The Rome of Augustus Caesar.

By His Grace Most Rev. John Walsh, Archbishop of Toronto.

THE subject of this essay is the Rome of Augustus Cæsar. When I say Rome I mean not only the Eternal City itself, but the vast Empire, of which it was the centre and the Capital, the head and the heart. The Roman Empire was the greatest and most splendid creation that ever existed of human genius, political sagacity, wise statesmanship and irresistible valor in arms. It was the kingdom of iron that appeared to Nebuchadnezzar, in division of the Eight, which trampled down thrones, destroyed kingdoms, and, out of their broken fragments, constructed its own vast structure. It occupied the centre of the world's history. All the past ages came flowing down upon it with their rich treasures of human thought, of vast experiences, of precious traditions and of the accumulated stores of erudition, of the arts and sciences; and from it the Christian ages, in a rich tide of untold blessings, flow on towards the consummation of the world. For Imperial Rome all the wisdom of Egypt and of all the East had been stored up; for it all the schools of Greek philosophy theorized and thought; for it all the ancient law givers, Zoraster and Solon, and Lycurgus legislated; for it the Medes and Persians and Alexander the Great fought and conquered, the countries they had subdued, forming a portion of the Empire: for it all the ancient poets sang the artists clothed the stone or canvas in forms of imperishable and unapproachable beauty, and orators spoke with more than human eloquence. Spain and Gaul, all the frontier provinces from the Alps to the Danube sent their finest and bravest youths to its armies, and their best and choicest minds to its senate. The culture of the most polished nations, and the vigour, energy and freshness of younger peoples were employed in its service and contributed to its strength and power and glory. In a word, it was the heir of all antiquity. The experiences, the traditions of the human race, all the wealth of human thought and learning, all the wisdom of the past, all the moral and intellectual truths which that past had acquired and stored up, all that was great and good and refining and elevating in ancient civilization, came pouring in plenteous streams into the bosom of that society which Augustus Cæsar had organized and consolidated into an Empire.

AUGUSTUS CAESAR—CAPITOLINE MUSEUM ROME.

We will glance at the greatness and splendour of the Rome of Augustus Cæsar, and we shall then point out some of the causes of its greatness, and also some of the elements of weakness and dissolution that were at work in Roman society, gnawing like the canker worm at its very vitals, and ultimately causing its decline and irretrievable fall.

THE EXTENT AND GREATNESS OF THE EMPIRE.

At the point of Roman history which we select for our consideration, the Empire embraced the confines of the known world. For centuries the Roman legions had been marching to the conquest of the discovered earth. Tribe after tribe, people after people, nation after nation had been defeated by those all-conquering legions, and been made to pass under the Roman yoke. The Roman eagles, says an ancient author, had spread out their wings so far and so wide as to veil the earth and to obscure the canopy of heaven. The most ancient and historic kingdoms, the most polished and refined nations, as well as the most rude and savage, had lost their independence and autonomy and had been absorbed in this all-embracing Empire, and made to bow to the majesty of Imperial Rome. The Empire of Augustus had for boundaries on the west the Atlantic Ocean; the Rhine and Danube on the north; the Euphrates on the east, and, towards the south; the sandy deserts of Arabia and of Africa. It was two thousand miles in breadth from the northern limits of Dacia to Mount Atlas and the Tropic of Cancer; its extent was more than three thousand miles from the Western Ocean to the Euphrates. it was situated in the finest part of the temperate zone, and was supposed to contain about sixteen thousand square miles of the fairest, the most fertile and the most cultivated part of the world, and it contained about one hundred and twenty million of inhabitants, amongst them the greatest, the most learned, the wealthiest and the bravest of mankind. Where now in Europe a group of half friendly nations watch each others progress with intense jealousy, Rome maintained an Empire of which Spain and Great Britain and North Africa, Switzerland and the greater part of Austria, Turkey in Europe, Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt were but single limbs—members of her mighty body. Her roads radiating from the golden milestone in the Forum, spread like a network over this vast territory, pierced the mountains and crossed valleys and bridged over rapid rivers securing an easy and safe passage for the march of her legions, the caravans of her merchants and the far-reaching sweep of her legislation. Her navies, stationed at various ports, preserved the Mediterranean from piracy, and enabled the various countries bordering on its shores to exchange the products of their soil and of their industry with security. The land army, numbering in all about 300,000 men, were [illegible] at the frontiers of the Empire, but [illegible] to preserve internal peace and [illegible] rested on a different and a sounder basis but to guard the citizens from the invasion of the fierce barbarians and the forest, the wilderness and the mountain beyond the borders. A few thousand soldiers, stationed in the various Provinces were sufficient to protect the citizens in their life, property and liberties, where now in this nineteenth century half an hundred cutthroat constabulary and [illegible] are deemed necessary to preserve peace and order at home and to protect their rank and dignity and legitimate influence abroad. In the days of Augustus Cæsar, Asia Minor had not a single regiment of soldiers within its bounds, and though teeming in rich and populous cities, enjoying the civilization of a thousand years, and abounding in wealth, it had nothing to fear from internal turmoil or lawlessness, for it was sufficiently protected by the power of the Roman name and by what Pliny called the "immense majesty of the Roman peace." The policy which the Government employed in the various Provinces was not to keep them in leading strings not to press with bureaucratic despotism upon all the springs of civil life, but to leave each city and corporation the right and liberty to manage its own affairs—in other words, to secure them the right and the blessings of Home Rule in those matters that concerned the special interests of the provinces themselves, and were not in conflict with the rights and interests of the Empire. By this wise and statesmanlike policy was secured that "Pax Romana," that majestic Roman peace which smiled like the sun over every portion of the Empire and differed so widely from that armed jealousy of rival nations which is now called the balance of power. From the Danube and Rhine to the deserts of Syria and Asia Minor, the calm influence of this peace and security was felt like the soft hazy stillness of a beautiful day in Autumn. Of this period might be predicated what Tertulian wrote of a subsequent reign: "The world itself is opened up and becomes from day to day more civilized and increases the sum of human enjoyment. Every place is reached, is become known, is full of business, solitudes, famous of old, have changed their aspects under the richest cultivation, the plough has levelled forests and the beasts that prey on man have given place to those that serve him. Corn waves on the sea-shore; rocks are opened out into roads; marshes are drained; cities are more numerous now than villages in former times. The island has lost its savageness and the cliff its desolation. Houses spring up everywhere and men to dwell in them. On all sides are government and life."

SPLENDOR AND MAGNIFICENCE OF THE CITY.

The city itself was then in its marble newness, in the zenith of its power, in the full meridian of its peerless magnificence. She was the queen of nations, the mistress and presiding genius of the civilized world. Thither the rich and the great, the learned of the earth, thronged as to a common pleasure ground to revel in all possible material, as well as intellectual, enjoyments. There the eye was glutted with seeing and the ear with hearing. The city was gorged with the spoils of every nation, glutted with wealth, resplendent with marbles and gilding, and filled with all the beautiful works of art which the most refined civilization could produce. It abounded in public libraries, picture and sculpture galleries and music halls, and in every need that provided for the cultivation and refinement of the mind. There, in elegant ease, philosophers theorized and discussed, poets sang in immortal verse, orators spoke with an eloquence that still resounds through the world and stirs men's hearts, painters made the canvass breathe and live, and sculptors took the rough stones of the quarry and chisseled them into an imperishable life and beauty. There might have been heard the sweet lyrics and the pungent satires of Horace, the majestic strains of Virgil and the burning and triumphant eloquence of Cicero. Philosophy, oratory, poetry and the arts and sciences had reached a perfection never until then attained, making the reign of Augustus the synonym of all that is refined, elevating, great and perfect in art and literature.

Nor was Rome less advanced in all the comforts and luxuries of material civilization. Immense aquaeducts conveyed the waters of the coolest and most sequestered fountains in the solitudes of distant mountains to the ponds, baths, houses and gardens of the citizens, and many of them stand to this day the wonder of the modern traveller. Numerous baths of porphyry overlaid with silver, and in some instances set with precious stones, were at the service of the poor as well as of the rich. The Mediterranean was whitened with the sails of merchant vessels conveying the produce of the teeming countries adjacent to its shores. The delicacies of every climate and of every season were brought to the markets of the Imperial City. The Scythian hunter roamed the forests of the North that its citizens might be wrapt in furs; for them the savage tribes along the Danube and the Baltic dived for amber; the richest carpets and embroidery adorned their saloons and banquet halls; the looms and the cunning hands of Asia, skilled in every luxurious craft, seemed to labor only for them. The spices and perfumes of Arabia exhaled their sweetness for their enjoyment, and whole argosies coming from distant India failed to supply their demand for silks, pearls and diamonds. Such was the Empire, such was the City of Rome in the last years of the reign of Augustus Cæsar. Well might the British prince Caractacus, brought captive to Rome a half century afterwards, when passing by the marble palaces and lofty monuments of the Imperial City, have expressed his surprise and wonder that a people possessed of such great wealth at home should cry for an humble cottage in Britain.

Little, however, did that brave and high spirited prince imagine that in after centuries his native Britain would be the centre of an empire as vast and populous as the Roman, ruling over as many subjects, peoples, tribes and tongues, having a commerce more extensive, an empire as great in peace as in war on which the sun of heaven never sets, but in his daily rounds is greeted by the sound of the British sentinel-gun and the note of the British bugle—an Empire whose language is as majestic and as stately as the Latin, and enriched by such poets as Milton, Shakespeare, Pope, Dryden, Moore and Burns, and such orators as Chatham, Burke, Sheridan, Fox, Grattan, Flood, Curran, O'Connell Bright and Gladstone, an Empire, in a word, which when its sun will have set, for all nations are perishable will leave the horizon of time suffused with its lingering glories, will leave mankind the example of great and glorious achievements and the heritage of splendid and imperishable memories. This does not mean that I approve of all the acts and conduct of the British Government. On the contrary, as an Irishman, I heartily condemn the injustice and oppression it has heaped on my native country, but I entertain the hope that England will let learn to regard and to treat Ireland as a sister, and will do its utmost to staunch her wounds that have been so long bleeding.

CAUSES OF THE STABILITY OF THE EMPIRE.

The system of just laws regulating the relations and the conduct of the governing power of Rome towards its citizens, and its marvelous power of assimilating its subject races and nations, lay at the foundation of Rome's unrivalled greatness and of the wondrous strength and enduring stability of its Empire. It was the policy of Augustus and his successors not to attempt to extend the boundaries of the Empire, but rather to consolidate the various members of it into one great commonwealth, and to bind them together in a political unity by the power of equal laws and the recognition of local rights and usages. In order the better to cement this union and bind it together as with bonds of steel, the Cæsars gave their subjects liberty of conscience, and the free exercise of their various religions down to the advent of Christianity, and even after that event, and with the the single exception of that religion, until Christianity became the religion of the Empire. Roman law was a great system of natural equity, recognizing the just rights of all, and therefore won the allegiance and the loyalty of the many nations that came within its beneficent influence. Rome was therefore not only the mighty conqueror but also the great and wise legislator and the skilful assimilator of the human race. Herein she differed from and excelled other great cities famous in history, and which were once the heads of former empires.

Athens was once a great city, and the creator and centre of a most brilliant civilization. She was skilled in the arts of peace and war. She reigned a queen on the beautiful shores of the Egean. Clothed with an ideal beauty, radiant with triumphant genius, and basking in in the dreamy elysian atmosphere of its genial clime.

"Where on the Egean shore a city stands,
Built nobly, pure the air, and light the soil"

But it lacked the power of making its sway acceptable to its tributaries, its provinces revolted against its rule, and its empire vanished like a dream of the night. Its dominion henceforward, was over the mind of man. Painting, sculpture, music, poetry, eloquence and philosophy, chose her as their capital, but she failed to consolidate her tributaries into an enduring common-wealth because she lacked the faculty of practical legislation and of assimilation.

Antioch was once a great and beautiful city, and was selected by an able sovereign for the head of his empire. Seated in a valley of matchless beauty, and enjoying a most lovely climate, she grew to vast proportions. She was the meeting place of Greek and Oriental civilization, and continued for centuries under Roman dominion the favorite resort of the wealthy and luxurious, and of even many Roman Emperors. For more than eight hundred years her glory lasted, until she was destroyed by Chosroes.

And yet, in what has Antioch, as a pagan city benefitted or enriched mankind? What legacy of intellectual, moral or political value has she bequeathed to the nations? She was a splendid capital, a luxurious city, and nothing more. Greater than Antioch, and more beautiful, was Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great. It was for centuries the rival even of Rome in commerce, attracting to its marts the products of three continents. It became the centre of universal learning. Here schools of philosophy and medicine flourished, it was even here that the Scriptures were first made known to the heathen through that immortal version called the Septuagint. She united in herself the glories of Athens and of Antioch, being not only a seat of great learning and mental culture, but also the centre of immense commercial enterprise and material wealth. Although she enjoyed unexampled prosperity and prodigious wealth and power for nearly a thousand years, still she, as a pagan city, bequeathed no rich dowry to mankind, and left no salutary impress on the ages.

Far superior as Rome was to those great and brilliant cities in material wealth and extent of empire, she was immeasurably greater in her art of governing and in the practical wisdom of her legislation. The countries she had conquered by the force of her arms she won to her rule by the justice of her laws. On the various races that lay within the far-extending sweep of her boundaries, she conferred what she considered the most precious gift in her possession, and what has been considered such by posterity, the protection of equal and just laws, the enjoyment of equal rights, in other words, her citizenship. This is what constituted the real glory and strength and stability of Rome. This is what made it truly great, and what constituted the overshadowing majesty of the Roman name, and of the *Pax Romana*, or Roman peace. Whilst other great cities and seats of empire, such as Athens, Antioch and Alexandria, sat alone in their solitary glory, and selfish and destructive isolation, Rome opened up her mighty bosom as of a great and loving mother to her subjects. Her policy was not one of isolation, but rather of extension and attraction. Her policy and aim was to make the rights privileges, and liberties, that constituted her life circulate from her mighty heart, to all the members of her body, imparting to them one imperishable national life, and binding them together in the body politic by equal laws and a common language.

THE ROMAN FORUM.

Let us see how she effected this. The emperor decreed that the legions should be stationary and permanent in the various regions in which they were placed. Furthermore, vast numbers of Romans and Italians emigrated to the conquered countries, just as modern Englishmen emigrate to-day to improve their fortunes or to seek new pleasures, to the various countries of the British empire. Thus the Provinces became the homes of multitudes of Roman citizens and soldiers. These were authorized to create colonies or colonies. And they established them in the most fertile districts and the most convenient situations. The colonia was the very image of Rome itself in its internal policy and government, it was Roman soil dwelt in by Roman citizens, enjoying all civil and political rights. The colonia was Rome reproduced, in every locality in which it was planted, it was the representative of its power and civilization. It was in each district the guardian of law and order and good government. The natives around the colonia who went thither for the purpose of trade, were attracted towards the civilized life they there saw imaged forth, they saw a picture of life, wealth comfort and civil peace far superior to anything they had imagined.

Gradually and insensibly the magnet of the civilization of the colonia drew them to its bosom, and the aim and ambition of their life became to share the privileges and innumerable advantages which they saw securely possessed by its inhabitants. Rome had planted herself with all her attributes of power, order, wealth and peace before their eyes and within their grasp. How could they fail to stretch forth their arms to the embrace of such a mother. The municipal cities by degrees came to equal the colonies in rank and splendour and privileges.

Thus did Rome for centuries propagate herself in Italy, Spain, Great Britain, and other countries of her empire, bringing her freedom, her laws and her civilization to them all winning them to allegiance and loyalty, and homage moulding them into one great common wealth, guarded and ramparted around by the hearts and hands of her myriad subjects. Whilst other imperial cities stood alone in their solitary grandeur, and isolated from their tributaries and perished ignominiously, Rome sowed the soil of Europe with the fruitful seeds of her libertics, laws and self-government, so that her municipal autonomy passed on as a principle of freedom to our own times, and even when the empire perished, the municipalities of her creation still survived amid the ruins around them, like some glorious shaft or column standing aloft amid the ruins of some magnificent temple forever overthrown. She adopted the principle of self-government, and hence, although her sovereignty was indisputable and all controlling, it at the same time left the subject races in general, in possession of their own laws, liberty, property and customs, reserving to herself the right of peace and war, and requiring only that they should have the same friends and the same enemies with herself. It was a patronage, says Cicero, rather than empire. There were no rebellions, because there was no cause for disloyalty, and this magistic peace lasted in its completeness for four hundred years. Such was Imperial Rome and such the secret of its mighty strength and of its mountain like stability. And even the giant fabric torn down and broken into fragments by innumerable heats, its presence and its influence are still felt in the world. The heavens bespeak its glory, for it gave names to the stars that bespangle them, the earth is strewn with her mighty ruins that tell of her former greatness. Her laws are the basis of European jurisprudence, her language is still the language of the learned, the language of our universities and the language of the great Latin Church, which is as wide as the world, and as universal as the human race, she has stamped her impress on time itself, for she has given names to our days and months; though dead she yet speaketh, as if loth to relax her hold on the government of mankind, so that we may truly say of the great Roman people:

"They fell devoted but undying
The very ages their names seem sighing
The waters murmur of their name,
The woods are peopled with their fame
The silent pillar lone and gray
Claims kindred with their sacred clay
Their spirits wrap the dusky mountain,
Their memory sparkles o'er the fountain,
The meanest rill, the mightiest river,
Rolls mingling with their fame forever.

THE CAUSES THAT WROUGHT RUIN TO THE EMPIRE.

But within the bosom of this great Roman society there were causes at work which slowly but surely brought about the decline and ultimately the fall of the Empire.

1st. Marriage had lost its unity, sanctity and indissolubility, and thereby the very foundation of Roman society was sapped and undermined. The family is the foundation of society, and in fact it was the first society instituted by God, it is it that gives citizens to the state and children to the Church. What the foundation is to the structure that rests upon it, that the family is to society. If you undermine and destroy the foundation, the superincumbent building will tumble into fragments; and so when the family is disrupted and ruined society and the state, which is but an organization of families, must inevitably come to ruin and destruction. Now this was the condition of things in the Roman Empire at the time of which we are writing. The family was degraded and disrupted because marriage had lost its unity, its sanctity, and indissolubility; its unity by polygamy, its sanctity by legalized prostitution, and its indissolibility by divorce.

2nd. In consequence of the loss of the sanctions and safeguards given by God to marriage, woman lost her primitive dignity and became the plaything and the slave of brutalized man. When the mother is degraded and enslaved the child has no home and protection Under Roman law the child had no rights: it was completely at the mercy of the father. Thousands of children were thrown out on the streets of the city and into the fields and lanes of the country to be devoured by wild beasts or to perish by cold and hunger. Cruelty and tyranny ruled supreme, might constituted right, uncontrolled despotism of the strong over the weak, of the husband over the wife, of the father over the children, of the master over the slave, was the rule and law. Their very holidays and games which were instituted to recreate and gratify the citizens and the mob, were characterized by the most savage cruelty and brutality. The greatest delight, the most heartfelt pleasure of the Roman citizens and populace, was to witness the shedding of human blood—the waste and destruction of human life. There could have been no Roman holiday without the gladiatorial games in which hundreds of human beings mangled and tore each other other to death, or were worried and devoured by wild beasts, to the delight of assembled Rome. Byron, in his "Child Harold," thus vividly paints the outrages inflicted on humanity in the persons of those gladiators:

"I see before me the gladiator die,
He leans upon his hand, his manly brow
Consents to death but conquers agony
And his drooped head sinks gradually low,
And from his side the last drops, ebbing slow,
From the red gash fall heavy one by one,
Like the first of a thunder shower
And now the arena swims around him,
He is alone one recalled the inhuman shout
That greets the wretch who won

He heard it, but he heeded not, his eyes
Were with his heart, and that was far away.
He reckoned not of the life he lost, nor prize,
But where rushed his rude hut by the Danube lay,
There were his young barbarians all at play,
There was their Dacian mother, he their sire
Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday
All this rushed with his blood, oh is he expire
Avenged of thy cruelties and slain your tire

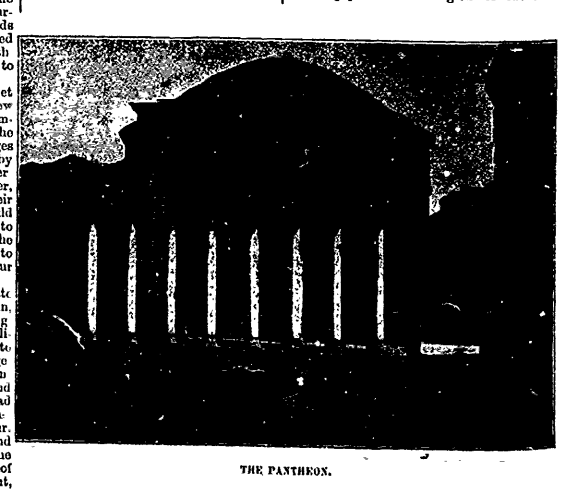
Where there was so much tyranny, so much monstrous inhumanity, so much savage and brutal atrocity in the inner relations of Roman life, there could not be long a home for freedom, for justice, for patriotism in a word, for all those virtues that dignify, ennoble and make a state great and enduring, and outraged liberty, not being able to live in such a poisoned atmosphere must take its flight for ever to better and more congenial climes.

Slavery was another tremendous evil that brought and hastened the ruin of Rome.

Slavery gradually expelled free labor, it monopolised all domestic work, it tilled the soil and took possession of the mechanical arts. All labour whether domestic, mechanical or agricultural had become servile and ignominious, and there was no place for free men either as mechanics or agriculturists. Now this result must have had a most destructive effect on the well-being of the state, for it produced sloth enervation, and all the other vices which enforced idleness necessarily begot amongst the masses of free citizens. The Roman armies were no longer recruited from the hardy sons of toil who hitherto had made them invincible, they were now crowded with men who had neither soul-stirring ambition nor love of country, whilst the city itself was filled with idle classes which had no aim, no ambition in life, and were always a menace and a danger to the government.

Slavery opened up in every Roman family an inexhaustible fountain of moral corruption. Not merely did the time, labor, strength and health of the slave belong to his master, not mercy could the slave be punished, flogged and even crucified, but the common nature of man was not recognized in him, and even that last stronghold of the moral being, the sanctuary of conscience and of purity was recklessly invaded and violated. There was, according to Roman law and Roman custom, no such thing as seduction and no thing as outrage in respect of male or female slaves In this respect, as well as in every other, they were the prey of their master: they were at the mercy of their masters unbridled passions and lusts, and history shudders as she relates the shameful degrading and destructive immoralities that were the result We must draw a veil over the part of the subject Suffice it to say that the awful sin of the sodomy was more widespread and as scarlet in its enormity as it had been in the day when God, in his omnipotent anger showered down fire and brimstone on the guilty cities of the plain. One of the effects of this was the violation of the sanctity of the family, the disruption of family ties, the destruction of family life. Now the family is foundation of civil society and of the state, and whatever tends to break up the family must shake the pillars of the state and tear down the whole superstructure of society in whelming in ruin. But not only did this tremendous evil tend to destroy family life and the sanctities of home, but it effectually prevented marriage and the procreation of children, and therefore laid fratricidal hands on the life of the empire itself. Romans refused to marry or to be burthened with children, and to such an extent did this frightful abuse prevail, that Augustus and his successors found it necessary for the protection and the very existence of the empire, to pass a series of laws encouraging and enjoining marriage, giving rewards and privileges to those who had families, and fining and censuring celibacy and punishing bachelors. But all in vain. Even in the time of Augustus the number of unmarried citizens of age far exceeded that of the married. Roman families decrease in number and the very race is threatened with extinction.

Thus the virus of slavery poisoned the whole body politic and menaced it with paralysis and death. It stamped all honest labor with infamy, it corrupted in its very source the social and political life of the free citizens and by destroying the general morality it caused the free population to decrease with a force and momentum that no remedial laws could prevent or stay. Nor did the religious condition of the people offer any prospect of moral reformation or recovery. A certain sort of religion, it is true, existed and was cultivated among the masses, but it was an empty shell—a religion of mere



THE PANTHEON.

NOTE.—This essay is largely drawn from that admirable work, "The Formation of Christendom," by T. W. Allies.