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Imperial Augustus' Ruthless Rise

By JOHN A. MENAUGH

THE BIMILLENARY of the birth of Augustus Caesar, first emperor of Rome, is being observed in Italy with a vast exhibition, fêtes, and speechmaking. Every honor imaginable is being paid in this Augustan year to the celebrated Roman, who was born 2,000 years ago next Sept. 23.

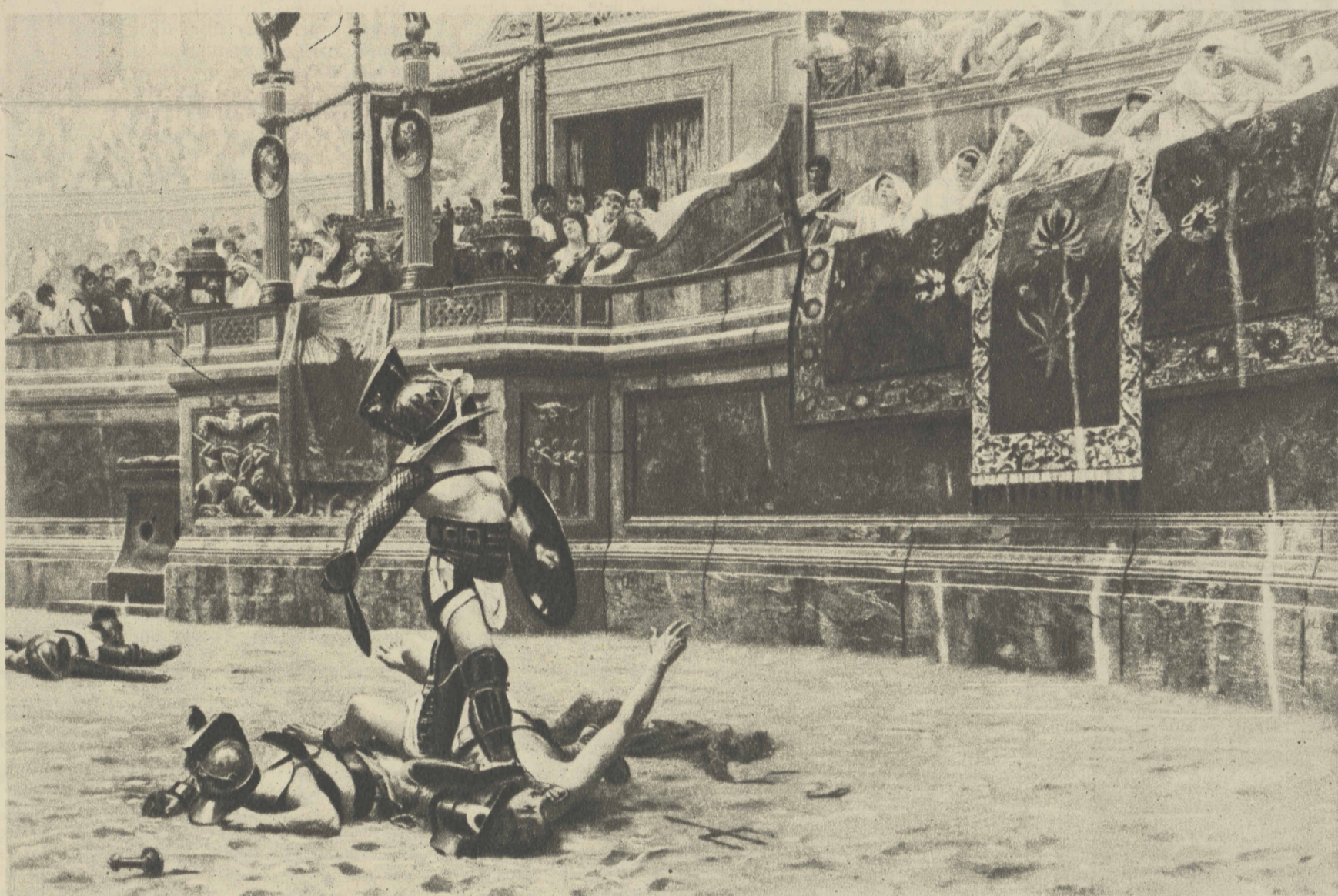
● Back of this newest glorification of Augustus, founder of an empire that faded from the world scene nearly fifteen centuries ago, is the

suggestion, fostered by Premier Mussolini, that the modern Italian empire is a revival of the empire of Augustus.

● Recalled thus from his grave obviously for present-day political purposes, Augustus again becomes a subject of general discussion. And therefore people may ask:

● Who was this first emperor of Rome, and what manner of man was he?

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Typical of Imperial Rome

The two famous paintings by Jean Leon Gerome that are reproduced on this page present scenes typical of the Roman empire, of which Augustus Caesar was the first emperor. The one at the top of the page shows a chariot race in one of the vast circuses. Largest of these was the Circus Maximus, built in 329 B. C., restored in 174 B. C., and enlarged and embellished with marble ornaments years later by order of Augustus. Ancient writers estimated the seating capacity of the Circus Maximus at between 250,000 and 485,000. The other picture shows the vestal virgins signaling with thumbs down to indicate that the gladiator with a foot on his opponent's throat should show no mercy. (These virgins were a group of girls who guarded the sacred fire and acted as judges at various ceremonies.) The victor is a secutor; his unfortunate opponent, armed only with net and trident, is a retiarius. Gladiatorial combats were fought in vast amphitheatres, the first of which was built in Rome in 59 B. C. The Colosseum, largest of the amphitheatres, was dedicated in A. D. 80. It seated between 40,000 and 50,000 spectators. The term amphitheatrum first was used by writers of the Augustan era.