

Acts of the Divine Augustus

Selections from the Acts of the Divine Augustus (Res Gestae Divi Augusti), Lewis Stiles, translator (with additions by John Porter).

Extracts of the things done by the Divine Augustus, the things by which he subjected the orb of the lands to the Imperium of the People of Rome, and of the money which for the Res Publica and the People of Rome he spent—the (original) is incised upon two bronze pillars set up at Rome—a copy (of his own account) follows.

At nineteen years of age [44-43 BCE] I prepared an army by (my own) personal plan and at (my own) personal expense, through which I reclaimed the Res Publica from the domination of the faction oppressing it, and set it free. In the name of that deed the Senate, by honorific decrees, into its own rank elected me,¹ at the same time giving me a consular place for giving my opinion,² and it gave imperium to me. The Res Publica ordered me as a praetor, along with the consuls, to see to it that it suffered nothing detrimental to itself. The People, moreover, in the same year [43 BCE] made me consul, when the consuls both had fallen in war, and Triumvir for the purpose of constituting the Res Publica.

Those who had killed my parent I drove out into exile through the legitimate courts, as the avenger of their crime; and afterwards when they were bringing war against the Res Publica I conquered them in two battles.³

Wars by land and by sea, civil and foreign, over the whole orb of the lands I often waged; and as victor I spared all who sought pardon as citizens. The foreign nations—those which in safety I was able to forgive—I preferred to preserve rather than to kill. Of Roman citizens bound by a (military) sacrament to me there were about 500,000; out of these I led out into colonies or sent back into their own municipalities—when they had earned a year's wages—somewhat more than 300,000, and to them all I assigned arable land or else I gave money as a reward for military service. I captured 600 ships, beyond those which were smaller than triremes.

Twice I had triumphal ovations, and three times curule triumphs; and I was called, twenty-two times, Imperator. When, however, the Senate decreed more triumphs, I sat out from them. The bay leaves from my fasces I deposited in the Capitol when my vows, which in each war I had pronounced, were fulfilled. On account of things by land and by sea successfully done by me or by my delegates under my auspices, 55 times the Senate decreed that prayers be made to the immortal gods. Of days, moreover, on which by the Senate's decree (these) prayers were made, there were 890. In triumphs of mine there were led before my chariot, of kings or king's children, nine. I had been consul 13 times, when I wrote this [14 CE], and was in the 37th year of my tribunician power.

Dictatorship, offered to me both when I was absent and when I was present by both the People and the Senate when M. Marcellus and L. Arruntius were consuls [22 BCE], I did not accept. I did not beg off, when there was a great shortage of grain, from the management of its supply, which I so administered that within a few days from its immediate fear and danger I freed the entire state at my own expense and by my own care. Consulship, annual and also perpetual, at that time offered to me, I did not accept [22 BCE].

When the consuls were M. Vinicius and Q. Lucretius [19 BCE], and afterwards when they were P. and Cn. Lentulus [18 BCE], and a third time when they were Paullus Fabius Maximus and Q. Tubero [11 BCE], even with the Senate and the Roman People consenting that I should be made sole curator of laws and public morals with imperium, I accepted no magistracy offered contrary to the custom of our ancestors. The things which at that time the Senate wanted done through me, I accomplished through my tribunician power; and a colleague in that power I myself, of my own accord, five times demanded from the Senate and received.

I was Triumvir for the constituting of the Res Publica throughout ten continual years [43-33 BCE]. I was Princeps of the Senate, up to the day on which I wrote this, throughout 40 years. I was Pontifex Maximus, an Augur, one of the Fifteen for making sacrifices, one of the Seven for religious feasts, an Arval brother, a Titian fellow, and a Fetial.

The Patricians' numbers I increased, as consul for the fifth time, at the bidding of the People and the Senate [29 BCE]. Three times I revised the membership of the Senate and in my sixth consulship [28 BCE] I held a census of the people, with M. Agrippa as my colleague. I conducted a lustrum after (a lapse of) 41 years; in that lustrum of Roman citizens there were counted 4,063,000 heads. Then again, with consular imperium, alone I conducted a lustrum when C. Censorinus and C. Asinius were consuls [8 BCE]; in that lustrum were counted, of Roman citizens, 4,233,000 heads. And a third time with consular imperium I conducted a lustrum, with, as colleague, Ti. Caesar my son [14 CE]; in that lustrum were counted, of Roman citizens' heads, 4,937,000. Through new laws brought forward at my instigation I reintroduced many salutary practices established by our ancestors—things that at that time were beginning to disappear from our age; and I myself handed on examples of many things which ought to be imitated by those who come after.

That prayers for my health be undertaken by the consuls and priests every fifth year, the Senate decreed. Along with these prayers, they often held games while I was living, sometimes the four most important colleges of priests,

¹ C. Pansa and A. Hirtius were consuls.

² I.e., the right to speak and vote as one of consular rank in the senate.

³ I.e. at Philippi—42 BCE.

sometimes the consuls. Also, both privately and municipally the entire body of citizens, unanimously and continuously at all the altars, for my health made supplication.

My name by the Senate's decree was included in the Saliar Hymn; and it was legislated that I be sacrosanct in perpetuity and, while I lived, that the tribunician power be given me [23 BCE]. I refused to be made Pontifex Maximus in the place of my colleague while he lived, when the people offered me that priesthood which my father had held; that priesthood some years later, upon the death at last of that man who had used the occasion of civil tumult to get it, with all Italy pouring together for my election in a multitude such as had never been reported at Rome before that time, I accepted (P. Sulpicius and C. Valgus were consuls [12 BCE]).

An altar of Fortune the Bringer-back before the shrines of Honor and Virtue at the Capene Gate, on behalf of my return, was by the Senate consecrated; in it the priests and Vestal Virgins were ordered to make anniversary sacrifice on the day on which (when Q. Lucretius and M. Vinicius were consuls [19 BCE]) I came back to the city from Syria, and the day was named the Augustalia from my cognomen.

By the Senate's decree at the same time a part of the praetors and of the tribunes of the plebs, with the consul Q. Lucretius and the principal men (of the Senate) were sent to meet me in Campania—an honor which up to that time no one except me had been decreed.

When from Spain and Gaul—matters in those provinces having been successfully managed—I came back to Rome,⁴ an altar of August⁵ Peace, by the Senate, in honor of my return, was ordered to be consecrated on the Field of Mars; in it the magistrates and priests and Vestal Virgins were ordered to make anniversary sacrifices.

As for the Gates of Janus Quirinus, which our ancestors wanted closed whenever through the whole area of the imperium of the Roman People, by land and by sea, peace had been secured by victories—although before I was born from the founding of the city only twice⁶ in all it had been closed according to tradition—three times while I was Princeps the Senate ordered them closed.

My sons, who as youths were snatched from me by Fortune—C. and L. Caesar—for my honor's sake were by the Senate and People of Rome, when they were each fourteen, made consuls-designate, on the condition that they enter that magistracy after five years; and the Senate decreed that from the day on which they were led into the Forum they should be present at public councils. The Equites of Rome, moreover, universally named each of them Princeps of the Youth and presented them with shield and spears of silver.

For the plebs of Rome, man by man, I counted out 300 sesterces (each) from the will of my father [44 BCE], and in my own name 400 each out of the spoils of war I gave in my fifth

consulship [29 BCE]; again moreover in my tenth consulship [24 BCE] from my own patrimony I counted out as a gift 400 sesterces man by man; in my eleventh consulship [23 BCE] I measured out [for each citizen] twelve rations of grain privately bought; in the twelfth year of my tribunician power [12 BCE] I gave 400 sesterces for the third time, man by man. These gifts of mine never came through to fewer than 250,000 men. In the eighteenth year of my tribunician power, in my twelfth consulship [5 BCE], I gave 240 sesterces, man by man, to 320,000 members of the urban plebs. And to the colonists chosen from my soldiers in my fifth consulship [29 BCE] I gave out of war-spoils 1,000 sesterces each; in the colonies about 12,000 men received this gift during my triumph. In my thirteenth consulship [2 BCE] I gave 60 denarii [each] to the plebs who then were receiving grain rations; they were a few more than 200,000 men.⁷

For the lands which in my fourth consulship [30 BCE] and afterwards when M. Crassus and Cn. Lentulus the Augur were consuls [14 BCE] I assigned to the soldiers, I paid money to the municipalities; this sum was about 600,000,000 sesterces which I counted out for the war-spoils in Italy and about 260,000,000 which I paid for land in the provinces....

Four times from my own money I helped out the Public Treasury....⁸

I built the Curia [the Senate house] and the Chalcidicum which adjoins it, the temple of Apollo on the Palatine with its porticoes, the temple of the Divine Julius, the Lupercal, the portico near the Flaminian Circus (which I suffered to be named the Octavian Portico, after the man who had built the earlier one at that same site), the shrine near the Circus Maximus, the temples of Jupiter Feretrius⁹ and Jupiter the Thunderer¹⁰ on the Capitoline, the temple of Quirinus, the temples of Minerva and of Queen Juno and of Jupiter of Liberty on the Aventine, the temple of the Lares at the top of the Sacred Way, the temple of the Divine Penates in the Velian district, the temple of Youth, the temple of the Great Mother on the Palatine.

At great expense I rebuilt both the Capitoline temple and the theater of Pompey, without inscribing my name on either. In many areas I repaired water channels which had fallen into disrepair with age, and I doubled the output of the Marcian aqueduct by introducing a new water source to its channel. I completed the Julian forum and the Julian basilica—the one between the temple of Castor and the temple of Saturn—both of which were begun and nearly completed by my father, and when this same basilica was destroyed by fire I enlarged its foundations and began to rebuild it in the name of my sons, with commands that, should I not have lived to complete the work, it should be completed by my heirs. In my sixth consulship [28 BCE], on the authority of the senate, I rebuilt 82 temples of the gods in the city, with none omitted which at that time were in need of repair. In my seventh consulship [27 BCE]

⁴ When Tiberius and P. Quintilius were consuls—13 BCE.

⁵ *August* carries the sense of "holy, majestic."

⁶ Once by King Numa and again at the conclusion of the First Punic War.

⁷ 1 denarius = 4 sesterces; 900 sesterces was the annual gross income of a soldier under Augustus.

⁸ In this section Augustus claims to have contributed 150 million sesterces to the Roman treasury.

⁹ Livy 1.10: victory of Romulus over forces of Caenina; kills leader of opposing forces and thereby wins "spoils of victory." Rome's first temple, according to Livy: probably c. 650-550 BCE.

¹⁰ Commemorating escape from lightning bolt while on Cantaberian campaign (27 BCE?).

I rebuilt the Flaminian Way from the city to Arminum [modern Rimini] and all the bridges with the exception of the Mulvian and Minucian bridges.

On private ground I built the temple of Mars the Avenger and the Forum of Augustus [2 CE], out of war-spoils....

Three gladiatorial games I gave in my own name and five in my sons' or grandsons' names; in these games there fought around 10,000 men.... I gave hunts of beasts from Africa in my name or in that of my sons or grandsons in the circus or forum or amphitheater 26 times; in these were used up around 3,500 beasts.

I gave the spectacle of a naval battle to the People, across the Tiber in the place where now is the Grove of the Caesars, having excavated a piece of ground 1,800 feet in length and 1,200 in width; in this 30 beaked triremes or biremes and even more smaller ships fought amongst themselves; in these fleets fought—besides the rowers—around 3,000 men.

In the temples of all the cities of the province of Asia I as victor put back the ornaments which, when he had despoiled the temples, the one against whom I waged the war had possessed privately. Statues of myself—on foot, on horse, or in chariots—silver ones, stood in the city, around 80 of them; these I myself took up, and from that money I put golden gifts in the temple of Apollo in my own name and in the names of those who had done me the honor of [commissioning] the statues.

The sea I pacified, (freeing it) from pirates. In that war of the slaves who had fled their masters and against the Res Publica had taken up arms,¹¹ I captured about 30,000 and gave them to their masters for punishment. There swore allegiance to me all of Italy of its own will, and demanded me as leader of the war in which I was victor at Actium; the Gallic Provinces and the Spanish ones, and Africa, Sicily and Sardinia swore the same allegiance. Of those who under my standards then campaigned there were more than 700 Senators, among whom those who either before or later became consuls [to the day on which this was written] were 83, and (those who became) priests were around 170.

Of all of the provinces of the People of Rome on whose borders were races which did not obey our imperium, I extended the borders. The Gallic and Spanish provinces, and also Germany—the part which Ocean encloses from Cadiz to the north of the Elbe river—I pacified. The Alps, from the region which is nearest to the Adriatic Sea to the Tuscan one I pacified—to no race bringing a war through an unjust cause. My fleet through Ocean from the mouth of the Rhine to the region of the rising sun, to the borders of the Cimbri, sailed; to a place where neither by land nor by sea any Roman before that time had gone. And the Cimbri and Charydes and Semnones and the other Germanic peoples of that area through delegates sought my friendship and that of the Roman People. At my order and under my auspices two armies were led at almost the same time into Ethiopia and into the part of Arabia called the Blessed; and great forces of the enemy of both races were cut down on the battle-field, and many towns were captured.

Into Ethiopia as far as the town of Nabata [our army] went through—to the place nearest to Meroe; into Arabia so far within the borders of the Sabaeans proceeded the army as to the town of Mariba.

Egypt to the imperium of the Roman People I added. As for Greater Armenia, when its king, Artaxes, had been killed, although I could have made it a province I preferred—following our ancestors' example—to give over that kingdom to Tigranes, king Artavasdes' son and grandson moreover of Tigranes the king, through (the agency of) Tiberius Nero, who was then my stepson. And when then that same race after withdrawing and rebelling had been tamed through [the agency of] Gaius my son, I gave it over to king Ariobarzanes, son of Artabazus king of the Medes, for him to rule, and after his death to his son Artavasdes; when he was killed I sent [yet another] Tigranes, who was of the royal house of the Armenians born, into that kingdom. The provinces, all those across the Adriatic Sea which verge on the East, and Cyrenae—at that time the greater part of them was possessed by kings—and before that Sicily and Sardinia when they were occupied during the slave war, I recovered.

Colonies in Africa, Sicily, Macedonia, both Spains, Achaia, Asia, Syria, Gallia Narbonensis and Psidia, out of my soldiers I founded. Italy also has 28 colonies which in my lifetime were very densely populated and which under my authority were founded.

Several standards, by other leaders lost, when the enemies were conquered I recovered—out of Spain and Gaul and from the Dalmatians. I compelled the Parthians to give back the spoils and the standards of three Roman armies¹² to me, and as suppliants to beg the friendship of the Roman People. Those standards moreover in the innermost shrine which is in the temple of Mars the Avenger I deposited.

The Pannonian races, which before I was Princeps an army of the Roman People had never gone to, were conquered through (the agency of) Tiberius Nero, who was then my stepson and delegate; to the imperium of the Roman People I subjected them, and I carried forward the borders of Illyricum to the banks of the river Danube. To our side of that river a Dacian army crossed—under my auspices it was defeated and routed, and afterwards my army was led across the Danube and compelled the Dacian races to submit to the imperium of the Roman People.

To me from India's kings delegates often were sent, men not seen before that time in attendance on any Roman leader....

In my sixth and seventh consulships [28-27 BCE], after I had extinguished the civil wars, being by universal consent in control of all affairs, I transferred the Res Publica out of my power and (put it) under the judgment of the Senate and People of Rome. In return for this deserving act of mine, by the Senate's decree I was named "Augustus" and with bay leaves the door-posts of my dwelling were wreathed, publicly; a civic crown over my door was fixed, and a golden shield put in the Curia Julia, which the Senate and People of Rome gave to me for the sake of my courage, clemency, justice and piety, as

¹¹ I.e., against Sex. Pompeius, Pompey's son in Spain [38-37 BCE.].

¹² The armies of Crassus (defeated at Carrhae in 53) and Antony (in Asia Minor in 40 and in Armenia in 36).

witnessed by that shield's inscription. After that time in authority before all men I stood, but of actual power I had no more than did the others who were my colleagues in each magistracy.

While I held my thirteenth consulship [2 BCE] the Senate and the Equestrian class and the People of Rome universally

named me Father of our Fatherland, and resolved that this should in the porch of my dwelling be inscribed and in the Curia Julia and in the Forum of Augustus under the chariot which for me by the Senate's decree had been placed there.

When I wrote this my age was seventy-six.