



# FACILIS DESCENSUS AVERNO —VERGIL

## MAMERTINE PRISON

The so-called “Mamertine Prison” is generally accepted as being identical with “the prison ... in the middle of the city, overlooking the forum”, mentioned by Livy (I, xxxiii). It consists of two chambers, one above the other. The lower, known as the *Tullianum*, was probably built originally as a cistern, whence its name, which is derived from the archaic Latin word *tullius*, a jet of water. The two chambers are at present connected by a stairway, but originally there was no means of communication between them save a hole in the floor of the upper chamber, through which such famous prisoners as King Jugurtha and the Catiline conspirators were thrown into the lower dungeon, where they died of starvation or were strangled.

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