

HARLAN J. BERK ESSAY CONTEST

INTERMEDIATE category
Essay #4123

Winner : Brandon Reich-Sweet, age 14,
Ricks Center for Gifted Children
Denver, CO
Teacher Kristin Tracy - email ktracy@du.edu

Ides of the Month of Augustus Year 800 of the Founding of Rome

Daily Journal of the Emperor Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus

This being the 800th year of the founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus the great descendants of Aeneas, I have found much inspiration in my writing of histories. I plan to begin a new set of volumes to detail the history of coinage in Rome and its precursors in various other parts of the world. I have felt under much strain and torn from my beloved writing of the histories in the past few years since the death of the mad Gaius. Since the rushed and panicking ordeal of my placing as Emperor by the Praetorian Guard, through my marriage with the whore Messalina, as well as my campaigns in Britain, I have been pulled away from dutifully writing the events of times past and placed more in a position that I do not much enjoy, that of a man with responsibilities heaped upon my shoulders and of an office that I feel is headed for destruction. I hope that this history of coinage, that I feel eager to start, will give me a welcome relief from the anxieties of being the First Man in Rome.

Firstly to speak of the 800th anniversary of Rome's founding. I consider this to be a truly landmark celebration in Roman history, and based on that belief I put on a series of games to go along with the Parilia Celebration on the 14^h day before the Kalends of May. This Parilia Celebration is put on every year to celebrate the founding of the city of Rome. Unfortunately the people scoffed at my herald's declaration that these were games that nobody had ever seen before or would ever see again.

The true point of this entry is however, to discuss the history of coinage that I am restless to begin. In it I wish to speak of a particular coin that I plan to have minted at sometime under my rule. I intend to begin writing about this specific coin going back through history and tying it and its production to others through history. This particular coin is of a delicate silver color, that when hit by the light sparkles with white light. I make this statement not to be unnecessarily descriptive or fanciful such as a writer of poetry, but because I have seen magnificent coins in the past and wish this coin to be as stunning in character. The obverse of the coin is to feature a characterization of my head

bearing the Laurel Crown as well as my various titles and ranks. On the reverse is to be a printed manifestation of the winged goddess of revenge, Nemesis. The goddess will be holding out a fold of her clothing and carrying the caduceus, the magic wand of the God Mercury. The caduceus is a short staff or rod intertwined with two serpents and topped with a pair of wings. The goddess is led by a snake that is located near the inscription of AVGVSTAE in the upper right section of the reverse. I have been given preliminary minting of the coin and it is somewhat heavy. I am very fond of my depiction on the coin; I have noticed that I have the ability to look very strong, dignified and handsome until my disabilities give me away. But my appearance on the coin shows my neck to be quite strong, and when the light hits it the white shine that I have mentioned earlier shows up most prevalent in my hair, that white hair being another trait of mine that I have become fond of. Unfortunately, when I walk all of my less agreeable traits become noticeable. My fine qualities turn into foaming at the mouth and trickling at the nose, my weak knees give way under me, I stammer badly (one of the reasons I am so fond of my histories is that they allow me to speak without people being put off by my undesirable stammer and other foibles) and my head can be most shaky. These peculiarities of mine have made many consider me to be a fool, as the society of Rome has come to consider weakness and such shortcomings in physical stature as mine to be representative of one's mental state, and that makes me even more inclined to my dignified representation on this coin. And on an interesting side note about this coin, I have commissioned for the coin to be minted at a mint in Gallia known as Lugdunum also known as Lyons, which is my birthplace. This ties the coin even closer to my heart.

To speak of the history I am about to write I will begin with the introduction of this Denarius coin and continue with various other coins from the Roman Empire, the Republic and the time of kings, including location of minting, explanations of design and process of minting as well as give detailed illustrations of each coin. The volumes will then give histories of various forms of coinage throughout the world and their connections with modern coins. I intend to speak in some detail of the God Augustus's involvement in the stabilization of Roman coinage, mainly through his retention of the three main coin types: the Aureus, Denarius and Sestertius. Along with this Augustus launched copious numbers of both imperial and local mints across all Roman territory, all of which would be strictly controlled. Between the years 734-741 Ab Urbe Condita; Augustus reopened the mint at Rome, this is where the gold and silver coins were originally created before being distributed to the provinces. For reasons unbeknownst to me Augustus later abandoned this mint and moved the operation to my birthplace in Lugdunum or Lyons. For the rest of Augustus's rule and for much of the rule of Tiberius the majority of gold and silver coins were minted at the Lugdunum Mint, although some silver coins were struck in the east and at certain special mints. Bronze coins, used by all people in all reaches of the empire, were minted at smaller, provincial mints. These coins were created with the letters "S.C.," for Senatus Consultum, which is a statement by the emperor to recognize the historical part the Senate has played in the development of coinage, as well as an example of how Augustus wanted to work with the legislature in order to better the Roman state. This work of mine is to be in small publication as I do not expect that there

will be much enthusiasm for the books as there has been little for most of my other histories aside from a few fellow historians.

As I spoke of earlier, in recent years I have been carted away from writing histories, and one reason for this more than any other has been my campaigns in Britain. These conquests seem ironic as my own body and mind are little suited to military work, and yet my territorial expansions have been some of the only ones carried out in this century. The mad Gaius or “Little Boot” as some once affectionately called him, had spoken about military expansion seven years earlier, but never followed through on it. Probably that was for the best considering the considerable other misfortunes he brought on Rome. A military campaign by Gaius would have most surely ended in disaster. As time consuming as this affair was, I was not the general commander of the invasion forces in Britain for more than the 16 days that I spent camped on the island; these duties I handed over to Aulus Plautius. Perhaps the time of greatest glory during my rule, it gave much authority and good will to the early years of my reign as emperor. Once I returned from this brief stay in Britain, I celebrated the victories with a splendid triumph. I paraded the captured enemies behind my gilded chariot, all of them in chains, the people threw flowers and there were great rewards for all of the legionnaires and their commanders. Along with the great success of the campaign in Britain I have also sent forces to Mauretania and to the Crimea in Armenia, but these were lesser endeavors and did not even require my presence.

Phoebus Apollo’s burning chariot is sinking slowly down over the horizon as I write these words. Outside a small distance away from the royal palace I can hear the busy street. People empty out of their various shops on their way home. The public baths are also beginning to vacate; the people leave the baths sweet smelling (especially compared to the filthy streets) after covering themselves in perfumed oil and scraping it off, along with plenty of dirt, with a curved stick known as a strigil. Some of the wealthier visitors to the baths are attended by a slave to take care of the use of the strigil, which can be quite difficult to do on one’s own. The shouts of the slave traders from the Forum die down and the street gradually begins to hush as the Apollo’s burning chariot slips below the edge of the world.

Tonight I am to attend a dinner party in the palace’s extravagant triclinium, where the couches are decorated with ivory and fine gold; the floors are covered with beautifully crafted Egyptian rugs. The banquet guests will arrive and remove their sandals so as to have their feet washed by a slave and their hands washed when they arrive at their reclining tables. Even though the wine will be diluted at the banquet tonight, I am quite sure that I will overindulge myself and have a strenuous time beginning my history tomorrow. But I intend to enjoy myself tonight as I will have ample time to begin my history. I am very excited to begin, and very proud of my new coin. As the edges of the earth seem to close over the sun, flashing and dancing in a blaze of light, I, too, close this chapter.

