Initially these vices grew slowly and at times they were corrected, but finally when the disease had spread like a plague, Rome was changed. Its rule (*imperium*) from being most justice and good, became cruel and unendurable. . . . As soon as riches came to be considered honorable, and it was found that glory, military commands and political power followed in their train, virtue became dulled, modest means were regarded as a disgrace, and a blameless life despicable . . .

Fame, Family, and Self-Promotion: The Roman Funeral

Polybius, a prominent Greek soldier and statesman, was brought to Rome in 168 B.C. as a hostage for the good behavior of his native state, the Achaean League. At Rome he was befriended by a young nobleman, Scipio Aemilianus, who later became famous for his capture of Carthage and Numantia. With a ringside seat from which to view the unfolding events of Roman history, Polybius set about explaining to the world Rome's rise to Power. In this excerpt he describes how the Roman upper-class family functioned to promote itself and socialize its younger members. It is found in the section of Book 6 that compares the Roman constitution with others, such as those of Carthage, Sparta, and elsewhere.[8]

Whenever one of their illustrious men dies, in the course of his funeral the body with all of its paraphernalia is carried into the Forum to the Rostra, as the raised platform there is called. Sometimes he is propped upright on it so as to be conspicuous, or, more rarely, he is laid flat on it. Then, with all the people of Rome standing around, his son, if he has one of full age and he happens to be in Rome, or failing him, one of his relatives, mounts the Rostra and delivers a speech about the virtues of the dead man and the successful deeds performed by him in his life.

By these means the people are reminded of what the deceased accomplished and are made to see it with their own eyes—not only those who were involved in the actual deeds, but those also who were not—and their sympathies are so deeply moved that the loss appears not to be confined to the actual mourners but to be a public one affecting the whole people.

After the burial and all the usual ceremonies have been performed, they place the likeness of the deceased in the most conspicuous spot in his house, surmounted by a wooden canopy or shrine. This likeness consists of a mask made to represent the deceased with extraordinary fidelity both in shape and color. These likenesses they display at public sacrifices, and they decorate them with much care.

Also when any notable member of the family dies, they carry these masks to the funeral, putting them on men who seem most like those whose masks they wear in terms of height and other personal characteristics. And these substitutes assume clothes according to the rank of the person represented. If he was a consul

[8]Polybius 6.53–54. Translation based on E. S. Shuckburg, *Polybius: The Histories* (London–New York, 1889).

or praetor, for example, a toga with purple stripes is worn; if a censor, a wholly purple toga; if he had also celebrated a triumph or performed any exploit of that kind, a toga embroidered with gold. These representatives also ride in chariots, while the fasces and axes and all the other customary insignia of the particular offices lead the way, according to the dignity of the rank in the state enjoyed by the deceased in his lifetime. On arriving at the Rostra, they all take their seats on ivory chairs in a row. There could not easily be a more inspiring spectacle than this for a young man of noble ambitions or virtuous aspirations. For can we conceive anyone to be unmoved at the sight of all the likenesses collected together of the men who have earned glory, all, as it were, living and breathing? Or what could be a more glorious spectacle?

Furthermore, as soon as the speaker who gives the eulogy over the person about to be buried finishes, he then immediately starts upon the others whose representatives are present, beginning with the most ancient, and recounts the successes and achievements of each. By this means the glorious memory of brave men is continually renewed; the fame of those who have performed any noble deed is never allowed to die, and the renown of those who have done good service to their country becomes a matter of common knowledge to the multitude and part of the heritage of posterity.

But the chief benefit of the ceremony is that it inspires young men to shrink from no exertion for the general welfare, in the hope of obtaining the glory which awaits the brave. And what I say is confirmed by this fact. Many Romans have volunteered to decide a whole battle by single combat. Not a few have deliberately accepted certain death, some in time of war to secure the safety of the rest, some in time of peace to preserve the safety of the commonwealth. There also have been instances of men in office putting their own sons to death, in defiance of every custom and law, because they rated the interests of their country higher than those of natural ties, even with their nearest and dearest. . . .

3.8 The Triumphal Parade of Aemilius Paullus

A triumph, or its lesser form, an ovation, was awarded on the basis of the significance of the victory and the body count. A minimum of 5,000 was necessary for a triumph. Formally a triumph was the ritual purification of the army after a campaign, but it also had the effect of driving home the value of war and drawing the whole community together in a grand celebration of the state's success. It was the pinnacle of the triumphing general's career and conferred immortality on his family and on himself. The victor in this triumph was L. Aemilius Paullus, who defeated the Macedonians at the battle of Pydna in 168.[10]

The people erected stands in the race tracks (which the Romans call "circuses"), all around the Forum and at every spot in the city from which they could get a view of the

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[10]Plutarch, *Aemilius Paullus* 32–35.

show. The spectators were dressed in white garments. All the temples were open and full of garlands and incense. The streets were cleared and kept open by numerous officers, who drove back all who crowded onto or ran across the processional route.

The triumph lasted three days. The first day was barely long enough for the presentation of the booty in the form of statues, pictures, and colossal images which were conveyed in 250 chariots. The second day the finest and richest armor of the Macedonians, both bronze and steel, all newly polished and glittering, was carried by in many wagons. The pieces were piled up and arranged artfully as though they had been tumbled in heaps carelessly and by chance: Helmets were thrown upon shields, coats of mail on greaves; Cretan light infantry targets [*small shields*] and Thracian wicker bucklers and quivers of arrows lay among horses' bits. Through these there appeared the points of naked swords, intermixed with long Macedonian sarissas [*lances*]. All these arms were attached together just loosely enough that they struck against one another as they were drawn along, making a harsh and frightening noise, so that even as the spoils of a conquered enemy they could not be seen without dread. After the wagons loaded with armor there followed 3,000 men who carried silver coins in 750 baskets, each of which weighed three talents [*roughly 180 pounds*] and was carried by four men. Others brought silver bowls and goblets and cups, all disposed in a way to make the best show, and all unusual for their size as well as the solidity of their embossed work.

On the third day, early in the morning, first came the trumpeters, who played not as they usually did in a procession or solemn entry, but the kind of martial music the Romans used when encouraging their troops to go into action. Next followed 120 oxen with their horns gilded and their heads adorned with ribbons and garlands. These were led by young men with handsomely bordered aprons and boys with basins of silver and gold for the libations. After them was brought the gold coin, which was divided into containers that weighed three talents, like those that contained the silver. There were seventy-seven of these. Next came the bearers of the consecrated bowl which Aemilius had made. It weighed ten talents and was set with precious stones. Then the cups of Kings Antigonus and Seleucus and those of Therikleius were displayed, and all the gold plate that was used at King Perseus' table.

After these came Perseus' own chariot, in which was placed his armor, and on top of that his crown. After a gap, the children of the king were led by as captives, and with them a train of their servants, teachers, and attendants, all shedding tears and reaching out their hands to the spectators. The children themselves were encouraged by their attendants also to beg for compassion. There were two sons and a daughter, whose young age made them only partly aware of their misery, to such an extent that their incomprehension of their condition made them seem the more to be pitied. At any rate, Perseus himself scarcely got as much attention when he passed by. Pity fixed the eyes of the Romans on the infants, and many of them could not stop their tears. Until the children had gone, the viewers were moved by a mixture of pain and pleasure.

After his children and their attendants came Perseus himself, clad in black and wearing the boots of his country, looking shocked and stupefied as a result of his great misfortune. Next came a great crowd of his friends and familiars, whose faces were disfigured with grief and who let the spectators see by their tears and their continued looking at Perseus that it was his fortune they lamented, not their own. Perseus had appealed to Aemilius not to be led in pomp but to be left out of the triumphal procession. But Aemilius rightly refused, reminding Perseus of his cowardice and fondness for life and saying that, as in the past, it was within his power to avoid disgrace, meaning that he could take his own life. But Perseus, relying on who knows what hopes, allowed himself to appear as part of his own spoils.

Four hundred gold crowns in honor of Aemilius' victory, which had been sent to him by the cities, together with their deputations, came next. Then came Aemilius himself, seated on a magnificently adorned chariot. Aemilius, a striking individual even without the trappings of power, was dressed in a robe of purple interwoven with gold and was holding a laurel branch in his right hand. All the army, divided into centuries and cohorts, followed in like manner, with boughs of laurel in their hands. Some sang verses mixed with jokes according to the custom; others sang songs of triumph and praise of Aemilius' deeds. He was indeed admired and regarded as happy by all men, unenvied at least by the good. It seems the responsibility of some god to lessen that kind of happiness, which is too great and disproportionate, and so to mingle the affairs of human life that no one should be entirely free and exempt from disasters. Indeed we read in Homer that those people should think themselves truly happy whom Fortune has given an equal share of good and evil.

At any rate, Aemilius had four sons, of whom Scipio and Fabius were adopted into other families.[11] The other two, whom he had by his second wife and who were still young, he brought up in his own house. One of these died at fourteen years of age, five days before his father's triumph. The other died at twelve, three days after the triumph. There was not a Roman who did not have a deep sense of Aemilius' suffering and who did not shudder at the cruelty of Fortune that had not scrupled to bring so much sorrow into a house resplendid with happiness, rejoicing, and sacrifices, and to intermingle tears and laments with songs of victory and triumph.

Aemilius, however, reasoned rightly that courage and resolution were to resist not merely arms and spears, but all the shocks of ill fortune. He so met and so adapted himself to these mingled and contrasting circumstances as to outbalance the evil with the good, and his private concerns with the public. Thus he did not allow anything either to take away from the grandeur or to sully the dignity of his victory.

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[11]The Scipio referred to here is the Scipio who was the friend of Polybius and the general who sacked Carthage (see previous section).