

Work

Augustus wrote an autobiography that has not survived, but we do have his Res Gestae—a reckoning of his stewardship placed on bronze tablets in front of Augustus' mausoleum. It survives only in inscriptions carved on the side of temples. This document has a magisterial disregard for the embarrassing factual details of the civil wars, where the republican leader Sextus Pompey is referred to simply as a pirate. Nor is Antony's name even mentioned. Constitutional issues are also blurred; the document is a rose-colored glorification of the reign from the perspective of his 77th (and final) year.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DIVINE AUGUSTUS

(RES GESTAE DIVI AUGUSTI)

Below is a copy of *The Achievements of the Divine Augustus*, by which he subjected the entire world to imperial power of the Roman people, and of the expenses which he incurred for the state and people of Rome; the original text has been inscribed on two bronze pillars set up at Rome.

1. When I was nineteen year old, on my own initiative and at my own expense I raised an army, with which I restored freedom to the state which was oppressed by the power of a clique. For that reason the senate passed honorary decrees enrolling me in its order in the consulship of Gaius Pansa and Aulus Hirtius (43 B.C.E.), granting me the privilege of speaking among the ex-consuls and giving me *imperium*—the right of military command. It ordered me as a propraetor together with the consuls to ensure that the state should suffer no harm. In the same year, when both consuls had fallen in battle, the people named me consul and appointed me one of a commission of three (*triumvir*) for the re-establishment of the Republic.

2. I drove the murderers of my father into exile, and avenged their crime through legal tribunals; and afterwards, when they made war on the republic, I twice defeated them in battle.¹

3. I undertook civil and foreign wars by land and sea throughout the whole world, and as victor I spared the lives of all citizens who sought pardon. When foreign nations could safely be pardoned I preferred to preserve rather than to destroy them. 500,000 Roman citizens took a military oath of obedience to me. Of this number, I settled more than 300,000 in colonies or sent them back to their home towns after their service was completed; to all I gave lands or money as a reward for their military service. I captured six hundred ships, not counting those smaller than

¹ Brutus, Cassius, and other senators assassinated Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.E.; two years later the triumvirs (Octavian, Marc Antony, and Lepidus) defeated them in the two battles at Philippi.

triremes.

4. Twice I was honored with ovations and I celebrated three curule triumphs and I was twenty-one times saluted as *imperator*. When the senate decreed still more triumphs in my honor, I declined them all. After I had fulfilled the vows I made in each war, I laid the bay leaves from my *fascēs* in the Capitol. Fifty-five times the senate decreed that thanks be offered to the immortal gods on account of successes on land and sea gained by me or by lieutenants acting under my command. The thanksgivings decreed by the senate occupied 890 days. In my triumphs nine kings or children of kings paraded before my chariot. When I was writing these words, I had been consul thirteen times and was in the thirty-seventh year of tribunician power (14 B.C.E.).

5. In the consulship of Marcus Marcellus and Lucius Arruntius (22 B.C.E.), the people and the senate both offered me the dictatorship, both in my absence and when I was at Rome, but I refused it. During the great famine I did take charge of the grain-supply, which I so administered that, in a few days and at my own expense, I freed the whole city from the fear and present danger of starvation. At that time the consulship was offered to me, to be held each year for life, but I refused it.

6. In the consulship of Marcus Vinicius and Quintus Lucretius (19 B.C.E.), and afterwards in that of Publius and Gnaeus Lentulus (18 B.C.E.) and thirdly in that of Paullus Fabius Maximus and Quintus Tubero (11 B.C.E.), the senate and the Roman people agreed that I should be appointed sole guardian of laws and morals with supreme power, but I refused any office offered to me that was contrary to the custom of our ancestors. The actions that the senate which me to take I carried out in virtue of my tribunician power. On five occasions, at my own request, I received from the senate a colleague in that office.

7. I was triumvir for the re-establishment of the Republic for ten consecutive years. Up to the day of writing I have been *princeps senatus* for forty years. I am High Priest, *augur*, member of the religious board of fifteen, board of seven for religious feasts, Arval brother, *sodalis Titius*, Fetial priest.

8. In my fifth consulship (29 B.C.E.) I increased the number of patricians at the command of the people and the senate. I revised the roll of the senate three times. In my sixth consulship (28 B.C.E.) with Marcus Agrippa as colleague, I held a census of the people, and I performed a *lustrum* after a lapse of forty-one years; at that *lustrum* 4,063,000 Roman citizens were enrolled. Then I performed a second *lustrum* with consular *imperium* and without a colleague, in the consulship of Gaius Censorinus and Gaius Asinius (8 B.C.E.); at that *lustrum* 4,233,000 citizens were registered. Thirdly I performed a *lustrum* with consular *imperium*, with my son Tiberius Caesar as colleague, in the consulship of Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Appuleius (14 C.E.); at that *lustrum* 4,937,000 citizens were registered. By new laws which I proposed, I restored many exemplary practices of our ancestors which were falling out of use in our own time, and I myself

transmitted many exemplars to be imitated by posterity.

9. The senate decreed that every fifth year the consuls and priests should undertake vows for my health. In fulfillment of these vows games were often celebrated in my lifetime, sometimes by the four most distinguished colleges of priests, sometimes by the consuls. Moreover, all the citizens, individually and on behalf of their towns, have unanimously and continuously offered sacrifices for my health at all the seats of the gods.

10. By decree of the senate my name was inserted in the Salian hymn, and it was enacted by law that my person should be forever inviolable and that I should hold the tribunician power as long as I Live. When the people offered me the High Priesthood which my father had held, I refused to replace in that office my colleague who was still alive. Several years later, after the death of the man² who had seized it during civil disturbance, I accepted this priesthood, in the consulship of Publius Sulpicius and Gaius Valgius (12 B.C.E.), and such a crowd from all of Italy assembled for to my election as was never before recorded at Rome.

11. In honor of my return the senate consecrated the altar of *Fortuna Redux* (Fortune Who Brings Back) before the temples of Honor and Virtue at the Porta Capena, and it ordered that the priests and Vestal virgins should make a sacrifice there each year on the anniversary of my return to the city from Syria in the consulship of Quintus Lucretius and Marcus Vinicius (19 B.C.E.), and it named the day the Augustalia from my name.

12. At the same time, by decree of the senate, some of the praetors and tribunes of the plebs, with the consul Quintus Lucretius and the leading men, were sent to Campania to meet me, an honor that has been decreed to no one else up to the present day. After I successfully handled affairs in Spain and Gaul and returned to Rome in the consulship of Tiberius Nero and Publius Quintilius (13 B.C.E.), the senate decreed that an altar of the Augustan Peace (*Ara Pacis Augustae*) should be consecrated in the Campus Martius in honor of my return, at which the magistrates, priests, and Vestal virgins were ordered to make an annual sacrifice.

13. Our ancestors wished that the gateway of Janus Quirinus should be shut whenever victory had secured peace on land and sea throughout the whole empire of the Roman people. From the foundation of the city down to my birth, the tradition is that it was shut only twice, but while I was *princeps* the senate voted to shut it on three occasions.³

14. To honor me, the senate and Roman people designated my sons Gaius and Lucius Caesar, whom Fortune took from me as young men, as consuls when they were

² Marcus Lepidus.

³ It had been closed under King Numa and after the First Punic War in 235 B.C.E. Under Augustus it was closed after the battle of Actium, in 25 B.C.E. after his war in Spain. The third time is uncertain.

fourteen, providing that they should only enter that magistracy after five years. And the senate decreed that from the day when they entered into public life they should take part in the councils of state. Furthermore the whole body of Roman knights hailed each one as Leader of the Youth and presented them with silver shields and spears.

15. To the Roman plebs I paid each man 300 sesterces under my father's will, and in my own name I gave them 400 each from the booty of war in my fifth consulship (29 B.C.E.). In my tenth consulship (24 B.C.E.) I again paid out of my own inheritance a bonus of 400 sesterces to each man, and in my eleventh consulship (23 B.C.E.) I bought grain with my own money and made twelve food distributions. In the twelfth year of my tribunician power (12 B.C.E.) I gave every man 400 sesterces for the third time. These grants of mine never reached fewer than 250,000 persons. In the eighteenth year of my tribunician power and my twelfth consulship (5 B.C.E.), I gave 240 sesterces apiece to 320,000 members of the urban plebs. In my fifth consulship I gave 1,000 sesterces out of booty to every one of the colonists drawn from my soldiers; about 120,000 men in colonies received this bonus at the time of my triumph. In my thirteenth consulship (2 B.C.E.) I gave 240 sesterces apiece to the plebs who then received public grain; there were a bit more than 200,000 persons.

16. I paid cash to the towns for the lands that I granted to soldiers in my fourth consulship (30 B.C.E.), and later in the consulship of Marcus Crassus and Gnaeus Lentulus (14 B.C.E.). I paid a total of about 600,000,000 sesterces for Italian land, and about 260,000,000 sesterces for provincial lands. In the recollection of my contemporaries, I was the first and only one to have done this of all who founded military colonies in Italy or the provinces.⁴ Later, in the consulships of Tiberius Nero and Gnaeus Piso, of Gaius Antistius and Decimus Laelius, of Gaius Calvisius and Lucius Pasienus, of Lucius Lentulus and Marcus Messalla and of Lucius Caninius and Quintus Fabricius I paid cash bonuses to soldiers whom I settled in their home towns after discharge, and for this I spent about 400,000,000 sesterces.

17. Four times I helped the treasury with my own money, so that I transferred to the administrators of the treasury 150,000,000 sesterces. In the consulship of Marcus Lepidus and Lucius Arruntius, I paid 170,000,000 sesterces from my inheritance to the military treasury which was founded by my advice so that cash bonuses could be paid to soldiers who had served for twenty years or more.

18. Beginning in the consulship of Gnaeus and Publius Lentulus (18 B.C.E.), whenever the taxes were inadequate, I distributed from my own funds and my inheritance both grain and money, sometimes to 100,000 persons, sometimes to many more.

19. I built the Senate House, and the Chalcidicum next to it, the temple of Apollo on the Palatine with its porticoes, the temple of the deified Julius, the Lupercal, the portico at the Flaminian circus, which I permitted to bear the name of the portico of Octavius after the man who erected an earlier portico on the same site, the imperial box at the Circus

⁴ Previously generals, including Octavian/Augustus himself in 41 B.C.E., had confiscated land for their soldiers without compensation.

Maximus, the temples of Jupiter the Subduer and Jupiter the Thunderer on the Capitol, the temple of Quirinus, the temples of Minerva, of Queen Juno and of Jupiter Libertas on the Aventine, the temple of the Lares at the head of the Sacred Way, the temple of the Di Penates on the Velia, the temple of Youth, and the temple of the Great Mother on the Palatine.

20. I rebuilt the Capitol and the theater of Pompey—both at great expense—without inscribing my own name. I repaired the channels of the aqueducts, which in several places were collapsing through age, and I doubled the supply of the Marcian aqueduct, by bringing in a new spring. I completed the Forum Julium and the basilica between the temples of Castor and Saturn, works begun and almost finished by my father, and when that same basilica was destroyed by fire, I began to rebuild it on an enlarged site, in the name of my sons, and in case I do not finish it in my life-time, I have ordered my heirs to complete it. In my sixth consulship (28 B.C.E.) I restored eighty-two temples of the gods in the city on the authority of the senate, neglecting none that needed repair at that time. In my seventh consulship (27 B.C.E.) I rebuilt the Via Flaminia from the city to Rimini, and all the bridges except the Mulvian and the Minucian.

21. I built the temple of Mars the Avenger and the Forum Augustum on my own land from the proceeds of booty. On ground largely bought from private owners, I built a theater next to the temple of Apollo, and called it after my son-in-law Marcus Marcellus. From the booty of war I consecrated dedications on the Capitol and in the temples of the deified Julius, of Apollo, of Vesta and of Mars the Avenger, which cost me about 100,000,000 sesterces. In my fifth consulship I gave back 35,000 pounds of gold crowns contributed by the cities and colonies of Italy to my triumphal celebrations, and thereafter, whenever I was saluted as *imperator* I refused the gold crowns which the cities and colonies continued to vote with the same kindness as before.

22. I presented three gladiatorial games in my own name and five in the name of my sons or grandsons; at these games about 10,000 men fought. Twice in my own name and a third time in that of my grandson I presented to the people spectacles of athletes summoned from all parts. I gave games in my own name four times and, in place of other magistrates, twenty-three times. For the board of fifteen, as its president with Marcus Agrippa as my colleague, I presented the Secular Games in the consulship of Gaius Furnius and Gaius Silanus (17 B.C.E.). In my thirteenth consulship (2 B.C.E.) I was the first to present the games of Mars, which since that time have been given annually by the consuls by a decree of the senate. Twenty-six times I presented in my own name or in that of my sons and grandsons beast-hunts with African animals in the circus, forum or amphitheater, during which about 3,500 beasts were killed.

23. I presented a display of a naval battle as a show for the people across the Tiber in a place now occupied by the grove of the Caesars, where a site 1,800 feet long and 1,200 broad was excavated. In that spot thirty beaked triremes or biremes and more smaller vessels engaged in battle. In these fleets about 3,000 men fought in addition to the rowers.

24. After my victory, I replaced in the temples, of all the cities of the province of Asia the ornaments which my former enemy, after looting those temples, had taken for his private use.⁵ Some eighty silver statues of me, standing, mounted, and in four-horse chariots, were set up in Rome; I myself removed them, and with the money from them I placed golden offerings in the temple of Apollo, in my name and in the name of those who had honored me with the statues.

25. I freed the sea of pirates.⁶ In that war I captured about 30,000 slaves who had fled from their masters and taken up arms against the state, and I returned them to their masters for punishment. The whole of Italy voluntarily swore an oath of allegiance to me and demanded me to be Leader in the War which I won at Actium. The Gallic and Spanish provinces, Africa, Sicily and Sardinia swore the same oath. More than 700 senators fought under my standards at that time, including eighty-three who previously or subsequently (down to the day this was written) were made consuls, and about one hundred and seventy who were appointed priests.

26. I expanded the frontiers of all those provinces of the Roman people bordered by peoples not subject to our government. I brought peace to the Gallic and Spanish provinces as well as to Germany, an area bounded by the Ocean from Cadiz to the mouth of the Elbe. I brought peace to the Alps, from the region near the Adriatic all the way to the Tuscan sea, yet without waging an unjust war on any people. My fleet sailed through the Ocean from the mouth of the Rhine eastwards to the territory of the Cimbri, a region which no Roman had visited before either by land or sea, and the Cimbri, Charydes, Semnones and other German peoples of that region sent envoys to seek my friendship and that of the Roman people. At my command and under my auspices two armies were led about the same time into Ethiopia and Arabia Felix; vast enemy forces of both peoples were cut down in battle and many towns were captured. Ethiopia was invaded as far as the town of Nabata, which is next to Meroë; in Arabia the army advanced into the territory of the Sabaeans to the town of Mariba.

27. I added Egypt to the empire of the Roman people. I might have made Greater Armenia a province after its king, Artaxes, was killed, but I preferred, following the precedent of our ancestors, to give that kingdom to Tigranes, son of King Artavasdes and grandson of King Tigranes, acting through Tiberius Nero, who was then my stepson. When the same people later rebelled and were subdued by my son Gaius, I handed them over to be ruled by King Ariobarzanes, son of Artabazus, King of the Medes, and after his death by his son Artavasdes. When he was murdered, I sent Tigranes, a heir of the royal Armenian house, into that kingdom. I recovered all the provinces east of the Adriatic sea, together with Cyrene, the greater part of them being then occupied by kings.⁷ I had earlier recovered Sicily and Sardinia which had been seized in the slave war.⁸

⁵ Even forty-five years after the battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E., Augustus refuses to refer to Marc Antony by name.

⁶ Augustus refers to his war against Sextus Pompey in 36 B.C.E.

⁷ Antony had allowed kings (like Herod of Judaea) to administer Roman provinces.

⁸ Another derogatory reference to the war with Sextus Pompey.

28. I established colonies of soldiers in Africa, Sicily, Macedonia, both Spanish provinces, Achaea, Asia, Syria, Gallia Narbonensis and Pisidia. Italy also has twenty-eight colonies founded under my authority, which have become densely populated in my lifetime.

29. By defeating my enemies I recovered in Spain, in Gaul, and from the Dalmatians military standards lost by other commanders. I forced the Parthians to restore to me the spoils and standards of three Roman armies and to beg as suppliants for the friendship of the Roman people.⁹ Those standards I placed in the inner shrine of the temple of Mars the Avenger.

30. The Pannonian tribes, which a Roman army had never approached before I was *princeps*, were conquered by Tiberius Nero, who was then my stepson and legate. I added them to the empire of the Roman people, and extended the frontier of Illyricum to the bank of the Danube river. When an army of Dacians crossed to this side of the Danube, it was defeated and routed under my auspices, and later my army crossed the Danube and forced the Dacian peoples to submit to the orders of the Roman people.

31. Embassies were often sent to me from kings in India, which had never been seen by any Roman leader. The Bastarnae, Scythians and the kings of the Sarmatians who live on both sides of the river Don, and the kings of the Albanians and the Iberians and the Medes sent embassies to seek our friendship.

32. The following kings fled to me as suppliants: Tiridates, King of Parthia, and Tater Phraates son of King Phraates, Artavasdes, King of the Medes; Artaxares, King of the Adiabeni; Dumnobellaunus and Tincommius Kings of the Britons; Maelo, King of the Sugambri; and the King of the Marcomanni and Suebi. The king of Parthia, Phraates, son of Orodes, sent all his sons and grandsons to me in Italy, not because he had been overcome in war, but because he sought our friendship by pledging his children. While I was the princeps very many other peoples, who had never previously exchanged embassies or had friendly relations with us, have experienced the good faith of the Roman people.

33. The Parthians and Medians sent to me noble ambassadors who sought and received kings from me, for the Parthians Vonones, son of king Phraates, grandson of King Orodes, and for the Medes, Ariobarzanes, son of King Artavasdes, grandson of King Ariobarzanes.

34. In my sixth and seventh consulships (28-27 B.C.E.), after I had extinguished civil war, and with the consent of all I was in complete control of affairs, I transferred the republic from my power to the authority of the senate and Roman people.¹⁰ For this service of mine I was called Augustus by decree of the senate, and the door-posts of my house were publicly decorated with bay leaves, a civic crown was fixed over my door, and a golden shield was placed in the Curia Julia, whose inscription attests that it was

⁹ Standards lost by Crassus at Carrhae (53 B.C.E.) and Marc Antony in 40 and 36 B.C.E. They were returned in 20 B.C.E.

¹⁰ Though Augustus referred to the events of 27 B.C.E. as the restoration of the Republic, he in fact retained all effective power.

given me by the senate and Roman people because of my courage, clemency, justice and poetry. Thereafter I excelled all in authority, although I possessed no more official power than others who were my colleagues in each office.

35. In my thirteenth consulship (2 B.C.E.), the senate, the equestrian order and the entire Roman people called me "Father of the Country," and decreed that this title should be inscribed on the porch of my house, in the Senate House, and in the Forum Augustum below the four-horse chariot which was placed there in my honor by decree of the senate. At the time of writing I was in my seventy-sixth year.

APPENDIX

1 The sum of money that he gave to the treasury or to the Roman plebs or to discharged soldiers was 2,400,000,000 sesterces. **2** He built these new structures: the temples of Mars, of Jupiter the Thunderer and the Subduer, of Apollo, of the deified Julius, of Quirinus, of Minerva, of Queen Juno, of Jupiter Libertas, of the Lares, of the Di Penates, of the Youth, of the Great Mother, the Lupercal, the imperial box at the Circus, the Senate House with the Chalcidicum, the Forum Augustum, the Basilica Julia, the theater of Marcellus, the Octavian portico, the grove of the Caesars beyond the Tiber. **3** He restored the Capitol and sacred buildings to the number of eighty-two, the theater of Pompey the aqueducts and the Via Flaminia. **4** The expenditure that he devoted to dramatic shows, to gladiatorial contests, to athletic games and hunts and the sea battle, and the money granted to colonies, cities, towns destroyed by earthquake and fire, or to individual friends and senators to whose property requirement he contributed, are incalculable.