

DOMITIUS CORBULO

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I

Of the campaigns of Domitius Corbulo, not much remains to be said at so late a date in the annals of erudite investigation. His significance for social and political history is another matter. Corbulo's early career excites curiosity. And, later, the effort is not vain to look for links between Corbulo and certain persons, families, or groups destroyed by Nero in 65 and 66, in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy; and scrutiny of the legates who had served under Corbulo during the dozen years of his activity in the eastern lands also proves remunerative. In the winter of 66/7 Nero summoned Corbulo to Corinth and ordered him to put an end to his life. The general had become 'capax imperii'.

That does not exhaust the count. Corbulo's mother was Vistilia, the lady of the six husbands, who stands in startling and salutary comment on the Augustan programme of moral regeneration, although charity or equity might invoke death as well as divorce to account for several of them. The fruits of her adventures in matrimony acquire political consequence in the reigns of Caligula and Claudius. Furthermore, the local origin of the Domitii calls for inspection. Also, the identity of Corbulo's wife.

The evidence about Vistilia comes from the best of sources. Pliny, admitted in his youth to society life at Rome, enjoyed the advantageous patronage of P. Pomponius Secundus, one of the sons of Vistilia; he saw service under Pomponius later in Germania Superior, and he wrote his biography. Pliny in his encyclopedia, when reporting variations in the term of pregnancy, was able to adduce the following particulars (*NH* VII, 39):

Vistilia Gliti ac postea Pomponi atque Orfiti clarissimorum civium coniunx ex his quattuor partus enixa, septimo semper mense, genuit Suillum Rufum undecimo, Corbulonem septimo, utrumque consulem, postea Caesoniam Gai principis coniugem octavo.

The passage is of primary importance. Yet only once has it been accorded discussion in detail, and that was for its bearing on Pomponius Secundus, the consular dramatist.¹ It is time to look at it again, for it carries a number of perplexities, not all resolved or even recognized. Pliny is putting on record, in order of time, seven births. For the first four, sex is not specified—and some of these seven-month infants might not have survived. Nonetheless, sons of the first three marriages can be established or surmised. To arrive at the approximate period and limits of Vistilia's fecundity, it will be expedient to begin with the named sons of the fourth and fifth marriages, viz. Suillius Rufus and Domitius Corbulo.

II

First, therefore, P. Suillius Rufus. In his long and variegated career the fact stood out (perhaps he made much of it himself) that he had been quaestor of Germanicus Caesar. It is twice registered by the careful Tacitus (*Ann.* IV, 31, 3; XIII, 41, 3). Which was the year? Germanicus held the consulship in A.D. 12 and in 18. But, apart from that, when on the Rhine he had proconsular *imperium*, voted by the Senate on September 17, A.D. 14 (*Ann.* I, 14, 3). Hence the right to a quaestor, as again in his eastern command, which he took up before the end of 17. Now Ovid, in a poem of 15 or 16 addressed to Suillius, invokes his especial cult of Germanicus—'di tibi sunt Caesar iuvenis' (*Ex Ponto* IV, 8, 23).

¹ C. Cichorius, *Römische Studien* (1922), 429 ff.

The poem refers to martial exploits of the prince—'unde tuas possim laudes celebrare recentes' (ib. 87). Perhaps therefore 15 was the year.

The next four years are not excluded. An inscription at Antioch records a man who was 'xvir stl. iudic., q. Germanici Caesaris, leg. Ti. Caesaris Aug.' (*ILS* 8967). Perhaps Suillius. It shows him going on after the quaestorship to be legate, i.e. presumably legate of a legion in Syria.

It will be noted in passing that, though Tacitus is alert to the early career of Suillius, the full narrations about Germanicus on the Rhine and in the East do not mention his name. Friends of Germanicus who had been with him in Syria, notably Q. Veranius and P. Vitellius, were eager for vengeance, active in the prosecution of Cn. Piso early in 20 (*Ann.* II, 74, 2; III, 10, 1; 13, 2; 17, 2). P. Vitellius produced a famous oration (Pliny, *NH* XI, 187). Suillius had already some oratorical talent or promise when Ovid addresses him—'studiis excolte Suilli' (*Ex Ponto* IV, 8, 1). It may perhaps be inferred that Suillius was debarred by absence from Rome at this time.

In the pages of Tacitus, Suillius first turns up in 24—'convictus pecuniam ob rem iudicandam cepisse' (IV, 31, 3). The Emperor insisted that he should be banished to an island, asseverating on oath the public welfare. Let a conjecture be hazarded: Suillius had been praetor in 23.²

That touches the rhythm of his official career. A man could pass in four years from quaestorship to praetorship. Thus C. Ummidius Quadratus, quaestor in 14, aedile, praetor in 18 (*ILS* 972). Not, however, if he commanded a legion before he was praetor—which was a normal practice at this time (*Ann.* II, 36, 1). If Suillius is the man commemorated on the inscription at Antioch, the year 15 becomes plausible for his quaestorship—as Ovid's poem indicates.

Suillius came to grief in 24 and endured a long exile. He returned to the scene after the decease of Tiberius. Tacitus, who generally eschews anticipatory notices, letting significant names speak for themselves, adds his comment—'quem vidit sequens aetas praepotentem venalem et Claudii principis amicitia diu prospere numquam bene usum' (IV, 31, 3). Retribution overtook him at last, in the year 58. He was then 'extrema senecta' (XIII, 42, 2). That is, about seventy. His quaestorship falls in the period 15–19, as shown above. Taking the year to be 15, for the sake of argument, Suillius was born about 10 B.C.

Suillius held the consulship under Claudius, with P. Ostorius Scapula for colleague. The period can be closely circumscribed. Since one of the *ordinarii* in 42 and in 46 held the *fasces* for twelve months, several attested consular pairs must, for various reasons, be assigned to the intervening years.³ As a recently discovered document reveals, Suillius and Scapula fall in a September, November or December.⁴ Later evidence rules out 44. Perhaps therefore the last two months of 45, a notion that could be supported by the guess that Scapula, who went as governor to Britain in 47, had won merit there under Claudius in the campaign of 43.

Thus, on any count, the consulate of Suillius Rufus should be put in 43 or 45. A son of Suillius, namely M. Suillius Nerullinus, was *consul ordinarius* not long after, in 50. This person is the son issuing from his marriage with the daughter of Ovid's third wife.⁵ The relationship emerges from the poem addressed to Suillius in 15 or 16 (*Ex Ponto* IV, 8, 11; 90): Ovid is a kind of father-in-law. That is Ovid's first (and only) citation of Suillius. In the earlier poems from his place of exile, Ovid had been chary of appeal to any named friends. No obstacle, therefore, to the notion that the match had been contracted several years previously.⁶ The aspirant to honours tended, for valid reasons, to take a wife two or

² This possibility is not noticed in *PIR*¹, S 700, or in P-W.

³ For the items and the evidence, see A. Degraffi, *I Fasti Consolari* (1952), 12 ff. Add now, for 44 and 45, G. Barbieri, *Epigraphica* xxix (1967), 3 ff.

⁴ L. Robert, *Hellenica* vi (1948), 62, whence *AE* 1949, 250 (Hierocaesarea in Phrygia). The previous evidence was *Inst.* III, 8, 3: 'Suillio Rufo et Ostorio et Scapula'; *Dig.* xxxviii, 4, 1, praef.: 'Velleo Rufo Ostorio Scapula'. Also *CIL* VI, 24729: '[.] P. Suillius Rufus . . .'

⁵ Both ladies anonymous. Ovid's third wife had an uncle 'maxima Fundani gloria, Rufe, soli' (*Ex Ponto* II, 11, 28): not identifiable.

⁶ Not, however, 'spätstens uml. das J. 5 n. Chr.' as M. Fluss, P-W VA, 722. That scholar was on a false trail; and, arguing from M. Suillius Nerullinus (*cos.* 50), the son of this marriage, he showed himself unaware of the age-differential touching consulships.

three years before the season of his quaestorship. The birth of Nerullinus (*cos.* 50) should fall in the period 12–15.

A son succeeding his parent in the *fasces* with the interval of only half a dozen years, that is no surprise. Observe, for example, a C. Cestius Gallus *ordinarius* in 35 and another *suffectus* in 42. Tacitus under the year 32 mentions 'C. Cestium patrem' (VI, 7, 2). Some have proposed to emend 'patrem' to 'praetorem'.⁷ That is on the wrong track. The language of Tacitus proves the existence of two homonyms in the Senate at that time, father and son. The case is patent—a *novus homo* acceding to the *fasces* late in life, a son benefiting from his parent's entry to the aristocracy of the consulars.

The variants in the consular age are relevant to several of Vistilia's sons. As a privilege for the *nobiles*, Caesar Augustus lowered the standard age by ten years.⁸ Hence consuls at thirty-two are possible; and a rapid access is sometimes on direct attestation. Thus C. Asinius Pollio and C. Antistius Vetus, praetors in 20, consuls in 23. Not that all advance quite so quickly: Ser. Sulpicius Galba, noble and patrician, born in 3 B.C., becomes consul in A.D. 33.

The privilege extends to the new imperial nobility. L. Vitellius (*cos.* 34) may have been born about 10 B.C., but his son Aulus, born in A.D. 15, is consul in 48. For other senators the forty-third year obtains, more or less. Thus T. Flavius Vespasianus, born in 9, praetor 39, consul *suffectus* in 51. However, a preference grows up for meritorious or favoured *novi homines* (not unconnected with the tenure of imperial provinces of praetorian rank).⁹ Thus Sex. Papinius Allenius, *pr.* 27, *cos.* 36; C. Laecanius Bassus, *pr.* 32, *suff.* 40; Q. Veranius, *pr.* 42 or 43, *cos.* 49.¹⁰

By contrast, the results of late entry, slow progress or a setback. A short list is instructive:

A. Didius Gallus (*suff.* 36). In 50 when legate of Britain he is already 'senectute gravis' (*Ann.* XII, 40, 4).

Cn. Domitius Afer (39). Praetor in 25 (*Ann.* IV, 52, 1).

C. Ummidius Quadratus (*c.* 40). Quaestor in 14, praetor in 18 (*ILS* 972).

Sex. Palpellius Hister (43). 'Comiti Ti. Caesaris Aug. dato ab divo Aug.' (*ILS* 946). Tiberius, it appears, had not cared to go on to relations of amity in the sequel.

Curtius Rufus (? 43). Legate of Germania Superior in 47. The comments of Tacitus imply clearly that he was advanced in years (*Ann.* XI, 21, 3).

Of those five consulars, four held army commands under Claudius. The other, Domitius Afer, was a ferocious prosecutor of long life and evil fame, like Suillius Rufus. They can all be claimed close coevals with Suillius, quaestor of Germanicus, praetor in 23, consul *suffectus* ? 45.

III

Next, Corbulo. His parent enters the *Annales* under the year 21—Domitius Corbulo, a senator of praetorian rank, in an angry quarrel for precedence with a young *nobilis* (III, 31, 3 ff.). The historian subjoins annotation. The same Corbulo raised loud complaint about the condition of the roads in Italy and got himself appointed commissioner, in which function he behaved ferociously—'quod haud perinde publice usui habitum quam exitiosum multis, quorum in pecuniam atque famam damnationibus et hasta saeviebat.'

Cassius Dio, under the year 39, has a divergent account (LIX, 15, 3). Cn. Domitius Corbulo, observing the bad state of the roads in the time of Tiberius, had been in the habit of criticizing road curators and had made a nuisance of himself in the Senate. Caligula enlisted his services to prosecute and fine curators and contractors, both the living and the dead. As a reward the Emperor gave him the consulship. Subsequently, however, under Claudius, his actions came under scrutiny, and restitution was made to the victims of his zeal (LX, 17, 4).

⁷ Thus, following Lipsius, H. Fuchs in his edition (1946).

⁸ Not recorded by any historian but deduced from facts, notably the age of L. Piso the Pontifex (*Ann.* VI, 10, 3), consul in 15 B.C.

⁹ *JRS* XLVIII (1958), 1 ff.

¹⁰ The praetorships of Allenius (*ILS* 945) and of Laecanius are dated by the *Fasti Arvalium (Inscr. It.* XIII, 1, 299). For the *cursus* of Q. Veranius, see *AE* 1953, 88.

Dio, it may be noted, is not aware of the fact that Corbulo had held an official mandate in the reign of Tiberius; and he nowhere draws a distinction between the two homonyms, the road-commissioner and the general. Hence the chance (and something more) that he was in error when assigning to the former a consulship in 39.¹¹ Dio can be guilty of blunders as well as inadvertence about characters in history. One of them exhibits multiple confusion. Dio states, under the year 37, that Q. Pomponius had been kept in confinement for seven years after his consulship (LIX, 6, 2). The reference is to his brother, P. Pomponius Secundus, incriminated in 31 after the fall of Seianus (*Ann.* v, 8, 1 ff.)—and later consul suffect, in 44.

Dio may be erroneous in his attribution of a consulate. It does not follow that he failed all through to distinguish between father and son. His narrative is fragmentary for 40 and the beginning of 41. It breaks off again before the end of 46, and the passage where Cn. Domitius Corbulo is introduced without explanation of identity as general in Germany (LX, 29, 4) derives in fact from Xiphilinus.

Not but that strong doubt should obtain about the elder Corbulo's consulship in 39. Pliny in his compressed notice about Vistilia's pregnancies, after naming the first three husbands (Glitius, Pomponius, Orfitus), alters his procedure and registers, instead of the next two husbands, the next two sons—'genuit Suillium Rufum undecimo (*sc.* mense), Corbulonem septimo, utrumque consulem' (*NH* VII, 39). Perhaps only for variety. Yet it might be asked why he goes out of his way to specify 'utrumque consulem'. It may be a deliberate device to avoid confusion and to distinguish a son from a parent who was not consul. Nothing is known about Suillius' father—but the elder Corbulo was a person of some notoriety. There would be no point in insisting that a consul's son was also consul.

On this interpretation of Pliny's text, only one Corbulo was consul, the son. For ease of argumentation (rather than from conviction of certainty) it will here be assumed that it is the general who held the *fasces* as consul suffect in 39.¹² Merit or special influence could bring a *novus homo* to the consulship a little short of the age of forty—and Milonia Caesonia, his half-sister, was first the mistress and then the consort of Caligula. Corbulo may thus have been born *c.* A.D. 1. Perhaps, however, three or four years earlier.

No impediment, it must be conceded, precludes a consulship for the father in 39—and a son can succeed his elderly father in the *fasces* after a short interval. An old man he must have been in 39, well over sixty. Age is implied already in the incident reported by Tacitus in 21. When he was praetor? He has been identified as the 'Js Cor.' who was peregrine praetor in 17.¹³ An improved publication of the document in question permits the conjecture—'Js Cot[t]a.'¹⁴ That is to say, M. Aurelius Cotta (*cos.* 20), the same person as the consular Cotta Messallinus, who turns up several times in the *Annales*. Old Corbulo's date of birth may go back as far as 25 or 30 B.C. And Vistilia was hardly born later than 30 B.C. since, on Pliny's showing, she had at least four children previous to the birth of P. Suillius Rufus. That son became quaestor in the period A.D. 15–19.

Vistilia now falls into her proper generation. Two other members of her family are on record. Tacitus under the year 32 mentions 'Sex. Vistilium praetorium, quem Druso fratri percarum in cohortem suam transtulerat' (VI, 9, 2). Given the age which friendship with Drusus, the brother of Tiberius, presupposes, Sex. Vistilius should be the brother of Vistilia, not the parent.¹⁵ He had a daughter, i.e. the other Vistilia, married to the senator Titedius Labeo. In 19 she sought official sanction for an irregular life—'Vistilia praetoria familia genita licentiam stupri apud aedilis vulgaverat, more inter veteres recepto qui satis poenarum adversum impudicas in ipsa professione flagitii credebant' (II, 85, 2). This bold lady's assertion of a 'mos maiorum' may or may not have been intended to reflect on

¹¹ As suggested in *Tacitus* (1958), 788. The index of that book registers the general as 'suff. ? 39.'

¹² The standard opinion accepts Dio and assigns the consulship in 39 to the general's father. Thus Groag in *PIR*², D 141; Degraffi, *o.c.* By corollary, the son must then have been consul *c.* 43: he was legate of Germania Inferior in 47 (*Ann.* XI, 18, 1). However, the case for the general's consulship in 39 is vindicated with powerful arguments by G. B. Townend, *Hermes* LXXXIX (1961), 234 ff.

¹³ *CIL* I², p. 70, cf. *PIR*², D 141.

¹⁴ *Inscr. It.* XIII, 1, cf. *JRS* XLVI (1956), 18.

¹⁵ It is suggested in *PIR*¹, V 490 that both Vistilia and the other Vistilia (*Ann.* II, 85, 2) are daughters of the old praetorian senator Sex. Vistilius. Against which, cf. *JRS* XXXIX (1949), 17; *Tacitus* (1958), 374. The Vistilii have been omitted from the recent instalment of P-W.

the sequence of legal husbands that signalized her aunt. It got her exiled to the island Seriphos.¹⁶

The *nomen* 'Vistilius' is rare. It points to Umbria, where in fact the freedman of a Sex. Vistilius can be discovered at Iguvium.¹⁷ No senatorial Vistilii occur in the sequel.

To come now to the general. Assuming him to be the consul in 39, his birth can fall in the period 4 B.C.—A.D. 1. The youngest child of Vistilia is Milonia Caesonia, with whom Caligula fell madly in love. He ended by marrying her, in 40. Suetonius says that she was no longer 'integra aetate' (*Cal.* 25). The phrase does not permit an exact definition. Let it be supposed that she was born c. A.D. 5.

IV

On the argument so far, the sequence of Vistilia's offspring, assuming male issue for the first three marriages, will have to work out roughly as follows:

(1) Glitius, born c. 15 B.C. Therefore not P. Glitius Gallus, who was exiled in 65 (*Ann.* xv, 71, 3), as has been assumed (*PIR*², G 184), but his parent, not otherwise known.

(2) Q. Pomponius Secundus, born c. 14 B.C. Consul suffect in 41 after the assassination of Caligula (*PIR*¹, P 564).

(3) P. Pomponius Secundus, born c. 12 B.C. Brother of the foregoing and *cos. suff.* 44. Son of Vistilia, not, as in *PIR*¹, P 563, her husband. By his full style 'P. [? Calv]isius Sabinus Pomponius Secundus', cf. *CIL* XIII, 5201 + 5237. Dio, by a double blunder, assigns him his brother's *praenomen* and supposes him consul seven years before 37 (*LIX*, 6, 2). Perhaps quaestor in 30, as suggested in *PIR*. Rather perhaps praetor. The parent evades ascertainment.¹⁸ The only other consular Pomponii under the first dynasty, before C. Pomponius Pius (*suff.* 65), are C. Pomponius Graecinus (*suff.* 16) and his brother L. Pomponius Flaccus (*cos.* 17): origin unknown, but Iguvium happens to furnish the inscription of a senatorial Pomponius Graecinus.¹⁹

(4) Orfitus, born c. 11 B.C. Therefore the parent (otherwise unattested) of Ser. Cornelius (Scipio) Salvidienus Orfitus (*cos.* 51). Not husband of Vistilia, as suggested in *PIR*², C 1444. The consul of 51 was youthful, since he had been quaestor under Claudius (*IRT* 341), hence born c. 15.

(5) P. Suillius Rufus, *PIR*¹, S 700. Born c. 10 B.C., at the latest c. 7 B.C. Quaestor of Germanicus, probably in 15, as argued above. In any case not later than 19, since he was probably praetor in 23 (cf. *Ann.* iv, 31, 3). Consul suffect ? 45.²⁰

(6) Cn. Domitius Corbulo, born in the period 4 B.C.—A.D. 1. Consul suffect in 39.²¹

(7) Milonia Caesonia, born ? c. A.D. 5. Her father is not attested.

Such is the catalogue. On first inspection, not at all reassuring. It stretches the tract of Vistilia's pregnancies over some twenty years. That does not strain belief. Nor is it anomalous that two senators whose ages may be separated by about a dozen years (Suillius and Corbulo) should reach the consulate in the same season. The peculiar thing is the long gap that has to be assumed between the fifth child and the sixth. Matters are not much improved if Suillius' quaestorship be moved forward from 15 to 17 or 18.

¹⁶ That barren island would have been a suitable receptacle for her cousin P. Suillius Rufus, banished five years later (*Ann.* iv, 31, 3).

¹⁷ For the distribution of the name, *JRS* xxxix (1949), 16 ff. *PIR*¹, V 489 notes four freedmen of a Sex. Vistilius—but not the example at Iguvium (*CIL* xi, 5825).

¹⁸ As potential father, a Pomponius consul in 23 has recently been conjured up in P-W XXI, 2356, with a reference to 'Inscr. Per. II p. 428'. The inscription is spurious, cf. *CIL* xi, *314.

¹⁹ *CIL* xi, 5809. He is 'C. [f.]', therefore not the consul, who is presumably, like his brother Flaccus, 'L.f.' (cf. *PIR*¹, P 540). Perhaps a son. Note further, as relevant to Pomponii in this period, that Graecinus had at least two brothers (*Ex Ponto* II, 6, 15). The Vistilii appear to come from Iguvium, cf. above, n. 17.

²⁰ The *nomen* 'Suillius', vulgar in appearance, is not at all common. For 'Suillius' and 'Suellius', see W. Schulze, *LE* 233; 372 (with mention of the Suillates in Umbria, Pliny, *NH* III, 114). The *nomen* is absent from the *Indices* of *CIL* v, ix, x, xiv. In xi, one instance at Pisae (1493, with the *cognomen* 'Cerylus'), one at Spolegium (4924). The latter, a fragmentary inscription with the words 'loc. pub.' in the second line, reveals M. Suillius M.f., clearly a person of local consequence. Observe also at Spolegium a woman called 'Suilla P.f.' (4925).

²¹ Should any doubt subsist about the year of his consulship (cf. above, n. 12), it does not in itself affect the problem of the sequence of Vistilia's children, or the approximate dating.

Further, the two Pomponii, consuls suffect in 41 and 44. Suillius is an elderly consul, they are older than he, on Pliny's showing. As for the younger brother, the historian, when recording his exploits in 50 as legate of Germania Superior, adds a disguised obituary notice in the form of tribute to his literary talent (XII, 20, 2). It may be taken that he died not long after.

Perplexity subsists. Pliny alludes to the parent of the Pomponii as a 'clarissimus civis'. Yet the sons seem to come to the *fasces* unexpectedly late. Why Suillius was retarded is clear—thirteen years in exile. But the consulates of the two Pomponii belong in the same period as his. It might have seemed preferable to put their births *c.* 2 B.C., not a dozen years earlier; and the younger brother may in fact have been praetor in 30.

A dark suspicion arises. Perhaps the Pomponii are junior to Suillius Rufus. That would be advantageous, putting them in the gap between Suillius and Corbulo, also cur-tailing Vistilia's long servitude to childbirth. However, who can tell? Pliny ought to have known what he was talking about.

There is, it is true, a proposal that cuts into the chronology worked out above. On the standard assumption, P. Suillius Rufus, the quaestor of Germanicus, is a son of the fourth marriage of Vistilia (*PIR*¹, S 700). What if he were her husband? ²²

Let that notion be put under scrutiny. It carries two postulates. First, Suillius before marrying the step-daughter of Ovid, must have contracted a match with Vistilia and engendered a son. That match occurred, it is asserted, in A.D. 5 at the latest.²³ The corollary is damaging—Suillius, on the evidence of his quaestorship, would be a boy at that time.

Second, to explain the phrase about Vistilia, 'genuit Suillum Rufum undecimo, Corbulonem septimo, utrumque consulem,' one would have to conjure up a consular son of Germanicus' quaestor, *ex hypothesi* older than Corbulo (*suff.* ? 39), also older, much older, than M. Suillius Nerullinus (*cos.* 50): the latter, Suillius' son by Ovid's step-daughter, was probably born about 15. A Suillius Rufus, consul under Claudius and distinct from the colleague of P. Ostorius Scapula cannot be discovered.²⁴

To be sure, Suillius Rufus might have run through a brief matrimony *c.* 10–12 and have produced a son before he married Ovid's step-daughter. But that son would be junior to Corbulo, which contradicts the testimony of Pliny. Similarly, for that matter, Suillius may well have acquired another wife, after 16.²⁵

If Pliny's order of births is to be disrupted, that would be better done for the two Pomponii, as suggested above. However, if Pliny is accepted, along with certain consequences not at all welcome, or if the Pomponii are displaced, in any event Vistilia's son Suillius Rufus has to be the quaestor of Germanicus.

The sons of Vistilia are a collection rather than a group. Discord is as likely as harmony. Attack from Suillius (it was alleged) brought Q. Pomponius to a desperate pass, and so he joined Arruntius Camillus who as legate of Dalmatia made a proclamation against Claudius in 42 (*Ann.* XIII, 43, 2). Nonetheless this tie of blood and kinship was effective in some instances; and links between some of these persons and the party of Germanicus or the faction of L. Vitellius (*cos.* 34) can be established or surmised. Publius, probably the oldest of the brothers Vitellius, praetor before 14, was a prominent and fervent supporter of Germanicus (*PIR*¹, V 502). Lucius used Suillius to destroy Valerius Asiaticus in 47 (*Ann.* XI, 1, 1; 2, 1), and no doubt for other purposes as well. That theme would take one on long

²² So Cichorius, *Römische Studien* (1922), 432; M. Fluss, P-W V A, 722.

²³ M. Fluss, P-W V A, 722, followed by R. Hanslik in *xxi*, 2356 (on P. Pomponius Secundus).

²⁴ Cichorius (o.c. 431 ff.), appealing to the P. Suillius Rufus named second in a pair of consuls (*CIL* VI, 24729), postulated a consul distinct from the man in the pair 'Suillius Rufus, Ostorius Scapula' (above, n. 4), hence a homonymous son of Germanicus' quaestor. Against, L. Robert, *Hellenica* VI (1948), 62. This second P. Suillius Rufus has secured an entry in P-W V A 722. Not, however, in Degraffi's *Fasti Consolari*.

²⁵ M. Suillius Nerullinus (*cos.* 50) is patently the

son of Ovid's step-daughter. But Suillius had at least two sons, compare the taunt of Valerius Asiaticus — 'interroga, Suilli, filios tuos' (*Ann.* XI, 2, 1). Another son, Suillius Caesoninus, is discovered soon after that in an appropriate context — 'Caesoninus vitiis protectus est, tamquam in illo foedissimo coetu passus muliebria' (XI, 36, 4). The *cognomen* 'Caesoninus' invites speculation. May not Suillius Rufus have contracted a second marriage, finding a bride somewhere in the congenial ambiance of his half-sister, Milonia Caesonia? Hence his son Caesoninus, to be presumed younger than Nerullinus.

and sometimes devious paths. Let it be enough to suppose that one portion of Corbulo's career stands in close relation with the faction and influence of L. Vitellius (see further below). Meanwhile, there are other problems concerning Corbulo.

V

The local origin of these Domitii calls for enquiry, but provokes an excursus. The *nomen* first emerged at Rome with two houses of the plebeian *nobilitas*. The Domitii Calvini, after two consulates (332 and 283), go into eclipse for two centuries, to come back briefly with a praetor in 80 and his son Cn. Domitius Calvinus (*cos.* 54, *cos.* II 40) after whom the male line lapses. More remarkable the Ahenobarbi, in their long perpetuation of their name on the *Fasti* from the consul of 192—despite few sons in any generation—down to Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (*cos.* A.D. 32), the parent of the Emperor Nero.²⁶

The Ahenobarbi acquired a historic *clientela* in Narbonensis, clearly attested on various evidence, notably through the occurrence of their *nomen* in that province.²⁷ Close upon Valerius Asiaticus (*suff.* 35) follows the second Narbonensian consul, Cn. Domitius Afer (*suff.* 39). The provenance of Afer would not be known but for a late authority who, recording his decease as a result of over-eating, happens to mention that his *patria* was the city of Nemausus.²⁸ That being so, a suspicion about Cn. Domitius Corbulo became legitimate.²⁹ He got his special command in the East at a time when Annaeus Seneca and Afranius Burrus had the patronage in their hands. Compare, successive in Germania Inferior c. 54–59, Pompeius Paulinus from Arelate, Duvius Avitus from Vasio.

Further, the *cognomen* might be Celtic. Observe Cornelius Corbulo (*CIL* XII, 2414: Augusta, in the Allobrogic territory) and L. Crassicius Corbulo (XIII, 5178: Salodurum among the Helvetii). But, as with some other *cognomina*, it can also be Italian.³⁰ There is L. Pomponius Corbulo, *duumvir* at Cupra Maritima in Picenum (IX, 5329). Also, and better, L. Helvacius Corbulo, praetor at Alba Fucens (IX, 6349 = *ILLRP* 287).³¹

The Domitii Corbulones may derive from Appennine Italy. The family had property at Peltuinum in the land of the Vestini, as is revealed by inscriptions of slaves and freedmen of Corbulo's daughter (see below, 34 f.). Not alone a clear proof. Immigrants from the western provinces were already acquiring estates in various parts of Italy. Columella, the agronomic expert from Gades, had possessions at Ardea, Carseoli, Caere and Alba (*De re rustica* III, 3, 5; 9, 2).

Nonetheless, the Appennine trail should be pursued. It leads into speculation about the 'ultima origo' of the aristocratic Domitii Ahenobarbi. Their *cognomen* is peculiar indeed. Explanation is to hand, and a legend in two versions. First Suetonius, expounding the ancestry of Nero. The first person to bear the *cognomen* was a certain L. Domitius: his beard and hair turned ruddy when he encountered in the countryside 'iuvenes gemini augustiore forma' who bade him announce a victory to the Senate and the People (*Nero* 1, 1). Suetonius is vague about the occasion. But Plutarch takes the thing back to the first days of the infant Republic—an apparition of the Dioscuri in the Forum after the Battle of Lake Regillus (*Aemilius Paulus* 25). This story is not in Livy, Dionysius or Cicero: perhaps a product of the late Republic or the Civil Wars.³² The *denarii* struck by Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus the Republican admiral show on the obverse the head of a bearded man, i.e., the ancestor of the *gens*.³³

Suetonius, elucidating the legend, states that most of the Ahenobarbi were in fact 'rutila barba'. Further, however, the word could denote texture as well as colour, for a glossator has the definition 'flava barba vel dura'.³⁴ Is not that the better explanation? The adjective 'aenus' or 'aeneus' is never employed metaphorically to describe colour, only hardness. That is confirmed by the metallic images which L. Crassus the orator evoked in the famous altercation with the consul of 96—'non esse mirandum quod aeneam barbam haberet cui os ferreum cor plumbeum esset' (Suetonius, *Nero* 2, 2).

²⁶ Velleius II, 10, 2, on the 'peculiaris . . . felicitas' of the Domitii (but not quite accurate).

²⁷ *Rom. Rev.* (1939), 44; *Tacitus* (1958), 783 ff.

²⁸ Jerome, *Chron.* 179 H.

²⁹ *Tacitus* (1958), 591, n. 5: 'conceivably Narbonensian.'

³⁰ *Tacitus* (1958), 788.

³¹ Not cited in *Tacitus* (1958), 788.

³² As suggested by F. Münzer, *P-W* V, 1314.

³³ E. A. Sydenham, *The Roman Republican Coinage* (1952), 191.

³⁴ Cited in *TLL*, s.v. 'Ahenobarbus'.

Hence a doubt about the traditional interpretation. That is not all. 'Ahenobarbus' by its configuration (adjective plus noun) is all but unique among Latin *cognomina*. The only other specimen in the senatorial order is 'Crassipes', which is confined to the Furii.

The true and patent parallel is Illyrian—'Scenobarbus'. That is the name born by a Dalmatian chieftain in the great rebellion (Dio LV, 33, 2), and it occurs ten times on inscriptions.³⁵ Of its two members, 'Scenus' is attested as a personal name, likewise 'Barbus'. The latter is found in central Italy. For example, Didia Barbi f. Decuma at Larinum (*CIL* IX, 751); and it is a *cognomen* in the ancestry of an Augustan senator from Histonium (2845 = *ILS* 915). Nor will one omit the *nomen* 'Barbius', indigenous at Aquileia and thence carried widely into the Danubian lands—though a number of instances may be native to those regions.

'Scenobarbus' on the inscriptions, the name in the text of Dio is Σκενόβαρδος. Therefore 'Scenobarbus', it is claimed, represents a Latinization of the true Illyrian form 'Scenobardus'; and 'bardus' can be taken to mean 'beard'.³⁶ In epilogue on this matter, attention can be drawn to an apparent 'redbeard', a native at Tridentum called 'Barbaruta'.³⁷

As for the *cognomen*, 'Ahenobarbus', whatever be the meaning of the first member (and one might suspect the traditional notion), it resembles in its structure Illyrian double names, such as 'Scenobarbus', 'Scenocalus', 'Scerdilaidas', 'Tritanerus' and so on. Certain other senatorial families exhibit as *cognomina* Illyrian personal names: 'Laeca', 'Nerva', 'Varro'. There was a pervasive Illyrian substratum in Appennine Italy, not only among Paeligni but among Vestini.³⁸

Suspicion about the *cognomen* spreads to the *nomen*. Protected by its long familiarity, 'Domitius' on inspection betrays an unusual termination. Apart from 'Digitius', 'Equitius', and 'Tarquitius', names ending in '-itius' are not at all easy to come by.³⁹ And, save only Domitii, no Republican consul in this company. At the least, this *nomen* looks non-Latin in origin.⁴⁰

Domitii outside Rome and Latium therefore acquire relevance. Two of them are on show with ethnic *cognomina*, viz. the poet Domitius Marsus and the Antonian partisan Domitius Apulus, labelled a poisoner by Cicero (*Phil.* XI, 13). The Ahenobarbi themselves either retained or acquired an interest in the back country. Before the outbreak of the *Bellum Italicum* in 91, Poppaedius the Marsian gathered a large and menacing band, proposing to march on Rome and put the claims of the Italians before the Senate: he was met and dissuaded by a certain C. Domitius.⁴¹ Perhaps, it has been supposed, one of the Ahenobarbi.⁴² Again, on the outbreak of the war between Caesar and Pompeius, L. Domitius Ahenobarbus took up his station at Corfinium of the Paeligni, and raised recruits in the adjacent regions. The Marsian soldiers were conspicuous by their personal loyalty at Corfinium.⁴³

VI

So far the aristocratic *gens* in relation to peoples of the Abruzzi. Peltuinum discloses slaves or freedmen of the Domitii, notably of Corbulo's daughter Domitia Longina, wife and widow of Domitian.⁴⁴ One of the inscriptions demands special attention. It is the gravestone of Phoebus, a slave of 'Domitia Domitiani', set up by his kinsfolk 'ex collegio/

³⁵ H. Krahe, *Lexikon altillyrischer Personennamen* (1929), 101.

³⁶ H. Krahe, *Die Sprache der Illyrer* I (1955), 59.

³⁷ *CIL* V, 5033: 'Lubiae Esdrae uxori Turi Barbarutae f.' Cf. H. Krahe, o.c. 53.

³⁸ See P-W VIII A, 1781.

³⁹ For 'Digitius' see, discussing Sex. Digitius (pr. 194 B.C.), F. Münzer, *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* (1920), 92 ff. The *nomen*, preternaturally rare, points to Paestum, so he suggests, adducing *CIL* X, 477; 483; 493 ff. The only other instance in the towns of Italy is X, 5068 (Atina).

⁴⁰ Perhaps by its root not Latin but Illyrian. Compare 'Ovia Laevica Domatoris f.' (*CIL* V, 449: Piquentum in Istria), registered by H. Krahe,

Lexikon altillyrischer Personennamen (1929), 44. Add (noted in *TLL*), the 'Domator' of *Pan. Messallae* 116, which some have impugned, without good reason. There is also the place name Domavia, in the back country of the province Dalmatia.

⁴¹ Diodorus xxxvii, 13, 1.

⁴² P-W V, 1327.

⁴³ Caesar, *BC* I, 20, 2. He had estates in central Italy, cf. 17, 4: 'militibus in contione agros ex suis possessionibus pollicetur'. Also, however, in Etruria, cf. I, 34, 2; 56, 3.

⁴⁴ *CIL* IX, 3418 ff.; 3432; 3438; 3469; *ILS* 9518. Registered in *PIR*², D 181, also in *Tacitus* (1958), 788.

heroi Corbulonis et Longinae' (*ILS* 9518). That document proves a cult of Corbulo at Peltuinum. Who is Longina, the lady therein associated with him? Possibly Corbulo's daughter. But she is there already in the nomenclature of her slave, hence ostensibly not yet among the honoured dead. Therefore rather his wife.⁴⁵ Her identity will be an incitement to speculation.

There is another inscription at Peltuinum, not so easy in its interpretation—and not perhaps in fact highly remunerative. An acephalous fragment, two imperfect lines only of a large block, refers to a Roman senator and mentions his wife Longina (*IX*, 3426).

3426 in lapide longo m. 1.82. Bominaci sub
ecclesia S. Pellegrini.

RISCO u IIVIR · EPVLO NVm
NTAE ARMENIAE BIS SYRIAE LONGINA VXGr

Dressel descripsit.

s/ IIVIRIIVLCNA traditur.

FIG. 21. BOMINACO: INSCRIPTION ON LIMESTONE FROM PELTUINUM AS PUBLISHED IN *CIL* IX

Such is the document, as published by Dressel, from a block about two feet in length. Meanwhile, however, half of it has disappeared. The lettering of the surviving piece is extremely worn. It may suffice to furnish a drawing, taken from the photograph.

IIVIRIIVLCNA
BIS SYRIAE LONGINA VXGr

FIG. 22. BOMINACO: THE SAME INSCRIPTION TO-DAY AFTER USE AS A THRESHOLD IN THE CHURCH OF S. PELLEGRINO
Drawing from photograph by Soprintendenza alle Antichità degli Abruzzi

That is the present situation. Though the names of Armenia and Syria excite curiosity, comment will be of the briefest. Should the identity of the senator be discoverable, the only certain and useful facts that emerge are the priesthood (he was *septemvir epulonum*) and the name of his wife.

The question of identity has in fact produced a response. The man is assumed to be a Priscus and has his lodgement as *PIR*¹, P 710. And, a further step. It has been suggested that he may be identical with a known character, A. Larcus Priscus (*suff.* 110).⁴⁶ This man was *VIIvir epulonum*; his tribe, the Quirina, fits an origin from the land of the Vestini; and he was in Syria, anomalously, as quaestorian legate of IV Scythica in 97 or 98, acting 'pro legato consulare provinc. Syriae' (*AE* 1908, 237, cf. *ILS* 1055: Thamugaddi).⁴⁷

Something else occurs: Corbulo and his wife Longina. Which some may have suspected and nobody hitherto has bothered to argue.⁴⁸

The accepted version in the first line in *CIL* produces a proper name, '[P]RISCO'. Is that clear and irrefragable? An earlier reading, registered in *CIL* but rejected, showed

⁴⁵ Dessau in cautious comment on *ILS* 9518 said 'aut ipsa Domitia Domitiani, Longina etiam alibi dicta, aut mater eius, uxor Corbulonis, praeterea ignota'. Groag, however, did not find the notion worth admittance to the rubric on Corbulo, *PIR*², D 142.

⁴⁶ E. Groag, *Jahreshefte* xxix (1935), Beiblatt 193.

⁴⁷ On Larcus Priscus in Syria, cf. *Tacitus* (1958), 631. He is not heard of after his consulate.

⁴⁸ Dessau in comment on *ILS* 9518, mooted Corbulo's wife, said 'praeterea ignota, nisi ad eam spectat *IX* 3426'. That possibility was briefly evoked in *Tacitus* (1958), 788.

the letter 'S' before the first stroke of 'V]IIVIR. EPULONUM.' That is to say, it would permit the word 'COS' to emerge, destroying the ostensible *cognomen* '[P]RISCO'. Hence, instead, the end of a word in the genitive case, ']RIS COS'.

The word might have been '[IUNIO]RIS', or, carrying a reference to a province where the man held authority before his consulship, '[ULTERIO]RIS', that is, Hispania Ulterior. Better, '[PRAETO]RIS'. To have the one magistracy spelled out in full, the other (and higher) abbreviated, that is not attractive. Yet not without some sort of parallel. Observe, for what it is worth, 'L. Coelio Festo/cos., praetori' (*ILS* 1079).

Let that pass. In the second line stands 'ARMENIAE BIS SYRIAE' with an obscure and truncated word preceding. If that word were '[CAPPADO]CIAE', a claim could be put in for Domitius Corbulo. The command to which he was appointed late in 54 is described as 'retinendae Armeniae' (*Ann.* XIII, 8, 1). It was a special command, without precedent, carrying the governorship of the provinces Cappadocia and Galatia. Corbulo was later put in charge of Syria for a short time after the decease of Ummidius Quadratus in 60; in 61, Cappadocia went to L. Caesennius Paetus; but in 63, after the disaster of Paetus, Corbulo reverted to Cappadocia, another legate being appointed to Syria. Such are the stages, not uncomplicated.⁴⁹

Corbulo was governor of Cappadocia on two separate occasions, and once (so far as attested) of Syria. The Romans at this time asserted a claim to Armenia (with, intervening, the brief tenure of their vassal Tigranes). Corbulo had conquered Armenia, and Caesennius Paetus affirmed that Armenia would be turned into a Roman province—'se tributa ac leges et pro umbra regis Romanum ius victis impositurum' (*Ann.* xv, 6, 4).

Therefore it does not pass belief that Corbulo could have been described as twice governor of Cappadocia and Armenia. However that may be, it is not expedient to press into service a fragmentary (and perhaps not precise) inscription. And it is not necessary. If the document refers to Corbulo, it adds nothing, save the priesthood—and the name of his wife.

Enough to abide by the document establishing a 'collegium heroi Corbulonis et Longinae' (*ILS* 9518: Peltuinum). At first sight, and viewed without prepossessions, that inscription mentions the general and his wife. And where is the impediment?

The inscriptions at Peltuinum, aided by appeal to other facts or conjectures, render that origin plausible for Corbulo's family. Like other municipal aristocrats, these Domitii could put up a proud claim: 'hic enim orti stirpe antiquissima sumus, hic sacra, hic genus, hic maiorum multa vestigia' (*De legibus* II, 3).

If this be so, it accords well with the arrogance of Corbulo and of Corbulo's father (but no proof). Corbulo too was ferocious, as a stray anecdote conveys — he described a certain Cornelius Fidus as a 'plucked ostrich'.⁵⁰ The old man paraded anger about the state of the roads in Italy. In Tacitus' account he got an official commission under Tiberius, which he exercised oppressively (*Ann.* III, 31, 4). According to Dio, he was active and over-zealous in the reign of Caligula (LIX, 15, 3 f); and Dio reports under the year 43 restitution for Corbulo's exactions (LX, 17, 4). Whatever the transgressions of this objectionable person, he had not laboured all in vain. He was vindicated not long after, by governmental action. In 47 the Emperor constructed a road which ran through Peltuinum and the territory of the Vestini, precisely: the Via Claudia Nova.⁵¹

VII

Corbulo's wife is styled 'Longina', omitting the *gentilicium* (*ILS* 9518). Perhaps a manifestation of pride rather than of diffidence, if the *cognomen* were historical, appertaining to a famous house in the Roman *nobilitas*, and not to be mistaken. May she not belong to the Cassii Longini, a descendant of the tyrannicide?

That line was perpetuated into the epoch of the first imperial dynasty: L. Cassius

⁴⁹ The sequence and changes in Corbulo's sphere of authority are clearly set forth in *PIR*², D 142.

⁵⁰ Seneca, *De const. sap.* 17. 1. In *PIR*², C 1350 the parent is assumed 'sine dubio.' But observe the convincing argument of G. B. Townend, *Hermes* LXXXIX (1961), 235. Cornelius Fidus married a

daughter of one or other of Ovid's first two wives: a daughter finds an anonymous mention in *Tristia* I, 3, 19 (she was then absent, in Africa).

⁵¹ *ILS* 207, cf. T. Ashby and R. Gardner, *JRS* III (1913), 205 ff.

Longinus (*suff.* 11), and his two sons. First, L. Cassius Longinus (*cos.* 30). In 33 Tiberius Caesar, selecting bridegrooms for several princesses, allocated to him Drusilla, one of the daughters of Germanicus (*Ann.* vi, 15, 1). Not a person endowed with any strength of character, despite his upbringing—'severa patris disciplina eductus facilitate saepius quam industria commendabatur.' Such is the comment of Tacitus. Caligula took Drusilla from her husband and gave her to his friend and favourite M. Aemilius Lepidus (son of the consul of A.D. 6, the man deemed 'capax imperii' in a notorious and suspect anecdote). This Cassius is not heard of in the sequel.

The younger brother is C. Cassius Longinus (*suff.* 30), the illustrious jurist. Also dignified by a dynastic connection. He marries Junia Lepida, descendant in the blood of Caesar Augustus, being one of the children of M. Silanus (*cos.* 19) and Aemilia Lepida, the great-granddaughter of the Princeps. She may not have been the first wife of Cassius, for one of her brothers was born as late as the year 25 (*ILS* 957).

For Corbulo, brilliant prospects offered in the days of Caligula. He may have been married already, but now came the chance of an aristocratic connection. Why not a daughter of the jurist, issuing from his conjectural first marriage? ⁵²

Two daughters of Corbulo stand on record. One married Annius Vinicianus, who was serving as military tribune under Corbulo in 63 (*Ann.* xv, 28, 3). The other, Domitia Longina, was in 70 the wife of L. Aelius Lamia Aelianus when Domitian seized her. Lamia (*suff.* 80) was probably born *c.* 45. Domitian saw the light of day in 51. Longina may have been about his own age.

Some of the kinsmen of Corbulo through his mother Vistilia had been important under Caligula and under Claudius. Later, other ties and affinities came into play. Q. Pomponius Secundus perished in 42, and his brother had no long survival after 50; and the influence of Suillius Rufus perhaps waned before the end of Claudius' reign, although he was not brought to book until 58.⁵³ As for two grandsons of Vistilia, Glitius Gallus and Ser. Cornelius Orfitus (*cos.* 51), the former was exiled in 65 (*Ann.* xv, 71, 3); the latter came to grief in 66 or 67, one of the victims of Aquillius Regulus, as Tacitus reveals (*Hist.* iv, 42, 1).

On the Pisonian conspiracy followed a sequence of prosecutions. Before the year 65 ended old Cassius Longinus was sent into exile. It is not necessary to invoke the hypothesis that Corbulo had married his daughter. Fact, allegation or surmise puts Corbulo in perilous relation with a whole group hostile to Nero.⁵⁴

Emphasis should be laid on Annius Vinicianus, whom Corbulo chose as son-in-law. His parent, L. Annius Vinicianus (*PIR*², A 701) has a notable role in history. The *cognomen* indicates kinship with M. Vinicius (*cos.* 30, *cos.* II 45), the husband of the beautiful Julia Livilla, one of the daughters of Germanicus. Perhaps he was a nephew.⁵⁵ The evidence shows him the prime mover in the conspiracy against Caligula; and, the purple being in competition, he urged the claims of M. Vinicius.⁵⁶ Further, so it is alleged, Vinicianus instigated Arruntius Camillus the legate of Dalmatia, who made an armed proclamation in the second year of Claudius Caesar.⁵⁷ The few names attested as allies of the pretender excite curiosity. Among them was C. Caecina Paetus, the father-in-law of Thræsea Paetus.⁵⁸

The other son of the rebel, Annius Pollio, is discovered in suspicious company. He was incriminated in the Pisonian conspiracy (unjustly, it appears), and sent into exile. He was the husband of Servilia, the daughter of Barea Soranus (*Ann.* xvi, 30, 3). That brings the reckoning to the murderous climax in 66—'trucidatis tot insignibus viris ad postremum Nero Virtutem ipsam excindere concupivit interfecto Thræsea Paeto et Barea Sorano' (*Ann.* xvi, 21, 1).

No ties of family or friendship between Corbulo and this group ought to be neglected.

⁵² As suggested, with due diffidence, in Tacitus (1958), 560 (cf. 788), and drawing attention to another character, C. Pompeius Longinus Gallus (*cos.* 49): known only as consul and proconsul of Asia.

⁵³ However, Suillius' son was *consul ordinarius* in 50, and Suillius himself became proconsul of Asia (*Ann.* xiii, 43, 1, cf. *IGR* iv, 972; 995: Samos).

⁵⁴ Tacitus (1958), 560.

⁵⁵ Borghesi supposed that his father, Annius Pollio (*suff. ann. inc.*) had married a sister of M. Vinicius: conceded in *PIR*², A 677, cf. 701.

⁵⁶ Josephus, *AJ* xviii, 49; 52; 251. For these transactions, see now D. Timpe, *Historia, Einzelschriften*, Heft 5 (1962), 80 ff.; R. Syme, *Hermes* xcii (1964), 415 f.

⁵⁷ Dio LX, 15, 1.

⁵⁸ Pliny, *Epp.* iii, 16, 7 ff.

Later in the course of 66, when Nero had set out on his tour of Hellas, occurred the 'coniuratio Vinicianae Beneventi conflata atque detecta'. Only Suetonius attests it (*Nero* 36, 1)—apart from the Arval Brethren who duly offer thanksgivings '[ob det]ecta [nefariorum con]silia' (*CIL* VI, 2044). The ostensible criminal is the husband of Corbulo's daughter. His own doom came not long after.

VIII

Corbulo's career in its earlier stages is not without problems and speculation.⁵⁹ The general is introduced by Tacitus in 47 with one name only—'dum Corbulo adventat' (XI, 18, 1). Therefore, something had been said about him in the lost books. By mishap, no fact or date concerning his previous activities is available from any other source. Certain inscriptions are to hand, but in dispute whether they name the general or the father. An inscription at Ephesus registers the quaestor Cn. Domitius Corbulo.⁶⁰ The standard opinion consigns this document to his father.⁶¹ The assumptions may not be valid.

Similarly, coins and inscriptions disclose a Corbulo proconsul of Asia under Claudius.⁶² If this post belongs to the father, assuming him the *suffectus* of 39 (cf. *PIR*², D 141), a very elderly proconsul. Barely possible. Otherwise, and better, the son. He would be proconsul towards the year 50. Let that pass, however.

If the son were quaestor in Asia, he might have been there early in the prolonged tenure of P. Petronius (*suff.* 19): his *sexennium* covers either 29–35 or 30–36. Not without interest, since Petronius belongs to an influential group and nexus at the core of which stands the great L. Vitellius (*cos.* 34, *cos. II* 43, *cos. III* 47). The wife of the proconsul was daughter of a Vitellia (*Ann.* III, 49, 1). Inscriptions disclose her identity as Plautia A.f., that is to say, daughter of A. Plautius (*cos.* 29), Claudius' general in the invasion of Britain.⁶³

Again, given the applause which, according to Tacitus, welcomed the appointment of Corbulo to a special command in the eastern lands at the end of 54 (*Ann.* XIII, 8, 1), one might wonder whether he had not been at some time legate of a legion in Syria, either quaestorian or praetorian. Vitellius was sent there in 35, with special powers. After Vitellius, Syria was held by P. Petronius, from 38 or 39 to 42.

L. Vitellius is the strong link that binds the late Tiberian years to the reigns of Caligula and Claudius. The visible summit of his success is the year 47—consul for the third time (nothing equal had been seen since Marcus Agrippa), holding the *fasces* with Claudius Caesar, and also the Emperor's colleague in the censorship. His predominance was established long before. In 43 when Claudius went to Britain he left Vitellius in charge of Rome and the government.

IX

When the fall of Nero put the purple into competition among the consular commanders of armies, the son of Vitellius was available—'A. Vitellius aderat, censoris Vitellii ac ter consulis filius: id satis videbatur' (*Hist.* I, 9, 1). Paradox in all human affairs was borne in ever the more on the consular historian (*Ann.* III, 18, 4). Notably the opportunities and the perils in the life of a senator. Domitius Corbulo is a text. He benefited from some at least of his mother's sequence of marriages (it must be said again, her sons are a collection, not a political group). Links with the party of Germanicus and the Vitellian faction will be accorded emphasis.

⁵⁹ One will note reserve about his consulship: c. 43 on the standard assumption (*PIR*², D 142), but, as here assumed, in 39.

⁶⁰ *OGIS* 768 = *Forschungen in Ephesos* II, 173, no. 59.

⁶¹ *PIR*², D 141. Local coins of a community in Lydia, under Augustus and under Nero, register the name of Corbulo. For the detail see *PIR*², D 142, with no positive conclusions. They do not forbid the notion that the parent had been in Asia as quaestor, the son as proconsul. Further, both Corbulones could have been quaestors in Asia.

⁶² Viz., coins of Docimium in Phrygia (*BMC Phrygia* 190), and unpublished inscriptions of Cos, from *Clava Rhodos* VIII (1936), 370, noted in *PIR*², D 142. Cf. also M. Segré, *Aevum* IX (1935), 254, with an addition to the proconsul's decree of *IGR* IV, 1944 (Cos). As for identity, *PIR*², D 141 expresses a preference for the elder Corbulo.

⁶³ *CIL* VI 6866; *SEG* XIV, 646 (Caunus). Cf. *Tacitus* (1958), 386. This lady has no entry in *PIR*² or in P-W.

In the aftermath of Caligula's removal, Corbulo evaded hazard and he acceded before long to the command in Germania Inferior. Though frustrated of glory in Germany through the jealousy of Claudius—'beatos quondam duces populi Romani' (*Ann.* XI, 20, 1)—and perhaps going through a brief period of eclipse, he had his chance in the first months of Nero's reign when a crisis in the East was advertised, enhanced and exploited so as to get for him a special command (*Ann.* XIII, 6 ff), with no immediate action ensuing in the field, but a diplomatic success for the government. At that time Seneca and Burrus held control of patronage. Corbulo enjoyed help and support from loyal ministers of the dynasty, first L. Vitellius, then, as influence changed, from Seneca and Burrus. Yet, in the end, Corbulo gets involved with the enemies of the dynasty, or is incriminated through various ties or sympathies that united him to their company, with an ominous recall to the conspiracy against Caligula or the proclamation of Arruntius Camillus. Corbulo, holding authority for twelve years in the eastern lands, had acquired glory and prestige too great for a senator and a subject. That was not the only reason for his destruction.

Corbulo's daughter became the consort of an emperor in the dynasty of the plebeian Flavii—who could be described as clients of the Vitellii (*Hist.* III, 66, 3). Domitia Longina survived for long years, not in good repute. She was still alive under Hadrian, in 126.⁶⁴ A decree of the town council of Gabii refers, in 140, to a temple that one of her freedmen had built to perpetuate her memory.⁶⁵

Suetonius, in language of remarkable freedom, reports the rumour that she had been guilty of adultery with her husband's brother, which she solemnly denied—'persancte Domitia iurabat: haud negatura, si qua omnino fuisset, immo etiam gloriatura, quod illi promptissimum erat in omnibus probris' (*Divus Titus* 10, 2).

The language ought to compel attention—also the tenses. Domitia Longina is spoken of as one no longer among the living. But she was still extant as late as 126. That has a bearing upon Suetonius' time of writing. His original plan and achievement may have been the *Lives* of the six Caesars of the first dynasty, from Caesar the Dictator to Nero, the next six rulers following after an interval, as an epilogue.⁶⁶

Domitia Longina was an arrogant woman, not unworthy of her grandfather, the rancorous senator from the back country of confederate Italia who quarrelled with a Roman *nobilis*—in fact, with a Cornelius Sulla (*Ann.* III, 31, 3). Her grandmother was Vistilia, the lady of the six husbands—and the other Vistilia, her father's cousin, was frank and shameless (*Ann.* II, 85, 2 f.). That was one side of her family. Perhaps Domitia also transmitted and paraded an aristocratic attitude: the proud tradition of the unbending Cassii.⁶⁷

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⁶⁴ On the evidence of the tile bearing the date of that year (*CIL* xv, 554), cf. *PIR*², D 181.

⁶⁵ *CIL* XIV, 2795 = *ILS* 272.

⁶⁶ For this conjecture, cf. *Tacitus* (1958), 501; 780. That on the contrary Suetonius began with the six *Vitae* from Galba to Domitian is now argued by G. W. Bowersock, *Hommages à Marcel Renard* 1 (1969), 119 ff.

⁶⁷ This paper was composed in 1959. For pertinent criticism, for valuable and necessary improvements, I am much indebted to various members of the Editorial Committee. The drawing of the surviving half of the Peltuinum inscription (*CIL* IX, 3426), along with a photograph, was generously furnished by Dr. A. La Regina, of the Superintendency of Antiquities for the Abruzzi.