

Chapter VII

VARIOUS MATTERS OF BUSINESS
AND ADMINISTRATION

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

WITH the Jews the most ordinary unit of weight was the *shekel*. We have no record of its exact size before the period of the Maccabees, but at that time the Jewish shekel amounted to 218 grains, and the Phoenician shekel to about 224. Smaller weights were the *beka* or half-shekel, and the *gerah*, which was one-twentieth of the shekel, and the principal larger weights were the *menah*, which may have been anything from 50 to 100 shekels, and the *kikkar*, which weighed 3000 shekels. The Phoenician equivalent of the latter weighed about 96 lb., and when we read of a crown weighing as much as this, we must realise that the article in question was not worn by a human being, but by an idol in the form of a man, and was, therefore, of colossal size. *Kikkar* is translated 'talent' in the English Bible, but we must remember that the *talentum* (Greek *talanton*) varied in size, the Attic being about 57 lb. in weight.¹ The word *menah* or *mna* passed from the Phoenicians to the Greeks, who called it *mana*, and thence to the Italians, who pronounced it *mina*. This is the 'pound' of the New Testament. The Greek *mana* varied a good deal in different

¹ The Jewish *talanton* was very large and heavy, more like a cannon-ball or a kerbstone (there were perhaps two shapes) and its estimated weight was about 40 kilograms. It is hardly surprising that a lazy person might prefer to bury it, or pack it up and put it away. The *mna* was a very large flat coin, perhaps six inches in diameter, and also inconveniently bulky.

places and in different places. The Romans from the earliest times used the copper *libra* or pound both for money and for weight. It appears that pieces of copper were cast in Italy of the weight of a pound and of its various fractions, and although the standard of Roman coinage fell rapidly, the weight continued unchanged, and the Roman *libra* as a weight was exactly the same under the Emperor Constantine the Great as it was in the time of Christ; indeed it has been said that the dominion of the *libra* as weight was as durable and extensive as the dominion of Rome herself. This must have been of great advantage in every province of the Empire.

The measures of volume vary, of course, in name as between Palestine and the other parts of the Empire. Thus, the *ephah*, which is said by Ezekiel to have been equal to the *bath* in volume, seems to be the same as the Greek *batos* mentioned in Luke 16⁶, and the *seah* and the *kor* seem to be the same as the New Testament *ston* and *koras*. The *seah* was about one-third of an *ephah*, and the *kor* contained ten *ephahs*. The *seah* and *ephah* were usually employed in measuring dry substances, but the *bath*, and its smaller units the *hin* and *log*, were fluid measures. To get the whole of the equivalents right we must consider that the *log* was very nearly an English pint, that the *hin* contained twelve *logs* and the *bath* six *hins*, or about eight and a quarter gallons. The *seah* was nearly one and a half *logs*, and the *ephah* was three times this volume. The *kor* contained ten *ephahs*. Other measures were the Latin *modius*, which was correctly a vessel containing two gallons, and usually translated 'bushel' in the New Testament. This *modius* was the standard measure used for corn rations. Then there was the *metreta*, which is translated 'firkin' in John⁶, and which was

a jar containing nine gallons. The water pots at Cana, therefore, contained anything from eighteen to twenty-seven gallons apiece. The *choenix* held about a quart, and since a labourer could be hired for a denarius a day, we can judge that the statement that he could get one *choenix* of wheat or three of barley for one denarius indicates that his daily corn ration was a quart of wheat or three quarts of barley.

Weights and measures had to be of the correct standard, and were stamped with the name of the controller who passed them for use. Thus, we find at Jerusalem a lead weight in the museum inscribed:

ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟ(Υ)C ΑΓΟΡΑΝΟΜΘΥΝΤΟC
 'while Agathocles was Controller of weights and measures' (72),

and another inscribed:

ΤΙΜΙΝΝΙΟC ΚΡΗΤΙΚΟC
 'Timinnios the Cretan';

another inscription runs '(made) in the year when Euphemius was magistrate and Apollonius controller of the market'.

RATIONING AND FOOD-CONTROL

When Paul went to Rome, would it have been necessary for him to have the equivalent of a ration card or identity card? This question is by no means an extravagant or foolish one. From the earliest times it was considered the duty of the Roman government to secure the supply of cereals for the population. In times of scarcity the State went in for bulk-buying, and then re-sold to the citizens through the corn market (to which it guaranteed supplies) at a moderate price. The

market was under the control of an officer of State called an aedile. With the decline of agriculture in Italy, and the increase of the urban population, the government had to buy more and more, and since the price went up, it soon became impossible for the poorer citizens to purchase at the ordinary retail price fixed by the State. At first this difficulty was met by the generosity of rich private citizens, but from 123 B.C. onwards there was a regulation made by which every citizen was entitled to a certain ration of wheat per month, probably five modii, about ten gallons English, at a little over half the market price, the difference being made up out of the treasury. This, as we can see, was virtually the same as the modern food subsidy, and the ration was granted to fathers of families as such, and not confined to the poor, but was a basic ration to which any male married person was entitled, whatever his income. Each citizen had, however, to apply for his ration in person, and snobbery would thus deter a good many people from presenting themselves at the local food-office! Various modifications were made in this law from time to time, and at one period it was temporarily suspended, but it was soon restored, as the suspension was most unpopular. From the time of Julius Caesar onward the further step was taken of supplying corn *free* to all citizens, a very socialistic step, comparable to the modern supply of free milk in schools, or of free education. It was said that this free ration of corn cost the State one-fifth of its revenue (perhaps £700,000 a year) and, of course, this had to be made up out of the taxes in the usual manner. It can well be seen how easily such a system was open to abuse. The first thing, therefore, that Julius Caesar had to order was a list to be made of all the persons in Rome who would be entitled to this free ration, and to

exclude from it all who could not prove their Roman citizenship, and the chief reason for this was that during the civil wars a large number of aliens who possessed no claim to the Roman franchise had settled inside the city boundaries in order to get the benefit of the ration. The number had grown to 320,000, and it was now reduced to 150,000. But even of these, only the really destitute were allowed it free. There was, in effect, a means test, and the indigent had to have special tickets, others having only an ordinary ration ticket entitling them to buy at the controlled price. This prudent regulation was discontinued soon after the death of Julius Caesar, and Augustus doubled the number of free tickets for a time, but later cut it down once more, and even thought seriously about abolishing the free list altogether, in the interests of Italian agriculture. In the end he kept it on, and even made the whole distribution free during times of famine. After that, the only variation made by the Emperors was as to the controlled price at which the corn should be sold to those not entitled to the free ration. Later still each citizen entitled to a corn ration was given a permanent ration ticket or *tessara*, which he could even sell, or bequeath by will, and the ration once more became free to all, without any means test. Thus, we see that when Paul came to Rome he would have had to supply evidence of his citizenship in order to get any corn, except, perhaps, in the black market. He would thus have had to produce some sort of certificate or identity card (issued to him, perhaps, originally at Tarsus), on showing which at the local food-office he would have been given a *tessara*, unless, of course, being a State prisoner, he was supplied direct with a prison ration. It will, however, be recalled that during part of the time in which he lived in Rome, he did so in his

own hired house, and in this case he must surely have applied for a *tessara*. It seems hardly likely that so good a business man as a Jew usually was would have bought his corn for more than the controlled price, if he could have avoided doing so.

We also note that a Roman Jew got extra rations of grain and oil on a Friday, to avoid complications over the Sabbath, and that since some Jews objected to receiving Gentile oil, they were allowed to claim the equivalent of the oil-ration in cash.

TIMES AND SEASONS

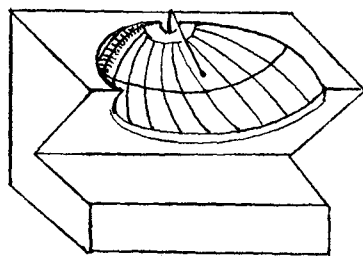
Reckoning of time is one of the things in which the first century differs from our own, and here also there was a difference between East and West. In Palestine the Orientals as distinct from the Romans reckoned each day as beginning at sunset, and continuing until the next sunset. (Hence the phrase in Genesis—The evening and the morning were one day.) This is still the practice among most Syrians who are not westernised, so that if you are told that you are invited to a meeting on a Tuesday in the evening, you must be careful not to arrive on Tuesday, but on Monday evening. This accounts also for the fact that the Jewish Sabbath was always reckoned as beginning on the Friday at sunset, and ending on Saturday at sunset. The day itself, from sunrise to sunset, was divided into twelve hours of daylight, the first of these beginning at sunrise. This did not mean that the hours were, as with us, of the same length all the year round. Indeed, it would not have been possible to compute them as containing sixty minutes in winter, for the hours in fact changed in length every day, and there was no constant or fixed duration for each of the twelve divisions. Noon was the sixth hour, not, as with us, the twelfth hour, and if a

boy had to be in school at nine, he would have said that school began at the third hour. The night was divided into three watches by Jews, but the Romans divided it into four, evening, midnight, cock-crowing and early morn, but the Jews also used the expression 'cock-crowing' and there was a special benediction or prayer to be said at it. The Romans also had a variation as between summer and winter in the length of the days, yet did not reckon the day from sunset, but from dawn, so that their way of speaking was different from that of the Jews, and it has sometimes been held that in the Fourth Gospel the days are reckoned in the Roman way, whereas in the other gospels they are reckoned after the Jewish manner.

The division of an hour into minutes and seconds goes back to Babylonian times, and passed on westward from Mesopotamia, and it was certainly known to the Jews. Nevertheless it is extremely unlikely that the bulk of the population of any Mediterranean country during the first century had any accurate ways of measuring the time in small units. In this respect their world differed greatly from ours. No transport timetables, calculating arrivals and departures in minutes, was in circulation, and nobody could make precise appointments with doctors or dentists. It must have been very inconvenient for busy people, but no doubt life went on in a much more leisurely fashion than in our day, and if you had a business interview in prospect with a great man, instead of being told to arrive at 9.10 or 11.20, you turned up with a crowd of clients and just waited your turn. It was only wealthy persons who could afford mechanical clocks as private possessions. Other folks merely knew of the smaller divisions of time when they lived near some time-telling instrument.

Now what devices were there for telling the time? The clock with wheels is of course a much later invention, probably medieval, but the *solarium* or sundial and the water-clock were both in use in the first century. Dials seem to have been invented in Mesopotamia, and may well be very ancient, and there is clear mention of one in 2 Kings 16¹⁰, while Herodotus definitely asserts that the Babylonians not only invented the concave dial and also the ordinary sundial, but also introduced the division of the day into twelve hours. But we do not really know the shape of the dial referred to in 2 Kings. Under the circumstances it seems likely that if any time-measuring devices existed in Palestine they were most likely to have been the sort of dials known as gnomons. On the other hand the Greeks seem to have invented the water-clock, in which time was reckoned by the level of a liquid in a bowl, down the side of which were marked divisions. The water was released a drip at a time in the same way as sand from an hour-glass, and indeed on the same principle. Wealthy Jews might have bought and used such instruments, and Romans certainly used them. There would very likely have been one in Pontius Pilate's house, and in the house of the Roman governor at Caesarea. The Romans began by using the sun-dial or *solarium*, a specimen of which was introduced at Rome twelve years before the war with Pyrrhus (i.e. about 290 B.C.), but since this was no use on overcast days, one of the Scipios had a water-clock erected in a public place in 159 B.C., and this indicated the hours of both day and night, and was probably made on a large scale. Nevertheless, since these *clepsydrae* (as they were called) soon got out of order, the *solarium* still continued to be the commonest form of time-keeper, and Augustus had a magnificent

one erected in the Campus Martius, which must have been there when Paul visited Rome. *Clepsydrae*, however, were used in military camps to measure accurately the night and day watches, since no one could rely upon sunshine for these, and *clepsydrae* were also used in law-courts to regulate the length of counsel's speeches, since there was a regular limit to the time allowed for the prosecuting counsel (two hours) and for the defending counsel (three hours). In one exceptional case, however, the prosecution was allowed



76 Roman horologium

six, and the defence nine hours. Pliny in one of his letters says he was allowed to address the bench for five hours! We don't know whether *clepsydrae* were used in the trials of Christ or Paul, but there are signs that in the trials of the latter long speeches were permitted, and it is fair to assume that they were timed in this way.

The most elaborate water-clock of which we have any record was one invented by a certain mathematician at Alexandria in 135 B.C. It could hardly have been used except by very wealthy persons, but rich Jews could have afforded one. In this case the water was made to drip upon wheels which were thereby turned, just as in the case of an overshot mill-wheel, of

which it was a miniature form. The movement of the wheels elevated a tiny statue holding a rod which pointed to the hours marked on a pillar, and it was capable of doing this for all periods of the year, but it was said that it needed frequent attention and regulating, and was much too complicated to be in general use. Public *horologiums* (76), as they were called, seem to have been provided for the benefit of those who had no clocks of their own, but only in larger centres of population. At Athens are to be seen the ruins of one large *horologium* which combined an elaborate *clepsydra* with a number of sun-dials.

Whether you were a Jew or a Gentile, you had in any case a calendar, and this was naturally based upon the monthly phases of the moon, so that the year with its four seasons was almost inevitably divided into months. But whereas with the Jews there was also the week, which they had inherited from the Babylonians, together with its seventh day as a Sabbath, with the Romans the division of the month was more a matter of days, so that on the one hand you had certain special days in each month marked out by a name, the *kalends*, the *ides* and the *nones*, all indicating some phase of the moon, while the rest of the month was described in relation to these, so that you had 'the day before the *ides*', or 'the second day after the *kalends*', and so on: and then on the other hand you had the division of each month into (i) days which were sacred to some divinity, and on which work must not be done, and (ii) days which were secular, and devoted to human business. The Roman year had 355 days, and of these 109 were sacred, and 235 secular, while eleven were divided between the gods and men. No doubt this determined eventually something of the form assumed by the calendar of the Christian Church, but the latter

was also affected by the Jewish week, so that the month became divided up into four weeks, with the holy day on the first instead of the seventh day, and this was not entirely on account of the Resurrection of Christ, because the first day of the week was also a festival of the Sun, so that the Christians were able to take over a day that was already sacred.

We are so accustomed to reckoning time by the week that it is a little difficult to place ourselves in the position when the week was a new thing, and perhaps only just coming into use, and not accepted by everybody. How did it happen? As far as we can make out, it came in somewhere about the first century, as the result of the combination of two influences. On the one hand there was the growing tendency to associate different days with the power of different heavenly bodies or planets. On the other, there was the growing influence of the Jews, who, from whatever source they derived it (whether, as they taught, from Moses, or from the customs of Babylonia), certainly had a seven-day week with their Sabbath on the Saturday. It appears that the Sabbath coincided with the day which was under the influence of Saturn, and of this the Roman historian Tacitus said 'Of the seven stars which rule human affairs Saturn has the highest sphere and the chief power.' Hence, it would seem, even Romans who did not believe in the Jews' religion felt some kind of superstitious regard for the Sabbath. References in well-known Latin writers such as Ovid, Horace and Tibullus show that this was the case.

Anybody can see that the names of the days of the week in some languages of continental Europe show that they were called after the heavenly bodies. Monday (Lundi) is the moon's day, Tuesday (Mardi) belongs to Mars, Wednesday (Mercredi) to Mercury,

Thursday in French (Jeudi), Italian, and Spanish, is under the sway of Jove or Jupiter, and Friday in the same way belongs to Venus (Vendredi). When St. Paul in some of his letters speaks of people being enslaved under the *stoicheia*, for a long time it was uncertain what he meant, because *stoicheia* can mean 'the alphabet' or 'the rudiments of knowledge', and to translate the word in this way does not seem to make any good sense of the passages in Galatians 4³ and Colossians 2⁸ (which you can look up for yourselves, and where the word occurs). *Stoicheia* is, however, also used for 'the elements', in the sense of 'the signs of the Zodiac' or 'the planets', and if we use this translation we get very good sense. What St. Paul aims at showing is that until people become Christians they are enslaved by a belief in astrology, that is to say they think that the planets control the events of life from day to day, and, as he says, they observe days and months and seasons and years, and are always on the look out for lucky and unlucky, auspicious and inauspicious days and even hours, and therefore they have no real freedom, but are just puppets. How this worked we know a little bit from the books on astrology that were written. The poet Juvenal actually wrote a satire (No. 6) against ladies who regulate every action by their astrological books. There were astrological predictions made in connection with every Roman Emperor from the time of the Crucifixion to the martyrdom of St. Peter, and one whole poem called *The Astronomica* on astrology was written by a writer called Manilius (believed to be first century). He is not very well known, but Professor Housman, who wrote *The Shropshire Lad*, was a great authority on his work, and was the first to edit it properly. Mr. F. H. Colson has given a good example of the sort of guidance that

astrologers provided for the public.¹ (Although the source from which he draws is a little later than the first century, it is quite typical.) He takes the hour at which he is writing, namely about 12.30 p.m. on a Friday, 20th November. At this time of year the sun rises about half past seven and sets shortly after four, and the day-hours, according to Roman reckoning, would then be about forty-three minutes each. At half past twelve one would be in the eighth hour. Venus is therefore the ruler of the hour as well as of the day. What may happen to me at such a time? According to the handbook quite a number of unlucky things. It would seem that the planets rather enjoy tormenting human beings. Thus my slave may run away (this is a thing that is predicted in nearly all the astrological books of the period, and no doubt corresponds rather with your daily help not turning up in the morning). Then I may fall ill or I may lose or break something, or I may have a burglary, but the influence being that of Venus, the burglar will be a soft womanish kind of person, and will steal my earrings, and if my slave runs away he will probably be found hiding with a woman in a public house. It is a relief to know that although the illness will be a serious one I shall recover. In about half an hour one passes into the next or ninth hour of the day ruled by Mercury (i.e. Hermes). In this case the property stolen will be parchments or gilded vessels, and the thief will be an educated or literary person. The runaway slave will take refuge in a temple; but alas, any illness contracted may end in death!

One may well judge what a relief it must have been to be delivered from bondage to this pernicious nonsense by the clear fresh proclamations of the gospel. Nevertheless, astrology dies hard. It has reappeared in

¹ In his very interesting book: *The Week*.

cheap newspapers during the past twenty years, and is sufficiently well-known for the B.B.C. to make jokes about it, with the expectation that listeners will understand the allusions.

Turning to calendars in general, an interesting one was discovered some years ago at Pompeii. It consists of a marble cube, rather like a large paper-weight, the sort of thing that could be stood on the writing-table in the billiard-room of a country house today, and it was evidently in use in a country house in the first century A.D. The four sides are divided by vertical lines into months, and information is given about each month in turn (including the name of the deity presiding over it), certain important dates, and notes on the work to be done on the estate in field or vineyard during the period in question. A much older calendar, of the tenth century B.C. found at Gezer, records the principal farming operations of the successive months. This kind of record must therefore have existed in Palestine in the first century, and is evidently a traditional one of great antiquity.

COINAGE

Although, as we shall see, there were manuscript documents in use corresponding to cheques and bills of exchange, many cash transactions, as with us, were in metal. The Roman Empire seems to have recognised two sorts of currency. *First*, its own gold and silver coins, which were issued by the emperor for the time being, who controlled the minting of them.¹ The gold

¹ An interesting commentary on the Book of Revelation is provided by a coin of the first-century Emperor Vespasian, representing ROME as a female figure seated upon seven hills. Another coin of the same emperor, issued after A.D. 70 is inscribed JUDAEA CAPTA, with a picture of a palm-tree, and on one side of it a male Jew in fetters, on the other a Jewess mourning.

consisted of (1) the *aureus* and half *aureus*, and (2) the standard silver coin, the *denarius*, which is often wrongly translated 'penny', where 'shilling' would be much more appropriate. Coinage of a lower value was minted under the authority of the Senate, and was in brass or copper. In the time of Augustus it is said that the ratio was 1 *aureus*=25 *denarii*=100 *sesterces*=400 *asses*. Such coins all had a universal range throughout the Empire. Besides these, and in the *second* place, the Government tolerated the circulation of local currencies in the various provinces and municipal areas. Hence it would be legal tender to pay in either Imperial or local currency in a given place; but it does not follow that that local currency would be legal tender outside its own area (77). Some years ago a choirboy found some coins dredged up on Midsummer Common at Cambridge. When I took them for him to an expert, I was told that they were Egyptian coins of *c.* 165 B.C. which were in circulation long after in the province of Egypt. The explanation offered was that since the small hoard was found in the river Cam not far from the foot of the Castle Hill, it was probably thrown into the river by a soldier stationed in the fort



77 Money-changers

above it, during the Roman occupation of Britain. He may well have been sent to Britain from a regiment previously stationed in the province of Egypt, and finding that some local Egyptian coins in his wallet were of no use in a garrison town in the province of Britain, cast them away in disgust.

The local coins in circulation in Palestine seem to have been eight in number, and they were mostly those coined in the neighbouring Phoenician cities, i.e. Tyre and Sidon. They were (1) the silver *talent* which was worth 240 *aurei*, (2) the *mina*, which was one-sixtieth part of a *talent*, (3) the *drachma*, which was small silver and worth about 9½d. of English money, (4) the *didrachma* or half-shekel, which was worth about 7½p of our money, and was the amount of the levy exacted each year towards the support of the Temple from all Jews of the age of twenty and upwards (this was probably a coin made in the time of Simon the Maccabee and still in use), (5) the *stater* or shekel, worth about 21p, which is the coin mentioned in the 'thirty pieces of silver' paid to Judas Iscariot, and (6) the *assarion* and (7) *kodrantes*, which were apparently copper coins, and the nature of which is somewhat doubtful. The smallest coin mentioned in the New Testament is (8) the *lepton*, a name which simply means 'thin' or 'small', and which is rendered 'mite'. This again would seem to have been a very minute copper coin of local mintage. An *assarion* may have been less than half a new penny, and this, it is said, was the price paid for two sparrows.

Money-boxes for small savings were in common use. One, made of red earthenware, was found in excavations at the baths of Titus, and contained 250 *denarii*. I saw red earthenware money-boxes of identical pattern actually on sale in the Suq at Jerusalem.





BANKING

It is natural to pass from an account of coinage and currency to consider what was done with it. Both the Jewish and Roman business worlds had organised banking systems. Under the early Greeks (and even much later), temples played the part of safe deposits, but in the early Roman Empire we also find regular banking establishments, sometimes owned by a number of partners. The function of such was first to arrange for the business of foreign exchanges, and second to enable people to make deposits and to draw upon them whenever necessary. Many persons entrusted all their capital to their bankers, and payment was made by manuscript cheques, for, of course, there were as yet no printed ones. Bank accounts were kept very accurately and were regarded by Roman courts of law as good evidence in cases where such was needed. Although there were no State banks, except in Greece (where the practice by this time did prevail), bankers had to be licensed by the local authority. This would have applied as much in Jerusalem as in Rome. The *argentarius* or *shulchan* as he was called, was also entitled to lend money, and the Greek custom of using bills of exchange was also in vogue, so that a banker in Rome might receive a sum which had to be paid at Athens or Jerusalem, and then draw a bill to be paid in one of those cities by a banker on the spot. Slaves were allowed to act as bankers on their own account with their own savings, presumably only by permission of their masters, but in general a slave was only manager of a bank for his master. Rates of interest for loans were rather high. The Jewish law distinguished between what it called 'increase', and 'usury', and only allowed transactions of the latter character with

antiles. Herod Agrippa borrowed a sum of 20,000 sesterces (say £800 to £1000) from a Jew at Alexandria, on a bill of exchange to be paid in Italy, and the interest and commission on this was at the rate of 12 per cent; but in the main the influence of the Torah was against such business, and in the first century not many bankers were Jews. In Rome very high interest was charged at an early date, but later it was lowered, first to 8½ per cent, then to 4 per cent, but this regulation did not endure, and soon we find monthly interest being charged at 1 per cent per month. During the first century A.D. it stood at 8 per cent. Extravagant and luxurious persons were, however, charged sometimes as much as 10 to 24 per cent, and even 48 per cent, and this at compound interest.

Most Roman business men kept a day-book for jotting down disbursements, and a ledger with a credit and debit column.

If you had seen account books of Roman business men you might have found, besides the ordinary Roman numerals, some unfamiliar symbols. Thus until after the first century

1000 was designated by 
 10,000 by 
 100,000 by 
 and a million by 

Some fractions also had special symbols. Thus the 44th part of an *as*, called a semi-sextula, was shown



THE BUSINESS WORLD GENERALLY

It is said that at the time of Philo the number of Jews in Egypt amounted to about a million, and that at Alexandria they occupied two out of the five divisions of the city, and lived there under governors of their own, almost in a state of independence. Their quarter, called after the fourth letter of the Greek alphabet, *delta* (possibly from its shape Δ), lay along the seashore, and it appears that the supervision of navigation, both sea and river, was entirely entrusted to them. We learn that the provisioning of Italy and indeed of the whole Mediterranean world thus became the business of the Jews, and the export trade in grain from Egypt, which we have mentioned elsewhere, was (under Government) entirely in their hands. There is a curious analogy indeed between the position of the Jews at Alexandria and that of the great house of Rothschild at the time of the battle of Waterloo. During the troubles at Rome following the murder of Julius Caesar the Jewish bankers of Alexandria contrived to obtain from their correspondents earlier and more trustworthy political news than anyone else. They thus managed always to be on the right side, whether as supporters of Caesar or of Octavius, and they gained, as may be imagined, the full advantage, both political and financial, which resulted from such policy, just as Rothschild managed to make his fortune by buying securities on a falling market at a time when the news of Wellington's victory was not generally known, but had reached him privately by pigeon-post.

We have record of some of the imports and exports connected with Palestine in the first century. Imports, with the exception of wood and metals, were chiefly luxury-goods and certain sorts of food, apples from

etc, cheese from Bithynia, fish from Spain, wine from Italy, beer from Media, dresses from India, shirts from Cilicia, veils from Arabia, sandals from Laodicea, dates from Babylon, baskets from Egypt, jugs and basins from Sidon. Exports were almost entirely agricultural products such as wheat, olive oil, balsam, honey, figs, etc. It is said that the value of exports and imports was nearly equal, but that the trade balance, if any, was on the whole in favour of Palestine.

Rabbinical Judaism laid down strict regulations with regard to all commercial transactions. A wholesale dealer must cleanse his scales or measures once a month, and a retail dealer twice a week. All weights had to be washed once a week, and balances wiped every time they were used. In sales of fluids, an ounce had to be added to every ten pounds, to make up for waste or spilling, and half an ounce for every ten pounds of solids. A bargain was not to be considered closed until both parties had taken possession of their respective properties. If a purchaser could prove that he had been overcharged, or that a higher than the controlled profit had been made, he had the right either to return the article and have his money back, or to claim the balance in money, but he could not do so unless he submitted his claim within a certain specified time. The seller was similarly protected. Goods of different qualities might not be mixed in a sale, and for the protection of the public it was forbidden to sell wine in Palestine diluted with water, unless in some place where the usage was recognised. It is well known that much old wine was thick and sticky, and needed dilution, but to dilute it before sale was likely to open the way to grave abuses. No corn was allowed to be sold until the controlled price had been announced. There is no reference to the prohibition of secret

commissions, but one Rabbi condemned tradesmen who gave presents to children in order to attract the custom of their parents.

Although Jews appear to have charged interest for loans freely to Gentiles, usually it would seem to have been strictly discouraged within the nation. One curious regulation runs that if a woman borrows a loaf of bread from her neighbour, she must fix its value at the time, since a sudden rise in flour might make the loaf returned more than that which was borrowed, and so the lender might get unearned increment. If a house or a field were rented, and the rent were not paid in advance, a higher charge might be made, but this would not apply in the case of an outright purchase. It was lawful within certain restricted limits to take a pledge for a loan and in the event of non-payment to sell it, but wearing apparel, bedding, a plough-share and all articles needed for preparing food must not be sold.

TRADE-GUILDS

There were certainly trade- and craft-guilds (*collegia fabrorum*) throughout the Empire, but it appears to have been necessary to obtain an Imperial licence to form one, and this licence was not infrequently withheld, if the Emperor was advised that a union in a particular area might be used as a means of organising sedition. Labour guilds in Palestine went so far as to regulate days and hours for working, and to insure their members against losses in the matter of ships or donkeys. Pliny wanted to found a guild or *collegium* at Nicomedia to extinguish fires—a sort of national fire-service—but (!) the Emperor stopped him because he said the Bithynians were too factious, and that it would only create another instrument of party-feeling, be-

een members and non-members. The number of these quasi-trade-unions varied considerably from province to province, according as the government deemed it advisable to license them, but they were commonest in the Rhône valley, in the old Roman or Latin *coloniae*, and in North and Central Italy. Some of the guilds were those of artificers attached to the fighting-forces. The *fabrica* was the name given as the equivalent of our ordnance corps. Arsenal or *armenaria* certainly existed at an early date, though originally citizens were expected to furnish their own arms.

AUCTION SALES

The organisation of the public sale of goods was quite well known in the first century, at any rate among the Romans. The time, place and condition of sale were announced either by a notice posted on the *album*, or by a crier. Bidding was done either by word of mouth, or by the sort of nods and hints which are familiar to people who go to auction sales today. Payment had to be made to the person who supervised the auction. The latter was evidently too dignified an official to do the usual patter himself, but he controlled the proceedings, and made entries in his books of the sums due from the bidders, who signed an engagement to pay the money to him, and whom he was entitled to sue if they defaulted. Sometimes it was a condition that payment had to be in advance. The supervisor employed a *praeco* or crier to play the part of the modern auctioneer. The *praecones* called out the bid-dings and made the usual facetious remarks to amuse the company and keep the bidding brisk. They were not generally educated men, but freed slaves of a low social grade, and the Roman satirists make fun of them. Yet, as so often happens, a job of this kind was

extremely lucrative, and a *praeco*, if he did not mind being looked down upon, could become quite a rich man.

PROCEDURE IN LAW COURTS

It will be remembered that when there was a disturbance at Ephesus over St. Paul's preaching, the town clerk appeased the people by pointing out that the disturbance was likely to bring the city into discredit, and that if the Jews really had any grievance 'the courts are open, and there are deputies. Let them implead one another'. It is clear, therefore, that the Romans, who have always been famous for their legal institutions, had evidently established throughout the provinces of the Roman Empire a proper and uniform system of law courts. It is reasonable to inquire how the proceedings in these courts were conducted. To give full details would obviously take up too much space, but some of the general points may be noted.

A plaintiff *summoned* his opponent to appear in court. If he refused to go, the plaintiff could call any bystander to witness the delivery of the summons and its refusal, and he was then entitled to use force to compel the defendant to appear, if he shirked or raised any objection. But he had to provide transport for the defendant if sickness or old age hindered him from going, though the transport need not be luxurious, e.g. there need not be cushions in the car or litter. There was a curious ritual when the plaintiff delivered the summons. He was supposed to touch the ear of the witness as a symbol that he was making him listen to the terms of it, whereupon the defendant could either settle the matter at once out of court, or accept suit in person, or he might employ an advocate, the equivalent of our solicitor or counsel, to appear on his behalf.

The payment of advocates was graded by the income of the person who engaged one. If there was no settlement out of court, the parties to the suit had to appear in an appointed place, and state their case. If one was present and the other not, the case was against the absentee. The proceedings were not continued beyond sunset, and if they were not finished then, the court adjourned, and the parties had to find bail for future appearance. Another piece of ritual was that if the case was a property dispute, either the whole of the property or some representative part of it had to be produced in court. Thus if it was a dispute about the ownership of a flock of sheep, one animal, or at least a lock of wool had to be brought in. If the dispute were over a piece of land, house property, or a ship, then a turf or a brick or a piece of the ship's timber had to be brought in. The first hearing, before a praetor, might end in an immediate decision, but if the assignment made by the praetor was not accepted, further bail was demanded by him from both parties, and the case was sent for trial by a judge. The trial might take place within two days, though there might be an adjournment, in order to call further evidence, or bring a foreign defendant from a distance, or on account of the serious illness of one of the litigants. Actions might take place *in rem*, that is to say to establish some kind of property right or privilege, or *in personam*, to deal with an injurious act or tort, such as breach of contract on the part of a certain person or persons. Modifications in procedure were made in the course of time, and in the end Roman law settled down to two main kinds of trials, those in the praetor's court, which we might call a court of summary jurisdiction, and those in the judge's court; but under the Empire the distinction between a praetor and a judex largely ceased, and the

various officials of the Empire, such as local governors, decided all cases themselves, though this may not have come into full effect until after the first century.

So far we have been dealing with what we should call civil suits. What we call criminal actions, as with us, only very slowly developed into a separate branch. A *crimen* in earlier days was regarded as an offence against religion and the gods. Later a *crimen* was defined as an offence not against a private individual, but against the State or community.¹ If there was dispute as to a contract or the ownership of some individual property, this was a matter for a civil action. But if it was a case of robbery or murder, then there was a penalty inflicted by the State. In the case of theft, not only was the value of the stolen goods recoverable, but a penalty twice or four times the estimated value of the stolen goods could be awarded as compensation. Murder of course did not admit of full restitution, so it was natural for the penalty to be much heavier. Hence the practice of capital punishment.

PUNISHMENTS

This section is bound to be an unpleasant one, but it cannot be left out without unfairly toning down the picture of social life in the first century. We have to consider that the world of that day was on the whole a cruel world, and that its punishments of criminals tended to be brutal. Cruelty unfortunately is a blemish upon human life which is hard to eradicate, and anyone who considers how the Tudor Christian King, Henry VIII, treated the Carthusian monks for refusing

¹ cf. the much later, though probably inherited, definition of a murder (in English law) as 'against the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King (or Lady the Queen) his (or her) crown and dignity'.

acknowledge the Royal Supremacy can hardly judge the age of Tiberius and Nero to severely. Almost everyone knows the story of how, by Nero's orders, the Christians in Rome were dressed in fantastic costumes, led to stakes in the Imperial Gardens, and then turned to death by having their clothes soaked in inflammable material and set on fire, while the Emperor, dressed as a jockey, drove about looking on, and amusing himself with his friends. Even supposing that this is not an exaggerated account, things were perhaps not always quite so bad. Nevertheless, there was little pity for the condemned criminal. We shall see in the chapter on the public games how some convicts were given a chance to fight for their lives, and perhaps to witness a battle to the death in the arena was no more revolting than to go to Smithfield to see men hanged, drawn, quartered, or burned in public, as did our Christian forefathers. Perhaps the worst type of execution was that by crucifixion. It was not only rough and cruel, but it involved a lingering torture, since the victim was left naked, and exposed to the pitiless rays of the eastern sun and the attacks of insects, suspended by nails driven through hands and feet. Small wonder that kindly women sometimes subscribed to provide sloped drinks to be given to criminals before the execution began. Nor was crucifixion rare. It is said to be heard of first among the Phoenicians, and was an oriental form of execution, but it was adopted by the Romans, and by the first century had become a normal way of dealing with those convicted of crimes of violence, as normal as was our cat o' nine tails. Moreover it was sometimes inflicted simultaneously on large numbers of offenders, especially in cases of rebellion against the government. There is a record of as many as 2000 victims being crucified all at once. Titus, during the

first Jewish war, crucified on one single occasion so many prisoners that the supply of wood ran short.

Scourging seems to have been of two kinds. The Jews scourged with a rod, thirteen times on each shoulder and on the loins, i.e. the legal number of 'forty stripes save one'.¹ The face could also be scourged or struck. Roman scourging was far more terrible. Instead of rods, cords or strips of leather were used, each with a pellet of bone or metal at the end, so that the flesh was cut and mangled. It is significant that the job was given to native recruits and not to Italian soldiers. This, for instance, would mean that Christ would have been scourged by Syrian levies, and not by strictly Roman troops.

Other more prolonged punishments consisted of penal labour, usually in mines, or, as we should say, 'concentration camps'. One of these was certainly on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, and the writer of the Apocalypse was evidently confined there (*damnatus in metallum* was the sentence, i.e., 'condemned to quarry ore'). Another camp, for Jews, was in Sardinia.

A punishment less severe but fraught with considerable hardship was that of banishment or *exilium*. The Emperor could forbid anyone who had incurred his displeasure from coming within a certain distance of the capital city, or he might condemn him explicitly to reside in a particular spot. Thus, Nero banished Seneca, his former tutor, to the island of Corsica, and the poet Ovid was banished to a miserable spot on the shores of the Black Sea.

Sometimes punishment involved being put in

¹ This is said to be connected with the threefold recitation of a certain verse of a Psalm containing thirteen words, with a blow for each word (thirty-nine in all).

chains, or condemned to slavery, and for slaves who offended there were a number of barbarous punishments. They might be obliged to work in chains, they were frequently beaten with sticks or scourged with a whip; sometimes they were hung up by their hands with weights tied to their feet, or suspended so that their toes only just touched the ground, with the result that they had to strain their feet painfully in order to get any support. A very common mode of punishment was to make them carry a forked structure of wood around the neck while working. This was rather like the Chinese board punishment, or the pillory, of which we hear as late as the time of Charles II. It was called a *furca*, and slaves were often flogged while bearing it. Crucifixion was specially an extreme punishment for slaves. A runaway slave, and also a thief, might be branded on the forehead with an indelible mark (known as a *stigma*). Another punishment was to be sent to grind at the mill, which would be somewhat the equivalent of the old treadmill in convict prisons.