of Severus was to affiliate himself and his elder son to the Antonines by a sort of spurious and posthumous adop­tion. The prestige of the old name, even when gained in this illegitimate way, was probably worth a good deal. Bassianus, the elder son of Severus, thereafter known as Aurelius Antoninus, was named Cæsar in place of Albinus, and was thus marked out as successor to his father. "With­out interrupting the march of his forces, Severus con­trived to make an excursion to Rome. Here he availed himself with much subtlety of the sympathy many senators were known to have felt for Niger. Though lie was so far faithful to the decree passed by his own advice that he put no senator to death, yet he banished and impoverished many whose presence or influence seemed dangerous or inconvenient to his prospects. Of the sufferers probably few had ever seen or communicated with Niger.

The collision between the forces of Severus and Albinus was the most violent that had taken place between Roman troops since the mighty contest at Philippi. The decisive engagement was fought in February of the year 197 on the plain between the Rhone and the Saône, to the north of Lyons. Dio tells us that 150,000 men fought on each side. The fortunes of Severus were, to all appearance, at one stage of the battle as hopeless as those of Julius Cæsar were for some hours during the battle of Munda. The tide was turned by the same means in both cases—by the personal conduct and bravery of the commander.

By this crowning victory Severus was released from all need for disguise, and “ poured forth on the civil popula­tion all the wrath which he had been storing up for a long time ” (Dio). He particularly frightened the senate by calling himself the son of Marcus and brother of Commodus, whom he had before insulted. And he read a speech in which he declared that the severity and cruelty of Sulla, Marius, and Augustus had proved to be safer policy than the clemency of Pompey and Julius Cæsar, which had wrought their ruin. He ended with an apology for Cornmodus and bitter reproaches against the senate for their sympathy with his assassins. Over sixty senators were arrested, on a charge of having adhered to Albinus, and half of them were put to death. In most instances the charge was merely a pretence to enable the emperor to crush out the forward and dangerous spirits in the senate. The murderers of Commodus were punished; Commodus himself was deified ; and on the monuments from this time onward Severus figures as the brother of that reproduction of all the vice and cruelty of Nero with the refinement left out.

The next years (197-202) were devoted by Severus to one of the dominant ideas of the empire from its earliest days—war against the Parthians. The results to which Trajan and Verus had aspired were now fully attained, and Mesopotamia was definitely established as a Roman pro­vince. Part of the time was spent in the exploration of Egypt, in respect of which Dio takes opportunity to say that Severus was not the man to leave anything human or divine uninvestigated. The emperor returned to enjoy a well- earned triumph, commemorated to this day by the arch in Rome which bears his name. During the six years which followed (202-208) Severus resided at Rome and gave his attention to the organization of the empire. No doubt his vigorous influence was felt to its remotest corners, but our historians desert us at this point and leave us for the most part to the important but dim and defective conclusions to be drawn from the abundant monumental records of the reign. Only two or three events in the civil history of this period are fully narrated by the ancient writers. The first of these is the festival of the Decennalia, or rejoicings in the tenth year of the emperor’s reign. Contemporaneous with this festival was the marriage of Aurelius Antoninus

(Caracalla) with Plautilla, the daughter of Plautianus, com­mander of the reorganized Prætorian guards. This officer holds a conspicuous position in the ancient accounts of the reign, yet it is all but impossible to believe a good deal that we are told concerning him. Nevertheless, without a clear view of the career of Plautianus, it is difficult to grasp definitely some important features in the character of Severus, or to appreciate exactly the nature of his government. According to Dio and Herodian, Plautianus was allowed for years to exercise and abuse the whole power of the emperor, so far as it did not relate to the actual conduct of war. He was cruel, arrogant, and corrupt; and the whole empire groaned under his exac­tions. Geta, the brother of Severus, tried to open the emperor’s eyes, but the licence of Plautianus was merely restricted for a moment, to be bestowed again in full. Finally, in 203 this second Sejanus fell a victim to an intrigue set on foot by his own son-in-law Antoninus (Caracalla), the details of which were not clearly known even to contemporary writers. It is hard to see in what way we are to reconcile this history with the known facts of Severus’s character and career, unless we assume that Plautianus was really the instrument of his master for the execution of his new policy towards the senate and the senatorial provinces. That Plautianus abused his authority and brought about his own fall is probable enough,—also that Severus had destined him at one time for the guardian­ship of his sons. Plautianus was succeeded in his office by two men, one of whom was the celebrated jurist Papinian.

Severus spent the last three years of his life (208-211) in Britain, amidst constant and not very successful war­fare, which he is said to have provoked partly to strengthen the discipline and powers of the legions, partly to wean his sons from their evil courses by hard military service. He died at York in February of the year 211. There are vague traditions that his death was in some way hastened by Caracalla. This prince had been, since about 197, nominally joint emperor with his father, so that no ceremony was needed for his recognition as monarch.

The natural gifts of Severus were of no high or unusual order. He had a clear head, promptitude, resolution, tenacity, and great organizing power, hut no touch of genius. That he was cruel cannot be questioned, but his cruelty was of the calculating kind, and always clearly directed to some end. He threw the head of Niger over the ramparts of Byzantium, but merely as the best means of procuring a surrender of the stubbornly defended fortress. The head of Albinus he exhibited at Rome, but only as a warning to the capital to tamper no more with pretenders. The children of Niger were held as hostages and kindly treated so long as they might possibly afford a useful basis for negotiation with their father ; when ho was defeated they were killed, lest from among them should arise a claimant for the imperial power. Stern and barbarous punishment was always meted out by Severus to the conquered foe, but terror was deemed the best guarantee for peace. He felt no scruples of conscience or honour if he thought his interest at stake, but he was not wont to take an excited or exaggerated view of what his interest required. He used or destroyed men and institutions alike with cool judgment and a single eye to the main purpose of his life, the secure establishment of his dynasty. The few traces of aimless savagery which we find in the ancient narra­tives are probably the result of fear working on the imagination of the time.

As a soldier Severus was personally brave, but he can hardly be called a general, in spite of his successful campaigns. He was rather the organizer of victory than the actual author of it. The operations against Niger were carried out entirely by his officers. Dio even declares that the final battle with Albinus was the first at which Severus had ever been actually present. When a war was going on he was constantly travelling over the scene of it, planning it and instilling into the army his own pertinacious spirit, but the actual fighting was usually left to others. His treat­ment of the army is the most characteristic feature of his reign. He frankly broke with the decent conventions of the Augustan constitution, ignored the senate, and candidly based his rule upon force. The only title he ever laid to the throne was the *pronunciamiento* of the legions, whose adherence to his cause he commemorated