

Proscriptions of 43 BC:

Excerpts From Appian's Roman History, Book 4, chapter 2, sections 8-11

[8] The proscription was in the following words: " Marcus Lepidus, Mark Antony, and Octavius Cæsar, chosen by the people to set in order and regulate the republic, do declare that, had not perfidious scoundrels begged for mercy and when they obtained it become the enemies of their benefactors and conspired against them, neither would Gaius Cæsar (Julius Caesar) have been slain by those whom he saved by his clemency after capturing them in war, whom he admitted to his friendship and upon whom he heaped offices, honors, and gifts; nor should we have been compelled to use severity against those who have insulted us and declared us public enemies. Now, seeing that the malice of those, who have conspired against us and from whom Gaius Cæsar suffered, cannot be overcome by kindness, we prefer to anticipate our enemies rather than suffer at their hands. Let no one who sees what both Cæsar and ourselves have suffered consider our action unjust, cruel, or immoderate. Although Cæsar was clothed with supreme power, although he was pontifex maximus (the high priest) although he had overthrown and added to our sway the nations most formidable to the Romans, although he was the first man to attempt the untried sea beyond the pillars of Hercules and was the discoverer of a country hitherto unknown to the Romans, this man was slain in a public and sacred place designated as the senate-house, under the eyes of the gods, with twenty-three dastardly wounds, by men whom he had taken prisoners in war and had spared, some of whom he had named as co-heirs of his wealth. After this execrable crime, instead of arresting the guilty wretches, the rest sent them forth as commanders and governors, in which capacity they seized upon the public money with which they are collecting an army against us and are seeking reinforcements from barbarians ever hostile to Roman rule. Cities subject to Rome that would not obey them they have burned, or ravaged, or levelled to the ground; other cities they have forced by terror to bear arms against the country and against us. [9] "Some of them we have punished already; and by the aid of divine providence you shall see the rest punished presently. Although the chief part of this work has been finished by us or is well in hand, appertaining to Spain and Gaul as well as to Italy, one task still remains, and that is to march against Cæsar's assassins beyond the sea. On the eve of undertaking this foreign war for you, we do not consider it safe, either for you or for us, to leave other enemies behind to take advantage of our absence and watch for opportunities during the war. We think that there should be no delay in such an emergency, but that we ought rather to sweep them out of our pathway, once for all, seeing that they began the war against us when they voted us and the armies under us public enemies. [10] "What vast numbers of citizens have they doomed to destruction with us, disregarding the vengeance of the gods and the reprobation of mankind! We shall not deal harshly with any multitude of men, nor shall we count as enemies all who have opposed us or plotted against us,

or those distinguished for their riches merely, their estates, or their high position; nor shall we go to the same lengths as another man who held the supreme power before us, when he, too, was regulating the commonwealth in civil convulsions, and whom you named the Fortunate¹ on account of his success; and yet necessarily three persons will have more enemies than one. We shall take vengeance only on the worst and most guilty. This we shall do for your interest no less than for our own, for while we keep up our conflicts you will all be involved necessarily in great dangers. It is incumbent on us also to do something to quiet the army, which has been insulted, irritated, and decreed a public enemy by our common foes. Although we might arrest on the spot whomsoever we please, we prefer to proscribe rather than seize them unawares; and this, too, on your account, so that it may not be in the power of enraged soldiers to exceed their orders, but that they may be restricted to a certain number designated by name, and spare the others according to order.

[11] "In God's name then, let no one harbor any one of those whose names are hereto appended, or conceal them, or send them away, or be corrupted by their money. Whoever shall be detected in saving, or aiding, or conniving with them we will put on the list of the proscribed without allowing any excuse or pardon. Those who kill the proscribed and bring us their heads shall receive the following rewards: to a free man 25,000 Attic drachmas¹ per head; to a slave his freedom and 10,000 Attic drachmas and his master's right of citizenship. Informers shall receive the same rewards. In order that they may remain unknown the names of those who receive the rewards shall not be inscribed in our registers." Such was the language of the proscription of the triumvirate as nearly as it can be rendered from Latin into Greek.

¹ The drachma was roughly equivalent to the Roman denarius, a single silver coin that often was the daily wage of low-skilled workers and sailors.