

flooded with a poverty-stricken rabble—ruined farmers, discharged soldiers, and idlers from all Italy—who lived on state and private charity and on bribes bestowed by office-seekers.

Between the aristocracy of birth and wealth and the vast moneyless mob there was bitter hostility. In vain the Gracchi, grandsons of the great Scipio Africanus who defeated Hannibal at Zama, came forward as champions of the people and proposed to redistribute the public lands and to limit the powers of the corrupt and selfish Senate. Both fell victims to the hatred of their foes, Tiberius Gracchus in 133 B.C., and his brother Gaius 12 years later.

Soldier Rulers of Rome

The death of Tiberius marked the beginning of a century of revolution and civil war, which ended in the downfall of the Roman Republic and the establishment of the Empire. Henceforward armies, not votes, were to determine the course of events.

First of the popular military chiefs was Marius, who had become a national hero by capturing Jugurtha, leader of an insurrection in Africa, and almost destroying (102–101 B.C.) a horde of German barbarians (the Cimbri and Teutones), who had disastrously defeated four Roman armies one after another. In the year 90 the Italian allies, who had long in vain demanded full Roman citizenship, rose in revolt (the Social War). The struggle lasted two years and ended in the bestowal of the rights demanded.

Rivalry between Marius and Sulla, an adherent of the senatorial party, for command in a war against Mithradates in Asia Minor led Sulla to march with his troops on Rome. For the first time Rome was invaded by a Roman army. As soon as Sulla and his legions were safely out of the way in Asia, Marius seized Rome with his army and massacred many of the senatorial leaders.

Sulla "Perpetual Dictator"

On his victorious return in 82 Sulla took a fearful revenge, slaughtering more than 5,000 of the people's leaders and confiscating their goods. As "perpetual dictator" (81–79) he passed laws transferring supreme power from the people to the Senate, but in vain; the aristocrats were too corrupt and feeble to keep the reins of power.

The history of the remaining years of the republic is the story of the great adventurers who now made themselves masters of the state, sometimes joining hands to make their position secure, sometimes waging savage civil strife. (See Cæsar; Cicero; Pompey.)

The only thing that saved the Roman power was the emergence of two statesmen of commanding genius, Gaius Julius Cæsar and his great-nephew Augustus (Octavian), who remoulded

the tottering structure of the republic into an empire, in which all power was gradually concentrated in the hands of a single ruler, backed by the might of the Roman legions. How this was done is told in the articles on Julius Cæsar and Augustus. (See also Cleopatra.)

With the establishment of the empire came two centuries of profound peace, broken only by frontier warfare. At home literature and civilization flourished, and in the provinces responsible men held power.

More and more the Mediterranean world assumed the aspect of one great nation. Paved roads led from end to end of Italy, and into what are now France and Germany. Fragments of Roman roads still exist even in Britain, aqueducts and bridges in France, and Roman wells in the Egyptian oases of the Sahara. Roman citizenship was given to all free men throughout the empire, and Roman law was administered in every court.

Gradual Growth of Christianity

In this period of tranquillity the new religion founded by Jesus of Nazareth had an opportunity to grow, slowly, but with comparatively little interruption, until in the reign of Constantine Christianity became the official faith of the Roman Empire and ultimately of the whole Western World.

But though the "Roman peace" (*pax Romana*) spread its beneficent influence over the civilized world, though the remotest lands were ransacked to supply the wealthy citizens with luxuries and delicacies, though art and letters were prized and fostered, the national character was steadily decaying. Prosperity had brought in the leaven of corruption. Selfishness had become the first law of life.

The passion for a life of luxurious ease ruled in all classes. The rich amused themselves by giving feasts of unparalleled splendour; the poor had their *panem et circenses*—free bread and free entertainments. Slave labour had degraded the once sturdy peasantry to the status of serfs or beggars. The backbone of the nation, the middle class, had almost disappeared.

The Empire in Leading-strings

After the time of Diocletian the whole empire was put in leading-strings, and under absolute rule society became stagnant politically, industrially, and mentally. Emperors could build up and maintain a bureaucratic organization of great efficiency, but they could not cure the canker at the heart of the people.

Augustus was followed by his stepson Tiberius (A.D. 14–37), a capable but unpopular ruler. Then came the mad Caligula (37–41), whose life was ended by his own officers after he had reigned only four years. Claudius (41–45) was not a strong ruler, but his reign left its mark