

# GILBERT À BECKETT

THE COMIC  
HISTORY OF  
ROME

**Gilbert À Beckett**  
**The Comic History of Rome**

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*The Comic History of Rome:*

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# **Gilbert Abbott À Becket**

## **The Comic History of Rome**

### **PREFACE**

Some explanation is perhaps due from a writer who adopts the title of Comic in relation to a subject which is ordinarily considered to be so essentially grave as that of History. Though the epithet may be thought by many inappropriate to the theme, this work has been prompted by a very serious desire to instruct those who, though willing to acquire information, seek in doing so as much amusement as possible.

It is true that professedly Comic literature has been the subject of a familiarity not unmixed with contempt on the part of a portion of the public, since that class of writing obtained the popularity which has especially attended it within the last few years; but as whatever disrepute it has fallen into is owing entirely to its abuse, there is no reason for abandoning an attempt to make a right use of it. The title of Comic has therefore been retained in reference to this work, though the author has felt that its purport is likely to be misconceived by many, and among them not a few whose judgment he would highly esteem, who would turn away from a Comic History solely on account of its name, and without giving themselves the trouble to look into it. Those persons are,

however, grievously mistaken who have imagined that in this, and in similar books from the same pen, the object has been to treat History as a mere farce, or to laugh at Truth – the aim of the writer having invariably been to expose falsehood, and to bring into merited contempt all that has been injudiciously, ignorantly, or dishonestly held up to general admiration. His method of telling a story may be objected to; nevertheless, if he does his utmost to tell it truly, he ought not, perhaps, to be very severely criticised for adopting the style in which he feels himself most at home; and if his opinions are found to be, in the main, such as just and sensible persons can agree with, he only asks that his views and sentiments may be estimated by what they contain, and not by any peculiarity in his mode of expressing them.

The writer of this book is animated by an earnest wish to aid, as far as he is able, in the project of combining instruction with amusement; and he trusts he shall not be blamed for endeavouring to render such ability as he possesses available for as much as it is worth, in applying it to subjects of useful information.

Those who are not disposed to approve of his design, will perhaps give him credit for his motive; and he may with confidence assert, that, from the care and attention he has bestowed upon this work, it will be found to form (irrespective of its claims to amuse) by no means the least compendious and correct of the histories already in existence of Rome to the end of the Commonwealth. If he has failed in justifying the

application of the title of Comic to his work, he has reason to believe it will be found accurate. Though the style professes to be light, he would submit that truth does not necessarily make more impression by being conveyed through a heavy medium; and although facts may be playfully told, it is hoped that narrative in sport may be found to constitute history in earnest.

# CHAPTER THE FIRST. FROM THE FOUNDATION OF ROME TO THE DEATH OF ROMULUS

The origin of the Romans has long been lost in that impenetrable fog, the mist of ages; which, it is to be feared, will never clear off, for it unfortunately seems to grow thicker the more boldly we try to grope about in it. In the midst of these fogs, some energetic individual will now and then appear with a pretty powerful link, but there are not enough of these links to form a connected chain of incidents.

One of the oldest and most popular traditions concerning the origin of the Romans, is that founded on the remarkable feat of filial pick-a-back alleged to have been performed by Æneas, who is frequently dragged in head and shoulders, with his venerable parent, to lead off the march of events, and, as it were, open the ball of history.

It is said that after<sup>1</sup> the siege of Troy, Æneas snatched up his

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<sup>1</sup> The Lares of the Romans are supposed to have been the Manes or shades of their ancestors, and consisted of little waxen figures – such as we should put under shades made of glass – which adorned the halls of houses. The Lares were sewn up in stout dog's-skin, durability being consulted more than elegance. The Penates were a superior order of deities, who were kept in the innermost parts of the establishment, and took

Lares and Penates in one hand, and his father, Anchises, in the other; when, flinging the former over the right shoulder, and the latter over the left, he ran down to the sea-shore, called "A boat a-hoy," and escaped from the jaws of destruction into the mouth of the Tiber. There are many reasons for disbelieving this story, and it is quite enough to deprive it of weight to consider what must have been the weight of Anchises himself, and the large bundle of household images that Æneas is alleged to have been burdened with. Putting probability in one scale, and an elderly gentleman, with a lot of Lares and a parcel of Penates in the other, there can be no doubt which will preponderate. It happens, also, that Troy is usually said to have been destroyed 430 years before Rome was founded,<sup>2</sup> so that it would have been to this day as unfounded as the tale itself, if the city had had no other foundation than that which Æneas was supposed to have given it.

The Latin Bards have adorned this story in their own peculiar way, by adding that Æneas, on his arrival in the Tiber, resolved to sacrifice a milk white sow, in gratitude for his safety. The sow, who must have been an ancestor of the learned pig, got scent of her fate, and running two or three miles up the country, produced a sad litter of thirty little ones; when Æneas, fancying he heard a voice telling him to build a town on the spot, determined, "please the pigs," to found a city there. The classical story-teller

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their name from *penitus*, within, which caused the portion of the house they occupied to be afterwards called the *penetralia*.

<sup>2</sup> Troy destroyed, B.C. 1184. Rome founded, B.C. 753.



goes on to say, that Latinus, king of the Latins, happened to be at war with Turnus – or as we might call him Turner – King of the Rutuli, when the Trojans arrived, and the former, thinking it better worth his while to make friends than foes of the immigrants, gave them a tract of land, which rendered them extremely tractable. On the principle that one good turn deserves another, they turned round upon Turnus, and completely routed the Rutuli. Latinus, to show his gratitude, gave Lavinia – not the "lovely young" one, who Thomson tells us, "once had friends;" but his own daughter of that name – in marriage to Æneas, who at the death of his father-in-law, ruled over the city, and called his colony Lavinium. Tradition tells us further that Æneas had a son, Ascanius, sometimes called Parvus Iulus, or little Juli, who subsequently left Lavinium, and built Alba Longa – a sort of classical long acre – in that desirable neighbourhood known as the Alban Mount, which, from its becoming subsequently the most fashionable part of the city, may deserve the name of the Roman Albany.

The descendants of Ascanius are said to have reigned 300 years, and an attempt has been made to fill up the gap of these three centuries with a quantity of dry rubbish of the antiquarian kind, which occupies space, without affording anything like a solid foundation for the structure to be built upon it. Of such a nature is the catalogue of matters alleged to have connected Æneas with the actual founders of Rome; but though names and dates are given, there is little doubt that the value of names is

not even nominal, and that if we trust the dates, we shall rely on the falsest data.

The spirit of antiquarianism is as ancient as the subjects on which it employs its ingenuity, and the Romans began puzzling themselves at a very early period about their own origin. A long course of fabrication ended in rearing up a legendary fabric, which was acknowledged by all the Roman bards; and however much they may have doubted the truth of the tale, they deserve some credit for the consistency with which they have adhered to it.

The legend states that one Procas, belonging to the family of the Silvii, or Silvers, had two sons, – the elder, to whom the kingdom was left, being called Numitor, and the younger going by the name of Amulius. Though Numitor was the bigger brother, he does not seem to have been, pugilistically speaking, the better man, for he was deprived of the kingdom by Amulius, who, to prevent the chances of the law of primogeniture again taking effect, by placing any of Numitor's descendants on the throne, caused Rhea Silvia, the only daughter of that individual to become a virgin in the Temple of Vesta. The Vestals were, in fact, the old original nuns, withdrawing themselves from the world, and entering into a solemn vow against marriage during thirty years; after which period they were free to wed, though they were scarcely ever invited to avail themselves of their rather tardy privilege. The senior sister went by the highly respectable name of Virgo Maxima – or old maid in chief – and was doubtless

something more than ordinary in her appearance, as well as in her position. The Vestals were required to be plain in their dress, and in order to extend this plainness as far as possible to their looks, their hair was cut very short, however much they may have been distressed at parting with their tresses. Their chief duty consisted in keeping up the fire on the altar of Vesta, and they were prohibited on pain of death from giving to any other flame the smallest encouragement. In the event of such an offence having been committed by an unfortunate Vestal, who found her position little better than being buried alive, she was made to undergo literally that awful penalty.

Though the duties of the Vestals were rigidly enforced, and the letting out of the sacred fire was, in some cases, punished by the extinction of the delinquent's vital spark, they enjoyed some peculiar advantages. Though their acts were under strict control, they were, in one sense, allowed a will of their own; for they were permitted, even when under age, to make their own testaments. They occupied reserved seats at public entertainments; and if they happened to meet a criminal in custody, they had the privilege of releasing him from the hands of the police of the period. Notwithstanding these inducements, the office of Vestal was not in much request; and, in the event of a vacancy, it was awarded by lot to some young lady, whose dissatisfaction with her lot was usually very visible. Such is a brief outline of the duties and liabilities of the order into which Amulius forced his niece, and it has been the subject of complaint in more recent

times that Rome still occasionally does as Rome used to do. We will now return to Rhea Silvia, who appears to have entered the service of the goddess as a maid-of-all-work; for she was in the habit of going to draw water from a well; and it was on one of these aquatic excursions she met with a military man, passing himself off as Mars who paid his addresses to her, and proved irresistible.

Rhea Silvia gave birth to twins; upon which her cruel uncle ordered her to be put to death, and desired that her infant offspring should be treated as a couple of unwelcome puppies, and got rid of by drowning in the ordinary manner.

The children were placed in a cradle, or, as some say, a bowl, and turned adrift on the river; so that Amulius, if he had any misgiving as to the security of his crown, preferred to drown it in the bowl with his unhappy little relatives.

It happened that there had been such a run on the banks of the Tiber, that its coffers or coffer-dams had poured out their contents all over the adjacent plains, and caused a very extensive distribution of its currency. Among other valuable deposits, it chanced to lodge for security, in a branch connected with the bank, the children of Rhea Silvia, who, by the way, must have been very fortunate under the circumstances, in being able to keep a balance. The infants were not in a very enviable condition; for there was nobody to board and lodge them, though the Tiber was still at hand to wash and do for them. The high tide proved a tide of good fortune to the children, who were floated so far

inland, that when the river receded, they were left high and dry at the foot of a fig<sup>3</sup> tree, with no one, apparently, to care a fig what became of them. Under these circumstances a she-wolf, who had gone down to the Tiber to drink, heard the whimpering of the babies among the trees, and, her attention being drawn off from the water in the river to the whine in the wood, she came forward in the most handsome manner in the capacity of a wet-nurse to give them suck and succour. How this wolf became possessed of so much of the milk of human kindness, does not appear, and it is not perhaps worth while to inquire.

The children, it is said, were awakened by receiving a gentle licking from the tongue of the animal standing *in loco parentis* over them. Finding the situation damp, the wolf removed the infants to her den, where they were visited by a philanthropic woodpecker; who, when they were hungry, would bring them some tempting grub, or worm, by which the woodpecker soon wormed itself into the children's confidence. Other members of the feathered tribe made themselves useful in this novel nursery, by keeping off the insects; and many a gnat found itself – or rather lost itself – unexpectedly in the throat of some remorseless swallow. However well-meaning the animal may have been, the children could not have profited greatly, if there had been no one ready to take them from the month; and happily Faustus, the king's shepherd, who had watched them as they were being

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<sup>3</sup> From this circumstance the fig was considered figurative of the foundation of the city, and held sacred in Rome for many centuries.

carried to the wolf's cave or loup-hole, provided them with another loophole to get out of it. Taking advantage of the wolf's temporary absence from home, the "gentle shepherd," resolving to rescue the children, by hook or by crook, removed the babes to his own hut, and handed them over to his wife Laurentia, as a sort of supplement to their previously rather extensive family.

Some historians, refusing to believe the story of the Wolf and the Woodpecker, have endeavoured to reconcile probability with tradition, by suggesting that the wife of Faustulus had got the name of the Wolf from the contrast she presented to her lamb-like husband, and that the supposed woodpecker was simply a hen-pecker, in the person of Laurentia.

Romulus and Remus were the names of the two infants, who, as they grew up, began to take after their foster-mother the wolf, turning out exceedingly wild lads, with a lupine propensity for worrying the flocks, and going on altogether in a very brutal manner. Remus was taken up on a charge of sheep stealing, or something very like it, and brought before Numitor, his own grandfather, when a recognition took place in a manner not much in accordance with the ordinary rules of evidence. Romulus had also been apprised of his relationship by Faustulus, who must have made a pretty bold guess at a fact he could not have known; and the two lads, being adopted by Numitor, were sent for their education to Gabii, where everything was taught that men of rank in those days were expected to learn, and whence the word Gaby is clearly derivable. Anxious to do something

for the old gentleman, their grandfather, Romulus and Remus got up a demonstration in his favour, and they succeeded in restoring him to the throne of Alba Longa, a long row of white houses, which was less of a territory than a Terrace, and it is a strange coincidence that Terracina, or little Terrace, formed one end of it. Amulius was killed, and leaving Numitor sole master of White's Row, Romulus and Remus resolved on a building speculation a great deal higher up – that is to say on the spot where they had passed the days of their infancy. Before the new city was commenced, a dispute arose, first, about what it should be called, and secondly, as to who should govern it. Romulus and Remus, being twins, could not bring the law of primogeniture to bear upon their little differences, and it was therefore agreed to refer the matter to augury, which should decide who was to be inaugurated as the ruler of the new colony. Romulus mounted the Palatine Mount, and Remus took his station on the Aventine, when both began to keep a very sharp look out for something ominous. Remus was the first to remark something odd in the shape of six vultures flying from north to south, but Romulus no sooner heard the news than he declared he had seen twelve, and the question arose whether, figuratively speaking, the one bird in hand seen by Remus should outweigh the two in the bush that subsequently appeared to Romulus. The augur, when appealed to, gave, as usual, a very ambiguous answer. It amounted, in effect, to the observation that there were six of one and a dozen of the other; so that the soothsayer, instead of having said anything

to soothe, was far more likely to irritate. Both parties claimed the victory; Remus contending for the precedence usually granted to the early bird, and Romulus maintaining that he had been specially favoured, by having been permitted to see so many birds of a feather flock together. Romulus accordingly commenced drawing his plans in the Etruscan fashion, by causing a boundary line to be marked out with a plough, to which were yoked a heifer and a bull, a ceremony from which, perhaps, the English term bulwarks, and the French word boulevards or bulvards, may or may not be derivable. The line thus traced was called the Pomœrium, and where an entrance was to be made, it was customary to carry the plough across the space – a little engineering difficulty that gave the name of Porta to a gate, from the verb *portare*, to carry. Remus looked on at the proceedings in a half-quizzing, half-quarrelsome spirit, until the wall rose a little above the ground, when he amused himself by leaping derisively over it. "Thus," said he, "will the enemy leap over those barriers." "And thus," rejoined the superintendent or clerk of the works – one Celer, who acted in this instance with thoughtless celerity – "thus shall die whoever may leap over my barriers."<sup>4</sup> With these words he gave Remus a mortal blow, and the legend goes on to state, that Romulus was immediately seized with remorse,

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<sup>4</sup> The Pomœrium was not the actual wall, but a boundary line, held very sacred by the Romans. It consisted of nothing but the clod turned inwards by the furrow, and, it is probable, that the offensive act of Remus was not his leaping over the wall, but his hopping over the clod, which would, naturally, excite indignation against him as an unmannerly clod-hopper.



and subsequent visits from his brother's ghost rendered Romulus himself little better than the ghost of what he used to be. Remus showed as much spirit after his decease as during his lifetime; and took the form of the deadly nightshade, springing up at the bed-side, to poison the existence of his brother.

Tradition tells us that Romulus came at length to terms with the ghost, who agreed to discontinue his visits, in consideration of the establishment of the festival of the Lemuria – called, originally, Remuria – in honour of his memory. The rites were celebrated bare-footed – an appropriate penalty for one who had stepped into a brother's shoes; the hands were thrice washed – a process much needed, as a sort of expiation for dirty work; – and black beans were thrown four times behind the back, with the superstitious belief that the growing up of the beans would prevent the stalking abroad of evil spirits. The unfortunate twin was buried on Mount Aventine, and Romulus ordered a double set of sceptres, crowns, and royal badges, in order that he might set up one set by the side of his own, in honour of his late relative. These duplicates of mere senseless symbols served only to commemorate the double part which Romulus had acted; for a vacant throne and a headless crown were but empty tributes to a murdered brother's memory.

The city having been built, was found considerably too large for the people there were to live in it; and as a place cannot, like a garment, be made to fit by taking it in, there was no alternative but to fill the city with any stuff that might serve for stuffing.

Romulus, therefore, threw open his gates to any one who chose to walk in, which caused an influx of those who, from having no character at all, usually go under the denomination of all sorts of characters. Society became terribly mixed, and, in fact, the place was a kind of Van Demon's Land, crammed with criminals, replete with runaway slaves, and forming – in a word – a regular refuge for the morally destitute. It says something for the females of the period, that women were very scarce at Rome, and it is surprising that some learned philologist has never yet made the remark, that the fact of the word Ro-man being familiar to us all, while there is no such term as Ro-woman, may be taken as a collateral proof of the scarcity of the gentler sex in the city founded by Romulus.

The ladies of the neighbourhood were indisposed to listen to the addresses of the male population of Rome, which was quite bad enough to suggest the possibility of the Latin word *male-factor* having supplied the distinctive epithet "male" to the ruder sex in general. In vain were proposals of marriage made to the maidens of the adjoining states, who one and all declared they would not change their state by becoming the wives of Romans. Irritated by these refusals, Romulus determined to prove himself more than a match for these women, every one of whom thought herself too good a match for any of his people. He announced his intention to give a party or pic-nic for the celebration of the Consualia, which were games in honour of Consus, the god of Counsel, – a sort of lawyer's frolic, in which a mole was

sacrificed, probably because working in the dark was always the characteristic of the legal fraternity. Invitations to these games were issued in due form to the Latins and Sabines, with their wives and daughters, many of whom flocked to the spot, under the influence of female curiosity.

The weather being propitious, all the Sabine beauty and fashion were attracted to the place, and the games, consisting of horse-racing, gave to the scene all the animation of a cup day at Ascot. Suddenly, at a preconcerted signal, there was a general elopement of the Roman youth with the Sabine ladies, who were, in the most ungallant manner, abandoned to their fate by the Sabine gentlemen. It is true that the latter were taken by surprise, but they certainly made the very best of their way home before they thought of avenging the wrong and insult that had been committed. Had they been all married ladies who were carried off, the cynic might have suggested that the Sabine husbands would not have objected to a cheap mode of divorce, but – to make use of an Irishism – there was only one single woman who happened to be a wife in the whole of the "goodly company." The small Latin states, Antennæ, Crustumerium, and Cœnina, were very angry at the supineness of the Sabines, whose King – one Tattius – seemed disposed to take the thing rather too tacitly. The three states above mentioned commenced an action on their own account, and Acron, the King of Cœnina, fell in battle by the hand of Romulus, who, stripping off the apparel of the foe, caused it to be carried to Rome and hung upon an oak, where

the arms and armour of Acron, glittering among the acorns, were dedicated, as *Spolia opima*, to Jupiter Feretrius.<sup>5</sup>

Though Tatius had been the last, he was not destined to be the least of those taking part in the Sabine war; and he determined to rely less on strategy than stratagem. The water in those days was not so well laid on as in later times; when the lofty aqueducts, still running in ruins about the neighbourhood of Rome, were carried to an elevation fitted for the very highest service that could be desired. Rome, instead of being well supplied, was supplied by wells; and ladies of rank were accustomed to draw the water required for domestic purposes. It chanced, one afternoon, that Tarpeia, the daughter of Tarpeius, the commander of the Roman city, on the Capitoline Hill, was proceeding on an errand of the sort, when she met with Tatius, who, addressing her in the language of a friend, requested "a drink" of her pitcher. Tarpeia, dazzled by the splendour of his gold bracelets and glittering armour, could not resist the request of such a highly polished gentleman. Tatius had purposely electrotyped himself for the interview, and, seeing the effect he had produced, he intimated that he had several friends, who were covered with metal quite as attractive as that he wore, and that, if Tarpeia would only open the gate of the citadel to himself and party, she should have more gold than she could carry. The bargain was faithfully kept on both sides; for Tarpeia opened the gate to Tatius and the Sabines,

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<sup>5</sup> The word Feretrius will strike the merest tyro as being derived from *fero*, to strike, and meaning to designate Jupiter in his character of Striker, or Smiter.

who, on their part performed their contract to the letter, for, as they entered, they threw at her not only their bracelets but their breast-plates, completely crushing her with the weight of the gold she had coveted; and making her think, no doubt, that "never was poor woman so unmercifully put upon." So thorough an illustration of an *embarras des richesses* is not often met with in history.

Being now possessed of the Capitoline, the Sabines were in an improved position; and the Romans, having tried in vain to recover the citadel, saw that they must either give in or give battle. Determining on the latter course, Romulus selected the valley between the Palatine and the Capitoline, where a general engagement began; but the Romans seemed to have special engagements elsewhere, for they were all running away, when their leader, with great tact, vowed a Temple to Jupiter Stator – the flight-stayer. This gave to the action a decided re-action; for the Romans, being rallied upon their cowardice, by their chief, began, in their turn, to rally. The contest grew fierce on both sides, when suddenly the Sabine ladies, who were the primary cause of the quarrel, threw themselves into the midst; and, though female interference has rarely the effect of making peace, the women were, on this occasion, the cause of a cessation of hostility. It was agreed that the two nations should be henceforth united under the name of Romans and Quirites, each having a distinct king, a distinction which, had it continued, must in time have led to a difference. In a few years, however, Tatius was slain

at a sacrifice which he had attended without the remotest idea of being made a victim himself; and Romulus, finding nothing said about a successor, thought it politic to hush the matter up without even avenging his late colleague. Romulus is said to have reigned for seven-and-thirty years; but when we enquire into the exact time and manner of his death we learn nothing, beyond the fact that nobody knows what became of him. According to the statement of one set of authorities, he was attending a review in the Palus Capræ-a marsh near the Tiber-when a total eclipse of the sun took place, and on the return of light, Romulus was nowhere visible. If this was really the case, it is probable that he got into a perilous swamp, where he felt a rapid sinking; and all his attendants being in the dark as to his situation were unable to extricate him from the marsh in which, according to some authorities, he went down to posterity. It must, however, be confessed, that when we look for the cause of the death of Romulus in this fatal swamp, we have but very poor ground to go upon. It is, nevertheless, some consolation to us for the mystery that overhangs the place and manner of his decease, that his existence is, after all, quite apocryphal; and we are not expected to go into an elaborate inquiry when, where, and how he died, until the fact of his having ever lived at all has been satisfactorily settled. Before we have quite done with Romulus, it will be proper to state how he is said to have divided the people under his sovereignty. He is alleged to have separated them into three tribes-the Latin word *tribus* will here suggest

itself to the acute student—namely the Ramnes, called after the Romans; the Tities, after Titus Tatius; and the Luceres, who derived their appellation either from one Lucumo, an Etruscan ally of Romulus, or Lucerus a king of Ardea; or *lucus* a grove, because there was no grove, and hence we get *lucerus a non luco*, on the same principle as *lucus a non lucendo*: or lastly, according to Niebuhr's opinion, from a place called Lucer or Lucerum, which the Luceres might have inhabited. Each tribe was divided into ten *curiæ*,<sup>6</sup> every one of which had a chapel for the performance of sacred rites, and was presided over by a *curio*; and the reader must have little curiosity, indeed, if he does not ask whether our modern word curate may not be referred to this remote origin. The *curiæ* were subdivided into *gentes*, or clans, and each gens consisted of several families, called gentiles; so that a man of family and a member of the *gentes*, became somewhat synonymous. In time, however, the gentiles got very much mixed by unsuitable marriages; and hence there arose among those who could claim to belong to a gens, a distinction similar to that between the *gentes*, or *gents*, of our own day, and the *gentiles*, or *gentlemen*. Romulus is said to have selected his body-guard from the three tribes, taking one hundred from each, and as Celer, the Etruscan, was their captain, the guards got the name of Celeres – the fast men of the period.

In addition to the tribes, there existed in those early times a

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<sup>6</sup> The best derivation of the word *curia* is *quiris*, which, on inquiry, is found to correspond with *curis*.

separate body, consisting of slaves, and a somewhat higher class, called by the name of clients.<sup>7</sup> The latter belonged to the common people, each of whom was permitted to choose from among the patricians a *patronus*, or patron, who could claim the life and fortune of his client in exchange for the cheaper commodities of protection and patronage. The patron gave his countenance and advice when asked, the client giving his labour and his money when wanted – an arrangement which proves that clients, from the remotest times to the present hour, were liable to pecuniary mulcts, even to the extent of the entire sacrifice of the whole of their subsistence, for the benefit of those who had the privilege of advising them.

The Senate – a term derived from the Latin word *Senes*, old men – formed the chief council of the state, and its first institution is usually referred to the reign of Romulus. Three members were nominated by each tribe, and three by each of the thirty *curiæ*, making ninety-nine in all, to which Romulus himself is said to have added one, for the purpose of making up round numbers, and at the same time nominating a sort of president over the assembly, who also had to take care of the city, in the absence of the sovereign. There is a difference of opinion as to whether one hundred new members were added to the Senate at the time of the union with the Sabines, for Dionysius says there were; but Livy says there were not; and we are disposed

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<sup>7</sup> The word "client" is probably derived from *cluere*, to hear or obey – at all events *cluere* is the best clue we can give to the origin of the word in question.



to attach credit to the former, for he was an extremely particular man, while Livy was frequently oblivious of caution in giving credence and currency to mere tradition.

Before closing this portion of the narrative of the History of Rome, it is necessary to warn the reader against believing too much of it. The current legends are, indeed, *Legenda*, or things to be read, because every body is in the habit of repeating them; but the student must guard himself against placing credence in the old remark, that "what everybody says must be true," for here is a direct instance of what everybody says being decidedly otherwise. The life and reign of Romulus, are to be taken not simply *cum grano salis*— with a grain of salt — but with an entire cellar of that condiment, which is so useful in correcting the evil consequences of swallowing too much of anything.

## **CHAPTER THE SECOND. FROM THE ACCESSION OF NUMA POMPILIUS TO THE DEATH OF ANCUS MARTIUS**

Romulus having been swamped in the marsh of Capra, or having disappeared down one of those drains, which have carried away into the great sea of conjecture so many of the facts of former ages, the senate put off from week to week, and from this day se'nnight to that day se'nnight the choice of a successor. The honourable members agreed to try their hands at Government by turns, and they took the sceptre for five days each by a constant rotation, which any wheel, and more particularly a commonwheel, was sure to suffer from. The people growing tired of this unprofitable game of fives, which threw everything into a state of sixes and sevens, clamoured so loudly to be reduced under one head, that permission was given them to elect a sovereign. Their choice fell upon Numa Pompilius, because he was born on the day of the foundation of the city; so that he may be said to have succeeded by birth to the berth of chief magistrate. Numa Pompilius was a Sabine, who we are told had been instructed by Pythagoras, and we should be happy to believe what we are told, if we did not happen to know that the

sage belonged to quite a different time, having lived two hundred years later than the alleged existence of the pupil.

Before entering on his duties, the newly chosen king consulted the augurs, with one of whom he walked up to the Temple on the Saturnian Hill, where Numa, seated on a stone, looked to the south as far as he could see, in order to ascertain whether there was any impediment to his views and prospects. In the earliest periods of the history of Rome no office was undertaken without a consultation of the augurs, or auspices; and the continued use of these words affords proof of the ancient custom to which they relate; though inauguration now takes place under auspices of a very different character. The recognised signs of those times were only two, consisting of the lightning, by means of which the truth was supposed to flash across the augur's mind; and, secondly, the birds, who, by being consulted for something singular in their singing, or eccentric in their flying, might, had they known it, have fairly plumed themselves on the honours done to them. A crow on the left betokened that things were looking black, but the same bird on the right imparted to everything a brighter colour; and as these birds are in the habit of wandering right and left, the augurs could always declare there was something to be said on both sides.

Numa Pompilius was, according to all accounts, a just ruler, and he began his career in a ruler-like manner by drawing several straight lines about Rome, to mark its boundaries. He placed these under a deity, termed Terminus, and he erected

twelve stones within a stone's throw of each other, at regular intervals along the frontier. These were visited once a year by twelve officers, called *Fratres Arvales*, appointed for the purpose, and the custom originated, no doubt, the parochial practice of perambulating parishes with wands and staves, placed in the hands of beadles, who not unfrequently add the luxury of beating the boys to the ceremony of beating the boundaries.

Numa, though he had come to the throne, was fond of the retired walks of life, and frequently took a solitary stroll in the suburbs. During one of his rambles chance brought him to a grotto, and he was induced to remember the grotto by the surpassing loveliness of its fair inhabitant. Her name was Egeria, her profession that of a fortune-teller, which gave her such an influence over the superstitious mind of Numa, that she ruled him with her divining rod as completely as if it had been a rod of iron. He professed to act under the advice of this nymph, to whom tradition – an inveterate match-maker – has married him, and he instituted the *Flamines*, an order of priests, to give weight to the falsehoods or "flams" he thought fit to promulgate. The privileges of the *Flamines* were not altogether of the most comfortable kind, and consisted chiefly in the right of wearing the *Apex* – a cap made of olive wood – and the *Laena*, a sort of Roman wrap-rascal, shaggy on both sides, and worn above the toga, as an overcoat. The *Flamen* was prohibited from appearing in public without his *Apex*, which could not be kept on the head without strings; but such was the stringency of the

regulations, that one Sulpicius<sup>8</sup> was deprived of his priesthood, in consequence of his official hat, which was as light as a modern zephyr, having been blown off his head in the midst of a sacrifice.

Numa added, also, a sort of *ballet* company to the mythological arrangements of his day, by establishing twelve *Salii*, or dancing priests, whose duty it was to execute a grand *pas de douze* on certain occasions through the principal public thorough fares. The *Salii*, though a highly respectable, were not a very venerable order, for no one could remain in it whose father and mother were not both alive, the existence of the parents of the dancing priests being, no doubt, required as a guarantee that their dancing days were not yet over.

Several temples are dated from this reign, including that of Janus, the double-faced deity, who presided over peace and war – a most appropriate office to one capable of looking two ways at once, for there are always two sides to every quarrel. This temple must have been perfectly useless during the life of its founder, for it was never to be opened in the time of peace, and Numa preserved for Rome forty-three years of undisturbed tranquillity. He was emphatically the friend of order, and its usual consequences, prosperity to trade, with soundness of credit, and he encouraged commerce by giving a patron-saint or Lar to every industrial occupation. He marked also the value of good faith by building a temple to Bona Fides, and it may be presumed that the creditor, who, putting up with the loss of his little bill,

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<sup>8</sup> Val. Maximùs, i. 1. § 4.

sacrificed a bad debt in this Temple, was still in hope that he should eventually find his account in it.

If it cannot be said that Numa never lost a day, it must be admitted that he made the most of his time; for he added two whole months to the year of Romulus. January and February were the names given to the time thus gained; but as the year did not then correspond with the course of the sun, it was usual to introduce, every other year, a supplementary month, so that if one year was too short, the next, by being too long, made it as broad as it was long in the aggregate.

Numa Pompilius lived to be eighty-two; when he had the beatitude of dying as peacefully as he had lived; and so gently had Nature dealt with him, that she had suffered him to run up more than four scores, before her debt was satisfied. Certain stories are told of the funeral ceremonies that followed Numa's death; and it is said that the Senators acted as porters to his bier, in token of their appreciation of the imperial measures which Numa had himself carried. It has been stated, also, that he caused to be placed, within his tomb, a copy, on papyrus, or palm leaves,<sup>9</sup> of his own works, in twenty-four books; and it is certainly a happy idea to bury an author with his writings, when, if they have been provocative of sleep in others, he may eventually reap the benefit of their somniferous properties.

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<sup>9</sup> There exist, in the British Museum, books older than the time of Numa, written by the Egyptians, on these palm leaves, which show, in one sense, the palmy state of literature at that early period.

On the death of Numa, the country having been taught, by past experience, the danger of allowing the crown to go from head to head, without the slightest regard to a fit, determined that the interregnum should be short, and the election of a new king was at once proceeded with. The choice fell upon Tullus Hostilius, who was of a decidedly warlike turn, and was ever on the look-out for a pretext to commence hostilities. The Albans, our old friends of Alba Longa, or White's Row, were the nearest, and consequently the most conveniently situated, for the indulgence of his pugnacious propensities; and tradition relates that on one occasion some Alban peasants, having been attacked and stripped by the Romans, the former, who had lost even their clothes, sought redress at the hands of their rulers. In the course of an attempt to settle the dispute between Alba and Rome, each place sent ambassadors, who crossed each other on the road, as if the two states were determined to be in every way at cross purposes. The Alban envoys were beguiled of all ideas of business by invitations to banquets and feasts, so that whenever they attempted to ask for explanations, their mouths were stopped with a dinner or a supper, given in honour of their visit. The Roman messengers were prohibited, on the contrary, from accepting invitations, or giving up to parties what was meant for Romankind; and had received peremptory instructions to demand an immediate settlement of their long-standing account from the Albans. The parties could not understand each other, or, rather, they understood each other too well; for war was the

object of both, though neither of them liked the responsibility of beginning it. The Albans, however, prepared to march on Rome, and encamped themselves within the confines of a ditch, into which ditch their King, Cluilius, tumbled, one night, very mysteriously, and died, which caused them to dignify the ditch with the name of *fossa Cluilia*.

The Albans appointed one Mettius Fuffetius, a fussy and nervous personage, as Dictator, in the place of the late King; and Fuffetius requested an interview with Tullus, who agreed to the proposition, with a determination, before meeting the Dictator, not to be dictated to. Mettius represented the inconvenience of wasting whole rivers of blood, when a few pints might answer all the purpose; and it was finally agreed to settle the matter by a grand combat of six, sustained on either side by three champions, chosen from each army. The Alban and the Roman forces were graced, respectively, with a trio of brothers, whose strength and activity rendered them worthy to be ranked with the small family parties who attach the epithet of Herculean, Acrobatic, Indian rubber, or Incredible, to the fraternal character in which they come forward to astonish and amuse the enlightened age we live in.

These six young men were known as the Horatii and Curiatii, – the former being on the Roman, the latter on the Alban side; and to them it was agreed, by mutual consent, to trust the fate of the battle. The story-tellers have done their utmost to render everything Roman as romantic as possible; and the legend of the



Horatii and Curiatii has been heightened by making one of the latter batch of brothers the accepted lover of the sister of the Horatii.

All the arrangements for the sanguinary *sestetto* having been completed, the six champions came forward, looking fresh and confident, not one of them displaying nervousness by a shaking of the hand, though they shook each other's hands very heartily. Having taken their positions, the men presented a picture which we regret has not been preserved for us by some sporting annalist of the period. Imagination, who is "our own reporter" on this occasion, and, perhaps, as accurate a reporter as many who profess to chronicle passing events, must fill up the outlines of the sketch that has been handed down to us.

The contest commenced with a great deal of that harmless, but violent exercise, which goes on between Shakspeare's celebrated pair of Macs – the well known 'Beth and 'Duff – when the former requests the latter to "lay on" to him, and there ensues a clashing of their swords, as vigorous as the clashing of their claims to the crown of Scotland. At length one of the Curiatii, feeling that they had all met for the despatch of business, despatched one of the Horatii, upon which the combatants, being set going, they continued to go one by one with great rapidity. A few seconds had scarcely elapsed when a second of the Horatii fell, and the survivor of the trio, thinking that he must eventually become number three if he did not speedily take care of number one, resolved to stop short this run of ill-luck against his race, by

attempting a run of good luck for his life; or, in other words, having a race for it. The excellence of his wind saved him from drawing his last breath, for the Curiatii, starting off in pursuit, soon proved unequal in their speed, and one shot far in advance of the other two, who, though stout of heart, were somewhat too stout of body to be as forward as their nimbler brother in giving chase to their antagonist. The survivor of the Horatii perceiving this, turned suddenly round upon the nearest of his foes, and having at once disposed of him, waited patiently for the other two, who were coming at unequal speed, puffing and panting after him. A single blow did for the second of the Curiatii, who was already blown by the effort of running, and it was unnecessary to do more with the third, who came up completely out of breath, than to render him incapable of taking in a further supply of that vitally important article. The last of the Horatii had consequently become the conqueror, and though when he began to run his life seemed to hang on a thread, which an unlucky stitch in his side would have finished off, his flight was the cause of his coming off in the end with flying colours. After the first of the Curiatii fell, fatness proved fatal to the other two, for Horatius, by dealing with them *en gros*, as well as *en detail*, settled all accounts with both of them.

Seeing the result of the contest, Fuffetius, on the part of the Albans, gave out that they gave in, and the Romans returned home with Horatius at their head, carrying – in a huge bundle – the spoils of the Curiatii. At the entrance of the city he met

his sister, who, perceiving among the spoils, a garment of her late lover, embroidered with a piece of work from her own hands, commenced another piece of work of a most frantic and desperate character. Maddened at the sight of the yarn she had spun for the lost object of her affections, she began spinning another yarn that threatened to be interminable, if her brother had not soon cut the thread of it. She called him by all kinds of names but his own, and was, in fact, as noisy and abusive as a conventional "female in distress," or, as that alarming and dangerous nuisance, "an injured woman." Horatius, who had found the blades of three assailants less cutting than a sister's tongue, interrupted her as she ran through her wrongs, by running her through with his sword, accompanying the act with the exclamation, "Thus perish all the enemies of Rome." Notwithstanding the excitement and *éclat* attending the triumphant entry of Horatius into Rome, the proper officer of the period, whoever he may have been, was evidently not only on duty, but prepared to do it, for the victorious fratricide, or sororicide, was at once hurried off to the nearest Roman station. Having been taken before the king, his majesty saw great difficulties in the case, and was puzzled how to dispose of it. Taking out the scales of justice, he threw the heavy crime of Horatius into one; but the services performed for his country, when cast into the other scale, seemed to balance the matter pretty evenly. Tullus, therefore, referred the case to another tribunal, which sentenced the culprit to be hanged, but he was

allowed to have so capitally acquitted himself in the fight, that he was acquitted of the capital punishment. This was commuted for the penalty of passing under the yoke, which consisted of the ceremony of walking under a pike raised upright on two others, and at these three pikes the only toll placed upon his crime was levied.

The fallen warriors were honoured with tombs in the form of sugar-loaves, by which the unsatisfactory sweets of posthumous renown were symbolised. Fuffetius, who though not wounded in his person, was fearfully wounded in his pride by the result of the conflict, felt so jealous of Tullus, that the former, though afraid to burst into open revolt, determined on the really more revolting plan of treachery. The rival soldiers had now to combine their forces against the Veientes and the Fidenates, and, having set out together, they soon found the foe drawn up in battle array, when Tullus with his Romans faced the Veientes, and Mettius with his Albans formed a *vis à vis* to the Fidenates. When the conflict commenced, the Alban wing showed the white feather, and Fuffetius gradually withdrew his forces to an adjacent hill, which he lowered himself by ascending for the purpose of watching the turn of events, so that he might declare himself on the side of victory. Tullus saw the unmanly manœuvre, but winked at it, and rushed like winking upon the Fidenates, who ran so fast that their discretion completely outran their valour. The Roman leader then turned his eyes, arms, and legs towards the Veientes, who fled towards the Tiber,

into which they desperately dived, but many of them, for divers reasons, never got out again. The perfidious Albans, headed by Mettius Fuffetius, now came down into the plain, and putting on a plain, straightforward manner, he congratulated Tullus on the victory. Pretending not to have noticed their treachery, he invited them all to a sacrifice on the following day, and having particularly requested them to come early, they were on the ground by sunrise, but were completely in the dark as to the intentions of T. Hostilius. The Romans at a given signal closed in upon the Albans, who were informed that their city should be razed, or rather, lowered to the ground, and, that their chief, who had pulled a different way from his new ally, should be fastened to horses who should be driven in opposite directions. This cruel sentence, upon which we have scarcely patience to bestow a sentence of our own, was barbarously carried into execution. Alba fell to the ground; which is all we have been able to pick up relating to the subject of this portion of our history.

The remainder of the reign of Hostilius was occupied with military successes; but he neglected the worship of the gods, who it is said evinced their anger by a tremendous shower of stones on the Alban Mount, in order to soften his flinty heart, by making him feel the weight of their displeasure. From the extreme of indifference he went to the opposite extreme of superstition, and called upon Jupiter to send him a sign – which was, in fact, a sign of the King's head being in a lamentable condition. The unhappy sovereign, imitating his predecessor Numa, attempted

some experiments in the hope of drawing down some lightning, but it was not likely that one who had conducted himself so badly could be a better conductor of the electric fluid, and the result was, that though he learned the art of attracting the spark, it flashed upon him with such force that he instantly expired.

Such is the tradition with reference to the death of Tullus; but it is hard to say whether the accounts handed down to us have been overcharged, or whether the clouds were in that condition. Some speculators insinuate that the royal experimentalist owed his sad fate to some mismanagement of his electrical jar while attempting to produce an unnatural jarring of the elements. The good actions of Tullus were so few, that his fame will not afford the omission of one, and being desirous to put the best construction we can upon his works, we give him credit for the construction of the Curia Hostilia, whose site still meets the eye near the northern angle of the Palatine. Ambassadors are spoken of as existing in the reign of Tullus Hostilius, but whether they owe their origin to Numa, who went before, or to Ancus Martius, who came after him, is so much a matter of doubt, that some historians, in trying to meet the claims of both half-way, stop short of giving the merit to either. Tullus may, at all events, have the credit of employing, if he did not institute, the art of diplomacy in Rome; for he appointed ambassadors, as we have already seen, to negotiate with the Albans. These envoys were called *Feciales*, the chief of whom wore on his head a fillet of white wool, with a quantity of green herbs, formed into a turban,

which must have had somewhat the appearance of a fillet of veal, with the ingredients for stuffing. His duty was to proceed to the offending country, and proclaim his wrongs upon the border, though there might be no one there to listen, and having crossed the boundary – if his indignation happened to know any bounds – he was to astonish the first native he met by a catalogue of grievances. On reaching a city, the ambassador went over the old story to the soldier at the gate, just as though, at Storey's gate, an irritated foreigner should pour out his country's real or imaginary wrongs to the sentinel on duty. To this recital the soldier would, of course, be as deaf as his post, and the *Fecialis* would then proceed to lay his complaint before the magistrates. In the event of his obtaining no redress, he returned home for a spear, and killing a pig with one end, he poked the fire with the other. The instrument being thus charred in the handle and blood-stained at the point, became an appropriate emblem of hostility, and the *Fecialis* declared war by stirring it up with the long pole, which he threw across the enemy's boundary.

After the death of Tullus Hostilius, the people lost no time in choosing Ancus Martius, a grandson of Numa, for their sovereign. The new king copied his grandfather, which he had a perfect right to do, but he imposed on the Pontifex Maximus the very severe task of copying on white tables the somewhat ponderous works of Pompilius, which were posted up for the perusal of the populace.

Though partial on the whole to peace, Ancus was not afraid of

war, and, when his kingdom was threatened, he was quite ready to fight for it. He subdued the Latins, and having first settled them in the field, allowed them to settle themselves in the city. He enlarged Rome, but abridged the distance between different parts by throwing the first bridge across the Tiber, and his name has come down to posterity in the ditch of the Quirites which he caused to be dug for the defence of the city, against those who were unlikely to go through thick and thin for the purpose of invading it. He also built a prison in the heart of the city, and what might be truly termed a heart of stone, for the prison was formed of a quarry, and is still in existence as a monument of the hard lot of its inmates. Ancus Martius further signalled his reign by founding the city of Ostia at the Tiber's mouth, and thus gave its waters the benefit of that port which so much increased their value. On the spot may still be seen some ruins supposed to belong to a temple dedicated to the winds, among whom the greater part of the temple has long since been promiscuously scattered. Salt-works were also established in its neighbourhood, but the *sal* was of that volatile kind that none now remains from which buyers could fill their cellars. Ancus Martius reigned for a period of twenty-four years, and either in tranquillity or war – whether engaged in the works of peace, or embroiled in a piece of work – he proved himself thoroughly worthy of his predecessors, and, in fact, he left far behind him many who had gone before him in the task of government.



# **CHAPTER THE THIRD.**

## **FROM THE ACCESSION OF TARQUINIUS PRISCUS TO THE DEATH OF SERVIUS TULLIUS**

It is the opinion of the best authorities that the Muse of History has employed her skipping-rope in passing, or rather skipping, from the grave of Ancus Martius to the throne of Tarquinius Priscus; for there is a very visible gap yawning between the two; and as we have no wish to set the reader yawning in sympathy with the gap, we at once drag him away from it.

Plunging into the times of Tarquinius Priscus, we describe him as the son of a Corinthian merchant, who, being compelled to quit his country for political reasons, had withdrawn all his Corinthian capital, and settled at Tarquinii, an Etruscan city. Having fallen in love with a lady of the place, or, more poetically speaking, deposited his affections in an Etruscan vase, he became a husband to her, and the father of two children, named respectively Lucumo and Aruns. Poor Aruns had a very brief run, and soon met his death; but we cannot say how or where, for we have no report of the meeting. Lucumo married Tanaquil, an Etruscan lady, of great beauty and ambition, who professed to dive into futurity; and, guided by this diving belle,

he threw himself into the stream of events, in the hope of being carried onwards by the tide of fortune. She persuaded him that Tarquinii was a poor place, where nothing was to be done; that his foreign extraction prevented him from being properly drawn out; and that Rome alone could afford him a field wide enough for his vast abilities. Driven by his wife, he jumped up into his chariot, which was an open one, and was just entering Rome, when his cap was suddenly removed from his head by a strange bird, which some allege was an eagle; though, had they said it was a lark, we should have believed them far more readily. Lucumo followed his hat as well as he could with his eyes; but his wife was so completely carried away with it, that she declared the circumstance told her he would gain a crown, though it really proved how nearly he had lost one; for until the bird replaced his hat upon his head, there was only a bare possibility of his getting it back again.

The wealth of his wife enabled Lucumo to live in the first style of fashion; and having been admitted to the rights of citizenship, he changed his name to Lucius Tarquinius: for the sake, perhaps, of the sound, in the absence of any sounder reason. He was introduced at Court, where he won the favour of Ancus, who was so much taken by his dashing exterior, that he gave him a commission in the army, as *Tribunus Celerum*, a sort of Captain of the Guards, who, from the title of *Celeres*, appear to have been, as we have before observed, the fast men, as opposed to the "slow coaches" of the period.

The Captain made himself so generally useful to Ancus, that when the latter died, his two sons were left to the guardianship of the former, who, on the day fixed for the election of a new king, sent his wards to the chase, that they might be pursuing other game, instead of looking after the Crown, which Tarquinius had set his own eye upon. In the absence of the youths, Tarquinius, who had got the name of Priscus, or the old hand, which he seems to have well deserved, proposed himself as a candidate; and, in a capital electioneering speech, put forth his own merits with such success, that he was voted on to the throne without opposition.

The commencement of his reign was not very peaceful, for he was attacked by the Latins; but he gave them a very severe Latin lesson, and, crushing them under his feet, sent them back to that part of Italy forming the lower part of the boot, with the loss of considerable booty. He, nevertheless, found time for all manner of games; and he instituted the *Ludi Magni*, which were great sport, in a space he marked out as the *Circus Maximus*.

The position of the Circus was between the Palatine and Aventine Hills, there being a slope on either side, so that the people followed the inclination of nature as well as their own in selecting the spot for spectacular purposes. In the earliest times a Circus was formed of materials brought by the spectators themselves, who raised temporary scaffolds, from which an unfortunate drop, causing fearful execution among the crowd, would frequently happen. Tarquinius Priscus, desirous of giving more permanent accommodation to the Roman sight seers, built

a Circus capable of containing 150,000 persons, and, from its vast superiority in size over other similar buildings, it obtained the distinction of Maximus. The sports of the Circus were extremely attractive to the Romans, who looked to the *libelli*, containing the lists of the horses, and names and colours of the drivers, with all the eagerness of a "gentleman sportsman" seeking information from Dorling's correct card at Epsom. In the early days of Rome the amusements of the Circus were limited to the comparatively harmless contests of equestrian speed; and it was not until the city had reached a high state of refinement – cruelty having become refined like everything else – that animals were killed by thousands, and human beings by hundreds at a time, to glut the sanguinary appetites of the prince and the people. The ancient Circus was circular at one end only, and the line of seats was broken by a sort of outwork, supposed to have comprised the box and retiring-room of the sovereign; while, at the opposite side, was another deviation from the line of seats, to form a place for the *editor spectaculorum*— a box for the manager. Though Tarquinius is said to have founded the Circus Maximus in commemoration of his victory over the Latins, they were not the only foes whom he might have boasted of vanquishing.

Having fought and conquered the Sabines, he took from them Collatræ, as a collateral security for their good behaviour; and coming home with a great deal of money, he built the Temple of Jupiter on the capitol.

Tarquinius, being desirous of increasing the army, was

opposed by a celebrated augur of the day, one Attus Navius, whose reputation seems to have been well deserved, if the annexed anecdote is to be believed; for it indicates that he could see further into a whetstone than any one who has either gone before or followed him. Navius declared that augury must determine whether the plan of Tarquinius could be carried out, which caused the latter to ask, sneeringly, whether he knew what he was thinking about. The question was ambiguous, but Navius boldly replied he did, and added, that what Tarquinius proposed to do was perfectly possible. "Is it indeed," said the King, "I was thinking of cutting through this whetstone with this razor." "It will be a close shave," was the reply of the augur, "but it can be done, so cut away;" and the bluntness of the observation was only equalled by the sharpness of the blade, which cut the article in two as easily as if it had been a pound of butter, instead of a stone of granite. This reproof was literally more cutting than any other that could have been possibly conveyed to the king, who ever afterwards paid the utmost respect to the augurs, of whom he was accustomed thenceforth to say, that the affair of the whetstone proved them to be much sharper blades than he had been willing to take them for.

Having been at war with the Tuscans, whom he vanquished, he was admitted into the ranks of the Kings of Etruria; a position which led him to indulge in the most extravagant desires. He must needs have a crown of gold, which often tears or encumbers the brow it adorns; a throne of ivory, on whose too highly polished

surface the foot is apt to slip; and a sceptre, having on its top an eagle, which frequently gives wings to the power it is intended to typify. His robe was of purple, with so costly an edging, that the border exceeded all reasonable limits, and furnished an instance of extravagance carried to the extreme, while the rate at which he went on may be judged from the fact of his always driving four in hand in his chariot. He did not, however, wholly neglect the useful in his taste for the ornamental; and though his extravagance must have been a drain upon the public pocket, he devoted himself to the more honourable drainage of the lower portions of the city. He set an example to all future commissioners of sewers, by his great work of the *Cloaca Maxima*, some portion of which still exists, and which contains, in its spacious vault, a far more honourable monument than the most magnificent tomb that could have been raised to his memory.

Tarquinius had reigned about thirty-eight years, when the sons of Ancus Martius, who had been from the first brooding over their own ejection from the throne, carried their brooding so far as to hatch a conspiracy, which, though regarded by the best authorities as a mare's nest, forms one of those "lays" of ancient Rome which tradition gives as part of her history. The youths, expecting that Tarquinius would secure the succession to a favourite, named Servius Tullius, made an arrangement with a couple of shepherds, who, pretending to have a quarrel, went with hatchets in their hands to the king, and requested him to

settle their little difference. Tarquinius seems to have been in a most accommodating humour, for he is said to have stepped to the door of the palace, to arbitrate between these most ungentle shepherds, who, pretending that they only came with their hatchets to axe his advice, began to axe him about the head; and while he was endeavouring to act as an arbitrator, they, acting as still greater traitors, cruelly made away with him. The lictors who stood by must have had their faces and their fasces turned the wrong way, for they administered a beating to the shepherds when, too late, after the regal crown was already cracked beyond the possibility of repair, and the king was almost knocked to pieces before he had time to collect himself.

Tarquinius was a practical reformer, and rested his fame on the most durable foundations, among which the still-existing remains of the Cloaca Maxima, or largest common sewer, have already been noticed. Those who are over nice might feel repugnant to come down to posterity by such a channel; but that country is fortunate indeed in which genius seeks "the bubble reputation" at the mouth of the sewer, instead of in the mouth of the cannon.

It must be recorded, to the honour of Tarquinius, that he organised the plebeians, and elevated some of them to the rank of patricians, thus giving vigour to the aristocratic body, which runs the risk of becoming corrupt, and losing its vitality, unless a supply of plebeian life-blood is from time to time poured into it.

This measure would have been followed by other wholesome

reforms, but for the short-sighted and selfish policy of the patricians themselves, who could not perceive the fact, full of apparent paradoxes, that if anything is to remain, it must not stand still; that no station can be stationary with safety to itself; and that nothing possessed of vitality can grow old without something new being continually added.

The sixth king of Rome was Servius Tullius, who is said to have been the son of a female in the establishment of Tanaquil. His mother's name was Ocrisia; but there is something vague about the paternity of the boy, which has been assigned sometimes to the Lar, or household god of the establishment, and sometimes to Vulcan. Whoever may have been the father, it was soon intimated that the child was to occupy a high position; and on one occasion, when sleeping in his cradle, his head was seen to be on fire; but no one was allowed to blow out the poor boy's brains, or otherwise extinguish the flame, which was rapidly consuming the hair on the head of the future heir to the monarchy. The nurses and attendants were ordered to sit down and see the fire burn out of its own accord, which, the tradition says, it did, though common sense says it couldn't; for the unfortunate infant must have died of consumption had he been suffered to blaze away in the cool manner spoken of. Though of common origin, at least on his mother's side, young Servius Tullius was supposed to have been completely purified by the fire, which warmed the hearts of all who came near him; and not only did the queen adopt him as her own son, but



the partial baking had produced such an effect upon his very ordinary clay, that he was treated like a brick required for the foundations of the royal house into which Tarquinius cemented him, by giving him, as a wife, one of the daughters of the royal family.

Tanaquil having kept secret her husband's death, Servius Tullius continued for some time to carry on the business of government, just as if nothing had happened. When it was at length felt that the young favourite of fortune had got the reins fairly in his hands, the murder came out, and the barbarous assassination of Tarquinius was published to the multitude. Servius was the first instance of a king who mounted the throne without the aid of the customary pair of steps, consisting of an election by the Senate, and a confirmation by the Curiae.

It might have been expected that Servius, when elevated above his own humble stock, might have held his head so high and become so stiff-necked as to prevent him from noticing the rank from which he had sprung; but, on the contrary, he exalted himself by endeavouring to raise others. His reign was not a continued round of fights, for he preferred the trowel to the sword, and, instead of cutting his name with the latter weapon, he wisely chose to build up his reputation with the former instrument. His first care was to complete the city, to which he added three hills, feeling, perhaps, that his fame would become as ancient as the hills themselves; and with a happy perception that if "walls have ears" they are just as likely to have tongues, he

surrounded Rome with a wall, which might speak to future ages of his spirit and enterprise. He was a friend to insolvent debtors, to whom he gave the benefit of an act of unexampled liberality. Desiring them to make out schedules of their liabilities, he paid off the creditors in a double sense, for they were extremely reluctant to receive the cash, the payment of which cashiered their claim on the person and possessions of their debtors. He abolished imprisonment for debt, giving power to creditors over the goods and not the persons – or, as an ingenious scholar has phrased it, the bona and not the bones – of their debtors.

Servius found that while he was raising up buildings he was knocking down a great deal of money; but being nevertheless anxious to erect a temple to Diana on the Aventine Hill he persuaded the Latins, who had made the place a sort of *quartier Latin*, to subscribe to it. The Latins, the Romans, and the Sabines, were every year to celebrate a sort of union sacrifice on this spot, where the cutting up and cooking of oxen formed what may be termed a joint festival. It happened that a Sabine agriculturist had reared a prize heifer, which caused quite an effervescence among his neighbours, and taking the bull quietly by the horns, he asked the augur what it would be meet for him to do with it. The soothsayer looked at the bull, who turned his brilliant bull's eye upon the astonished sage, with a sort of supercilious stare that almost amounted to a glaring oversight. The augur, not liking the look of the animal, and anxious, no doubt, to put an end to the interview, declared that whoever sacrificed the beast

to Diana, off-hand, would benefit his race, and cause his nation to rule over the other confederates. The animal was led away with a shambling gait to the sacred shambles, where the Roman priest was waiting to set his hand to any Bull that might be presented to him. Seeing the Sabine preparing to act as slaughterman, the pontiff became tiffy, and suggested, that if the other was going to do the job, he might as well do it with clean hands, upon which the Sabine rushed to the river to take a finger bath. While the owner was occupied about his hands the Roman priest took advantage of the pause to slaughter the animal, and, on his return, the Sabine found that he had unintentionally washed his hands of the business altogether. The oracle was thus fulfilled in favour of the Romans, who trumpeted the fact through the bull's horns, which were hung up in front of the temple in memory of this successful piece of priest-craft.

The growing popularity of Servius with the plebs made the patricians anxious to get rid of him, for they had not the sense to feel that if they aspired to be the pillars of the state, a close union with the class beneath, or, as they would have contemptuously termed it, the base, was indispensable. It happened that Servius, in the hope of propitiating the two sons of Tarquinius, had given them his two daughters as their wives, though it was a grievous mistake to suppose that family marriages are usually productive of family union. Jealousy and quarrelling ensued, which ended in the elder, Tullia, persuading her sister's husband Lucius Tarquinius to murder his own brother and his own wife,

in order that he might make a match with the lump of female brimstone that had inflamed his brutal passions. Not satisfied with the double murder, which would have qualified her new husband to be struck in the hardest wax and to occupy chambers among the worst of horrors, Tullia was always whispering into his ear that she wished her father farther, and by this demoniac spell she worked on the weak and wicked mind of Lucius Tarquinius. It having been reported that Servius Tullus intended to crown his own reign by uncrowning himself, and exchanging, as it were, the royal stock for consuls, the patricians thought it would be a good opportunity to speculate for a fall, by attempting the king's overthrow. Tullia and her husband were asked to join in this conspiracy, when it was found that the wretched and corrupt pair would be quite ripe for any enormity. It was arranged, therefore, that Lucius Tarquinius, at a meeting of the Senate, should go down to the House with all the insignia of royalty, and, having seated himself upon the throne, the trumpeters in attendance were, by one vigorous blow, to proclaim him as the sovereign. When Servius heard the news he proceeded to the Assembly, where all things – including the trumpets – seemed to be flourishing in favour of the traitor. As the sound of the instruments fell upon the old king's ears, he seemed to tremble for a moment before the rude blast which threatened the blasting of all his benevolent views, but calling out from the doorway in which he stood, he rebuked the insolence and treachery of his son-in-law. A disgraceful scene ensued, in which other blows

than those of the trumpeters were exchanged, and Servius, who had in vain desired the traitor to "come off the throne," was executing a threat to "pull him off" as well as the old man's strength, or rather, his feebleness, would allow him. The senators were watching the scene with the vulgar interest attaching to a prize fight, and were no doubt backing up the combatants with the ordinary expressions of encouragement, which we can only interpret by our own familiar phrases of, "Go it," "Now then young 'un," "Bravo old 'un," and "Give it him." Getting rather too near the edge of the throne, but holding each other firmly in their respective grasps, the two combatants rolled together down the steps of the throne – an incident not to be met with in the rolls of any other Parliament. Getting immediately on to their legs they again resumed their hostile footing, when Tarquinius being younger and fresher than his antagonist, seized up the old man, now as feeble as an infant in arms, and carried his brutality to such a pitch as to pitch him down the steps of the Senate House. Servius tried in vain to pick up his courage, and being picked up himself, he was on his road home when he was overtaken and murdered in a street, which got the name of *Vicus Sceleratus*, or Rascally Row, from the disgraceful row that occurred in it. Tullia was driving down to the House to hear the news when her coachman pulled up at the horrid sight of the king lying in the street, but the female fury only ordered the man to "drive on," and it is said that she enforced her directions by flinging a footstool at his head, though, on subjecting the story to the usual tests,

we find the footstool without a leg to stand upon. Servius Tullus had reigned forty-four years, and his memory was cherished for centuries after his death, his birthday being celebrated on the Nones of every month, because he was known to have been born on some nones, but which particular nones were unknown to any one. We have already noticed the wall of Servius, but we must not forget the Agger, or mound, connected with it, the value of which was equal to that of the wall itself, and, indeed, those who give the preference to the Agger over the wall do not much exaggerate. There remains to this day a great portion of the mound, which was sixty feet high and fifty broad, skirted with flag stones towards the outer side, and the Romans no doubt would derive more security from laying down their flags on the outer wall than from hanging out their banners.

The greatest work, however, of the reign of Servius was the reform of the Constitution, which he constructed with a view to the reconciling of the wide differences between the patricians and the plebeians, so as to form one powerful body by making somebodies of those who had hitherto been treated as nobodies. His first care was to divide the plebeians into thirty tribes – a name derived from the word *tribus*, or three, and applied to the three plebeian tribes – the derivation being so simple that were we to ask any schoolboy if he understood it, his answer would be, that "he might be whipped" and he would assuredly deserve to be whipped "if he didn't." These thirty tribes were placed under an officer called a *tribunus*, whose duty it was to

keep a list of the members and collect the *tributum*— a word, to which in the reader's ready mind, the word tribute will at once be attributed. Besides the orders of patricians and plebeians, whose position was determined by descent alone, Servius thought there were many who might be connected together by a tie proper to them all, namely, that of property. He accordingly established a census to be held every five years, in which the name of every one who had come to man's estate was put down, together with the amount of his other estate, if he was lucky enough to have any. The whole number was divided into two heads, one of which was foot, or *pedites*, and the other horse, or *equites*, among whom an equitable share of rights and duties had to be distributed. The *pedites*, or infantry, were not all on the same footing, but were subdivided into six classes, according to the amount of their possessions, which determined their position in the army; but even the sixth class, or those who had no other possession than their self-possession, were not excluded from the service. Each class was divided into seniors and juniors, the former being men between forty-five and sixty; the latter, including all below forty-five and above seventeen, at which early age, though frequently not bearded themselves, they were expected to go forth and beard the enemy. In addition to the two assemblies of the *curiæ* (the *comitia curiata*) and the tribes (the *comitia tributa*), there was instituted by Servius a great national assembly called the *comitia centuriata*, and consisting of the whole of the centuries. Of these centuries there were altogether one hundred and ninety-

three; but, instead of every individual member being allowed a separate vote, the suffrage was distributed amongst classes according to their wealth or the number of asses they possessed, a principle which the opponent of a mere property qualification will regard as somewhat asinine. By this arrangement the poor were practically excluded from voting at all, unless the rich were disagreed among themselves, when the merely industrious classes, such as the *Fabri*— the very extensive family of the Smiths and the Carpenters — the *Cornicines*— the respectable race of Hornblowers — and others of similar degree sometimes had sufficient weight to turn the balance.

Though the equestrian centuries comprised the richest class, they seem to have been in one respect little better than beggars on horseback, for each eques received from the treasury a sum for the purchase of his horse and an annual grant for its maintenance. The amount was levied upon orphans and widows, who were, it is true, exempt from other imposts, though their contributing from their slender means to keep a horse on its legs caused many to complain that the law rode rough-shod over them. The Assembly of the Centuries was a grand step towards self-government, and, though many may think that wealth had an actual preponderance, it was always possible for a member of a lower class to get into a higher, and thus an inducement to self-advancement was secured, which is, certainly, not one of the least useful ends of government. There were numerous instances of energetic Romans rising from century to century with a rapidity showing



that they were greatly in advance of the age, or, at all events, of the century in which they were originally placed by their lot, or rather by their little.

Servius introduced into Rome the Etruscan As, of the value of which we can give no nearer notion than by stating the fact that a Roman sheep was worth about ten Etruscan asses. To the poorer classes these coins could have been of little service, and by way of small change they were permitted to use shells, from which we no doubt get the phrase of "shelling out," a quaint expression sometimes used to describe the process of paying. In some parts of the world shells are still current as cash, and even among ourselves fish are employed at cards as the representatives of money. Though in ordinary use for the smaller purposes of commerce, shells were not receivable as taxes, for when the Government required the sinews of war it would not have been satisfied with mussels or any other similar substitute.

The Roman As was of bronze and stamped on one side with a portrait of Janus, whose two heads we never thought much better than one, though they appeared appropriately on a coin as a sign, perhaps, that people are often made doublefaced by money. On the other side was the prow of a ship, which might be emblematical of the fact that money is necessary to keep one above water.

In the time of Servius all were expected to arm themselves according to their means, and the richest were thoroughly clad in bronze for the protection of their persons, while the poorer,

who could not afford anything of the kind, were obliged to trust for their self-defence to their own natural metal. The patricians carried a clypeus, or shield, of such dimensions as to cover frequently the whole body, and by hiding himself behind it the wearer often escaped a hiding from the enemy. The material of which the clypeus was composed was wood covered with a bull's skin that had been so thoroughly tanned as to afford safety against the severest leathering.

# **CHAPTER THE FOURTH. FROM THE ACCESSION OF TARQUINIUS SUPERBUS TO THE BANISHMENT OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, AND THE ABOLITION OF THE KINGLY DIGNITY**

Tarquinius had ascended the throne more by the force of his fists, than by the strength of his arms; for he had aimed a blow, not only at the crown, but at the face of the unhappy sovereign who had preceded him. Carrying his hostility beyond the grave, Tarquinius refused to bury his animosity, or to grant his victim a funeral. The upstart nature of the new king gained for him the nickname of Superbus, or the proud, though he had as little to be proud of as some of the most contemptible characters in history. He, however, asserted himself with so much audacity, that the people were completely overawed by his pretensions, and many made away with themselves, to insure their lives, by a sort of Irish policy, against Tarquin's violence. He took away the privileges of the plebeians, and sent many to the scaffold, by employing them as common bricklayers; but there were several who preferred laying violent hands on themselves, to laying a single brick of the

magnificent buildings which he planned, in the hope, perhaps, that the splendour of the constructions of his reign would induce posterity to place the best construction on his character.

He coolly assumed the whole administration of the law, and added the office of executioner to that of judge, while he combined with both the character of a criminal, by seizing the property of all those whom he punished, and thus adding robbery to violence. To prevent the possibility of a majority against him in the Senate, he cut off several of the heads of that body; and though he never condescended to submit to the Assembly a single question, he treated the unhappy members as if they had much to answer for.

Finding the continued ill-treatment of his own people getting rather monotonous, he sought the pleasures of variety, by harassing the Volscians, whom he robbed of a sufficient sum to enable him to commence a temple to Jupiter. Bricks and mortar soon ran up above the estimated cost; and Tarquin had scarcely built the lower floor, when he came to the old story of shortness of funds, which he supplied by making the people pay as well as work, and taxing at once their time and their pockets. This temple was on the Capitoline Hill; and it is said that in digging the foundations the workmen hit upon a freshly-bleeding human head, which, of course, must be regarded as an idle tale; nor would it be right for history to hold an elaborate inquest on this head, since it would be impossible to find a verdict without having first found the body. The augur, who, according to the

legend, was present on the occasion, is reported to have made a *post-mortem* examination of the head, which he identified as that of one Tolus; but who Tolus was, or whether he ever was at all, we are told nothing on any competent authority. The augur, whose duty it was to be ready to interpret anything that turned up, no sooner saw the head, than putting upon it the best face he could, he declared it to be a sign that Rome was destined to be the head of the world – an obvious piece of fulsome adulation, worthy of being offered to the flattest of flats, by one disposed to flatter. The temple itself was a great fact, notwithstanding the numerous fictions that are told concerning it; and there is little doubt that though, as some say, Tarquinius Priscus (the old one) may have begun it, Tarquinius Superbus put to it the finishing touch, and surmounted it with a chariot and four in baked clay, which, had it been preserved to this day, would have been one of the most interesting of Potter's Antiquities.

A curious anecdote, connected with the bookselling business of the period, has been handed down to us; and it is sufficiently interesting to be handed on to the readers of this work, who are at liberty either to take it up, or to set it down at its real value. It is said that Tarquin was waited upon by a female, who brought with her nine books, and, expressing herself willing to do business, asked three hundred pieces of gold for the entire set of volumes. The King pooh-poohed the proposition, on the ground of the exorbitant price, and desired her to be off with the books, when she solemnly advised him not to off with the

bargain. Finding him obstinate, the woman, who was, it seems, a sibyl, and eked out her bookseller's profits by the business of a prophetess, threw into the flames three of the volumes, which, assuming, for a few minutes, the aspect of illuminated copies, soon left no traces – not even a spark – of any genius by which they might have been inspired. The sibyl, soon after, paid a second visit to Tarquin, bringing with her the six remaining volumes; and having asked in vain the same sum for the imperfect copy as she had done for the whole work, she went through a sort of second edition of Burns, by throwing three more of her books into the fire. To the surprise of Tarquin, she appeared a third time with her stock of books, now reduced to three; and upon the King's observing to her "What do you want for these?" she replied that three hundred pieces of gold was her price; that she made no abatement; that if the books were not instantly bought, they would speedily be converted into light literature, and being condensed into one thick volume of smoke, would, of course, take their final leaves of the royal residence. The King, astonished at the woman's pertinacity, resolved at last to send for a valuer, to look at the books, who declared them to be well worth the money. They contained a variety of remedies for diseases, directions for preparing sacrifices, and other interesting matter, with a collection of the oracles of Cumæ, by way of appendix, so that the volumes formed a sort of encyclopædia, embracing the advantages of a Cookery Book, a Buchan's Domestic Medicine,

and a Complete Fortune-teller. Tarquin<sup>10</sup> became the purchaser of these three very odd volumes, which seem to have been estimated less according to their intrinsic value, than the price they had brought; and they were carefully put away in the Temple library.

It was the desire of the Government to prevent the people from knowing what these books might contain, and the office of librarian was entrusted to two individuals of illustrious birth, under the idea – not very flattering to aristocracy – that patricians would be found the best promoters of ignorance. One of these officers, having acted so inconsistently with his rank, as to have imparted some information to a fellow-citizen, was dismissed from his place and thrown into the sea in a bag; so that he may be said, by the heartless punster, to have got the sack in a double meaning.

While building operations were going on at home, destruction was being dealt out abroad; and the Gabii being about twelve miles from Rome, were the objects of the King's hostility. Having sent one of his captains against them, who was repulsed by a major force, Tarquinius resolved on trying treachery. He accordingly despatched his son, Sextus, to complain of ill-treatment at his father's hands, and to implore the pity of the Gabii, who were gabies enough not only to believe the story, but

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<sup>10</sup> Some say that Tarquinius Priscus bought the books; but it is of little consequence who was the real buyer, as the whole story is very probably "a sell" on the part of the narrators, as well as of the sibyl.

even to appoint Sextus their general. He was ultimately chosen their governor; and finding the Gabii completely in his hands, he sent to his own governor – Tarquinius – to know what to do with them. The King was in the garden when the messenger arrived; and whenever the latter asked a question, the former made no reply, but kept knocking off the heads of the tallest poppies with his walking-stick. The messenger ventured to intimate, once or twice, that he was waiting for an answer; but the heads of the poppies flying off in all directions, he began to tremble for his own, and he flew off himself, to prevent accidents. On his return, he mentioned the circumstances to Sextus, who regarded the poppies as emblems of the Gabii; and, indeed, the latter seemed so thoroughly asleep, that the comparison was no less just than odious.

Sextus, taking the paternal hint, knocked off several of the heads of the people; and keeping up the allegory to the fullest extent, cut off the flower of the Gabii. Many of their fairest blossoms perished by a too early blow; and being thus deprived of what might fairly be termed its prime pick, the soil was soon planted with the victorious standards of Tarquinius. He, however, instead of introducing any apple of discord, judiciously grafted the Gabian on the Roman stock; and thus cultivated the only really valuable fruits of victory.

Tarquin was a great deal troubled by the signs of the times; or, rather, he was made so uncomfortable by an evil conscience, that if a snake appeared in his path, it seemed to hang over



him like a horrible load; and if he went to sleep, there was a mare's-nest always at hand, to trouble him with a night-mare. He dreamed that some eagles had built in his gardens, and that in their temporary absence from the nest, some vultures had breakfasted on the new-laid eggs, and, armed with their beaks, taken possession of the deserted small tenement. Unable to drive the vultures out of his head, he was anxious to ascertain the meaning of the omen, for he had become so superstitious, that if he saw a sparrow dart from a branch, he regarded it as an emblem that he was himself about to hop the twig in some unexpected manner. Doubting the efficiency of his own augurs, on whom he was beginning to throw some of the discredit to which prophets in their own country are liable, Tarquin resolved on seeking the aid of foreign talent; and as the omens were worse than Greek to him, he sent to the oracles at Delphi, thinking if the matter was Greek to them they would be able to interpret it. His messengers to the fortune-tellers were his two sons, Aruns and Titus, together with his nephew, one Lucius Junius Brutus, who, though an extremely sensible young man, was in the habit of playing the fool, in order to avert the suspicions of his uncle. Though Brutus assumed the look of an idiot, and generally had his eye on vacancy, it was only to conceal the fact that a vacancy on the throne was what he really had his eye upon. Valuable gifts were taken to the oracle, which was slow to speak in the absence of presents. When Brutus put a *báton* into the hand of the Priestess, she knew, by the weight, that the *báton* was a

hollow pretext for the conveyance of a bribe, which she looked for, found, and pocketed. On the strength of a large lump of gold, thus cunningly conveyed to the Priestess, Brutus ventured to ask who would be the next King of Rome, to which she replied by a recommendation that all the applicants should go home to their mothers, for that "he who kissed his mother first should be the one to govern." Titus and Aruns made at once for their mamma, and eager to kiss her, ran as fast as they could to catch the first bus, but Brutus, whom they had perhaps tripped up, to prevent his getting a fair start, saluted his mother earth with a smack of the lip in return for the blow on the face that his fall had occasioned him.

When the ambassadors returned to Rome they found Tarquin as nervous as ever; and there is little doubt, that if tea had been known in those days, the King would have sat for ever over his cups, endeavouring to read the grounds for his fears in the grounds of the beverage. The treasury having been exhausted by his building speculations, the people were growing more dissatisfied every day; and, in order to turn their discontent away from home, he engaged them in a quarrel with Ardea, a city situated on a lofty rock, against which the Romans threw themselves with a sort of dashing energy. The attempt to take the place by a common assault and battery was vain, for the rock stood firm; and it was probable, that if the Romans remained at the gates, and continued knocking over and over again, they would ultimately be compelled to knock under. They therefore

resolved on hemming the Ardeans in, as there was no chance of whipping them out, and military works were run in a continuous thread round the borders of the city.

The Romans, acting as a sort of army of occupation, had, of course, scarcely any occupation at all; and there being nothing that soldiers find it so difficult to kill as their time, the officers were in the habit of going halves in suppers at each other's quarters. At one of these entertainments the King's sons, and their cousin, one Tarquinius, surnamed Collatinus, from the town of Collatia, were discussing the merits of their respective wives, and each of the officers, with an uxuriousness among the military that the commonest civility would have restrained, was praising his own wife at the expense of all others.

It was at length agreed that the husbands should proceed forthwith to Rome, and that having paid an unexpected visit to all the ladies, the palm should be awarded to her who should be employed in the most praiseworthy way, when thus unceremoniously popped in upon. They first visited the wife of Sextus, who had got a large evening party and ball at home, and who was much confused by this unexpected revelation of her midnight revels. Dancing was at its height; and as a great writer has said of dancing among the Romans, "*Nemo fere saltat sobrius, nisi forte insaniat*,"<sup>11</sup> – any one who dances must be

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<sup>11</sup> Cicero. It is true this was said at a much later time than that of which we are now writing; but dancing, except in connection with certain ceremonies, was considered degrading by the Romans from the earliest period.

either very drunk, or stark mad, – we may guess the state of the company that Sextus found at his residence. In one corner the game of *Par et Impar*– "odd or even" – might perhaps have been played; for nothing can be more purely classical than the origin of some of those sports which form almost the only pretexts for the employment of our modern street-keepers. A portion of the guests might have been amusing themselves with the *Tali*, or "knuckle-bones," others might have been employed at *Jactus bolus*– "pitch and toss;" while here and there among the revellers might have been heard the familiar cry of *Aut caput aut navem*– the "heads or tails" of antiquity.

Their next call was at the house of Collatinus, whose wife, Lucretia, was also engaged with a ball, but it was of cotton, and instead of devoting herself to the whirl of the dance, she was spinning with her maids, by way of spinning out the long, dreary hours of her husband's absence. Sextus at once admitted that Collatinus had indeed got a treasure of a wife, and the officers returned to the camp; but a few evenings afterwards, availing himself of the introduction of her husband, Sextus paid the lady a second visit. Being a kinsman, he was asked to make himself at home, but his manner became so strange, that Lucretia could not make him out; and as he did not seem disposed to go home till morning, she retired to her chamber, with the impression, no doubt, that being left alone in the sitting-room he would take the hint, order his horse, and proceed to his lodgings. Lucretia was, however, disturbed in the middle of the night by Sextus,

who was standing over her with a drawn sword, and who was guilty of such brutal insolence, that she sent a messenger, the first thing in the morning, to fetch her husband from Ardea, and her father from Rome, who speedily arrived with his friend, P. Valerius, a highly respectable man, who afterwards got the name of Publicola. Collatinus brought with him L. J. Brutus, and Lucretia having rapidly run through the story of her wrongs, she still more rapidly run through herself before any one had time to arrest the deadly weapon. Revenge against Tarquin and his whole race was instantly sworn, in a sort of quartette, by the four friends, and L. J. Brutus, snatching up the dagger, made a great point of it in a speech he addressed to the people in the market place. Indignation was now thoroughly roused against the Tarquin family, and Brutus, proceeding to Rome, called a public meeting in the Forum. He opened the business of the day by stating what had been done, and having made his deposition he proposed the deposition of the king; when it was moved, by way of amendment, and carried unanimously, that the resolution should be extended by the addition of the words, "and the banishment of his wife and family." A volunteer corps was at once formed to set out for Ardea, where the king was supposed to be; but on hearing of the insurrection, he had at once decamped from the camp, and proceeded to Rome, where he found the gates closed, and feeling himself shut out from the throne, he took refuge with his two sons, Titus and Aruns, at Caere, in Etruria. There history loses sight of the old king, but Sextus has

been traced to Gabii, a principality of which he thought he was the head; but the people soon undeceived him, by showing him they would have no head at all, for they cut him off one day in a tumult.

Tullia had fled, and it is not known whither; but mercy to the fallen king would lead us to hope that the queen had gone in a different direction from that which he had taken. The Ardeans agreed to a truce for fifteen years – a somewhat lengthy letter of license – during which all hostile proceedings were to be stayed, and the people decreed the total abolition of the kingly dignity. The royal stock was converted, as it were, into consuls, and L. Junius Brutus, with L. Tarquinius Collatinus, were elected for one year, to fill the latter character.

Before closing an account of what is usually termed the kingly period of the history of Rome, it is due to truth to state, that though some of the alleged kings were good and others were bad, they must all be considered as very doubtful characters. The fact of their existence depends on no better authority than certain annals, compiled more than a century and a half after the materials for compiling them had been destroyed; and we are thus driven to rely upon the statements of certain story-tellers, belonging, we fear, to a class, whose memories, according to the proverb, ought to be excellent. In pretending to recollect what they never knew, they have sometimes forgotten themselves, and in building up their stories, they have shown how mere fabrication may raise an ostensibly solid fabric.

Of the seven kings, who are said to have ruled in Rome during a period of nearly two hundred and fifty years, three or four were murdered; another subsided in a bog, and another ran for his life, which he saved by his speed, though he was the last of the race of royalty. It is difficult to spread these seven sovereigns over a space of two centuries and a half, and we feel that we might as well attempt to cover an acre of bread with a thin slice of ham, or turn the river Thames into negus by throwing a few glasses of sherry into it. Of the earliest Roman annals, some were burnt, leaving nothing to the student but the tinder, from which it is, in these days, hardly possible to obtain much light, but the greater portion of the early history of Rome has come down to us by tradition, that extraordinary carrier, who is continually adding to the bulk, but diminishing the weight of the matters consigned to it for delivery.

Of the condition of the people at this early period little or nothing can be known, and to amuse ourselves with idle guesses, would be scarcely better than to turn into a game of blindman's buff the important business of history. We can however state, with confidence, that the earliest Romans had no regular coinage, but were in the habit of answering with brass, in the rudest shape, the demands of their creditors. Servius Tullius is reputed to have been the first who converted the brass into coin, and marked it with the figure of a horse or some other animal,<sup>12</sup> as an emblem,

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<sup>12</sup> Hence, from the word *pecus*, cattle, was derived *pecunia*, signifying money, and giving rise to our own word "pecuniary."

perhaps, of the fact, that money runs away very rapidly.

Among the early Romans, the most honourable occupations were agriculture and war; the latter enabling the citizens to make a conquest of the soil with the sword, and the former teaching them to subdue it to their purposes by the implements of husbandry. Trade and commerce were held in contempt, and left to the plebeians; the patrician considering himself suitably employed only when he was thrashing his corn, or performing the same operation on his enemies.

During the early existence of the city the native artists were few, and the great works of architecture undertaken by the later kings were embellished by foreign talent from Etruria. The writing-master had made so little progress in ancient Rome, that it is doubtful whether many of the patricians could write their own names; and even some of the most distinguished characters of the day were men of mark, not only by their position, but by their signatures.

It is not very gratifying to the friends of education to find that though ignorance was almost universal among the early Romans, there was a wholesome tone of morality among the people, which led them, not only to condemn in their traditions the cruelty and laxity of principle prevailing in the family of their last king, but to pay due reverence to the domestic virtues of Lucretia. The legend of the latter being found spinning with her maids, while the princesses of the house of Tarquin were reeling in the dance, during the absence of their respective husbands, is



sufficient to show the estimation in which decency and sobriety were held, as well as the odium that attached to riotous revelry. The patrician youth of infant and unlettered Rome would have been ashamed of those nocturnal gambols which have prevailed among portions of the juvenile aristocracy and gentry in more civilised countries, and in a more enlightened age, when door-knockers, and bell-handles, have been carried off as the *spolia opima* of some disorderly triumph.

# **CHAPTER THE FIFTH.**

## **FROM THE BANISHMENT OF TARQUINIUS SUPERBUS TO THE BATTLE OF LAKE REGILLUS**

Brutus, who had gained his eminence by swearing that there should be no monarch or single ruler in Rome, found himself in sole possession of the supreme authority. His position presents nothing very remarkable to the modern observer, who is accustomed to see those who have denounced a system yesterday participating in the profits of the same system to-day, and declaring their own arguments to be thoroughly out of place, as applied to themselves when in office. Brutus, however, could not consistently exercise a power he had sworn to overthrow; and to carry out his anti-monarchical principles, he had either to go out himself, or to ask for a colleague. On the same principle that prefers the half quartern to utter loaflessness, Brutus proposed a partnership in the government; and Collatinus was taken into the firm, which proved to have no firmness at all, for it was dissolved very speedily. The difficulty of agreement between two of the same trade was severely felt by the two popular reformers, who were dividing the substance without the name of that power they had vowed to destroy; it was soon evident that if they had thought

it too much for one, they considered it not enough for two; and they were accordingly always quarrelling. To prevent collision, they tried the experiment of taking the supreme authority by turns, each assuming the fasces for a month at a time; but this alternate chopping of the regal sticks, or fasces, which were the emblems of power, led to nothing satisfactory.

A question at length arose, upon which the duality of the ruling mind was so distinctly marked, that the two consuls, whose very name is derived from *con*, with, and *salio*, to leap, were trying to leap in two opposite ways; and an end of their own power was the only conclusion to which they were likely to jump together. Tarquin had retired to Caere, waiting the chances of a restoration of his line; but his line had fallen into such contempt, that he was fishing in vain for his recall, though he nevertheless sent ambassadors to demand the restoration of himself, or at all events of his private property.

The senate decreed that though Tarquin could not have the fasces, he was at liberty to make a bundle of all the other sticks that might belong to him. On this question Brutus and Collatinus were violently opposed, and both becoming hot, their excessive warmth led to a mutual coolness that ended in an open hostility, which shut out every hope of compromise. Collatinus gave in by going out, and was succeeded by P. Valerius, one of the party of four who had roused the popular spirit over the bier of Lucretia.

Tarquin's ambassadors, instead of being satisfied with the permission to remove his goods, had other objects in the back-

ground; for they had a plan for his restoration in the rear, while they let nothing appear in the van, but the late king's furniture. The plot was being discussed after dinner, by a party of the conspirators, when one of the waiters, who had concealed himself behind the door, overheard the scheme, and ran to Valerius with the exclusive intelligence. The traitors were secured, and when they were brought up before the consuls, Brutus recognising among the offenders his two sons, subjected both them and himself to a very severe trial. Asking them what they had to say to the charge, and getting "nothing" in reply, he looked in the faces of his sons, and declaring that he must class all malefactors under one general head, which must be cut off, he called upon the lictors to do their duty. In leaving the other prisoners to be tried by Valerius, Brutus whispered to his colleague, "Now try them, and acquit them, if you can;" but he could only execute the law, and the law could only execute the criminals. The ambassadors were allowed to remain at large, though their plotting proved that they had been at something very little; and the government withdrew the permission that had been granted for the removal of Tarquin's goods, which were divided by means of a scramble among the populace.

Thus Tarquin, who had broken the twenty valuable tables of Servius, was doomed to have the tables turned upon him by the destruction of his own, while every leaf of the former was restored under the Consular government. The landed estates of the Tarquins were distributed among the plebeians, so that the

banished family had no chance of recovering their lost ground, which was afterwards known as the Field of Mars, or Campus Martius. The corn on the confiscated property was ripe; but the people felt a conscientious objection to consuming the produce which no labour of their own had reared; and they did not allow the tyrant's grain to outweigh their honest scruple. Throwing all idea of profit overboard, they cast the corn into the Tiber, which, it is said, was so shallow, that the sheaves stuck in the mud, and formed the small island known as the Insula Tiberina. That a piece of land, however small, should be formed by a crop of corn, however plentiful, is difficult to believe: but the story of the wheat can only find reception from the very longest ears; for common sense will admit that in the effort to give credit to the tale, it must go thoroughly against the grain on a proper sifting of all the evidence.

Tarquin relinquishing his hopes of a restoration by stratagem, resolved on resorting to strategy, and brought into the field a large army, of which the Veii formed a considerable part, and his son Aruns headed the Etruscan cavalry. The Roman consuls commanded their own forces; Valerius being at the head of the foot, and Brutus mounted on a clever cob, with a strong sword, that might be called a useful hack, taking the lead of the equestrians. When Aruns entered the field, he recognised Brutus in Tarquin's cloak, and the young man felt the blood mantling with indignation into his cheek at the first sight of the mantle. He instantly made for Brutus, who with equal eagerness made

for Aruns, and so violent was the collision, that the breath was knocked at one blow out of both their bodies.

The hostile leaders having fallen to the ground, the battle shared their fate, and both armies withdrew to their camps; but neither would allow the other the credit of a victory. The legend goes on to state that the god Silvanus – an alarmist among the classical deities, and synonymous with Pan – was heard shouting in the night that the Etruscans having lost one man more than the Romans, the latter had gained the battle. This announcement of the result of the contest, though only by a majority of one, so alarmed the Etruscans, who were always panic struck at the voice of Pan, that they took to flight, leaving the enemy to carry everything before them, including all the property that the fugitives had left behind them. The remains of Brutus were brought to the Forum, where they lay in state; but the state in which they lay was truly deplorable; for the deceased consul had been so knocked about, that had he been alive, he would scarcely have known himself, even by the aid of reflection. His colleague, Valerius, delivered an oration over his departed virtues, making a catalogue of the whole, and fixing the highest price to every one of them.

The question of "Shall Brutus have a statue?" was soon answered in the affirmative, and he was placed among the kings, though he had destroyed the monarchy. Where failure constitutes the traitor, success makes the patriot: and upon the merest accident may depend the question whether the originator of a

design against a bad government shall go to the block of the sculptor, or to that of the executioner.

P. Valerius was in no hurry to ask the people for a colleague, and he for some time did the whole of the business of the chief magistracy himself; so that had it not been for the mere name of the office, Rome might just as well have remained a monarchy. This fact seems to have flashed at last on the public mind; and when it was found that P. Valerius was building himself a stone residence, in a strong position, a rumour was spread abroad that he was aiming at the foundation of his own house, or family, in the kingly power. On hearing the report he immediately stopped the works of his intended residence, and having called a meeting of the curiæ, he appeared before them with his fasces reversed; a sign that the bundles of rods were not intended to be used on the backs of the people alone, but that they were held, as it were, in trust, and in pickle for the punishment of delinquency in general. This treatment of the fasces so fascinated the people, that they acquitted P. Valerius of every charge, and acknowledging their suspicions of a plot to be groundless, they gave him a plot of ground to build his house upon. Pleased with the taste of popularity, he continued to court it with so much success, that he gained the name of Publicola, or one who honours the public; and he certainly introduced many very wholesome legal reforms, by dabbling in law, in a spirit truly lau-dable. He gave an appeal from the magistrate to the people, in cases where the punishment awarded had been a fine, a

whipping, or a hanging; and in the last instance the provision was extremely salutary, for the suspending of a sentence might often avoid the necessity for suspending an alleged criminal. This right of appeal was, however, limited to within a mile from the city; an arrangement that would have justified the formation of a league to abolish the mile, as an unnecessary distinction, of which we can only expose the absurdity, by suggesting the possibility of an offence committed at Knightsbridge being punishable at Newgate with immediate death; while the culprit of Holborn Hill, though nearer the place of execution, would be further from the scaffold.

Having passed several salutary acts, and secured, as it were, the cream of popularity to himself, he proposed the election of a colleague who might share the skim with him. The new consul was Spurius Lucretius; but poor Spurius enjoyed none of the genuine sweets of power. He was so far advanced in years, at the period of his advancement to office, that he had already one foot in the grave, and the other foot went in after it immediately on his taking his new position. M. Horatius Pulvillius was chosen in the poor old man's stead, and an incident speedily happened which caused a difference, leading to something more than personal indifference between the two consuls. The temple of Jupiter, on the Capitoline, so called from the incident already related, of the Caput Toli, or head of Tulus, had not yet been dedicated; and it having been arranged that the thing was to be done, the next question that arose was, "Who is to do it?" Both consuls



were anxious for the job; and it was at length arranged that lots should be drawn, in order to settle the undecided point, which had led to such a decided coolness between P. Valerius and his colleague. Horatius was the happy man whom fortune favoured by her choice; and he was in the act of performing the ceremony, when, without any ceremony at all, a messenger rushed in, exclaiming that the son of the consul had suddenly expired. Believing the alarm to be false, Horatius hinted at his suspicion of its being one of the blackest of jobs, by suggesting that those who brought the news should go and attend the funeral. "As for me," he exclaimed, "I have other engagements just now;" and, continuing the work of dedication, he proceeded to mark the commencement of a new era, by driving a huge nail into the wall of the temple. Such was the mode by which chronology was taught to the early Romans, who had their dates literally hammered into them; and, as long as the consul hit the right nail upon the head, or went upon the proper tack, mistake was almost impossible.

The first specimen of diplomacy to be met with in the records of Rome must be referred to the first year of the Republic, when a treaty was concluded with Carthage, and engraved on brazen tables. The material was appropriate to the purpose it served; and the language was so obscure, that a modern treaty could scarcely have surpassed it in ambiguity. Some parts of it were unintelligible to the most learned of the Romans themselves; and, had any difference arisen as to the interpretation of the treaty,

the tables must have been left to brazen it out; for no one could have explained their meaning. Though the document may have mystified many things, it made one thing clear, for it proved history to have been wrong in stating that Horatius succeeded Brutus, for they are described as both being consuls together at the date of the treaty. In following the ordinary version or perversion of the facts or fictions connected with the rise of Rome, we take history as we find it; and though much of it is known to be false, we, by continually making the admission, prevent the bane from remaining very long without the antidote.

P. Valerius was still consul, with P. Lucretius for a colleague, when the old King Tarquin happened to be on a visit, at Clusium, in Etruria, with the local Lar, Porsenna.<sup>13</sup> After supper, Tarquin often grew garrulous about his alleged wrongs, and worked on the sympathies of his host, who declared the Romans should receive, through the medium of Porsenna, a tremendous physicking. The Lar accordingly set forth at the head of his army, and its approach being announced, the people in the suburbs of Rome were frightened out of their wits, and into the city. Throughout the whole of his journey, Porsenna administered a strong dose to all that opposed his way; and he scoured the country by the most drastic system of pillage. On arriving at Rome, he at once forced the Janiculum, the garrison rushing with their leader

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<sup>13</sup> Niebuhr spells the word with a double n, in the penultimate syllable; but Macaulay, who quotes four verses from different writers in favour of his orthography, writes the word Porsena, with the penultimate short.

at their head, and the foe almost at their heels, into the city. Nothing was now between the Romans and their assailants but the wooden bridge, or *Pons Sublicius*; and when the people asked for consolation from their consul, he had none to offer them. Looking at the water, he saw there was no time for reflection; and he ordered the bridge to be cut down, when Horatius Cocles, the gatekeeper, volunteered to offer a check to the enemy. "I want but two," cried Horatius, "two only are wanted, to join with me in throwing for that great stake, the safety of Rome;" and there immediately presented themselves, as ready to "stand the hazard of the die," if die they must, the youthful Spurius Lartius of the Neminian race, and Herminius, belonging to the Tities. The three heroes took their station at the foot of the bridge, resolved that no one should pass without paying a poll-tax, in the shape of a blow on the head, which the valiant trio stood prepared to administer. A shout of derisive laughter was the only salute they received from the Etruscan army; but the laughter was soon transferred to the other side of the Etruscan mouth, and subsided altogether when no less than half-a-dozen tongues were found to have licked the dust, instead of the enemy. Porsenna's army had advanced to the sound of trumpets, which seemed no longer in a flourishing condition, but were as incapable of dealing out a blow as the soldiers themselves. A few of the troops in the rear shouted "Forward!" to those in the van; but there was such a determined cry of "Keep back!" among the foremost men, that all were under the influence of a general gib, and every rank gave evidence of

rank cowardice.

While the Etruscans were shaking in their shoes on one side of the river, the Romans were shivering their own timbers, and knocking down beams and rafters on the other. They had razed the bridge to the ground, or rather lowered it to the water, when they called to their gallant defenders to come back, while there was still a plank left – a single deal to enable them to cut over to their partners.

Lartius and Herminius, seeing the game was nearly over, thought the only card they had to play was to discard their companion, and save themselves by a trick, which, however, would leave all the honours to Horatius. The two former darted across just before the remainder of the bridge fell, splashing into the water below, and rendering the tide untidy with the broken fragments.

Horatius was now alone in his glory, with the foe before him, and the flood behind; his only alternative being between a fatally hot reception by the one, and an uncomfortably cold reception by the other. Disdaining to beg for mercy from Porsenna, he prayed for pity from the Tiber, and making a bold plunge, he threw himself on the kind indulgence of the river. Being fastened up in armour, his case was a particularly hard one, and being encumbered as he was with his arms, to use his legs was scarcely possible. He nevertheless got on swimmingly, for his heart never sank, and at length, feeling his foot touch the bottom, he knew that his hopes were not groundless.

By courage and strength Horatius prevailed over every obstacle, and Cocles owed to the cockles of his heart, as well as to the muscles of his body, the happy results of his hazardous experiment. To recompense him for his risk by water, the grateful nation gave him a large portion of land, and erected his statue in the Comitium, a portion of the Forum from which orators were in the habit of holding forth, and where the figure of Horatius was placed to speak for itself to the populace. Though the enemy was kept out of the city, the Romans were kept in, while provisions were growing shorter and shorter every day – a sort of growth that led of course to a constant diminution. Such was the gratitude of the citizens to Horatius, that they subscribed to give him always as much as he could eat; and although the fact involves a pun we abominate, we are obliged to state the truth, that, in order to give him his desert, many went without their dinners.

The Romans had declared they would hold out to the last, and though they were left with scarcely any food, though they might have at once procured it, had they consented to eat their own words, they declined to satisfy their hunger by such a humiliating process. All hope of saving the city being apparently lost, the senate entered into an agreement with one Caius Mucius, who could talk a little Tuscan, and who undertook to go across the water for the purpose of killing Porsenna. Mucius disguised himself in an Etrurian helmet – a sort of Tuscan bonnet – and with a sword concealed under the folds of his ample

Roman wrap-rascal, he arrived at Porsenna's camp, just as the salaries were being paid to the soldiers. While the troops were intent on drawing their pay, Mucius slyly drew his sword, and seeing an individual rather handsomely dressed, rushed upon him to administer to him, with the weapon, a most unhandsome dressing.

The individual thus assailed was rapidly despatched, but it turned out that the victim, instead of being the king, was an unfortunate scribe, or writer, who could have been by no means prepared for this unusual fate of genius. Had the critics unmercifully cut him up, the scribe would have felt that his death was, to a certain extent, in the way of business; but to be murdered by mistake for a king, was a result that any member of the republic of letters might fairly have objected to. It may appear at first sight startling that a literary man should have been well-dressed, and in the company of a king, but it must be remembered that the scribe was not necessarily a man of remarkable ability. His art was that of a mere copyist, which, even in these days, frequently gains a reputation for the imitator, who is often confounded with, instead of being confounded by the man of original genius. The scribes of antiquity, like many modern writers, did no more than set down the thoughts of others, and, as their style was extremely hard, consisting of a piece of iron, with which they wrote upon wax, their works were not likely to make a very deep or lasting impression.

Our pity for the unfortunate literary character is considerably

lessened by the fact, that being in the camp he had no doubt been dining with the guards; and we know he was wearing a showy dress – two circumstances indicating an affectation of the manners of the fast man, which are always unbecoming to the man of letters.

Mucius was about to retire after the execution of the deed, but he was seized by the attendants, and then seized by remorse when he was informed that he had despatched a harmless literary man instead of Porsenna. Being taken to the king, Mucius found him sitting before the fire of a large altar. The Etruscan chief, on hearing the charge, pointed out the penalty that had been incurred, when the prisoner, thrusting his right hand into the fire, allowed it to remain, with extraordinary coolness, or, rather, with most intense heat, until it was consumed as far as the wrist; and he concluded the act of self incendiarism, by declaring there were three hundred others who were just as ready as himself to take up arms and burn off a hand, in defiance of their oppressor. Porsenna, who had watched the painful process with extreme interest, was so delighted at the fortitude displayed, that he jumped from his seat, and mentally remarking that "the fellow was a wonderfully cool hand at an operation of the kind," ordered some guards to conduct him in safety to Rome; at the same time advising Mucius to conduct himself more wisely for the future.

Mucius returned to Rome, where he obtained the name of Scævola (from *Scærus*) in consequence of his being left-handed, or it might have been because of his having evinced such an utter

want of dexterity in the business he had undertaken.

Porsenna, having heard that there were three hundred Romans ready to take his life, felt uneasy at such fearful odds as three hundred to one against him; nor could he enjoy a moment's peace with himself until a peace with Rome was concluded. He sent ambassadors to negotiate a treaty, which was soon arranged; the only difficulty arising on the subject of the proposed restoration of Tarquin, which his subjects would not listen to; and, though he and Porsenna had hitherto rowed in the same boat, the latter found it absolutely necessary to throw the former overboard. Rome was compelled to return the territory taken from the Veii, and Porsenna claimed several hostages, among whom were sundry young ladies of the principal Roman families. One of these was named Clælia, who, with other maidens, having resolved on a bold plunge for their liberty, jumped into the Tiber's bed, and swam like a party of ducks to the other side of the river. Clælia ran home in her dripping clothes, but, instead of a warm reception, she was met with a wet blanket, for her father fearing that her having absconded would be visited upon Rome, sent her back like a runaway school-girl to the camp of Porsenna. That individual behaved with his usual magnanimity, for he not only pardoned Clælia and her companions, but sent them home to their parents, who, perhaps, knew better than Porsenna how to manage them.

The Etruscan monarch seems to have been one of those who could do nothing by halves, but having once granted quarter



to the foe, he was not satisfied until he had surrendered the whole of what he had taken from the vanquished. He gave them unprovisionally all the provisions remaining in his camp, and, in fact, he left behind him so many goods and chattels, that at public auctions it was customary for many years afterwards to advertise the effects as "the property of King Porsenna." Returning to Clusium, he is believed to have shut himself up at home, and never stirred out again, for we meet with him no more in any of the highways or byways of history.

The Romans having recovered from the blow, or series of blows, they had received from Porsenna, were prepared to turn their anger on the subject nearest at hand, and the Sabines were conveniently situated to receive a great deal of it. Irritated by the enemy, the Sabines lost their temper towards each other, and several of them, among whom were Atta Clausus, or Appius Claudius and family, went over to Rome. The renegades were received by their new allies with honour; for apostacy, which should carry with it disgrace, was even in those days treated too often as a virtue. The Claudii were made patricians of Rome, which seems to have always courted converts by offering the highest price to those who were ready to part with their old opinions and principles. Valerius Publicola – or as some call him, Popli-cola, one who honoured the people – died soon after the last-mentioned event, and received the compliment of a magnificent funeral. The procession commenced with a band of pipers, every one of whom the public paid, and the crown was

carried in state; but on such an occasion as this, the empty crown could be suggestive of nothing but its own hollowness.

The armour belonging to the deceased was buried with him, as if in mockery of its uselessness against the attacks of the grim enemy; and the face was painted, as is still the custom in Italy, where the attempt to disguise the complexion to which we must come at last, only gives to the reality a hideousness neither necessary nor natural. After the funeral of a great or a much lamented man, it was usual to hang branches of cypress on his house, and his gates were decorated with pine by those who were left pining after him.

It was about this period that the great battle of Lake Regillus is supposed to have been fought, when the Latins, who had been trying to translate into Latin everything belonging to Rome, were at length taught that the Roman character was strong enough to maintain its own individuality.

In times of extreme peril, it has always been found that two heads, instead of being better than one, are likely to neutralise each other, and to reduce the supreme power under one head is the best mode of making it effectual. The Romans, when seriously threatened by the Latins, proceeded at once to the appointment of a dictator, from whose decrees there should be no appeal; so that whatever he said should be no sooner said than done – a principle of action which contributes materially to the success of every great enterprise. P. Lartius was the first dictator; but we can find no traces of his dictation, and he seems

to have been speedily superseded by Aulus Postumius, whose sword is said to have been known "to bite,"<sup>14</sup> – a propensity which must have rendered his blade rather liable to snap, unless its temper was excellent. The appointment of dictator was only for six months; so that the people were soon absolved from the absolute power under which they placed themselves. The best piece of patronage at the disposal of the dictator, was the place of Master of the Horse, which Aulus conferred on Æbutius; the latter acting completely under the guidance of the former, who never parted with the reins while deputing the mastership of the horse to another. Aulus and Æbutius set forward towards the Lake Regillus, on the margin of which they waited till it was pitch dark before they pitched their tent, with the intention of preparing for a pitched battle.

The Latins were led by Mamilius, and the foe being face to face, engaged themselves hand to hand with the most desperate energy. According to the legend, Æbutius and Mamilius, meeting in the thick of the fight, came individually to blows, which resulted in the unhorsing of the Master of the Horse, who was almost bored to death with the points of the swords of the enemy. At one time the battle seemed so much in favour of the Latins, that Aulus entreated the Romans not to resign themselves to the ravens, to be crowed over in a double sense, by the birds of prey and the enemy. So mutual was the slaughter, and so equal

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<sup>14</sup> "Camerium knows how deeply  
The sword of Aulus bites,  
And all our city calls  
him  
The man of seventy fights."  
Macaulay's Lay of the Battle of the Lake Regillus.

the bravery on both sides, that it would have been difficult to decide the battle; and the legend, in its equal apportionment of valour to each party, would have come to no practical result, had not supernatural agency stepped in opportunely to give to one side the victory. Two gigantic youths were seen fighting on the Roman side, and though nobody knew their names, their address was the admiration of every one. Their valour was shown at the expense of the unfortunate Latins, who, unable to sustain the heavy charge that was now made upon them, made no further attempt to meet any engagement, but resorted to flight, as the only act that seemed to offer benefit.

The warriors wore nothing on their heads, and many surmises arose as to who they could be; but nobody suspected the truth, – that the heroes, without helmets or hats, were Castor, who never was unaccompanied by his friend Pollux, and Pollux, who never went anywhere without his Castor. The same noble youths were the first to announce in Rome the news of the victory, acting as "their own reporters" of their own exploits. Having delivered their message, they disappeared as mysteriously as they came; for the legend loses sight of them in a horse-trough near the temple of Vesta. Hither they repaired to water their steeds, and to refresh themselves at an adjacent well; and those who feel the insatiable thirst of curiosity, are referred to the bottom of this well for the truth, if a deeper inquiry into the legend is desired. For many ages a superstitious reverence was shown for the margin of the Lake Regillus, where a mark, said to be the impression of a

celestial horse's hoof, remained, to make a lasting impression on the softness of credulity.

We have hitherto been swimming, as well as we can, in the sea of conjecture, catching eagerly at the lightest cork or bladder, in the shape of fact, to keep us afloat in the stream of events flowing from legendary sources.

The continuation of the journey will be chiefly on the *terra firma* of fact; and, instead of being, now and then, so thoroughly at sea as to find ourselves wandering into the wildest latitudes, with no other pilot than tradition, we shall henceforth, in our progress, have good and substantial grounds to go upon. Hitherto we have had credulity pulling at the oars, the idle and uncertain breezes of rumour filling our sails, and our rudder in the hands of various authorities distinguished for nothing but their disagreement with each other, and who would, in fact, be without distinction of any kind if they were without a difference.

We are now about to pursue our journey by a more certain road, to carry on our history, as it were, by the rail; and, though the line may be a peculiar one of our own, the train of facts will be regular, coming, we trust into no violent collision with others pursuing the same path, and arriving, in due time, at the appointed terminus.

# CHAPTER THE SIXTH. FROM THE BATTLE OF THE LAKE REGILLUS TO THE CLOSE OF THE WAR WITH THE VOLSCIANS

The resources of Rome had hitherto been derived from the plunder taken in war, but the field of battle is always far less fertile than the field of industry. In the former case, the crop once gathered is rendered for ever unproductive, and to beat the same enemy twice over, is like the useless operation of thrashing straw; for if, in either case, the first thrashing has been complete, there is nothing to be got by a second. The plebeians had been so long withdrawn from the cultivation of the land, that they found it extremely awkward to cultivate a second time an acquaintance once dropped; and the earth having been hitherto regarded as *infra dig.*, was not likely to yield much to those who had despised until they wanted it. The plebeians could only reap what they had sown, and as they had sown nothing of any value, they had fallen into a state of extreme seediness. Begging and borrowing were the only alternatives of those who could no longer steal, and the patrician body became a sort of loan society to the plebeians, who pledged themselves not only morally, but physically, for the

return of the money that had been advanced to them. The law of debtor and creditor was extremely stringent in ancient Rome; and indeed its stringency amounted almost to a rope round the debtor's neck; for if he could not pay within a certain time, he was tied down as the slave of his creditor. In this position the assailant was called an *addictus*, for he was regularly sold, without even the equity of redemption being allowed to him. If the borrower had only pledged himself without an actual sale, he was simply a *nexus*, with the power of paying off his debt by either money or work; but if he could do neither, he became an *addictus*<sup>15</sup> forthwith, when he was thrown into chains, and wore nothing but the stripes, which were the ordinary livery of that disgraceful state of servitude.

Appius Claudius had been chosen Consul, with P. Servilius as a colleague, in the year of the City 258, when a miserable old insolvent, with his hair like a mat, giving evidence of the severe rubs that had fallen on his head, rushed into the forum. His face had the paleness of ashes, and many tried to sift his countenance, in which the marks of his having been ground down to the dust were plainly visible. His back bore traces of recent scores, every one of which he declared should be accounted as a score to be paid off upon his oppressors. His farm had been burned down, and its contents burned up; his cattle had been driven he knew

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<sup>15</sup> This law is said to have been altered by Servius Tullius; but if legislation on the subject was at one time loose, it became very binding afterwards, and was extremely strict at the date above alluded to.

not where, while he himself had been driven to distraction. The tax-gatherer had, nevertheless, been as punctual as ever in his calls, and having soundly rated the ruined agriculturist for not being ready with his rates, the latter had been compelled to run into debt; for the Romans had not made insurance against fire any feature of their policy. Having been unable to pay his debts, the impoverished farmer became the slave of his creditor; and the shoulders of the former bore unmistakeable marks of the latter having got the whip-hand of him. The excitement in the forum was intense; for all were seized with indignation, who might possibly be seized for debt; and every one who owed anything to anybody began to feel that he owed a great deal more to common humanity. A popular outbreak seemed to be close at hand, and the two Consuls consulted together on the crisis. Appius Claudius gave it as his opinion, that as the people were put up, the best way was to put them down; but his colleague, Servilius, was an advocate for a milder regimen. At this juncture, news arrived of the Volscian army having set out for Rome; and the plebeians being called upon to enlist, declared that they would not enlist themselves at the bidding of those who would do nothing to enlist their sympathies. In this difficult dilemma, P. Servilius promised that if they would come out and fight, they should be released from prison during the war; and guaranteed that if they would present a bold front to the enemy's sword, their backs should be safe from the scourge of domestic tyranny. There was an immediate rush of insolvents into the ranks, which



were soon filled almost to overflowing; for as a great majority of the population happened to be hopelessly in debt, a summons to the field was the only sort of summons their appearance to which might have been reasonably relied upon.

They fought with the energy of desperation, for each rank had sworn an oath, and there was an affidavit, therefore, on every file, to do execution on the Volscians. Never were bankrupts more determined to avoid a surrender than the band of defaulters who went forth to meet the foe with a confidence, which would, probably, have disappeared had they recognised at the meeting a single one of their creditors. The success of the Romans was complete, and those who had fought upon the understanding that every blow they struck was to wipe out a debt, returned home in the expectation that every old liability had been rubbed off, and that they would be free to rub on as they best could for the future. They were, however, doomed to bitter disappointment, for Appius Claudius declared that no faith ought to be kept with those who had kept no faith with their creditors; and all the debtors who were not prepared to pay upon the nail had the screw cruelly applied to them. The debtors were sent back to their prisons, and many an unfortunate insolvent, as he thought of the imposition that had been practised upon him, could only cast his eyes upon the walls of his dungeon, and murmur at the dreadful cell of which he had become the victim. The bolts and bars of oppression would have brought liberty to a dead lock, had it not been for the people outside the gaols, who threatened to rise

for the purpose of falling upon the tyrants. At this critical period Rome was menaced by the Sabines, when the plebeians were called upon to enlist; but they declared they would be recruits of the very rawest description if they allowed themselves to be again done as they had been already. Public meetings were held on the Esquiline and Aventine hills, where liberal sentiments, which have now become as old as the hills themselves, fell upon the popular ear with all the charm and force of novelty. The patricians were divided as to the best means of dealing with the difficulty their own misconduct had created, and it was obvious that the fatal error having been committed of refusing to accede to a just demand, the scarcely less dangerous mistake of yielding to violence and clamour was the only course that could now be followed. The patricians would have stood by their order; but the difficulty was to know how public order, as well as their own order, could be preserved; and it was at length agreed that a dictator should be appointed. The choice fell upon M. Valerius, a moderate man, whom the plebeians could trust, for he came of a good stock, his father being no other than that great gun of the popular party, the famous Publicola. A large army was soon ready to take the field, or to take anything else that came in the ordinary course of battle. Valerius marched against the Sabines, who fled, or, more literally speaking, decamped; for they left behind them their camp, which was taken by the enemy.

On his return to Rome in triumph, the dictator asked for an inquiry into the people's wrongs, with a view to giving them

their rights; but the patrician party in the senate refusing him his committee, Valerius sent in his resignation, which was accepted by the senate. He apologised to the plebeians for not having been able to carry his measures of reform; and the patricians, pleased by his moderation in resigning his seat, gave him a curule chair – a sort of portable stall, or reserved seat, which, at the Circensian games he was privileged to occupy.

The Curule Chair, or *Sella Curulis*, invites us to pause for a moment, and hold a short sitting upon it, for the purpose of inquiring into its origin. Comfort seems to have been supplied most charily in the construction of this official chair; but there was a fine touch of morality in giving uneasiness to the seat of unlimited power. The legs of the *Sella Curulis* folded like those of a camp-stool; a device which may have been emblematical of the fact, that the dictatorial office was liable to a speedy shutting up, for the appointment was never more than of six months' duration. The material of which the chair was formed was the smoothest and most highly-polished ivory; so that the fatal facility of a fall must have been frequently suggested to the occupant of the seat by its exceedingly slippery surface.<sup>16</sup>

The Consuls, fearing an outbreak if the army was disbanded, ordered the soldiers to remain on duty in the capacity of special constables over each other – the staff being held responsible

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<sup>16</sup> The Curule Chair is said to have been imported, with other articles of state furniture, from Etruria. In some cases, the feet were formed of ivory in the shape of elephant's tusks; but there are other proofs of their Tuscan origin.

for the conduct of the main body. To be continued thus as a standing army, was more than the troops felt disposed to stand; and, determining to take high ground, they withdrew to the top of the Mons Sacer or Sacred Mount, in the neighbourhood of Crustumenum. Electing L. Sicinius as their leader, they accommodated themselves as well as they could, until matters should be accommodated with the senate.

The patricians began to be greatly alarmed at the secession of the plebeians; for though the former had been accustomed to trample the latter under foot, all the foundations of society seemed to be withdrawn in the absence of that part which, though it may be called the base, is essential to the existence of the capital. Rome, in fact, was beginning to find out that an aristocracy cut off from all connection with the people at large, is little better than a flower separated from the tree, and doomed to fall speedily into bad odour. The patrician order happily recognised the important truth, that the most delicate tendrils owe all their vitality to the sap, carried up to the top of the tree from those portions that are in the closest connection with the soil; and steps were therefore taken to prevent the final severing of the sturdy trunk from the higher branches. An embassy, consisting of ten patricians, was sent to negotiate; but as the patricians were no orators, and their stupidity spoke for itself, Menenius Agrippa, who had once been a plebeian, was sent as their head, which of course included their mouth-piece.

Menenius, using his authority as spokesman for the common

weal, cited the fable of the Belly and the Members, to the bellicose *plebs*, who seemed struck by his relation of it to them, and its own relation to their existing position. He told them that, once upon a time, all the members of the human body resolved on aiming a blow at the stomach, which was accused of leading a life of idleness. The hands struck with no particular aim; the legs, moved to rebellion, refused to stir; the eye shut down its lid; the mouth went into open hostility, and the nose joining in the general blow, there seemed every prospect that the proud stomach would be glad to eat humble pie in the absence of all other provisions. It was, however, soon found that, in nourishing their animosity, the members were keeping all nourishment from themselves, and that they and their revenge were about equally wasted.

The plebeians, understanding the moral of the story, were disposed to treat, on the understanding that they should henceforth be better treated. An agreement was entered into, by which the sponge was to be applied to all old debts; and all who had lost their liberty by being the slaves of bad circumstances were restored to freedom. The new compact provided also for the institution of two officers, named Tribunes, who were invested with authority over the concerns of the plebeians; and it was certainly one of the best investments ever made for the profit of the Roman people. The person of the Tribune was so sacred, that a common assault upon this officer, when in the execution of his duty, rendered the assailant liable not merely to be taken up, but

to be knocked down and killed in the streets by any one having a mania for manslaughter.

The Tribune was allowed such an unlimited liberty of speech, that it was punishable to interrupt him; and in default of bail, it was death to cough him down while addressing the people. Even to yawn during one of his discourses, was to open an abyss into which the yawner might be plunged before he was aware of it; and the involuntary action of his distended jaws would often render them the jaws of his own destruction.

The house of the Tribune was open day and night; so that it was as easy to find one of these officers as it is in these days to find a policeman, and sometimes rather easier. The Tribunes had power to bring parties before them, or, in other words, to issue summonses, as well as to enforce fines, which, if not paid, involved the forfeiture of property, or, in simpler terms, were recoverable by distress warrant upon the defaulter's goods and chattels. One of the greatest privileges of the Tribunes was the right of exercising a veto on any decree of the senate. Though they had no seats in the assembly, they were permitted to look in at the door; and if any act was passing that they disapproved, they had the privilege of exercising, by a shout of "No," a sort of negative authority. This power of prevention left fewer evils to be cured; and the plebeians, having at last obtained an organ of their own, may be said to have found the key to their liberties.

The Tribunes seem to have had power to add to their number, for they selected three colleagues, soon after they themselves had

been chosen; and, from this time forth, a struggle ensued between plebeian energy, seeking its fair share of right, and patrician tenacity, holding on with obstinate determination to exclusive advantages.

Contemporaneously with the institution of the Tribunes, some new officers were appointed, under the name of *Ædiles*, who were something like our Commissioners of Woods and Forests, of Sewers, and of Paving combined; for they had the care of public buildings, roads, and drains, as well as of baths and washhouses. They sometimes decided small disputes, and acted as Inspectors of Markets, examining weights, settling quarrels, and holding the scales of justice as well as of merchandise. They kept an eye to unwholesome provisions, and a nose to stale fish; their ears took cognisance of bad language; in their hands they carried a staff; and they were, in fact, a curious compound of the beadle, the commissioner, the policeman, and the magistrate.

While the plebeians had been sulking on the *Mons Sacer*, a treaty between the Latins and the Romans had been brought about by *Spurius Cassius*, a Consul, who, though his name sounds like counterfeit coin, seems to have possessed a good deal of the true metal. By the treaty, both nations were to be almost entirely equal in every respect; and, even with regard to booty, they were to be on the same footing.

By another clause in the act, those insolvent debtors who had been converted into "alarming sacrifices!" and were reduced to slavery, because their creditors "must have cash,"

or its equivalent, were restored to freedom. The ceremony of manumission was curious, and comprised so many indignities done to the slave, that, although free, he could not have been very easy under the process. He was first taken before the Consul by his master, who gave him a blow on the cheek, which was rather a back-handed mode of making an independent man of him. The Consul then laid his wand about the insolvent's back, at the same time declaring him perfectly free, and telling him to go about his business – if he happened to have any. The beating having been gone through, there was still more lathering to be endured; for the head of the freedman was closely shaved, as a precaution, perhaps, against his going mad on the attainment of his liberty. His release from his chains was not complete until he had been deprived of his locks; and to crown all, he was invested with that emblem of butchery in a political, as well as a social point of view, the red cap of liberty.

During the internal quarrels of Rome, agriculture had been so thoroughly neglected, that the harvest had completely fallen to the ground, or, rather, had never come out of it. The husbandman had husbanded nothing, either for himself or others; and as nothing had been sown but civil dissension, there was nothing to reap but the fruit of it. The Romans, who, until lately, had been thirsting for power, were now hungry for food; and, to prevent the people from dying at home, envoys were sent to scour the surrounding countries, – a process which involved many a brush with the inhabitants. It is stated, by some historians, that,



during the famine, an order was forwarded to Gelo, of Syracuse, for corn, which that individual was quite ready to supply, but for which he was so thoroughly unbusiness-like as to refuse the money. The incident, though utterly without commercial interest, would have been pleasing in a different point of view, were it not for the stern realities of chronology, which prove that Gelo could not have acted as a gratuitous corn-dealer at the time specified, for he was not alive at the period.

While Rome was suffering from want of corn, it was wasting the very flower of its population in a war with the Volscians. Among the most distinguished warriors on the side of the Romans was Caius Marcius, a young patrician, who led all his own clients into an action in which the defendants – the unfortunate Volscians – were subjected to enormous damages. He subsequently proceeded against Corioli, which made an obstinate defence; but was ultimately beaten, and compelled to pay the whole of the costs of the conflict. From this affair he took the name of Coriolanus, by which he is better known than by his original appellation of C. Marcius, for mankind will too often award the largest measure of fame to the most extensive perpetrator of mischief; and he who would carve himself a name, may carve it much more deeply and durably with the sword than with any other instrument.

When the corn arrived from Sicily, the popular party proposed a gratuitous distribution of the boon; but the patricians, headed by Coriolanus, who was a tyrant in grain, recommended that

the plebeians should pay for what they required. Complaint is never so open-mouthed as when it has nothing to eat; and the people became desperate when they found Coriolanus advising, without a scruple, that not a grain should be given, nor an ear lent to their sufferings. He proposed the abolition of the Tribunes as the condition of food being supplied to the people; but they, becoming every day more crusty from the want of bread, insisted on his being tried for treason. Coriolanus saw the people waxing resolute to seal his doom, and he accordingly made his escape, so that when the time came for him to be tried, he was found wanting. Judgment went against him by default; his name was struck out of the list of patricians – a sort of peerage of the period. He was sentenced, moreover, to *aquæ et ignis interdictio*— prohibition from fire and water; a punishment which, looking at the fiery nature of all spirituous liquors, may be fancifully supposed to have involved especially a stoppage of grog, as it certainly prevented everybody from entertaining him. This sentence amounted, in fact, to banishment; and, indeed, it was designed to do so; for the interdiction of fire and water left the culprit nothing on earth but air, which of course it was quite impossible to live upon.

Stung with what he called the ingratitude of his countrymen, though they had really not much to thank him for, Coriolanus, in a spirit not very magnanimous, proceeded to offer his services to the enemy. Taking leave of his wife Volumnia, a voluminous woman, who had had greatness thrust upon her by nature to an

awkward extent, he departed for the country of the Volscians, and arrived at Antium about supper time. His name was taken up at once to Attius Tullius, who, though sitting at his meal with the usual accompaniment of *manus unctæ*, or greasy hands, determined not to allow the illustrious stranger to slip through his fingers. Coriolanus was hospitably entertained, and induced to take the command of the Volscian army against the Roman colonists. He drove them from place to place until he had got them up against the Cluilian ditch, and into it many were thrown; a sad proof of his animosity having been carried to a pitch that must always leave a black stain on his memory. Here also he pitched his tent within almost a stone's throw of Rome; and as the plebeians were unwilling to fight, ambassadors were sent to entreat Coriolanus to lay down his sword; but, contemptuously folding his arms, he returned no answer. The priests next tried their powers of persuasion, but though they did all they could to convert Coriolanus to the cause of Rome, it was not until female influence was brought into requisition, that the attempt proved successful. His mother Veturia, accompanied by his considerably better half, Volumnia, and a party of Roman ladies made up for the occasion, visited him at his camp, when the clamour of the strong-minded, the sighs and sobs of the weaker, the sneers of some, the tears of others, and the importunity of all, proved irresistible. He had been resolute for some time; but when his wife, with a heavy heart added to her natural weight, fell upon his neck, he seemed to be sinking under that which he could no

longer stand up against.

His mother, Veturia, following up the advantage that had been gained, tried the power of the female tongue, to which time seems to go on adding all the force of which it deprives the rest of the body. The old lady raved and shouted with a degree of anile energy that struck Coriolanus with dismay; and when she threw herself on the ground, declaring he should walk over her body if he attempted to march upon Rome, he felt that he could not take another step without trampling on the tenderest relations of humanity. With Volumnia hanging to his neck, and Veturia clinging to his heels, – with a wife pouring the loudest lamentations into his ear, – with a mother cursing everything in general, but his own birthday in particular, – with a bevy of Roman ladies shrieking and sobbing in the background, – Coriolanus could no longer resist, but ordered his camp to be broken up, and led his legions back again. Tradition differs as to the date of the death of Coriolanus, who, according to some accounts, sunk under the attack made upon him by the weaker sex; while others assert that he lived to a good old age, which is likely to have been the case, if the scene we have described was not immediately the death of him – for the constitution that could have survived so severe a trial must have been of a strength truly wonderful.

Coriolanus has been held up as a model of disinterestedness, but we cannot help setting him down as a selfish upstart, who turned traitor to his country, because it did not form the highest

estimate of his personal merits. His deserts are overbalanced by the fact of his being a deserter; and it was, assuredly, the reverse of magnanimity to evince his spite against the nation to which he belonged, merely because his own value had not been put upon his own services. Such is our view of Coriolanus without the masquerade dress in which he has been often made to appear; for truth compels us to take off the gilt in which he has hitherto shone, and to substitute the guilt that really belongs to him.

The Temple of Fortuna Muliebris was raised, in compliment to the women who, by their hysterical, and now historical efforts, were said to have saved Rome; and indeed, considering the frequency with which female influence operates the other way, the fact of its having been exercised for the prevention of mischief, deserves the commemoration of a monument.

# **CHAPTER THE SEVENTH. FROM THE CLOSE OF THE WAR WITH THE VOLSCIANS TO THE PASSING OF THE BILL OF TERENTILLUS**

After the war with the Volscians was at an end, the Romans are said to have entered into a treaty with their former foe, the object of which was a sort of partnership in plunder; it being agreed that the new allies should take the field together, and divide the produce. Ill-gotten gain is never a source of real profit; and the land stolen in war became a ground of contention among the Romans. The patricians had hitherto grasped the whole of the conquered soil, though they could not do so with clean hands; and Spurius Cassius proposed that the plebeians should have a share of it. The suggestion, though violently resisted, became the law of the land; but the land was not appropriated in conformity with the law until a much later period. Spurius Cassius did not long survive, when the year of his Consulship had expired; for the patricians caused him to be impeached, and his head was struck off upon a block, though, from the services he had performed, it deserved rather to have been struck off upon a medal.

The patricians tried to divert the attention of the plebeians

from domestic affairs by leading them constantly into battle; but the latter, though compelled to march into the field, would take no steps to secure a victory. Like horses brought to the water but refusing to drink, the soldiers, though conducted to the field, evinced no thirst for blood; but firmly declining to aim a single blow, they presented a striking picture of passive disobedience. In vain did the officers suggest, that for those ambitious of a soldier's grave, there was at length an eligible opening; they would gain no laurels, but allowed themselves to be kept at bay; they laughed outright at their commanders, and, instead of straining every nerve for success, they kept their risible muscles only in full exercise.

There existed at this time a gens in Rome which had managed to obtain such a share of power for itself, that it was generally recognised as the governing family. The gens alluded to was that of the Fabii, whose union formed their chief strength; for no member of the family, though he might be unmindful of his antecedents, was ever known to forget his relatives. The Fabii derived their name from Faba, a bean, because their ancestors had cultivated that kind of pulse; but in later times the gens became remarkable for feeling the popular pulse, and making a cat's-paw of the patricians. By an arrangement with the order to which they belonged, the Fabii were ensured one of the consulships, on condition of their influencing their clients to elect a patrician to the other; and thus both the people and the senate were played off against each other for the special advantage of

the "family." Fortunately for society, there is in all corruption a rottenness which is always bringing it towards its conclusion while it seems to be gaining its end; and the usual difficulty of getting unprincipled men to hang long together by a rope of sand, was illustrated in the case of the patricians and the Fabii. The quarrels among themselves helped to render them contemptible to the plebeians, and the troops had become so accustomed to treat their leaders with disrespect, that many an intended fight ended without a sword being taken from its sheath, and nothing was drawn but the battle.

One of the Consuls had, for several years, been chosen from the family of the Fabii; when its members growing tired, at last, of their patrician stock being a laughing-stock to the army, determined to make themselves popular. Marcus Fabius won the hearts of the soldiers, by dressing their wounds, and promising to redress their grievances. Kæso Fabius, his successor, recommended the distribution of the land among the plebeians, by whose sweat it had been gained; but he had not been always equally anxious to acknowledge the claims of popular perspiration; for he had been one of those who condemned Spurius Cassius for having made a similar proposition.

Tradition states that the Fabii afterwards emigrated in a body, upwards of three hundred strong, taking with them four thousand clients; but whether the clients went at their own solicitation, or whether the Fabii were the solicitors, we are not in a position to determine. It is said that the whole party of four thousand three



hundred went into action together, and paid with their lives the costs of the sad affair; but the critical authorities doubt the whole story; and it is satisfactory to our best feelings to know that we, on this point, know nothing.<sup>17</sup>

The Etrurians soon after wasted the country near Rome, and wasted their own time into the bargain, for they were at last glad to treat, though not until they had retreated. A peace was concluded; and the parties held their peace for forty years, – or, at all events, if they ever had words, they did not come to blows during that lengthened period.

As some of the events recorded in this chapter arose out of the Roman law of debtor and creditor, it may be just as well to include in this account a few items of a commercial character. When a man ran into debt, he was almost sure to be brought to a stand-still, for compound interest continued to accrue so rapidly that there was no chance of compounding with those to whom he owed money. Thirty days after a debt being demanded, the defaulter was handed over to his creditor, and bound with a cord, by way of accord and satisfaction; but, at the end of sixty days, a crier, whose office was enough to make him shed tears, advertised the insolvent for sale as a slave in the market-place. It is not surprising that the plebeians should rise against their being put up to this degrading auction, more particularly when the

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<sup>17</sup> Among the other difficulties of this story is the comparatively trifling one, that the Fabian race did not become extinct; but tradition hops over this dilemma, by leaving one of the family behind to serve as a father to future Fabii.

masters to whom they were knocked down were in the habit of beating and cruelly ill-treating them. The patricians laid violent hands, not only upon the plebeians, but upon all the property of the State, assuming to the utmost all its rights, and repudiating all its duties. They took as a matter of right all the offices of state, and so complete was the seizure made by the patricians of every thing in the shape of a Government situation, that the name of the order which absorbed to itself all the good things is to be traced in the modern word "patronage." The whole of the profits of war went into the pockets of the upper class; and though the plebeians drew the sword, the patricians drew whatever money was to be obtained from the enemy.

The patricians, however, were not allowed to exercise their tyranny always without resistance; for, if their conduct was revolting to human nature, it was to be expected that human nature would revolt against them when opportunity offered. An instance occurred during the Consulship of Appius Claudius, who had been elected by the senate, and who, wishing to levy troops, caused the names of all the men between eighteen and forty-five to be called over in a list, which furnished the materials for enlistment. Amongst the names was that of Publilius Volero, who had formerly held a commission as a centurion, or captain; and, being now selected to serve as a common soldier, declared indignantly that rather than go as a private into the ranks, he would continue in a private station. Publilius, in fact, kicked violently against the orders of the Consul, and being a man of

very powerful stamp, it was felt that when Publilius kicked in earnest, there was something on foot that it was not easy to contend against. Appius intimating that the Consuls must be obeyed, desired one of the lictors to do his duty; when Volero, being a strong and robust man, received the lictor with open arms, and lifting him from the ground, gave him a setting down that shook the nerves of the astonished officer. Having thrown the lictor on the ground, where the unhappy functionary took his own measure, instead of carrying out those of his superiors, Volero threw himself on the public, upon whom he made a very strong impression.

Publilius from this moment had considerable weight with the plebeians, who made him one of their Tribunes; and he at once proposed a large measure of reform in the mode of electing those officers. He suggested an extension of the suffrage, by giving it to the tribes instead of the centuries; and public meetings were got up in support of the project. These meetings were attended by the patricians, and disturbances ensued, owing to the attempts of one party to put the other party down; for public discussion in all ages seems to have been conducted on the principle that it is to be all on one side, and that any opinion opposed to that of the majority is not to be listened to. When the strength of lungs happens to be with the party having the strength of argument, there is not much harm done; but as the patricians and plebeians mustered in nearly equal numbers at the meetings alluded to, personal altercations frequently took place; and the Tribunes as well as the Consuls

sent their respective officers to arrest each other.

At length Lætorius, who had been elected as the colleague of Publilius Volero, marched into the Forum with an armed force, determined that he would that morning carry the day; and as he drew his sword, he declared he would go through with it. The patricians, losing their own resolution, offered to agree to any that he might propose; but, refusing to trust them, he took possession of the Capitol, as a guarantee for the fulfilment of their promise. The *Lex Publilia* was accordingly passed, to the great annoyance of Appius, who always treated the plebeians as if different sorts of clay, as well as different moulds, were employed by Nature in her great man – ufacture. When his year of office was over, he was impeached by the Tribunes; but on the day when the trial ought to have come on, the worldly trials of Appius were all past, for he died the night before the cause stood for hearing. Posterity has agreed on the verdict which the judges were not required to pronounce; and it has even been said that he fell by his own hand, in consequence of his sense of guilt preventing him from knowing how to acquit himself.

To add to its troubles, Rome was visited by a double plague, in the shape of an external foe and an internal pestilence. The enemy having approached the gates of the city, the country people had taken refuge inside the walls, bringing with them their cattle in such numbers that the place was literally littered with pigs, while the oxen and sheep were packed in pens to an extent of which our own pen can furnish but a faint outline. The summer

was at the height of its heat, and the sufferings of the poor dumb animals, as they lost their fat, and met their fate, were enough to melt not only a heart of stone, but many a stone of suet. The foe, fearing from the pestilence a plaguy deal of trouble, broke up their camp; and Rome was allowed to enjoy an interval of peace, though disease did more havoc than might have been expected at the hands of an enemy.

We now come to the legend of Cincinnatus; and though it is no better than a legend, which, as the smallest student will be aware, is so called from *legendum*, a thing to be read, we must proceed upon the assumption that, as it is a thing to be read, it is *à fortiori* a thing to be written. Lucius Quinctius, surnamed Cincinnatus from his curly locks – for nature had dressed his hair to a turn – was of a high patrician family. He passed his life as a country gentleman occupying his own estate, and occupying himself in looking after it. His land, it must be admitted, was better cultivated than his manners, which were haughty and imperious. His virtues were all of the domestic kind; he was equally attached to his wife and his farm, and he was an excellent husband, as well as a good husbandman.

It happened that Rome was in such a perilous state as to need a strong hand, when Cincinnatus, being famed for the use of the spade, was invited to leave his *otium cum dig.* – as everybody knows already, and somebody may have said before – that he might assume the office of dictator. When the messengers arrived from the senate, Cincinnatus was at work in the fields,

perhaps sowing up some old tares, or examining the state of his pulse – a favourite crop in those days – or cutting out the sickliest of his corn with the sickle. The soil being loamy, and Cincinnatus being in the thick of his work, he was not very presentable; but hastily throwing his toga round him, he made the best appearance he could before the messengers of the senate. They at once hailed him as dictator, and carried him to Rome, where he called out every man capable of bearing arms; and every man thus called out, accepted the patriotic challenge. Every soldier was to carry with him food for five days, and twelve stakes cut into lengths to form a barricade; so that, as the stakes weighed several pounds, and the eatables were solid, the burden of each man, together with his accoutrements – which included a cask on the head from which the perspiration poured – must have been inconveniently ponderous. Notwithstanding their heavy load, the legend, which is less weighty than their equipments, goes on to state that the soldiers started at sunset, with Cincinnatus at their head, and reached the camp, a distance of two-and-twenty miles, at a quick march, or rather at a fast trot, by midnight. Though the story runs thus, we are compelled to doubt the running of the troops, who, with their legs encumbered by their arms and other equipments, must have found speed impossible. On arriving at Mount Algidus, where the enemy was encamped, Cincinnatus made his soldiers surround the place, and by aiming at all in the ring, they were sure to hit somebody. Finding themselves in the midst of a circle by no means social, the Æquians sued for mercy;

but Cincinnatus threw Gracchus Cloelius and his lieutenants into chains, which was equivalent to making them enter into bonds for their future good behaviour. Cloelius continued in his command after having been thus formally tied down, and Cincinnatus returned to Rome in triumph. Having held the dictatorship only sixteen days, he laid it quietly down, and returning to his farming operations, after having submitted the enemy to the yoke, he fitted it once more to the necks of his oxen.

While engaged in fighting with an external enemy, a nation often forgets the foes she has within; and it is the cruel policy of despotism to waste the popular energy on quarrels with strangers, in order to divert the attention of the public from domestic grievances. The war being ended, the people began to look at home, and they soon perceived that, while the sword of aggression had been in constant use, the sword of justice had been rusting in the scabbard, or had been only drawn forth to inflict, occasionally, a wound on public liberty. A movement arose in favour of law reform, and C. Terentillus Arsa brought in a bill for getting the patricians and plebeians to a better understanding, by putting them on nearly the same footing. The measure led to considerable agitation; for, though the tribunes passed it, the senate could not get over it at all; and, the latter having thrown it out, the former brought in a bill, containing a great deal more than the original demand, in the year following. In political, as well as pecuniary affairs, a just claim carries interest, which accumulates as long as the claim

remains unsatisfied; and every day, while it augments the debt due, increases the difficulty of meeting it.

The proposition of Terentillus was much discussed in large assemblies, the harmony of which was disturbed by some of the young patricians; for, even in the early days of which we write, the noble art of laughing down, or crowing over a discomfited orator, was understood by some of the juvenile scions of aristocracy. It happened that Cincinnatus had four sons, who were exceedingly fine young men, with very coarse manners. One of them, named Kæso, was continually getting into street rows, or disturbing public meetings; and frequently went so far as to interfere with Virginius, a tribune, in the execution of his duty. The officer was for a long time patient; but, at length, was goaded to take the matter, as well as the offender, up; and Kæso was charged with a series of assaults, of a more or less aggravated and aggravating character. While these accusations were hanging over him, an old case of manslaughter came to light; the victim having been an aged invalid, whom Kæso, in a disreputable night brawl, had cruelly maltreated. He was already under heavy sureties when this fresh charge was brought up, and, to avoid meeting it, this proud patrician ran away from his bail, leaving their recognizances to be forfeited.

Reports were soon afterwards spread, that the man who had left the city as a contemptible runaway, was about to return to it in the more formidable character of a robber and a murderer. One night when the people had gone to bed, many of them



heard in their sleep the trampling of horses, which seemed to come like a tremendous nightmare over the city. Presently a shout arose, which beat upon the drum of every ear like a call to battle. The Consuls sprang out of bed, and throwing about them the first substitute for a toga that the bedclothes presented, they made at once for the walls of the city. The plebeians, when called upon, refused to serve; and the Consuls, feeling how weak they were in going to the wall alone, made the usual promises, which the people, as usual, were induced to discount, at a great personal sacrifice. Proceeding to the Capitol, they found it in the possession of a large band of exiles and runaway slaves, who would have been glad to run away a second time, had escape been possible. Many fell, and were felled to the earth, on both sides, while P. Valerius after putting several to the sword, had the sword put to him in a most uncomfortable manner.

The exiles took nothing by their expedition as far as the attack was concerned; but many of them owed something to the expedition with which they fled from the contest. After this battle, all traces of Kæso Quinctius are lost; but whether he fell in the fray, or whether the thread of his existence was frayed out in some other way, is a mystery we have no means of unravelling.

Appius Claudius was now called upon, as the surviving partner of P. Valerius, to redeem the pledge given by the latter; but Appius, with a chicanery worthy of Chancery in its best, or rather in its worst days, pleaded the death of his colleague as a bar to the suit, declaring that both consuls must be joined in it, though

he knew all the while that a bill of revivor for the purpose of including the deceased consul was quite impossible. During these unhappy differences between the two orders, many of the leading plebeians were murdered at the instigation of the patricians, who, however, were rapidly cutting their own throats; for violence, while it thinned the body, added to the stoutness of heart of the popular party. The tribunes were increased in number from five to ten; and, somewhat later, a still higher point was gained for the plebeians by limiting to a couple of sheep and thirty beeves the fines to which they were liable. These exactions were, however, enforced with such rigour that the tenderest lamb was allowed no quarter if a fine had been incurred, and the smallest stake in the country – if the stake happened to be beef – was seized without remorse if the owner had become subject to a penalty.

It was many years before the Bill of Terentillus – which has been specially noted – was at length taken up, when the patricians graciously consented to a change in the laws, and offered the benefit of their services into the bargain, by taking upon themselves to determine the sort of change that was required. Hitting, by anticipation, on the modern expedient for delaying useful measures, the patricians appointed a select committee to inquire into law reform, and, by way of rendering the chances of legislation still more remote, they ordered the members to proceed to Athens, where, under the enervating influence of Attic associations, they were likely to go to sleep over the subject of their labours. The special commissioners became, no doubt,

so thoroughly Greek in all their ideas, that, even the preparation of their report was deferred until the Greek Kalends.

# CHAPTER THE EIGHTH. FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DECENVIRATE TO THE TAKING OF VEII

The Romans, being at peace abroad, began to think of improving the means of quarrelling among themselves at home, and a desire for law reform became general. Three senators had been sent to Athens to collect information, but what they picked up in Greece was so thoroughly Greek to them, that they were obliged to get it translated into Latin by one Hermodorus, an Ephesian refugee, before they could understand a word of it.<sup>18</sup> As one job naturally leads to another, it was arranged that three commissioners having been employed in cramming, the process of digesting should be entrusted to ten more, who were called the Decemviri. These were appointed from the patricians, after a struggle on the part of the plebeians to get five selected from

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<sup>18</sup> It has been often a subject of regret that the particulars of this expedition have not been handed down to us, and that the three Roman excursionists did not put their heads together to form a log during their voyage. It is, however, seldom that the marine expeditions of the sages are fully detailed, for nothing can be scantier than the account of the journey of the three wise men of Gotham who went to sea in a bowl; and there is reason to believe that many a chapter has been lost to the philosophical transactions of the world, by the chapter of nautical accidents.

their own order; but, with a laudable regard to public order, they withdrew their opposition. The especial object for which the Decemviri had been appointed was to frame a new code of laws, but it seems to have been always understood that the practical purpose of a commission is to delay an object, quite as much as to further it. Lest the Decemviri should proceed too rapidly with the work they had been specially chosen to do, arrangements were made for distracting their attention from it by throwing on them the whole business of Government. Had they been modern commissioners of inquiry, they would have needed no excuse for delay; but, with a stubborn resolution to get through their task, they surmounted, or avoided, the obstacles they might have been excused for stumbling at. Instead of making their administrative duties an interruption to their legislative labours, and urging the necessity for attending to both as a plea for the performance of neither, the commissioners took the sovereignty in rotation for five days at a time, and as ten rulers acting all at once would have kept nothing straight, this arrangement for obtaining the strength of unity was altogether a judicious one. At the expiration of their year of office the Decemviri had completed a system of laws, which was engraved on ten tables; – a proof of the industry of the Government of the day, for in these times it would be hopeless to expect ten tables from those who might be, at the same time, forming a cabinet.

Though the Decemviri had done enough to win the public favour, they had left enough undone to afford a pretext for the

prolongation of their powers. It was suggested that though the ten tables were very good as far as they went, there was room for two more; and to give an opportunity for this small sum in addition being completed, the continuance of the decemviral form of government was agreed upon. As the time for the election approached, the most disgraceful election intrigues were practised, and in order to disqualify Appius Claudius – one of the former Decemviri – the patricians put him in the chair, or elected him president, on the day of the nomination of the candidates. Appius had for some time been acting the character of the "people's friend," and he had shown himself a consummate actor, for, being a tyrant by nature, he must have been wholly indebted to art for appearing otherwise. Having been called upon to preside, he opened the business of the day by proposing nine names of little note – including five plebeians – and then, with an air of frankness, he suggested himself as a fit and proper person to complete the number. The people – surprised and amused at the coolness of the proposition – proceeded to elect the very candid candidate, who, being joined with a number of nonentities, formed the unit to the ten of which the rest composed the cipher. Soon after their election, the new Decemviri proceeded to complete the twelve tables – and as they formed the origin of the Civil Law, embodying principles which the best jurists have been unable to improve – we will spread these tables before the student, and ask him to sit down with us for a few moments over them.

We cannot promise him any other than a dry repast, with little or nothing to whet his curiosity; and unless his appetite for information is extremely vigorous, there will be little to suit his taste on those plates of bronze or ivory – the material is immaterial, and has been variously described – on which the provisions we are about to serve up were originally carved.

The first table coincided in some respects with our County Courts Act, and furnished a cheap mode of bringing a defendant into court by a simple summons, though if he refused to walk, a mule, an appropriate type of obstinacy, was to be provided for him.

By the second table, it was justifiable to kill a thief in the night; but a person robbed in the day was to have the thief as his slave; a privilege equal to that of being allowed to take into your service, as your page, the urchin who has just picked your pocket. Such an exploit would no doubt indicate a smart lad, and, in order to make him literally smart, the Roman law, in the spirit of our Juvenile Offenders Act, ordered the knave a whipping.

The third table was in some respects an interest table; for it prohibited the taking of more than 12 per cent. on a loan; but if a debtor did not pay within thirty days, he might be bound with chains; an arrangement by which his exertions to get out of difficulty must have been grievously fettered. Having been made to enter into these unprofitable bonds for sixty days, the debtor, if his creditors were more than one, might have been divided between them; but human nature must have found it difficult,

under such circumstances, to declare a dividend.

The fourth table seems hardly to have a sound leg to stand upon; for it gave a father the right of life and death over all his children, together with the privilege of selling them. To prevent a parent from pursuing a disgraceful traffic in a series of alarming sacrifices of his family stock, he was not permitted to sell the same child more than three times over, when the infant was permitted to go into the market on his own account, free of all filial duty.

The fifth table related to the estates of deceased persons; and if a freedman died without a will or a direct heir, the law provided for the distribution of his goods without providing for his family. Fallacious hopes among poor relations were checked by handing over to the patron all that remained; and thus the client may be said to have been subject to costs, even after the debt of nature had been satisfied.

In the sixth table, there is nothing worthy of remark; but the seventh guards against damage done by quadrupeds, and not only meets the old familiar case of the donkey among the chickens, but declares that any one wilfully treading on a neighbour's corn shall pay a suitable penalty.

Agriculture was protected by making it a capital offence to blast by incantation another's wheat; so that had the farmers of the day moaned over each other's ruined prospects as they have done in more recent times, performing a sort of incantation by singing the same old song of despair, they might have been liable



to lose their heads in the literal as well as in the intellectual sense of which the phrase is susceptible. By the same table, a man breaking another's limb was exposed to retaliation; and a simple fracture was compensated by a simple fracture, though the parties were allowed to compound if they preferred doing so.

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