

IN DEFENCE OF THE LEIDEN TACITUS

The absolute supremacy accorded for so long to the Second Medicean manuscript by editors of *Annals* xi – *Histories* v has been seriously challenged in the last decade. Numerous, if not always cogent, arguments have been advanced by Mendell and Koestermann in an attempt to prove that the fifteenth-century Leidensis (one of some 30 manuscripts of that century covering the books in question) contains material not derived from the eleventh-century Medicean, not the product of humanistic or earlier interpolation, and hence clothed with the authority of an independent tradition¹). Large claims invite cautious scrutiny. Reaction has varied from approval to reserve or downright incredulity²). It is perhaps unfortunate that the apparatus of the latest Teubner edition has been lavish in attributing to L alone many variants which are in fact shared by it with its near contemporaries. In the absence of a complete collation of all the recentiores (and many have not been examined for half-a-century, if at all) this was perhaps a proper challenge. But its effects have been to draw fire too soon, and possibly to prejudice an issue in which all the evidence has not yet been advanced.

It has been judiciously observed by R. H. Martin that 'the first requirement is to establish which are the true or probable readings that are uniquely recorded in L.'³) This is perhaps not the only way in which L's reputation could be saved; but the information would be of use to any future editor, whatever the verdict on L. Even so, it will of course still be open to a critic to dismiss both the excellences of L that have long been recognized as such, and those others (if any) that await discovery, as the result of 'common sense occasionally aided by a touch of

1) C. W. Mendell, *AJP* 75 (1954) 250–70 and *Tacitus* (1957); E. Koestermann, *Pb* 104 (1960) 92–115 and ed. *Historiae*, Teubner, 1961.

2) E. g. C. Questa, *RCCM* 3 (1961) 390–408; N. P. Miller, *JRS* 51 (1961) 271 f.; H. Heubner, *Gn* 34 (1961) 159–63; R. H. Martin, *CQ* NS 14 (1964), 110–19. Further literature is listed by H. W. Benario *CW* 58 (1964), 69 f.

3) *o.c.* 118.

felicity'⁴) or as 'billige Interpolationen' made to cover 'Verderbnisse in M... die ohne große Anstrengung zu beseitigen waren.'⁵) Subjective judgments of this sort will no doubt continue to be made even when a fuller collation than is now available has helped to clarify the picture. In the meantime, lest L should be shrugged off as an unfortunate distraction, I have thought it desirable to discuss in detail four passages in the *Histories* which seem to me to contain unique and excellent contributions from L not hitherto observed or evaluated. The criteria of excellence must of course, as always, be those of usage, style, content and palaeographic plausibility. Further search, and a complete collation, would undoubtedly add to the number. The sigla by which I indicate those manuscripts which I have consulted for the purpose are as follows:

Group I	Group III
(ending <i>H v 13 euenerant</i>)	(ending <i>H v 26 in Pannonia</i>) ⁶)
N ₂₁ Neapolitanus iv c 21	B ₀₅ Bodleianus 27605
O ₂₂ Ottobonianus 1422	B ₇₂ Bodleianus 34472
O ₄₈ Ottobonianus 1748	G Gudianus 118
V ₆₄ Vaticanus Lat. 1864	H Harleianus 2764
V ₆₅ Vaticanus Lat. 2965	Hol Holkhamicus 359
Group II	J Jesus Coll. 109
(ending <i>H v 23 potiore</i>)	M Laurentianus 68.2
C Budensis 9	B Laurentianus 68.5
L Leidensis 16B	Mal Malatestinus II 13.5
N ₂₂ Neapolitanus iv c 22	Prm Parmensis 861
N ₂₃ Neapolitanus iv c 23	U Urbinas Lat. 412
P Parisiensis Reg. 6118	V ₅₈ Vaticanus Lat. 1958
V ₆₃ Vaticanus Lat. 1863	
V _{en} Venetus 381	
Vin Vindobonensis 49	

i 49, 2-3

The famous characterization of the emperor Galba contains more than its fair share of textual, grammatical and interpreta-

4) Martin, *ibid.*

5) H. Heubner, *o.c.* 161. That L (like M) is interpolated is not in question, and H. Drexler does not put L out of court when he triumphantly points (*Helikon* 5, 1965, 148-56) to a (single) bad instance in *A XIV*.

6) In the apparatus I have sometimes separated the 'Genevan' and 'non-Genevan' classes of this group, and cited the former in order of date.

tional difficulties. Among them is one which has so far escaped detection:

famae nec incuriosus nec uenditator; pecuniae alienae non adpetens, suae parcus, publicae auarus...

So, as it seems, M and a large company of recentiores, followed by the editio princeps and (so far as I am aware) by all editors including the most recent, Rudolf Till (Heidelberger Texte, 1963). But there is a difficulty. What meaning are the words *pecuniae publicae auarus* capable of conveying, and how far is this meaning compatible with the picture of Galba which Tacitus' own narrative paints?

The Thesaurus distinguishes between two senses of *auarus*: (a) *auarus sc. comparandae pecuniae*, = 'covetous' and (b) *auarus sc. retinendae pecuniae*, = 'miserly'. If it is associated with an objective genitive, the former sense is intended. To this rule we are told that the passage under discussion provides the only exception. Such lonely exceptions must be considered credible in the view of the relatively small bulk of surviving Latin literature, but they call for keen scrutiny. It will in fact be prudent to admit no unique exceptions unless there are overwhelming grounds for so doing. Let us therefore begin by refusing to credit this one. In that case, we shall be compelled by Latin usage to translate *pecuniae publicae auarus* as 'covetous of public money', 'eager to line his pockets from the revenues of the state'. Nothing could accord worse with what we know of Galba's high sense of duty. Member of a wealthy family (as we have just been reminded by the words *uetus in familia nobilitas, magnae opes*), Galba had no inducement to deplete for his own profit the almost empty coffers of the aerarium. On the contrary, he fully realized the need for strict economy in public spending; and as a martinet with old-fashioned ideas of military propriety, he had refused, or postponed, payment of the promised donative for which the urban troops clamoured and which, if promptly accorded, might have secured his principate and his life. All this, and more, is abundantly clear from Tacitus' narrative (cf. i 5, 1-2; 15, 4; 16, 2; 18, 3; 20; 37, 4-5). The phrase printed in our texts as *publicae pecuniae auarus* is clearly an allusion to the attitude of Galba enshrined in the dictum *legi a se militem, non emi*. And of course it has never occurred to translators to suggest anything else: 'a miser with public funds' (Fyfe), 'avare des deniers publics' (Goelzer), 'mit Staatsgeldern geizig' (Borst).

We are therefore confronted with a piece of Latin which on grounds of grammar and usage ought to mean one thing and on grounds of sense and intelligibility should mean another. Before accepting the *pis aller* of the unique exception to a well-attested rule, we must enquire whether our text is sound.

The Leiden manuscript, and it alone, presents a startling variant: *famae nec incuriosus nec uenditator; alieni non adpetens, sui parcus, publice auarus*. Here *pecuniae* has vanished, a neuter substantival *alienum* is contrasted with *suum*, and by a pleasant variation an adverb, *publice*, removes from *auarus* the offending objective genitive. Style and sense are satisfied. That the cautious Till has made no allusion to Leidensis' contribution here is surprising but understandable when we observe that even Ryck, the early champion of L, was dubious about the merits of 'meus codex' at this point. Its modern defender, Koestermann, is equally sceptical. His apparatus issues a challenge. Having duly cited L and pointed to an apparent imitation of its reading in Sidonius, he adds 'haec lectio [i.e. codicis Leidensis] quamuis propius accedat ad Sall. Cat. 5, 4, tamen reicienda est, cum uerbo pecuniae in contextu carere non possimus.' 'An excellent note,' comments Martin⁷⁾.

How indispensable is *pecuniae*? Consider the following parallels:

Sall. *Cat.* 5, 4 *alieni appetens, sui profusus* (*cuius rei* precedes)

Livy 5, 55, 4 *omisso sui alienique* discrimine

Seneca, *Ben.* 4, 11, 1 *alieni abstinentem, sui non auare tenacem* (*simplicem, memorem, gratum* precedes)

Pliny, *Ep.* 6, 8, 5 *alieni abstinentissimus, sui diligens*

Tacitus, *D* 29 *sui alienique contemptus* (*lasciua, dicacitas, impudentia* precedes)

Tacitus, *G* 31 *prodigi alieni, contemptores sui* (*aliqua cura* precedes)

Sidonius *Ep.* 3, 5, 2 *alieni non appetens, sui parcus*.

It is clear from these instances (and the list makes no claim to be exhaustive⁸⁾) that antithetical *alienum* and *suum* can connote 'property' or 'wealth' without the addition of any noun. Admittedly the occurrence in Sidonius cannot in itself validate the

7) *CR NS* 12 (1962), 156.

8) *alieni adpetens* is at least as old as Cicero (*de Orat.* ii 135; *Tusc.* iii 36; *pro Caecina* 70). And the entries under *alienus, alienum* in *TLL* and Otto's *Sprichwörter* supply a multitude of examples of this antithesis.

Leidensis text since the writer was familiar with both Sallust and Tacitus and he may well have had the *Catiline* rather than Tacitus' *Histories* in mind; and in any case his echoes are sometimes approximate rather than verbally exact⁹). But Sallust certainly lends support to L's version; Seneca shows a similar turn of phrase in *auare tenax*; and – most important of all – Tacitus' words in the *Germania* demonstrate that the antithesis *alieni ... sui* was so familiar to a Roman ear that the writer could risk what seems to us the obscure and ambiguous collocation *prodigi alieni* because it was capped, and rendered clear, by the immediately succeeding (and in itself not much less ambiguous) *contemptores sui*. In a society, and under a legal system, that laid considerable weight upon rank and property, it is a priori probable that what Lamb calls 'those pedantic distinctions of *meum* and *tuum*' were current coin in thought and expression. When an accusative case was required, the neuter plural seems to have been preferred. Three instances occur in the *Histories*, all in the first book: 20, 1 *isdem erga aliena sumptibus quibus sua prodegerant*; 22, 1 *auido talium, si aueret, ut sua ostentantes, quiescenti ut aliena exprobrabant*; and 52, 2 *donaret sua, largiretur aliena*. In an author so liable to unconscious repetition of words and phrases as Tacitus, these instances, and particularly that at 52, 2, are not without their significance for the restitution of the text.

Much depends on the choice between *publice* and *publicae*, for if the latter stands, then so must *pecuniae*; and by the same token Leidensis fails. If, however, the adverb *publice* (common enough in Tacitus) is better attested, this may weaken the case for retaining *pecuniae*. A decision depends in part on the MS evidence, hazardous as this must be in view of the fortuitous fluctuation of the recentiores between ae, e and e. No manuscript shows *publicae* in full. The other spellings are distributed as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| (a) publice | N 21; Ven; BMB 72 V 58; <i>ed. pr.</i> |
| (b) pecuniae ... publice | O 22; Vin; G |
| pecunīe ... publice | CN 22 P; H Mal |
| pecunīe ... publice | O 48 V 64 V 65; V 63 N 23; Hol U; BO 5 |

As this distribution to a large extent cuts across the manuscript groups and classes, the spelling of *pecuniae* clearly depends on the

⁹) Cf. E. Geisler's index of 'Loci Similes Auctorum' in Luetjohann's edition of Sidonius in *MGH*.

whim or convention of the copyist. In view of this the strong preference for the form *publice* is noteworthy. But if at some stage *publice* had been interpreted as a feminine genitive, it would have been necessary to supply a noun with which it might agree. The obvious choice was *pecuniae*, and the consequential changes (*alieni* > *aliene*; *sui* > *sue*) were trifling. If therefore we accept the reading of Leidenensis on grounds of sense and usage, there is no difficulty in accounting for the corruption in M and the remaining recentiores.

The possibility of Leidenensis' unique reading being a tacit humanistic emendation is remote. Not only is the change well beyond the apparent powers of emendation displayed in the recentiores, but the vulgate *pecuniae alienae-suae-publicae* is not one to cause the average reader the slightest difficulty. Drastic surgery was unnecessary. Only the evidence of the Thesaurus files, a realization of Tacitean variation, and a concern for the factual content of the narrative – criteria not available to the scribes and scholars of the eleventh or fifteenth centuries – could point to the eligibility of the Leidenensis text. Nor does the imagination readily conceive of a gifted humanistic scholar who was so meticulous as to strain at the gnat of a readily intelligible vulgate at *H* i 49 while cheerfully swallowing the numerous textual camels of this and neighbouring chapters. I therefore accept the reading of Leidenensis here as independent of, and superior to, that of the Medicean tradition. If I am right, we must add *pecuniae alienae ... suae ... publicae* to the not inconsiderable number of proven interpolations in M.

i 52, 2

et Vitellius ut apud seueros humilis, ita comitatem bonitatemque fauentes uocabant quod sine modo, sine iudicio donaret sua, largiretur aliena; simul auiditate imper(it)andi ipsa uitia pro uirtutibus interpretabantur.

imper(it)andi *Fisher coll. iv 25, 3 imperandi N21 O 22 O 48 V 64 V 65; C N 22 N 23 P V 63 Ven Vin; BO 5 B 72 G H Hol J M B Mal Prm U V 58 ed. pr. impetrandi L imperi dandi Nipperdey intemperanti Weidner ei parendi Meiser [auiditatem imperandi] Heubner.*

A favourite device in Tacitus is the attribution of selfish motives to the supporters of a pretender. This point is made in the *Histories* with regard to the party of Galba (i 7, 3), Otho (i 24, 1) and Vespasian (ii 78, 4; 84, 2; 99, 2; 101), and it is no surprise to the

reader to be told the same of the German legions who proclaimed Vitellius emperor. The vulgate *aviditate imperandi* has long been felt to be unsatisfactory¹⁰), since the context forbids our adopting the obvious – and grammatically necessary – translation ‘owing to their greed for (imperial) power.’ The troops (and it is they, not Caecina and Valens, who are to be understood as the subject of *interpretabantur*¹¹) desire Vitellius to be their emperor: they do not wish to reign themselves. They are not ‘eager for power’ (Church and Brodribb: similarly Fyfe and Sontheimer), but for pay, promotion and privilege. Nor can we accept the ingenious but incredible pirouette of Goelzer: ‘l’on prenait pour des vertus les défauts nés de son ambition du pouvoir’, if only because the syntax is impossible and we are to be told immediately that the easy-going and diffident Vitellius had no such ambition, but had to be prodded by his unscrupulous lieutenants: *legati legionum ... instigare Vitellium ... quatiebatur his segne ingenium ut concupisceret magis quam ut speraret.*

The same objection rules out Fisher’s emendation, which was accepted by Giarratano and Koestermann. Weidner (*Neue Jahrbücher* 149, 1894, 857) suggested the adjective *intemperanti* (Tacitean, but uncommon) – a less attractive emendation than the gerunds of Nipperdey and Meiser. So far as these are concerned, both *ei parendi* and *imperi dandi* are possible, though they fall short of carrying complete conviction: the former, because the troops already obey Vitellius as their legate and their obedience provides no special motive for misinterpreting his vices as virtues; the latter, as presupposing the loss of a syllable without obvious cause. In his recent commentary Heubner is tempted to adopt the emended form *aviditatem imperandi*¹²) and to bracket this as a bad gloss upon *uitia*. But he does not mention the reading of Leidensis, *impetrandi*, a word which was conjectured by Polster in *Neue Jahrbücher* 155 (1897) 71 and solves the difficulty with the greatest economy. By the addition of a single letter we obtain a verb which suits the context admirably both

10) Thus the shrewd, though superficial, Godley: ‘The ms. reading is *imperandi*: and perhaps the army which elects a ruler can be said to rule.’ But he prints Meiser’s emendation.

11) Lenchantin’s note ‘*imperandi* M, quod ad Vitellii fautores refertur qui principum munera obire gestiebant’ appears to be a misleading echo of 62,2 *torpebat Vitellius ... ardor et vis militum ultro ducis munia implebat, ut si adesset imperator et strenuis uel ignavis spem metumue adderet.*

12) Apparently a suggestion of N.S. Anquetil, *Quaedam Taciti loca notis tentata*, Paris, 1817.

in grammar and sense. The troops' eagerness to benefit by Vitellius' boundless and indiscriminate generosity makes them blind to those defects of his character – lethargy and indecision – which were finally to prove his, and their, undoing. In this irrational stampede towards an imperial patron they behave as do the senators and people of Rome on many occasions in this fatal year, *obvio obsequio priuatas spes agitantes sine publica cura*.¹³)

The excellence of this reading was seen by Ryck (*Animadversiones*, ad loc.), who remarks inter alia 'hinc I.F. Gronovius, cum nobis adolescentibus explicaret, Tacitum de ingenio legebat, *impetrandi*, pro *imperandi*: quod in Notis ejus, quae deinceps publicatae, omissum miror. Cum vero haec lectio totidem literis in MS. meo exstet, exhibere non dubitavi.' (Gronovius in fact prints the vulgate without comment.) It should be noted that M has the *-ra-* of *imperandi* in rasura, and considerations of space show that the displaced letters can have been no more numerous than the *-tra-* of the *impetrandi* which L now uniquely preserves; *imperi dandi* is too long. Finally the corresponding entry in Dio (64, 4, 1–2) renders more fully the sense provided by Leidensis: οἱ ἐν ταῖς Γερμανίαις στρατιῶται ... ὅτι ἀκολούθως τῇ ἀσελείᾳ ταύτῃ ἔζη οὐκ ἐνενόησαν ἢ καὶ μᾶλλον δι' αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἀρμόζειν σφίσιν αὐτὸν ἐνόμισαν, where ἀρμόζειν σφίσιν αὐτὸν describes the selfish ambitions which are meant by Tacitus' *aviditas impetrandi*. Translate therefore: 'Besides, his men were eager enough for favours, and this eagerness caused them to take his very faults for virtues.'

iii 13, 3

The attempt of Aulus Caecina Alienus to induce the Vitellian legions which he commanded at Hostilia in October 69 to desert to the Flavians who confronted them at Verona was a failure. The rank and file were blindly devoted to an emperor who, as Caecina and others now realized, would never fill the part. While the men were dispersed on various duties and fatigues Caecina and his cronies had removed the name and portraits of Vitellius from the headquarters building of the camp and had informed the Flavian commander Antonius Primus of the transfer of allegiance which the action symbolized. When the troops heard of this manoeuvre, they returned from their several tasks

13) i 19. 1.

and there was a violent reaction: *sed ubi totis castris in fama proditio, recurrens in principia miles praescriptum Vespasiani nomen, proiectas Vitellii imagines adspexit, uastum primo silentium, mox cuncta simul erumpunt.* They denounced their commander for stealing not only houses, villas and money from their emperor, but also his very army. The sentence in which Tacitus expresses this thought contains a textual crux:

id Basso, id Caecinae uisum, postquam domos hortos opes principi abstulerint, etiam militibus principem auferre † litem † integros incruentosque, Flauianis quoque partibus uiles, quid dicturos reposcentibus aut prospera aut aduersa?

militibus principem auferre litem integros *N 21 O 22 O 48 V 64 V 65; CN 23 P V 63 Ven Vin; B Hol U; M ed. pr.* (auferre. litem *O 22 O 48; Hol* litem. integros *M* litem in integros *U*)
militibus principem auferre. licet integros *B 72 V 58 H Mal Prm J G B O 5*

cet

militibus principem auferre litem integros (cet *eadem manus ut uidetur*) *N 22*

militibus principem auferre, principi militem integros *L prob. Brotier*

Conjecture is rife:

- (a) milites auferre, licet integros incruentosque. Flauianis *Grotius*
milites auferre. deditos, integros *JFGronovius*
militem auferre. integros *F Jacob, JMüller, prob. Fisher*
militem, militibus principem auferre. integros *Nipperdey*
militem auferre* integros *Goelzer 1921*
- (b) auferre militem. integros *Halm, prob. Goelzer 1920*
- (c) principi auferri militem: integros *Bipontini*
- (d) militibus principem auferre. licet integros *Ferrettus*
militibus principem auferre. sic et integros *JGronovius*
militibus principem auferre. scilicet integros *Ruperti*
militibus principem auferre licere. integros *Onions*
militibus principem auferre. integros *Giarratano, prob. Koestermann 1950, Till*
- (e) militibus principem, principi auferre militem. integros *Lenchantin*
militibus principem, principi militem auferre. integros *Koestermann 1961*

There can be few more permutations remaining. The perplexity of editors is evident. It has not diminished over four centuries, and certainty seems as far off as ever. Fisher, Lenchantin, Giar-

ratano and Koestermann disagree among themselves, and the Teubner editor has changed his mind between 1950 and 1961, as Goelzer changed his between 1920 and 1921. It would be wearisome and superfluous to deal with the merits of each conjecture in turn. Many of them are worthless – especially those listed under (a), (b) and (c) which depart too violently and arbitrarily from the manuscript evidence. The five conjectures listed under (d) are better inasmuch as they retain the *militibus principem auferre* attested by all the manuscripts; and most of them face the difficulty of *litem*, the reading of *M* and of a majority of the recentiores (*licet* in the Genevan class of Mendell's Group III is obviously no more than a poorish emendation of *litem*).

Lenchantin and Koestermann (1961) realize that we have here (as Nipperdey had seen) an instance of a figure much favoured by Tacitus, the chiasmic play of cases and tenses called antimetabole. The *Histories* of Tacitus provide the following examples: i 36, 2 *modo imperatorem militibus, modo milites imperatori commendare*; ii 37, 2 *ut qui pacem belli amore turbauerant, bellum pacis caritate deponerent*; iii 33, 1 *stupra caedibus, caedes stupris miscere*; 73, 1 *quae iusserat uetare, quae uetuerat iubere*; v 16, 3 *quis uel ex longa pace proelii cupido uel fessis bello pacis amor*. The closest parallel to *H* iii 13, 3 is however in Seneca, *Contr.* ii 1, 9 *ne auferam patri filium, filius patrem*. Here and in Tacitus *H* iii 13, 3 the figure effectively stresses the mutuality of the loss.

The weakness of the conjectures of Lenchantin and Koestermann is that they posit a double change for which it is not easy to account:

militibus principem <principi> auferre <mi>litem and
militibus principem <principi militem> auferre [licet]

Much more economical and convincing is the reading of Leiden-sis, *militibus principem auferre, principi militem*. This reading, and this alone, explains the mysterious *litem* of *M*. A continuous text has been wrongly corrected PRINCIPEMAUFERREPRINCIPI MILITEM, leading, at the next copy, to the form *principem auferre litem* or (as O₂₂, O₄₈ and Hol have it) *principem auferre. litem*. It is no surprise that the highly interpolated class of 'Genevan' manuscripts has not scrupled to change *litem* into a superfluous *licet*.

In sense and structure the sentence is now perfect. After robbing Vitellius of property, the traitors have now robbed the

troops of their emperor and the emperor of his troops. The point of *militibus principem auferre* has sometimes escaped commentators¹⁴), but the allusion is clear. Not only has Caecina deprived the troops of the emperor of their choice in a figurative sense by attempting to ensure his abandonment, defeat and death, but he has literally removed from their gaze the name and effigy of Vitellius, as we were informed some twelve lines before. The climax, however, is properly left to the end: it is the intended weakening of the Vitellian army by the transfer of eight legions to the enemy. The whole sentence is built up with masterly skill. Consider the sequence *opes principi abstulerint|militibus principem auferre|principi militem*. The variation of case is accusative dative/dative accusative/dative accusative; of number, plural singular/plural singular/singular singular; of word, AB/CB/BC. Each of these three interwoven patterns is different from the other. Verbal ingenuity could scarcely go further.

If this interpretation is sound, a passage whose corruption has long caused perplexity is clarified by the unique contribution of L, quoted indeed by Ryck and approved by Brotier, though without discussion, adapted and spoiled by the moderns. When even the champions of Leidensis are found blind to its merit, it becomes increasingly hard to believe that we ought to father that merit upon a hypothetical humanist scholar conjured up to explain unexpected excellences.

iii 66, 3

In the last months of A. D. 69 the Flavian forces commanded by Antonius Primus, having decisively defeated the main Vitellian army in the second battle of Cremona, swept triumphantly forward to occupy Rome. Valens, one of the two leading Vitellian generals, took little or no part in this campaign. Detained in the capital by illness, and distrusting, not without reason, his colleague Caecina who had gone on before, he decided to make for Gaul and Germany in an endeavour to open a new front in the rear of the advancing Flavians. He was in Etruria when he received news of the fatal battle beyond the Apennines. Taking ship at Portus Pisanus and delayed by bad weather, he was compelled to run for the harbour of Monaco, where he tried, though unsuccessfully, to win over the Maritime Alps to Vitel-

14) 'malim: *etiam principes auferre*, primum, quia princeps reipsa non auferebatur militibus, sed milites principi ...' (Ferrettus).

lius. Contrary winds continued to impede his voyage westwards, and he was captured in the Iles d'Hyères by a pro-Flavian procurator. The valuable prisoner was brought back by his captors to Italy, that is, to the army of Antonius advancing down the Flaminian Way from Fanum Fortunae via Mevania to Carsulae. The days of captivity were few. At Urvinum (*sc.* Hortense = Collemancio, 14 km north-west of Mevania) he was put to death so that his head should be displayed to the small and demoralized Vitellian forces holding Narnia. All hope of a second front was now at an end, and they capitulated immediately.

It was the news of this collapse¹⁵) that finally impelled Vitellius to carry out what he had been contemplating for some time: despite the warnings of his advisers, he descended from the palace on 18 December in an attempt, which proved abortive, to abdicate the principate.

In Tacitus' version of the arguments put forward to demonstrate the undesirability of abdication occurs the passage with which we are concerned:

nunc pecuniam et familiam et beatos Campaniae sinus promitti: sed ubi imperium Vespasianus inuaserit, non ipsi, non amicis eius, non denique exercitibus securitatem nisi exstincto aemulo redituram. Fabium illis Valentem, captiuum et casibus dubiis reseruatum praegrauem fuisse...

casibus dubiis *N 22; B 72 V 58 H Mal Prm J G BO 5*
 (captis diebus *suprascr. man. post.*
V 58) prob. Halm, Haase Heraeus
Andresen Fisher Giarratano Koestermann
(1950 et 1961) Till

captis diebus *N 21 O 22 O 48 V 64 V 65; C N 23 P V 63 Ven*
Vin; B Hol U; M ed. pr. (supra
captis scr. pi N 23 V 63; a captis P;
paucis add. in marg. man. post. U)

paucis diebus L

The vulgate *casibus dubiis* will not do. The grammar of the phrase is dubious and its sense non-existent, though most editors and commentators seem content. The usual explanation is that offered by Ernesti: 'vulgatum verum. ne Valenti quidem vitam condonasse, quem tamen captum tenuerint in potestate, et in quo

15) Explicitly stated at 67, 2 *audita defectione* but implied already by the reference to Valens' death at 66, 3.

conservando consulere sibi potuerint, si forte res aliter ac vellent caderent, ut per eum a Vitellio veniam consequi possent.' Ernesti presumably took *casibus dubiis* as a dative, and if so he might plausibly have compared *G* 29 *bellis reseruantur* and *Agr.* 31 *metalla aut portus ... quibus exercendis reseruemur*. Whether *dubii casus* is capable of meaning 'a reverse of fortune' (Murphy), 'the chance of disaster' (Church and Brodribb) and other similar versions might be a matter of debate (the phrase does not occur elsewhere in Tacitus). But such a sense is decidedly inappropriate. If the Flavians are to be represented as fearful of future catastrophe and anxious to retain Valens as a bargaining weapon, what event has occurred to cause them to change their minds? But of course it is perfectly clear from the preceding account of Tacitus that the Flavians nourished no such fears. Their advance was rapid, confident and almost careless. Antonius had in fact some difficulty in restraining his vanguard from an onslaught upon Narnia from Carsulae before the legionaries had arrived in force¹⁶). That the issue of the war was now regarded as certain is stressed by the historian (49, 1 *ut captam Italiam persultare*; 50, 1 *profligato iam bello*; 52, 2 *tam celeri victoria*; 54, 1 *Vitellius fractis apud Cremonam rebus*; 59, 1 *haud dubium erga Flavianas partes studium*; 63, 1 *omnia prona uictoribus*). Even Vitellius' advisers are represented as recognizing the hopelessness of the situation: *moriendum uictis, moriendum deditis: id solum referre, nouissimum spiritum per ludibrium et contumelias effundant an per uirtutem*. To put into their mouth a suggestion that the Flavians were, or had been, fearful of reverses would in this context be singularly ill-judged. The same considerations tell also against an alternative explanation of *dubii casibus* advanced by Summers: 'apparently abl. abs., "While their fortunes were still in the balance." The use of *casus* is strange: cp. however *A.* 15.29 *at nunc uersos casus*.' But both Valens' capture and his captivity fall after the Battle of Cremona which had in reality decided the issue in the eyes of the Roman world.

The unique reading of L is textually far superior as providing a ready explanation of the corrupt *captis diebus*: confusion of *-cis* with *-tis* and of *pau-* with *cap-* after *captium*. The use of *reseruare* in the sense of 'keep alive' is attested in Tacitus and elsewhere: cf. *H* iv 42, 5 *retinete, patres conscripti, et reseruate hominem tam expediti consilii*; 61, 3 *Lupercus in itinere interfectus*.

16) *H* iii 60, 1.

pauci ... reseruantur pignora societatis; Lucret. v 859, Caes. BG i 53, Suet. *Julius* 26, 3, etc. So far as *paucis diebus* is concerned, the ablative of duration of time is by no means unusual (cf. KS i 360f) and appears in Tacitus: *Agr.* 14, 3 *biennio prosperas res habuit*; *H* i 48, 1 *quadriduo Caesar*; *A* i 53, 4 *quattuordecim annis exilium tolerauit*. But the crucial test is the historical validity of the statement that Valens was kept alive in captivity for only a few days. Luckily we have sufficient evidence on this point.

It can be shown that the Second Battle of Cremona took place on the night of 24/5 October, 69¹⁷). Valens, already in Etruria, must have received news of it in late October. His subsequent move to Portus Pisanus, the voyage in bad weather, the abortive attempt to win over the Alpes Maritimae, his slow progress to the Iles d'Hyères and his capture there must bring us to mid – or late – November. His conveyance to Urvinum cannot have been completed until late November or early December. How long did he languish there until the day of execution? We have seen that Vitellius' attempted abdication is firmly dated by Tacitus to 18 December, and that this was a consequence in part of the bad news from Narnia of the surrender brought about by the display of Valens' head. The conclusion is inescapable that Valens was executed about 10 December. As a chronological statement, and in its context, *paucis diebus* is most apt. As it was for Valens, so would it be for Vitellius: surrender meant a speedy death.

How likely is the supposition that a humanist emendator made this calculation, whose starting point is a date not mentioned by Tacitus or any other ancient author? And how likely also is the supposition that, on purely textcritical grounds, L or its exemplar has detected and corrected not only the evident error in *M's captis diebus* but also the latent error in the vulgate *casibus dubiis* which for so long, and by so many scholars, has passed unnoticed? For my part, I find the alternative hypothesis, that L alone has preserved a tradition which is faithful to what Tacitus wrote, a much lighter strain upon my credulity.

If the readings of Leidenensis discussed above are the interpolations of a humanist or earlier scholar, then we are dealing with a man of quality. He must possess a sense of Latin and Tacitean usage so acute as to enable him to suspect apparently

17) *RbM* 100 (1957) 244–52.

blameless sentences; he must enjoy the ability (not always enjoyed by modern readers of Tacitus) to follow closely the train of thought pursued by the writer; he must have a faculty for neat emendation much above the average displayed by scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; and finally he must be endowed with a sound knowledge of the history of A.D. 69. But even Homer nods occasionally. With all his talents this paragon must also, so it seems, be afflicted by onsets of blindness and sleep which allow him to pass over the most egregious blunders with equanimity. He is quite content, despite his intermittent vigilance, with such nonsense as we find at i 46, 2 *pars manipuli pars*; 48, 1 *dein quatriduo a Caesare*; 50, 2 *Pharsaliam Philipporum*; 51, 2 *seueritate disciplinae, quam in pace exorabilem discordiae ciuium resoluunt*; *ibid. ad usum et ad dedecus* – to refer only to the chapters adjoining the first two passages discussed. Can anyone seriously believe in such a scholar? This juxtaposition of nonsense and of something a good deal better (*pace* Martin) than common sense is our best guarantee that the good readings in L (in many respects an average specimen of the recentiores of Tacitus, though not standing in close affinity with any other) are not the product of an eccentric and gifted emendator, but reflect a tradition independent of, and in some ways superior to, that of the Second Medicean.

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