practical than Cicero's dream of an ideal-
ized Roman Republic, sketched in his dialogue On the Republic.

The Augustan Age

Outside of Rome itself and its governing circle Cicero saw but little; his death is a symbol of the passing of the Republic. After Cicero came Augustus with a stabilized political system; after Cicero, again, came a new epoch of literature and art, the Augustan Age, which breathes of an entirely different spirit. This age is one of those rare periods of balance; pride in the past stands over against relief at the present peace and hope for the future. Such a flowering of civilization as occurred in Augustus' lifetime may appear surprising, for Augustus was actually a disguised dictator; but he brought peace, an outward retention of old Roman ways, and also the prosperity necessary to support the arts. The artists and writers of this period were largely supported by Augustus and his deputy Maecenas, but the thoughts they expressed seem essentially to be their own. The almost fulsome praise of Augustus in poetry, prose, and stone as the restorer of stability is yet a sincere representation of popular opinion.

The boast of Augustus that he found Rome in brick and left it in marble was intended metaphorically, but it is not far wrong as a summary of the building program of Augustus and his aides. Arches, temples, theaters, porticoes—the list of what he accomplished is almost endless. Roman architecture profited greatly from this activity, as did also the companion art of the sculptor. In such works of this period as the Altar of Augustan Peace or the Prima Porta statue of Augustus one may sense the same turn back to the spirit of classic Greece, the same pride in the past accomplishments
of Rome, the same religious thanksgiving for peace and order as appears in the prolific literature of the Augustan Age.

Of these authors, Livy, Horace, and Virgil best illuminate the major ideas of the age. Livy (T. Livius 59 B.C.—A.D. 17) dedicated his life to writing the history of Rome down to his time and has some claim to being considered the greatest of the Roman historians. His standards of criticism were not high, but his style was admirable. He was filled with a love for the old Roman character and so produced an epic work which fixed for the future the traditional view of the Republic. Livy may be said to typify the backward-looking aspect of the Augustan Age; his history is an unconscious admission that the Republic was ended. New things were beginning, but to see what they were one must turn from Livy to the poets Horace and Virgil.

Horace (Q. Horatius Flaccus, 65–8) was the son of a freedman but received the best possible education. He fought at Philippi in the army of Brutus and Cassius, then came back to Rome, where he eked out a poor living until Maccenas began to support him at Virgil’s suggestion. In variety of meter and deftness of expression Horace is Rome’s outstanding poet, and his thought ranges widely over the whole of society. More personal than Virgil, he now satirizes mockingly the foibles of his world, now praises a lovely lady in a stirring ode, and again gives serious advice on literary criticism or the art of poetry. Often he withdrew from town to his Sabine farm. In his cosmopolitanism, satirical spirit, and delight in leisure he struck notes which have always made him the special favorite of aristocratic societies. Still, he could sing in more serious vein, and some of his odes are stirring evocations of the old religious and patriotic attitudes which Augustus was trying to revive.
Virgil

The other great poet of the Augustan Age, Virgil (P. Vergilius Maro, 70–19), was a gentle soul with sensitive spirit, who yet reflects in his writings the main forces of Roman life and thought. To understand the Roman and his civilization one cannot do better than study Virgil. In itself his life is not exciting. Born near Mantua, close to the Alps in north Italy, he received a good education at nearby centers and then at Rome, but might have remained a gentleman farmer all his life had not the unrest after Caesar's death struck him a rude blow. While Octavian was settling the veterans of Philippi, Virgil lost his farm in the general confiscation; by an appeal he may have gotten it back eventually, but thereafter he lived in Rome or near Naples in the circle of Maecenas. The rest of his life was devoted to his poetry. He died before his greatest work, the Aeneid, was completed; his request that it be burned was vetoed by Augustus, who stepped in to save this epic celebration of the Augustan Age. In addition to minor early poems Virgil also produced ten brief Bucolics and four books of Georgics.

The Bucolics are artificial praises of the pastoral life, in imitation of Theocritus' Idyls. They display Virgil's tremendous learning, whose roots cannot always be traced, and his skill at imitation of Alexandrian originals; yet not all is copy. The poet's native, lush plains with slowly winding rivers can often be detected in the background, and his love of nature and deep sympathy with misfortune are instinctive. In the Fourth Bucolic Virgil sings of a child to be born who will end the strife of the era and in his dreams makes manifest the yearning of the whole period. The child apparently was born to a noble Roman house, but Christians later took it
to be Christ and so considered Virgil a prophet of the coming of the Messiah.

The *Georgics* are a handbook on agriculture in verse, composed at the request of Maecenas and intended to further Augustus’ program of reawakening interest in farming. To the modern world, city-bred or accustomed to mechanized farming, the *Georgics* may often seem to drag in their technical detail despite their marvelously turned hexameters and glowing digressions, but even now they convey something of the unremitting toil of peasant farming and the rich pageant of the Italian agricultural world with its love of the soil and its festivals. The *Georgics* celebrate Italy as a whole:

Hail, great mother of harvest! O land of Saturn, hail!  
Mother of Men! For you I take my stand on our ancient  
Glories and arts, I dare to unseal the hallowed sources  
And sing a rural theme throughout the cities of Rome.¹

The theme may have been suggested to him, but Virgil’s love of his native land, torn by strife after the death of Caesar, shines forth again and again, as in the following bitter lines:

For Right and Wrong are confused here, there’s so much war in the world,  
Evil has so many faces, the plough so little  
Honour, the labourers are taken, the fields untended,  
And the curving sickle is beaten into the sword that yields not.  
The wicked War-god runs amok through all the world.

Virgil’s greatest poem is his *Aeneid*, composed after Augustus had restored stability to this war-ravaged world. The hero, Aeneas, appears first in Homer’s *Iliad* as a member

¹ Quotations from the *Georgics* are in the translation by C. Day Lewis (copyright 1940, 1947, by Oxford University Press, Inc.).
of the Trojan royal family, a doughty fighter particularly marked for his piety. A myth early arose of Aeneas' voyage to north Greece, then to Sicily, and finally to Latium, where he became an ancestor of the Romans. This extension of the legend, concocted mainly to give the Romans some tie with the Aegean world, was an inconsistent, uninspired tale when Virgil seized upon it as a subject for his great epic poem.

At the outset of his work Virgil states his purpose: he proposes to tell of the tribulations and wanderings of the man who was directed by the gods to pave the way for Rome. Aeneas carries with him the images of his family gods, the Penates, who are to become the inner gods of Rome and the guardians of its rise. He also brings the idea of a city with "justice, and magistrates, and the august senate." But the Aeneid is actually more than the story of Aeneas; through this device Virgil is able to state his lofty views of the development of the Roman Republic. In great passages of prophecy Jupiter, Aeneas' father Anchises, and others step forward to sketch boldly the purpose of Rome and the majesty of its power. The height toward which all Roman history ascends inevitably is the poem's own age, the age of Augustus. Thus the Aeneid is a blend of the mythical and the historical, of the past and of the immediate present. Like Livy, Virgil looks to the past of Rome with swelling pride; unlike the historian, Virgil also turns and looks forward into the future with equal certainty of Rome's mighty purpose.

The whole epic is much indebted to Homer's work, both in details of poetic style and in general division. Books I–VI of the Aeneid describe Aeneas' wanderings from Troy to Carthage, where he is succored by Queen Dido; and thence to the shore of Italy, where his visit to the underworld is
recounted in the great blaze of allegory and religious suggestion of Book VI. All this is modeled on the *Odyssey*; the last six books, describing the settlement of the Trojans in Latium and their wars, reflect the *Iliad*. As an epic the *Aeneid* is inevitably much more artificial than Homer's work; for Virgil lived in an advanced age, and again he was a Roman. The hero is not a half-barbarian Achilles capable of paroxysms of undisciplined anger, but "pious Aeneas." Aeneas, it must be confessed, is not a character who appeals to the modern mind. Throughout he is a creature of the divine will, and one who needs considerable stiffening to keep to the mark. But to a Roman this characteristic merely showed his divine guidance, and in the *Aeneid* he is ever more clearly driven by the divine mission of paving the way for Rome. *Pietas* was one of the great foundations of Roman character, and that quality Aeneas had in great abundance.

It will not do to compare the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* on any but the most restricted of points. The *Aeneid* is a Roman poem written for a definite purpose, and Virgil packed into it a wealth of learning about Roman religious and social customs. Above all, the poem is infused with Virgil's sense of Roman destiny, which made that state the inevitable master of the Mediterranean—not for plunder or rapine, but for peace, order, and the growth of equality among the races. As Anchises prophesies to his son, the Greeks may excel in sculpture, oratory, or science:

> be thy charge, o Roman, to rule the nations in Roman empire; this shall be thine art, to ordain the law of peace, to be merciful to the conquered and beat the haughty down.²

² Quotations from the *Aeneid* are in the translation by J. W. Mackail.
Rome had a sacred duty, which brought it external empire but culminated in the age of Augustus. Jupiter so states early in the poem:

To these [Romans] I ordain neither period nor boundary of empire. I have given them dominion without end. Nay, harsh Juno, who in her fear now troubles earth and sea and sky, shall change to better counsels, and with me shall cherish the lords of the world, the gowned race of Rome. . . . From the fair line of Troy a Caesar shall arise, who shall limit his empire with Ocean, his glory with the firmament, Julius, inheritor of great Iulus' name. Him one day, my care done, thou shalt welcome to heaven loaded with Eastern spoils; to him too shall vows be addressed. Then shall war cease, and the iron ages soften. Hoar Faith and Vesta, Quirinus and Remus brothers again, shall deliver statutes. The dreadful steel-clenched gates of War shall be shut fast; inhuman Fury, his hands bound behind him with an hundred rivets of brass, shall sit within on murderous weapons, shrieking with ghastly blood-stained lips.

Simply as planned epic the Aeneid would scarcely have gained its fame. It reflects once more Virgil's intense love of Nature, but even more it is infused with his deep sympathy and brooding upon the world. His compassion for Dido almost carried him outside the due bounds of his plot but led to the creation of one of the most striking female characters in ancient literature. In the Aeneid, more than anywhere else, Virgil is a universal poet, appealing to people of any age. Dante chose him as his guide in the Divine Comedy, and his work enjoyed almost religious respect throughout the Middle Ages. The Aeneid may be an artificial epic, but it is great in the poetic sense; its place is secure as long as the Latin hexameter is understood.

In Virgil, as in Horace, Livy, or the sculptors of the
Augustan Age, one can see that the Romans had found themselves again, after two centuries of political and cultural upheaval. They had changed considerably from their forebears of third-century Rome. The conquest of the Mediterranean led first to a collapse of the old Republic and then to the evolution of a new machinery under an almost absolute ruler, which we shall soon inspect. The old Roman simplicity gave way to a much more complicated civilization in which Greek culture was fully accepted and integrated. "Rome" no longer meant a dominant city-state but all Italy under Augustus; the next step was to make "Rome" equal the entire Mediterranean.

The Augustan Age thus marks the final achievement of a cultural synthesis between Greece and Rome and the establishment of a stable political system which would safeguard the working out of that synthesis in a truly Mediterranean civilization and its expansion throughout the Empire. And, in closing this chapter, it might be well to note that the Greeks on their side had by now grown ready to accept Roman rule. For a Rome conscious of its mission and an empire reconciled to its domination the future looked bright toward a peaceful expansion and intensification of civilization.
CHAPTER V

The Synthesis of the Empire

THE new era of Roman history which begins with Augustus is usually called the Empire, and the series of individuals who controlled the state after Augustus forms the famous line of Roman emperors. Though the Empire has a long history running down into the fifth century after Christ, we shall be concerned here only with the period from Augustus to A.D. 180—the two centuries which witnessed the ever more complete synthesis of Mediterranean civilization and its spread through much of Europe. This epoch is one of the great consolidating periods of world history, in which the contributions of Orient, Greece, and Rome were summed up and passed on to later civilization.

These two centuries of uninterrupted tranquillity are perhaps the longest period during which the civilized world has known peace and felt a sense of security. They were gained for the Roman Empire by the Augustan reorganization of the ramshackle, haphazard structure of government built up in the Republic, for the Augustan system lasted without major outward change down to A.D. 180. The nature of the civilization fostered by the famous "Roman peace" we shall examine later, but first let us cast a brief glance at the Empire itself.