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PRAESENS THE FRIEND OF HADRIAN

Ronald Syme

I. In the course of the year 107 Pliny addressed a missive to Praesens. It conveyed a gentle rebuke, an amicable anticipation. The friend should give up the life of ease and come back to the capital, invited there by *dignitas, honor, amicitiae tam superiores quam inferiores*.¹

The person put on show in this fashion, even if taking up again the career of honours, seemed not at all likely to achieve rank and fame. Erudite consensus refused to identify him with C. Bruttius Praesens who opened the year 139, consul for the second time as colleague to Antoninus Pius. Hence decisive and separate entries.²

Scholars failed to allow for paradox or vicissitudes in the destiny of senators. From time to time epigraphy redeems. Paying honour to the proconsul Bruttius Praesens, the African city of Mactar delivered his full cursus.³ That enabled an acephalous inscription at Lepcis to be assigned to the same person.⁴ Further discussion followed, and some revision.⁵

Illustrating so many aspects of society and government between the last years of Domitian and the first of Pius, this consular of long duration would justify an ample discourse. The present essay aims at economy of treatment.

¹ Pliny, Epist. 7,3,2.

² Thus, following PIR¹, PIR², B 161 and 164.

³ G. Ch. Picard, CRAI 1949, 298ff., whence AE 1950, 66.

⁴ Id., Revue africaine 94 (1950) 25ff., with Note complémentaire (49f., discussing comments from the present writer, who adduced IRT 545 (Lepcis).

⁵ Id., with H. G. Pflaum, Karthago II (1951) 91ff. See further, for bibliography, B. E. Thomasson, Senatores Procuratoresque Romani Nonnulli (1975, Göteborg) 21ff. That scholar omitted the Commentary on Pliny of A. N. Sherwin-White (1966): for whose inadequacies in the treatment of Praesens, observe C. P. Jones, Phoenix 22 (1968) 114f. Finally W. Eck. RE Supp. XIV (1974) 77.

II. The document (AE 1950, 66) is printed on the opposite page.

III. First of all, extraction and nomenclature. By good fortune the father of Praesens turned up in the same season: L. Bruttius Maximus, proconsul of Cyprus in 80.⁶ Otherwise some might have been disposed to argue an adoption. The second member, *L. Fulvius Rusticus*, indicates the maternal ascendance. That is generally the case with binary nomenclature.⁷ Furthermore, the father's name can suffer displacement. The dedication to the son of Praesens (cos. 153) leads off with *L. Fulvio C.f. Pom*].⁸

That inscription was found at Volceii in Lucania, and Pliny styles his friend a Lucanian. Fulvii Rustici, the mother's family, are discovered a little later, senators resident in the border country between Mediolanum and Comum.⁹

IV. At the opening stage in his apprenticeship to public life, Praesens was a *triumvir capitalis*. As is evident, posts in the vigintivirate differ in esteem — and they may furnish a sign of future promotion.¹⁰ To hold the lowest of them is suitable for the son of a Roman knight or minor senator.¹¹

More significant, the military tribunate, since it offered the chance of patronage from the consular legate — and in this epoch of Domitian's reign the prospect of service in warfare. When tribune in I Minervia Praesens earned military decorations. That legion was one of the four stationed in Germania Inferior, the legate of which command stood loyal to the Emperor in January of 89, defeating in battle the usurper Antonius Saturninus.

The item registering the decorations was supplemented by the editor with *ob bell[um Germanicum]*. Lepcis comes to the rescue with *ob*]

⁶ AE 1950, 122.

⁷ As argued in 'Clues to Testamentary Adoption'. *Epigrafia e ordine senatorio* I (1982) 397ff.

⁸ ILS 1117.

⁹ PIR², F 557, etc. Further, G. Alföldy, *Epigrafia e ordine senatorio* II (1982) 351f.

¹⁰ E. Birley, *Proc.Brit.Ac.* 39 (1953) 201ff.

¹¹ E.g. ILS 1038; 1048; 1052.

c. bruttius l. f. pompeius PRAESENTI L FVLVIO RVS
tico COS. PROCOS. PROU. AFRICAE XV VIR SACR FACIENDIS CVRA
torio OPERUM LOCORVMQVE PVBLICORVM LEG PRO PR
imp. caes. traiani hadriani AVG PROVINCIAE CAPP
5 DOCIAE ITEM LEG PRO PR *imp. caesaris traiani hadriani*
AVG PROVINCIAE MOESIAE *inferioris* LEG PRO PR IMP CAESAR DIVI TRA
IANI AVG PROVINCIAE CILIC CVR *viae* LATINAE LEG LEG VI FERRATAE DONIS MILI
TARIBVS DONATO AB IMP TRAIANO *aug. ob bellum parthicum* PRAET AEDIL PLEB *quaes*
TOR PROVINCIAE HISPANIAE BAETICAE *ulterioris* TRIB LATIC LEG I MINERVIAE DONIS
10 MILITARIBVS DONAT AB IMP AVG OB *bellum germanicum* TRIVMVIRO CAPITALI PATRONO
D d.

bellum Marcomannicum. A consequence ensues, of precious value. The war in question is Domitian's campaign against Suebi (and also Sarmatae) in spring or summer of the year.¹² Praesens took a *vexillatio* of I Minervia to Pannonia.

Military tribune in 88 and 89, Praesens reveals his age, within the limits of about three years. The exact parallel is Julius Maximus, awarded the *dona* for service in V Macedonica, in the Dacian War that terminated in 89.¹³ Four other coevals will be cursorily registered below. For convenience of the exposition it entails no deception to suppose that Praesens saw the light of day in 68. Half way therefore between Pliny, probably born in 62 (since praetor in 93), and Hadrian, born in 76.

V. Next, entry to the Senate. Praesens passed his quaestorship abroad. Not in Asia or Africa, which denoted favour or promise. The province allocated was Baetica. Likewise to Julius Maximus. In which order, who can tell?¹⁴

Baetica offers an engaging perspective. The proconsul for the tenure 92/3 was the infamous Baebius Massa, prosecuted in the late summer of 93 by Pliny and Herennius Senecio. That transaction had sharp and rapid repercussions. It led to the sequence of prosecutions that consigned to death or banishment members of the group that carried on the tradition of Thræsea Paetus: Senecio himself, the son of Helvidius Priscus, the brothers Arulenus Rusticus and Junius Mauricus.

A quaestor stood in an especial relationship towards his proconsul. He might well get involved one way or the other, either through complicity or as a private source of damaging information. For all that, no provincial quaestor happens to be named in any of the cases recounted by Pliny.

Whatever be the date of Praesens' quaestorship, the events of the evil year (savage enmities and a servile Senate) were enough to engender a distaste for public life. More victims accrued, among them the aristocratic Acilius Glabrio; and early in 95 the innocuous consul Flavius Clemens met his end.

¹² Rather than Domitian's campaign of 92.

¹³ ILS 1016 (Nemausus).

¹⁴ Priority for Maximus, with Praesens 'um 95/97', was assumed by G. Alföldy, *Fasti Hispanienses* (1969) 185.

Although *libertas* and *principatus* revived in unwonted alliance with the accession of Nerva (so they said), the *felicitas temporum* betrayed disturbing symptoms. And, although the supersession of Nerva averted civil war and imposed stability, not all senators were in a posture to benefit. Honour and promotion by favour of the deceased tyrant was no bar, it is true.¹⁵ But the new emperor had his own friends and allies — and also his own standards of approbation. Mere wealth or integrity was not enough.

Negative evidence avails. Pliny at once requested admission to the Senate for Voconius Romanus. Ample means commended him, enhanced by *liberalia studia*, by *eximia pietas*.¹⁶ Trajan declined.¹⁷ For one thing, the fellow was too old, with no trace of active merit.

Again, a praetorship for Accius Sura. He was *quietissimus* also endowed with *natalium splendor*, with *summa integritas in paupertate*.¹⁸ No sign that Caesar concurred; and it is not likely that he regarded Bruttius Praesens with indulgence.

VI. Praesens may have remained content with the rank of quaestor.¹⁹ Or he might have reached the aedileship before Domitian's end. However it be, a prolonged spell of retirement ensued, down to 107. Expedient comparison can adduce the progression of four coevals, quaestors under Domitian between 92 and 95.

(1) L. Minicius Natalis (suff. 106). Tribune in VI Victrix in Germania Inferior (perhaps in 88/9). Praetor c. 98, legate to the proconsul of Africa, legate of a legion and decorated in the first war against the Dacians, acceding to the *fasces* after the Numidian command. ILS 1029.

(2) Q. Pompeius Falco (suff. 108). Tribune of the plebs in 97.²⁰ Then after his praetorship legate of V Macedonica in Moesia Inferior, with

¹⁵ Cf. Pliny, disclosed as *praefectus aerarii* (ILS 2927), probably 94—96. He had called a halt in his career, so he alleged (Pan. 95,3).

¹⁶ Epist. 10,4.

¹⁷ As was assumed in Tacitus (1958) 632 and argued in *Historia* 9 (1960) 365f. = *Roman Papers* (1979) 480f. Not all scholars concurred.

¹⁸ Epist. 10,12.

¹⁹ Among the charges against Herennius Senecio was his refusal through long years to advance beyond that rank (Dio 67,13,12).

²⁰ I.e., identical with the Murena of Epist. 9,13,19.

military decorations and consul after governing Lycia-Pamphylia and Judaea. ILS 1035.²¹

(3) L. Catilius Severus (suff. 110). Quaestor in Asia and legate there for two years after his praetorship, he proceeded to the consulate after four more praetorian posts (including the command of XXII Primigenia) by way of the *Aerarium Saturni*. ILS 1041.²²

(4) T. Julius Maximus (suff. 112). After the praetorship he was *iuridicus* in *Tarraconensis*, then legate of I Adiutrix and IV Flavia in succession (both Danubian legions, but he missed military decorations). The governorship of Pannonia Inferior, from 108, secured his consulship. ILS 1016.²³

Sundry contrasts are apparent. For the consulate forty two was the standard age. It might be abridged in this period by as much as four or five years. Thus Natalis and Falco. Natalis, from Barcino, was an adherent (one presumes) of Licinius Sura, who came from the same region. Falco married, or was to marry, Sosia Polla, the daughter of Sosius Senecio (cos. 99, cos. II 107).²⁴ On the other hand, Catilius Severus ran through no fewer than six praetorian posts. His subsequent success is paradoxical, to be explained in part by marriage to an opulent heiress.²⁵ And Julius Maximus had to wait, despite early distinction won when military tribune.

The first three rose to important military commands, although not in near sequence to their consulships. All enjoyed the favour of Hadrian, in the first epoch of his reign. The fourth may well be Maximus the consular general killed by the Parthians in Mesopotamia.²⁶

VII. During the epoch of the Dacian Wars, Bruttius Praesens abode at ease on his estates in Campania and Lucania, close on forty when he received the epistle from Pliny — the first and also the last. Like the

²¹ To hold two praetorian provinces was an anomaly, without parallel for the next fifty years.

²² The second year in Asia is attested by AE 1941, 129: not earlier than 102.

²³ Adding CIL XVI 164, a diploma of 110. For the legionary commands (? 105—108), see *Historia* 14 (1965) 228ff. = *Danubian Papers* (1971) 345ff.

²⁴ His son (cos. 149) was born in 117 (ILS 1106).

²⁵ I.e. the relict of Domitius Tullus. For this conjecture, *Historia* 17 (1968) 95f. = RP (1979) 683.

²⁶ Dio 68,30,2, cf. Fronto (ed. Haines) 2,22; 214.

petitions on behalf of friends, the invitation vouchsafed to Praesens calls for delicate assessment.

On an amiable preconception in might be supposed that the friend made due and prompt response, coming back to Rome and resuming the life of a senator, with a praetorship in near prospect. A different interpretation is on the cards: the bland and astute consular was already aware of Praesens' conversion, and he went on to exploit it. Pliny slipped in an allusion to *amicitiae maiores*. When he wrote he knew that Hadrian, still absent in his brief governorship of Pannonia Inferior, was destined to assume the *fasces* on May 1 of the year 108.

VIII. From the conquest of Dacia to the autumn of 113 when Trajan set out for war again, obscurity envelops the history of government. Of Licinius Sura the last mention among the living belongs to the summer of 108. Sura told Hadrian that Trajan proposed to adopt his kinsman.²⁷ The disclosure, preserved in the *Historia Augusta*, derives ultimately from Hadrian's Autobiography, it is a fair assumption. Like other items from that source, it betrays apologia. Clear enough, to convey the notion that Sura was not a rival but a friend.

Sura had risen to the peak of a third consulship the year before. Not to the liking of two other *bis consules*, namely Julius Servianus, who was the brother-in-law of Hadrian, and Laberius Maximus, who had won great glory in the first war against the Dacians. No military exploit happens to stand to the credit of Sura, that enigmatic character.

Rival ambitions among the marshals defy ascertainment but do not lie beyond surmise. One result is on record. When Trajan died, Laberius Maximus is discovered in exile, relegated to a penal island.²⁸ No certain indication of the nature of his offence, and the date eludes. Nevertheless, perhaps something to do with the elevation of Sura, or with intrigue and discord ensuing upon his decease.²⁹

²⁷ HA, Hadr. 3,10: *ut a Sura adoptandum se a Traiano esse, ab amicis Traiani contemni desiit ac neglegi.*

²⁸ Hadr. 5,5: *qui suspectus imperio in insula exulabat.*

²⁹ As suggested in Tacitus (1958) 231.

IX. The catastrophe of Laberius Maximus had a minor and paradoxical consequence. In 107 the wife of Praesens was Campanian, as Pliny states.³⁰ An inscription emerging at Trebula Mutuesca in the Sabine country revealed Laberia Hostilia Crispina, daughter of the *bis consul* M. Laberius Maximus.³¹ Now Laberius came from Lanuvium, in old Latium.³² Hence a second marriage for Bruttius Praesens.³³ From it issued his son, the consul of 153, born in the vicinity of 120.

The Campanian spouse may have passed away not long after her attestation in the Plinian epistle. Warfare brings pestilence in its wake. Much illness is on record in those years, and several deaths might be suspected in addition to that of Licinius Sura.³⁴ The Emperor himself reached fifty five in September of 108, and many consulars perished in their middle fifties, a fact not alien to political calculations.

Even if the banishment of Laberius Maximus did not occur until several years elapsed, a fact stands.³⁵ When taking a new wife, Praesens showed compassion towards the daughter of an exile — and he annexed an heiress endowed with vast possessions.

X. Despite the Transpadane link through his mother, Praesens is hardly to be numbered in the 'Plinian circle' (one letter only). The origin of his attachment to Hadrian evades precision. It may go back to the late Domitianic years when Hadrian, after a visit to Baetica (in

³⁰ Epist. 7,3,1. Matrimony about twenty two is normal in the upper order. Hence, given the facts of mortality, the chance of an earlier wife.

³¹ M. Torelli, *Epigraphica* 24 (1964) 55ff., whence *AE* 1964, 106. By her full style Laberia Marcia Hostilia Crispina Moecia Cornelia, cf. *CIL* VIII 110 (Capsa), with the first name corrected.

³² L. Laberius Maximus, patently the grandfather, was aedile there in 43 (*ILS* 6194). For an earlier Laberius with the tribe *Maecia*, L. R. Taylor, *The Voting Districts of the Roman Republic* (1960) 223.

³³ As assumed in *Latomus* 23 (1964) 756 = *Danubian Papers* (1971) 950. Not suspected by Torelli, who in consequence took the Laberii for Campanian (o.c. 65).

³⁴ *Some Arval Brethren* (1980) 22.

³⁵ For Torelli, Laberius was banished between 114 and 117 (o.c. 64), cf. *PIR*², L 9: 'fortasse non ante annum 113'. The present reconstruction is avowedly conjectural.

90), entered on public life with a post in the vigintivirate. He was also *praefectus urbi* (? in 94), while the consuls were absent celebrating the Latin Games on the Alban Mount.³⁶ That distinction, most abnormal for a *novus homo*, illustrates the potent influence of Ulpian Traianus (cos. 91).

Hadrian in sequel to his consulship occupied a dubious position in Roman society: next of kin to Caesar and the husband of his grand-niece, but not advertised as a crown prince, and not lacking enemies. He would set store by confidence and comfort emanating from a good friend half a dozen years his senior. In 112/3 Hadrian held the archontate at Athens, no doubt a welcome relief from Rome.³⁷ If not then with him, Praesens joined Hadrian who went on the eastern expedition as legate to the Emperor.³⁸

XI. In command of the legion VI Ferrata, Bruttius Praesens took part in the occupation of Armenia, in 114. A fragment of Arrian's Parthica now comes in. A Roman general called 'Brutius' got into severe straits: snow sixteen feet deep. He turned for help to native guides, who provided snow shoes, and the passage was achieved.³⁹

For the region and for the occasion, a passage in Strabo is decisive. He describes the snow shoes and the sleds on constant use both in Atropatene and in Armenia, on Mount Masius.⁴⁰ The ambiguity in the geographer's application of the term 'Masius' (the Armenian word for 'mountain') has not always been discerned, let alone allowed for. In two other places he means the Tur Abdin, the low range that extends between the upper valley of the Tigris and the Mesopotamian plain.⁴¹ In the fourth instance, however, Masius is the Armenian Taurus, running eastwards towards Lake Van and in some places over eleven thousand feet.⁴²

³⁶ Not in the HA. Supplied by ILS 308 (Athens).

³⁷ PIR², A 134. Not in absence, it is here assumed.

³⁸ HA, Hadr. 4,1 (noting five of Hadrian's friends in this season).

³⁹ Arrian, Parthica, fr. 85 Roos, cf. PIR², B 164.

⁴⁰ Strabo 11, p. 506. Adduced in Historia 17 (1969) 352 = RP (1979) 774.

⁴¹ Strabo 11,522; 16,747.

⁴² Strabo 11,527. Only two of the four references were registered by Weissbach, RE XIV, 2068f. (viz. 11,506 and 527).

Praesens, it follows was conducting his legion southwards across the high Taurus in the winter of 114/5. His goal was Tigranocerta, situated in the Tigris valley a little to the north of the river.⁴³

XII. The legate received the appropriate decorations, *bello Parthico*. But not perhaps until an interval had elapsed. His next post on record is the charge of an Italian road: the Via Latina, of minor value in a senator's career and normally falling soon after a praetorship.⁴⁴ Curiosity arises and impinges. At first sight, why not demotion? Trajan conceived anger because one of his legions had been brought into dire peril; and discord might be suspected in the high command. Yet, for all that can be known, the fault resided in instructions from the impatient Emperor himself. At a late stage he threw cavalry against Hatra, a strong fortress in the desert, so it was asserted.⁴⁵

A gentler explanation will not be deprecated. An inferior road like the Latina is a sinecure, with nominal duties. If Praesens in fact went back to Italy, the post, while perhaps covering or indicating a lapse from favour, could be regarded as a form of paid leave, offering recuperation from the hardships of snow and ice.⁴⁶

Not but that the other version attracts. Praesens was denied occupation in the subsequent campaigns: in the conquest of Mesopotamia and in the suppression of revolts. Other generals won startling promotions. Thus Terentius Gentianus, with the sole rank of *legatus Augusti* after his praetorship, but consul in the summer of 116, when not yet thirty;⁴⁷

⁴³ For the situation, 'Tigranocerta. A Problem Misconceived', in *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia* (ed. S. Mitchell, 1983) 61ff. Following Sachau a century ago, Tigranocerta was put at Tell Ermen, a low mound on the Mesopotamian plain, by A. Dilleman. *La Haute Mésopotamie orientale et les pays adjacents* (1962) 252ff., etc. (cf. the map facing p. 269); F. Lasserre, *Strabon, Tome VIII* (Budé, 1975) 237.

⁴⁴ Thus Vitorius Marcellus (*Stadius, Silvae* 4,4,60) and Pompeius Macrinus (IG V.2 151). The earliest instances on register.

⁴⁵ Dio 78,31,3.

⁴⁶ Cf. Tacitus (1958) 242.

⁴⁷ ILS 1046.

and Lusius Quietus, Moorish chieftain and commander of native cavalry, was shoved into a consulship in 117.⁴⁸

XIII. Then another surprise. Praesens emerges as governor of Cilicia, which, although not in the first rank of the praetorian provinces, normally foretold a consulship. He was in office when Trajan, on the way back to celebrate a Parthian triumph, ended his days at Selinus in August of 117, not without the suspicion that he was no longer among the living when he adopted Hadrian. The despatch to the Senate bore the signature of Plotina, according to Cassius Dio, who felt no doubt about the facts — since apprised by his father, legate of Cilicia some sixty years later.⁴⁹ Whatever be thought of Dio's testimony, it does not pass belief that a resolute and sagacious woman, aided by the Prefect of the Guard, took the necessary measures entailed by the Emperor's decease.

The new ruler departed to winter at Nicomedia or Byzantium, visited the Danube armies, and reached Rome in July of the next year. He took the friend with him, so it may be assumed without discomfort, and he had in mind a speedy consulship. For that office discretion enjoins either 118 or 119. Nothing precludes the second half of 118.

In that season a successful *novus homo* commonly found admission to one of the four superior priesthoods. Bruttius Praesens became one of the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, a college congenial to senators who excelled in liberal studies.

XIV. Hadrian confronted manifold embarrassments. Men of sober judgment might condone the dubious adoption, but it would take time for the truth to percolate about Trajan's ostensible conquests, now renounced. Something worse had supervened, not comparable for odium. During his absence the Senate voted (or rather approved) the execution of four men of consular rank, marshals of his predecessor, on charges of treason.⁵⁰ This joint conspiracy was implausible, on more counts than one. A surmise insinuates that Hadrian's agents at the capital had been hasty and incompetent, notably Acilius Attianus the commander of the Guard.⁵¹

⁴⁸ PIR², L 439.

⁴⁹ Dio 69,1,3f.

⁵⁰ For their identity, *Athenaeum* 62 (1984) 33ff.

⁵¹ Blamed by Hadrian, and (in 119) demoted (HA, Hadr. 9.3ff.).

Hadrian stood in sore need for support. The *consules ordinarii* in the first years publish some of his personal allies. In 118 to share the *fasces* he selected Pedanius Fuscus, the husband of his niece Julia (daughter of Julius Servianus), in 119 Dasumius Rusticus. In 120 Catilius Severus (cos. II) had for colleague Aurelius Fulvus; and in 121 Annius Verus was likewise consul for the second time. More to the point, the ruler had to find consular legates for ten military provinces. In so far as discoverable, the list conveys instruction. Two names can be singled out for contrast. First, Ummidius Quadratus (suff. 118), attested as governor of Moesia Inferior already in 120.⁵² Perhaps there a year or so earlier.⁵³ Second, Platorius Nepos. After governing Thrace he held the *fasces* as the first consul suffect of 119. He proceeded thence to Germania Inferior.⁵⁴

Ummidius was a young aristocrat, close coeval to Pedanius Fuscus (cos. 118) and to Aurelius Fulvus, the third of that name (cos. 120), to neither of whom fell an armed province. Platorius was a *novus homo*: from Baetica, and perhaps from Italica, the *patria* of Hadrian.⁵⁵

XV. Praesens (suff. ?118) did not go out at once to one of those commands. The ruler valued his presence. That is demonstrated beyond doubt when the correct order of his consular posts is discerned and conceded. The inscription at Mactar (confirmed by Lepcis) is tripartite. First, the name of Praesens and his titles (viz. consulate, proconsulate of Africa, priesthood). Second, three consular posts bunched together. Third, Cilicia and the rest of career, in descending order.

Praesens was *curator operum publicorum*, legate of Cappadocia, legate of Moesia Inferior. The word *item* linking the two provincial posts establishes their order in time.⁵⁶ A close parallel avails in a later cursus inscription.⁵⁷ No call therefore to adduce a plain fact: two legions in Cappadocia, three in Moesia Inferior.

⁵² Proved identical with the governor *Se]rtorius* by the new fragment at Tomis (AE 1977, 745). See further HSCP 82 (1979) 290f. = RP III (1984) 1161f.

⁵³ From 118, cf. W. Eck, *Chiron* 13 (1983) 150.

⁵⁴ ILS 1052. Perhaps consul in absence, like Terentius Gentianus (116) and Lusius Quietus (117).

⁵⁵ A. R. Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (1981) 101.

⁵⁶ *Historia* 9 (1960) 375 = RP (1979) 490.

⁵⁷ ILS 1081.

By mishap, an authoritative study postulated the reverse order, with Moesia Inferior held by Praesens from 122 to 125, Cappadocia from 127 to 130.⁵⁸

The *cura operum publicorum* repays brief scrutiny. Previous known evidence showed the post at varying stages in a consular career, sometimes quite late. After Praesens the next occupant, viz. Metilius Secundus (suff. 123) had it before his province.⁵⁹ The same holds for Praesens.⁶⁰ The duration of tenure is nowhere specified. A biennium appears reasonable.

Before long, the post is on attestation as collegiate. For the first time in 128. The function was neither exacting nor mysterious. As in other ages, members of the upper order prefer titles to work. In this instance Caesar's indulgence provides a spell at home for ex-consuls destined for a command abroad.

XVI. Next, Cappadocia. Hadrian departed in the early summer of 121, on his journey to the western provinces. It was interrupted in 123 by trouble with the Parthian monarch, and an interview took place on the Euphrates. Praesens can be assigned Cappadocia from 121 to 124.⁶¹ His diplomatic talents may have played a role.

After that, Moesia Inferior: probably from 124 until 128, when he was succeeded by Sex. Julius Severus (suff. 128), Hadrian's best general (so Dio avers) in the progression that led to Britannia, Syria Palaestina, Syria.⁶²

Finally, unlike some of the *viri militares*, Bruttius Praesens benefited from the sortition for a proconsulate in Asia or Africa. It awarded him Africa, about the year 133.⁶³

⁵⁸ Thus Picard and Pflaum, *Karthago II* (1951) 67.

⁵⁹ For holders in this period, ZPE 56 (1984) 183.

⁶⁰ By aberration Praesens was put 'suff. um 121', and curator after the provincial governorship by R. Hanslik, *RE Supp. XII* (1970) 133. See now W. Eck, *Supp. XIV* (1974) 77. B. E. Thomasson also assumed that order, *Senatores Procuratoresque Romani Nonnulli* (1975) 22.

⁶¹ W. Eck, *Chiron* 13 (1983) 217.

⁶² Dio 69,13,2; ILS 1056.

⁶³ The year depends on that of his consulship, and on the conjectured governorship of Ummidius Quadratus (suff. 118), cf. ZPE 37 (1980) 10 = RP III (1984) 1309.

So far the facts rendered by Mactar and Lepcis. Another piece of evidence accrued some time previously. A fragment at Palmyra, dated to April of 138, registers the names of three consulars: an *Ignotus*, Bruttius Praesens, Julius Maior.⁶⁴ Hence the inference that Praesens had a short spell as governor of Syria about the year 136.⁶⁵ In support, the son of Praesens (suff. 153) served as tribune in III Gallica, a legion of Syria.⁶⁶

None the less, dissent emerged: the consulars in question were members of a special commission. A parallel was not easy to find, and dissent now abates.⁶⁷

Hadrian sent Praesens to Syria for a brief tenure. Contention had arisen with the Arsacid, who after the incursion of the Alani raised complaint about Pharasmanes, the Roman vassal ruling Iberia and master of the pass through Caucasus; and relations were still disturbed when Pius came to the throne.⁶⁸ Praesens, so it is conjectured, was chosen because Julius Severus, passing to Syria after subduing the insurrection in Palestine, succumbed not long after.⁶⁹

Anomalous for a proconsul of Asia or Africa, Syria was not the end, and not the climax. Bruttius Praesens opened the year 139 as colleague to Antoninus Pius. He might have been designated from gratitude by Hadrian before his decease in July of the previous year. Better, chosen by the successor, and perhaps in substitution for somebody else.

A more precise explanation is to hand, namely the city prefecture.⁷⁰ In the last months Hadrian took offence at the pretensions of Catilius Severus (cos. II 120), and dismissed him, appointing Scipio Salvidienus Orfitus (cos. 110).⁷¹ Pius at once dropped Orfitus: he went out on his own request or petition, such was the expedient formula.⁷² With the eminent office normally accorded a second consulship. Therefore Praesens

⁶⁴ AE 1938, 137.

⁶⁵ *Historia* 9 (1960) 375 = RP (1979) 491. And elsewhere.

⁶⁶ ILS 1117.

⁶⁷ W. Eck, *Chiron* 13 (1983) 179, cf. 228 (with a query).

⁶⁸ Dio 69,25,2; HA, Pius 9,1; ILS 1076.

⁶⁹ HSCP 86 (1982) 205; *Romanitas—Christianitas* (Festschrift Straub, 1982) 239.

⁷⁰ *Historia* 9 (1960) 375 = RP (1979) 491.

⁷¹ HA, Hadr. 24,6ff.

⁷² HA, Pius 8,6.

as successor to Orfitus, before the latter could annex that distinction. The conjecture is painless.⁷³

Prefects of the city often lasted until life's end. On Praesens followed Erucius Clarus (suff. 117), dying in office when consul for the second time in 146. He belongs to the rubric of Praesens on other counts. Through Pliny's suffrage Erucius had entered the Senate as quaestor (probably in 99) but the patron was moved to voice doubts about his prospects for the tribunate of the plebs.⁷⁴ Nothing more in the correspondence. Erucius turns up as a general in Mesopotamia, recapturing the city of Nisibis, hence his consulship.⁷⁵

XVII. The septuagenarian consular lasted into the reign of Pius, but only for two years. The son whom Laberia bore him has already been referred to, a *polyonymus* carrying about ten *gentilicia* (ILS 1117). Marcus Aurelius selected the grand-daughter Crispina as bride for Commodus, and the name of the Bruttii endured into the fourth century. Estates in various regions of Italy document the opulence of the family, which does not need to be specified in this place.⁷⁶

More attractive, success against long odds, and sundry vicissitudes in the career of a senator without ancestors. Like an emperor whom men and the stars failed to predict, Bruttius Praesens exhibits the *ludibria rerum mortalium cunctis in negotiis*.⁷⁷

It was the habit of elderly senators to call up *vetera et praesentia* for comparison, especially at obsequies of the Caesars. The *prudentes* would be alert to assess the laudation on Hadrianus Augustus, what the orator said and what he covered up; their comments would fix on the *primum facinus* of the reign, namely the affair of the Four Consulars; and they would expatiate on the recent enormity, old Servianus brought to ruin along with the son of Pedanius and Julia when the autocrat turned against his kinsfolk and adopted Ceionius Commodus.

⁷³ Supported by L. Vidman, *Fasti Ostienses* (ed. 2, 1982) 123.

⁷⁴ Pliny, *Epist.* 2,9.

⁷⁵ Dio 68,30,2.

⁷⁶ PIR², B 164.

⁷⁷ Tacitus, *Ann.* 3,18,4.

Garnering variegated experiences since the last years of Domitian, Praesens might have been drawn to the composition of history. However, recent transactions, apart from discomfort or even danger, lacked appeal for other reasons. When Cornelius Tacitus, paying due homage to the present happy dispensation, announced that he reserved Nerva and Trajan for later treatment if life permitted, he was aware of a theme not congruous with his manner and talents.

The achievement of Tacitus declared the death warrant of annalistic history in the literature of the Latins. Biography was the fashion henceforth.

Suetonius in his account of Domitian's reign had been variously inadequate. For example, no express emphasis on the year 93 with its fateful sequence of prosecutions for treason. The biographer was not a senator, and he invited supplementation.

Hadrian towards the end composed his Autobiography. Four fragments are transmitted in the *Historia Augusta*. Two of them betray malice or apologia.⁷⁸ More can be divined.⁷⁹ The product would in any case provoke dissent in the upper order — if not a refutation either explicit or veiled, blending perhaps some depreciation of Trajan with a defence of Hadrian's foreign policy.

XVIII. In fact, a writer called Bruttius stands on named attestation. The notice possesses unique value among the 'scanty and suspicious materials of ecclesiastical history'.⁸⁰ Eusebius in the *History* reported a persecution in the fifteenth year of Domitian: pagan historians knew the time and registered it with accuracy.⁸¹ He was referring to the banishment of Domitilla, the wife of Flavius Clemens (she a niece of the Emperor, Clemens the son of a first cousin).⁸²

In his *Chronicle* Eusebius supplied the name of Bruttius, which Jerome

⁷⁸ Hadr. 3,2; 7,1f.

⁷⁹ E.g. the revelation made in 108 by Licinius Sura (3,10, cf. above).

⁸⁰ A phrase taken from Edward Gibbon.

⁸¹ Eusebius, *Hist.eccl.* 3,18.

⁸² For the Flavian stemma, G. B. Townend, *JRS* 51 (1961) 62.

reproduces.⁸³ Suetonius on Clemens styled him *contemptissimae inertiae*.⁸⁴ In the account of Dio, both Clemens and his wife are incriminated for 'atheism'; and others suffered condemnation who had lapsed into the Jewish way of life.⁸⁵ This is no place to discuss, let alone to define, their habits or creed.⁸⁶ Let it suffice to adduce these transactions among the reasons that confirmed in Bruttius Praesens a strong distaste for the senatorial existence.

Nothing impedes a further step, to acclaim the *praefectus urbi* as an author, for all that some have been disposed to scout Bruttius as a *pia fraus* created by Eusebius.⁸⁷ If an author, of what type? Complications arise. In Malalas a writer is cited, 'Buttios' or 'Botos', as a historian and chronographer: three times, for the legend of Danae and the conquests of Alexander as well as the exile of Domitilla.⁸⁸

Compilation of the kind thus indicated is a credible pastime for an elderly senator of erudite habits. Nevertheless, Bruttius Praesens might have composed history, perhaps memoirs, perhaps in Greek.⁸⁹ Yet it is not safe or legitimate to adduce the passage across the Armenian Taurus, as related in the Parthica of Arrian. Verbal information is not excluded, or Arrian's own presence during the campaigns.



Praesens as an author, this enquiry might find its suitable termination. The long career furnished instruction enough. Yet something remains to be said about personality and beliefs.

⁸³ Jerome, Chron. p. 192 H, cf. PIR², B 159, where the other authors in the Eusebian tradition are cited, viz. Syncellus, the Chronicum Paschale, Malalas.

⁸⁴ Suetonius, Dom. 15,1.

⁸⁵ Dio 67,14,2f.

⁸⁶ Jewish in the estimate of H. Solin, ANRW II.29 (1983) 661.

⁸⁷ Under 'Bruttius' the testimonia were printed (including the passages from Malalas) in H. Peter, HRF (1883) 375ff. But Peter in the sequel rejected him utterly, cf. HRR 2 (1906) CCVIIIff. Some sceptical scholars eagerly concurred. Thus E. T. Merrill, Essays in Early Christian History (1924) 164ff.

⁸⁸ Malalas, ed Dindorf, pp. 34; 193; 262. For the third item (with Βώπτιος), see Schenk v. Stauffenberg, Die r. Kaisergeschichte bei Malalas (1931) 237f.

⁸⁹ It might be a question whether Hadrian wrote his Autobiography in Greek. It was assumed Latin by H. Bardon, Les Empereurs et les Lettres Latines (1940) 412.

XIX. In the Second Century, sporadic evidence brings Epicureans into close proximity with Christians. Atheists both, so Alexander, the false prophet declared.⁹⁰ The features they exhibited in common are numerous enough. Both denied the gods, divination, the science of the Chaldaeans; and both asserted freedom of the will, the primacy of friendship, community of living, the practice of charity. Finally, they rejected distinctions of birth, wealth, or rank.

By their choice of life, the followers of Epicurus tend to escape notice in their own time; and they often fail to elicit response from later ages. That Bruttius Praesens adhered to that persuasion, the language of the Plinian epistle testifies beyond doubt or cavil.⁹¹

Other friends confirm. When Calestrius Tiro, inactive since his praetorship (in 93), was appointed proconsul of Baetica in 107, Pliny was on the alert. He warned Tiro to be careful in the selection of friends during his mandate, citing a pertinent example on recent notoriety (6,22). When governor, Tiro came in for explicit admonishment. He exhibits *humanitas* in dealing with provincials, but the *praecipua pars* of that virtue is *honestissimum quemque complecti*. Tiro must pay due respect to the *discrimina ordinum dignitatumque* (9,5).

Voconius Romanus conveys sharp relevance, not stirring for long years from his comfortable existence at Saguntum beside the sea. Pliny undertook to transmit a letter from Voconius to Plotina (9,28,1). With the Augusta (her solitary mention in the collection), all is clear. She was patroness of the school at Athens.⁹²

The beliefs of Hadrian are a notorious subject of disquisition, not to say divagation. Inadequate attention was accorded to a passage in the *Historia Augusta*, deriving, so it can be contended, from the basic and sober source: *in summa familiaritate Epictetum et Heliodorum philosophos ... habuit*.⁹³

Epictetus we knew, of the Stoic profession, but with marked leanings

⁹⁰ Lucian, *Alex.* 25.

⁹¹ *Epist.* 7,3. Not only *amicitiae* but *voluptates istae* and *iucundissimum genus vitae*. Quoted and emphasized in *Historia* 17 (1969) 352 = *RP* (1979) 774.

⁹² *ILS* 7784; *SIG*³, 834.

⁹³ *Hadr.* 16,10.

towards the Cynics in his hostility against rank and class.⁹⁴ The other man is Avidius Heliodorus, secretary to Hadrian and rising to the prefecture of Egypt before the reign ended.⁹⁵ The two names combine usefully.⁹⁶

Arrian, who had heard at Nicopolis the lectures, or rather dialogues, of Epictetus, compiled in old age his notes or reminiscences. His other writings betray no vestiges of the doctrine. Congenial on so many counts to Hadrian, Arrian might be esteemed the special friend. That label attaches rather to Bruttius Praesens — if not to Plotina.

⁹⁴ F. Millar, *JRS* 55 (1965) 141ff.

⁹⁵ *PIR*², A 1405+H 51.

⁹⁶ See further 'Hadrian as Philhellene. Neglected Aspects', *HAC* 1982 (1984), not yet published.