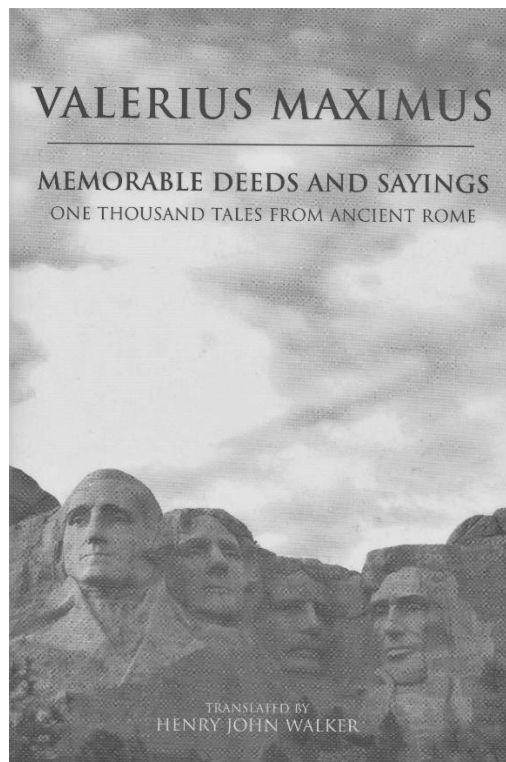


BELLARIA LIII



Some editions Valerius Maximus, very popular in the Middle Ages, from 1527-1726

Valerius Maximus III



FACTORUM ET DICTORUM MEMORABILIVM LIBRI IX

Introduction

A people's values are exemplified not by 'society'—the whipping-boy for all problems in the modern world—but by the 'words and deeds' of individuals. In Valerius these are mainly the great and good, as illustrated here by the millionaire Marcus Licinius Crassus, who met his end in 53 BC fighting the Parthians. It is notable how Valerius dwells on the significance of that defeat: it demonstrated for

him that the gods really did love Rome and intended it to rule the world. It was only human blindness (though he does not finger Crassus specifically) that prevented the divine will being enacted.

Since the job of the censors was to deal with citizens who did not prove themselves fully worthy of the title, their decisions prove an important marker of the behaviour expected of the normal Roman, which for Valerius had to be driven by a proper sense of 'duty and shame', of which five examples are given.

PRODIGIES

Prodigia



Parthian horseman shredded Rome's legions

1.6.11 At this point we cannot get away with passing over in silence the case of Marcus Crassus, which must be counted among the most serious defeats of the Roman Empire (i). Before this great disaster he was bombarded by a large number of very obvious portents. When he was about to lead his army out of Carrhae against the Parthians, he was given a black cloak, although it is customary to give a white or purple cloak to those going off to battle. The soldiers gathered sadly and silently at his headquarters, though they should have been running and shouting eagerly, in accordance with the old custom. One of the eagle-standards could hardly be pulled up by the senior centurion; the other was extracted with great difficulty, and then as it was being carried, it turned of its own accord in the opposite direction.

(i) Marcus Licinius Crassus Dives (cos, 70 B.C.) was governor of Syria in 53 B.C. when he launched his disastrous campaign against the Parthian Empire (modern Iran and Iraq).

1.6.11 *non sinit nos M. Crassus, inter grauissimas Romani imperii iacturas numerandus, hoc loco de se silentium agere, plurimis et euidentissimis ante tantam ruinam monstrorum pulsatus ictibus. ducturus erat a Carris aduersus Parthos exercitum. pullum ei traditum est paludamentum, cum in proelium exeuntibus album aut purpureum dari soleat. maesti et taciti milites ad principia conuenerunt, qui uetere instituto cum clamore alacri adcurrere debebant. aquilarum altera uix conuelli a primo pilo potuit, altera aegerrime extracta in contrariam ac ferebatur partem se ipsa conuertit.*



The head of a Roman standard (*aquila*)

1.6.11 These prodigies were considerable but that defeat was even more so: all those beautiful legions were destroyed, all the standards were captured by the enemy, and the great glory of the Roman army was trampled underfoot by the cavalry of the barbarians; the father's face was spattered with the blood of his son, who was a young man of excellent character (i); among the corpses piled up in random heaps lay the body of the general, left there to be torn apart by birds and beasts. I should have liked to speak more calmly, but what I have recorded is the truth. This is how the gods flare up when their warnings have been ignored; this is how human plans are reprovved when they exalt themselves over the plans of the gods.

(i) Crassus died along with his son at Carrhae (on the eastern border of Syria).

1.6.11 *magna haec prodigia, sed et illae clades aliquanto maiores, tot pulcherrimarum legionum interitus, tam multa signa hostilibus intercepta manibus, tantum Romanae militiae decus barbarorum obtritum equitatu, optimae indolis filii cruore paterni respersi oculi, corpus imperatoris inter promiscuas cadauerum strues auium ferarumque laniatibus obiectum. uellem quidem placidius, sed quod relatum uerum est. sic deorum spreti monitus excandescunt, sic humana consilia castigantur, ubi se caelestibus praeferunt.*

OF THE CENSORIAL STIGMA

De censorial nota



Checking off the citizens (the 'Census frieze')

2.9 Preface After discussing the strong bond of army discipline and the careful maintenance of military order, the idea naturally suggests itself that I should move on to the censorship, which is our master and guardian in peacetime. Through the courage of our generals, the financial resources of the Roman people have grown to extraordinary affluence, but our honesty and self-restraint are subjected to the strict supervision of the censors, and their activity has as important an effect as our glorious deeds in war. What is the use in achievements overseas if we live bad lives at home? Cities may be sacked, nations may be overrun, kingdoms may be seized, but if a sense of duty and shame does not exist in our public life and in our Senate house, then all the wealth we have accumulated, even if it reaches heaven itself, will not rest on a stable foundation. It is, therefore, important to know and recall the actions of those who have held the office of censor (i).

(i) Two censors were elected to hold a census every five years. They also supervised public morality. They had the power to demote a citizen to a lower social class, or even deprive him of his voting rights, if he had misbehaved in some way. They could likewise expel a man from the Senate.

2.9 praef. *castrensis disciplinae tenacissimum uinculum et militaris rationis diligens obseruatio admonet me ut ad censuram pacis magistram custodemque transgrediar: nam ut opes populi Romani in tantum amplitudinis imperatorum uirtutibus excesserunt, ita probitas et continentia, censorio supercilio examinata, est opus effectu par bellicis laudibus: quid enim prodest foris esse strenuum, si domi male uiuitur? expugnentur licet urbes, corripiantur gentes, regnis manus iniciantur, nisi foro et curiae officium ac uerecundia sua constiterit, partarum rerum caelo cumulus aequatus sedem stabilem non habebit. ad rem igitur pertinet nosse atque adeo recordari acta censoriae potestatis.*

Raising children



Detail from the *Ara Pacis*

2.9.1 The censors Camillus and Postumius ordered any men who had reached old age without marrying to pay a sum of money into the treasury as a penalty (i). They were liable to a second penalty if they dared in any way to complain about this very just rule and were denounced in the following way: ‘Nature has laid this law down that just as you were born, so you should beget children. If you had any sense of shame, you would see that by rearing you, your parents have obliged you to pay this debt off by rearing grandchildren for them. Furthermore, you have had the good fortune to enjoy a long grace period for performing this duty, but you have allowed those years to go by without earning the name of husband and father. So you must go now and pay that tough fine, which will go to benefit people with large families.’
(i) Marcus Furius Camillus (dictator, 396 B.C.) and Marcus Postumius Albinus Regillensis were censors in 403 B.C.

2.9.1 *Camillus et Postumius censores aera poenae nomine eos, qui ad senectutem caelibes peruenerant, in aerarium deferre iusserunt, iterum puniri dignos, si quo modo de tam iusta constitutione queri sunt ausi, cum in hunc modum increparentur: ‘natura uobis quemadmodum nascendi, ita gignendi legem scribit, parentesque uos alendo nepotum nutriendorum debito, si quis est pudor, alligauerunt. accedit his quod etiam fortuna longam praestandi huiusce muneris aduocationem estis adsecuti, cum interim consumpti sunt anni uestri et mariti et patris nomine uacui. ite igitur et non odiosam exsoluite stipem, utilem posteritati numerosae.’*

Rejecting marriage



(Augustan) Altar to Anna Perenna, from whom the Annii claimed descent

2.9.2 The censors Marcus Valerius Maximus and Gaius Junius Brutus Bubulcus were equally severe in a similar kind of investigation (i). They expelled Lucius Annius from the Senate, because after he had married a young woman, he divorced her without getting a council of friends together to advise him. I suspect that his offence was greater than the one I spoke of above. Those bachelors simply rejected the sacred rite of marriage, but this man unlawfully abused it. The censors were, therefore, perfectly justified when they decided he did not deserve to be in the Senate.

(i) Marcus Valerius Maximus Corvinus (cos, 312 B.C.) and Gaius Junius Bubulcus Brutus (cos, 317 B.C.) were censors in 307 B.C.

2.9.2 horum seueritatem M. Valerius Maximus et C. Iunius Brutus Bubulcus censores consimili genere animaduersionis imitati sunt: L. enim Annum senatu mouerunt, quod quam uirginem in matrimonium duxerat repudiasset nullo amicorum [in] consilio adhibito. at hoc crimen nescio an superiore maius: illo nam<que> coniugalia sacra spreta tantum, hoc etiam iniuriose tractata sunt. optimo ergo iudicio censores indignum eum aditu curiae existimauerunt,

Disgracing office



Lucius Quinctius Flaminius (perhaps...)

2.9.3 Cato the Censor was equally justified when he expelled Lucius Flaminius from the Senate (i). Flaminius had condemned someone in his province to death and beheaded him, but he had chosen the date of the execution to please some woman he was in love with by letting her see it (ii). Cato could have been held back by his respect for the consulship that Flaminius had held, or by the prestige of his brother, Titus Flaminius (iii); but he was a censor and he was Cato, which made him a model of severity twice over. Cato decided that Flaminius should be censured all the more because he had disgraced the grandeur of the highest office with such a low deed and because he had not shown any concern that his ancestral death masks would be associated both with the surrender of King Philip and with a prostitute enjoying the sight of human bloodshed (iv).

(i) Cato was famous for his severity as a censor in 184 B.C., which is why he was always known as 'Cato the Censor'. Lucius Quinctius Flaminius had been consul in 192 B.C.

(ii) His province was Liguria (northern Italy). Some sources say the object of his affection was a young man.

(iii) His brother was the famous Titus Quinctius Flaminius (cos, 198 B.C.).

(iv) Titus Quinctius Flaminius (cos, 198 B.C.) had defeated King Philip V of Macedonia in 197 B.C.

2.9.3 *sicut Porcius Cato L. Flaminiū, quem e numero senatorum sustulit, quia in prouincia quendam damnatum securi percusserat tempore supplicii ad arbitrium et spectaculum mulierculae, cuius amore tenebatur, electo. et poterat inhiberi respectu consulatus, quem is gesserat, atque auctoritate fratris eius Titi Flamini. sed et censor et Cato, duplex seueritatis exemplum, eo magis illum notandum statuit, quod amplissimi honoris maiestatem tam taetro facinore inquinauerat nec pensi duxerat isdem imaginibus ascribi meretricis oculos humano sanguine delectatos et regis Philippi supplices manus.*

Excessive strictness



Negotiating with the Greek invader Pyrrhus, who whipped back a curtain to reveal an elephant, Fabriceius commented 'Neither your elephants nor your gold move me'

2.9.4 What am I to say about the censorship held by Fabriceius Luscinius? (i) Every age has told and will tell again in the future how he refused to allow Cornelius Rufinus to stay in the senatorial order (ii). Rufinus had acted splendidly during his two consulships and his dictatorship, but he had bought silver vessels weighing ten pounds, and Luscinius felt this was decadent and would set a bad example. By Jove, I think that the literature of our age is overawed when it is obliged to carry out the task of recording such strictness; it is afraid that people will think it is recording events in a city quite different from ours. It is hard to believe that, within the same urban boundary, ten pounds of silver were once considered an outrageously extravagant amount for a man to possess but are now looked down upon as a sign of great poverty.

(i) Gaius Fabriceius Luscinius (cos, 282 B.C.) was censor in 275 B.C.

(ii) Publius Cornelius Rufinus (cos, 290 B.C.) had fought successful campaigns against the Samnites and King Pyrrhus of Epirus.

2.9.4 *quid de Fabrici Luscini censura loquar? narrauit omnis aetas et deinceps narrabit ab eo Cornelium Rufinum duobus consulatibus et dictatura speciosissime functum, quod X pondo uasa argentea conparasset, perinde ac malo exemplo luxuriosum in ordine senatorio retentum non esse. ipsae medius fidius mihi litterae saeculi nostri obstupescere uidentur, cum ad tantam seueritatem referendam ministerium adcommodare coguntur, ac uereri ne non nostrae urbis acta commemorare existimentur: uix enim credibile est intra idem pomerium X pondo argenti et inuidiosum fuisse censum et inopiam haberi contemptissimam.*

The case for extravagance



2.9.5 The censors Marcus Antonius and Lucius Flaccus expelled Duronius from the Senate because when he was tribune of the plebs, he had vetoed a law that had been introduced to restrict spending on banquets (i). The remarkable reason for his expulsion was that Duronius had insolently mounted the rostra to make the following speech: 'Citizens, a bridle has been forced upon you that cannot be endured in any way. You have been bound and restricted by the bitter chains of slavery: a law has been proposed that commands you to be frugal. Let us veto this law that is covered with the rust of the harsh old days: what is the point in freedom if you cannot ruin yourselves in luxury when you want to?'

(i) Marcus Antonius (cos, 99 B.C.) and Lucius Valerius Flaccus (cos, 100 B.C.) were censors in 97 B.C. Marcus Duronius was a tribune of the plebs some time between 102 and 97 B.C.

2.9.5 *M. autem Antonius et L. Flaccus censores Duronium senatu mouerunt, quod legem de coercendis conuiuiorum sumptibus latam tribunus plebi abrogauerat. mirifica notae causa: quam enim inpunderent Duronium rostra conscendit illa dicturus: 'freni sunt iniecti uobis, Quirites, nullo modo perpetiendi. alligati et constricti estis amaro uinculo seruitutis: lex enim lata est, quae uos esse frugi iubet. abrogemus igitur istud horridae uetustatis rubigine obsitum imperium: etenim quid opus libertate, si uolentibus luxu perire non licet?'*