even on the coinage of the realm. The legions voted him the adopted son of Marcus Aurelius ; the legions associated with him Caracalla in the government of the empire. Severus strove earnestly to wed the army as a whole to the support of his dynasty. He increased enormously the material gains and the honorary distinc­tions of the service, so that he was charged with corrupting the troops. Yet it cannot be denied that, all things considered, he left the army of the empire more efficient than he found it. He increased the strength of it by three legions, and turned the Prætorians, heretofore a flabby body without military experience or instinct, into a chosen corps of veterans. Their ranks were filled by promotion from all the legions on service, whereas pre­viously there had been special enlistment from Italy and one or two of the neighbouring provinces. It was hoped that these picked men would form a force on which an emperor could rely in an emergency. But to meet the possibility of a legionary revolt in the provinces, one of the fundamental principles of the Augustan empire was abrogated : Italy became a province, and troops of the regular army were quartered in it under the direct command of the emperor. Further to obviate the risk of revolution, the great commands in the provinces were broken up, so that, excepting on the turbulent eastern frontier, it was not possible for a commander to dispose of troops numerous enough to render him dangerous to the government.

But, while the policy of Severus was primarily a family policy, he was by no means careless of the general security and welfare of the empire. Only in one instance, the destruction of Byzantium, did he weaken its defences for his own private ends—an error for which his successors paid dearly, when the Goths came to dominate the Euxine. The constantly troublesome Danubian regions re­ceived the special attention of the emperor, but all over the realm the status and privileges of communities and districts were recast in the way that seemed likely to conduce to their prosperity. The administration acquired more and more of a military character, in Italy as well as in the provinces. Retired military officers now filled many of the posts formerly reserved for civilians of equestrian rank. The præfect of the Prætorians received large civil and judi­cial powers, so that the investment of Papinian with the office was less unnatural than it at first sight seems. The alliance between Severus and the jurisconsults had important consequences. While he gave them new importance in the body politic, and co-operated with them in the work of legal reform, they did him material service by working an absolutist view of the government into the texture of Roman law. Of the legal changes of the reign, important as they were, we can only mention a few details. The emperor himself was a devoted and upright judge, but he struck a great blow at the purity of the law by transferring the exercise of imperial jurisdic­tion from the forum to the palace. He sharpened in many respects the law of treason, put an end to the time-honoured *quaestiones perpetuae,* altered largely that important section of the law which defined the rights of the fiscus, and developed further the social policy which Augustus had embodied in the *lex Julia de adulteriis* and the *lex Papia Poppaea.*

Severus boldly adopted as an official designation the autocratic title of *dominus,* which the better of his predecessors had renounced, and with which the worse had only toyed, as Domitian, whom Martial did not hesitate to call “his lord and his god.” During Severus’s reign the senate was absolutely powerless ; he took all initiative into his hands. He broke down the distinction between the servants of the senate and the servants of the emperor. All nominations to office or function passed under his scrutiny. The estimation of the old consular and other republican titles was diminished. The growth of capacity in the senate was effectually checked by cutting off the tallest of the poppy-heads early in the reign. The senate became a mere registration office for the imperial determinations, and its members, as has been well said, a choir for drawling conventional hymns of praise in honour of the monarch. Even the nominal restoration of the senate’s power at the time of Alexander Severus, and the accession of so-called “senatorial emperors” later on, did not efface the work of Septimius Severus, which was resumed and carried to its fulfil­ment by Diocletian.

It only remains to say a few words of the emperor’s attitude towards literature, art, and religion. No period in the history of Latin literature is so barren as the reign of Severus. Many later periods—the age of Stilicho, for example—shine brilliantly by com­parison. The only great Latin writers are the Christians Tertullian and Cyprian. The Greek literature of the period is richer, but not owing to any patronage of the emperor, except perhaps in the case of Dio Cassius, who, though no admirer of Severus, attributes to encouragement received from him the execution of the great his­torical work which has come down to our time. The numerous restorations of ancient buildings and the many new constructions carried out by Severus show that he was not insensible to the artistic glories of the past ; and he is known to have paid much attention to works of art in foreign countries where his duties took him. But he was in no sense a patron or connoisseur of art. As to religion,

if we may trust Dio, one of the most superstitious of historians, Severus was one of the most superstitious of monarchs. But apart from that it is difficult to say what was his influence on the religious currents of the time. He probably did a good deal to strengthen and extend the official cult of the imperial family, which had been greatly developed during the prosperous times of the Antonines. But what he thought of Christianity, Judaism, or the Oriental mysticism to which his wife Julia Domna gave such an impulse in the succeeding reign, it is impossible to say. We may best conclude that his religious sympathies were wide, since tradition has not painted him as the partisan of any one form of worship.

The energy and dominance of Severus’s character and his capacity for rule may be deemed, without fancifulness, to be traceable in the numerous representations of his features which have survived to our days.

The authorities for this emperor’s reign are fairly full and satisfactory, con­sidering the general scantiness of the imperial records. Severus himself wrote an autobiography which was regarded as candid and trustworthy on the whole. The events of the reign were recorded by several contemporaries. The first place among these must be given to Dio Cassius, who stands to the empire in much the same relation as Livy to the republic. He became a senator in the year when Marcus Aurelius died (180) and retained that dignity for more than fifty years. He was well acquainted with Severus, and was near enough the centre of affairs to know the real nature of events, without being great enough to have personal motives for warping the record. Though this portion of Dio’s history no longer exists in its original form, we have copious extracts from it, made by Xiphilinus, an ecclesiastic of the 11th century. The faults which have impaired the credit of Dio’s great work in its earlier portions,—his lack of the critical faculty, his inexact knowledge of the earlier Roman institutions, his passion for signs from heaven,—could do little injury to the narrative of an eye-witness; and he must here make upon the attentive reader the impression of unusual freedom from the commonest vices of history,—passion, prejudice, and insincerity. His Greek, too, stands in agreeable contrast to the debased Latin of the “scriptores historiae Augustae.” The Greek writer Herodian was also a contemporary of Severus, but the mere fact that we know nothing of his life is in itself enough to show that his opportunities were not so great as those of Dio. The reputation of Herodian, who was used as the main authority for the times of Severus by Tillemont and Gibbon, has not been proof against the criticism of recent scholars. His faults are those of rhetoric and exaggeration. His narrative is probably in many places not independent of Dio. The writers known as the “ scriptores historiae Augustae” are also of considerable importance,—particularly in the lives of Didius Julianus, Severus, Pescennius Niger, and Caracalla, attributed to Ælius Spartianus ; those of Clodius Albinus and Opilius Macrinus to Julius Capitolinus; those of Antoninus Diadumenus, Antoninus Heliogabalus, and Alexander- Severus to Lampridius. The personal history of Severus and his family is known to us mainly through these writers. Their principal authority was most probably L. Marius Maximus, a younger contemporary of Septimius Severus, who wrote, in continuation of the work of Suetonius, the lives of eleven emperors from Trajan to Heliogabalus inclusive. If we may believe a few words about him dropped by Ammianus Marcellinus, he was a kind of prose Juvenal, whose uniformly dark pigments can hardly have sufficed to paint a true picture even of his own times. The very numerous inscriptions belonging to the age of Septimius Severus enable us to control at many points and largely to supplement the literary records of his reign, particularly as regards the details of his administration. The juridical works of Justinian’s epoch embody much that throws light on the government of Severus.

The principal modem works relating to this emperor, after Tillemont and Gibbon, are—J. J. Schulte, *De Imperatore L. Septimio Severo,* Münster, 1867 ; Hüfner, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisers L. Septimius Severus,* Giessen, 1875 ; *Untersuchungen zur römischen Kaisergeschichte,* ed. by M. Budinger ; H. Schiller, *Geschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit,* Gotha, 1880-83 ; De Ceuleneer, *Essai sur la Vie et le Règne de Septime Sévère,* Brussels, 1880 ; Réville, *La Religion à Rome sous les Sévères,* Paris, 1886. Controversy about the many disputed matters pertaining to Severus has been intentionally avoided in what has been said above. (J. S. R.)

SEVERUS, Marcus Aurelius Alexander, Roman emperor from 222 to 235, was of Syrian parentage, and was born at Area near the Syrian Tripolis (now 'Irka ; Yákút, iii. 653 ; *cf.* Gen. x. 17), probably in the year 205. His father Gessius Marcianus held office more than once as an imperial procurator ; his mother Julia Mamæa was the daughter of Julia Mæsa, the scheming and ambitious lady of Emesa who had succeeded in raising her grand­son Elagabalus to the throne of the Cæsars ; see the genealogical table in Heliogabalus. His original name was Alexius Bassianus, but he changed it in 221, when Mæsa persuaded Elagabalus to adopt his cousin as suc­cessor and create him Cæsar. In the next year Elagabalus was murdered, and Alexander was proclaimed by the Prætorians and accepted by the senate. He was then a mere lad, amiable, well-meaning, but somewhat weak, and entirely under the dominion of his mother, a woman of many virtues, who surrounded her son with wise counsel­lors, watched over the development of his character, and improved the tone of the administration, but on the other hand was inordinately jealous of her influence, and alien­ated the army by extreme parsimony, while neither she nor her son had a strong enough hand to keep tight the reins of military discipline. Mutinies became frequent in all parts of the empire : to one of them the life of the prætorian præfect Ulpian was sacrificed ; another compelled