

Caesar's Funeral  
*The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*  
By C. Suetonius Tranquillus

LXXXIV. Notice of his funeral having been solemnly proclaimed, a pile was erected in the Campus Martius, near the tomb of his daughter Julia; and before the Rostra was placed a gilded tabernacle, on the model of the temple of Venus Genitrix; within which was an ivory bed, covered with purple and cloth of gold. At the head was a trophy, with the [bloodstained] robe in which he was slain. It being considered that the whole day would not suffice for carrying the funeral oblations in solemn procession before the corpse, directions were given for every one, without regard to order, to carry them from the city into the Campus Martius, by what way they pleased. To raise pity and indignation for his murder, in the plays acted at the funeral, a passage was sung from Pacuvius's tragedy, entitled, "The Trial for Arms:"

That ever I, unhappy man, should save  
Wretches, who thus have brought me to the grave! [98]  
And some lines also from Attilius's tragedy of "Electra," to the same effect. Instead of a funeral panegyric, the consul Antony ordered a herald to proclaim to the people the decree of the senate, in which they had bestowed upon him all honours, divine and human; with the oath by which they had engaged themselves for the defence of his person; and to these he added only a few words of his own. The magistrates and others who had formerly filled the highest offices, carried the bier from the Rostra into the Forum. While some proposed that the body should be burnt in the sanctuary of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, and others in Pompey's senate-house; on a sudden, two men, with swords by their sides, and spears in their hands, set fire to the bier with lighted torches. The throng around immediately heaped upon it dry faggots, the tribunals and benches of the adjoining courts, and whatever else came to hand. Then the musicians and players stripped off the dresses they wore on the present occasion, taken from the wardrobe of his triumph at spectacles, rent them, and threw them into the flames. The legionaries, also, of his (54) veteran bands, cast in their armour, which they had put on in honour of his funeral. Most of the ladies did the same by their ornaments, with the bullae [99], and mantles of their children. In this public mourning there joined a multitude of foreigners, expressing their sorrow according to the fashion of their respective countries; but especially the Jews [100], who for several nights together frequented the spot where the body was burnt.

LXXXV. The populace ran from the funeral, with torches in their hands, to the houses of Brutus and Cassius, and was repelled with difficulty. Going in quest of Cornelius Cinna, who had in a speech, the day before, reflected severely upon Caesar, and mistaking for him Helvius Cinna, who happened to fall into their hands, they murdered the latter, and carried his head about the city on the point of a spear. They afterwards erected in the Forum a column of Numidian marble, formed of one stone nearly twenty feet high, and inscribed upon it these words, TO THE FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY. At this column they continued for a long time to offer sacrifices, make vows, and decide controversies, in which they swore by Caesar.

LXXXVI. Some of Caesar's friends entertained a suspicion, that he neither desired nor cared to live any longer, on account of his declining health; and for that reason slighted all the omens of religion, and the warnings of his friends. Others are of opinion, that thinking himself secure in the late decree of the senate, and their oaths, he dismissed his Spanish guards who attended him with drawn swords. Others again suppose, that he chose rather to face at once the dangers which threatened him on all sides, than to be for ever on the watch against them. Some tell us that he used to say, the commonwealth was more interested in the safety of his person than himself: for that he had for some time been satiated with power and glory; but that the commonwealth, if any thing should befall him, would have no rest, and, involved in another civil war, would be in a worse state than before.

(55) LXXXVII. This, however, was generally admitted, that his death was in many respects such as he would have chosen. For, upon reading the account delivered by Xenophon, how Cyrus in his last illness gave instructions respecting his funeral, Caesar deprecated a lingering death, and wished that his own might be sudden and speedy. And the day before he died, the conversation at supper, in the house of Marcus Lepidus, turning upon what was the most eligible way of dying, he gave his opinion in favour of a death that is sudden and unexpected.

LXXXVIII. He died in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and was ranked amongst the Gods, not only by a formal decree, but in the belief of the vulgar. For during the first games which Augustus, his heir, consecrated to his memory, a comet blazed for seven days together, rising always about eleven o'clock; and it was supposed to be the soul of Caesar, now received into heaven: for which reason, likewise, he is represented on his statue with a star on his brow. The senate-house in which he was slain, was ordered to be shut up [101], and a decree made that the ides of March should be called parricidal, and the senate should never more assemble on that day.

LXXXIX. Scarcely any of those who were accessory to his murder, survived him more than three years, or died a natural death [102]. They were all condemned by the senate: some were taken off by one accident, some by another. Part of them perished at sea, others fell in battle; and some slew themselves with the same poniard with which they had stabbed Caesar [103].