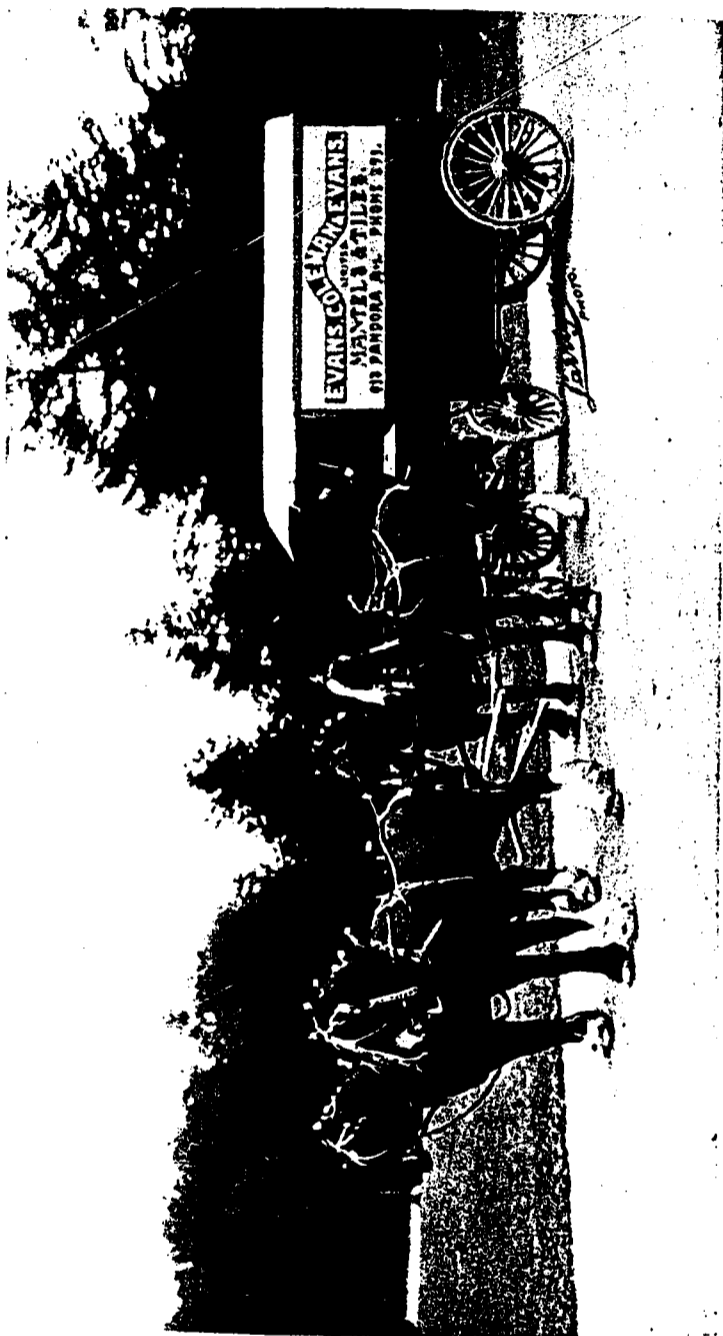


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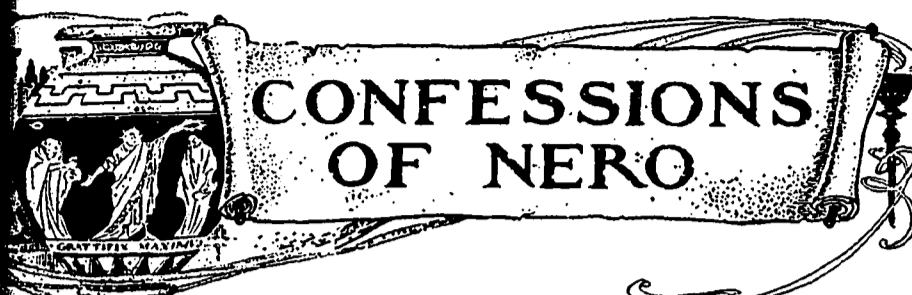
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MANUSCRIPT RECENTLY UNEARTHED FROM THE RUINS
OF ROME.—EDITOR.



FROM NERO, IMPERATOR AT ROME, TO MARCUS
CLAUDIUS RHINO, GOVERNOR OF LUSITANIA

Friend of a thousand cocktails, I salute you! In the red eye
of imagination I see you crowned, like Dionysius, with a chaplet
of leaves covering your bald spot. I see you threading light
from Thracian musical-comedies. I can feel the soft and
hand-clasp with which you stimulate love and sympathy
the classes you plunder. I can hear your glutinous laughter
as you slap the back of Prosperity and wink the other eye to the
bankers and usurers who farm your province. Marcus C. Rhino,
thou art what Big Tim Sullivan would
call Good Fella! Get thee to a Caucus, thou politician!

You ask me how I fare—rather nice of you, isn't it, to worry
the health of so obscure an individual as your Emperor. To
my kind enquiry I reply, "I am dangerously well." Friend, I
do not think I am long for this bitter world. No, no, not poison.
I am no longer afraid of that—I am having my nightingales' tongues
served in a chafing dish before my eyes. But a strange languor
runs my blood and I am haunted night and day with the abom-
inable thought: So Much to Spend, so Little to buy. Friend, I
have to you one dying request. If I am found some morning with
my head resting lightly on an empty wine-cask, a peaceful smile upon
my god-like face, tell them to plant me just as I am and carve upon
my mausoleum the following simple inscription:

HERE LIES NERO
HE WAS BORED TO DEATH
IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY

We have just moved into the Golden Palace, me and the Missus
and five or six thousand Hired Help. You should see the place.
The outside of Pittsburgh has wealth been lavished with such a
heavy hand. Even as I write I recline on a solid gold couch in the
center of a pavilion of similar material. Everything, from the pillars
that support the roof to the cuspidors under the benches, is of the
best Klondyke stuff—with the exception of the door-knobs and
nails on the furniture, which are composed of diamonds and
are the size of hens' eggs. In addition I have installed a few
interesting novelties. Hard by the couch on which I dine I have had
constructed a champagne geyser which spouts the effervescent liquor
brilliantly into a 40-foot basin of the yellow metal. I tried the
experiment of introducing gold fish into the champagne tank, but
the results were not, on the whole satisfactory. The scaly beauties
started, at first, uplifted, elated, charmed by their new environment.
The finger of Bacchus seemed to tickle their gills. They swam
in mad circles, in fanciful pursuit. With fins interlocked they
moved in curious zigzag fashion, poking each other roguishly in the
face from time to time. Anon they stood on their heads striking
the surface of the pond with their foolish tails. How I envied them
their zest—it is good to be young! But even as I looked a change