

75 AD

OTHO A.D. 32-69

Plutarch
translated by John Dryden

Plutarch (46-120) - Greek biographer, historian, and philosopher, sometimes known as the encyclopaedist of antiquity. He is most renowned for his series of character studies, arranged mostly in pairs, known as "Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans" or "Parallel Lives." Otho (75 AD) - A study of the life of the Roman emperor, Otho.

OTHO

THE new emperor went early in the morning to the capitol, and sacrificed; and, having commanded Marius Celsus to be brought, he saluted him, and with obliging language desired him rather to forget his accusation than remember his acquittal; to which Celsus answered neither meanly nor ungratefully, that his very crime ought to recommend his integrity, since his guilt had been his fidelity to Galba, from whom he had never received any personal obligations. Upon which they were both of them admired by those that were present, and applauded by the soldiers.

In the senate, Otho said much in a gentle and popular strain. He was to have been consul for part of that year himself, but he gave the office to Virginius Rufus, and displaced none that had been named for the consulship by either Nero or Galba. Those that were remarkable for their age and dignity he promoted to the priesthoods; and restored the remains of their fortunes, that had not yet been sold, to all those senators that were banished by Nero, and recalled by Galba. So that the nobility and chief of the people, who were at first apprehensive that no human creature, but some supernatural, or penal vindictive power had seized the empire, began now to flatter themselves with hopes of a government that smiled upon them thus early.

Besides, nothing gratified or gained the whole Roman people more than his justice in relation to Tigellinus. It was not seen how he was in fact already suffering punishment, not only by the very terror of retribution which he saw the whole city requiring as a just debt, but with several incurable diseases also; not to mention those unhallowed frightful excesses among impure and prostitute women, to which, at the very close of life, his lewd nature clung, and in them gasped out, as it were, its last; these, in the opinion of all reasonable men, being themselves the extremest punishment, and equal to many deaths. But it was felt like a grievance by people in general that he continued yet to see the light of day, who had been the occasion of the loss of it to so many persons, and such persons, as had died by his means. Wherefore Otho ordered him to be sent for, just as he was contriving his escape of means of some vessels that lay ready for him on the coast near where he lived, in the neighbourhood of Sinuessa. At first he endeavoured to corrupt the messenger, by a large sum of money, to favour his design; but when he found this was to no purpose, he made him as considerable a present as if he had really connived at it, only

entreating him to stay till he had shaved; and so took that opportunity, and with his razor despatched himself.

And while giving the people this most righteous satisfaction of their desires, for himself he seemed to have no sort of regard for any private injuries of his own. And at first, to please the populace, he did not refuse to be called Nero in the theatre, and did not interfere when some persons displayed Nero's statues to public view. And Cluvius Rufus says, imperial letters, such as are sent with couriers, went into Spain with the name of Nero affixed adoptively to that of Otho; but as soon he perceived this gave offence to the chief and most distinguished citizens, it was omitted.

After he had begun to model the government in this manner, the paid soldiers began to murmur, and endeavoured to make him suspect and chastise the nobility, either really out of a concern for his safety, or wishing, upon this pretence, to stir up trouble and warfare. Thus, whilst Crispinus, whom he had ordered to bring him the seventeenth cohort from Ostia, began to collect what he wanted after it was dark, and was putting the arms upon the wagons, some of the most turbulent cried out that Crispinus was disaffected, that the senate was practising something against the emperor, and that those arms were to be employed against Caesar, and not for him. When this report was once set afoot, it got the belief and excited the passions of many; they broke out into violence; some seized the wagons, and others slew Crispinus and two centurions that opposed them; and the whole number of them, arraying themselves in their arms, and encouraging one another to stand by Caesar, marched to Rome. And hearing there that eighty of the senators were at supper with Otho, they flew into the palace, and declared it was a fair opportunity to take off Caesar's enemies at one stroke. A general alarm ensued of an immediate coming sack of the city. All were in confusion about the palace, and Otho himself in no small consternation, being not only concerned for the senators (some of whom had brought their wives to supper thither), but also feeling himself to be an object of alarm and suspicion to them, whose eyes he saw fixed on him in silence and terror. Therefore he gave orders to the prefects to address the soldiers and do their best to pacify them, while he bade the guests rise, and leave by another door. They had only just made their way out, when the soldiers rushed into the room, and called out, "Where are Caesar's enemies?" Then Otho, standing up on his couch, made use both of arguments and entreaties, and by actual tears at last, with great difficulty, persuaded them to desist. The next day he went to the camp, and distributed a bounty of twelve

hundred and fifty drachmas a man amongst them; then commended them for the regard and zeal they had for his safety, but told them that there were some who were intriguing among them, who not only accused his own clemency, but had also misrepresented their loyalty; and, therefore, he desired their assistance in doing justice upon them. To which, when they all consented, he was satisfied with the execution of two only, whose deaths he knew would be regretted by no one man in the whole army.

Such conduct, so little expected from him, was regarded by some with gratitude and confidence; others looked upon his behaviour as a course to which necessity drove him, to gain the people to the support of the war. For now there were certain tidings that Vitellius had assumed the sovereign title and authority, and frequent expresses brought accounts of new accessions to him; others, however, came, announcing that the Pannonian, Dalmatian, and Moesian legions, with their officers, adhered to Otho. Ere long also came favourable letters from Mucianus and Vespasian, generals of two formidable armies, the one in Syria, the other in Judaea, to assure him of their firmness to his interest: in confidence whereof he was so exalted, that he wrote to Vitellius not to attempt anything beyond his post; and offered him large sums of money and a city, where he might live his time out in pleasure and ease. These overtures at first were responded to by Vitellius with equivocating civilities; which soon, however, turned into an interchange of angry words; and letters passed between the two, conveying bitter and shameful terms of reproach, which were not false indeed, for that matter, only it was senseless and ridiculous for each to assail the other with accusations to which both alike must plead guilty. For it were hard to determine which of the two had been most profuse, most effeminate, which was most a novice in military affairs, and most involved in debt through previous want of means.

As to the prodigies and apparitions that happened about this time, there were many reported which none could answer for, or which were told in different ways; but one which everybody actually saw with their eyes, was the statue, in the capitol, of Victory carried in a chariot, with the reins dropped out of her hands, as if she were grown too weak to hold them any longer; and a second, that Caius Caesar's statue in the island of Tiber, without any earthquake or wind to account for it, turned round from west to east; and this, they say, happened about the time when Vespasian and his party first openly began to put themselves forward. Another incident,

which the people in general thought an evil sign, was the inundation of the Tiber; for though it happened at a time when rivers are usually at their fullest, yet such height of water and so tremendous a flood had never been known before, nor such a destruction of property, great part of the city being under water, and especially the corn market, so that it occasioned a great dearth for several days.

But when news was now brought that Caecina and Valens, commanding for Vitellius, had possessed themselves of the Alps, Otho sent Dolabella (a patrician, who was suspected by the soldiery of some evil purpose), for whatever reason, whether it were fear of him or of any one else, to the town of Aquinum, to give encouragement there; and proceeding then to choose which of the magistrates should go with him to the war, he named amongst the rest Lucius, Vitellius's brother, without distinguishing him by any new marks either of his favour or displeasure. He also took the greatest precautions for Vitellius's wife and mother, that they might be safe, and free from all apprehension for themselves. He made Flavius Sabinus, Vespasian's brother, governor of Rome, either in honour to the memory of Nero, who had advanced him formerly to that command, which Galba had taken away, or else to show his confidence in Vespasian by his favour to his brother.

After he came to Brixillum, a town of Italy near the Po, he stayed behind himself, and ordered the army to march under the conduct of Marius Celsus, Suetonius Paulinus, Gallus, and Spurina, all men of experience and reputation, but unable to carry their own plans and purposes into effect, by reason of the ungovernable temper of the army, which would take orders from none but the emperor whom they themselves had made their master. Nor was the enemy under much better discipline, the soldiers there also being haughty and disobedient upon the same account, but they were more experienced and used to hard work; whereas Otho's men were soft from their long easy living and lack of service, having spent most of their time in the theatres and at state shows and on the stage; while moreover they tried to cover their deficiencies by arrogance and vain display, pretending to decline their duty, not because they were unable to do the thing commanded, but because they thought themselves above it. So that Spurina had like to have been cut in pieces for attempting to force them to their work; they assailed him with insolent language, accusing him of a design to betray and ruin Caesar's interest; nay, some of them that were in drink forced his tent in the night, and demanded money for the

expenses of their journey, which they must at once take, they said, to the emperor, to complain of him.

However, the contemptuous treatment they met with at Placentia did for the present good service to Spurina, and to the cause of Otho. For Vitellius's men marched up to the walls, and upbraided Otho's upon the ramparts, calling them players, dancers, idle spectators of Pythian and Olympic games, but novices in the art of war, who never so much as looked on at a battle; mean souls, that triumphed in the beheading of Galba, an old man unarmed, but had no desire to look real enemies in the face. Which reproaches so inflamed them that they kneeled at Spurina's feet, entreated him to give his orders, and assured him no danger or toil should be too great or too difficult for them. Whereupon when Vitellius's forces made a vigorous attack on the town, and brought up numerous engines against the walls, the besieged bravely repulsed them, and, repelling the enemy with great slaughter, secured the safety of a noble city, one of the most flourishing places in Italy.

Besides, it was observed that Otho's officers were much more inoffensive, both towards the public and to private men, than those of Vitellius; among whom was Caecina, who used neither the language nor the apparel of a citizen, an overbearing, foreign-seeming man, of gigantic stature, and always dressed in trews and sleeves, after the manner of the Gauls, whilst he conversed with Roman officials and magistrates. His wife, too, travelled along with him, riding in splendid attire on horseback, with a chosen body of cavalry to escort her. And Fabius Valens, the other general, was so rapacious that neither what he plundered from enemies, nor what he stole or got as gifts and bribes from his friends and allies, could satisfy his wishes. And it was said that it was in order to have time to raise money that he had marched so slowly that he was not present at the former attack. But some lay the blame on Caecina, saying, that out of a desire to gain the victory by himself before Fabius joined him, he committed sundry other errors of lesser consequence, and by engaging unseasonably and when he could not do so thoroughly, he very nearly brought all to ruin.

When he found himself beat off at Placentia, he set off to attack Cremona, another large and rich city. In the meantime, Annius Gallus marched to join Spurina at Placentia; but having intelligence that the siege was raised, and that Cremona was in danger, he turned to its relief, and encamped just by the enemy, where he was daily reinforced by other officers. Caecina placed a strong ambush of heavy infantry in some rough and woody country, and gave orders to his horse to advance, and if the enemy should charge

them, then to make a slow retreat, and draw them into the snare. But his stratagem was discovered by some deserters to Celsus, who attacked with a good body of horse, but followed the pursuit cautiously, and succeeded in surrounding and routing the troops in the ambuscade; and if the infantry which he ordered up from the camp had come soon enough to sustain the horse, Caecina's whole army, in all appearance, had been totally routed. But Paulinus, moving too slowly, was accused of acting with a degree of needless caution not to have been expected from one of his reputation. So that the soldiers incensed Otho against him, accused him of treachery, and boasted loudly that the victory had been in their power, and that if it was not complete, it was owing to the mismanagement of their generals; all which Otho did not so much believe as he was willing to appear not to disbelieve. He therefore sent his brother Titianus, with Proculus, the prefect of the guards, to the army, where the latter was general in reality, and the former in appearance. Celsus and Paulinus had the title of friends and counsellors, but not the least authority or power. At the same time, there was nothing but quarrel and disturbance amongst the enemy, especially where Valens commanded; for the soldiers here, being informed of what had happened at the ambuscade, were enraged because they had not been permitted to be present to strike a blow in defence of the lives of so many men that had died in that action; Valens, with much difficulty, quieted their fury, after they had now begun to throw missiles at him, and quitting his camp, joined Caecina.

About this time, Otho came to Bedriacum, a little town near Cremona, to the camp, and called a council of war; where Proculus and Titianus declared for giving battle, while the soldiers were flushed with their late success, saying they ought not to lose their time and opportunity and present height of strength, and wait for Vitellius to arrive out of Gaul. But Paulinus told them that the enemy's whole force was present, and that there was no body of reserve behind; but that Otho, if he would not be too precipitate, and chose the enemy's time, instead of his own, for the battle, might expect reinforcements out of Moesia and Pannonia, not inferior in numbers to the troops that were already present. He thought it probable, too, that the soldiers, who were then in heart before they were joined, would not be less so when the forces were all come up. Besides, the deferring battle could not be inconvenient to them that were sufficiently provided with all necessaries; but the others, being in an enemy's country, must needs be exceedingly straitened in a little time. Marius Celsus was of Paulinus's opinion;

Annius Gallus, being absent and under the surgeon's hands through a fall from his horse, was consulted by letter, and advised Otho to stay for those legions that were marching from Moesia. But after all he did not follow the advice; and the opinion of those that declared for a battle prevailed.

There are several reasons given for this determination, but the most apparent is this; that the praetorian soldiers, as they are called, who serve as guards, not relishing the military discipline which they now had begun a little more to experience, and longing for their amusements and unwarlike life among the shows of Rome, would not be commanded, but were eager for a battle, imagining that upon the first onset they should carry all before them. Otho also himself seems not to have shown the proper fortitude in bearing up against the uncertainty, and, out of effeminacy and want of use, had not patience for the calculations of danger, and was so uneasy at the apprehension of it that he shut his eyes, and like one going to leap from a precipice, left everything to fortune. This is the account Secundus the rhetorician, who was his secretary, gave of the matter. But others would tell you that there were many movements in both armies for acting in concert; and if it were possible for them to agree, then they should proceed to choose one of their most experienced officers that were present; if not, they should convene the senate, and invest it with the power of election. And it is not improbable that, neither of the emperors then bearing the title having really any reputation, such purposes were really entertained among the genuine, serviceable, and sober-minded part of the soldiers. For what could be more odious and unreasonable than that the evils which the Roman citizens had formerly thought it so lamentable to inflict upon each other for the sake of a Sylla or a Marius, a Caesar or a Pompey, should now be undergone anew, for the object of letting the empire pay the expenses of the gluttony and intemperance of Vitellius, or the looseness and effeminacy of Otho? It is thought that Celsus, upon such reflections, protracted the time in order to a possible accommodation; and that Otho pushed on things to an extremity to prevent it.

He himself returned to Brixillum, which was another false step, both because he withdrew from the combatants all the motives of respect and desire to gain his favour which his presence would have supplied, and because he weakened the army by detaching some of his best and most faithful troops for his horse and foot guards.

About the same time also happened a skirmish on the Po. As Caecina was laying a bridge over it, Otho's men attacked him, and tried to prevent it. And when they did not succeed, on their putting into their boats torchwood, with a quantity of sulphur and pitch, the wind on the river suddenly caught their material that they had prepared against the enemy, and blew it into a light. First came smoke, and then a clear flame, and the men, getting into great confusion and jumping overboard, upset the boats, and put themselves ludicrously at the mercy of their enemies. Also the Germans attacked Otho's gladiators upon a small island in the river, routed them, and killed a good many.

All which made the soldiers at Bedriacum full of anger, and eagerness to be led to battle. So Proculus led them out of Bedriacum to a place fifty furlongs off, where he pitched his camp so ignorantly and with such a ridiculous want of foresight that the soldiers suffered extremely for want of water, though it was the spring time, and the plains all around were full of running streams and rivers that never dried up. The next day he proposed to attack the enemy, first making a march of not less than a hundred furlongs; but to this Paulinus objected, saying they ought to wait, and not immediately after a journey engage men who would have been standing in their arms and arranging themselves for battle at their leisure, whilst they were making a long march, with all their beasts of burden and their camp followers to encumber them. As the generals were arguing about this matter, a Numidian courier came from Otho with orders to lose no time, but give battle. Accordingly they consented, and moved. As soon as Caecina had notice, he was much surprised, and quitted his post on the river to hasten to the camp. In the meantime, the men had armed themselves mostly, and were receiving the word from Valens; so while the legions took up their position, they sent out the best of their horse in advance.

Otho's foremost troops, upon some groundless rumour, took up the notion that the commanders on the other side would come over; and accordingly, upon their first approach, they saluted them with the friendly title of fellow-soldiers.

But the others returned the compliment with anger and disdainful words; which not only disheartened those that had given the salutation, but excited suspicions of their fidelity amongst the others on their side, who had not. This caused a confusion at the very first onset. And nothing else that followed was done upon any plan; the baggage-carriers, mingling up with the fighting men, created great disorder and division; as well as the nature of the

ground, the ditches and pits in which were so many that they were forced to break their ranks to avoid and go round them, and so to fight without order, and in small parties. There were but two legions, one of Vitellius's called The Ravenous, and another of Otho's, called The Assistant, that got out into the open outspread level and engaged in proper form, fighting, one main body against the other, for some length of time. Otho's men were strong and bold, but had never been in battle before; Vitellius's had seen many wars, but were old and past their strength. So Otho's legion charged boldly, drove back their opponents, and took the eagle, killing pretty nearly every man in the first rank, till the others, full of rage and shame, returned the charge, slew Orfidius, the commander of the legion, and took several standards. Varus Alfenus, with his Batavians, who are the natives of an island of the Rhine, and are esteemed the best of the German horse, fell upon the gladiators, who had a reputation both for valour and skill in fighting. Some few of these did their duty, but the greatest part of them made towards the river, and, falling in with some cohorts stationed there, were cut off. But none behaved so ill as the praetorians, who, without ever so much as meeting the enemy, ran away, broke through their own body that stood, and put them into disorder. Notwithstanding this, many of Otho's men routed those that were opposed to them, broke right into them, and forced their way to the camp through the very middle of their conquerors.

As for their commanders, neither Proculus nor Paulinus ventured to reenter with the troops; they turned aside, and avoided the soldiers, who had already charged the miscarriage upon their officers. Annius Gallus received into the town and rallied the scattered parties, and encouraged them with an assurance that the battle was a drawn one and the victory had in many parts been theirs. Marius Celsus, collecting the officers, urged the public interest; Otho himself, if he were a brave man, would not, after such an expense of Roman blood, attempt anything further; especially since even Cato and Scipio, though the liberty of Rome was then at stake, had been accused of being too prodigal of so many brave men's lives as were lost in Africa, rather than submit to Caesar after the battle of Pharsalia had gone against them. For though all persons are equally subject to the caprice of fortune, yet all good men have one advantage she cannot deny, which is this, to act reasonably under misfortunes.

This language was well accepted amongst the officers, who sounded the private soldiers, and found them desirous of peace; and Titianus also gave directions that envoys should be sent in

order to a treaty. And accordingly it was agreed that the conference should be between Celsus and Gallus on one part, and Valens with Caecina on the other. As the two first were upon their journey, they met some centurions, who told them the troops were already in motion, marching for Bedriacum, but that they themselves were deputed by their generals to carry proposals for an accommodation. Celsus and Gallus expressed their approval, and requested them to turn back and carry them to Caecina. However, Celsus, upon his approach, was in danger from the vanguard, who happened to be some of the horse that had suffered at the ambush. For as soon as they saw him, they hallooed, and were coming down upon him; but the centurions came forward to protect him, and the other officers crying out and bidding them desist, Caecina came up to inform himself of the tumult, which he quieted, and giving a friendly greeting to Celsus, took him in his company and proceeded towards Bedriacum. Titianus, meantime, had repented of having sent the messengers; and placed those of the soldiers who were more confident upon the walls once again, bidding the others also go and support them. But when Caecina rode up on his horse and held out his hand, no one did or said to the contrary; those on the walls greeted his men with salutations, others opened the gates and went out, and mingled freely with those they met; and instead of acts of hostility, there was nothing but mutual shaking of hands and congratulations, every one taking the oaths and submitting to Vitellius. This is the account which the most of those that were present at the battle give of it, yet own that the disorder they were in, and the absence of any unity of action, would not give them leave to be certain as to particulars. And when I myself travelled afterwards over the field of battle, Mestrius Florus, a man of consular degree, one of those who had been, not willingly, but by command, in attendance on Otho at the time, pointed out to me an ancient temple, and told me, that as he went that way after the battle, he observed a heap of bodies piled up there to such a height that those on the top of it reached the pinnacles of the roof. How it came to be so, he could neither discover himself nor learn from any other person; as indeed, he said, in civil wars it generally happens that greater numbers are killed when an army is routed, quarter not being given, because captives are of no advantage to the conquerors; but why the carcasses should be heaped up after that manner is not easy to determine.

Otho, at first, as it frequently happens, received some uncertain rumours of the issue of the battle. But when some of the wounded

that returned from the field informed him rightly of it, it is not, indeed, so much to be wondered at that his friends should bid him not give all up as lost or let his courage sink; but the feeling shown by the soldiers is something that exceeds all belief. There was not one of them would either go over to the conqueror or show any disposition to make terms for himself, as if their leader's cause was desperate; on the contrary, they crowded his gates, called out to him the title of emperor, and as soon as he appeared, cried out and entreated him, catching hold of his band, and throwing themselves upon the ground, and with all the moving language of tears and persuasion, besought him to stand by them, not abandon them to their enemies, but employ in his service their lives and persons, which would not cease to be his so long as they had breath; so urgent was their zealous and universal importunity. And one obscure and private soldier, after he had drawn his sword, addressed himself to Otho: "By this, Caesar, judge our fidelity; there is not a man amongst us but would strike thus to serve you;" and so stabbed himself. Notwithstanding this, Otho stood serene and unshaken, and, with a face full of constancy and composure, turned himself about and looked at them, replying thus: "This day, my fellow-soldiers, which gives me such proofs of your affection, is preferable even to that on which you saluted me emperor; deny me not, therefore, the yet higher satisfaction of laying down my life for the preservation of so many brave men; in this, at least, let me be worthy of the empire, that is, to die for it. I am of opinion the enemy has neither gained an entire nor a decisive victory; I have advice that the Moesian army is not many days' journey distant, on its march to the Adriatic; Asia, Syria, and Egypt, and the legions that are serving against the Jews, declare for us; the senate is also with us, and the wives and children of our opponents are in our power; but alas, it is not in defence of Italy against Hannibal or Pyrrhus or the Cimbri that we fight; Romans combining against Romans, and, whether we conquer or are defeated, the country suffers and we commit a crime: victory, to whichever it fall, is gained at her expense. Believe it many times over, I can die with more honour than I can reign. For I cannot see at all how I should do any such great good to my country by gaining the victory, as I shall by dying to establish peace and unanimity and to save Italy from such another unhappy day." As soon as he had done, he was resolute against all manner of argument or persuasion, and taking leave of his friends and the senators that were present, he bade them depart, and wrote to those that were absent, and sent letters to the towns, that they might have every honour and facility in their journey. Then he sent for Cocceius, his brother's son, who was

yet a boy, and bade him be in no apprehension of Vitellius, whose mother and wife and family he had treated with the same tenderness as his own; and also told him that this had been his reason for delaying to adopt him, which he had meant to do as his son; he had desired that he might share his power, if he conquered, but not be involved in his ruin if he failed. "Take notice," he added, "my boy, of these my last words, that you neither too negligently forget, nor too zealously remember, that Caesar was your uncle." By and by he heard a tumult amongst the soldiers at the door, who were treating the senators with menaces for preparing to withdraw; upon which, out of regard to their safety, he showed himself once more in public, but not with a gentle aspect and in a persuading manner as before; on the contrary, with a countenance that discovered indignation and authority, he commanded such as were disorderly to leave the place, and was not disobeyed.

It was now evening, and feeling thirsty, he drank some water, and then took two daggers that belonged to him, and when he had carefully examined their edges, he laid one of them down, and put the other in his robe, under his arm, then called his servants, and distributed some money amongst them, but not inconsiderately, nor like one too lavish of what was not his own; for to some he gave more, to others less, all strictly in moderation, and distinguishing every one's particular merit. When this was done, he dismissed them, and passed the rest of the night in so sound a sleep that the officers of his bed-chamber heard him snore. In the morning, he called for one of his freedmen, who had assisted him in arranging about the senators, and bade him bring him an account if they were safe. Being informed they were all well and wanted nothing, "Go then," he said "and show yourself to the soldiers, lest they should cut you to pieces for being accessory to my death." As soon as he was gone, he held his sword upright under him with both his hands, and falling upon it expired with no more than one single groan to express his sense of the pang, or to inform those that waited without. When his servants, therefore, raised their exclamations of grief, the whole camp and city were at once filled with lamentation; the soldiers immediately broke in at the doors with a loud cry, in passionate distress, and accusing themselves that they had been so negligent in looking after that life which was laid down to preserve theirs. Nor would a man of them quit the body to secure his own safety with the approaching enemy; but having raised a funeral pile, and attired the body, they bore it thither, arrayed in their arms, those among them greatly

exulting who succeeded in getting first under the bier and becoming its bearers. Of the others, some threw themselves down before the body and kissed his wound, others grasped his hand, and others that were at a distance knelt down to do him obeisance. There were some who, after putting their torches to the pile, slew themselves, though they had not, so far as appeared, either any particular obligations to the dead, or reason to apprehend ill-usage from the victor. Simply, it would seem, no king, legal or illegal, had ever been possessed with so extreme and vehement a passion to command others, as was that of these men to obey Otho. Nor did their love of him cease with his death; it survived and changed ere long into a mortal hatred to his successor, as will be shown in its proper place.

They placed the remains of Otho in the earth and raised over them a monument which neither by its size nor the pomp of its inscription might excite hostility. I myself have seen it, at Brixillum; a plain structure, and the epitaph only this: To the memory of Marcus Otho. He died in his thirty-eighth year, after a short reign of about three months, his death being as much applauded as his life was censured, for if he lived no better than Nero, he died more nobly. The soldiers were displeased with Pollio, one of their two prefects, who bade them immediately swear allegiance to Vitellius; and when they understood that some of the senators were still upon the spot, they made no opposition to the departure of the rest, but only disturbed the tranquillity of Virginus Rufus with an offer of the government, and moving in one body to his house in town they first entreated him, and then demanded of him to be head of the empire, or at least to be their mediator. But he, that refused to command them when conquerors, thought it ridiculous to pretend to it now they were beat, and was unwilling to go as their envoy to the Germans, whom in past time he had compelled to do various things that they had not liked; and for these reasons he slipped away through a private door. As soon as the soldiers perceived this, they owned Vitellius, and so got their pardon, and served under Caecina.

THE END