Mars Ultor

Ernest Hilbert

Before they had a fleet
Romans rowed on logs
As they prepared to meet

Carthage. Treaties, public
Or secret, do little when
The border of the republic

Is breached without notice:
More tug of war
Than elegant chess.

Some ask: Is virtù virtue?
After reconciliation, consensus,
Appeasement, the coup.

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Some rely on law,
But law relies on guns,
Or must withdraw.

Brutes push their way to power,
But the filthiest barbarian
Also wants the throne an hour,

And dons a crown, marks affairs,
Nods under a golden branch until
A stronger one turns up the stairs.