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## COMMODUS ANTONINUS\*

BY ABLIUS LAMPRIDIUS

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1. CONCERNING Commodus Antoninus' parents there has been sufficient discussion in the *Life* of Marcus Antoninus. Now he himself was born at Lanuvium with his twin brother Antoninus on the day before the Kalends of September, his father and uncle being the consuls [31 August A.D. 161], in the place where his maternal grandfather is also said to have been born. Faustina, when pregnant with Commodus and his brother, dreamed that she was giving birth to snakes, one of which however was fiercer than the other. But when she had given birth to Commodus and to Antoninus, the latter, for whom the astrologers promised a horoscope equal to Commodus, was carried off at the age of four.<sup>1</sup> So when his brother was dead, Marcus tried to educate Commodus both by his own precepts and by those of great and excellent men. He had as teacher of Greek letters Onesicrates, and for Latin Capella Antistius; his oratory teacher was T. Aius Sanctus.<sup>2</sup> But teachers in so many disciplines profited him nothing. So great is the power either of innate qualities or of those kept as tutors at court. For straight from his earliest boyhood he was base, shameless, cruel, lecherous, defiled of mouth too and debauched, already adept at those arts which do not accord with

\* For a brief sketch of the reign of Commodus, see Birley, *Severus*, pp. 97ff. It is impossible to annotate all the individuals mentioned in this *Life*.

1. Commodus' twin was T. Aurelius Fulvus Antoninus: see stemma, p. 320.

2. The MSS. give the name as Ateius Sanctus: the correct form is supplied by a recently published inscription.

the position of emperor, in that he could mould cups, dance, sing, whistle, even play the buffoon and the gladiator to perfection. He gave advance warning of his future cruelty in his twelfth year, at Centumcellae. For when he happened to have taken a bath in rather tepid water, he ordered the bath-keeper to be cast into the furnace. Whereupon a sheepskin was burned in the furnace by the slave-tutor to whom this order had been given, to make him believe from the smell of the fumes that the penalty had been paid.

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He was called Caesar as a boy with his brother Verus,<sup>3</sup> and in the fourteenth year of his age he was enrolled in the college of priests. He was co-opted among the . . .<sup>4</sup> as Leader of the Youth (*princeps iuventutis*) when he assumed the toga. While still wearing the bordered tunic of a boy he gave largess and presided in Trajan's basilica. He was in fact robed in the toga on the Nones of July [7 July A.D. 175], the day on which Romulus disappeared from the earth, and at the time when Cassius revolted from Marcus. Having been commended to the soldiers he set out with his father for Syria and Egypt, and returned with him to Rome. After this, when exemption from the law of the appointed year had been granted, he was made consul, and with his father he was hailed *imperator* on the fifth day before the Kalends of December, when Pollio and Aper were the consuls [27 November A.D. 176], and he celebrated a triumph with his father. Then he accompanied his father to the German war.

III Of those appointed to supervise his life he could not endure the more honourable, but retained all the most evil men and those that were dismissed he yearned for to the point of falling ill. When they were reinstated through his father's soft-heartedness, he always kept cookshops and low dives for them in the

3. In A.D. 166, see p. 121 above. His younger brother, M. Annius Verus, died in A.D. 169, see p. 129 above.

4. The MSS. are defective here.

palace, and never spared either decency or expense. He played at dice in his house. Women of particular beauty of appearance he gathered together like bought harlots, creating a brothel to make sport of their chastity. He purchased chariot-horses for himself and drove chariots in the dress of a charioteer. He conducted himself like a procurer's attendant, so that you would have believed him born rather for shameful things than for that station to which fortune had advanced him. His father's older ministers he dismissed, and aged friends he cast away. The son of Salvius Julianus, who was in command of armies, he vainly tempted to immodest conduct, and then plotted against Julianus. All the most honourable men he cast aside either by insult or by an unworthy office. He was named by actors as a defiled person and he exiled them so quickly that they did not appear again. The war, also, which his father had almost completed, he abandoned, having accepted the enemy's conditions, and then returned to Rome. ends German war

When he came back to Rome he celebrated a triumph,<sup>5</sup> with Saoterus his debaucher placed behind him in the chariot. In the course of the triumphal procession Commodus several times turned his head and kissed him, quite openly. He even did this in the orchestra. He would drink till dawn and squander the resources of the Roman empire. In the evening he even flitted through the taverns to the brothels. He sent to rule the provinces persons who were either his allies in crime or had been recommended by criminals. He became so hated by the Senate that he was filled with a savage passion to destroy that great order; and from having been despised, he became cruel.

IV. Commodus' way of life compelled Quadratus<sup>6</sup> and Lucilla to initiate plans to murder him, with the advice of the prefect of

5. October A.D. 180.

6. Ummidius Quadratus, adopted son of M. Aurelius' nephew: see stemma, p. 319.

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the guard Tarrutienus Paternus.<sup>7</sup> But the business of carrying out the murder was given to Claudius Pompeianus,<sup>8</sup> a kinsman. He approached Commodus with drawn sword, when he had the chance of action, bursting out with these words: 'This dagger the Senate sends,' gave away what he was doing, the fool, and did not carry it out; and there were many who had a share in the business with him. After this, Pompeianus first, and Quadratus, then Norbana and Norbanus and Paralius were put to death; and the latter's mother and Lucilla were sent into exile.

Then the prefects of the guard, having seen that Commodus had become so detested on account of Saoterus, whose power the Roman people could not endure, had the man courteously led out of the palace on the pretext of a sacrifice, and murdered him, as he was returning to his own mansion, by means of commissary agents. But that was more offensive to Commodus than the plot against himself. At any rate, at the instigation of Tigidius,<sup>9</sup> by the expedient of giving the honour of the broad stripe,<sup>10</sup> he removed Paternus from the administration of the prefecture. Paternus not only appeared to be the instigator of this murder but had also, as far as could be seen, been involved in the attempt to kill Commodus himself - and had stood in the way of further punishment of the conspiracy. A few days afterwards he accused him of conspiracy, saying that the reason why the daughter of Paternus had been betrothed to the son of Julianus was so that the empire could be handed over to Julianus. Hence he put to death both Paternus and Julianus and

7. The correct form of the name is supplied by a recently published inscription.

8. The conspiracy took place in A.D. 182. Pompeianus was nephew of Lucilla's second husband (*PIR*<sup>2</sup>, C 975).

9. i.e. Sex. Tigidius Perennis, soon to be mentioned under the latter name.

10. i.e. by making him a senator and thus ineligible to be prefect of the guard.

Vitruvius Secundus, a very close intimate of Paternus, who had charge of the imperial correspondence. Besides this, the whole house of the Quintillii was wiped out, because Sextus the son of Condianus, by pretending death, was said to have escaped for the purpose of rebellion. Vitrasia Faustina<sup>11</sup> was also put to death, and Velius Rufus and Egnatius Capito, an ex-consul. The consuls Aemilius Juncus and Atilius Severus were also exiled, and savage treatment was meted out in various ways against many others.

V

After this, Commodus never readily appeared in public, and never permitted anything to be announced to him unless Perennis had previously dealt with it. Perennis in fact, knowing Commodus very well, discovered how to gain power for himself. He persuaded Commodus to free himself for a life of pleasure while he, Perennis, would devote himself to the administration; and this Commodus gladly accepted. Under this agreement, therefore, Commodus began a life of orgiastic abandonment in the palace, amid banquets and baths: he had three hundred concubines, whom he assembled together for the beauty of their person, recruiting both married women and whores, together with youths of ripe age, also three hundred in number, whom he had collected, with beauty as the criterion, equally from the commons and the nobility, by force and by payment.

In the meanwhile, in the dress of a victim-slayer, he slaughtered sacrificial victims, and he fought in the arena with foils and as a gladiator, among the chamberlains, with the swords' points uncovered. By this time, Perennis had arrogated everything to himself: he made away with anyone he wanted, robbed a great many, subverted all the laws, and put all the booty into his own purse. Commodus himself, indeed, killed his sister Lucilla after he had sent her to Capreae [Capri]. Then, having debauched his other sisters, as it is said, and being joined in

11. Daughter of M. Aurelius' cousin, see stemma, p. 319.

embraces with a cousin of his father,<sup>12</sup> he even gave one of the concubines the name of his mother. His wife, whom he had caught in adultery, he drove out, then banished her, and subsequently killed her. He used to order the concubines themselves to be debauched before his own eyes, and he was not free from the disgrace of submitting sexually to young men, being defiled in every part of his body, even his mouth, with both sexes.

At this time also Claudius, whose son had once approached Commodus with a dagger, was killed, ostensibly by brigands; and many other senators were made away with, without trial, and rich women as well. In the provinces not a few, having been falsely accused by Perennis on account of their riches, were robbed or even made away with. Those who could not be prosecuted even on a trumped-up charge were accused of being unwilling to name Commodus as their heir.

VI At that time Perennis gave his own son the credit for successes in Sarmatia won by other generals. Yet in spite of his great power, because he had dismissed senators and put men of equestrian status in command of the troops in the British war, when the matter was made known by the legates of the army this same Perennis was suddenly declared a public enemy and given to the soldiers to be lynched.<sup>13</sup> Commodus appointed Cleander, one of the chamberlains, to his position of power. Of course, after the execution of Perennis and his son Commodus rescinded many measures, as though they had not been carried out with his authority, on the pretext that he was restoring things back to normal. In fact, he could not keep up this repentance for his crimes for longer than thirty days - what he was to do through the agency of Cleander was more serious

12. *Annia Fundania Faustina*, mother of *Vitrasia Faustina* (p. 165 above).

13. The British war lasted from soon after Commodus' accession (A.D.180) until A.D.184. Perennis' death was in A.D.185.

than what he had done through the aforementioned Perennis. In influence at any rate, Cleander was the successor of Perennis, although Niger,<sup>14</sup> succeeded him in the prefecture - he is said to have been prefect of the guard for only six hours. In fact the prefects of the guard were changed hourly and daily: everything Commodus did was worse than what he had done before. *Marcus Quartus* was prefect for five days. The successors of these men were either retained in office or killed at the whim of Cleander, at whose nod even freedmen were enrolled into the Senate and among the patricians. Then, for the first time, there were twenty-five consuls in a single year.<sup>15</sup> All the provinces were sold - Cleander sold everything for cash. He rewarded with office men recalled from exile, and rescinded legal decisions. Through Commodus' stupidity he had such power that he brought the husband of Commodus' sister, *Burrus*<sup>16</sup> - who was denouncing and reporting to Commodus everything that was being done - under suspicion of an attempt on the throne, and killed him; and he made away with many others who tried to defend *Burrus*. Among these the prefect *Aebutianus* was also put to death. In his place Cleander himself, with two others whom he himself had chosen, was made prefect, and then for the first time there were three prefects of the guard - one of them a freedman, with the title 'Bearer of the Dagger'.

VII Eventually, however, Cleander's life too had a fitting end. When *Arrius Antoninus*<sup>17</sup> was killed on charges that were trumped up as a favour to *Attalus*, whom *Arrius* had convicted during his proconsulship of Asia, Commodus was unable to endure the ill-feeling that ensued at that time, for the populace

14. Hardly *Pescennius Niger* - the name was fairly common.

15. This was evidently A.D.190. *Severus*, the future emperor, was one of the twenty-five (p. 204 below).

16. *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, A 757: *L. Antistius Burrus* (*cos. ord.* 181), husband of Commodus' youngest sister *Vibia Aurelia Sabina*: see stemma, p. 320.

17. *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, A 1088: so far as is known this man was no relative of the imperial family, in spite of the names.

were in a fury. So Cleander was presented to the common people to pay the penalty. At the same time, Apolaustus and other court freedmen were put to death in like manner. Cleander, among other things, had debauched some of Commodus' concubines, on whom he begot sons. They were put to death after his removal, together with their mothers. Julianus<sup>18</sup> and Regillus were appointed to his post. Subsequently Commodus condemned them as well.

When these men had been killed, Commodus put to death Servilius Silanus and Duilius Silanus, with their families, then Antius Lupus and the Petronii, Mamertinus and Sura, Mamertinus' son Antoninus, Commodus' own sister's son,<sup>19</sup> and after them six ex-consuls at the same time, Allius Fuscus, Caelius Felix, Luceius Torquatus, Larcus Eurupianus, Valerius Bassianus and Pactumeius Magnus, with their families; in Asia, Sulpicius Crassus the proconsul and Julius Proculus, with their families, and Claudius Lucanus an ex-consul; and in Achaia, his father's cousin Faustina Annia; and countless others. He had intended to kill another fourteen also, when the resources of the Roman empire could not sustain his expenditure.<sup>20</sup>

VIII  
In the meantime, as an act of mockery on the part of the Senate, Commodus was named Pius after he had designated his mother's lover to the consulship, and Felix after he had killed Perennis - amidst a great many murders of many citizens, as if he were some new Sulla. This same Commodus, the 'Dutiful' (*pius*), the 'Fortunate' (*felix*), is said to have invented a plot against his own life as well, to justify the killing of a great many people. Yet there was no other rebellion apart from the one by Alexander, who subsequently took his own life, and those of

18. *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, J 615: L. Julius Vehilius Gratus Julianus.

19. Cornificia, married to M. Petronius Sura Mamertinus (*cos. ord.* 182): see stemma, p. 320.

20. This statement seems to refer to his plans at the time just before his murder.

his family, and by Commodus' sister Lucilla. Commodus was named Britannicus<sup>21</sup> by flatterers, although the Britons even wanted to choose an emperor in opposition to him. He was called 'the Roman Hercules' too, because he had killed wild animals at Lanuvium in the amphitheatre; for it was his practice to kill wild beasts at home. Besides this, he was insane enough to want the city of Rome to be called the 'Commodian Colony': this crazy idea is said to have been instilled into him in the midst of Marcia's blandishments. He also wanted to drive four-horse chariots in the circus. He appeared in public in the Dalmatian tunic and in this garb gave the signal for starting the chariots. Indeed, at that time, when he proposed to the Senate his motion to make Rome *Commodiana*, not only did the Senate gladly accept this, in mockery as far as can be understood, but it even called itself 'Commodian', naming Commodus 'Hercules' and 'god'.

IX  
He pretended that he was going to go to Africa too, so that he could exact travelling expenses; and he did exact them and spent them on banquets and gambling instead. He put to death Motilenus, the prefect of the guard, by means of poisoned figs. He accepted statues in the dress of Hercules, and sacrifices were made to him as to a god. He had intended to put many others to death in addition, as was revealed by a little boy who tossed out of his bedroom a tablet on which were written the names of those who were to be killed.<sup>22</sup>

He practised the rites of Isis, even to the extent of shaving his head and carrying the figure of Anubis. He ordered the votaries of Bellona actually to cut off an arm, in his zeal for cruelty. The Isis worshippers, indeed, he forced to beat their breasts with pine-cones, to the point of death. When he was carrying the Anubis figure he used to strike the head of the Isis worshippers

21. A.D. 184.

22. This story seems to derive from Herodian (1.17.1ff.), who may well have invented it.

hard with the face of the statue. Clad in woman's dress and a lionskin he struck with his club not only lions but many humans as well. Men who were lame in the feet and those who could not walk he dressed up like giants, in such a way that they were covered from their knees downwards with bandages and cloths, to look like serpents, and he dispatched them with arrows. He polluted the Mithraic rites with real murder, although the custom was merely for something to be said, or pretended, to create an impression of fear.

X

As a boy he was already both gluttonous and lewd. As a youth he disgraced every kind of person that was with him and was disgraced by all of them. Those who mocked him he cast to the wild beasts. One man who had read Tranquillus<sup>23</sup> book containing the *Life* of Caligula he even ordered to be cast to the beasts, because his own birthday was the same as Caligula's. Of course, if anyone expressed a wish to die, he ordered him to be cast headlong, although reluctant. In his jokes, too, he was destructive. For example, he put a starling on the head of a man who, he had seen, had some hairs that were going white among the black ones, like worms; the bird thought it was chasing worms and made the man's head fester with the striking of its beak. He cut open a fat man in the middle of the stomach so that his innards suddenly poured out. He used to name men 'one-footed', or 'one-eyed' when he had removed one of their eyes or snapped off one of their feet. Besides this, he murdered many others in different places, some because they had met him when they were wearing barbarian dress, others because they were noble and rather handsome. He had among his minions men called after the private parts of either sex, and on them he used to bestow his kisses with particular pleasure. He had, too, a man whose penis projected further than does that of animals; he called him Onos and was very fond of him - he even enriched him, and appointed him to the priesthood of the

23. i.e. Suetonius.

Rural Hercules. He is said often to have mixed human excrement with the most expensive foods, and did not refrain from tasting it, making a fool of other people, as he thought. He displayed on a silver dish two misshapen hunchbacks covered with mustard; and straight away he gave them advancement and riches. He pushed into a swimming-pool his prefect of the guard Julianus, clad in a toga, in the presence of his staff; and he ordered him to dance - naked, as well - before his concubines, shaking cymbals and with his face contorted. It was seldom that he did not call for every kind of cooked vegetable for a banquet, to provide continuous luxury. He used to bathe seven or eight times a day and eat actually in the baths. He used to enter the temples of the gods polluted with adulteries and with human blood. He even posed as a surgeon, to the extent of letting blood, using scalpels that were deadly in their effect.

The months, too, flatterers renamed in his honour: Commodus instead of August, Hercules instead of September, Invictus instead of October, Exsuperatorius instead of November, and Amazonius, after his own surname, instead of December.<sup>24</sup> He was called Amazonius because of his passion for his concubine Marcia, whom he loved to have depicted as an Amazon, and for whose sake he even wished to enter the Roman arena in Amazon's dress. He also engaged in gladiatorial combat and accepted a gladiator's name, with pleasure, as if he were accepting triumphal honours. He always entered the public shows and as often as he did so, he ordered it to be inscribed in the public records. He is in fact said to have fought seven hundred and thirty-five times.

He was nominated a Caesar on the fourth day before the Ides of October (which he afterwards called Hercules), when Pudens and Pollio were the consuls [12 October A.D. 166]. He was called Germanicus on the Ides of 'Hercules' when Maximus and Orfitus were the consuls [15 October A.D. 172]. He was received into all the priestly colleges on the thirteenth day

24. According to Dio (72.15.3) all the months were renamed.

before the Kalends of 'Invictus', when Piso and Julianus were the consuls [20 January A.D. 175]. He set out for Germany on the fourteenth day before the Kalends of 'Aelius', as he afterwards called it, in the same year [19 May A.D. 175], and took the toga of manhood when the same men were consuls. Together with his father he was called *imperator* on the fifth day before the Kalends of 'Exsuperatorius', when the consuls were Pollio for the second time and Aper for the second time [28 November A.D. 176]. He celebrated a triumph on the tenth day before the Kalends of January when the same men were the consuls [23 December A.D. 176]. He set out on expedition a second time on the third day before the Nones of 'Commodus', when Orfitus and Rufus were the consuls [3 August A.D. 178]. He was presented to be maintained in perpetuity by the army and the Senate in the Commodian Palace on the eleventh day before the Kalends of 'Romanus', when Praesens was consul for the second time [22 October A.D. 180]. When contemplating departure on expedition for a third time he was dissuaded by his Senate and people. Vows were taken for his sake on the Nones of 'Pius', when Fuscianus was consul for the second time [5 April A.D. 188]. In the meantime, it is recorded, he fought three hundred and sixty-five times under his father and further, he subsequently achieved so many gladiatorial crowns by defeating or killing net-fighters that he reached a thousand. Moreover, he killed with his own hand many thousands of wild animals, even elephants. Frequently it was before the eyes of the Roman people that he did these things.

XIII

For such things as these, to be sure, he was strong enough, but otherwise he was weak and feeble, even having something wrong with him in the groin, which stuck out so much that the Roman people could detect the swelling through his silk clothing. Many verses were written on this subject, and Marius Maximus prides himself on recording them in his work. Such was his strength in slaying wild animals that he transfixed an elephant with a pole, pierced a wild goat's horn with a spear,

and dispatched many thousands of huge beasts, each with a single blow. Such was his lack of propriety that he very often drank in public, sitting in the amphitheatre or theatre, in women's clothing.

The Moors were conquered during his reign, but, since he himself lived in this way, it was by means of legates; the Dacians were conquered too, and the Pannonian provinces were set in order; while in Britain, Germany and Dacia the provincials rejected his rule. All these troubles were settled by generals. Commodus himself was tardy and careless in signing documents; he used to answer many petitions with a single formula, while in very many letters he used to write merely 'Farewell'. All business was carried out by others, and they are said to have used even condemnations for the benefit of their purses. In fact, through this carelessness, when the men who were administering the republic had been plundering the grain-supply, a tremendous famine arose at Rome,<sup>25</sup> although there was no shortage of crops. As for those who were plundering everything, Commodus subsequently killed and proscribed them. But he himself, pretending that there was a golden age, 'Commodian' by name, declared that prices were to be cheap, as a result of which he caused a greater shortage.

XIV

In his reign many persons obtained for cash both punishment for others and acquittal for themselves. He also sold alternative punishments and the right of burial and alleviation of wrongs; and he killed different people in place of others. Provinces and administrative posts he sold also, and in these instances the men through whose agency he made the sale received one share and Commodus the other. To some he even sold the murder of their enemies. In his reign the freedmen sold even the results of lawsuits. He did not long put up with Paternus and Perennis as prefects; even in the case of those prefects whom he had appointed himself, none of them completed three years' tenure, and many of them he put to death either with poison or the

25. A.D. 190.

XV

sword. Prefects of the city he changed with the same readiness. He took pleasure in killing his chamberlains, even though he had always done everything at their behest. The chamberlain Eclectus, when he saw how readily Commodus put his chamberlains to death, forestalled him and took part in the conspiracy which caused his death.

Commodus would take up the weapons of a gladiator as a 'pursuer', covering his bare shoulders with a purple cloth. Besides this he had the practice of ordering that everything he did that was base, impure, cruel, gladiatorial or pimp-like, should be included in the *Records of the City* - as the writings of Marius Maximus bear witness. He called the people of Rome the 'Commodian people', since he had very often fought as a gladiator in their presence. But although the people had applauded him as if he were a god at his frequent bouts, in the belief that he was being mocked he had instructed the marines who spread the awnings to slaughter the Roman people in the amphitheatre. He had ordered the city to be burned, seeing that it was his own colony; and this would have been done if Laetus the prefect of the guard had not deterred him. At any rate, among his other triumphal titles he was called 'First stake of the Pursuers'<sup>26</sup> six hundred and twenty times.

XVI

There were the following prodigies in his reign of both a public and a private kind. A comet appeared. Footprints of gods were seen in the Forum, going out of it. And before the deserters' war the sky blazed. A sudden mist and darkness arose in the circus on the Kalends of January; and before dawn there had been fire-birds too and Furies. He himself moved from the palace to the Vectilian House on the Caelian Hill, saying that he could not sleep in the palace. The twin gates of Janus opened of their own accord, and the marble image of Anubis was seen to move. In the Minucian Portico a bronze statue of Hercules

26. The *palus* (stake) was the wooden pike with which gladiators practised. The leading gladiator was entitled *primus palus* by analogy with the title of the chief centurion in a legion, *primus pilus*.

sweated for several days. A horned owl was caught above his bedroom, both at Rome and at Lanuvium. He himself moreover created a not insignificant omen: after thrusting his hand into the wound of a gladiator who had been killed, he wiped it on his head and, contrary to custom, ordered the spectators to come to the show in cloaks, which was usual at funerals, instead of togas, while he presided in dark clothes. Further, his helmet was twice carried out through the Gate of Libitina<sup>27</sup>. He gave largess to the people, seven hundred and twenty-five denarii apiece. Towards everyone else he was very mean, because he had been draining the treasury by his expenditure on luxury. He held many circus races, but for pleasure rather than for religion, and also in order to enrich the faction leaders.

XVII

Stirred up by these things, but all too late, Quintus Aemilius Laetus the prefect and Marcia the concubine entered into a conspiracy to kill him. First they gave him poison; and when that was less than effective, they had him strangled by an athlete with whom he used to train.

Physically, at least, he was well proportioned. His expression was vacant as is usual with drunkards, and his speech disordered. His hair was always dyed and made to shine with gold dust. He used to singe his hair and beard from fear of the barber.

Senate and people demanded that his body be dragged with the hook and thrown into the Tiber. But subsequently, by order of Pertinax, it was transferred to Hadrian's tomb. No public works of his still exist except the baths which Cleander had built in his name. Where his name was inscribed on public works of others, the Senate deleted it. Indeed, he did not even complete his father's public works. He did organize the African fleet, which was to be in reserve if the Alexandrian grain-supply happened to fail. He even gave Carthage the name Alexandria Commodiana Togata, after naming the African fleet Commodiana Herculea as well. He made certain embellishments to the

27. The goddess of funerals; the gate through which the bodies of gladiators were carried was named after her.

Colossus, of course, all of which were subsequently removed. In fact he took off the head of the Colossus, which was that of Nero, and put his own on it, inscribing beneath it an inscription in the usual style, not even omitting those gladiatorial and effeminate titles. Yet Severus, a stern emperor and a man like his own name, from hatred of the Senate, as it seems, enrolled this man among the gods, with the grant of a Herculean-Commodian *flamen* (which Commodus had planned to have for himself while still alive). Three sisters survived him. Severus ordained that his birthday should be celebrated.

XVIII

There were great acclamations by the Senate after Commodus' death. In fact, so that the Senate's verdict on Commodus may be known, I have included the acclamations verbatim, from Marius Maximus, and the content of the decree of the Senate:

From the enemy of the fatherland let the marks of honour be dragged away! Let the parricide's honours be dragged away! Let the parricide be dragged along! Let the enemy of the fatherland, the parricide, the gladiator, be mangled in the charnel-house! The executioner of the Senate is the enemy of the gods, the murderer of the Senate is the enemy of the gods! The gladiator to the charnel-house, he that killed the Senate, let him be put in the charnel-house! He that killed the Senate, let him be dragged with the hook, he that killed the innocent, let him be dragged with the hook! Enemy! Parricide! Truly! Truly! He that did not spare his own blood, let him be dragged with the hook! He that was about to kill you, let him be dragged with the hook! You were afraid with us, you were in danger with us. That we may be safe, Jupiter Best and Greatest, preserve Pertinax for us! Good fortune to the trustiness of the praetorians, good fortune to the loyalty of the Senate! Let the parricide be dragged along! We ask, Augustus, that the parricide be dragged along! This we ask, that the parricide be dragged along! Give heed, Caesar! Informers to the lion! Give heed, Caesar! Speratus to the lion! Good fortune to the victory of the Roman people, good fortune to the trustiness of the soldiers, good fortune to the trustiness of the praetorians, good fortune to the praetorian cohorts! The enemy's

statues are everywhere, the parricide's statues are everywhere, the gladiator's statues are everywhere - let the statues of the gladiator and parricide be dragged away! Let the slayer of citizens be dragged along, let the murderer of citizens be dragged along! Let the statues of the gladiator be dragged away! While you are safe, we are safe and free from care, truly, truly, if truly then with honour, if truly then in freedom! Now we are free from care - let the informers tremble! That we may be free from care, let the informers tremble! That we may be safe, out with informers from the Senate, the club for informers! While you are safe, informers to the lion! With you as emperor, the club for informers! Let the remembrance of the parricide, the gladiator, be wiped out, let the statues of the parricide, the gladiator, be dragged down, let the remembrance of the foul gladiator be wiped out! The gladiator to the charnel-house! Give heed, Caesar! Let the executioner be dragged with the hook, let the executioner of the Senate be dragged with the hook, in the ancient fashion! More savage than Domitian, more foul than Nero, as he did to others, let it be done to him! Let the remembrance of the innocent be preserved, restore the honours of the innocent, we ask! Let the parricide's corpse be dragged with the hook, let the gladiator's corpse be dragged with the hook, let the gladiator's corpse be placed in the charnel-house! Call for the vote, call for the vote! We all vote that he be dragged with the hook! He that killed all, let him be dragged with the hook, he that killed persons of all ages, let him be dragged with the hook, he that killed both sexes, let him be dragged with the hook, he that did not spare his own blood, let him be dragged with the hook, he that plundered temples, let him be dragged with the hook, he that destroyed testaments, let him be dragged with the hook, he that plundered the living, let him be dragged with the hook! We have been slaves to slaves! He that exacted payment for a life, let him be dragged with the hook, he that exacted payment for a life and did not keep faith, let him be dragged with the hook, he that sold the Senate, let him be dragged with the hook, he that took sons from their inheritance, let him be dragged with the hook! Spies out of the Senate, informers out of the Senate, suborners of slaves out of the Senate! You too were afraid with us, you know everything, you know both good men and bad, you know everything, set everything to rights! We have been afraid for your sake! Happy are we with

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you emperor in truth! Put the question on the parricide, put the question, put it to the vote! We ask your presence! The innocent have not been buried - let the parricide's corpse be dragged along! The parricide dug up the buried - let the parricide's corpse be dragged along!

XX. When, by Pertinax's order, Livius Larensis, procurator of the patrimony, had given Commodus' corpse to Fabius Cilo,<sup>28</sup> consul designate, it was buried during the night. The Senate cried out: 'On whose authority did you bury him? Let the buried murderer be dug up, let him be dragged along!' Cincius Severus said:

Wrongly was he buried. I speak as pontifex; the college of pontiffs says this. Since I have recounted glad tidings, now I turn to what is needful: I give it as my opinion that those things which that man, who lived only for the destruction of citizens and for his own shame, compelled to be decreed in his own honour, must be wiped out; that his statues, which are everywhere, should be destroyed; that his name be erased from all public and private monuments; and that the months be called by the names by which they were called when that evil first fell upon the republic.

28. Larensis is portrayed as the host in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*. L. Fabius Cilo (*cos. II ord. 204*) was to be a prominent supporter of Severus (*PIR*<sup>2</sup>, F 27).

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## PERTINAX\*

BY JULIUS CAPITOLINUS

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PUBLIUS HELVIUS PERTINAX had a freedman father, Helvius Successus, who declared that he had given the name to his son on account of his unbroken connection with the wool trade,<sup>1</sup> because he had carried on that business pertinaciously. Pertinax was born<sup>2</sup> in the Apennines, at his mother's villa. At the hour when he was born a dark horse climbed onto the roof tiles, and after staying there for a short time fell down and expired. Moved by this event his father approached a Chaldaean, who predicted future greatness for the child, then said that he had lost his progeny. The boy was taught his elementary letters and arithmetic, and given over to a Greek grammar-teacher as well, and then to Sulpicius Apollinaris. After being taught by him, Pertinax in turn took up the profession of teaching grammar.

But since there was little profit in this, through the mediation of Lollianus Avitus,<sup>3</sup> a man of consular rank and his father's patron, he sought an appointment to command in the ranks.<sup>4</sup> Then, as prefect of a cohort,<sup>5</sup> he set out for Syria, Titus Aurelius<sup>6</sup>

\* For a sketch of Pertinax's career, see Birley, *Severus*, pp. 106ff.

1. I read *lanariae* in preference to the MSS, 'lignariae.'

2. 1 August A.D. 126.

3. *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, H 40.

4. i.e. a commission as a centurion. The implication is that he failed to obtain one.

5. The career as given here has been confirmed, as far as the first appointment in Dacia, by an inscription discovered at Brühl, near Cologne, published by H. G. Kolbe, *Bonner Jahrbücher*, 1962, pp. 407ff.

6. i.e. Antoninus Pius.