

TACITUS
THE AGRICOLA AND GERMANIA

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY

R. B. TOWNSHEND, M.A.

LATE SCHOLAR OF

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

METHUEN & CO.

36 ESSEX STREET, W.C.

LONDON

1894

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

I. Germany taken as a whole is divided from Gaul, Rhaetia and Pannonia¹ by the Rhine and the Danube. Mountains divide it from Sarmatia and Dacia,² and mutual fear is also a barrier between the peoples. On the far side it is encircled by the ocean, which sweeps around broad promontories and islands³ of unknown extent, where dwell kings and tribes, whose existence has only been recently revealed to us by war. Rising amid the untrodden fastnesses of the Rhaetic Alps, the Rhine flows with a slight westerly curve down to its outlet in the North Sea. The Danube, issuing from the gentle slopes of the Black Forest, visits many peoples in its course until it forces its way into the Black Sea through six mouths, whilst a seventh channel loses itself in the marshes.

II. In my opinion the Germans are the original inhabitants of the country, and are almost entirely unalloyed by admixture with immigrant tribes from without. I ground this opinion upon the fact that ancient migrations took place not by land but by sea, and

¹ *i.e.*, From France and the south-western part of Austro-Hungary.

² Russia and Roumania.

³ Scandinavia was supposed to be an archipelago of islands.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

that seldom indeed are those vast and, I may say, hostile seas that encompass them visited by a ship from our part of the world. And, moreover, apart from the perils of that terrible unknown ocean, no man would think of abandoning Asia or Africa or Italy and seeking a home in Germany, with its uninviting lands and ungenial climate, its dreary aspect and its social gloom, if it were not his native place.

The sagas, which are the sole record of their past history, say that the God Tuisto¹ sprang from the earth, and that he and his son Mannus were the authors and founders of the race. To Mannus they ascribe three sons, whose names are borne respectively by the Ingaevones² next to the ocean, the Herminones in the middle of the country, and the Iscaevones in the rest of it. Others, with true mythological license, give the deity several more sons, from whom are derived more tribal names, such as Marsians, Gambrivians, Suabians, and Vandals; and these names are both genuine and ancient. The name Germany, however, is new and of recent application, owing to the fact that the first of these peoples to cross the Rhine and dispossess the Gauls, a tribe now known as the Tungrians, then got the name of "Germans". Thus what was originally a name given to a tribe and not that of a race gradually came to be accepted, so that all men of the race were

¹ Or Tuisco, the deity that gives its name to Tuesday.

² "Grimm's identification of the Ingaevones with the Saxons, of the Iscaevones with the Franks, and of the Herminones with the Thuringians is convenient" (Stubbs, *Const. Hist.*, i. 38).

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

called Germans, by the victorious tribe first as a name of fear, and by themselves afterwards when the name had once been coined.

III. Tradition goes so far as to say that Hercules¹ visited their country, and they raise a hymn in his praise, as the pattern of all valiant men, as they approach the field of battle. They have also a kind of song which they chaunt to fire their courage (they call it "barding"²), and from this chaunt they draw an augury of the issue of the coming fray. For they inspire terror in the foe, or become flurried themselves according to the sound that goes up from the host. It is not so much any articulate expression of words as a war-like chorus. The great aim is to produce a hoarse tempestuous roar, every man holding his shield before his mouth to increase the volume and the depth of tone by reverberation.

Ulysses also, as some think, sailed into the northern ocean, in the course of his long mythical wanderings, and trod on German soil, and they maintain that Asburg on the Rhine, which is an inhabited place at the present day,

¹ Tacitus may have taken Thor for a northern Hercules, from the nature of his exploits, or he may have identified the Roman demi-god with Irmin, son of Wuotan.

² Possibly an interpolation, "bard" being a Celtic and not a Teutonic word, or it may be that Tacitus got this information through a Celtic channel. Orelli reads "baritum". The "baritus" was a precisely similar war-cry raised, so Ammianus tells us, at a later date, by the Roman legionaries on going into battle. But in his time the legionaries were largely composed of Germans, and they may very well have introduced a practice of their own into the ranks of the Roman regulars.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

was both founded and named by him ; nay, more, they assert that an altar, consecrated to Ulysses, with the name of his father, Laertes, also on it, was once found on this very spot, and that certain monuments and tombs inscribed with Greek characters are still to be seen on the confines of Germany and Rhaetia. I have no intention of bringing forward evidence either in order to confirm these statements or to refute them ; every man must give or withhold his assent as he is inclined.

IV. For myself I am disposed to side with those who hold that the German peoples have never intermarried with alien stocks, but have always stood forth as a race rooted in the soil, pure and unlike every other. This is why, extraordinarily numerous as the Germans are, they all possess precisely the same physical characteristics,—fierce blue eyes, red hair, and large frames which are good only for a spurt ; they certainly have not a corresponding power of endurance for hard work, while, although inured by the nature of their climate and soil to hunger and cold, they have never learnt to support heat and thirst.

V. Their land, notwithstanding considerable local diversities, as a rule consists of tangled forests and dismal swamps, the rainfall being greater on the side towards Gaul, while the side facing Noricum and Pannonia is more exposed to winds. It is fairly fertile, though fruit trees do not flourish, and it is a good grazing country, but the cattle are usually stunted ; our fine powerful oxen with their spreading horns are positively unknown ; their pride is in large herds, which constitute

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

their sole and most highly prized form of wealth. Silver and gold the gods have denied them, but whether in mercy or in anger I hesitate to say ; neither would I be understood to affirm that Germany possesses no veins of silver or gold, for nobody has ever looked for them. They make a difference in the value they set upon the precious metals for use and for commerce. One may see amongst them vessels of silver, that have been officially presented to their envoys and chiefs, put to the same common uses as pots of clay, although those tribes that are on our border highly appreciate gold and silver for the purposes of trade, and recognise and preferentially accept some varieties of our coins. The interior tribes still exchange by barter after the more primitive and ancient fashion. They like money that is old and familiar, in the form of pieces having deeply-indented rims,¹ and bearing the impression of a two-horse chariot. Silver, too, rather than gold attracts them, not that they are any fonder of it as a metal, but because the reckoning of silver coins is easier for men who deal in a variety of cheap articles.

VI. Even iron is by no means abundant with them, as we may gather from the character of their weapons. Only a few have swords and heavy spears. They carry lances, "frameae"² as they call them, with the iron point narrow and short, but so sharp and so easy

¹ Notches were filed in the rim of the coin after it was struck to show that it was not a mere disk of copper coated with silver.—*Sir John Evans.*

² The old German word is "pfriemen".

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

to handle that they employ them either for stabbing¹ or for throwing as occasion demands. A lance and a shield are arms enough for a horseman ; the footmen have also darts to hurl : each man carries several, and, being naked or only lightly clad with a little cloak, they can hurl them to an immense distance. They make no display of ornament, only they are very careful in the colours they use for the devices on their shields. Few possess such a thing as a breastplate, and only a man or two here and there a helmet or headpiece.

Their horses are not remarkable for beauty or speed, neither are they trained to complex evolutions like ours ; the riders charge straight forward, or wheel in a single turn to the right, the formation of the troop being such that there is no rear rank. Generally speaking, the footmen are the most numerous, and the fighting line therefore is composed of both arms combined, all the fastest runners among the young men being chosen for the van, and by their great speed of foot being admirably suited for a cavalry engagement.² Their number, moreover, is exactly fixed ; there are one hundred of them from every village ; these chosen youths are always known as "The Hundred" among their own folk ; and thus what was originally a mere number, has grown to be an actual title of honour.

Their line of battle is drawn up in wedge-shaped

¹ Like the "stabbing assegai" of the Zulus.

² "At Waterloo the Scots Greys charged with a 92nd Highlander hanging on to each stirrup."—*Lord Roberts' speech at the St. Andrew's-day dinner, 30th November, 1893.*

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

columns ; to fall back, however, provided only a man comes on again, is held to be good tactics, not cowardice. Even in a defeat they carry off the bodies of their comrades. Throwing away the shield is the crowning disgrace, and a man who has so dishonoured himself may neither take part in the rites of religion nor enter the general assembly ; many such survivors from the battlefield have been known to end their shame by hanging themselves.

VII. They choose their kings for their noble birth, their generals for their prowess : the king's power is neither unlimited nor arbitrary, and the generals owe their authority less to their military rank than to their example and the admiration they excite by it, if they are dashing, if they are conspicuous, if they charge ahead of the line. But they may not execute, they may not bind, they may not even strike a delinquent ; those are the privileges solely of the priests, and they do such things not as a form of military punishment nor at the generals' bidding, but as if such were the express commands of the deity whom they believe to be present on the field ; and they carry with them into battle certain images and statues brought out of the sacred groves.

But the sharpest spur to their valour is that each separate squadron or column is not a mere casual aggregation of chance-comers, but is composed of men of one family and one kin ; and their households go with them to the field, and the shrieks of their women and the wailings of their children ring in their ears. Each man feels bound to play the hero before such witnesses

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

and to earn their most coveted praise. To his mother and to his wife he brings his wounds ; and they do not shrink from counting them, nor from searching them, while they carry food to the fighters and give them encouragement

VIII. Their traditions tell that more than once, when a German line was wavering on the point of giving way, the women rallied it, urgently entreating the men to fight on, baring their breasts and crying out that their captivity was at hand. Captivity for their women is a thing the men abhor far more than for themselves ; so that, as a matter of fact, we always obtain the firmest hold over those states which are compelled to include amongst the hostages they send us some maidens of noble birth. Nay, the Germans even ascribe to women a certain inspiration and power of prophecy ; they do not either despise the advice they give or neglect their forecasts. Most of their tribes long gave divine honours to Velea, whom we saw as a prisoner here in the days of the Emperor Vespasian, of blessed memory ; but there was also an Aurinia¹ in earlier times, and many others likewise, whom they venerated sincerely enough, though not with any idea of making goddesses of them.

IX. Mercury² is their principal divinity, and upon

¹ Others read "Albruna" ; but perhaps it should be "aliruna," an old word for prophetess.

² The identification of the Teutonic deities in their Latin garb is not easy. Grimm says: "The net result is that in Latin records dealing with Germany and her gods we are warranted in interpreting Mercurius as Wuotan, Jupiter as Donar, and Mars as Ziu" (*Teutonic Mythology*, p. 130 ; Stallybrass' translation).

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

certain days their religion requires that in their sacrifices to him they should include human victims. Hercules and Mars are appeased with offerings of the lower animals, and some of the Suabians also offer sacrifice to Isis.¹ From what sources this foreign cult took its rise I have failed to discover, further than that the actual emblem of the goddess being made in the form of a Liburnian galley points to the worship having been imported from without.

For the rest, the thought of confining their gods within walls, or of making any human face the model after which to represent the divine image, seems to them out of keeping with the dignity of celestial beings. They consecrate woods and groves to them, and under the names of the various deities they invoke that invisible presence which is apprehended only by the reverent mind.

X. To omens and the drawing of lots they pay the very greatest attention. Their method of divining by the lot is simple. They lop a branch from a fruit tree and cut off the twigs: they mark these differently in order to distinguish them apart, and they then cast them loosely, at haphazard, on a white robe. Then the priest of the community, if it is going to be a public divination, or if a private one, the head of the household, offers a prayer to the gods, and turning up his eyes to heaven he draws three twigs, one at a time, and he interprets those which he has drawn according to the

¹ It is very hard to say who "Isis" can be. Holda and Bertha are possible suggestions.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

marks previously set upon them. If the interpretation proves to be unfavourable, no further divination on the same question takes place that day. If it is favourable, the auspices have still to be consulted. We, too, are familiar with the practice of drawing auguries from the flight and the cries of birds. Peculiar to the German race is the importance attached to certain forecasts and warnings afforded by horses as well. Horses are kept at the public charges in the sacred woods and groves; they are white in colour and are never desecrated by any toil in the service of man; they are harnessed to a sacred car, and the priest and the king or the chief of the state walk beside them and note with the utmost care their neighings and snortings. In no other omen have they firmer faith, and this holds good not only among the common people but also among the chiefs and priests: for these latter, while considering themselves to be the ministers of the gods, think that the sacred steeds are their mouthpieces.

They have also another method of consulting the omens, which is used to ascertain beforehand the issue of wars of grave importance. A man of the nation with which they are at war is captured by some means or other, and is put to fight with a champion of their own nation, armed each with his national weapons; the victory of the one or the other is thought to foretell the event of the war.

XI. Upon minor matters the chiefs deliberate; upon greater matters the general assembly, with the reservation that, in the latter case, where the popular vote

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

settles the question, these matters, too, must be thoroughly debated at a meeting of the chiefs. The general assembly is held regularly on fixed days (except in the instance of a sudden emergency arising) either at new or at full moon, for they hold these times to be the most auspicious date for entering upon their discussions. They reckon time by nights instead of by days as we do, and all their engagements and arrangements are made on this system; the day is counted in with the previous night.

Their perfect independence of one another involves this drawback, that they never reach their trysting-place together nor obey the conditions of their summons, but two or three days are always wasted by the unpunctuality of the late comers. When the general opinion is that the time has come to begin, they all take their seats, arms in hand. Silence is commanded by the priests, on whom now devolves the task of maintaining order. Then the king or a chief, according to the speaker's age or rank or fame or eloquence, is heard by the assembly; but he is listened to rather as a man whose influential character carries weight than as one who has the power to command. If the proposal finds no favour, its rejection is signified by groaning; if it is accepted, the warriors clash their spears. Approval expressed by the clashing of arms is the form of assent held in the highest honour.

XII. Before the general assembly, likewise, criminals may be charged and may be tried for their lives. The penalties vary with the crime. Traitors and renegades

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

are hung on a tree ; cowards and recreants and infamous wretches are pressed under a hurdle into the slime of a morass and suffocated. This difference in the methods of execution is not meaningless, the idea being that crimes should be made a public example of, but that abominations should be buried out of sight. Minor offences are punished proportionately, the offender on conviction being fined in a number of horses or cattle ; part of the fine goes to the king or to the State, part to the man whose wrongs are being righted, or to his family.

It is also in these assemblies that chiefs are chosen to administer justice throughout the districts and villages. Each chief so chosen has the assistance of a hundred of the commonalty, who are associated with him ¹ in order to advise him and enforce his decisions.

XIII. All business, public and private, is transacted arms in hand ; custom, however, forbids any one to carry arms before the community has approved his claim to do so. When the time comes the young man is formally presented with a shield and a lance in the presence of the assembly either by some one of the chiefs, or by his own father, or his relatives. This with them is equivalent to the taking of the toga with us : it is the young man's first admission to public life ; before this he is a part

¹ Dr. Latham considers this to be the origin of the Hundred as a territorial division. These attendants *comites*, chosen from the common people, for local purposes, in time of peace, whose number is exactly fixed at a hundred, seem to be different from the other *comites*, mentioned in the next chapter, of noble birth in many cases and of varying number, who formed a chief's body-guard and fought around him in war.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

of the household, henceforward he is a member of the State. Illustrious birth or great services rendered by the family may confer the rank of chief even upon mere youths ; such youths associate themselves with the others whose strength is more matured and whose quality has been already put to the proof ; nor is it considered to be any sort of derogation for them to be seen in a chief's body-guard.¹ In fact, among the henchmen or retainers composing the body-guards there are varying degrees of rank conferred by the chief whom they follow, and there is an eager rivalry between the retainers for the post of honour next their chief, as well as between the different chiefs for the honour of having the most numerous and the most valiant body-guard. Here lie dignity and strength. To be perpetually surrounded by a large train of picked young warriors is a distinction in peace and a protection in war. Nor is it merely in his own nation alone that each chieftain enjoys his reputation and his fame if he stands forth pre-eminent by the number and the valour of his retinue, but they are spread abroad among the neighbouring states as well ; em-

¹ Dr. Latham says "comitatus—comites. The German of this translation was probably some older form of the Anglo-Saxon *gesið*, plural, *ge-si-ðas* = retainers."

Mr. Thomas Hodgkin, in his work *Theodoric the Goth*, prefers to translate *comes* by *henchman*.

The title *count* is actually derived from *comes* (or rather from the acc. *comitem*), and *comes* became in later times the term for a member of a knightly order. Some historians have seen in the personal devotion of the *comites* to their *princeps* a foreshadowing of the relation of vassal and lord, but Dr. Stubbs, following Waitz, entirely discards this theory (*Const. Hist.*, i. 251).

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

bassies come specially to court the alliance of such men, and compliment them with gifts, and their mere reputation is enough in many cases virtually to decide a war.

XIV. Upon the field of battle the chief is bound in honour not to let himself be surpassed in valour, and his retainers are equally bound to rival the valour of their chief. Furthermore, for one of the retainers to come back alive from the field where his chief has fallen is from that day forward an infamy and a reproach during all the rest of his life. To defend him, to guard him, nay, to give to him the glory of their own feats of valour, is the perfection of their loyalty. The chiefs fight for victory ; the body-guard for their chief.

If a State lies long rusting in peace and inactivity, off go most of the noble youths belonging to it, of their own accord, to join other nations where a war of some sort is going on ; because peace is repulsive to the race, and the path to glory lies through danger, and also because a numerous band of retainers can only be maintained by war and rapine. For they claim from the liberality of their chief the coveted war-horse and the blood-stained spear of victory that they desire. As a substitute for pay they have repasts and banquets, coarse it may be, but abundant. Forays and plunderings supply the means of keeping a free table. These men can be far less easily prevailed upon to plough the soil and wait for the ingathering than to challenge the enemy and take wounds as their reward. In truth, they regard it as a dull and stupid thing to painfully accu-

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

mulate by the sweat of the brow what might be won by a little blood.

XV. In the intervals of wars they spend much of their time in hunting and still more in doing nothing, without any sort of object except sleeping and eating, all the boldest and most warlike men having no employment whatsoever, while the care of the house and its belongings and the cultivation of the fields are abandoned to the women and old men and to the weaklings of the family. The warriors lie torpid. Amazing inconsistency ! The same men love sloth and hate peace.

It is customary for the chiefs to receive a share of the herds and of the crops, given voluntarily and individually by the members of the community. They accept this as an honour, and their needs are also supplied thereby. They take especial pleasure in gifts from neighbouring tribes, which come not only from individuals, but from the general body as well, and take the form of choice steeds, massive arms, pendants, and necklets. They have, moreover, learnt from us by this time to accept money.

XVI. The fact is well known that the peoples of Germany do not dwell in cities, and will not even suffer their settlements to adjoin each other. They plant themselves separately and independently at some favourite spring or plain or grove. They do not lay out their villages like ours, where the houses join and are massed together, but every man makes his abode with a clear space round it, possibly as a precaution against fires, or perhaps from pure ignorance of the art

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

of building. They never use quarry stone, or tiles, but employ rough timber for everything, with an entire disregard of beauty and elegance. They do, however, plaster parts of their houses with some care, using an earth so pure and bright that the effect resembles coloured designs done with paint. They likewise make a practice of digging cellars, which they cover with a heap of manure, as winter refuges and as storehouses for their crops, for two reasons : firstly, the frost does not penetrate into such places, and secondly, if any enemy happens to invade the country, he plunders everything above ground, but these hidden and buried stores escape, because he either does not know of their existence or has no time to hunt for them.

XVII. Their invariable dress is a cloak fastened with a brooch, or, failing that, a thorn. With nothing on except this they pass whole days indoors around the hearth where the fire is burning. It is a sign of great wealth to wear underclothing, which in Germany is not loose and flowing like that of the Sclavonians and Parthians, but fits close and follows the shape of the limbs. They also wear furs ; but those nearest our frontier are beginning to leave them off, while those in the farther part of the country, not getting any clothing through the channels of trade, set great store by them. Some sorts of animals are held in greater esteem than others, and the furs obtained from them are dotted over with snippets from the pelts of strange beasts which are found in the outside ocean and the unknown sea.

The women dress like the men, only they frequently

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

wear a vesture woven from flax, with a purple pattern on it; there are no sleeves to the upper part of this garment, the whole arm being left bare, and the upper part of the breast is likewise uncovered.

XVIII. For all that, the marriage bond is strict, and no feature in their mode of life is more creditable to them than this. Unlike the great majority of barbarians, they are content with one wife: very few of them have more than one, and these few exceptions are not due to wantonness; they are cases of men of high rank, to whom several matrimonial alliances have been offered from motives of policy. The wife does not bring a dowry to her husband; on the contrary, he offers one to her. This part of the affair is arranged by her parents and kinsmen, and they pass judgment on the wedding gifts, which are no toys collected to suit feminine frivolities or adorn a bride; instead of that, they consist of oxen, and a bridled horse, and shield and spear and sword. These are the presents that await her as a wife, and her own wedding present to her husband in return is a gift of arms. This is the strongest bond of union—this the mystery of marriage; these are their gods of wedded life. Lest the woman should think that masculine courage and the perils of war lie beyond her sphere, these tokens remind her upon the threshold of marriage that she comes as the man's partner in toils and dangers; and that in peace and in war she must expect to suffer and to dare the same. This is the signification of the oxen in the yoke, of the harnessed horse, of the offering of arms. Thus is she bound to live and thus to die. She

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

receives what she is to hand on to her sons, inviolate and unprofaned ; what her sons' wives are to receive after her, and they, in their turn, to hand on to her children's children.

XIX. So they guard the chastity of their lives, with no shows to entice them nor orgies to excite their evil passions. To men and women alike such a thing as secret correspondence is unknown. Amongst all this immense population adultery is extremely rare : its penalty is instant, and is left to the husband ; he cuts off the hair of the unfaithful wife, strips her, turns her out of his house in the presence of the kinsmen, and scourges her through the whole village. For there is no pardon for the fallen woman ; not by her beauty, not by her youth, not by her wealth, will she succeed in finding a husband. For no one there makes a jest of vice, or says that seducing and being seduced is the style of the period.

Better still, to be sure, is the practice of those states in which none but maidens marry, and a woman becomes a wife with a wife's hopes and wishes once and once only. Thus it becomes as much a matter of course for her to have only one husband as to have only one body or one life, to the end that she may not look beyond him nor let her desires stray further, and that she may not so much cherish her husband as her status as a wife. To limit the number of the family or to put to death any of the later-born infants is held to be an abomination, and with the Germans good customs have more authority than good laws elsewhere.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

XX. In every household the naked, dirty children develop the mighty limbs and frames that we see with so much admiration. Every mother suckles her own babes, and does not give them over into the charge of handmaids and nurses. No one could distinguish the young master from the slave by any luxury in his bringing up. Out among the cattle, at home on the earthen floor, they live just alike until approaching manhood separates them, and the free-born youth proves his breeding by his valour.

The youths do not early indulge the passion of love, and hence come to manhood unexhausted. Nor are the maidens hurried into marriage : in their case the same maturity and the same full growth is required ; they enter upon marriage equally strong and vigorous, and the children inherit the robust frames of their parents.

A sister's children are considered to be related to her brothers as nearly as to their own father. Some tribes even esteem the former tie to be the closer and more sacred of the two, and they tend to require it in exacting hostages, as appealing more strongly to the feelings and giving a wider hold upon the family. Nevertheless, a man's own children are his heirs and successors, and there is no power of bequest. If he has no children the next in succession to the inheritance are his brothers, and his uncles both on the father's and the mother's side. The more relations and connections a man has, the more attention he commands in his old age ; there are no fortune-hunters there to pay court to him if he is childless.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

XXI. Along with the inheritance the heirs incur the obligation of taking up the family feuds as well as the family friendships. But the feuds are not irreconcilable or perpetual ; even homicide may be atoned for by the payment of a fixed number of cattle and sheep, and this compensation is divided amongst all the kin of the slain man ; the plan is greatly to the public advantage, for feuds where men have so much freedom are exceedingly dangerous.

No people in the world are more prodigal of hospitality, whether to friends or to strangers. They account it a sin to refuse the shelter of their roof to any human being. Every host provides the best entertainment that he can afford for his guest. When supplies fail, he becomes the guide, and finds elsewhere a welcome for his guest. They enter, uninvited, the next house ; no difference is made between them ; both are received with equal courtesy ; no one draws any distinction between friend and stranger as far as the rights of hospitality are concerned. On departing it is customary to present the guest with anything he may ask for, and there is the same absence of embarrassment in asking a boon in return. They like gifts, but the giver does not consider them as scored to his credit, or the receiver feel that he is being laid under an obligation. The relation of host and guest is one of courtesy.

XXII. They usually sleep until some time after sunrise, and immediately upon rising they bathe, in warm water as a rule, the weather there being wintry during the greater part of the year. After bathing they break-

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

fast, each having his own separate seat and table. Then, taking their arms, they proceed to business, or, quite as often, to a drinking bout. There is no shame attached to drinking steadily all day and night long; naturally among drunken men quarrels frequently spring up, and these seldom stop at angry words, but in the majority of cases end in wounds and bloodshed. Nevertheless, it is generally at drinking bouts that they discuss the making up of feuds, the contracting of marriages, the admissions to the order of chiefs, and indeed the all-important question of peace or war; as though under no other circumstances were men more likely to be single-hearted or more easy to warm to great resolves. Not being a crafty or a cunning race they furthermore disclose their secret thoughts in the freedom of the feast, and so the minds of all lie open and discovered. On the morrow the matter is debated again, and the double process justifies itself. They discuss when disguise is impossible,¹ they decide when too sober to blunder.

XXIII. Their drink is a liquor made from barley or wheat, fermented so as somewhat to resemble wine. The frontier tribes do indeed buy wine. Their food is simple: wild fruits, fresh game, or curdled milk; they appease their hunger without luxurious accessories to tickle their senses. In quenching their thirst they

¹ Tacitus here adopts a highly rationalising explanation of an ancient practice common to both the Persians and the Germans. The line between intoxication and inspiration was not visible to them: drink was regarded as divine, and they discussed great questions under its influence in order to get the advantage of the assistance afforded by the god.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

are by no means so temperate ; let them but be given all the intoxicating liquor they choose to drink, and vice will make an easier conquest of them than the sword.

XXIV. They have but one form of public spectacle, and that is repeated without variation at every gathering. Naked young warriors, for whom the thing is a game, leap and bound about amidst bare swords and bristling spears. Practice makes them skilful at this exercise, and skill makes them graceful ; but it is not done professionally or for pay. Their most daring flings find their sole recompense in the delight of the spectators.

An amazing thing to us is that they practise gambling as the serious occupation of their sober hours ; and they hazard to win or lose so recklessly that, when all he has is gone, a player will stake his personal liberty on a last and decisive throw. If he loses he goes into voluntary slavery ; and, although he may be the younger and the stronger man, he suffers himself to be bound and to be sold. They exhibit herein a most perverse obstinacy, and call it paying a debt of honour. Successful gamblers get rid of the slaves held under this title by selling them to the merchants in order to escape their share of the shame.

XXV. Their other slaves they do not employ as we do by telling them off to special duties. Each has his tenement, and possesses an independent home of his own. His master exacts from him, as if he were a metayer,¹ a certain amount of wheat or of live stock or of cloth, and to this extent the slave has to obey

¹ *i.e.*, A peasant farmer who pays his rent in kind.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

his orders ; but the master's own wife and children do the actual work of the house. To flog a slave or to put him in chains and set him to penal labour is a rare thing ; to kill one outright is common enough, but it is done not as a strict enforcement of discipline, but in a burst of passion, as if he were a personal enemy, with the difference that there is no fine to pay for it. A man's freedmen are not much above his slaves in position. They rarely have any weight in the household, and never in the community, save and except among those peoples that are ruled by kings ; for there they rise not only above the freeborn but above the nobles. In all the other German states the inferior status of the class of freedmen is a proof that these states enjoy freedom.

XXVI. The exacting of interest simple or compound is quite unknown, and is therefore more guarded from abuse than if it had been forbidden.

The lands,¹ allotted in proportion to the number of cultivators, are entered upon by the communities in

¹ The meaning of the passage has been much disputed, as well as the different readings. A good light seems to be thrown upon it by the parallel passage in Cæsar, *De Bell. Gall.*, VI. xxii., which runs as follows : " They (the Germans) are not fond of agriculture, and the principal portion of their diet consists of milk, cheese, and flesh ; nor have any among them a fixed quantity of territory or private property in land, but the magistrates and the chiefs assign for the term of one year to the tribes and clanships forming communities (*gentibus cognationibusque hominum qui una coierint*) as much land as they think good, and in such place as they think good, and compel them to remove to another place the next year ".

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

rotation, and these lands they thereupon distribute amongst themselves according to their estimate of individual claims. The great amount of open land at their disposal makes this task of distribution easy. The part ploughed they change annually, and there is ground over and to spare. For they take no advantage of the extent and the fertility of their soil by corresponding industry in planting orchards, and fencing off meadows, and irrigating gardens; corn is the only return they insist upon from the earth. Hence, too, they do not, like us, divide the year into four seasons: they recognise and have names for only three, winter, spring, and summer; they are ignorant alike of the name and of the blessings of autumn.

XXVII. They have no ostentation in their funerals. The only special observance is the custom of burning the bodies of famous men with particular kinds of wood. They do not heap robes and rich spices on the funeral pile; but a man's arms are burnt along with him, and sometimes his horse is burnt also. A barrow of earth is raised as a sepulchre; they will not hear of huge monuments laboriously piled up in their honour, considering them as but a load upon the dead. Weeping and wailing soon cease, but their sorrow and sadness they are slow to put by: women may mourn, men should remember.

Such is the information I have been able to collect concerning the origin and the customs of the Germans in general. I now propose to deal with the social and religious institutions of the separate tribes, explaining

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

their differences, and noting what peoples transplanted themselves from Germany into Gaul.

XXVIII. A great authority, Julius Cæsar, of blessed memory, informs us that at an earlier period the Gauls had been far more powerful than in his time, and it is therefore quite credible that there were also migrations of Gauls into Germany. A river would offer but a trifling obstacle to prevent each tribe, as soon as it found itself strong enough, from moving into and seizing upon such territories as still lay open to the first comer and had not been already appropriated by aggressive kingdoms. Thus the Swiss established themselves between the Hartz Forest and the rivers Rhine and Main, and the Boii in the district beyond, both tribes being of Gallic origin. The name Boihemum (Bohemia) still survives as a landmark, recalling the past history of the district, although another folk now inhabit it.

Again, the Aravisci of Pannonia and the Osi, a nation of Germans,¹ are still identical in language, in institutions, and in customs. But in their case there is a doubt as to which of the two has been the parent stock and which has migrated, seeing that in early days, both being equally poor and equally free, one side of the Danube was as likely to attract them as the other.

The people of Trèves and of the Sambre, in Gaul, are even ambitious to establish their German ancestry, by way of showing that their noble lineage should save

¹ Yet in chapter xliii. Tacitus classes them as non-Germanic, thereby proving that he sometimes uses the word *Germani* in a geographical and not an ethnological sense.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

them from being confounded with the spiritless Gauls whom they resemble.

The actual bank of the Rhine is held by undoubted Germans, the people of Worms, Strasburg, and Spiers. Even the citizens of Cologne, who have won the honour of being made a Roman colony and prefer the name of Agrippinenses, after the colony's founder, the Empress Agrippina, are noways ashamed of their origin. They came over to our side of the Rhine many years ago, and were posted by us directly on its bank ; they had given proof of their loyalty, and they were to be our guards, not we theirs.

XXIX. The Batavians are the bravest race of all the Rhine country. They occupy an island in the river, and a small strip along its banks. Once they were a branch of the Chatti,¹ but in consequence of a domestic quarrel they removed to their present position to become a part of the Roman empire. They enjoy that honour still, and likewise a special privilege that marks their old alliance with us. No tribute brands them as inferiors ; no tax-farmer spoils their substance ; excused from all tax or contribution, they form a reserve of brave men, to be employed only on the field of battle, like a magazine of arms kept in store for use in war. The Mattiaci² also stand on the same dependent footing with regard to us. Extending away across the Rhine and beyond the old boundaries of the empire the greatness of the Roman people made itself felt and revered. Thus, in their homes in their country on their

¹ Hessians.

² A tribe of what is now Nassau.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

own side of the Rhine, they are with us heart and soul as truly as the emigrant Batavians, whom they otherwise resemble, save indeed that they are of an even more enterprising courage, the natural effect of their sterner clime and country.

I cannot class among Germanic peoples the present occupants of the Tithe-lands,¹ though they have established themselves on the German side of the Rhine and of the Danube. That territory used to be a debatable land, and all the greatest rovers and the needy adventurers among the Gauls seized upon it; subsequently, our boundary was advanced and our forts were pushed forward;² they are now an outlying corner of the empire and a part of a Roman province.

XXX. Beyond the Tithe-lands at the Great Hercynian³ forest, the country of the Chatti⁴ begins; theirs is not a flat marshy country like the rest of the states that stretch across the German plain; for the forest hills extend far before they gradually die away; the Chatti are the children of the Hercynian forest, and

¹ Part of Baden and Wurtemberg.

² Evidently under Domitian, says Mommsen, which is the reason why Tacitus, who hated him, abstained from mentioning the name of the emperor who made the annexation.

³ The Hercynian forest spread over the whole mountainous region of South Germany, from what is now the Black Forest to the Carpathians.

⁴ The name Chatti, or Catti, may have signified "Whelps," or possibly "Cats". Grimm also suggests that it may be connected with "hat," and refer to a head-dress that the Chatti wore (*Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache*, pp. 567, 577).

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

with it they extend and with it they end. They are distinguished beyond their fellows by their singularly hardy frames, well-knit limbs, resolute eyes, and by a remarkable energy of spirit. For Germans, they have an unusual amount of method and skill: they choose leaders and obey them when chosen; they keep their ranks, discern the requirement of the moment, and can postpone an attack; they throw out pickets by day, and entrench their camps at night; they trust less to fortune, which is fickle, than to their own courage, which is proof; and, rarest of all,—a thing characteristic only of a discipline like the Roman,—they rely more on their general than on their army.

Their whole strength is in foot-soldiers, who, besides carrying their arms, are loaded with tools and supplies; other Germans come out for a single battle, the Chatti for a campaign; they seldom make mere raids or allow themselves to be drawn into a casual encounter: it is cavalry, to be sure, from which one expects a quick success or a quick retreat; speed goes with timidity, slowness is more allied to steadiness.

XXXI. There is one custom which is universal amongst the Chatti, but is only occasionally found elsewhere in Germany, and then simply as an exhibition of individual daring. Every youth on reaching manhood allows his hair and beard to grow, and vows that in this guise he will boldly court danger until he shall have slain an enemy. Then, in triumph, bestriding the bloody corpse, he bares his face, and proclaims that now at last he has justified his existence and proved

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

himself worthy of his parents and of his country. The laggard and the dastard remain to the end unkempt.

Their boldest champions moreover pledge themselves to wear an iron ring like a shackle, an intolerable indignity for a German, till they win their release by the slaughter of a foe. With most of the Chatti this fashion finds favour; ay, and they grow grey with this badge, conspicuous alike to friend and foe. In every battle these shackle-wearers have the honour of leading the way. Their line is always in front, a truly startling sight; for their ferocious features scarcely relax even in times of peace. These men have no home, no land, no occupation; wherever they present themselves they find entertainment, squanderers of other men's goods and heedless of their own, until enfeebling age unfits them for this career of desperate valour.

XXXII. Next to the Chatti dwell the Usipii¹ and Tencteri along the Rhine, which by this time flows in a well-defined channel, and is now sufficiently large to be a boundary. The Tencteri enjoy the usual high reputation of Germans as warriors, and in particular are distinguished for the excellence of their cavalry, whose reputation is equal to that of the infantry of the Chatti. In this they do but follow the example set them by their forefathers. Horsemanship among them is the amusement of childhood and the passion of youth, while even the old persist in keeping it up. Horses

¹ For the adventures of a cohort of Usipii, who deserted in Scotland and were reduced to cannibalism in trying to find their way home, see cap. xxviii. of the *Agricola*.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

pass by inheritance as well as slaves and household goods and other property to which there are legal rights of succession; but primogeniture gives no preferential claim to them as it does to the rest; the son who gets the horses gets them as being a bold warrior and the better man.

XXXIII. Next to the Tencteri in former days used to dwell the Bructeri; but now I am told that the Chamavi and Agrivarii¹ have moved in there, the Bructeri having been defeated and utterly exterminated² by a coalition of the neighbouring nations; their destroyers may have been impelled to the act either by some resentment at their overbearingness, or by mere lust of plunder, or by some special favour extended towards us on the part of the gods, who deigned even to grant us the entertainment of witnessing the show. Our eyes were feasted with the glorious spectacle of over sixty thousand men being slaughtered without one single Roman sword having to leave its scabbard. So may it continue is my earnest prayer, yea, may it endure for ever among the nations, that if they do not love us they may at least hate each other; for now, when Rome is staggering to her doom, fortune can bestow on us no greater blessing than discord amongst our enemies.

XXXIV. The Agrivarii and Chamavi are bounded in the rear by the Dulgibini and Chasuarii and other tribes of whom we do not hear so much; in their front they have the Frisians, who are distinguished, according to the

¹ Saxon tribes from the Ems and Weser.

² Not utterly: they survived, and even grew to power again.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

relative strength of their divisions, into the Greater Frisians and the Lesser. Both divisions live beside the Rhine bank down to the ocean, and also around the margin of those vast lagoons along the coast on which Roman ships have sailed. Nay, our vessels have ventured far even on the Ocean of the North, and rumour brings a tale of Pillars of Hercules¹ that stand there unto this day; whether it be true that Hercules ever visited the spot, or that we by common consent attach his great name to imposing objects everywhere. There was no lack of daring in Drusus Germanicus, but Ocean barred his way;² the secrets of Ocean and of Hercules were not to be pried into. After him no one made the attempt; and it has been deemed more pious and reverent to believe than to know, when the doings of the gods are in question.

XXXV. Thus far we have learned to know Germany westward. It now makes a great sweep round on

¹ The Straits of Gibraltar were known as the "Pillars of Hercules" from time immemorial. Perhaps the narrow channels between Denmark and Scandinavia are here compared to the entrance to the Mediterranean. Or it may be that, taking Hercules to be "Thor," this refers to the "Pillars of Thor" at Upsala; or again, taking him to be "Irmin," it may even refer to the "Irminsul," though that stood far inland.

² This in all probability refers to the second campaign of Germanicus in A.D. 16, culminating in the victory of Idistaviso, when he set up a trophy and formally announced the conquest of all the country between the Rhine and the Elbe. But on his return the fleet of a thousand sail, in which he had reached the mouth of the Ems, was scattered by a tempest, and he himself was cast away alone on the desolate shore of the Chauci.—See Mommsen, *Provinces*, i. 54, and Bury, *Hist. Rom. Emp.* (early period), 173, 174.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

the north; and here at once we come on the tribe of the Chauci. They adjoin the Frisians, and possess a frontage to the sea; but from thence their territory stretches all along the flank of the nations I have enumerated until it finally curves into that of the Chatti. Large as it is, the Chauci not only hold this immense district, but fill it. The noblest of the Germans, they desire to preserve their high place by righteous dealing. Neither greedy nor violent, they live quietly by themselves, provoking no wars and making no raids and forays in quest of plunder. Of their strength and valour there can be no better proof than the fact that they do not resort to wrong in order to maintain their superiority. But every man of them has his arms ready, and, if occasion demands, they can put an army in the field and march with very many men and very many horses. Thus they succeed in combining peace with honour.

XXXVI. The Cherusci, the next neighbours to the Chauci and the Chatti, lived for a long period in the undisturbed enjoyment of an excessive and enervating repose. They lived in a fool's paradise; for to take your ease with the strong and unscrupulous at your door is a delusion. When men appeal to force, moderation and fairness are words that belong to the stronger side. Formerly the phrase in use was "The Cherusci, good honest souls"; now they are known as "Those dull fools of Cherusci,"¹ while to their conquerors, the

¹ It has been suggested that these phrases may have come from some of the camp songs which Tacitus is known to have collected.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

Chatti, success has brought an excellent reputation for wisdom.

The fall of the Cherusci involved that of the Fosi, whose boundaries marched with theirs: from having been their dependents in the days of prosperity, the Fosi have been promoted to a position of perfect equality in their ruin.

XXXVII. In this same outlying part of Germany, nearest to the sea, dwell the Cimbri. They are now but a mere remnant, yet their fame is world-wide. Traces of their past greatness are still to be seen, stretching in the shape of vast encampments along both banks of the Rhine, by measuring which we may verify even at the present day the enormous number of men employed and the historical truth of that swarming migration.¹

It was in the consulship of Caecilius Metellus and Papirius Carbo, six hundred and forty years after the founding of Rome, that we first heard the clash of the Cimbrian arms. From that date, reckoning down to the second² consulship of the Emperor Trajan, gives an interval of some two hundred and ten years. Our conquest of Germany is taking us a long time.

And during the process we have had many hard blows in return. Not the Samnites, nor the Carthaginians,

¹ The peninsula of Denmark is sometimes called the Cimbric Chersonese; but there is a dispute as to its having been the original seat of the Cimbri, who invaded the Roman empire in B.C. 113, when their warriors are said to have been a quarter of a million.

² A.D. 98, the year in which Tacitus published the *Germania*.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

nor the Spaniards, nor the Gauls, nor even the Parthians themselves, have oftener given us a lesson. The freemen of Germany are more spirited antagonists than all the subjects of King Arsaces. What has the East really scored against us save the slaughter of Crassus, and was not that defeat more than wiped out by the crushing victory of Ventidius over Pacorus? Contrast with this the success of the Germans: Carbo, and Cassius, and Scaurus Aurelius, and Servilius Caepio, and finally Marcus Manlius, all cut to pieces or captured, make altogether five consular armies destroyed in the days of the Republic, while even Augustus endured at their hands the loss of Varus and his three legions.¹ Moreover, the victories obtained over them by Caius Marius in Italy, by Julius Cæsar in Gaul, and by Drusus and Tiberius and Germanicus on their own ground, were all dearly bought.

Later came the farcical collapse of the monstrous threats of Caligula.² Then there followed a time of peace

¹ In the autumn of A.D. 9, a Roman army of some 20,000 men under Varus was beset and utterly destroyed by the Germans under Arminius, the Cheruscan, somewhere in the Teutoburger Wald. The three legions destroyed were the 17th, the 18th, and the 19th. Augustus felt the loss bitterly, and was often heard to cry out: "O Varus, Varus, give me back my legions". Arminius is known to the Germans as Herman, and his victory as the Herman-schlacht. Grimm quotes a verse of an old ballad, "Un Hermen sla dermen, sla pipen, sla trummen; de fürsten sind kummen mit all eren mannen; hebt Varus uphangen,"—but he is doubtful whether this verse can be genuine.

² He arranged a sham fight with some captives hidden for that purpose just across the border; reported his splendid victory in laurelled letters to the senate, and demanded a triumph,

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

until the dissensions that culminated in our civil wars gave the Germans the chance of carrying by storm the winter quarters of our legions, and actually attempting to make themselves masters of Gaul; the attempt failed, but the triumphs celebrated over them in recent times have been in honour of imaginary victories.

XXXVIII. Let us turn now to the Suabians, who are not simply a single tribe like the Chatti or the Tenc-teri, but occupy more than half of Germany, and have moreover their own distinct national names, though they all come under the general appellation of Suabians.¹

It is a common mark of them all to tie back the hair and bind it up in a knot. This practice distinguishes the freemen from the slaves among the Suabians, as well as the Suabians themselves from other Germans. It is indeed sometimes to be seen among other tribes who are either akin to the Suabians, or, as is not uncommon, imitate their style; but it is rare, and only during the period of youth. The Suabians keep it up until hoar old age; the hair is drawn back so as to stand erect off the forehead, and is generally bound in a single knot over the crown of the head. The chiefs have it dressed even more elaborately. They take pains about their appearance to this extent, but they

¹ Dr. Latham says: "Zeuss admits that between the Suevi of Suabia and the Alemanni no tangible difference can be found. . . . One half of what at present constitutes the High-German division is of Alemanno-Suevic origin," pp. liii., liv. The Suevi of Tacitus lay further to the east than the Suevi of Cæsar, and included populations which we should class as Slavonic,

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

do so innocently enough, for these are no boy's love-locks ; it is for their enemies' eyes that they dress their hair, in order to make themselves look more tall and terrible as they rush to battle.

XXXIX. The Semnones talk of themselves as most ancient and the most noble of the Suabians. Their religion confirms the belief in their antiquity. They possess a wood¹

Which Fear has haunted since the days of old,
And rites ancestral make a holy place.

Hither at a stated time deputations from all the peoples of the common Suabian stock assemble, and here upon behalf of the State they offer a human sacrifice, and with this hideous formality they open their barbarous rites. There is another superstitious observance also connected with the wood. Every man who enters it must do so bound with a fetter, as a mark of humility and an avowal of the power of the divinity. If he happens to fall down, he may not lift himself up and rise to his feet, but must roll himself out along the ground. This wood is the centre of their whole superstition, being looked upon as the cradle of the race, and the god of it as the universal ruler to whom all other things are subject and obedient. The prosperity of the Semnones adds weight to this claim. The districts inhabited by them number one hundred, and their great size causes them to think that they are the principal people among the Suabians.

¹ ? The Sonnenwald.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

XI. The Lombards,¹ on the other hand, are famous because they are few. Hemmed in by numerous and powerful tribes, they survive, not by truckling to the strong, but by fighting and taking all risks.

Further on lie a number of tribes, Reudigni and Aviones, Angles and Warings, Eudoses, Suardones, and Nuithones, all with their ramparts of forest or of river. There is nothing that calls for notice among these tribes individually, except the worship of Nerthus or Mother Earth, which is common to them all, the goddess, according to their belief, mingling in the affairs of men, and visiting her various peoples in her chariot. On an island² out in the ocean there is an inviolate grove, where, covered by a robe, is a sacred car dedicated to her. One priest, and only one, may touch it. It is he who becomes aware when the goddess is present in her holy seat; he harnesses a yoke of heifers to the car, and follows in attendance with reverent mien. Then are the days of festival, and all places which she honours with her presence keep holiday. Men lay aside their arms and go not forth to war; all iron is locked away; then only are peace and quietness known, then only are they welcomed, until the priest restores her to her temple, when she has had enough of her converse with mortals. Then the car and the robes and (if we choose to believe them) the goddess herself are washed in a mystic pool. Slaves are the ministers of this office, and are forthwith drowned in the

¹ Probably not "Long-beards," but "Long-halberdiers".

² ? Heligoland.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

pool. Dark terror springs from this, and a sacred mystery enshrouds those rites which no man is permitted to look upon and live.

XLI. This branch of the Suabian stock stretches far out into the less-known parts of Germany. Nearer home (to follow the line of the Danube as I previously did that of the Rhine), I take first the community of the Hermunduri, who are our very good friends, and whom, therefore, alone amongst the Germans, we allow to trade with us not merely on the Danubian frontier but far within our borders and even in the splendid capital of the province of Rhaetia.¹ They pass the river at any point unchallenged. To the other nations we only give permission to view our camps and our material of war; to the Hermunduri we throw open our houses and farms, because they covet nothing.

In the country of the Hermunduri lie the sources of the Elbe, a river famous and well known in other days,² now merely a name.

Next to them come the Naristi, and then the Mark-men and the Quadi. The Mark-men stand the highest in reputation and power; they drove out their predecessors the Bohemians, and won the very land they now hold by the sword. The Naristi, too, and the Quadi are not degenerating. These peoples may be said to form the van of the German line as far as it extends along the Danube. Within living memory both the

¹ Augsburg.

² When Germanicus carried a conquering army to the Elbe and set up a trophy there.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

Mark-men and the Quadi had kings of native race, the noble line of Maroboduus and Tuder.¹ Now they submit to alien rulers whose despotic power rests upon the arm of Rome ; we sometimes aid them with arms, but more frequently with a subsidy of money, which they do not find less effective.

XLII. Close in the rear of the Mark-men and the Quadi lie four tribes. Two of these, the Marsigni and Buri, both in language and mode of life, closely resemble the Suabians. The other two tribes, the Gothini and the Osi, are demonstrably non-Germanic, seeing that the former speak a Gallic, and the latter a Pannonian tongue, and both submit to tribute. This is imposed upon them partly by the Slavonians, and partly by the Quadi, on the ground that they are foreigners. This cowardly conduct on the part of the Gothini is the more to their shame as they have iron mines. All these peoples have but little low-lying land ; their dwelling-places are the forests, and the high hills, and the mountain chain ; for an unbroken mountain chain² divides and cleaves asunder the Suabian territory, and on the farther side of it dwell a great number of tribes. The various sub-divisions of the Lygians³ embrace the greater part of this district. I will content myself with naming the chief of them, as the Harii, the Helveconae, the Manimi, the Elisii, and the Nahanarvali. The

¹ Possibly Theodmar.—See Vigfusson, *Sigfred-Arminius*, p. 17, where moreover he maintains that Arminius, the Cheruscan, may have been the original of the legendary German hero Sigfred.

² The Carpathians.

³ Lecks or Poles.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

Nahanarvali are the proud possessors of a grove of immemorial sanctity. The presiding priest wears feminine attire, but the gods they speak of in connection with it are, to give them their Roman names, Castor and Pollux ; their attributes are similar, the name by which they are known is the Alci. Images of them there are none, nor is there any trace of their worship having had a foreign origin ; nevertheless, the people adore them as youthful heroes, and as brothers.

For the rest, the Harii are not only superior in strength to the other tribes just mentioned, but they have a natural craving for bloodshed which they contrive to gratify by artful wiles and selection of the fitting hour. They paint their shields black, they paint their bodies likewise ; they select a pitch-dark night for their attack, and by the very terror and gloom of their funereal host they scatter panic before them, not a man of their enemies being able to retain his presence of mind at the startling, I might almost say supernatural, apparition. It is ever the eye that first quails in battle.

Beyond the Lygians are the Goths, who are ruled by their kings rather more strictly than the rest of the German nations, a condition that we find prevails as we go north, but, so far, not to such an extent as to extinguish liberty. Beyond them, on the side of the ocean, live the Rugii and the Lemovii ; and all these tribes are distinguished by having round shields and short swords, and by being submissive to their kings.

XLIII. From this point are the states of the Swedes,

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

who inhabit islands out in the ocean itself,¹ and, besides men and arms, possess strong fleets. The build of their vessels differs from ours in this: the stern is made like the bow, so that they can be beached either end foremost; nor are their vessels worked with sails like ours; nor yet have they their oars fixed to their sides in regular banks, but they are fitted with loose sweeps, such as may be seen on some river craft, which can be shifted about as required from one side to the other.

Among the Swedes, moreover, wealth and power are held in honour; and therefore one man bears sway; so now no longer do we find any form of independence, and the claim to obedience becomes absolute. Here, too, there is no general right of carrying arms as in the other parts of Germany; the weapons are locked up in the charge of a keeper, and the keeper is a slave; because the ocean acts as a rampart against any sudden incursion of the enemy, and, furthermore, an idle body of men with arms in their hand speedily tends to mutiny. It is unquestionably to the interest of the monarch not to commit the charge of the arms to either a noble or a freeman, nor even to a freedman.

XLIV. Beyond the country of the Swedes there is another sea, sluggish and well-nigh motionless, which is believed to be the boundary and limit of the world, because here the last glow of the setting sun shines on into the following dawn, so as to dim the brightness of the stars. Nay, further, we are induced to credit the

¹ It will be remembered that Scandinavia was supposed to be an archipelago.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

fact that the noise of the sun rising out of the waters is heard, and that his attendant deities are seen and his crown of rays.¹ Thus far, and no further (and in this report speaks truly), does nature go.

So now we turn back ; and on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea we find the tribes of the East-men dwelling along the coast ;² in their religion and in their fashions they are Suabians, but their language is more like the British. They worship the mother of the gods³ and, as a religious symbol, they carry images of wild boars. The symbol serves instead of arms and every kind of assistance, and gives the devotee of the goddess a sense of safety even in the midst of foes. Iron is scarce among them, and the use of the war-club is common. They cultivate grain, and also fruit trees, with more patience than is usually exhibited by the indolent Germans ; and, besides this, they even search the sea, for they alone among mankind gather amber, or “glesum” as they call it, in the shallows and along the shore. And yet, like true barbarians, they have never asked nor ever found out what is its nature or how it is produced. Long it lay unheeded with the other flotsam and jetsam of the waves until the day when our luxury made it famous. They make no use of it themselves ; they pick it up rough ; the shapeless lump finds its way to us, and they marvel at the price they get for it. Observation shows that it

¹ Probably the Aurora Borealis, which is often accompanied by a strange rustling sound that might be taken for the hissing of the sun's orb in the water.

² Of Courland.

³ Freya.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

must be the gum of a tree, because within its transparent substance there are often visible various creatures, creeping or flying things, which, having been entangled in the gum as it flows, are imprisoned in its mass as it afterwards hardens. Therefore, I venture to think that in the isles and lands of the west there must be woods and groves of very luxuriant growth, like those of the far-distant East, dropping frankincense and balsams, and that the burning rays of their near neighbour the sun melt and distil these humours until they drop into the sea below, and that then the force of storms washes them up on the shores that lie opposite.

If we test the nature of amber by applying fire to it, it blazes up like a torch and burns with a rich and strongly-scented flame, and presently melts into a viscid mass like so much pitch or resin.

The tribes of the Sitones¹ are conterminous with those of the Swedes, whom they resemble in all respects with only one point of difference : they are ruled by a woman. So far, they fall not merely below the position of free-men, but even beneath that of slaves.

Here Suabia comes to an end.

XLV. I am in some doubt as to whether I ought to class the nations of the Peucini, the Wends, and the Finns, as Germans or as Sclavonians, although the Peucini, otherwise known as the Bastarnians, in their language and their degree of civilisation, and in their settlements and houses, are undoubtedly German. Dirt and indolence are universal among them, and by the in-

¹ ? Norwegians.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

termarriages of chiefs¹ they are acquiring something of the unseemliness of the Slavonians.

The Wends² have borrowed many of the Slavonian habits, and go roaming about in search of plunder through all the wooded and rocky highlands that separate the Peucini and the Finns. Nevertheless, they are on the whole to be classed among the Germans because they have fixed habitations, and carry shields, and are proud of being footmen and of their powers of running, in all which matters they are unlike the Slavonians, who live on horseback and whose home is in a waggon.

The Finns are utter savages, and squalidly poor; they have no arms, no horses, no homes; they eat wild herbs, go clad in skins, and lie on the bare earth; their only hope of getting better fare is in their arrows, which for lack of iron they tip with points of bone. The women seek their sustenance by the chase, exactly like the men; they accompany them wherever they go, and claim their share of the prey. Their infants have no other refuge against wild beasts and storms than a booth of wattled boughs; here the old folk crouch and hither the young folk return after hunting. Yet they esteem their life a happier one than if it were spent in groaning over the clods and labouring to build houses, dreading ever to lose what has already been gained, or hoping to gain what another must lose.

¹ Reading "procerum connubiis mixtis".

² Wends has become a general term amongst the Germans for Slavonians.

THE GERMANIA OF TACITUS

Careless of what man or god may do, they have reached the most difficult of all positions to attain, in that they have nothing more to pray for.

Farther than this everything dissolves into fable, stories of Hellusii and Oxionae,¹ beings with men's heads and faces and the bodies and limbs of beasts. Of these things I know nothing, and choose therefore to leave them alone.

¹ Lapps, possibly.