

take the hump of Rutila (a hunchback) and give Rutila her —? beauty, says Duff reading *suam* and understanding *faciem* from 293. But *suum* is the reading of much the best of the MSS., P, and this Bücheler retains, understanding *gibbum*, which seems right, but in the sense of *papillas*, breasts, which, as Duff says, seems impossible. Surely *suum* is the right reading and the hump referred to is the natural one of the 'lower dorsal curve', represented nowadays by the last set of figures given in the 'statistics' of contestants in our perhaps overdone 'beauty contests'? Hardy says 'supply *vultum* with *suum*', but this is very far-fetched. Why then did the poet not write *suam*, as the word he had already used was feminine?

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GAIUS AND THE SEA-SHELLS

Views of historians on the emperor Gaius are conflicting; some writers accept that he was a dangerous lunatic, as the sources portray him, others discount a hostile tradition and try to rationalize the deeds of his principate.

One story of the emperor which has caused particular difficulty is that of his British 'expedition'. Suetonius (*Gaius* 46) and Xiphilinus (166, 36ff.) describe a farce, and their account is accepted by some (e.g. Bury, *Students' Roman Empire*, p. 225, considers the story possible). Balsdon, in his excellent book on Gaius (p. 88ff.) gives two rationalizing alternatives. Before considering them it is necessary to quote the relevant texts.

(a) Suetonius, *Gaius* 46: 'Postremo quasi perpetraturus bellum, directa acie in litore Oceani ac ballistis machinisque depositis, nemine gnaro aut opinante quid coepturus esset, repente ut conchas legerent, galeasque et sinus replerent imperavit, spolia Oceani vocans Capitolio Palatioque debita.'

(b) Xiphilinus 166, 36ff. (= Dio 59, 25, 1-2): 'He came to the Ocean as with the intention of campaigning in Britain also, and after drawing up all his troops on the shore he boarded a trireme, put out to sea a little way and returned. After this he took his place on a lofty platform and, after giving his soldiers the signal as for battle, and spurring them on by trumpet, then suddenly he bade them pick up shells.' (Balsdon's translation)

After dismissing the views of Willrich (that Gaius was frightened to put himself at too great a distance from a hostile senate by crossing the channel) and of Gelzer (that Gaius was informed of a change in the political situation in Britain) Balsdon suggests the following alternatives:

- (i) Gaius gave the command to embark, and the troops refused. The emperor flew into a typical rage, and gave the order to collect sea-shells, in order to insult the soldiers' dignity.
- (ii) The absurd narrative results from a civilian misunderstanding of a rare and technical military term 'musculus' (mentioned by Caesar, *B.G.* 2. 10, and Vegetius, 4. 16). 'Musculi' were a kind of sappers' huts, used in

siege works. It would be highly probable that such structures were among the equipment gathered for the British campaign, and that they were placed on the shore prior to embarking [for elaboration of the theory cf. *JRS* 24 (1934) p. 18]. For the misunderstood 'musculus', Suetonius' source substituted 'concha'.

The first of the above theories is weak and artificial, the second ingenious. In spite of its cleverness, however, it carries little conviction.

First, 'musculi' were not the most prominent of the siege engines, and it is hardly likely that 'embark the sappers' huts' was one of the major, or the more memorable, of the orders given on this particular occasion. Secondly, Gaius would hardly have given such a minor order personally, as he was clearly represented as doing by the common source of Suetonius and Dio Cassius. The emperor might have given a general notification of embarkation, but nothing more. Are we therefore forced to fall back on the possibility that Gaius was an insane mountebank? There is another possible line of explanation which may at first seem equally fantastic, but nevertheless one worthy of consideration.

The clue is to be found in Aelian (*VH* xiii 13). Writing of the Celts, he informs us that 'many of them awaited the overflowing sea, some throwing themselves armed into the waves, and receiving their onset with drawn swords and threatening spears, just as if they could scare back, or wound them'. Kelsen (*Society and Nature*, p. 34) quotes the passage as an example of the social interpretation of nature by primitive peoples. Jibaro Indians, for example, attempt to resist the thunder. That the Celts should indulge in this particular practice is an interesting coincidence, to say the least.

It may be objected that Roman soldiery was too civilized to indulge in such a quixotic form of battle, and that the Roman army can be hardly considered to have included large numbers of wild Celts who persuaded Caligula to conquer the sea. However, Suetonius (44, 2) tells us that in 39 A.D. a British prince, Amminus, son of Cunobelinus, appealed to Gaius. Encouraged by his pretensions the emperor built a lighthouse on the channel coast, was hailed as Britannicus (Dio 59, 25, 5a) and behaved as if all Britain had been handed over to him.

Balsdon assumes that Gaius, perceiving that effective operations against the Germans were impossible, was encouraged by Amminus to make an attack on Britain. Gaius then built a lighthouse and enacted the spectacle described by our sources. Why should Gaius, if he thought that Britain was virtually handed over, desire to attack it? Perhaps the reason for his failure to cross the channel was not fear but his belief that an expedition was unnecessary.

Is it possible that the Prince Amminus implanted the suggestion that Gaius should make a triumphant demonstration against the Ocean which dissident Britons regarded as their protection and shield against the power of Rome? Celtic mentality personalized the sea, and regarded it as a strong ally. If Rome reduced the waters of the channel, their ally would be overcome, and either be the prisoner of their enemies, or even fight on the Roman side.

It may be objected that the mind of Caligula was not capable of such subtle considerations, even if persuaded by Amminus, but there is quite good reason

to believe that Gaius was perfectly able to make use of old customs where necessary. For example, the poetry competition held in Gaul may have been enacted according to an ancient national custom [Jullian, *Histoire de la Gaule* (Paris, 1921) iv, 163 n. 4].

Even if the details are speculative, there might, for other reasons also, be something in the above explanation. Gaius who regarded himself as Jupiter may have been only too pleased to chastise his brother Neptune, as Xerxes had chastised the waters that frustrated his operations (Herodotus 7, 35). The story of the bridge from Baiae to the Mole at Puteoli (Suetonius *Gaius* 19) tends to confirm this. Gaius is said to have built the bridge as an improvement on Xerxes' famous feat of bridging the narrower Hellespont. Others believed he wanted to impress the Germans and Britons. Dio (59, 17, 10-11) adds significantly that during the bridge operations the sea was extremely smooth and tranquil, and that this caused Caligula great elation so that he remarked that even Neptune was afraid of him.

What the Roman troops thought of the performance by the sea we do not know. Doubtless the degenerate legionaries of Gaetulicus and Apronius enjoyed having to do so little for their living, and expended less energy than Aelian's Celts. Even if their donative was smaller than expected, they could hardly complain. At the prospect of a genuine expedition under Claudius the same soldiers mutinied and could only be persuaded to embark with great difficulty (Dio 60, 19).

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