

TACITUS
THE AGRICOLA
AND THE
GERMANIA

TRANSLATED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY H. MATTINGLY

TRANSLATION REVISED
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GERMANIA

I

THE various peoples of Germany are separated from the Gauls by the Rhine, from the Raetians and Pannonians by the Danube, and from the Sarmatians and Dacians by mountains – or, where there are no mountains, by mutual fear. The northern parts of the country are girdled by the sea, flowing round broad peninsulas and vast islands where a campaign of the present century has revealed to us the existence of some nations and kings hitherto unknown. The Rhine rises in a remote and precipitous height of the Raetian Alps and afterwards turns slightly westward to flow into the North Sea. The Danube issues from a gentle slope of moderate height in the Black Forest, and after passing more peoples than the Rhine in its course discharges itself into the Black Sea through six channels – a seventh mouth being lost in marshlands.

2

As to the Germans themselves, I think it probable that they are indigenous and that very little foreign blood has been introduced either by invasions or by friendly dealings with neighbouring peoples. For in former times it was not by land but on shipboard that would-be

immigrants arrived; and the limitless ocean that lies beyond the coasts of Germany, and as it were defies intruders, is seldom visited by ships from our part of the world. And to say nothing of the perils of that wild and unknown sea, who would have been likely to leave Asia Minor, North Africa, or Italy, to go to Germany with its forbidding landscapes and unpleasant climate – a country that is thankless to till and dismal to behold for anyone who was not born and bred there?

In the traditional songs which form their only record of the past the Germans celebrate an earth-born god called Tuisto. His son Mannus is supposed to be the fountain-head of their race and himself to have begotten three sons who gave their names to three groups of tribes – the Ingaevones, nearest the sea; the Herminones, in the interior; and the Istaevones, who comprise all the rest. Some authorities, with the freedom of conjecture permitted by remote antiquity, assert that Tuisto had more numerous descendants and mention more tribal groups such as Marsi, Gambrivii, Suebi, and Vandilii – names which they affirm to be both genuine and ancient. The name *Germania*, however, is said to have been only recently applied to the country. The first people to cross the Rhine and appropriate Gallic territory, though they are known nowadays as Tungri, were at that time called *Germani*; and what was at first the name of this one tribe, not of the entire race, gradually came into general use in the wider sense. It was first applied to the whole people by the conquerors of the Gauls, to frighten them; later, all-

the Germans adopted it and called themselves by the new name.

3

The Germans, like many other peoples, are said to have been visited by Hercules, and they sing of him as the foremost of all the heroes when they are about to engage in battle.* Ulysses also, in all those fabled wanderings of his, is supposed by some to have reached the northern sea and visited German lands, and to have founded and named Asciburgium, a town on the Rhine inhabited to this day. They even add that an altar consecrated by Ulysses and inscribed also with the name of his father Laertes was discovered long ago at this same place, and that certain barrows with monuments upon them bearing Greek inscriptions still exist on the borders of Germany and Raetia. I do not intend to argue either for or against these assertions; each man must accept or reject them as he feels inclined.

* They also have the well-known kind of chant that they call *baritus*. By the rendering of this they not only kindle their courage, but, merely by listening to the sound, they can forecast the issue of an approaching engagement. For they either terrify their foes or themselves become frightened, according to the character of the noise they make upon the battlefield; and they regard it not merely as so many voices chanting together but as a unison of valour. What they particularly aim at is a harsh, intermittent roar; and they hold their shields in front of their mouths, so that the sound is amplified into a deeper crescendo by the reverberation.

4

For myself, I accept the view that the peoples of Germany have never contaminated themselves by intermarriage with foreigners but remain of pure blood, distinct and unlike any other nation. One result of this is that their physical characteristics, in so far as one can generalize about such a large population, are always the same: fierce-looking blue eyes, reddish hair, and big frames – which, however, can exert their strength only by means of violent effort. They are less able to endure toil or fatiguing tasks and cannot bear thirst or heat, though their climate has inured them to cold spells and the poverty of their soil to hunger.

5

The appearance of the country differs considerably in different parts; but in general it is covered either by bristling forests or by foul swamps. It is wetter on the side that faces Gaul, windier on the side of Noricum and Pannonia. A good soil for cereal crops, it will not grow fruit-trees. It is well provided with live-stock; but the animals are mostly undersized, and even the cattle lack the handsome heads that are their natural glory. It is the mere number of them that the Germans take pride in; for these are the only form of wealth they have, and are much prized. Silver and gold have been denied them –

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whether as a sign of divine favour or of divine wrath, I cannot say. Yet I would not positively assert that there are no deposits of silver or gold in Germany, since no one has prospected for them. The natives take less pleasure than most people do in possessing and handling these metals; indeed, one can see in their houses silver vessels, which have been presented to chieftains or to ambassadors travelling abroad, put to the same everyday uses as earthenware. Those who live on the frontiers nearest us, however, do value gold and silver for their use in commerce, being quick to recognize and pick out certain of our coin-types.* They like old-fashioned coins because they have been long familiar with them – especially those which have notched edges and are stamped with representations of two-horse chariots. They also prefer silver to gold, not from any special liking for the metal, but because a quantity of silver coins is more convenient for buying ordinary cheap merchandise.

6

Even iron is not plentiful; this has been inferred from the sort of weapons they have. Only a few of them use swords or large lances: they carry spears – called *frameae* in their language – with short and narrow blades, but so sharp and easy to handle that they can be used, as required, either at close quarters or in long-range fighting. Their

* The tribes of the interior stick to the simpler and more ancient practice of barter.

horsemen are content with a shield and a spear; but the foot-soldiers also rain javelins on their foes: each of them carries several, and they hurl them to immense distances, being naked or lightly clad in short cloaks. There is nothing ostentatious about their equipment: only their shields are picked out in the colours of their choice. Few have breastplates, and only one here and there a helmet of metal or hide. Their horses are not remarkable for either beauty or speed, and are not trained to execute various evolutions as ours are; they ride them straight ahead, or with just a single wheel to the right, keeping their line so well that not a man falls behind the rest. Generally speaking, their strength lies in infantry rather than cavalry. So foot-soldiers accompany the cavalry into action, their speed of foot being such that they can easily keep up with the charging horsemen. The best men are chosen from the whole body of young warriors and placed with the cavalry in front of the main battle-line. The number of these is precisely fixed: a hundred are drawn from each district, and 'The Hundred' is the name they bear among their fellow-countrymen. Thus what was originally a mere number has come to be a title of distinction. The battle-line is made up of wedge-shaped formations. To give ground, provided that you return to the attack, is considered good tactics rather than cowardice. They bring back the bodies of the fallen even when a battle hangs in the balance. To throw away one's shield is the supreme disgrace, and the man who has thus dishonoured himself is debarred from attendance at sacrifice

or assembly. Many such survivors from the battlefield have ended their shame by hanging themselves.

7

They choose their kings for their noble birth, their commanders for their valour. The power even of the kings is not absolute or arbitrary. The commanders rely on example rather than on the authority of their rank – on the admiration they win by showing conspicuous energy and courage and by pressing forward in front of their own troops. Capital punishment, imprisonment, even flogging, are allowed to none but the priests, and are not inflicted merely as punishments or on the commanders' orders, but as it were in obedience to the god whom the Germans believe to be present on the field of battle. They actually carry with them into the fight certain figures and emblems taken from their sacred groves. A specially powerful incitement to valour is that the squadrons and divisions are not made up at random by the mustering of chance-comers, but are each composed of men of one family or clan. Close by them, too, are their nearest and dearest, so that they can hear the shrieks of their women-folk and the wailing of their children. These are the witnesses whom each man reverences most highly, whose praise he most desires. It is to their mothers and wives that they go to have their wounds treated, and the women are not afraid to count and compare the gashes. They also carry supplies of food to the combatants and encourage them.

It stands on record that armies already wavering and on the point of collapse have been rallied by the women, pleading heroically with their men, thrusting forward their bared bosoms, and making them realize the imminent prospect of enslavement – a fate which the Germans fear more desperately for their women than for themselves. Indeed, you can secure a surer hold on these nations if you compel them to include among a consignment of hostages some girls of noble family. More than this, they believe that there resides in women an element of holiness and a gift of prophecy; and so they do not scorn to ask their advice, or lightly disregard their replies. In the reign of the emperor Vespasian we saw Veleda long honoured by many Germans as a divinity; and even earlier they showed a similar reverence for Aurinia and a number of others – a reverence untainted by servile flattery or any pretence of turning women into goddesses.

Above all other gods they worship Mercury, and count it no sin, on certain feast-days, to include human victims in the sacrifices offered to him. Hercules and Mars they appease by offerings of animals, in accordance with ordinary civilized custom. Some of the Suebi sacrifice also to Isis. I do not know the origin or explanation of this foreign cult; but the goddess's emblem, being made in the

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form of a light warship, itself proves that her worship came in from abroad. The Germans do not think it in keeping with the divine majesty to confine gods within walls or to portray them in the likeness of any human countenance. Their holy places are woods and groves, and they apply the names of deities to that hidden presence which is seen only by the eye of reverence.

10

For omens and the casting of lots they have the highest regard. Their procedure in casting lots is always the same. They cut off a branch of a nut-bearing tree and slice it into strips; these they mark with different signs and throw them completely at random onto a white cloth. Then the priest of the state, if the consultation is a public one, or the father of the family if it is private, offers a prayer to the gods, and looking up at the sky picks up three strips, one at a time, and reads their meaning from the signs previously scored on them. If the lots forbid an enterprise, there is no deliberation that day on the matter in question; if they allow it, confirmation by the taking of auspices is required. Although the familiar method of seeking information from the cries and the flight of birds is known to the Germans, they have also a special method of their own - to try to obtain omens and warnings from horses. These horses are kept at the public expense in the sacred woods and groves that I have mentioned; they are pure white and undefiled by any toil in the service of man. The

priest and the king, or the chief of the state, yoke them to a sacred chariot and walk beside them, taking note of their neighs and snorts. No kind of omen inspires greater trust, not only among the common people, but even among the nobles and priests, who think that they themselves are but servants of the gods, whereas the horses are privy to the gods' counsels. There is yet another kind of omen-taking used to forecast the issue of serious wars. They contrive somehow to secure a captive from the nation with which they are at war and match him against a champion of their own, each being armed with his national weapons. The victory of one or the other is thought to forecast the issue of the war.

II

On matters of minor importance only the chiefs debate; on major affairs, the whole community. But even where the commons have the decision, the subject is considered in advance by the chiefs. Except in case of accident or emergency, they assemble on certain particular days, either shortly after the new moon or shortly before the full moon. These, they hold, are the most auspicious times for embarking on any enterprise. They do not reckon time by days, as we do, but by nights. All their engagements and appointments are made on this system. Night is regarded as ushering in the day. It is a drawback of their independent spirit that they do not take a summons as a command: instead of coming to a meeting all together, they waste two or three days by their unpunc-

tuality. When the assembled crowd thinks fit, they take their seats fully armed. Silence is then commanded by the priests, who on such occasions have power to enforce obedience. Then such hearing is given to the king or state-chief as his age, rank, military distinction, or eloquence can secure – more because his advice carries weight than because he has the power to command. If a proposal displeases them, the people shout their dissent; if they approve, they clash their spears. To express approbation with their weapons is their most complimentary way of showing agreement.

12

The Assembly is competent also to hear criminal charges, especially those involving the risk of capital punishment. The mode of execution varies according to the offence. Traitors and deserters are hanged on trees; cowards, shirkers, and sodomites are pressed down under a wicker hurdle into the slimy mud of a bog. This distinction in the punishments is based on the idea that offenders against the state should be made a public example of, whereas deeds of shame should be buried out of men's sight. Less serious offences, too, have penalties proportioned to them. The man who is found guilty has to pay a fine of so many horses or cattle, part of which goes to the king or the state, part to the victim of the wrongful act or to his relatives. These same assemblies elect, among other officials, the magistrates who administer justice in the districts and villages. Each magistrate is assisted by a hundred assessors

chosen from the people to advise him and to add weight to his decisions.

13

They transact no business, public or private, without being armed. But it is a rule that no one shall carry arms until the state authorities are satisfied that he will be competent to use them. Then, in the presence of the Assembly, either one of the chiefs or the young man's father or some other relative presents him with a shield and a spear. These, among the Germans, are the equivalent of the man's toga with us – the first distinction publicly conferred upon a youth, who now ceases to rank merely as a member of a household and becomes a citizen. Particularly noble birth, or great services rendered by their fathers, can obtain the rank of 'chief' for boys still in their teens. They are attached to others of more mature strength who have been approved some years before, and none of them blushes to be seen in a chief's retinue of followers. There are grades of rank even in these retinues, determined at the discretion of the chief whom they follow; and there is great rivalry, both among the followers to obtain the highest place in their leader's estimation and among the chiefs for the honour of having the biggest and most valiant retinue. Both prestige and power depend on being continually attended by a large train of picked young warriors, which is a distinction in peace and a protection in war. And it is not only in a chief's own nation that the superior number and quality

of his retainers brings him glory and renown. Neighbouring states honour them also, courting them with embassies and complimenting them with presents. Very often the mere reputation of such men will virtually decide the issue of a war.

14

On the field of battle it is a disgrace to a chief to be surpassed in courage by his followers, and to the followers not to equal the courage of their chief. And to leave a battle alive after their chief has fallen means lifelong infamy and shame. To defend and protect him, and to let him get the credit for their own acts of heroism, are the most solemn obligations of their allegiance. The chiefs fight for victory, the followers for their chief. Many noble youths, if the land of their birth is stagnating in a long period of peace and inactivity, deliberately seek out other tribes which have some war in hand. For the Germans have no taste for peace; renown is more easily won among perils, and a large body of retainers cannot be kept together except by means of violence and war. They are always making demands on the generosity of their chief, asking for a coveted war-horse or a spear stained with the blood of a defeated enemy. Their meals, for which plentiful if homely fare is provided, count in lieu of pay. The wherewithal for this openhandedness comes from war and plunder. A German is not so easily prevailed upon to plough the land and wait patiently for harvest as to challenge a foe and earn wounds for his

reward. He thinks it tame and spiritless to accumulate slowly by the sweat of his brow what can be got quickly by the loss of a little blood.

15

When not engaged in warfare they spend a certain amount of time in hunting, but much more in idleness, thinking of nothing else but sleeping and eating. For the boldest and most warlike men have no regular employment, the care of house, home, and fields being left to the women, old men, and weaklings of the family. In thus dawdling away their time they show a strange inconsistency – at one and the same time loving indolence and hating peace.

It is a national custom for gifts of cattle or agricultural produce to be made to the chiefs, individual citizens making voluntary contributions for this purpose. These are accepted as tokens of honour, but serve also to supply their wants. They take particular pleasure in gifts received from neighbouring states, such as are sent not only by individuals but by communities as well – choice horses, splendid arms, metal discs, and collars. And we have now taught them to accept presents of money also.

16

It is a well-known fact that the peoples of Germany never live in cities and will not even have their houses adjoin one another. They dwell apart, dotted about here and there, wherever a spring, plain, or grove takes their fancy.

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Their villages are not laid out in the Roman style, with buildings adjacent and connected. Every man leaves an open space round his house, perhaps as a precaution against the risk of fire, perhaps because they are inexperienced builders. They do not even make use of stones or wall-tiles; for all purposes they employ rough-hewn timber, ugly and unattractive-looking. Some parts, however, they carefully smear over with a clay of such purity and brilliance that it looks like painting or coloured design. They also have the habit of hollowing out underground caves, which they cover with masses of manure and use both as refuges from the winter and as storehouses for produce. Such shelters temper the keenness of the frosts; and if an invader comes, he ravages the open country, while these hidden excavations are either not known to exist, or else escape detection simply because they cannot be found without a search.

17

The universal dress in Germany is a cloak fastened with a brooch or, failing that, a thorn. They pass whole days by the fireside wearing no garment but this. It is a mark of great wealth to wear undergarments, which are not loose like those of the Sarmatians and Parthians, but fit tightly and follow the contour of every limb. They also wear the skins of wild animals – the tribes near the river frontiers without any regard to appearance, the more distant tribes with some refinement of taste, since in their part of the country there is no finery to be bought. These

latter people select animals with care, and after stripping off the hides decorate them with patches of the skin of creatures that live in the unknown seas of the outer ocean. The dress of the women differs from that of the men in two respects only: women often wear outer garments of linen ornamented with a purple pattern; and as the upper part of these is sleeveless, the whole of their arms, and indeed the parts of their breasts nearest the shoulders, are exposed.

18

Their marriage code, however, is strict, and no feature of their morality deserves higher praise. They are almost unique among barbarians in being content with one wife apiece – all of them, that is, except a very few who take more than one wife not to satisfy their desires but because their exalted rank brings them many pressing offers of matrimonial alliances. The dowry is brought by husband to wife, not by wife to husband. Parents and kinsmen attend and approve the gifts – not gifts chosen to please a woman's fancy or gaily deck a young bride, but oxen, a horse with its bridle, or a shield, spear, and sword. In consideration of such gifts a man gets his wife, and she in her turn brings a present of arms to her husband. This interchange of gifts typifies for them the most sacred bond of union, sanctified by mystic rites under the favour of the presiding deities of wedlock. The woman must not think that she is excluded from aspirations to manly virtues or exempt from the hazards of warfare. That is

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why she is reminded, in the very ceremonies which bless her marriage at its outset, that she enters her husband's home to be the partner of his toils and perils, that both in peace and in war she is to share his sufferings and adventures. That is the meaning of the team of oxen, the horse ready for its rider, and the gift of arms. On these terms she must live her life and bear her children. She is receiving something that she must hand over intact and undepreciated to her children, something for her sons' wives to receive in their turn and pass on to her grandchildren.

19

By such means is the virtue of their women protected, and they live uncorrupted by the temptations of public shows or the excitements of banquets. Clandestine love-letters are unknown to men and women alike. Adultery is extremely rare, considering the size of the population. A guilty wife is summarily punished by her husband. He cuts off her hair, strips her naked, and in the presence of kinsmen turns her out of his house and flogs her all through the village. They have in fact no mercy on a wife who prostitutes her chastity. Neither beauty, youth, nor wealth can find her another husband. No one in Germany finds vice amusing, or calls it 'up-to-date' to seduce and be seduced. Even better is the practice of those states in which only virgins may marry, so that a woman who has once been a bride has finished with all such hopes and aspirations. She takes one husband, just as she has one

body and one life. Her thoughts must not stray beyond him or her desires survive him. And even that husband she must love not for himself, but as an embodiment of the married state. To restrict the number of children, or to kill any of those born after the heir, is considered wicked. Good morality is more effective in Germany than good laws are elsewhere.

20

In every home the children go naked and dirty, and develop that strength of limb and tall stature which excite our admiration. Every mother feeds her child at the breast and does not depute the task to maids or nurses. The young master is not distinguished from the slave by any pampering in his upbringing. They live together among the same flocks and on the same earthen floor, until maturity sets apart the free and the spirit of valour claims them as her own. The young men are slow to mate, and thus they reach manhood with vigour unimpaired. The girls, too, are not hurried into marriage. As old and full-grown as the men, they match their mates in age and strength, and the children inherit the robustness of their parents. The sons of sisters are as highly honoured by their uncles as by their own fathers. Some tribes even consider the former tie the closer and more sacred of the two, and in demanding hostages prefer nephews to sons, thinking that this gives them a firmer grip on men's hearts and a wider hold on the family. However, a man's heirs and successors are his own

children, and there is no such thing as a will. When there is no issue, the first in order of succession are brothers, and then uncles, first on the father's, then on the mother's side. The more relatives and connections by marriage a man has, the greater authority he commands in old age. There is nothing to be gained by childlessness in Germany.

21

Heirs are under an obligation to take up both the feuds and the friendships of a father or kinsman. But feuds do not continue for ever unreconciled. Even homicide can be atoned for by a fixed number of cattle or sheep, the compensation being received by the whole family. This is to the advantage of the community: for private feuds are particularly dangerous where there is such complete liberty.

No nation indulges more freely in feasting and entertaining than the German. It is accounted a sin to turn any man away from your door. The host welcomes his guest with the best meal that his means allow. When he has finished entertaining him, the host undertakes a fresh role: he accompanies the guest to the nearest house where further hospitality can be had. It makes no difference that they come uninvited; they are welcomed just as warmly. No distinction is ever made between acquaintance and stranger as far as the right to hospitality is concerned. As the guest takes his leave, it is customary to let him have anything he asks for; and the host, with as little hesitation, will ask for a gift in return. They take delight in presents,

but they expect no repayment for giving them and feel no obligation in receiving them.

As soon as they wake, which is often well after sunrise, they wash, generally with warm water – as one might expect in a country where winter lasts so long. After washing they eat a meal, each man having a separate seat and table. Then they go out to attend to any business they have in hand, or, as often as not, to partake in a feast – always with their weapons about them. Drinking-bouts lasting all day and all night are not considered in any way disgraceful. The quarrels that inevitably arise over the cups are seldom settled merely by hard words, but more often by killing and wounding. Nevertheless, they often make a feast an occasion for discussing such affairs as the ending of feuds, the arrangement of marriage alliances, the adoption of chiefs, and even questions of peace or war. At no other time, they think, is the heart so open to sincere feelings or so quick to warm to noble sentiments. The Germans are not cunning or sophisticated enough to refrain from blurting out their inmost thoughts in the freedom of festive surroundings, so that every man's soul is laid completely bare. On the following day the subject is reconsidered, and thus due account is taken of both occasions. They debate when they are incapable of pretence but reserve their decision for a time when they cannot well make a mistake.

23

Their drink is a liquor made from barley or other grain, which is fermented to produce a certain resemblance to wine. Those who dwell nearest the Rhine or the Danube also buy wine. Their food is plain – wild fruit, fresh game, and curdled milk. They satisfy their hunger without any elaborate cuisine or appetizers. But they do not show the same self-control in slaking their thirst. If you indulge their intemperance by plying them with as much drink as they desire, they will be as easily conquered by this besetting weakness as by force of arms.

24

They have only one kind of public show, which is performed without variation at every festive gathering. Naked youths, trained to the sport, dance about among swords and spears levelled at them. Practice begets skill, and skill grace; but they are not professionals and do not receive payment. Their most daring flings have their only reward in the pleasure they give the spectators. They play at dice – surprisingly enough – when they are sober, making a serious business of it; and they are so reckless in their anxiety to win, however often they lose, that when everything else is gone they will stake their personal liberty on a last decisive throw. A loser willingly discharges his debt by becoming a slave: even though he

may be the younger and stronger man, he allows himself to be bound and sold by the winner. Such is their stubborn persistence in a vicious practice – though they call it ‘honour’. Slaves of this description are disposed of by way of trade, since even their owners want to escape the shame of such a victory.

25

Slaves in general do not have particular duties about the house and estate allotted to them, as our slaves do. Each has control of a holding and home of his own. The master demands from him a stated quantity of grain, live-stock, or cloth, as he would from a tenant. To this extent the slave is under an obligation of service; but all other duties, including household work, are carried out by the housewife and her children. To flog a slave, or to punish him by imprisonment and hard labour, is very unusual; yet to kill one outright is quite common. But they do this, not as a strict enforcement of discipline, but in a fit of passion, as they might kill an enemy – except that they do not have to pay for it. Freedmen rank little higher than slaves: they seldom have any influence in a household, never in the state, except among the tribes that are ruled by kings. There they rise above free men and even above noblemen. Elsewhere, the inferior status of freedmen is a proof of genuine liberty.

26

The employment of capital in order to increase it by

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usury is unknown in Germany; and ignorance is here a surer defence than any prohibition. Lands proportioned to their own number are appropriated in turn for tillage by the whole body of tillers. They then divide them among themselves according to rank; the division is made easy by the wide tracts of cultivable ground available. These ploughlands are changed yearly, and still there is enough and to spare. The fact is that although their land is fertile and extensive, they fail to take full advantage of it because they do not work sufficiently hard. They do not plant orchards, fence off meadows, or irrigate gardens; the only demand they make upon the soil is to produce a corn-crop. Hence even the year itself is not divided by them into as many seasons as it is with us: winter, spring, and summer are the seasons they understand and have names for; the name of autumn is as completely unknown to them as are the blessings that it can bring.

27

There is no ostentation about their funerals. The only special observance is that the bodies of famous men are burned with particular kinds of wood. When they have heaped up the pyre they do not throw garments or spices on it; only the dead man's arms, and sometimes his horse too, are cast into the flames. The tomb is a raised mound of turf. They disdain to show honour by laboriously rearing high monuments of stone, which they think would only lie heavy on the dead. Weeping and wailing

are soon abandoned, sorrow and mourning not so soon. A woman may decently express her grief; a man should nurse his in his heart.

Such is the general account that we find given of the origin and customs of the Germans as a whole. I shall now point out how far the individual tribes differ from one another in their institutions and practices, and which of them have migrated from Germany into Gaul.

28

That the power of Gaul once exceeded that of Germany is recorded by that greatest of authorities, Julius Caesar; and therefore we may well believe that there were also migrations of Gauls into Germany. There was only a river between – a trifling obstacle to prevent any tribe that grew strong enough from seizing fresh lands, and afterwards perhaps exchanging them for others, when they were no one's property and not yet partitioned between powerful monarchies. Thus, between the Hercynian forest and the rivers Rhine and Main, we find the Helvetii in occupation, and beyond them the Boii, both Celtic peoples. This land is still called Bohemia, which attests the ancient tradition concerning it, although the inhabitants have since changed. Whether the Aravisci came as immigrants to Pannonia from the tribe of the Osi, or the Osi from the Aravisci into Germany – both peoples still speak the same language and have the same customs and character – cannot be determined, since

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there was in those days the same poverty and the same freedom on both banks of the Danube, so that the attractions and disadvantages were identical. The Treviri and Nervii even take pride in the German descent to which they lay claim. Such a glorious origin, they feel, should prevent their being thought to resemble the unwarlike Gauls. The actual bank of the Rhine is held by peoples of undoubted German origin – the Vangiones, the Triboci, and the Nemetes. Even the Ubii, for all that they have earned the rank of a Roman colony and like to call themselves Agrippinenses after their foundress Agrippina, are not ashamed of their ancestry. They crossed the river many years ago, and as they had given proof of their loyalty to Rome they were stationed close to the west bank, to keep out intruders, not to be kept under surveillance themselves.

29

The most conspicuously brave of all the German tribes in Gaul, the Batavi, hold little of the river-bank, but do hold the Rhine island. They were once a section of the Chatti, and on the occasion of a civil war they migrated to their present home – destined there to become a part of the Roman empire. But they still retain an honourable privilege in token of their ancient alliance with us. They are not subjected to the indignity of tribute or ground down by the tax-gatherer. Free from imposts and special levies, and reserved for employment in battle, they are like weapons and armour – ‘only to be used in war’. We

exercise the same suzerainty over the Mattiaci; for the greatness of Rome has spread the awe of her empire even beyond the Rhine and the old frontiers. In geographical position they are on the German side, in heart and soul they are with us. They resemble the Batavi in every way, except that their country and climate give an even keener edge to their spirit.

I am not inclined to reckon among the peoples of Germany the cultivators of the *agri decumates*, although they have established themselves between the Rhine and the Danube. All the most disreputable characters in Gaul, all the penniless adventurers, seized on a territory that was a kind of no man's land. It was only later, when the frontier line of defence was drawn and the garrisons moved forward, that they came to be regarded as an outlying corner of the empire and a part of a province.

30

Beyond them dwell the Chatti, whose country starts from the Hercynian forest; it is less open and less marshy than the other states that stretch across the wide plains of Germany. For the hills run on and only thin out gradually; and the Hercynian forest, like a nurse with her infant cares, escorts its Chatti throughout and finally sets them down at the edge of the plains. This nation is distinguished by hardy bodies, well-knit limbs, fierce countenances, and unusual mental vigour. They have plenty of judgement and discernment, measured by

German standards. They appoint picked men to lead them, and then obey them. They know how to keep rank, and how to recognize an opportunity – or else postpone their attack. They can map out the duties of the day and make sure the defences of the night. They know that fortune is not to be relied on, but only valour; and – the rarest thing of all, which the gods have vouchsafed only to a military discipline like the Roman – they place more confidence in their general than in their troops.

All their strength lies in their infantry, which, in addition to its arms, is burdened with entrenching-tools and provisions. Other tribes may be seen going forth to battle; the Chatti come out for a campaign. They seldom engage in swift rushes or in casual fighting – tactics which properly belong to cavalry, with its quick successes and quick retreats. Speed suggests something very like fear, whereas deliberate movement rather indicates a steady courage.

31

There is one custom – sometimes practised by other German tribes, though rarely, and only as an exhibition of individual daring – that has become a general rule among the Chatti. As soon as they reach manhood they let their hair and beard grow as they will. This fashion of covering the face is assumed in accordance with a vow pledging them to the service of Valour; and only when they have slain an enemy do they lay it aside. Standing over the bloody corpse they have despoiled, they reveal

their faces to the world once more, and proclaim that they have at last repaid the debt they owe for being brought into the world and have proved themselves worthy of their native land and parents. The coward who will not fight must stay unshorn. The bravest also wear an iron ring – which in their country is a great indignity – as a mark of servitude, until they release themselves by killing a man. But many of the Chatti like these fashions, and even greybeards can be seen thus distinguished, for foe and fellow-countryman alike to point at. Every battle is begun by these men. They are always in the front rank, where they present a startling sight: for even in peace-time they will not soften the ferocity of their expression. None of them has a home, land, or any occupation. To whatever host they choose to go, they get their keep from him, squandering other men's property since they think it beneath them to have any of their own, until old age leaves them without enough blood in their veins for such stern heroism.

32

Close to the Chatti are the Usipi and the Tencteri. They dwell on the bank of the Rhine, which by this time flows in a well-defined channel and is large enough to serve as a boundary. The Tencteri, besides sharing in the general military distinction, excel in skilful horsemanship. The infantry of the Chatti are not more famous than the cavalry of the Tencteri. This tradition was started by their ancestors, whom they still continue to emulate. The

children play at riding; the grown men compete in riding; even the old will not give it up. Horses pass by inheritance along with slaves, homestead, and rights of succession. The horses go to a son, not necessarily, like the rest of the property, to the eldest, but to the one who is the keenest and ablest soldier.

33

Next to the Tencteri came the Bructeri in former times; but now the Chamavi and Angrivarii are said to have moved into their territory. The Bructeri were defeated and almost annihilated by a coalition of neighbouring tribes. Perhaps they were hated for their domineering pride; or it may have been the lure of booty, or some special favour accorded us by the gods. We were even permitted to witness the battle. More than 60,000 were killed, not by Roman swords or javelins, but – more splendid still – as a spectacle before our delighted eyes. Long, I pray, may foreign nations persist, if not in loving us, at least in hating one another; for destiny is driving our empire upon its appointed path, and fortune can bestow on us no better gift than discord among our foes.

34

The Angrivarii and Chamavi have a common frontier on one side with the Dulgubnii, Chasuarii, and other tribes of no special fame, while on the north-west they are succeeded by the Frisii, who comprise a larger section and a smaller section, called respectively the Greater and

the Lesser Frisii. Both sections have the Rhine as a frontier right down to the Ocean, and their settlements also extend round vast lagoons, which have been sailed by Roman fleets. We have even ventured upon the Northern Ocean itself, and rumour has it that there are Pillars of Hercules in the far north. It may be that Hercules did go there; or perhaps it is only that we by common consent ascribe any remarkable achievement in any place to his famous name. Drusus Germanicus did not lack the courage of the explorer, but Ocean forbade further research into its own secrets or those of Hercules. Since then no one has attempted it. It has been judged more pious and reverent to believe in the alleged exploits of gods than to establish the true facts.

35

This is as far as the Germany we know extends to the west. To the north it falls away in a huge bend; and here at once we come to the nation of the Chauci. They begin after the Frisii and hold a section of the coast; but they also lie along the flanks of all those nations that I have been describing, and finally curve back to meet the Chatti. This huge stretch of country is not merely occupied, but filled to overflowing, by the Chauci. They are the noblest people of Germany, and one that prefers to maintain its greatness by righteous dealing. Untouched by greed or lawless ambition, they dwell in quiet seclusion, never provoking a war, never robbing or plundering their neighbours. It is conspicuous proof of their valour and

strength that their superiority does not rest on aggression. Yet every man of them has arms ready to his hand, and if occasion demands it they have vast reserves of men and horses. So their reputation stands as high in peace as in war.

36

On the flank of the Chauci and the Chatti, the Cherusci have been left free from attack to enjoy a prolonged peace, too secure and enervating – a pleasant but perilous indulgence among powerful aggressors, where there can be no true peace. When force decides everything, forbearance and righteousness are qualities attributed only to the strong; and so the Cherusci, once known as ‘good, honest people’, now hear themselves called lazy fools, while the luck of the victorious Chatti passes for profound wisdom. The fall of the Cherusci involved also the neighbouring tribe of the Fosi, who played second fiddle to them in prosperity but get an equal share of their adversity.

37

In the same corner of Germany, nearest to the open sea, dwell the Cimbri, a name mighty in history, though now they are only a little state. Widespread traces of their ancient fame may still be seen: huge encampments on both sides of the Rhine, by their enormous circuit, still give a measure of the mass and man-power of the nation and demonstrate the historical truth of that great exodus.

Rome was in her six hundred and fortieth year when the alarm of the Cimbrian arms was first heard, in the consulship of Caecilius Metellus and Papirius Carbo. Reckoning from that year to the second consulship of the emperor Trajan, we get a total of about two hundred and ten years. Such is the time it is taking to conquer Germany. In this long period much punishment has been given and taken. Neither by the Samnites nor by the Carthaginians, not by Spain or Gaul, or even by the Parthians, have we had more lessons taught us. The freedom of Germany is capable of more energetic action than the Arsacid despotism. After all, what has the East to taunt us with, except the slaughter of Crassus? And it soon lost its own prince Pacorus and was humbled at the feet of Ventidius. But the Germans routed or captured Carbo, Cassius, Aurelius Scaurus, Servilius Caepio, and Mallius Maximus, and robbed the Republic, almost at one stroke, of five consular armies. Even from Augustus they took Varus and his three legions. And we had to pay a high price for the defeats inflicted upon them by Gaius Marius in Italy, by Julius Caesar in Gaul, and by Drusus, Tiberius, and Germanicus in their own country. The boastful threats of Gaius Caesar ended in farce. After that came a lull, until the Germans took advantage of our dissensions and civil wars to storm the quarters of the legions and make a bid for possession of Gaul. This attempt ended in another defeat for them; but the more recent 'victories' claimed by our commanders have been little more than excuses for celebrating triumphs.

We must now speak of the Suebi, who do not, like the Chatti or the Tencteri, constitute a single nation. They occupy more than half Germany, and are divided into a number of separate tribes under different names, though all are called by the generic title of 'Suebi'. It is a special characteristic of this nation to comb the hair sideways and tie it in a knot. This distinguishes the Suebi from the rest of the Germans, and, among the Suebi, distinguishes the freeman from the slave. Individual men of other tribes adopt the same fashion, either because they are related in some way to the Suebi, or merely because the imitative instinct is so strong in human beings; but even these few abandon it when they are no longer young. The Suebi keep it up till they are grey-headed; the hair is twisted back so that it stands erect, and is often knotted on the very crown of the head. The chiefs use an even more elaborate style. But this concern about their personal appearance is altogether innocent. These are no love-locks to entice women to accept their advances. Their elaborate coiffure is intended to give them greater height, so as to look more terrifying to their foes when they are about to go into battle.

The oldest and most famous of the Suebi, it is said, are the Semnones, and their antiquity is confirmed by a religious

observance. At a set time, deputations from all the tribes of the same stock gather in a grove hallowed by the auguries of their ancestors and by immemorial awe. The sacrifice of a human victim in the name of all marks the grisly opening of their savage ritual. Another observance shows their reverence for this grove. No one may enter it unless he is bound with a cord, by which he acknowledges his own inferiority and the power of the deity. Should he chance to fall, he may not raise himself or get up again, but must roll out over the ground. The grove is the centre of their whole religion. It is regarded as the cradle of the race and the dwelling-place of the supreme god to whom all things are subject and obedient. The Semnones gain prestige from their prosperity. The districts they inhabit number a hundred, and their multitude makes them believe that they are the principal people of the Suebi.

40

The Langobardi, by contrast, are famous because they are so few. Hemmed in as they are by many mighty peoples, they find safety, not in submission, but in facing the risks of battle. After them come the Reudigni, Aviones, Anglii, Varini, Eudoses, Suarines, and Nuitones, all of them safe behind ramparts of rivers and woods. There is nothing noteworthy about these tribes individually, but they share a common worship of Nerthus, or Mother Earth. They believe that she takes part in human affairs, riding in a chariot among her people. On an island of the

sea stands an inviolate grove, in which, veiled with a cloth, is a chariot that none but the priest may touch. The priest can feel the presence of the goddess in this holy of holies, and attends her with deepest reverence as her chariot is drawn along by cows. Then follow days of rejoicing and merrymaking in every place that she condescends to visit and sojourn in. No one goes to war, no one takes up arms; every iron object is locked away. Then, and then only, are peace and quiet known and welcomed, until the goddess, when she has had enough of the society of men, is restored to her sacred precinct by the priest. After that, the chariot, the vestments, and (believe it if you will) the goddess herself, are cleansed in a secluded lake. This service is performed by slaves who are immediately afterwards drowned in the lake. Thus mystery begets terror and a pious reluctance to ask what that sight can be which is seen only by men doomed to die.

41

The section of the Suebian territory that I have described stretches out into the less-known part of Germany. Nearer to us – to follow now the course of the Danube as we previously followed that of the Rhine – are our faithful allies the Hermunduri. Because they are so loyal, they are the only Germans who trade with us not merely on the river bank but far within our borders, and indeed in the splendid colony that is the capital of Raetia. They come over where they will, and without a guard set over

them. The other Germans are only allowed to see our armed camps; to the Hermunduri we exhibit our mansions and country-houses without their coveting them. In their country are the sources of the Elbe, a river well known and much talked of in earlier days, but now a mere name.

42

Next to the Hermunduri dwell the Naristi, followed by the Marcomanni and the Quadi. The Marcomanni are conspicuous in reputation and power: even their homeland, from which they drove out the Boii, was won by their bravery. Nor do the Naristi and Quadi fall below their high standard. These peoples form the front, so to speak, presented to us by that part of Germany which is girdled by the Danube. Down to our own times the Marcomanni and Quadi still had kings of their own race, the noble line of Maroboduus and Tudrus; but now they sometimes have foreign rulers set over them. The power of the kings depends entirely on the authority of Rome. They occasionally receive armed assistance from us, more often financial aid, which proves equally effective.

43

Close behind the Marcomanni and Quadi are the Marsigni, Cotini, Osi, and Buri. Of these, the Marsigni and Buri are exactly like the Suebi in language and mode of life. The Cotini and the Osi are not Germans: that is

proved by their languages, Celtic in the one case, Pannonian in the other, and also by the fact that they submit to paying tribute. The payments are exacted from them, as foreigners, by the Quadi and by the Sarmatians respectively – of which the Cotini have all the more reason to be ashamed inasmuch as they work iron mines. All these peoples are settled in country with few plains, consisting mostly of mountains and upland valleys. Suebia, in fact, is cut in two down the middle by an unbroken range of mountains, beyond which live a multitude of tribes, of whom the Lugii are the most widely spread, being divided into a number of smaller units. I need only give the names of the most powerful: the Harii, Helvecones, Manimi, Helisii, and Naharvali.

The Naharvali proudly point out a grove associated with an ancient worship. The presiding priest dresses like a woman; but the deities are said to be the counterpart of our Castor and Pollux. This indicates their character, but their name is the Alci. There are no images, and nothing to suggest that the cult is of foreign origin; but they are certainly worshipped as young men and as brothers.

As for the Harii, not only are they superior in strength to the other peoples I have just mentioned, but they minister to their savage instincts by trickery and clever timing. They black their shields and dye their bodies, and choose pitch dark nights for their battles. The shadowy, awe-inspiring appearance of such a ghoulish army inspires mortal panic; for no enemy can endure a sight so strange and hellish. Defeat in battle starts always with the eyes.

Beyond the Lugii are the Gothones, who are governed by kings. Their rule is somewhat more autocratic than in the other German states, but not to such a degree that freedom is destroyed. Then, immediately bordering on the sea, are the Rugii and Lemovii. All these peoples are distinguished by the use of round shields and short swords, and by submission to regal authority.

Next come the states of the Suiones, right out in the sea. They are powerful not only in arms and men but also in fleets. The shape of their ships differs from the normal in having a prow at each end, so that they are always facing the right way to put in to shore. They do not propel them with sails, nor do they fasten a row of oars to the sides. The rowlocks are movable, as one finds them on some river craft, and can be reversed, as circumstances require, for rowing in either direction. Wealth, too, is held in high honour; and so a single monarch rules, with no restrictions on his power and with an unquestioned claim to obedience. Arms are not, as in the rest of Germany, allowed to all and sundry, but are kept in charge of a custodian – who in fact is a slave. There are two reasons for this control of weapons: the sea makes sudden invasion impossible, and idle crowds of armed men easily get into mischief. As for not putting any noble or freeman, or even a freedman, in charge of the arms – that is a part of royal policy.

Beyond the Suiones we find another sea, sluggish and almost stagnant. This sea is believed to be the boundary that girdles the earth because the last radiance of the setting sun lingers on here till dawn, with a brilliance that dims the stars. Popular belief adds that you can hear the sound he makes as he rises from the waves and can see the shape of his horses and the rays on his head. So far and no farther (in this, report speaks truly) does the world extend. Turning, therefore, to the right hand shore of the Suebian sea, we find it washing the country of the Aestii, who have the same customs and fashions as the Suebi, but a language more like the British. They worship the Mother of the gods, and wear, as an emblem of this cult, the device of a wild boar, which stands them in stead of armour or human protection and gives the worshipper a sense of security even among his enemies. They seldom use weapons of iron, but clubs very often. They cultivate grain and other crops with a perseverance unusual among the indolent Germans. They also ransack the sea. They are the only people who collect amber - *glæsum* is their own word for it - in the shallows or even on the beach. Like true barbarians, they have never asked or discovered what it is or how it is produced. For a long time, indeed, it lay unheeded like any other refuse of the sea, until Roman luxury made its reputation. They have no use for it themselves. They gather it crude, pass it on in unworked lumps, and are astounded at the price it

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fetches. Amber, however, is certainly a gum of trees, as
you may see from the fact that creeping and even winged
creatures are often seen shining through it. Caught in the
sticky liquid, they were then imprisoned as it hardened. "I
 imagine that in the islands and continents of the west, just
 as in the secret chambers of the east, where the trees exude
 frankincense and balm, there must be woods and groves
 of unusual productivity. Their gums, drawn out by the
 rays of their near neighbour the sun, flow in liquid state
 into the adjacent sea and are finally washed up by violent
 storms on the shores that lie opposite. If you test the
 properties of amber by applying fire to it, you will find
 that it lights like a torch and burns with a smoky, pungent
 flame, soon becoming a semi-fluid mass like pitch or resin.

Bordering on the Suiones are the nations of the Sitones.
 They resemble them in all respects but one – woman is the
 ruling sex. That is the measure of their decline, I will not
 say below freedom, but even below decent slavery.

46

Here Suebia ends. I do not know whether to class the
 tribes of the Peucini, Venedi, and Fenni with the Germans
 or with the Sarmatians. The Peucini, however, who are
 sometimes called Bastarnae, are like Germans in their
 language, manner of life, and mode of settlement and
 habitation. Squalor is universal among them and their
 nobles are indolent. Mixed marriages are giving them
 something of the repulsive appearance of the Sarmatians.
 The Venedi have adopted many Sarmatian habits; for

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their plundering forays take them over all the wooded and mountainous highlands that lie between the Peucini and the Fenni. Nevertheless, they are on the whole to be classed as Germans; for they have settled homes, carry shields, and are fond of travelling – and travelling fast – on foot, differing in all these respects from the Sarmatians, who live in wagons or on horseback. The Fenni are astonishingly savage and disgustingly poor. They have no proper weapons, no horses, no homes. They eat wild herbs, dress in skins, and sleep on the ground. Their only hope of getting better fare lies in their arrows, which, for lack of iron, they tip with bone. The women support themselves by hunting, exactly like the men; they accompany them everywhere and insist on taking their share in bringing down the game. The only way they have of protecting their infants against wild beasts or bad weather is to hide them under a makeshift covering of interlaced branches. Such is the shelter to which the young folk come back and in which the old must lie. Yet they count their lot happier than that of others who groan over field labour, sweat over house-building, or hazard their own and other men's fortunes in the hope of profit and the fear of loss. Unafraid of anything that man or god can do to them, they have reached a state that few human beings can attain: for these men are so well content that they do not even need to pray for anything. What comes after them is the stuff of fables – Hellusii and Oxiones with the faces and features of men, the bodies and limbs of animals. On such unverifiable stories I shall express no opinion.

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All the extant manuscripts of the *Germania* (nearly thirty in number) date from the 15th or early 16th century, and are believed to have been derived ultimately from a single archetype of the 9th century.

The text followed in this translation is in the main that of Anderson (Oxford Press, 1938). Notes refer to some passages where a special textual difficulty calls for comment.

Chapter 1, 'a campaign of the present century': The campaign referred to is assumed to be that of Tiberius in A.D. 5, which was conducted by land and sea; *nuper*, 'recently', seems to be used rather loosely, but this can be paralleled.

Chapter 2, 'defies intruders': Some people take *adversus* to mean 'antipodal', although Tacitus elsewhere betrays his ignorance of the spherical shape of the earth. But the sense 'hostile' seems more appropriate. The emendation *aversus*, 'turning its back', is not necessary.

'from our part of the world': 'Our' of course means 'Roman', as often; thus *mare nostrum* is the Mediterranean.

'to frighten them': The Tungri told the Gauls that across the Rhine there were vast numbers of their kinsmen – *Germani* like themselves – who would be ready to reinforce them in case of need.

Chapter 3, Footnote: This digression on the German war-chant comes rather awkwardly in the main body of the text. Although *barditum* has better manuscript authority than *baritum*, the correct form of the word is almost certainly *baritus* or *barritus*; it means 'roar' – of an elephant for example.

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Chapter 4, 'remain of pure blood': The claim to special purity of race had been made before Tacitus's time for various other peoples. He can never have dreamed of the terrible abuses which would grow out of his simple statement.

Chapter 5, 'it will not grow fruit-trees': Tacitus is probably thinking especially of the most important fruit-trees of Mediterranean countries – the vine and the olive.

'Silver and gold have been denied them': Finds of precious metals in Germany are numerous enough to show that we must not take Tacitus too seriously here.

'old-fashioned coins': The *pecunia vetus* was the denarius of the Republic. The *serrati* had notches in their edges, intended to show that the metal was solid; *bigati* had as reverse type Diana or Victory in a two-horse chariot (*biga*). These two classes of coins seem to be used, with some inaccuracy, to denote the earlier Roman silver coinage in general.

Chapter 6, 'the sort of weapons they have': Tacitus's account of German arms is often corroborated by the evidence of coins, statuettes, and reliefs.

'The Hundred': Tacitus's *centeni* have nothing to do with the 'hundreds' into which many Germanic states were divided at a much later date. Some scholars think that the designation *centeni* – 'a title of distinction', as he calls it – must have belonged to the horsemen rather than to the select infantrymen who accompanied them in battle. But his statement cannot be disproved; it may well be that he was really speaking for the moment of an infantry *élite*.

Chapter 8, 'turning women into goddesses': The last sentence of this chapter is clearly intended as a severe criticism of the Roman

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practice of deifying women. Drusilla, sister of the emperor Gaius, Claudia Augusta the infant daughter of Nero and Poppaea, and Poppaea herself, had been consecrated as goddesses (*Divae*). Tacitus seems to have accepted the consecration of men as a political necessity: he normally gives the title *Divus* to emperors who had been consecrated.

Chapter 9, 'Mercury . . . Hercules and Mars': Mercury represents the German Wodan, whose name is preserved in Wednesday; Hercules, Donar (Norse Thor: Thursday); Mars, Tiu (Tuesday).

'Some of the Suebi sacrifice also to Isis': Tacitus thinks that the goddess worshipped was the Egyptian Isis, not a German goddess identified with her. The galley suggests advent by sea; Isis was worshipped in many places as the protectress of ships, and a spring festival, 'the release of ships', was celebrated in her honour when the winter storms were past.

Chapter 11, 'the chiefs': There is no difficulty about *principes*, if we remember that they were simply nobles – men prominent by wealth or birth – not magistrates, though capable of being chosen for magisterial posts.

Chapter 12, 'are pressed down . . . a bog': Matthew Arnold's lines (in *Balder Dead*, Part 2) come to mind:

Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd alive;
And round them still the wattled hurdles hung,
Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod them deep,
To hide their shameful memory from men.

Over fifty victims of this punishment have been found in north-western Europe.

'a hundred assessors': The *centeni* occur again here in a new context, and again the objections raised against Tacitus's account are inconclusive.

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Chapter 13, 'the rank of "chief"': Tacitus can hardly mean that these youths immediately assumed the position of fully-fledged chiefs. Clearly they did not at once take a prominent position, but were attached as followers to those who were older and more experienced. They were *principes*, as Anderson says, 'in the same anticipatory sense as a child of the house is *dominus*' (see Chapter 20).

Chapter 17: Tacitus's account of German dress is generally proved correct where details can be checked by ancient reliefs or coins.

Chapter 20, 'childlessness': The childless old man or woman (*orbis*, *orba*) and their courtiers (*captatores*), who were after their money, were a joke and a scandal at Rome in the early Empire. Calvia Crispinilla, for example, a disreputable old noblewoman at Nero's court, survived his fall and lived unscathed through the troubled reigns of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, enjoying great influence from her wealth and childlessness (Tacitus, *Histories* I, 73).

Chapter 21, *ad finem*: The words *victus inter hospites comis* are bracketed as an interpolation by Anderson, following most other editors.

Chapter 24, 'one kind of public show': This is the famous sword dance (originally, spear dance), not unknown even today.

Chapter 25: This account of slavery in Germany is scanty and in some ways inaccurate.

'Freedmen rank little higher than slaves': Tacitus seems to take a rather malicious pleasure in emphasizing the powerlessness of freedmen in Germany. At Rome, freedmen sometimes made large fortunes by daring speculation. In the service of Claudius and his successors they came to have considerable political influence, especially as the heads of important administrative

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bureaux – Finance, Correspondence, etc. Tacitus's *bête noire* Domitian had his confidential freedmen.

Chapter 29, 'agri decumates': These lands, situated between the Rhine, Main, and Danube, were included in the empire by Vespasian and his successors. The name *decumates* is pre-Roman and does not mean 'tithe-lands'; perhaps 'lands of ten cantons'.

Chapter 31: Tacitus speaks as if he did not realize the distinction between the young men who are still unshorn because they have not killed their man; the non-military types who must perforce remain unshorn all their lives; and the 'many' who retain or resume the habit because they like it. By letting their hair and beard grow long even in peace time, they are ready to terrify enemies by their appearance when war starts again. These last were probably a special caste of dedicated warriors.

Chapter 33, 'The Bructeri were defeated': Probably in A.D. 98. The men of the Roman army of Lower Germany were apparently watching the battle, which to them was like a great gladiatorial show. The tribe was not so completely destroyed as Tacitus says. Perhaps as a sequel to this war, a Roman general, Vestricius Spurinna, placed a king of the Bructeri on the throne.

'destiny is driving our empire': The words *urgentibus imperii fatis* seem to mean the same as *urgentibus imperium fatis* would mean: 'now that the fates of the empire are driving it on'. The tone is certainly anxious, perhaps even pessimistic, about the future of the empire. The strain is growing too great, the burden too heavy. If Tacitus does not despair, it is because fate has still one precious gift to help Rome – dissension among her foes.

Chapter 34, 'Drusus Germanicus': This is Nero Claudius Drusus (brother of the emperor Tiberius), who campaigned in Germany

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in 12-9 B.C. and died there in the latter year. He is said to have been the first Roman to explore the northern seas.

'Since then no one has attempted it': This apparently means that no one has since attempted to inquire into the secrets of Hercules. For voyages in the north were undertaken both by Tiberius in A.D. 5 and by Germanicus in 15-16.

Chapter 35, 'the Chauci': Received into alliance by Drusus in 12 B.C. In A.D. 28 they joined in the Frisian revolt, and they fought for Civilis in 69-70. Tacitus's high praise is not fully borne out by other authorities. Part of them lived in poverty on the coast and tried to improve their condition by piracy, which led them into trouble with Rome in 41 and 47.

Chapter 36, 'the Cherusci': Arminius, the famous chief of this tribe, died in A.D. 21. It received a king from the Romans in 47. Its king Chariomerus, driven out by the Chatti c. 85, obtained financial help, but nothing more, from Domitian.

Chapter 37, 'in her six hundred and fortieth year': The date is 113 B.C.

'the second consulship of the emperor Trajan': A.D. 98.

'Such is the time it is taking to conquer Germany': Compare the last sentence of this chapter: 'the more recent "victories" claimed by our commanders have been little more than excuses for celebrating triumphs'. The Romans were not accustomed to the kind of resistance that the Germans put up against them. For an account of the various German wars, see Introduction, Section X.

'the Samnites': Contested with Rome the control of central Italy in three wars, lasting from 343 to 290 B.C. The bitterest blow to Rome was the defeat and capitulation of her army at the Caudine Forks in 321.

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'the Carthaginians': Also fought three wars against Rome – the first Punic war, 264–241 B.C.; the second (the great war with Hannibal), 218–201; the third, ending in the destruction of Carthage, 149–146. In the first war Rome lost a consular army under Regulus in Africa and more than one fleet in storms at sea. In the second war Hannibal routed great Roman armies at the river Trebia, lake Trasimene, and Cannae, marched up and down Italy at will for ten years, and at one moment threatened the very existence of Rome.

'Spain': The conquest of Spain began in the second Punic war and was only rounded off under Augustus. The Lusitanians under Viriathus (c. 150–139 B.C.) and the Celtiberians of Numantia (c. 141–133) inflicted serious losses on the Romans.

'Gaul': In 390 B.C. Gauls invaded Italy, defeated the Romans at the river Allia, and sacked Rome. For over a century and a half they continued to cause much trouble on the northern frontier.

'the Parthians': M. Crassus the triumvir invaded Parthia, without just reason, but was defeated and killed at Carrhae in Mesopotamia in 53 B.C., with very heavy loss. Later, the Parthians took the offensive under Pacorus, son of their king Orodes. But he in his turn was defeated and killed at the fortress of Gindarus in Syria (38) by P. Ventidius, an able but allegedly low-born legate of Mark Antony.

Chapter 38, 'tie it in a knot': The knots of the Suebi are well illustrated on various monuments.

Chapter 39, 'The districts . . . number a hundred': This seems a large number of districts for a single tribe. Perhaps it includes the other tribes that shared in the festival.

Chapter 41, 'the splendid colony': This can be none other than Augusta Vindelicorum (Augsburg). But *colonia* is a misnomer.

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When the *Germania* was written it was just a town (*civitas*), but was raised by Hadrian to the status of a *municipium*.

'a river well-known': Two or three Roman expeditions had reached the Elbe; but a plan to make it a frontier of the empire was abandoned after the defeat of Varus in A.D. 9.

Chapter 42, 'Tudrus': Since Maroboduus was certainly a great king of the Marcomanni, Tudrus must have been a king of the Quadi. But he is known only from this passage.

Chapter 43, 'inasmuch as they work iron mines': The reason why the Cotini ought to be ashamed is because they could use the iron to make weapons and win their freedom, instead of tamely paying tribute.

'Castor and Pollux': The deities of the Naharvali are two in number, young men, and brothers, their native name being 'Alci'. By *interpretatio Romana* Tacitus means the identification of foreign deities with those deities in the Graeco-Roman pantheon to whom they correspond most nearly. In this case Castor and Pollux – the Greek Dioscuri, heavenly twins, saviours on land and sea – are the obvious choice.

Chapter 45, 'Popular belief adds': The sun-god was commonly represented in ancient art as a charioteer with a crown of rays on his head, driving a horse-drawn chariot.

'amber': This material was used for decoration from very early times, and some was imported into Italy from the early Republican period onwards. In the second century A.D. there was a flourishing trade in it between Italy and the shore of the Baltic.

Chapter 46, 'the repulsive appearance of the Sarmatians': Referring to the wide nostrils and slanting eyes of some Asiatic peoples.