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entitled (Munich)

CALIGULA: :: A STUDY IN :: IMPERIAL INSANITY

The celebrated satire of which this pamphlet is a translation was published by Professor Quidde six years after the Kaiser's accession to the throne. The parallelism between the Kaiser and Caligula is extraordinary, and was made the most of by the German Professor in his so-called Study of the eccentric Roman Emperor. The pamphlet created an immense sensation in Germany at the time and had an enormous sale, and every effort was made to convict the author of *lèse majesté* but without success, the Professor maintaining that he had written nothing but an historical treatise.

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PREFACE

THE pamphlet of which the following pages contain a slightly abridged translation was published in 1894 by Professor Ludwig Quidde of Munich. It made a great sensation, ran through thirty editions in a year or two, and a quarter of a million copies are said to have been sold. Professor Quidde was, of course, severely attacked by the monarchical press. The *Kreuz-Zeitung* said he ought to be beheaded, and the *Zukunft* recommended that he should be put in a strait waistcoat. Copies of a Social Democratic paper which printed extracts from the pamphlet were seized by the police. A public censure was passed upon Professor Quidde by the Munich Academy of Science. It is well known how strict the law of *lèse-majesté* is in Germany, people having been imprisoned for months for mere casual remarks. But it was impossible for the Government to bring the charge home to the Professor, for his pamphlet had the appearance of being an historical monograph with numerous citations from Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion Cassius, while the Emperor William II was never mentioned by name.

But the superficial similarity between Caligula and William II as indicated by the pamphlet was remarkable. The premature death of Germanicus, Caligula's father, who was dearly loved by the people, Caligula's dismissal of General Macro, the all-powerful minister, his love of display and military manœuvres, his expensive yachts, his turn for acting, his inability to bear any powerful and independent character near him, his ceaseless restlessness and love of making a figure as an orator—all these were features which helped to complete an unmistakable parallel. A darker feature is the insanity on which Professor Quidde lays stress, streaks of which have been notably present in members of the Hohenzollern family, especially in Frederick William I and Frederick William IV.

In spite of this audacious parallel the *Majestats-beleidigung's* law was powerless, and the public prosecutor's hands were tied, for to identify the Kaiser

with Caligula would in itself have been an act of *lèse majesté*. The immense circulation of the pamphlet was indeed partly due to the law itself, the very strictness of which had created a craving for such literature. The only punishment Professor Quidde seems to have received was a measure of social ostracism, especially on the part of his professional brethren.

At the time the pamphlet was written (1894) the Emperor had only been on the throne six years, but there was already a good deal of disappointment and disillusion abroad, though probably this was not his fault. Professor Quidde himself said that his pamphlet was not aimed at the Emperor himself, but was intended as an antidote to the flattery—"Byzantinism" as it is called in Germany—by which he was surrounded. It is remarkable that in recent years a well-known publicist, Graf von Reventlow, has published a book, "The Kaiser and the Byzantines," in which he points out quite as plainly as Quidde the dangers of the flattery which has always accompanied the Emperor.

Quidde also published a pamphlet, "Anti-militarismus," which does not seem to have attained the celebrity of his first work.

THE KAISER'S DOUBLE

OR

CALIGULA: :: A STUDY IN :: IMPERIAL INSANITY

GAIUS CÆSAR, known by the nickname Caligula (*i.e.* "little boot") was still very young, and had not attained to mature manhood, when he was unexpectedly called to rule. The circumstances which attended upon his elevation were gloomy and weird, and the fortunes of his family had been strange. His father, Germanicus, while far from his home and still in the prime of life, had succumbed to a malignant fate, and among the populace there was much talk concerning the mysterious circumstances of his death; people did not shrink from giving utterance to the most terrible suspicions which did not spare even the old Emperor (Tiberius) himself. Germanicus had been the people's favourite, and no other member of the Imperial family had enjoyed so much popularity as he. He had won the confidence of the common soldiers in many campaigns, during which he had shared the toils of war with them; the German lands and the Rhine districts were full of his name. But the people did not only view him as a military hero, he was popular in the best sense of the word. His family life, his numerous children, his simple unpretentious manners, his cheerful serenity in all circumstances, his friendly jocularities, had won the hearts of the citizens, as well as those of the soldiers.

It is true that so long as the old Emperor lived, Germanicus, although he occupied many posts of dignity and showed much energy and zeal for work, was, as regards the most important questions of home policy, condemned to inactivity; but had he ever come to power, it is likely that he would have inaugurated a period of greater happiness and freedom, and dispersed the heavy atmosphere of depression which rested on the whole empire. Thus

the hopes of a whole generation sank with Germanicus into the grave.

A certain gleam of popularity was reflected from this darling of the people on to his son. The latter grew up quite unlike his father and probably more resembled his proud and passionate mother, Agrippina, who had certainly made her husband's position, by no means an easy one in itself, even more difficult. The old Emperor, however, who regarded Germanicus' wife and other children with hatred and suspicion, seems to have cherished a certain liking for Gaius, probably only because he saw in him the exact contrary to his father, with whom Tiberius had nothing in common.

The young Emperor, on his accession to the throne, was at first for all an unknown and almost puzzling phenomenon. In recent years all kinds of rumours, favourable and unfavourable, had been spread about him. We may assume that people had inferred his toughness of character from his having maintained his position under such difficult circumstances; they feared probably his self-will, his inclination to abuse his great power, the operation of his crude and egotistic ideas. Stories were told of instances of brutality displayed in his earlier years; but the most definite opinion about him was that while young he would be very accessible to foreign ideas. It was to be expected, in the first place, that the already immense power of the Prefects of the Guard would be still further increased; all declared that

**Caligula
drops the
Pilot**

the young Emperor was especially devoted to these. But in many respects these fears and expectations were contradicted. The leading statesman, Macro, seems very soon to have fallen into disfavour; his influence completely waned; the Emperor took the reins of government into his hand and began to rule for himself. The people applauded him, for the change of government seemed to all classes like a deliverance; an era of reform was apparently beginning, and a free path seemed to be opened for liberal ideas.

So very promising was the début of Caligula, who, as son of the prematurely deceased Germanicus and of Agrippina, succeeded his great uncle, Tiberius, in A.D. 37, and astonished the world by his proceedings.

We have already mentioned the fact that Macro, who

had been recently the all-powerful statesman and General of the Prætorian Guard under Tiberius, and by whose help Caligula had succeeded to the throne, was almost immediately dismissed. This emancipation of the young Emperor seemed at the same time to signify a change in the principles of government. The long-standing demands of the liberal part of the nation were fulfilled; especially in political life more freedom was allowed. Caligula seemed to be in earnest in observing certain forms of the constitution which had fallen into decay under Tiberius; in passing the Budget and the army estimates he seemed to allow more weight to public opinion; the right of free election to the public comitia appeared to revive; steps were taken against the plague of informers, who resemble the modern *agents provocateurs*, and thereby public as well as private life was freed of one of its worst mischiefs; the writings of Labienus, of Cremutius Cordus, and of Cassius Severus, the circulation of which had been forbidden as being dangerous to the State, were again allowed to circulate; amnesties were granted to political prisoners; trials on account of *lèse-majesté* were suspended, and the laws which punished this offence with severe penalties were abrogated. Moreover, oppressive taxes which hindered the petty trades of the poorer classes were remitted, and alleviations in their favour were introduced in the distribution of corn, to say nothing of the public games, which Caligula encouraged in accordance with the old receipt, "*panem et circenses*." So that, together with enlarged liberty, an era of social reform, or at any rate of popular handling of economic questions, seemed to be dawning.

But already, at the beginning of Caligula's reign, while he was surrounded by the acclamations of a people easily stirred to enthusiasm, it is probable that far-sighted observers had anxious thoughts.

It was the intoxicating sensation of power, the consciousness of now suddenly being the foremost, the wish to do something great, and above all the ambition to make a dazzling figure in the world's history, which temporarily raised Caligula above himself. At the crisis of this extraordinary change in his life, he was seized by the desire to make himself conspicuous by exhibiting qualities really

foreign to his nature, *i.e.* tolerance and care for the commonweal. But at the same time some dangerous characteristics showed themselves. There was lacking the strong foundation of a steady view of life won by inner struggles; the mainspring of his actions was not the wish to do good, but the ambition to be admired as the champion of popular movements, and to go down to posterity as a great character. All his proceedings were characterized by a spasmodic and self-contradictory nervous haste, which hurried from one task to another; and, coupled with this, a very dangerous penchant for doing everything himself.

His dismissal of Macro, of which we have already spoken, should be properly judged from this point of view. Indeed, it appears that the relations between the two men were not completely or permanently broken off, for later on Macro had the opportunity of giving the young Emperor advice and of recommending him to be moderate and cautious. But he lived to rue having played the rôle of a warner; he only excited the fiercest wrath of the Emperor, who turned in murderous rage against him and his family. Caligula's ungrateful treatment of Macro is especially mentioned as one of the causes which contributed to shatter his own popularity.

The supersession of the man who had been first called to the helm of the state in this reign soon showed itself to be an occurrence not springing from the antithesis of the two characters but due to Caligula's manner of dealing in general. Of men in high places who were really influential under him we hear nothing. The Emperor could not endure any independent power near him; he wished to be his own Minister, and not only that, but to interfere personally in every department. But his essentially limited nature, even before it degenerated, lacked the requisite knowledge and talent, the quietness and self-discipline to do so effectually. But soon much more serious symptoms appeared. His reckless self-will, his startling ideas of reform, his sudden and cruel punishments of men in high position may still have evoked the applause of the multitude as being signs of a strong imperious character

at the very time when those of keener insight saw looming behind these symptoms a terrible spectre—madness.

People have been accustomed to speak of imperial insanity as of a special form of mental disease. The characteristics of the malady—megalomania exaggerated to the point of self-deification, disregard of every legal restraint and all rights of other individuals, aimless and senseless cruelty—these are found also in other madmen; the difference only lies in this—that the position of a ruler affords a fertile soil for the germs of such tendencies and allows them to reach a degree of development which would hardly be possible otherwise. These may express themselves in terrible deeds to an extent which would be inconceivable in any other circumstances.

Specific imperial insanity is the product of conditions which can only be brought about by the moral degeneration of a populace of monarchical tendencies, or by that of the higher classes which immediately surround the ruler. The consciousness of apparently unlimited power causes the sovereign to forget all legal limitations; the theoretical basis given to this power by the doctrine of "divine right," in which the unfortunate man thoroughly believes, gives a morbid twist to all his ideas. The forms of court etiquette, and still more the excessive and servile veneration of all those immediately near him, fill him with the consciousness that he is being exalted over all other men by Nature herself. At the same time his own observations of his entourage give him the impression that they are a contemptible and vulgar set of people.

If, in addition, not only the court, but the mass of the people are corrupted; if the ruler, no matter what he does, never encounters any manly and open resistance; and if the Opposition party, on the rare occasions on which they venture to remonstrate, anxiously maintain the appearance of not wishing to come into conflict with the person of the ruler and his views—if this spirit of corruption, which has invented the crime of *lèse-majesté* and sees in the refusal to pay veneration a punishable offence, once enters into legislation and influences judges in their verdicts, then it is really a miracle if such an absolute monarch preserves his sanity.

His megalomania a step to madness

His desire to make himself conspicuous

His inability to tolerate independence in others

The dangers of absolute monarchy

Thus in the already deeply corrupted political life of Rome all the conditions for the development of imperial insanity were abundantly present. Moreover, Caligula had inherited dangerous tendencies from both sides, and the fact that he had come to the throne so young powerfully stimulated the unwholesome germs present in his character; while the sharp contrast between his position and his capacity for it worked like poison upon his youthful spirit, already prone to excesses of every description.

Caligula, however, did not really become mad till after a severe illness, from which he recovered, unfortunately for himself and his people; but one may suppose that this illness in all probability only hastened the development of his madness, the germs of which were already distinctly present. The unfavourable factors which were bound to develop them were inherent in his position as Emperor in the Rome of that period.

The example of imperial insanity which Caligula affords is completely typical. Nearly all the symptoms of it which we find elsewhere in different sovereigns are united in him, and when we comprise in one survey his apparently healthy commencement with his terribly quick descent to the worst excesses we obtain a clear view of the development of the disease.

One symptom which is not generally dangerous in itself, but in which, when taken with other symptoms, Caligula's megalomania early showed itself, was unmeasured delight in display and extravagance. This is a characteristic of almost all princes in whom a sound judgment regarding the limits of their own position is lacking. Such were the oriental despots and certain popes, the two French Louis and their German imitators, a series which has recently had its last famous representative in the unfortunate King of Bavaria.*

In a short time not only was the very considerable treasure which the thrifty old Emperor had bequeathed to Caligula squandered, but recourse was had to very dubious means in order to increase the revenues and pay debts. The taxes which had just been abolished were again imposed;

* Cousin of William II.

new ones, partly of an oppressive or disgraceful character, were added; justice was abused in order to add fines and confiscations to the Imperial treasury; and finally the principle was publicly announced that the subjects' property should be at the Emperor's disposal.

The love of display and extravagance was, as might have been expected, shown by Caligula in all possible spheres, in giving feasts and bestowing largesses, in the furnishing and arrangement of his palaces and villas, and in the unheard-of luxury with which the Imperial yachts were fitted out. But this tendency found expression especially in the erection of enormous public edifices, and building projects. That is also a peculiar trait of exaggerated megalomania; it is, moreover, easily intelligible when we remember the love of fame which marked the Cæsars and their wish to shine in the eyes of posterity.

The huge scale on which Caligula framed his projects and the brevity of his reign have resulted in many of his works still remaining uncompleted. On the Palatine in Rome one is still shown the beginnings of "Caligula's Bridge," which he intended to build over the Forum from the imperial palace to the Capitol. He also undertook the building of great aqueducts and amphitheatres, and proposed at the earliest available moment to cut a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth.

But a strange love of destruction was united in him with this love of building. Edifices which were well worth preserving were pulled down and altered for trivial reasons. His building enterprises often incorporated very bizarre ideas. At Naples the remains of a Roman dam across the harbour are called "Ponte di Caligula" in memory of one of his fantastic constructions. He had flung across the Bay of Baiae a long bridge of boats, and on this bridge constructed a regular road with wineshops and fresh-water pipes. Then, wearing what was believed to be the breast-plate of Alexander the Great, he led his troops over the bridge to Baiae. There he fell with his soldiers on the peaceful town as if to conquer it, and on the next day arranged on the bridge a great triumphal march with gorgeous decorations, sham booty and sham prisoners.

**His
Amazing
Eccentricities**

Finally he celebrated the glorious undertaking, the overcoming of so many difficulties, as he said, and the "chaining of the ocean" with pompous speeches and feasts.

This celebrated undertaking was not only a glaring example of the display and love of extravagance of which we have spoken, but showed another token of morbid imperial megalomania,—the hunger for military triumphs. In this passion the ridiculous and the dreadful border on each other. If on one side the love for famous actions and martial display leads to the most terrible consequences and actual massacres, on the other side, when there is only appearance instead of reality, it may assume a comic and even a childish aspect.

This latter is especially the case with Caligula. The circumstances of his reign were not adapted to carrying on wars and winning victories. The frontiers were quiet, and the idea of further extension of the Empire had been given up. Caligula's morbid desire to shine in the military sphere led him to have recourse to theatrical manœuvres. The triumphal march across the Bay of Baiae was only one example of these. We give two more striking ones.

On one occasion he formed the sudden resolve to go to the army on the Rhine. Everything had to be set in motion with precipitate haste. On arriving at the army headquarters he displayed excessive disciplinary severity towards officers; the unfortunate ones who during this sudden mobilization did not reach the appointed place quickly enough were the special objects of his wrath. At the same time, little as he liked to be reminded of his own youth, he seemed determined to reduce the age of those serving in the army. He dismissed several of the senior centurions on the ground that they were too old or too weak. Against others he took steps on account of their alleged mismanagement of funds. Although his severe application of discipline may have seemed to his admirers to be soldierly keenness, it caused at the same time, according to Suetonius, much discontent. Many of his new rules must have appeared to unprejudiced judges mere ridiculous bragging, especially in the light of what followed.

**His love
of military
display**

The Emperor arranged a manœuvre on the banks of the Rhine. German soldiers belonging to his bodyguard and German princes' sons who were in his camp as hostages had to represent a supposed German enemy and take up a position not far from the Rhine. Then, while the Emperor sat at dinner, military information of their whereabouts was brought in through the pickets, and a glorious victory was won over the discovered enemy, the trained bodyguard and the German youths being paraded as prisoners.

In this case the manœuvres degenerated into a farce which all the world laughed at.

Almost more grotesque was Caligula's invasion of Britain, when he made his soldiers collect shells on the shore to be displayed as a war-trophy. Here we see again emerge the fantastic idea of conquering the sea, for **His passion for Con-** which the Emperor seems to have had a **quering** passion, harmless in itself but exaggerated **the Sea** to a morbid degree. We have already mentioned the magnificent equipment of his yachts. He often undertook short and long journeys by sea, and seems to have delighted in witnessing the wild beauty of storms. This passion of his must have involved great discomfort to those around him, for he seems to have inconsiderately required that all should share it. In the case of the unfortunate Silanus, who once remained behind during a storm, his fear of sea-sickness proved his destruction, for Caligula, who at that time was given to murderous suspicions, attributed his doing so to other motives.

In Caligula's manœuvre-amusements which we have described, and in his whims about discipline, there is a spice of theatricality which is an ingredient in imperial insanity. With Caligula this was not limited to military displays. We are told of his unbounded passion for theatres and circuses and, more than that, of his occasionally acting himself. He had a strange liking for wearing splendid costumes and continually changing them, going so far as to appear in the garb of various divinities—gods and also goddesses. He thirsted for applause for his mimetic skill, and would rouse senators out of their beds at night in order to dance before them. We are told that he appeared in the amphitheatre as a chariot-racer, like Nero subsequently, and even as a gladiator, like Commodus, *i.e.* he

played a rôle which then commonly called down the curse of social outlawry on the performer.

To this theatrical trait in his megalomania were added two others, first a morbid fantastic tendency like that of a child to confuse fancy with fact—a tendency which can well flourish in the atmosphere of a court, where, instead of simplicity and naturalness, there is so much perverse play-actorism and make-believe. Secondly, the imperious impulse to shine everywhere and in every department—an impulse unwholesomely encouraged by the peculiar position of an absolute ruler.

Among the types of rulers who are not afflicted with actual madness, we find some who constantly make a pitiful exposure of themselves in different departments of activity, partly because their very position impels them to be prominent everywhere, partly because those near them encourage them in the belief that their performance is brilliant and imposing, even when the mildest critics doubtfully shake their heads.

An art in which Caligula especially sought to shine was that of eloquence. He was always ready to speak in public, and we are told that he had a certain talent in that direction, and in particular a gift for vilifying and vituperating. He took especial delight in attacking great names in literature, and some of his sarcasms are said to have hit the mark. But his unintelligent fanaticism went so far that he would have liked to have banished classical authors like Homer, Virgil, and Livy from all libraries.

At the same time he seems to have made use of epigrammatic quotations from the authors he hated when describing his own position. Thus he once quoted to his guests the famous line of Homer, *εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω, εἷς βασιλεύς* ("Let there be one ruler, one king"). The most famous of his quotations is that from a dramatic poet, "Oderint dum metuant" ("Let them hate, provided they fear")—certainly the most pointed expression of his conception of the relations between ruler and people.

Delight in reckless violence governed his conduct in all the circumstances of public life. Apart from positive cruelty it is characteristic of this type of emperor, as with Caligula,

to make every one feel their power. Nothing excites them more than to come in contact with any limits to it, and they regard the diffusion of fear and terror as the best means of nipping in the bud any opposition on the part of their subjects. Like Caligula they constantly brag that everyone shall feel their power. Even geniuses like Napoleon are not free from this. Happy are the people whose rulers are compelled by the force of outward circumstances to content themselves with mere threats, and cannot, as Caligula did, translate them into acts.

It is not the masses of the people who suffer so much from the attempts of a ruler to make his power felt, as the higher classes of society, noble families and great officials. The first beginnings of this tendency show themselves in various acts of inconsiderateness, but they are only beginnings, for soon such rulers seek to crush everything near them which claims to have an independent existence. We see also in Caligula how he persecuted every kind of excellence and merit with his hatred and how he systematically sought to undermine every distinguished person with scorn and contempt. He made a special point of humiliating men in high position, compelled them to appear as gladiators (thereby also gratifying his lust for bloodshed), and made them run behind his carriage, wait at table, or reached them his foot to kiss. He purposely set at naught the ancient traditions of noble families, and surrounded himself with those of the lowest classes. Coachmen, gladiators, actors, and all kinds of vagrants were said to be his daily companions, while eminent men were pushed on one side. This is also a trait often met with in the history of morbid-minded rulers.

In political life Caligula acted in a similar fashion in what related to civil and military appointments. It is just here that it is particularly vexatious that the account Tacitus gives of Caligula breaks off at his accession. He would certainly with inimitable art have described how this trait in his character had a disintegrating effect on the whole administration of the State. Lesser authors than Tacitus have merely handed down to us the external fact that Caligula's madness culminated in his intending to have his horse appointed Consul. We must supply in imagination

the steps which led to this boyish extravagance. But it is not difficult to suppose that such contempt of all special knowledge and of all authority based upon professional training would from scarcely perceptible beginnings lead to this result.

Only two isolated facts relating to this tendency of Caligula's are accidentally known to us. He wished to do away with the science of jurisprudence and to abolish lawyers altogether. Although in this dislike of lawyers there may have been present the sound reason that the existence of specialized jurisprudence practically hinders the operations of justice, yet the idea itself even under the contemporary conditions of Roman life is thoroughly Cæsarian. The other fact is connected with the army. A number of circus-boxers, apparently from a pure whim, were appointed officers of his bodyguard.

We might add details as to how the Emperor bestowed military rank on government officials, quæstors or farmers of taxes, placed old soldiers in important civilian posts, sent professional jurists who had spent their lives in the Forum to difficult places on the frontier in order to deal with foreign tribes, or appointed gouty councillors to lead his dancers. It would be impossible to exaggerate in depicting the confusion, the contradiction between capacities and tasks brought about by Caligula's contempt for sound reason, which culminated in the contemplated promotion of his horse.

Over the confused, despised, trampled-on masses of the people and of all classes the Emperor believed himself to be throned in unapproachable divine majesty. This was not in any way impaired in his eyes by his occasional appearances in the amphitheatre. For it is an essential characteristic of this species of emperor to believe in their own right; they think that they have a mission, feel that they stand in a special relation to God, consider themselves to be His chosen instruments, and finally claim for themselves divine honours.

This seems to be the culminating point of Cæsarian madness, and yet many rulers who could not otherwise be considered seriously insane have approached it. Frederick William IV, for instance, even before his mind was com-

pletely clouded over, was infected with these ideas. Such notions are dangerously fostered by the servility both of the crowd and of the upper classes in nations which have been long and deeply impregnated with monarchical ideas. How otherwise can we explain the deification of Alexander and Cæsar?

In Caligula's case his claim to divinity is not a mere impudent exploitation of the popular view or a political calculation, but the sheer fantasy of a lunatic who believes in his own divinity.

Caligula's contemporaries themselves thought him mad, and it is not easy to understand how a modern historian can doubt it. The development of his mental disease shows that he was originally predisposed to it. Of his outward appearance we do not know much, but some particulars have been handed down to us. He was a tall youth of twenty when he first appeared at the court of Tiberius; he had thin legs and something of a paunch; his features made an unpleasant impression; his eyes were deep set and his brow was broad. He suffered from epileptic fits and terrible sleeplessness.

Connected with these last were his perpetual restlessness, his spirit of contradiction and the uncertainty what he would do next, of which Dion Cassius has given us a graphic picture. These are signs of nervousness which are not usually morbid themselves but which acquire a heightened significance in connexion with the other facts we know about him. Sometimes he sought the crowd, and sometimes solitude. Occasionally he went on journeys, and on one occasion he was hardly recognizable on his return; he had allowed his beard and hair to grow long, quite against the customs of the time. It was a matter of chance whether frankness or flattery would please or vex him. Sometimes he allowed people, especially those of a lower class, to say the boldest things; at other times he would punish trivial remarks with death. No one knew what to do or say in his presence, and if anyone chanced to please him he owed it to luck and not to foresight. The most absurd ideas came into his head, and even when they were comparatively harmless there was a spice of madness about them; thus on one occasion he sent

an officer who had excited his displeasure to King Ptolemy in Mauretania with a perfectly blank letter.

But his malice and pleasure in seeing suffering generally took much more serious forms. This characteristic marked him already as a youth, when he was constantly present at tortures and executions.

That this love of cruelty also bordered on madness is shown by many anecdotes which have come down to us.

Wishes the Thus when he kissed his wife or one of his
populace had paramours, he would say that "this beautiful
only one neck neck, as soon as he wished it, would be cut
through." On another occasion at a feast he
burst into uncontrollable laughter at the thought that it
only needed a gesture of his, and the throats of the two
Consuls reclining near him would be cut. His wish that
the Roman populace had only one neck that he might be-
head them with one stroke, is well known. Such ideas,
and still worse ones, found expression in a multitude of
cruelties, which he often accompanied with cynical jokes.
The details are too horrible to be recorded.

In brief, he plunged the whole of Rome in alarm, and
yet Rome could not summon up courage to shake off the
yoke of this madman, who raged like a
An bloodhound. The Senate did not dare to set
exaggerated him aside or to appoint a regent. He was not
satire (?) moved by any decree of a political body, but
it required a conspiracy which found a willing tool in the
thirst for vengeance of one of the officers of his bodyguard
whom he had grievously injured. So deeply sunk was the
State, at whose doors the vigorous barbarians from the
North were already ominously knocking. Anything like
this Cæsarism and this Imperial insanity is so completely
impossible under modern circumstances, that the whole of
the foregoing description may well seem to us an incredible
dream of fancy or an exaggerated satire composed by Roman
writers on the Cæsarism of their time. And yet in light of
modern research it is, in its essential features, dry historical
truth.

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