

Against Eutropius, Book I: Loeb Translation (pp139-71) (XVIII)

Let the world cease to wonder at the births of creatures half human, half bestial, at monstrous babes that affright their own mothers, at the howling of wolves heard by night in the cities, at beasts that speak to their astonished herds, at stones falling like rain, at the blood-red threatening storm clouds, at wells of water changed to gore, at moons that clash in mid heaven and at twin suns. All portents pale before our eunuch consul. O shame to heaven and earth! Our cities behold an old woman decked in a consul's robe who gives a woman's name to the year.¹ Open the pages of the Cumaean Sibyl, ye pontiffs; let wise Etrurian seers consult the lightning's flash, and the soothsayer search out the awful portent hidden in the entrails. What new dread warning is this the gods give? Does Nile desert his bed and leaving Roman soil seek to mix his waters with those of the Red Sea? Does cleft Niphates² once more let through a host of eastern barbarians to ravage our lands? Does a pestilence threaten us? Or shall no harvest repay the farmer? What victim can expiate divine anger such as this? What offering appease the cruel altars? The consul's own blood must cleanse the consular insignia, the monster itself must be sacrificed. Whatever it be that fate prepares for us and shows forth by such an omen, let Eutropius' death, I pray, avert it all.

Fortune, is thy power so all-embracing? What is this savage humour of thine? To what lengths wilt thou sport with us poor mortals? If it was thy will to disgrace the consul's chair with a servile occupant let some "consul" come forward with broken chains, let an escaped jail-bird don the robes of Quirinus—but at least give us a man. There are grades even among slaves and a certain dignity; that slave who has served but one master holds a position of less infamy. Canst thou count the waves of the sea, the grains of Africa's sands, if so thou canst number Eutropius' masters. How many owners has he had, in how many sale-catalogues has he appeared, how often has he changed his name! How often has he been stripped while buyer consulted doctor whether there lurked any flaw by reason of some hidden disease! All repented having bought him and he always returned to the slave-market while he could yet fetch a price. When he became but a foul corpse-like body, a mass of senile pendulous flesh, his masters were anxious to rid their houses of him by giving him away as a present and made haste to foist the loathsome gift on an unsuspecting friend. To so many different yokes did he submit his neck, this slave, old in years but ever new to the house; there was no end to his servitude though many beginnings.

He is destined from his very cradle to bloody tortures; straight from his mother's womb he is hurried away to be made a eunuch; no sooner born than he becomes a prey to suffering. Up hastens the Armenian, skilled by operating with unerring knife to make males womanish and to increase their loathly value by such loss. He drains the body's life-giving fluid from its double source and with one blow deprives his victim of a father's function and the name of husband. Eutropius lay doubtful of life, and the severed sinews drew a numbness deep down into his furthest brain. Are we to praise the hand that robbed an enemy of his strength? Or shall we rather blame the fates? It would have been better had he remained a man; his very disgrace has proved a blessing to him. Had he had his full manly vigour he would still have been a slave.

After this he is dragged from one Assyrian mart to another; next in the train of a Galatian slave merchant he stands for sale in many a market and knows many diverse houses. Who could tell the names of all his buyers? Among these Ptolemy, servant of the post-house,¹ was one of the better known. Then Ptolemy, tired of Eutropius' long service to his lusts, gives him to Arinthaëus;—gives, for he is no longer worth keeping nor old enough to be bought. How the scorned minion wept at his departure, with what grief did he lament that divorce! "Was this thy fidelity, Ptolemy? Is this my reward for a youth lived in thine arms, for the bed of marriage and those many nights spent together in the inn? Must I lose my promised liberty? Leav'st thou Eutropius a widow, cruel wretch, forgetful of such wonderful nights of love? How hard is the lot of my kind! When a woman grows old her children cement the marriage tie and a mother's dignity compensates for the lost charms of a wife. Me Lucina, goddess of childbirth, will not come near; I have no children on whom to rely.

Love perishes with my beauty; the roses of my cheeks are faded. What wits can save my wretched back from blows? How can I, an old man, please?"

So saying he entered upon the skilled profession of a pander. His whole heart was in his work; he knew his business well and was master of every stratagem for the undoing of chastity. No amount of vigilance could protect the marriage-bed from his attack; no bars could shut him out. He would have haled even Danaë from her refuge in the brazen tower. He would represent his patron as dying of love. Was the lady stubborn, he would win her by his patience; was she greedy, by a gift; flighty, he would corrupt her with a jest. None could arrest the attention of a maidservant with so neat a touch as he, none twitch aside a dress so lightly and whisper his shameful message in her ear. Never was any so skilled to choose a scene for the criminal meeting, or so clever at avoiding the wrath of the cuckold husband should the plot be discovered. One thought of Lais of Corinth, to whom the enamoured youth of that city brought wealth from its twin seas, who, when her grey hair could no longer go crowned with roses, when the emulous crowd of her admirers ceased nightly to haunt her doors and but few were left to knock thereat, when before the mirror's verdict age shrank back in horror from itself, yet stood, still faithful to her calling, and as a pander dressed others for the part, haunting still the brothel she had loved so well and so long, and still pandering to the tastes old age forbade her.

Hence sprang Eutropius' fame; for, though a eunuch's one virtue be to guard the chastity of the marriage-chamber, here was one (and one only) who grew great through adulteries. But the lash fell as before on his back whenever his master's criminal passion was through him frustrated. Then it was in vain that he prayed for forgiveness and reminded his lord of all those years of faithful service; he would find himself handed over to a son-in-law as part of the bride's dowry. Thus he would become a lady's-maid, and so the future consul and governor of the East would comb his mistress' locks or stand naked holding a silver vessel of water wherein his charge could wash herself. And when overcome by the heat she threw herself upon her couch, there would stand this patrician fanning her with bright peacock feathers.

And now his skin had grown loose with age; his face, more wrinkled than a raisin, had fallen in by reason of the lines in his cheeks. Less deep the furrows cloven in the cornfield by the plough, the folds wrought in the sails by the wind. Loathsome grubs ate away his head and bare patches appeared amid his hair. It was as though clumps of dry barren corn dotted a sun-parched field, or as if a swallow were dying in winter sitting on a branch, moulting in the frosty weather. Truly, that the outrage to the consul's office might one day be the greater, Fortune added to her gift of wealth this brand upon his brow, this deformity of face. When his pallor and fleshless bones had roused feelings of revulsion in his masters' hearts, and his foul complexion and lean body offended all who came in contact with him, scaring children, disgusting those that sat at meat, disgracing his fellow-slaves, or terrifying as with an evil omen those that met him; when his masters ceased to derive any advantage from that withered trunk (for his wasted limbs refused even to make the beds or cut wood for the kitchen fire, while his faithless nature forbade their entrusting him with the charge of gold or vesture or the secrets of the house—who could bring him to entrust his marriage-chamber to a pander?), then at last they thrust him from their houses like a troublesome corpse or an ill-omened ghost. He was now free—for everyone despised him. So a shepherd chains up a dog and fattens him with milk while yet his strength avails to guard the flock and, ever watchful, to scare away wolves with his barking. But when later this same dog grows old and dirty and droops his mangy ears he looses him, and, taking off his collar, at least saves that.

Universal contempt is sometimes a boon. Driven out by all, he could freely range amid every sort of crime, and open a way for destiny. Oh thou, whosoe'er thou art, that holdest sway in Olympus, was it thy humour to make such mockery of mankind? He who was not suffered to perform the duties of a slave is admitted to the administration of an empire; him whom a private house scorned as a servant, a palace tolerates as its lord. When first the consular residence received this old vixen, who did not lament? Who grieved not to see an oft-sold corpse worm itself into the sacred service of the emperor? Nay, the very palace-servants, holding a prouder rank in slavery, murmured at such a colleague and long haughtily scorned his company.

See what manner of man they seek to connect with the annals of Rome: the very eunuchs were ashamed of him. At first of no account, he lay hid, the most unknown unit of an unregarded throng, till thanks to the mad folly of Abundantius¹ (who brought ruin on the empire of the East and, ere that, upon himself) he was advanced from the most menial office to the highest honours. What a happy dispensation of providence it is that in this world the results of ill counsel fall first upon its instigators! Thus the seer who advised Busiris to placate the Thunderer's wrath, what time Nile's flood had long run dry, with a stranger's blood himself first stained that tyrant's altar with his own and fell a victim of the horrid sacrifice he had advised. Thus he who made the brazen bull and devised that new form of torture, casting the deadly bronze as an instrument of torment, was (at the bidding of the Sicilian tyrant) the first to make trial of the unhanselled image, and to teach his own bull to roar. So with Eutropius: on no man's goods did he sooner seize than on those of him by whom he had been raised to power; none did he drive sooner into exile and thus, by the condemnation of his patron, was to thank for one righteous action.

When this half-man, worn out with age, had been raised to that pinnacle of glory for which he never would have dared to pray, of which never to dream; when he had seen law at his feet, the heads of the nobility inclined before him, and fortune heaping such gifts upon one whose only hope and prayer had been to gain his freedom, he straightway forgot his former masters, and his slave's mind swelled high within him. The prisons were filled with degraded nobles, Meroë and the plains of Ethiopia re-echoed to the weeping of exiles; the desert rang with the punishment of men; the temple of Jupiter Ammon in Africa was stained with gentle blood.

Nothing is so cruel as a man raised from lowly station to prosperity; he strikes everything, for he fears everything; he vents his rage on all, that all may deem he has the power. No beast so fearful as the rage of a slave let loose on free-born backs; their groans are familiar to him, and he cannot be sparing of punishment that he himself has undergone; remembering his own master he hates the man he lashes. Being a eunuch also he is moved by no natural affection and has no care for family or children. All are moved to pity by those whose circumstances are like their own; similitude of ills is a close bond. Yet he is kind not even to eunuchs.

His passion for gold increases—the only passion his mutilated body can indulge. Of what use was emasculation? The knife is powerless against reckless avarice. That hand so well practised in petty thefts, accustomed to rifle a cupboard or remove the bolt from the unwatched coffer, now finds richer spoils and the whole world to rob. All the country between the Tigris and Mount Haemus he exposes for sale at a fixed price, this huckster of empire, this infamous dealer in honours. This man governs Asia for the which his villa has paid. That man buys Syria with his wife's jewels. Another repents of having taken Bithynia in exchange for his paternal mansion. Fixed above the open doors of his hall is a list giving the provinces and their prices: so much for Galatia, for Pontus so much, so much will buy one Lydia. Would you govern Lycia? Then lay down so many thousands. Phrygia? A little more. He wishes everything to be marked with its price to console him for his own fortune and, himself so often sold, he wants to sell everything. When two are rivals he suspends in the balance their opposed payment; along with the weight the judge inclines, and a province hangs wavering in a pair of scales.

Ye gods, are ye not ashamed that whole peoples are sold beneath the hammer? At least let it shame you of the seller, when a slave, a chattel the law counts dead, possesses so many kingdoms and retails so many cities. Did Cyrus' victory oust mighty Croesus from his throne that Pactolus and Hermus should roll their waves for a eunuch? Did Attalus make you, Rome, his heir, was Antiochus confined within the appointed bounds of Taurus, did Servilius enjoy a triumph over the hitherto unconquered Isaurians, did Egypt fall before Augustus, and Crete before Metellus, to ensure Eutropius a sufficient income?¹ Cilicia, Judaea, Sophene, all Rome's labours and Pompey's triumphs, are there to sell.

Why heap up these riches? Hast thou children to succeed to them? Marry or be married, thou canst never be a mother or a father: the former nature hath denied thee, the latter the surgeon's knife. India may enrich thee with enormous jewels, Arabia with her spices, China with her silks;

none so needy, none so poverty-stricken as to wish to have Eutropius' fortune and therewith Eutropius' body.

And now his mind, forgetful of its true nature and drunken with riches, makes sport of wretched law and the affairs of men. A eunuch is judge. Why now wonder that he is consul? Whatever he does is a prodigy. Can the annals of the law show cases so mishandled? What age or what country has ever witnessed a eunuch's jurisdiction? That nought might remain undisgraced, nought un-attempted, he even makes him ready to outrage arms, heaps portent on portent and wanton folly seeks to outdo itself. Mars blushed, Bellona scoffed and turned her from the disgrace of the East whene'er with arrows strung and flashing quiver the aged Amazon practises battle or hurries back as arbiter of peace and war to hold parley with the Getae. Our enemies rejoiced at the sight and felt that at last we were lacking in men. Towns were set ablaze; walls offered no security. The countryside was ravaged and brought to ruin. Mid-ocean alone gave hope. Women of Cappadocia were driven into captivity across the river Phasis; stolen from the stalls of their homesteads, the captive herds drink the snowy streams of Caucasus, and the flocks exchange the pastures of Mount Argaeus¹ for the woods of Scythia. Beyond the Cimmerian marshes, defence of the Tauric tribes, the youth of Syria are slaves. Too vast for the fierce barbarians are the spoils; glutted with booty they turn to slaughter.

Yet Eutropius (can a slave, an effeminate, feel shame? Could a blush grace such a countenance?), Eutropius returns in triumph. There follow companies of foot, squadrons like their general, maniples of eunuchs, an army worthy Priapus' standards. His creatures meet him and embrace their saviour on his return.² Great is his self-esteem; he struggles to swell out his pendulous cheeks and feigns a heavy panting; his lousy head dust-sprinkled and his face bleached whiter by the sun, he sobs out some pitiful complaint with voice more effeminate than effeminacy's self and tells of battles. In tremulous tones he calls his sister to witness that he has spent his strength for his country's need; that he yields to envy and cannot stand up against the storms of jealousy and prays to be drowned in the foaming seas. Would God his prayer had been granted! Thus speaking, he wipes away the silly tears, sighing and sobbing between each word; like a withered old dame travelled far to visit her son's daughter—scarce seated aweary and already she asks for wine. Why busy thy foul self with wars? Why attempt battle on the bloody field? 'Tis to the arts of that other Minerva thou shouldst apply thyself. The distaff, not the dart should be thine; thine to spin the thread, and, cunning craftsman that thou art, to urge on the spinning-maids when lazy; thine to wind the snowy wool for thy mistress' weaving. Or, wouldst thou be a devotee, let Cybele, not Mars, be the object of thy worship. Learn to imitate the madness of the Corybantes to the accompaniment of rolling drums. Thou mayest carry cymbals, pierce thy breast with the sacred pine, and with Phrygian knife destroy what yet is left of thy virility. Leave arms to men. Why seek to divide the two empires and embroil loving brothers in strife? Madman, remember thy former trade; 'twere more fitting thou shouldst endeavour to reconcile them.

It is for deeds like this that Eutropius demands this year of office, to ensure that by his efforts alone he leaves nothing not dishonoured, ruining the army as its general, the courts as their judge, the imperial fasti as a consul.

No portent so monstrous but time past has given it birth and the labour of bygone centuries produced it. Legend tells us that Oedipus married his mother and Thyestes his daughter; Jocasta bare brothers to her husband, Thyestes's daughter gave birth to her own brother. Athenian tragedy tells the sad tale of Thebes and the baneful war of Troy. Tereus was changed into a bird, Cadmus into a snake; Scylla looked in amaze on the dogs that girt her waist. Ancient story relates how one was transformed into a tree and thus attached to earth, how another grew wings and flew, how a third was clothed with scales and yet another melted into a river. But no country has ever had a eunuch for a consul or judge or general. What in a man is honourable is disgraceful in an emasculate. Here is an example to surpass all that is most laughable in comedy, most lamentable in tragedy.

A pleasant sight in truth to see him strain his sapless limbs beneath the weight of the toga, borne down by the wearing of his consular dress; the gold of his raiment rendered his decrepitude even more hideous. 'Twas as though an ape, man's imitator, had been decked out in sport with precious silken garments by a boy who had left his back and quarters uncovered to amuse the guests at supper. Thus richly dressed he walks upright and seems the more loathsome by reason of his brilliant trappings. Dressed in white the senate, perhaps even his master,¹ accompanies the dishonoured fasces. Behold a portent! A lictor more noble than the consul, and a man about to grant to others a liberty which he has not yet himself won. He mounts the lofty platform and amid a torrent of self-laudation boasts of a prophetic dream he had in Egypt¹ and of the defeat of tyrants which he foretold. No doubt the goddess of war stayed her avenging hand and waited till that emasculate Tiresias, that unmanned Melampus, could crawl back with oracles culled from farthest Nile.

Loud sang the prophetic birds in warning. The year shuddered at the thought of bearing Eutropius' name, and Janus proclaimed the madness of the choice from his two mouths, forbidding a eunuch to have access to his annals. Had a woman assumed the fasces, though this were illegal it were nevertheless less disgraceful. Women bear sway among the Medes and swift Sabaeans; half barbarity is governed by martial queens. We know of no people who endure a eunuch's rule. Worship is paid to Pallas, Phoebe, Vesta, Ceres, Cybele, Juno, and Latona; have we ever seen a temple built or altars raised to a eunuch god? From among women are priestesses chosen; Phoebus enters into their hearts; through their voices the Delphian oracle speaks; none but the Vestal Virgins approach the shrine of Trojan Minerva and tend her flame: eunuchs have never deserved the fillet and are always unholy. A woman is born that she may bear children and perpetuate the human race; the tribe of eunuchs was made for servitude. Hippolyte fell but by the arrow of Hercules; the Greeks fled before Penthesilea's axe; Carthage, far-famed citadel, proud Babylon with her hundred gates, are both said to have been built by a woman's hand. What noble deed did a eunuch ever do? What wars did such an one fight, what cities did he found? Moreover, nature created the former, the hand of man the latter, whether it was from fear of being betrayed by her shrill woman's voice and her hairless cheeks that clever Semiramis, to disguise her sex from the Assyrians, first surrounded herself with beings like her, or the Parthians employed the knife to stop the growth of the first down of manhood and forced their boys, kept boys by artifice, to serve their lusts by thus lengthening the years of youthful charm.

At first the rumour of Eutropius' consulship seemed false and invented as a jest. A vague story spread from city to city; the crime was laughed at as one would laugh to hear of a swan with black wings or a crow as white as privet. Thus spake one of weighty character: "If such things are believed and swollen lies tell of unheard of monsters, then the tortoise can fly, the vulture grow horns, rivers flow back and mount the hills whence they spring, the sun rise behind Gades and set amid the Carmanians of India; I shall soon see ocean fit nursery for plants and the dolphin a denizen of the woods; beings half-men, half-snails and all the vain imaginings of India depicted on Jewish curtains."

Then another adds, jesting with a more wanton wit: "Dost thou wonder? Nothing great is there that Eutropius does not conceive in his heart. He ever loves novelty, ever size, and is quick to taste everything in turn. He fears no assault from the rear; night and day he is ready with watchful care; soft, easily moved by entreaty, and, even in the midst of his passion, tenderest of men, he never says 'no,' and is ever at the disposal even of those that solicit him not. Whatever the senses desire he cultivates and offers for another's enjoyment. That hand will give whatever thou wouldst have. He performs the functions of all alike; his dignity loves to unbend. His meetings¹ and his deserving labours have won him this reward,² and he receives the consul's robe in recompense for the work of his skilful hand."

When the rumour concerning this disgrace of the eastern empire was known to be true and had impressed belief on Roman ears, Rome's goddess thus spake: "Is Eutropius worthy of mine ire? Is such an one fit cause for Roman grief?" So saying the mighty goddess winged her way through

the heavens and with one stroke of her pinions passed beyond the Po and approached the camp of her emperor. It happened that even then the august Honorius, assisted by his father-in-law Stilicho, was making answer to the Germans who had come of their own accord to sue for peace. From his lofty throne he was dictating laws to the Cauci and giving a constitution to the flaxen-haired Suebi. Over these he sets a king, with those he signs a treaty now that hostages have been demanded; others he enters on the list as serviceable allies in war, so that in future the Sygambrians will cut off their flowing locks and serve beneath our banners. Joy and love so fill the goddess' heart that she well nigh weeps, so great is her happy pride in her illustrious foster-child. So when a bullock fights in defence of the herd his mother lifts her own horns more proudly; so the African lioness gazes with admiration on her cub as he grows to be the terror of the farmsteads and the future king of beasts. Rome lays aside her veil of cloud and towers above the youthful warrior, then thus begins. "Examples near at hand testify to the extent of my power now thou art emperor. The Saxon is conquered and the seas safe; the Picts have been defeated and Britain is secure. I love to see at my feet the humbled Franks and broken Suebi, and I behold the Rhine mine own, Germanicus.¹ Yet what am I to do? The discordant East envies our prosperity, and beneath that other sky, lo! wickedness flourishes to prevent our empire's breathing in harmony with one body. I make no mention of Gildo's treason, detected so gloriously in spite of the power of the East on which the rebel Moor relied. For what extremes of famine did we not then look? How dire a danger overhung our city, had not thy valour or the ever-provident diligence of thy father-in-law supplied corn from the north in place of that from the south! Up Tiber's estuary there sailed ships from the Rhine, and the Saône's fertile banks made good the lost harvests of Africa. For me the Germans ploughed and the Spaniards' oxen sweated; my granaries marvel at Iberian corn, nor did my citizens, now satisfied with harvests from beyond the Alps, feel the defection of revolted Africa. Gildo, however, paid the penalty for his treason as Tabraca can witness. So perish all who take up arms against thee! "Lo! on a sudden from that same clime comes another scourge, less terrible indeed but even more shameful, the consulship of Eutropius. I admit I have long learned to tolerate this unmanned tribe, ever since the court exalted itself with Arsacid pomp and the example of Parthia corrupted our morals. But till now they were but set to guard jewels and raiment, and to secure silence for the imperial slumber. Never beyond the sleeping-chamber did the eunuch's service pass; not their lives gave guarantee of loyalty but their dull wits were a sure pledge. Let them guard hidden store of pearls and Tyrian-dyed vestments; they must quit high offices of state. The majesty of Rome cannot devolve upon an effeminate. Never have we seen so much as a ship at sea obey the helm in the hands of a eunuch-captain. Are we then so despicable? Is the whole world of less account than a ship? Let eunuchs govern the East by all means, for the East rejoices in such rulers, let them lord it over cities accustomed to a woman's sway: why disfigure warlike Italy with the general brand and defile her austere peoples with their deadly profligacy? Drive this foreign pollution from out the boundaries of manly Latium; suffer not this thing of shame to cross the Alps; let it remain fixed in the country of its birth. Let the river Halys or Orontes, careless of its reputation, add such a name to its annals: I, Rome, beg thee by thy life and triumphs, let not Tiber suffer this disgrace—Tiber whose way was to give the consulship to such men as Dentatus and Fabius though they asked not for it. Shall the Field of Mars witness the canvassing of an eunuch? Is Eutropius to stand with Aemilii and Camilli, saviours of their country? Is thy office, Brutus, now to be given to a Chrysogonus or a Narcissus¹? Is this the reward for giving up thy sons to punishment and setting the citizen's duty before the father's grief? Was it for this that the Tuscans made their camp on the Janiculum and Porsenna was but the river's span from our gates? For this that Horatius kept the bridge and Mucius braved the flames? Was it all to no purpose that chaste Lucretia plunged the dagger into her bosom and Cloelia swam the astonished Tiber? Were the fasces reft from Tarquin to be given to Eutropius? Let Hell ope her jaws and all who have sat in my curule chair come and turn their backs upon their colleague. Decii, self-sacrificed for your country's good, come forth from your graves; and you, fierce Torquati; and thou, too, great-hearted shade of poor Fabricius. Serranus, come thou hither, if now thou plougest the acres of the holy dead and cleavest the fallow

lands of Elysium. Come Scipios, Lutatius, famed for your victories over Carthage, Marcellus, conqueror of Sicily, rise from the dead, thou Claudian race, you progeny of Curius. Cato, thou who wouldst not live beneath Caesar's rule, come thou forth from thy simple tomb and brave the sight of Eutropius. Immortal bands of Bruti and Corvini, return to earth. Eunuchs don your robes of office, sexless beings assume the insignia of Rome. They have laid hands on the toga that inspired Hannibal and Pyrrhus with terror. They now despise the fan and aspire to the consul's cloak. No longer do they carry the maidenly parasol for they have dared to wield the axes of Latium.

"Unhappy band, leave your womanly fastnesses, you whom the male sex has discarded and the female will not adopt. The knife has cut out the stings of love and by that wounding you are pure. A mixture are you of two ages—child and greybeard and nought between. Take your seats, fathers in name alone. Come new lords, come sterile senate, throng your leader Eutropius. Fill the judgement-seat, not the bedchamber. Change your habits and learn to follow the consul's chair, not the woman's litter.

"I would not cite examples from remote antiquity nor count the countless magistrates of past history whom he thus outrages. But think how the reverence due to all past ages will be impaired, on how many centuries one man's shame will set its mark. Amid the annals that record the name of Arinthaëus,¹ his master, will be found the slave, and he will enter his own honours as equal to those of his owner. The slaves of Egypt's kings have ever been a curse to the world; behold I suffer from a worse than Pothinus and bear a wrong more flagrant than that of which Egypt was once the scene. Pothinus' sword at Alexandria spilled the blood of a single consul;² Eutropius brings dishonour on all.

"If the fate of subjects cannot move thee, yet have thou regard for princes, for your common cause, and remove this stain on royalty. The consulship is the sole office the emperor deigns to accept; alternately the honour passes to Court and Senate. Thou who hast thyself been four times consul spare succeeding consuls this infamy. I pray thee, protect the fasces, so often thine, from the pollution of a eunuch's hand; let not the omens handed down in our sacred books, let not those robes of mine wherewith I have subdued everything within Ocean's stream, be plunged in so great darkness and trodden under foot. What kind of wars can we wage now that a eunuch takes the auspices? What marriage, what harvest will be fruitful? What fertility, what abundance is possible beneath a consul stricken with sterility? If eunuchs shall give judgement and determine laws, then let men card wool and live like the Amazons, confusion and licence dispossessing the order of nature.

"What need of further words? Why, Stilicho, dost thou delay to conquer because ashamed to fight? Knowest thou not that the viler a foe the greater the rejoicing at his overthrow? His defeat of the pirates extended the fame of great Pompey; his victory in the Servile War gave an added glory to Crassus. Thou acceptest my charge: I recognize the clamour that terrified the East and drove Gildo and his Moors to their destruction. Why sound the trump of war? No need to attack him with javelin or spear. At the crack of the whip will be bowed the back that has felt its blows. Even so when after many years the Scythian army came back from the wars and was met on the confines of its native land by the usurping crowd of slaves who sought to keep their returning masters from their country; with displayed whips they routed the armed ranks; back from its enterprise the familiar terror drove the servile mob, and at threat of the lash the bondsman's sword grew dull." The nobly born Eutropius who but lately wielded the reins of supreme power once more fears the familiar blows; and, soon to feel the wonted shackles about his halting feet, he laments that his threats against his masters have idly vanished. Fortune, having had enough of her mad freak, has thrust him forth from his high office and restored him to his old way of life. He now prepares to hew wood with axe other than the consular and is at last scourged with the rods he once proudly carried. To the punishment set in motion by him when consul he himself as consul succumbed; the year that brought him his robe of office brought him his exile. That omen of evil augury for the people turns against itself, the portent of that consulship brings ruin to the consul. That name erased, our annals breathe once more, and better health is restored to the palace now that it has at

last vomited forth its poison. His friends deny him, his accomplices abandon him; in his fall is involved all the eunuch band, overcome not in battle, subdued not by strife—they may not die a man's death. A mere stroke of the pen has wrought their undoing, a simple letter has fulfilled Mars' savage work.