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Author: Charles Morris

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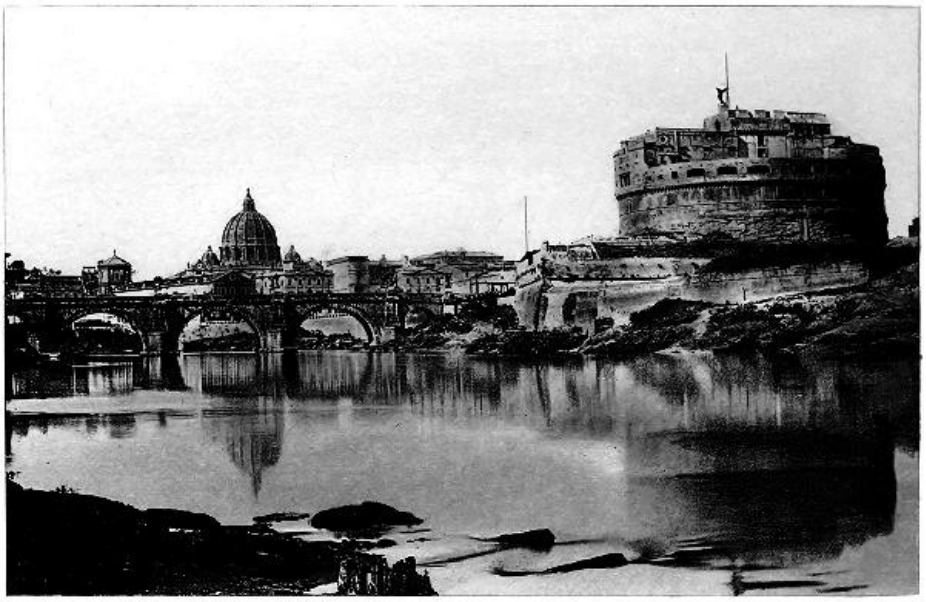

CASTLE S. ANGELO.

Edition d'Élite

Historical Tales

The Romance of Reality

By

CHARLES MORRIS

Author of "Half-Hours with the Best American Authors," "Tales from the Dramatists," etc.

IN FIFTEEN VOLUMES

Volume XI

Roman

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ROMAN.

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HOW ROME WAS FOUNDED.

Very far back in time, more than twenty-six hundred years ago, on the banks of a small Italian river, known as the Tiber, were laid the foundations of a city which was in time to become the conqueror of the civilized world. Of the early days of this renowned city of Rome we know very little. What is called its history is really only legend,—stories invented by poets, or ancient facts which became gradually changed into romances. The Romans believed them, but that is no reason why we should. They believed many things which we doubt. And yet these romantic stories are the only existing foundation-stones of actual Roman history, and we can do no better than give them for what little kernel of fact they may contain.

In our tales from Greek history it has been told how the city of Troy was destroyed, and how Æneas, one of its warrior chiefs, escaped. After many adventures this fugitive Trojan prince reached Italy and founded there a new kingdom. His son Ascanius afterwards built the city of Alba Longa (the long white city) not far from the site of the later city of Rome. Three hundred years passed away, many kings came and went, and then Numitor, a descendant of Æneas, came to the throne. But Numitor had an ambitious brother, Amulius, who robbed him of his crown, and, while letting him live, killed his only son and shut up his daughter Silvia in the temple of the goddess Vesta, to guard the ever-burning fire of that deity.

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Here Silvia had twin sons, whose father was said, in the old superstitious fashion, to be Mars, the God of War. The usurper, fearing that these sons of Mars might grow up and deprive him of his throne, ordered that they and their mother should be flung into the Tiber, then swollen with

recent rains. The mother was drowned, but destiny, or Mars, preserved the sons. Borne onward in their basket cradle, they were at length swept ashore where the river had overflown its banks at the foot of the afterwards famous Palatine Hill. Here the cradle was over-turned near the roots of a wild fig-tree, and the infants left at the edge of the shallow waters.

What follows sounds still more like fable. A she-wolf that came to the water to drink chanced to see the helpless children, and carried them to her cave, where she fed them with her milk. As they grew older a woodpecker brought them food, flying in and out of the cave. At length Faustulus, a herdsman of the king, found these lusty infants in the wolf's den, took them home, and gave them to his wife Laurentia to bring up with her own children. He gave them the names of Romulus and Remus.

Years went by, and the river waifs grew to be strong, handsome, and brave young men. They became leaders among the shepherds and herdsmen, and helped them to fight the wild animals [Pg 9] that troubled their flocks. Their home was on the Palatine Hill, and the cattle and sheep for which they cared were those of the wicked king Amulius. Near by was another hill, called the Aventine, and on this the deposed king Numitor fed his flocks. In course of time a quarrel arose between the herdsmen on the two hills, and Numitor's men, having laid an ambush, took Remus prisoner and carried him to Alba, where their master dwelt. This no sooner became known to Romulus than he gathered the young men of the Palatine Hill, and set out in all haste to the rescue of his brother.

Meanwhile, Remus had been taken before Numitor, who gazed on him with surprise. His face and bearing were rather those of a prince than of a shepherd, and there was something in his aspect familiar to the old king. Numitor questioned him closely, and Remus told him the story of the river, the wolf, and the herdsman. Numitor listened intently. The story took him back to the day, many years before, when his daughter Silvia and her twin sons had been thrown into the swollen stream. Could the children have escaped? Could this handsome youth be his grandson? It must be so, for his age and his story agreed.

But while they talked, Romulus and his followers reached the city, and, being forbidden entrance, made an assault on the gates. In the conflict that ensued Amulius took part and was killed, and thus Numitor and his daughter were at last revenged. Seeking Remus, the victorious shepherd prince found him with Numitor, who now fully recognized in the twin youths his long- [Pg 10] lost grandsons. Romulus, who was now master of the city, restored his royal grandfather to the throne.

As for Romulus and Remus, their life as shepherds was at an end. It was not for youths of royal blood and warlike aspirations to spend their lives in keeping sheep. But Numitor had been restored to the throne of Alba, and they decided to build a city of their own on those hills where all their lives had been passed and on which they preferred to dwell. The land belonged to Numitor, but he willingly granted it to them, and they led their followers to the spot.

Here a dispute arose between the brothers. The story goes that Romulus wished to have the city built on the Palatine Hill, Remus on the Aventine Hill; and that, as they could not agree, they referred the matter to their grandfather, who advised them to settle it by augury,—or by watching and forming conclusions from the flight of birds. This long continued the favorite Roman mode of settling difficult questions. It was easier than the Greek plan of going to Delphi to consult the oracle.

The two brothers now stationed themselves on the opposite hills, each with a portion of their followers, and waited patiently for what the heavens might send. The day slowly waned, and they waited in vain. Night came and deepened, and still their vigil lasted. At length, just as the sun of a new day rose in the east, Remus saw a flight of vultures, six in all. He exulted at the sight, for the vulture, as a bird which was seldom seen and did no harm to cattle or crops, was looked upon [Pg 11] as an excellent augury. Word of his success was sent to Romulus, but he capped the story with a better one, saying that twelve vultures had just passed over his hill.

The dispute was still open. Remus had seen the birds first; Romulus had seen the most. Which had won? The question was offered to the decision of their followers, the majority of whom raised their voices in favor of Romulus. The Palatine Hill was therefore chosen as the city's site. This event took place, so Roman chronology tells us, in the year 753 B.C.

The day fixed for the beginning of the work on the new city—the 21st of April—was a day of religious ceremony and festival among the shepherds. On this day they offered sacrifices of cakes and milk to their god Pales, asked for blessings on the flocks and herds, and implored pardon for all offences against the dryads of the woods, the nymphs of the streams, and other deities. They purified themselves by flame and their flocks by smoke, and afterwards indulged in rustic feasts and games. This day of religious consecration was deemed by Romulus the fittest one for the important ceremony of founding his projected city.

Far back in time as it was when this took place, Italy seems to have already possessed numerous cities, many of which were to become enemies of Rome in later days. The most civilized of the Italian peoples were the Etruscans, a nation dwelling north of the Tiber, and whose many cities displayed a higher degree of civilization than those around them. From these [Pg 12] the Romans in later days borrowed many of their religious customs, and to them Romulus sent to learn what were the proper ceremonies to use in founding a city.

The ceremonies he used were the following. At the centre of the chosen area he dug a circular

pit through the soil to the hard clay beneath, and cast into this, with solemn observances, some of the first fruits of the season. Each of his men also threw in a handful of earth brought from his native land. Then the pit was filled up, an altar erected upon it, and a fire kindled on the altar. In this way was the city consecrated to the gods.

Then, having harnessed a cow and a bull of snow-white color to a plough whose share was made of brass, Romulus ploughed a furrow along the line of the future walls. He took care that the earth of the furrow should fall inward towards the city, and also to lift the plough and carry it over the places where gates were to be made. As he ploughed he uttered a prayer to Jupiter, Mars, Vesta, and other deities, invoking their favor, and praying that the new city should long endure and become an all-ruling power upon the earth.

The Romans tell us that his prayer was answered by Jupiter, who sent thunder from one side of the heavens and lightning from the other. These omens encouraged the people, who went cheerfully to the work of building the walls. But the consecration of the city was not yet completed. Its walls were to be cemented by noble blood. There is reason to believe that in those [Pg 13] days the line of a city's walls was held as sacred, and that it was desecration to enter the enclosure at any place except those left for the gates. This may be the reason that Romulus gave orders to a man named Celer, who had charge of the building of the walls, not to let any one pass over the furrow made by the plough. However this be, the story goes that Remus, who was still angry about his brother's victory, leaped scornfully over the furrow, exclaiming, "Shall such defences as these keep your city?"

Celer, who stood by, stirred to sudden fury by this disdain, raised the spade with which he had been working, and struck Remus a blow that laid him dead upon the ground. Then, fearing vengeance for his hasty act, he rushed away with such speed that his name has since been a synonyme for quickness. Our word "celerity" is derived from it. But Romulus seems to have borne the infliction with much of that spirit of fortitude which distinguished the Romans in after-times. At least, the only effect the death of his brother had upon him, so far as we know, was in the remark, "So let it happen to all who pass over my walls!" Thus were consecrated in the blood of a brother the walls of that city which in later years was to be bathed in the blood of the brotherhood of mankind, and from which was destined to outflow a torrent of desolation over the earth.

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THE SABINE VIRGINS.

A TRACT of ground surrounded by walls does not make a city. Men are wanted, and of these the new city of Rome had but few. The band of shepherds who were sufficient to build a wall, or perhaps only a wooden palisade, were not enough to inhabit a city and defend it from its foes. The neighboring people had cities of their own, except bandits and fugitives, men who had shed blood, exiles driven from their homes by their enemies, or slaves who had fled from their lords and masters. These were the only people to be had, and Romulus invited them in by proclaiming that his city should be an asylum for all who were oppressed, a place of refuge to which any man might flee and be safe from his pursuers. He erected a temple to a god named Asylæus,—from whom comes the word asylum,—and in this he "received and protected all, delivering none back, neither the servant to his master, the debtor to his creditor, nor the murderer into the hands of the magistrate, saying that it was a privileged place, and they could so maintain it by an order of the holy oracle, insomuch that the city grew presently very populous."

[Pg 15] It was a quick and easy way of peopling a city. Doubtless the country held many such fugitives, —men lurking in woods or caves, hiding in mountain clefts, abiding wherever a place of safety offered,—hundreds of whom, no doubt, were glad to find a shelter among men and behind walls of defence. But it was probably a sorry population, made up of the waifs of mankind, many of whom had been slaves or murderers. There were certainly no women among this desperate horde, and Romulus appealed in vain to the neighboring cities to let his people obtain wives from among their maidens. It was not safe for the citizens of Rome to go abroad to seek wives for themselves; the surrounding peoples rejected the appeal of Romulus with scorn and disdain; unless something was done Rome bade fair to remain a city of bachelors.

In this dilemma Romulus conceived a plan to win wives for his people. He sent word abroad that he had discovered the altar of the god Consus, who presided over secret counsels, and he invited the citizens of the neighboring towns to come to Rome and take part in a feast with which he proposed to celebrate the festal day of the deity. This was the 21st of August, just four months after the founding of the city,—that is, if it was the same year.

There were to be sacrifices to Consus, where libations would be poured into the flames that consumed the victims. These would be followed by horse-and chariot-races, banquets, and other festivities. The promise of merry-making brought numerous spectators from the nearer cities, some doubtless drawn by curiosity to see what sort of a commonwealth this was that had grown [Pg 16]

up so suddenly on the sheep pastures of the Palatine Hill; and they found their wives and daughters as curious and eager for enjoyment as themselves, and brought them along, ignoring the scorn with which they had lately rejected the Roman proposals for wives. It was a religious festival, and therefore safe; so visitors came from the cities of Cœnina, Crustumerium, and Antemna, and a multitude from the neighboring country of the Sabines.

The sacrifices over, the games began. The visitors, excited by the races, became scattered about among the Romans. But as the chariots, drawn by flying horses, sped swiftly over the ground, and the eyes of the visitors followed them in their flight, Romulus gave a preconcerted signal, and immediately each Roman seized a maiden whom he had managed to get near and carried her struggling and screaming from the ground. As they did so, each called out "Talasia," a word which means spinning, and which afterwards became the refrain of a Roman marriage song.

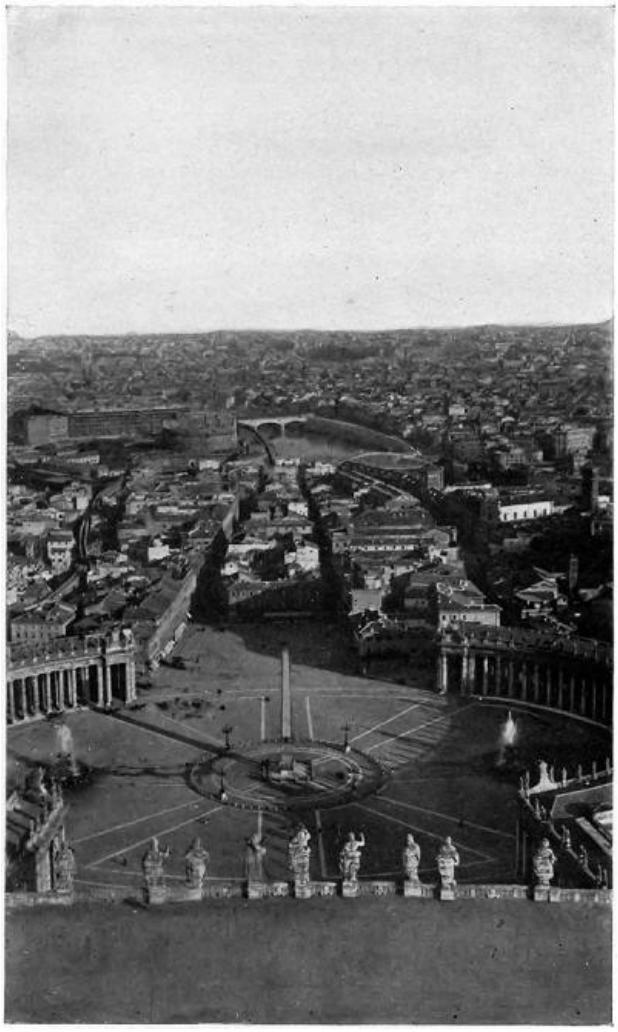
The games at once broke up in rage and confusion. But the visitors were unarmed and helpless. Their anger could be displayed only in words, and Romulus told them boldly that they owed their misfortune to their pride. But all would go well with their daughters, he said, since their new husbands would take the place with them of home and family.

This reasoning failed to satisfy the fathers who had been robbed so violently of their daughters, and they had no sooner reached home than many of them seized their arms and [Pg 17] marched against their faithless hosts. First came the people of Cœnina; but the Romans defeated them, and Romulus killed their king. Then came the people of Crustumerium and Antemna, but they too were defeated. The prisoners were taken into Rome and made citizens of the new commonwealth.

But it was the Sabines who had most to deplore, for they had come in much the greatest number, and it was principally the Sabine virgins whom the Romans had borne off from the games. Titus Tatius, the king of the Sabines, therefore resolved upon a signal revenge, and took time to gather a large army, with which he marched against Rome.

The war that followed was marked by two romantic incidents. Near the Tiber is a hill,—afterwards known as the Capitoline Hill,—which was divided from the Palatine Hill by a low and swampy valley. On this hill Romulus had built a fortress, as a sort of outwork of his new city. It happened that Tarpeius, the chief who held this fortress, had a daughter named Tarpeia, who was deeply affected by that love of finery which has caused abundant mischief since her day. When she saw the golden collars and bracelets which many of the Sabines wore, her soul was filled with longing, and she managed to let them know that she would betray the fortress into their hands if they would give her the bright things which they wore upon their arms.

They consented, and she secretly opened to them a gate of the fortress. But as they marched through the gate, and the traitress waited to receive her reward, the Sabine soldiers threw on [Pg 18] her the bright shields which they wore on their arms, and she was crushed to death beneath their weight. The steep rock of the Capitoline Hill from which traitors were afterwards thrown was called, after her, the Tarpeian Rock.



ROME FROM THE DOME OF ST. PETER'S.

The fortress thus captured, the valley between the hill and the city became the scene of battle. Here the Sabines repulsed the Romans, driving them back to one of their gates, through which the fugitives rushed in confusion, shutting it hastily behind them. But—if we may trust the legend—the gate refused to stay shut. It opened again of its own accord. They closed it twice more, and twice more it swung open. The victorious Sabines, who had now reached it, began to rush in; but just then, from the Temple of Janus, near by, there burst forth a mighty stream of water, which swept the Sabines away and saved Rome from capture. Therefore, in after-days, the gates of the Temple of Janus stood always wide open in time of war, that the god might go out, if he would, to fight for the Romans.

Another battle took place in the valley, and the Romans again began to flee. Romulus now prayed to Jupiter, and vowed to erect to him a temple as Jupiter Stator,—that is, the "stayer,"—if he would stay the Romans in their flight. Jupiter did so, or, at any rate, the Romans turned again to the fight, which now waxed furious. What would have been its result we cannot tell, for it was brought to an end by the other romantic incident of which we have spoken.

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In fact, while the fathers of the Sabine virgins retained their anger against the Romans, the virgins themselves, who had now long been brides, had become comforted, most of them being as attached to their husbands as they had been to their parents before; and in the midst of the furious battle between their nearest relatives the lately abducted damsels were seen rushing down the Palatine Hill, and forcing their way, with appealing eyes and dishevelled hair, in between the combatants.

"Make us not twice captives!" they earnestly exclaimed, saying pathetically that if the war went on they would be widowed or fatherless, both of which sad alternatives they deplored.

The result of this appeal was a happy one. Both sides let fall their arms, and peace was declared upon the spot, it being recognized that there could be no closer bond of unity than that made by the daughters of the Sabines and wives of the Romans. The two people agreed to become one, the Sabines making their new home on the Capitoline and Quirinal Hills, and the Romans continuing to occupy the Palatine. As for the women, there was established in their honor the feast called Matronalia, in which husbands gave presents to their wives and lovers to their betrothed. Romulus and Tatius were to rule jointly, and afterwards the king of Rome should be alternately of Roman and Sabine birth.

After five years Tatius was killed in a quarrel, and Romulus became sole king. Under him Rome grew rapidly. He was successful in his wars, and enriched his people with the spoils of his enemies In rule he was just and gentle, and punished those guilty of crime not by death, but by fines of sheep or oxen. It is said, though, that he grew somewhat arrogant, and was accustomed

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to receive his people dressed in scarlet and lying on a couch of state, where he was surrounded by a body of young men called *Celeres*, from the speed with which they flew to execute his orders.

For nearly forty years his reign continued, and then his end came strangely. One day he called the people together in the Field of Mars. But suddenly there arose a frightful storm, with such terrible thunder and lightning and such midnight darkness that the people fled homeward in affright through the drenching rain. That was the last of Romulus. He was never seen in life again. He may have been slain by enemies, but the popular belief was that Mars, his father, had carried him up to heaven in his chariot. All that the people knew was that one night, when Proculus Julius, a friend of the king, was on his way from Alba to Rome, he met Romulus by the way, his stature beyond that of man, and his face showing the beauty of the gods.

Proculus asked him why he had left the people to sorrow and wicked surmises, for some said that the senators had made away with him. Romulus replied that it was the wish of the gods that, after building a city that was destined to the greatest empire and glory, he should go to heaven and dwell with the gods.

"Go and tell my people that they must not weep for me any more," he said; "but bid them to be [Pg 21] brave and warlike, and so shall they make my city the greatest on the earth."

This story satisfied the people that their king had been made a god; so they built a temple to him, and always afterwards worshipped him under the name of the god Quirinus. A festival called the Quirinalia was celebrated each year on the 17th of February, the day on which he had vanished from the eyes of men.

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THE HORATII AND CURIATII.

Romulus was succeeded by a king named Numa Pompilius, of Sabine origin, who so loved peace that during his reign Rome had no wars and no enemies, so that the doors of the Temple of Janus were never once opened while he was on the throne. He built a temple to Faith, that men might learn to avoid falsehood and to act honestly. He taught the people to sacrifice nothing but the fruits of the earth, cakes of flour, and roasted corn, and to shed no blood upon the altars. And so Home was peaceful and prosperous throughout his long reign, and grew rapidly in wealth and population. He died at length when eighty years of age, and was succeeded by Tullus Hostilius, a king of Roman birth.

The new king loved war as much as the gentle Numa had loved peace. Under his rule the gates of the Temple of Janus were soon thrown open again, long to remain so. His first war was with the city of Alba Longa, the foster-parent of Rome. Some border troubles brought on hostilities, war broke out, and an Alban army marched until within fifteen miles of Rome. And here took place a celebrated incident. The two armies were drawn out on the field, and were about to plunge into the dreadful work of battle, when the Alban king, to whom the war seemed a foolish [Pg 23] and useless one, stood out between the two armies and spoke in the hearing of both.

He reminded them that the Romans and Albans were of the same origin, and that they were surrounded by nations who would like to see both of them weakened. He proposed, therefore, that the dispute between them should be decided not by battle, but by a duel between a few soldiers, and that the side which won should rule the other. This proposal seemed to Tullus a sensible one, and he accepted it, offering as the combatants on his side three brothers known as the Horatii.

The Alban army had also three brave brothers, of about the same age as the Roman champions, known as the Curiatii, and these were chosen to uphold the honor and dominion of Alba against Rome. So, with the two armies as spectators, and a broad space between for the deadly duel, the six champions, fully armed, faced each other in the field.

The onset was fierce, and set every heart in the two armies throbbing in hope or dread. But after a short time a shout of triumph went up from the Alban host. Two of the Horatii lay stretched in death on the field. The Curiatii were all wounded, but they were now three to one, so the remaining Horatius turned and fled, though he was still unhurt. Dismay fell on the Romans as they saw their single champion in full flight, pursued by his opponents. The glad shouts of the Albans redoubled.

Suddenly a change came. The fugitive, whose flight had been a feint, to separate his foes, now [Pg 24] turned and saw that the wounded men were lagging in pursuit and were widely separated. Running quickly back, he met the nearest, and killed him with a blow. The other two were met and slain in succession before they could aid each other. Then, holding up his bloody sword in triumph, the victor invited the plaudits of his friends, while shedding dismay on Alban hearts.

The Romans, now lords of the Albans, returned to Rome in triumph, their advent to the city being marked by the first of those pompous processions which in after-years became known as Roman Triumphs, and were celebrated with the utmost splendor and costliness of display.

But the affair of the Horatii and Curiatii was not yet at an end. It was to be finished in blood and crime. A sister of the Horatii was the affianced bride of one of the Curiatii, and as she saw her victorious brother enter the city, bearing on his shoulders the military cloak which she had wrought for her lover with her own hands, she broke into wild invectives, tearing her hair, and upbraiding her brother with bitter words. Roused to fury by this accusation, the victor, in a paroxysm of rage, struck his sister to the heart with the sword which had slain her lover, crying out, "So perish the Roman maiden who shall weep for her country's enemy."

This dreadful deed filled with horror the hearts of all who beheld it. Men cried that it was a crime against the law and the gods, too great to be atoned for by the victor's services. He was seized and dragged to the tribunal of the two judges who dealt with crimes of bloodshed. These heard the evidence of the crime, and condemned him to death, in despite of what he had done for Rome. [Pg 25]

But the Roman law permitted an appeal from the judges to the people. This appeal Horatius made, and it was tried before the assembly of Romans. Here his father spoke in his favor, saying that in his opinion the maiden deserved her fate. Remembrance of the great service performed by Horatius was also strong with the people, and the voice of the assembly freed him from the sentence of death. But blood had been shed, and blood required atonement, so a sum of money was set aside to pay for sacrifices to atone for this dreadful deed. Ever afterwards these sacrifices were performed by members of the Horatian clan.

In a later war the Albans failed to aid the Romans, as they were required to do by the terms of alliance. As a result the city of Alba was destroyed, and the Albans forced to come and live in Rome, the Cælial Hill being given them for a dwelling-place.

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THE DYNASTY OF THE TARQUINS.

The tale we have now to tell forces us to pass rapidly over years of history. After several kings of Roman and Sabine birth had reigned, a foreigner, of Greek descent, came to the throne of Rome. This was one Lucomo, the son of a native of Corinth, who had settled at Tarquinii in Italy. Growing weary of Tarquinii, Lucomo left that city, with his family and wealth, and made his way to Rome. As he came near the gates of the city an eagle swooped down, lifted the cap from his head, and, bearing it high into the air, descended and placed it on his head again. His wife Tanaquil, who was skilled in augury, told him this was a happy omen, and that he was destined to become great.

THE FORUM OF ROME.

And so he did. His riches, courage, and wisdom brought him great favor in Rome, and on the death of their king Ancus the people chose Lucius Tarquinius—as they called him, from his native city—to reign over them in his stead. He proved a valiant and successful warrior, and in times of

peace did noble work. He built great sewers to drain the city, constructed a large circus or race-course, and a forum or market-place, and built a wall of stone around the city in place of the old wooden wall. He also began to build a great temple on the Capitoline Hill, which was designed to be the temple of the gods of Rome. In the end Lucius was murdered by the sons of King Ancus, who declared that he had robbed them of the throne. [Pg 27]

There is a story of the deed of an augur in his reign which is worth repeating, whether we believe it or not. Lucius had little trust in the augur, and said to him, "Come, tell me by your auguries whether the thing I have in my mind may be done or not." "It may," said Attus, the augur. "It is this," said the king, laughing: "it was in my mind that you should cut this whetstone in two with this razor. Take them and see if you can do it."

Attus took the razor and whetstone, and with a bold stroke cut the latter in two. From that time on Lucius did nothing without first consulting the augurs, and testing the purposes of the gods by the flight of birds, and—so say the legends—he prospered accordingly.

The cause of the death of Lucius was this. One day a boy who dwelt in the palace fell asleep in its portico, and as he lay there some attendants who passed by saw a flame playing lambently around his head. Alarmed at the sight, they were about to throw water upon him to extinguish the flame, when Tanaquil, the queen, who had also seen it, forbade them. She told the king of what had happened, and said that the boy whom they were bringing up so meanly was destined to become great and noble. She bade him, therefore, to rear the child in a way befitting his destiny.

The boy, whose name was Servius Tullius, was thereupon brought up as a prince, and when old enough married the king's daughter. Lucius reigned forty years, and then the sons of Ancus, fearing to be robbed of their claim to the throne by young Servius, who had become very popular, managed to get an audience with and kill the king. [Pg 28]

The murderers gained nothing by their deed of blood. Queen Tanaquil shrewdly told the people that Lucius was only stunned by the blow, and that he wished them to obey the orders of Servius. To the young man she said, "The kingdom is yours; if you have no plans of your own, then follow mine." For several days Servius acted as king, and then, the people and senate having grown used to seeing him on the throne, the death of Lucius was declared and Servius proclaimed king. He had the consent of the senate, but had not asked that of the people, being the first king of Rome who reigned without the votes of the assembly of the Roman people.

Servius Tullius reigned long and won victories, but his greatest triumphs were those of peace. He formed a league with the thirty cities of Latium, and is said to have taken a census of the people of the city, which was found to have eighty-three thousand inhabitants. To strengthen his power he married his two daughters to two sons of Lucius Tarquinius, a well-intended act which led to a tragic and dreadful deed.

The daughters of Servius were very unlike in nature, and the same may be said of their husbands, and they became unequally mated. Lucius Tarquinius was proud and full of evil, while his wife, the elder Tullia, was good and gentle. Aruns Tarquinius was of a mild and kindly nature, while his wife, the younger Tullia, was cruel and ambitious. They were thus sadly mismated. But the evil pair saw in each other kindred spirits, and in the end Lucius secretly killed his wife, and the younger Tullia her husband. The wicked pair then married, and proceeded to carry out the purposes of their base hearts. [Pg 29]

Servius, being himself of humble birth, had favored the people at the expense of the nobles. He even made a law that no king should rule after him, but that two men chosen by the people should govern them year by year. Thus it was that the commons came to love him and the nobles to hate him, and when he asked for a vote of the people on his king-ship there was not a voice raised against him.

Lucius, whom his wicked wife steadily goaded to ambitious aims, conspired with the nobles against the king. There were brotherhoods of the young nobles, pledged to support each other in deeds of oppression. These he joined, and gained their aid. Then he waited till the harvest season, when the commons were in the fields, gathering the ripened corn.

This absence of the king's friends gave him the opportunity he wished. Gathering a band of armed men, he suddenly entered the Forum, and took his seat on the king's throne, before the door of the senate-chamber, from which Servius was accustomed to judge the people. Word of this act of treason was borne to the old king, who at once hastened to the Forum and sternly asked the usurper why he had dared to take that seat. [Pg 30]

Lucius insolently answered that it was his father's throne, and that he had the best right to it. Then, as the aged and unguarded king mounted the steps of the senate-house, his ambitious son-in-law sprang up, caught him by the middle, and flung him headlong down the steps to the ground. Then he went into the senate-chamber and called the senators together, as though he were already king.

The old monarch, sadly shaken by his fall, rose to his feet and made his way slowly towards his home on the Esquiline Hill. But when he came near it he was overtaken by some bravos whom Lucius had sent in pursuit. These killed the unprotected old man, and left him lying in his blood in the middle of the street.

And now was done a deed which has aroused the execrations of mankind in all later ages. Tullia, who had instigated her husband to the murder of her father, waited with impatience until it was performed. Then, mounting her chariot, she bade the coachman to drive to the Forum, where, heedless of the crowd of men who had assembled, she called Lucius from the senate-house, and cried to him, in accents of triumph, "Hail to thee, King Tarquinius!"

Wicked as Lucius was, he was not as shameless as his wife, and sternly bade her to go home. She obeyed, taking the same street as her father had followed. Soon reaching the spot where the bleeding body of the old king lay stretched across the way, the coachman drew up his horses and [Pg 31] pointed out to Tullia the dreadful spectacle.

"Drive on," she harshly commanded. "I cannot," he replied. "The street is too narrow to pass without crushing the king's body." "Drive on," she again fiercely ordered, and the coachman did so. Tullia went to her home with her father's blood upon the wheels of her chariot, and with the execration of all good men upon her head. And thus it was that Lucius Tarquinius and his wicked wife succeeded the good king Servius upon the throne.

We may tell here briefly the end of this evil pair. Tarquin the Proud, as he is known in history, reigned as a tyrant and oppressor, while his wife was viewed with horror by all virtuous matrons. At length the people rose against a base deed of the tyrant's son, and the wicked Tullia fled in terror from her house. No one sought to stop her in her flight; but all, men and women alike, cursed her as she passed, and prayed that the furies of her father's blood might take revenge for her dreadful deed.

She never saw Rome again. Tarquin sought long to regain his crown, but in vain, and the wicked usurpers died in exile. No king ever again ruled over the Romans. Tarquin's tyranny had given the people enough of kings, and the law of good Servius Tullius was at last carried out.

[Pg 32]

THE BOOKS OF THE SIBYL.

While Tarquin the Proud was king a strange thing happened at Rome. One day an unknown woman came to the king, bearing in her arms nine books, which she offered to sell to him at a certain price. She told him that they contained the prophecies of the Sibyl of Cumæ, and that from them might be learned the destiny of Rome and the way to carry out this destiny.

But the price she asked for her books seemed to the king exorbitant, and he refused to buy them, whereupon the woman went away from the palace and burned three of the volumes. She then returned with six only and offered them to the king, but demanded the same price for the six as she had before done for the nine. King Tarquin heard this demand with laughter and mockery, and again refused to buy. The woman once more left the palace, and burned three more of the books.

To the king's astonishment his strange visitor soon returned, bearing the three books that remained. On being asked their price, she named the same sum as she had demanded for the six and the nine. This was ceasing to be matter for mockery. There might be some important mystery concealed behind this strange demand. The king sent for the augurs of the court, told them what [Pg 33] had happened, and asked what he should do. They told him that he had done very wrong. In refusing the books he had refused a gift of the gods. By all means he must buy the books that were left. He bought them, therefore, at the Sibyl's price. As for the woman, she was never seen again.

The books were placed in a chest of stone, and kept underground in the great temple which his father had begun on the Capitoline Hill, and which he had completed. Two men were appointed to guard them, who were called the two men of the sacred books; and no treasure could have been kept with more care and devotion than these mysterious rolls.

The temple in which these books were kept was the grandest edifice Rome had yet known. When Tarquin proposed to build it he found the chosen site already occupied by many holy places, sacred to the gods of the Sabines, the first dwellers on the Capitoline Hill. The augurs consulted the gods to see if these holy places could safely be removed, to make room for the new temple. The answer came that they might take away all except the holy places of the god of Youth and of Terminus, the god of boundaries. This was accounted a happy augury, for it seemed to mean that the city should always retain its youth and that no enemy should remove its boundaries. And when the foundations of the temple were dug a human head was found, which was held to be a sign that the Capitoline Hill should be the head of all the earth. So a great temple was built, and consecrated to Jupiter and to Juno and to Minerva, the greatest of the [Pg 34] Etruscan gods. This edifice, afterwards known as the Capitol, was the most sacred and revered edifice of later Rome.

In the vaults of this temple the sacred books of the Sibyl were sedulously kept, and here they

were consulted from time to time, as occasions arose in the history of the city when divine guidance seemed necessary. None of the people were permitted to gaze within the sacred cell in which they lay. Only the augurs consulted them, and the word of the augurs had to be taken for what they revealed. It may be that the augurs themselves invented all that they told, for the books at length perished in the flames, and no man knows what secret lore they really contained.

It was during the wars of Sulla and Marius (83 B.C.) that this disaster occurred. The Capitol was burned, and with it those famous oracles, which had so long directed the counsels of the nation. Their loss threw Rome into the deepest consternation, the loss of the Capitol itself seeming small beside that of these famous scrolls.

To replace them as far as possible, the senate sent ambassadors to the various temples of Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor, within which were Sibyls, or oracle-speaking priestesses. These collected such oracles referring to Rome as they could find, about one thousand lines in all, and brought them to Rome, where they were placed in the same locality in the new Capitol that they had occupied in the old.

These oracles do not appear to have predicted future events, but were consulted to discover [Pg 35] the religious observances necessary to avert great calamities and to expiate prodigies. During the reign of Augustus they were removed to the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill, and all the false Sibylline leaves which were extant were collected and burned. They remained here until shortly after the year 400 A.D., when they were publicly burned by Stilicho, a famous general of Christian Rome, as impious documents of heathen times.

[Pg 36]

THE STORY OF LUCRETIA.

We have next to tell how Tarquin the Proud lost his throne, through his own tyranny and the criminal action of his son. Once upon a time, when this king was at the height of his power, he, as was usual, offered sacrifices to the gods on the altar in the palace court-yard. But from the altar there crawled out a snake, which devoured the offerings before the flames could reach them.

This was an alarming omen. The augurs were consulted, but none of them could explain it. So Tarquin sent two of his sons to the Temple of Delphi, in Greece, whose oracle was famous in all lands, to ask counsel of Apollo concerning this prodigy. With these two princes, Titus and Aruns by name, went their cousin, Lucius Junius, a youth who seemed so lacking in wit that men called him Brutus,—that is, the "Dullard." One evidence of his lack of wit was that he would eat wild figs with honey. Just in what way this was an evidence of want of good sense we do not know, though doubtless the Romans did.

But Brutus was by no means the fool that men fancied him. He was shrewd instead of stupid. His father had left him abundant wealth, to which his uncle, King Tarquin, might at any time take [Pg 37] a fancy, and sweep him away to enjoy it. The king had killed his brother for his wealth, and would be likely to serve him in the same way if he deemed him wise enough to fight for his inheritance. So, preferring life to money, Brutus feigned to be wanting in sense.

When he went to Delphi he took with him a hollow staff of horn, which he had filled with gold, and offered this staff to the oracle as a likeness of himself,—perhaps as one empty of wit and whose whole merit lay in his gold. When the three young men had performed the bidding of the king, and asked the oracle the meaning of the prodigy, they were told that it portended the fall of Tarquin. Then they said, "O Lord Apollo, tell us which of us shall be king of Rome." From the depth of the sanctuary there came a voice in reply, "The one among you who shall first kiss his mother."

This was one of those enigmas in which the Delphian oracle usually spoke, saying things with a double meaning, and which men were apt to take amiss. It was so now. The two princes drew lots which of them should first kiss their mother on his return; and they agreed to keep the oracle secret from their brother Sextus, lest he should be king rather than they. But Brutus was wiser than them both. As they left the temple together, he pretended to stumble and fell with his face to the ground. He then kissed the earth, saying, "The earth is the true mother of us all."

On their return to Rome the princes found that their father was at war. He was besieging the [Pg 38] city of Ardea, which lay south of Rome; and as this city was strong and well defended the king and his army were kept a long while before it, waiting until famine, their ally, should force the inhabitants to surrender. While the army was thus waiting in idleness its officers had leisure for feasts and diversions, and one of the king's sons found time to indulge in fatal mischief. This arose from a supper in the tent of Prince Sextus, at which his brothers Titus and Aruns, and his cousin Tarquin of Collatia, were present.

While they feasted a dispute arose between them, as to which had the worthiest wife. It ended in a proposition of Tarquin, "Let us go and see with our own eyes what our wives are doing, and

we can then best decide which is the worthiest." This proposition hit with their humor, and, mounting their horses, they rode to Rome. Here they found the wives of the three princes merrily engaged at a banquet. They then rode on to Collatia. It was now late at night, but they found Lucretia, the wife of their cousin, neither sleeping nor feasting, but working at the loom, with her handmaids busily engaged around her.

On seeing this, they all cried, "Lucretia is the worthiest lady." She ceased her work to entertain them, after which they took to their horses again, and rode back to the camp before Ardea.

But Sextus was seized with a vile passion for his cousin's wife, and a few days afterwards went alone to Collatia, where Lucretia received him with much hospitality, as her husband's kinsman. He treated her shamefully in return, forcing her, with wicked threats, to accept him as her lover and husband, in defiance of the laws of God and man. [Pg 39]

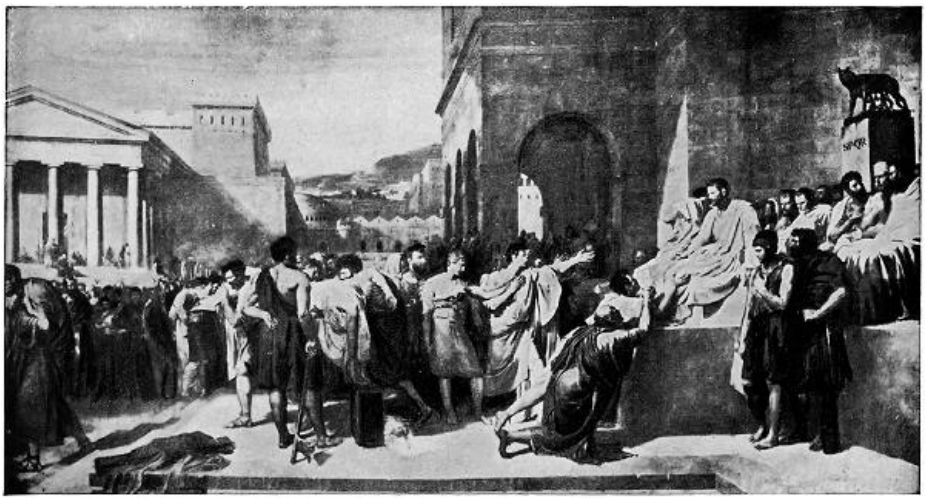
As soon as Sextus had left her and returned to the camp, Lucretia sent to Rome for her father and to Ardea for her husband. Tarquin brought with him his cousin Lucius Junius, or Brutus the Dullard. When they arrived the lady, with bitter tears, told them of the wickedness of Sextus, and said, "If you are men, avenge it!" They heard her tale in horror, and swore to deeply revenge her wrong.

"I am not guilty," she now said; "yet I too must share in the punishment of this deed, lest any should think that they may be false to their husbands and live." As she spoke she drew a knife from her bosom and stabbed herself to the heart.

As they saw her fall, a cry of horror arose from her husband and father. But Brutus, who saw that the time had come for him to throw off his pretence of stupidity and act the man, drew the knife from the bleeding wound and held it up, saying, in solemn accents, "By this blood, I swear that I will visit this deed upon King Tarquin and all his accursed race! And no man hereafter shall reign as king in Rome, lest he may do the like wickedness."

He then handed the knife to the others, and bade them to take the same oath. This they did, wondering at the sudden transformation in Brutus. They then took up the body of the slain woman and carried it into the forum of the town, crying to the gathering people, "Behold the deeds of the wicked family of Tarquin, the tyrant of Rome!"

The people, maddened by the sight, hastily sought their arms, and while some guarded the gates, that none might carry the news to the king, the others followed Brutus to Rome. Here the story of the wickedness of Sextus and the self-sacrifice of Lucretia ran through the city like wildfire, and a multitude gathered in the Forum, where Brutus addressed them in fervent words. He recalled to them all the tyranny of Tarquin and the vices of his sons, reminding them of the murder of Servius, the impious act of Tullia, and ending with an earnest recital of the wrongs of the virtuous Lucretia, whose bleeding corpse still lay in evidence in the forum of Collatia. [Pg 40]



BRUTUS ORDERING THE EXECUTION OF HIS SONS.

His words went to the souls of his hearers. An assembly of the people being quickly called, it was voted that the Tarquins should be banished, and the office of king should be forever abolished in Rome. Tullia, learning of the cause of the tumult, hastily left the palace, and fled from Rome in her chariot through throngs that followed her with threats and curses. Brutus, perhaps with the crimsoned knife still in his hand, bade the young men to follow him, and set off in haste to Ardea, to spread through the army the story of the deed of crime and blood.

Meanwhile, Tarquin had been told of the revolt, and was hurrying to Rome to put it down. Brutus turned aside from the road that he might not meet him, and hastened on to the camp, where the story of the revolt and its cause was told the soldiers. On hearing the story the whole army broke into a tumult of indignation, drove the king's sons from the camp, and demanded to be led to Rome. The siege of Ardea was at once abandoned and the backward march began. [Pg 41]

Meanwhile, Tarquin had reached the city, but only to find the gates closed against him and stern men on the walls. "You cannot enter here," they cried. "You are banished from Rome, you and all of yours, and shall never set foot within its walls again. And you are the last of our kings.

No man after you shall ever call himself king of Rome."

Just in what threats, promises, and persuasions Tarquin indulged we do not know. But the men on the walls were not to be moved by threats or promises, and he was obliged to take himself away, a crownless wanderer. As for Sextus, to whom all the trouble was due, some say that he was killed in a town whose people he had betrayed, while others say that he was slain in battle while his father was fighting to regain his throne.

But this is certain, no king ever reigned in Rome again. The people, talking among each other, said, "Let us follow the wise laws of good King Servius. He bade us to meet in our centuries (or hundreds) and to choose two men year by year to govern us, instead of a king. This let us do, as Servius would have done himself had he not been basely murdered."

So the centuries of the people met in the Campus Martius (Field of Mars), and there chose two men,—Brutus, the leader in the revolution, and Lucius Tarquin, the husband of the fated Lucretia. These officials were afterwards called Consuls, and were given ruling power in Rome. [Pg 42] But they had to lay down their office at the end of the year and be succeeded by two others elected in their stead. The people, however, were afraid of the very name of Tarquin, and in electing Lucius to the consulate it seemed as if they had put a new Tarquin on the throne. So they prayed him to leave the city; and, taking all his goods, he went away and settled at Lavinium, a new consul being elected in his place. A law was now passed that all the house of the Tarquins should be banished, whether they were of the king's family or not.

Thus ended the kingly period in Rome, after six kings had followed Romulus. With the consuls many of the laws of King Servius, which Tarquin had set aside, were restored, and a much greater degree of freedom came to the people of Rome. But that there might not now seem to be two kings instead of one, it was decreed that only one of the consuls should rule at a time, each of them acting as ruler for a month, and then giving over the power to his associate.

[Pg 43]

HOW BRAVE HORATIUS KEPT THE BRIDGE.

The banished King Tarquin did not lightly yield his realm. He roused the neighboring cities against Rome and fought fiercely for his throne. Soon after he was exiled from Rome he sent messengers there for his goods. These the senate decreed should be given him. But his messengers had more secret work to do. They formed a plot with many of the young nobles to bring back the king, and among these traitors were Titus and Tiberius, the sons of Brutus.

A slave overheard the conspirators and betrayed them to the consuls, and they were seized and brought to the judgment-seat in the Forum. Here Brutus, sitting in judgment, beheld his two sons among the culprits. He loved them, but he loved justice more, and though he grieved deeply inwardly, his face was grave and stern as he gave judgment that the law must take its course. So the sons of this stern old Roman were scourged with rods before his eyes, and then, with the other conspirators, were beheaded by the lictors, while he looked steadily on, never turning his eyes from the dreadful sight. But men could see that his heart bled for his sons.

Soon afterwards Tarquin led an army of Etruscans against Rome, and the two consuls marched [Pg 44] against them at the head of the Roman army. In the battle that followed Brutus met Aruns, the king's son, in advance of the lines of battle. Aruns, seeing Brutus dressed in royal robes and attended by the lictors of a king, was filled with anger, and levelled his spear and spurred his horse against him. Brutus met him in mid-career with levelled spear. Both were run through, and together fell dead upon the field.

The day ended with neither party victors. But during the night a woodland deity was heard speaking from a forest near by. "One man more has fallen of the Etruscans than of the Romans," it said; "the Romans are to conquer." This strange oracle ended the war. It was a reason, surely, for which war was never ended before or since. The Etruscans, affrighted, marched hastily home; while the Romans carried home their slain patriot, for whom their women mourned a whole year, in honor of his noble service in avenging Lucretia.

The banished king still craved his lost kingdom, and made other efforts to regain it. Having failed in his first attempt, he went to another city, named Clusium, in the distant part of Etruria, and here besought Lars Porsenna, the king of that city, to aid him recover his throne. Lars Porsenna, with a fellow-feeling for his dethroned brother king, raised a large army and marched with Tarquin and his fellow-exiles against defiant Rome.

The Romans now awaited him at home, and the two armies met on the hill called Janiculum, [Pg 45] beyond the river from the city. Here came the crash of battle, but the men of Clusium proved the stronger, and after a sharp struggle the Romans gave way and were driven pell-mell down the hill and across the bridge which spanned the Tiber at this point. This was a wooden bridge on which the Romans set great store, as it was their only means of crossing the stream. But it now was

likely to serve as a means of the loss of their city. Their flying army was pouring in panic across it, with the Etruscans in hot pursuit, seeking strenuously to win the bridge.

The bridge must be speedily destroyed or the city would be lost, but it seemed too late for this; unless the enemy could in some way be kept back till the bridge was cut down, Tarquin and his allies would be in the streets of Rome.

At this juncture a brave and stalwart son of Rome, Horatius Cocles by name, stepped forward and offered his life in his city's defence. "Cut away with all haste," he said; "I will keep the bridge until it falls." Two others, Spurius Lartius and Titus Herminius, sprang to his side, and the three, fully armed and stout of heart, ranged themselves across the narrow causeway, while behind them the axes of the Romans played ringingly upon the supports of the bridge.

On came the Etruscans in force. But the bridge was so narrow that only a few could advance at once, and these found in the way the sharp spears and keen-edged blades of the patriot three. Down went the leading Etruscans, and others pressed on, only to fall, till the defenders of the bridge had a bulwark of the slain in their front. [Pg 46]

HORATIUS KEEPING THE BRIDGE.

And now the bridge creaked and groaned as the axes kept up their lively play, the ring of steel finding its chorus in the cheering shouts of the Romans on the bank.

"Back! back!" cried the axemen. "It will be down in a minute more; back for your lives!"

"Back!" cried Horatius to his comrades, and they hastily retreated; but he stood unmoving, still boldly facing the foe.

"Fly! It is about to fall!" was the shout.

"Let it," cried Horatius, without yielding a step.

And there he stood alone, defying the whole army of the Etruscans. From a distance they showered their javelins on him, but he caught them on his shield and stood unhurt. Furious that they should be kept from their prey by a single man, they gathered to rush upon him and drive him from his post by main force; but just then the creaking beams gave way, and the half of the bridge behind him fell with a mighty crash into the stream below.

The Etruscans paused in their course at this crashing fall, and gazed, not without admiration, at the stalwart champion who had stayed an army in its victorious career. He was theirs now; he could not escape; his life should pay the penalty for their failure.

But Horatius had no such thought. He looked down on the stream, and prayed to the god of the river, "O Father Tiber, I pray thee to receive these arms and me who bear them, and to let thy waters befriend and save me." [Pg 47]

Then, with a quick spring, he plunged, heavy with armor, into the swift-flowing stream, and struck out boldly for the shore. The foemen rushed upon the bridge and poured their darts thick about him; yet none struck him, and he swam safely to the shore, where his waiting friends drew him in triumph from the stream.

For this grand deed of heroism the Romans set up a statue to Horatius in the comitium, and gave him in reward as much land as he could drive his plough round in the space of a whole day. Such deeds cannot be fitly told in halting prose, and Lord Macaulay, in his "Lays of Ancient Rome," has most ably and picturesquely told

"How well Horatius kept the bridge
In the brave days of old."

But though Rome was saved from capture by assault, the war was not ended, and other deeds

of Roman heroism were to be done. Porsenna pressed the siege of the city so closely that hunger became his ally, and the Romans suffered greatly. Then another patriot devoted his life to his city's good. This man, a young noble named Caius Mucius, went to the senate and offered to go to the Etruscan camp and slay Lars Porsenna in the midst of his men.

His proposal acceded to, he crossed the stream by stealth and slipped covertly into the camp, through which he made his way, seeking the king. At length he saw a man dressed in a scarlet [Pg 48] robe and seated on a lofty seat, while many were about him, coming and going. "This must be King Porsenna," he said to himself, and he glided stealthily through the crowd until he came near by, when, drawing a concealed dagger from beneath his cloak, he sprang upon the man and stabbed him to the heart.

But the bold assassin had made a sad mistake. The man he had slain was not the king, but his scribe, the king's chief officer. Being instantly seized, he was brought before Porsenna, where the guards threatened him with sharp torments unless he would truly answer all their questions.

"Torments!" he said. "You shall see how little I care for them."

And he thrust his right hand into the fire that was burning on the altar, and held it there till it was completely consumed.

King Porsenna looked at him with an admiration that subdued all anger. Never had he seen a man of such fortitude.

"Go your way," he cried, "for you have harmed yourself more than me. You are a brave man, and I send you back to Rome free and unhurt."

"And you are a generous king," said Caius, "and shall learn more from me for your kindness than tortures could have wrung from my lips. Know, then, that three hundred noble youths of Rome have bound themselves by oath to take your life. I am but the first; the others will in turn lie in wait for you. I warn you to look well to yourself."

He was then set free, and went back to the city, where he was afterwards known as Scævola, [Pg 49] the left-handed.

The warning of Caius moved King Porsenna to offer the Romans terms of peace, which they gladly accepted. They were forced to give up all the land they had conquered on the west bank of the Tiber, and to agree not to use iron except to cultivate the earth. They were also to give as hostages ten noble youths and as many maidens. These were sent; but one of the maidens, Clœlia by name, escaped from the Etruscan camp, and, bidding the other maidens to follow, fled to the river, into which they all plunged and swam safely across to Rome.

They were sent back by the Romans, whose way it was to keep their pledges; but King Porsenna, admiring the courage of Clœlia, set her free, and bade her choose such of the youths as she wished to go with her. She chose those of tenderest age, and the king set them free.

The Romans rewarded Caius by a gift of land, and had a statue made of Clœlia, which was set up in the highest part of the Sacred Way. And King Porsenna led his army home, with Tarquin still dethroned.

[Pg 50]

THE BATTLE OF LAKE REGILLUS.

A third time Tarquin the Proud marched against Rome, this time in alliance with the Latins, whose thirty cities had joined together and declared war against the Romans. But as many of the Romans had married Latin wives, and many of the Latins had got their wives from Rome, it was resolved that the women on both sides, who preferred their native land to their husbands, might leave their new homes and take with them their virgin daughters. And, as the legend tells, all the Latin women but two remained in Rome, while all the Roman women returned with their daughters to their fathers' homes.

The two armies met by the side of Lake Regillus, and there was fought a battle the story of which reads like a tale from the Iliad of Homer; for we are told not of how the armies fought, but of how their champions met and fought in single combats upon the field. King Tarquin was there, now hoary with years, yet sitting his horse and bearing his lance with the grace and strength of a young man. And there was Titus his son, leading into battle all the banished band of the Tarquins. And with them was Octavius Mamilius, the leader of the Latins, who swore to seat Tarquin again [Pg 51] on his throne and to make the Romans subjects of the Latins.

On the Roman side were many true and tried warriors, among them Titus Herminius, one of those who fought on the bridge by the side of Horatius Cocles, when that champion fought so well for Rome.

It is too long to tell how warrior rode against warrior with levelled lances, and how this one was struck through the breast and that one through the arm, and so on in true Homeric style. The battle was a series of duels, like those fought on the plain of Troy. But at length the Tarquin band, under the lead of Titus, charged so fiercely that the Romans began to give way, many of their bravest having been slain.

At this juncture Aulus, the leader of the Romans, rode up with his own chosen band, and bade them level their lances and slay all, friend or foe, whose faces were turned towards them. There was to be no mercy for a Roman whose face was turned from the field. This onset stopped the flight, and Aulus charged fiercely upon the Tarquins, praying, as he did so, to the divine warriors Castor and Pollux, to whom he vowed to dedicate a temple if they would aid him in the fight. And he promised the soldiers that the two who should first break into the camp of the enemy should receive a rich reward.

Then suddenly, at the head of the chosen band, appeared two unknown horsemen, in the first bloom of youth and taller and fairer than mortal men, while the horses they rode were white as the driven snow. On went the charge, led by these two noble strangers, before whom the enemy [Pg 52] fled in mortal terror, while Titus, the last of the sons of King Tarquin, fell dead from his steed. The camp of the Latins being reached, these two horsemen were the first to break into it, and soon the whole army of the enemy was in disorderly flight and the battle won.

Aulus now sought the two strange horsemen, to give them the reward he had promised; but he sought in vain; they were not to be found, among either the living or the dead, and no man had set eyes upon them since the camp was won. They had vanished as suddenly as they had appeared. But on the hard black rock which surrounds the lake was visible the mark of a horse's hoof, such as no earthly steed could ever have made. For ages afterwards this mark remained.

But the strangers appeared once again. It was known in Rome that the armies were joined in battle, and the longing for tidings from the field grew intense. Suddenly, as the sun went down behind the city walls, there were seen in the Forum two horsemen on milk-white steeds, taller and fairer than the tallest and fairest of men. Their horses were bathed in foam, and they looked like men fresh from battle.

Alighting near the Temple of Vesta, where a spring of water bubbles from the ground, these men, whom no Romans had ever seen before, washed from their persons the battle-stains. As they did so men crowded round and eagerly questioned them. In reply, they told them how the battle had been fought and won,—though in truth the battle ended only as the sun went down [Pg 53] over Lake Regillus. They then mounted their horses and rode from the Forum, and were seen no more. Men sought them far and wide, but no one set eyes on them again.

Then Aulus told the Romans how he had prayed to Castor and Pollux, the divine twins, and said that it could be none but they who had broken so fiercely into the enemy's camp, and had borne the news of victory with more than mortal speed to Rome. So he built the temple he had vowed to the hero gods, and gave there rich offerings as the rewards he had promised to the two who should first enter the camp of the foe.

Thus ended the hopes of King Tarquin, against whom the gods had taken arms. His sons and all his family slain, he was left ruined and hopeless, and retired to the city of Cumæ, whence formerly the Sibyl had come to his court. Here he died, and thus passed away the last of the Roman kings.

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THE REVOLT OF THE PEOPLE.

The overthrow of the kings of Rome did not relieve the people from all their oppression. The inhabitants of that city had long been divided into two great classes, the Patricians, or nobles, and the Plebeians, or common people, and the former held in their hand nearly all the wealth and power of the state. The senate, the law-making body, were all Patricians; the consuls, the executors of the law, were chosen from their ranks; and the Plebeians were left with few rights and little protection.

It was through the avarice of money-lending nobles that the people were chiefly oppressed. There were no laws limiting the rate of interest, and the rich lent to the poor at extravagant rates of usury. The interest, when not paid, was added to the debt, so that in time it became impossible for many debtors to pay.

And the laws against debtors had become terribly severe. They might, with all their families, be held as slaves. Or if the debtor refused to sell himself to his creditor, and still could not pay his debt, he might be imprisoned in fetters for sixty days. At the end of that time, if no friend had paid his debt, he could be put to death, or sold as a slave into a foreign state. If there were several creditors, they could actually cut his body to pieces, each taking a piece proportional in [Pg 55]

size to his claim.

This cruel severity was more than any people could long endure. It led to a revolution in Rome. In the year 495 B.C., fifteen years after the Tarquins had been expelled, a poor debtor, who had fought valiantly in the wars, broke from his prison, and—with his clothes in tatters and chains clanking upon his limbs—appealed eloquently to the people in the Forum, and showed them on his emaciated body the scars of the many battles in which he had fought.

His tale was a sad one. While he served in the Sabine war, the enemy had pillaged and burned his house; and when he returned home, it was to find his cattle stolen and his farm heavily taxed. Forced to borrow money, the interest had brought him deeply into debt. Finally he had been attacked by pestilence, and being unable to work for his creditor, he had been thrown into prison and cruelly scourged, the marks of the lash being still evident upon his bleeding back.

This piteous story roused its hearers to fury. The whole city broke into tumult, as the woful tale passed from lip to lip. Many debtors escaped from their prisons and begged protection from the incensed multitude. The consuls found themselves powerless to restore order; and in the midst of the uproar horsemen came riding hotly through the gates, crying out that a hostile army was near at hand, marching to besiege the city.

Here was a splendid opportunity for the Plebeians. When called upon to enroll their names and take arms for the city's defence, they refused. The Patricians, they said, might fight their own battles. As for them, they had rather die together at home than perish separate upon the battle-field. [Pg 56]

This refusal left the Patricians in a quandary. With riot in the streets and war beyond the walls they were at the mercy of the commons. They were forced to promise a mitigation of the laws, declaring that no one should henceforth seize the goods of a soldier while he was in camp, or hinder a citizen from enlisting by keeping him in prison. This promise satisfied the people. The debtors' prisons were emptied, and their late tenants crowded with enthusiasm into the ranks. Through the gates the army marched, met the foe, and drove him in defeat from the soil of the Roman state.

Victory gained, the Plebeians looked for laws to sustain the promises under which they had fought. They looked in vain; the senate took no action for their redress. But they had learned their power, and were not again to be enslaved. Their action was deliberate but decided. Taking measures to protect their homes on the Aventine Hill, they left the city the next year in a body, and sought a hill beyond the Anio, about three miles beyond the walls of Rome. Here they encamped, built fortifications, and sent word to their lordly rulers that they were done with empty promises, and would fight no more for the state until the state kept its faith. All the good of their fighting came to the Patricians, they said, and these might now defend themselves and their wealth.

The senate was thrown into a panic by this decided action. When the hostile cities without should learn of it, they might send armies in haste to undefended Rome. The people left in the city feared the Patricians, and the Patricians feared them. All was doubt and anxiety. At length the senate, driven to desperation, sent an embassy to the rebels to treat for peace, being in deadly fear that some enemy might assail and capture the city in the absence of the bulk of its inhabitants. [Pg 57]

The messenger sent, Menenius Agrippa Lanatus, was a man famed for eloquence, and a popular favorite. In his address to the people in their camp he repeated to them the following significant fable:

"At a time when all the parts of the body did not agree together, as they do now, but each had its own method and language, the other parts rebelled against the belly. They said that it lay quietly enjoying itself in the centre, while they, by care, labor, and service, kept it in luxury. They therefore conspired that the hands should not convey food to the mouth, the mouth receive it, nor the teeth chew it. They thus hoped to subdue the belly by famine; but they found that they and all the other parts of the body suffered as much. Then they saw that the belly by no means rested in sloth; that it supplied instead of receiving nourishment, sending to all parts of the body the blood that gave life and strength to the whole system."

It was the same, he said, with the body of the state. All must work in unity, if all would prosper. This homely argument hit the popular fancy. The people consented to treat for their return if their liberties could be properly secured. But they must now have deeds instead of words. It was not political power they sought, but protection, and protection they would have. [Pg 58]

Their demands were as follows: All debts should be cancelled, and all debtors held by their creditors should be released. And hereafter the Plebeians should have as their protectors two officials, who should have power to veto all oppressive laws, while their persons should be held as sacred and inviolable as those of the messengers of the gods. These officials were to be called Tribunes, and to be the chief officers of the commons as the consuls were of the nobles.

This proposition was accepted by the senate, and a treaty signed between the contesting parties, as solemnly as if they had been two separate nations. It was an occasion as important to the liberties of Romans as the treaty signed many centuries afterwards on the field of Runnymede, between King John and his barons, was to the liberties of Englishmen, and was held by the Romans in like high regard. The hill on which the treaty had been made was ever after

known as the Sacred Mount. Its top was consecrated and an altar built upon it, on which sacrifices were made to Jupiter, the god who strikes men with terror and then delivers them from fear; for the people had fled thither in dread, and were now to return home in safety.

Thus ended the great revolt of the people, who had gained in the Tribunes defenders of more power and importance than they or the senate knew. They were never again to suffer from the [Pg 59] bitter oppression to which they had been subjected in preceding years. As for Lanatus, to whose pleadings they had yielded, he died before the year ended, and was found to have not left enough to pay for his funeral. Therefore the Plebeians collected funds to give him a splendid burial; but the senate having decreed that the state should bear this expense, the money raised by the grateful people was formed into a fund for the benefit of his children.

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THE REVENGE OF CORIOLANUS.

Caius Marcius, a noble Roman youth, descended from the worthy king Ancus Marcius, fought valiantly when but seventeen years of age in the battle of Lake Regillus, and was there crowned with an oaken wreath, the Roman reward for saving the life of a fellow-soldier. This he showed with the greatest joy to his mother, Volumnia, whom he loved exceedingly, it being his greatest pleasure to receive praise from her lips for his exploits. He afterwards won many more crowns in battle, and became one of the most famous of Roman soldiers.

One of his memorable exploits took place during a war with the Volscians, in which the Romans attacked the city of Corioli. The citizens made a sally, and drove the Romans back to their camp. But Caius, with a few followers, stopped them and turned the tide of battle, driving the Volscians back. As they fled into the city through the open gates, he cried, "Those gates are set open for us rather than for the Volscians. Why are we afraid to rush in?" And suiting his act to his words, the daring soldier pursued the enemy into the town.

Here he found himself almost alone, for very few had followed him. The enemy turned on the bold invaders, but Caius proved so strong of hand and stout of heart that he drove them all [Pg 61] before him, keeping a way clear for the Romans, who soon thronged in through the open gate and took the city. The army gave Caius the sole credit for the victory, saying that he alone had taken Corioli; and the general said, "Let him be called after the name of the city." He was, therefore, afterwards known by the name of Caius Marcius Coriolanus.

Courage was not the only marked quality of Coriolanus. His pride was equally great. He was a noble of the nobles, so haughty in demeanor and so disdainful of the commons that they grew to hate him bitterly. At length came a time of great scarcity of food. The people were on the verge of famine, to relieve which shiploads of corn were sent from Sicily to Rome. The senate resolved to distribute this corn among the suffering people, but Coriolanus opposed this, saying, "If they want corn let them show their obedience to the Patricians, as their fathers did, and give up their tribunes. If they do this we will let them have corn, and take care of them."

When the people heard of what the proud noble had said they broke into such fury that a mob gathered around the doors of the senate house, prepared to seize and tear him to pieces when he came out. They were checked in this by the tribunes, who said, "Let us not have violence. We will accuse him of treason before the assembly, and you shall be his judges."

The tribunes, therefore, as the law gave them the right, summoned Coriolanus to appear [Pg 62] before the popular tribunal and answer to the charges against him. But he, knowing how deeply he had offended them, and that they would show him no mercy, stayed not for the trial, but fled from Rome, exiled from his native land by his pride and disdain of the people.

The exile made his way to the land of the Volscians, and seating himself by the hearth-fire of Attius Tullius, their chief, waited there with covered head till his late bitter foe should come in. How Attius would receive him he knew not; but he was homeless, and had now only his enemies to trust. But when the chieftain entered, and learned that the man who sat crouched beside his hearth, subject to his will, was the great warrior who by his own hands had taken a Volscian city, but was now banished and a fugitive, he was filled with compassion. He greeted him kindly and offered him a home, saying to himself, "Caius, our worst foe, is now our friend and a foe to Rome; we will make war against that proud city, and by his aid will conquer it."

But the Volscians were not eager for war. They were afraid of the Romans, who had so often defeated them, and Attius sought in vain to stir them to hostility. Failing to rouse them by eloquence, he practised craft. There was a great festival at Rome, to which had come the people of various cities, among them many of the Volscians. Attius now went privately to the Roman consuls and bade them beware of the Volscians, lest they should stir up a riot and make trouble in the city, hinting that mischief was intended. In consequence of this warning proclamation was [Pg 63] made that every Volscian should leave Rome before the setting of the sun.

This produced the effect which Attius had hoped. He met the Volscians on their way home, and found them fired with indignation against Rome. He pretended similar indignation. "You have been made a show of before all the nations," he cried. "You and your wives and children have been basely insulted. They have made war on us while their guests; if you are men you will make them rue this deed."

His words inflamed his countrymen. The story of the insult spread widely through the country, all the tribes of the Volscians took up the quarrel, and a great army was raised and set in march towards Rome, with Attius and Coriolanus at its head.

The Volscian force was greater than the Romans were prepared to meet, and the army marched victoriously onward, taking city after city, and finally encamping within five miles of Rome. When the Volscians entered Roman territory they laid waste, by order of Coriolanus, the lands of the commons, but spared those of the nobles, the exiled patrician deeming the former his foes and the latter his friends. The approach of this powerful army threw the Romans into dismay. They had been assailed so suddenly that they had made no preparations for defence, and the city seemed to lie at the mercy of its foes. The women ran to the temples to pray for the favor of the gods. The people demanded that the senate should send deputies to the invading army to [Pg 64] treat for peace. The senate, apparently no less frightened than the people, obeyed, sending five leading Patricians to the Volscian camp.

These deputies were haughtily received by Coriolanus, who offered them the following severe terms: "We will give you no peace till you restore to the Volscians all the land and cities which Rome has ever taken from them, and till you make them citizens of Rome, and give them all the rights in your city which you have yourselves."

These conditions the deputies had no power to accept, and they threw the senate into dismay. The deputies were sent again, instructed to ask for gentler terms, but now, Coriolanus refused even to let them enter his camp.

This harsh repulse plunged Rome into mortal terror. The senate, helpless to resist, now sent the priests of the gods and the augurs, all clothed in their sacred garments, and bearing the sacred emblems from the temples. But even this solemn delegation Coriolanus refused to receive, and sent them back to Rome unheard.

Where all this time was the Roman army, which always before and after made itself heard and felt? This we are not told. We are in the land of legend, and cannot look for too much consistency. For once in its history Rome seems to have forgotten that its mission was not to plead, but to fight. Perhaps its armies had been beaten and demoralized in previous battles. At any rate we can but tell the story as it is told to us.

The help of delegates, priests, and augurs having proved unavailing, that of women was next [Pg 65] sought. A noble lady, Valeria by name, who with other suppliants had sought the Temple of Jupiter, was inspired by a sudden thought, which seemed sent by the god himself. Rising, and bidding the other noble ladies to accompany her, she proceeded to the house of Volumnia, the mother of Coriolanus, whom she found with Virgilia, his wife, and his little children.

"We have come to ask you to join us," she said, "in order that we women, without aid from man, may deliver our country, and win for ourselves a name more glorious even than that of the Sabine wives of old, who stopped the battle between their husbands and fathers. Come with us to the camp of Caius, and let us pray him to show us mercy."

"It is well thought of; we shall go with you," said Volumnia, and, with Virgilia and her children, the noble matron prepared to seek the camp and tent of her exiled son.

It was a sad and solemn spectacle, as this train of noble ladies, clad in their habiliments of woe, and with bent heads and sorrowful faces, wound through the hostile camp, from which they were not excluded, like the men. Even the Volscian soldiers watched them with pitying eyes, and spoke no word as they moved slowly past. On reaching the midst of the camp, they saw Coriolanus on the general's seat, with the Volscian chiefs gathered around him.

At first he wondered who these women could be. But when they came near, and he saw his mother at the head of the train, his deep love for her welled up so strongly in his heart that he [Pg 66] could not restrain himself, but sprang up and ran to meet and kiss her. The Roman matron stopped him with a dignified gesture, saying,—

"Ere you kiss me, let me know whether I am speaking to an enemy or to my son; whether I stand here as your prisoner or your mother."

He stood before her in silence, with bent head, and unable to speak.

"Must it then be that if I had never borne a son, Rome would have never seen the camp of an enemy?" said Volumnia, in sorrowful tones. "But I am too old to bear much longer your shame and my misery. Think not of me, but of your wife and children, whom you would doom to death or to life in bondage."

Then Virgilia and the children came up and kissed him, and all the noble ladies in the train burst into tears and bemoaned the peril of their country. Coriolanus still stood silent, his face working with contending thoughts. At length he cried out, in heart-rending accents, "O mother, what have you done to me?"

Clasping her hand, he wrung it vehemently, saying, "Mother, the victory is yours! A happy victory for you and Rome, but shame and ruin to your son."

Then he embraced her with yearning heart, and afterwards clasped his wife and children to his breast, bidding them return with their tale of conquest to Rome. As for himself, he said, only exile and shame remained.

[Pg 67] Before the women reached home the army of the Volscians was on its homeward march. Coriolanus never led them against Rome again. He lived and died in exile, far from his wife and children. When very old, he sadly remarked, "That now in his old age he knew the full bitterness of banishment."

The Romans, to honor Volumnia and those who had gone with her to the Volscian camp, built a temple to "Woman's Fortune" on the spot where Coriolanus had yielded to his mother's entreaties; and the first priestess of this temple was Valeria, who had been inspired in the temple of Jupiter with the thought that saved Rome.

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CINCINNATUS AND THE ÆQUIANS.

In the old days of Rome, not far from the time when Coriolanus yielded up his revenge at his mother's entreaty, the Roman state possessed a citizen as patriotic as Coriolanus was proud, and who did as much good as the other did evil to his native land. This citizen, Lucius Quinctius by name, was usually called Cincinnatus, or the "crisp-haired," from the fact that he let his hair grow long, and curled and crisped it so carefully as to gain as much fame for his hair as for his wisdom and valor.

Cincinnatus was the simplest and least ambitious of men. He cared nothing for wealth, and had no craving for city life, but dwelt on his small farm beyond the Tiber, which he worked with his own hands, content, so his crops grew well, to let the lovers of power and wealth pursue their own devices within the city walls. But he was soon to be drawn from the plough to the sword.

While Cincinnatus was busy ploughing his land, Rome kept at its old work of ploughing the nations. War at this time broke out with the Æquians, a neighboring people; but for this war the Æquians were to blame. They had plundered the lands of some of the allies of Rome, and when [Pg 69] deputies were sent to complain of this wrong, Gracchus, their chief, received them with insulting mockery.

He was sitting in his tent, which was pitched in the shade of a great evergreen oak, when the deputies arrived.

"I am busy with other matters," he answered them; "I cannot hear you; you had better tell your message to the oak yonder."

"Yes," said one of the deputies, "let this sacred oak hear, and let all the gods hear also, how treacherously you have broken the peace. They shall hear it now, and shall soon avenge it; for you have scorned alike the laws of the gods and of men."

The deputies returned to Rome, and reported how they had been insulted. The senate at once declared war, and an army was sent towards Algidus, where the enemy lay. But Gracchus, who was a skilled soldier, cunningly pretended to be afraid of the Romans, and retreated before them, drawing them gradually into a narrow valley, on each side of which rose high, steep, and barren hills.

When he had lured them fairly into this trap, he sent a force to close up the entrance of the valley. The Romans suddenly found that they had been entrapped into a *cul-de-sac*, with impassable hills in front and on each side, and a strong body of Æquians guarding the entrance to the ravine. There was neither grass for the horses nor food for the men. Gracchus held not only the entrance, but the hill-tops all round, so that escape in any direction was impossible. But [Pg 70] before the road in the rear was quite closed up five horsemen had managed to break out; and these rode with all speed to Rome, where they told the senate of the imminent danger of the consul and his army.

These tidings threw the senate into dismay. What was to be done? The other consul was with his army in the country of the Sabines. He was at once sent for, and hastened with all speed to Rome. Here a consultation took place, which ended in the leading senators saying, "There is only one man who can deliver us. We must make Lucius Quinctius Master of the People." Master of the People meant in Rome what we now mean by Dictator,—that is, a man above the law, an autocrat supreme. What service this unambitious tiller of the ground had previously done for Rome to make him worthy of this distinction we are not told, but it is evident that he was looked upon as the man of highest wisdom and soldiership in Rome.

Caius Nautius, the consul, appointed Cincinnatus to this high office, as he alone was privileged to do, and then hastened back to his army. Early the next morning deputies from the senate sought the farm of the new dictator, to apprise him of the honor conferred on him. Early as it was, Cincinnatus was already at work in his fields. He was without his toga, or cloak, and vigorously digging in the ground with his spade, never dreaming that he, a simple husbandman, had been chosen to save a state.

"We bring you a message from the senate," said the deputies. "You must put on your cloak to receive it with the fitting respect."

"Has evil befallen the state?" asked the farmer, as he bade his wife to bring him his cloak. [Pg 71] When he had put it on he returned to the deputies.

"Hail to you, Lucius Quinctius!" they now said. "The senate has declared you Master of the People, and have sent us to call you to the city; for the consul and the army in the country of the Æquians are in imminent danger."

Without further words, Cincinnatus accompanied them to the boat in which they had crossed the Tiber, and was rowed in it to the city. As he left the boat he was met by a deputation consisting of his three sons, his kinsmen and friends, and many of the senators of Rome. They received him with the highest honor, and led him in great state to his city residence, the twenty-four lictors walking before him, with their rods and axes, while a great multitude of the people crowded round with shouts of welcome. The presence of the lictors signified that this plain farmer had been invested with all the power of the former kings.

The new dictator quickly proved himself worthy of the trust that had been placed in him. He chose at once as his Master of the Horse Lucius Tarquinius, a brave man, of noble descent, but so poor that he had been forced to serve among the foot-soldiers instead of the horse. Then the two entered the Forum, where orders were given that all booths should be closed and all lawsuits stopped. All men were forbidden to look after their own affairs while a Roman army lay in peril of destruction.

Orders were next given that every man old enough to go to battle should appear before sunset with his arms and with five days' food in the Field of Mars, and should bring with him twelve [Pg 72] stakes. These they were to cut where they chose, without hinderance from any person. While the soldiers occupied themselves in cutting these stakes, the women and older men dressed their food. Such haste was made, under the energetic orders of the dictator, that an army was ready, equipped as commanded, in the Field of Mars before the sun had set. The march was at once begun, and was continued with such rapidity that by midnight the vicinity of Algidus was reached. On the enemy being perceived, a halt was called.

Cincinnatus now rode forward and inspected the camp of the enemy, so far as it could be seen by night. He then ordered the soldiers to throw down their baggage, and to keep only their arms and stakes. Marching stealthily forward, they now extended their lines until they had completely surrounded the hostile camp. Then, upon a given signal, a simultaneous shout was raised, and each soldier began to dig a ditch where he stood and to plant his stakes in the ground.

The shout rang like a thunder-clap through the camp of the Æquians, waking them suddenly and filling them with dismay. It also reached the ears of the Romans who lay in the valley, and inspired them with hope, for they recognized the Roman war-cry. They raised their own battle-shout in response, and, seizing their arms, sallied out and made a fierce attack upon the foe, fighting so desperately that the Æquians were prevented from interrupting the work of the outer [Pg 73] army. All the remainder of the night the battle went on, and when day broke the Æquians found that a ditch and a palisade of stakes had been made around their entire camp.

This work accomplished, Cincinnatus ordered his men to attack the foe, and thus aid their entrapped countrymen. The Æquians, finding themselves between two armies, and as closely walled in as the Romans in the valley had before been, fell into a panic of hopelessness, threw down their arms, and begged their foes for mercy. Cincinnatus now signalled for the fighting to cease, and, meeting those who came to ask on what terms he would spare their lives, said,—

"Give me Gracchus and your other chiefs bound. As for you, you can have your lives on one condition. I will set two spears upright in the ground, and put a third spear across, and every man of you, giving up your arms and your cloaks, shall pass under this yoke, and may then go away free."

To go under the yoke was accounted the greatest dishonor to a soldier. But the Æquians had no alternative and were obliged to submit. They delivered up to the Romans their king and their chiefs, left their camp with all its spoil to the foe, and passed without cloaks or arms under the crossed spears, their heads bowed with shame. They then went home, leaving their chiefs as Roman prisoners. Thus was Gracchus punished for his pride.

In less than a day's time Cincinnatus had saved a Roman army and humiliated the Æquian foe. As for the battle-spoils, he distributed them among his own men, giving none to the consul's [Pg 74] army, and degraded the consul, making him his under-officer. He then marched the two armies back to Rome, which he reached that same evening, and where he was received with as much astonishment as joy. The rescued army were too full of thankfulness at their escape to feel chagrin at their loss of spoil, and voted to give Cincinnatus a golden crown, calling him their protector and father.

The senate decreed that Cincinnatus should enter the city in triumph. He rode in his chariot through the gates, Gracchus and the chiefs of the Æquians being led in fetters before him. In front of all the standards were borne, while in the rear marched the soldiers, laden with their spoil. At the door of every house tables were set, with meat and drink for the soldiers, while the people, singing and rejoicing, danced with joy as they followed the conqueror's chariot, and all Rome was given up to feasting and merry-making.

As for Cincinnatus, he laid down his power and returned to his farm, glad to have rescued a Roman army, but caring nothing for the pomp and authority he might have gained. And for all we know, he lived and died thereafter a simple tiller of the ground.

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THE SACRIFICE OF VIRGINIA.

In the year 504 B.C. a citizen of Regillum, of much wealth and importance, finding himself at odds with his fellow-citizens, left that city and proceeded to Rome, with a long train of followers, much as the elder Tarquin had come from Tarquinii. His name was Atta Clausus, but in Rome he became known as Appius Claudius. He was received as a patrician, was given ample lands, and he and his descendants in later years became among the chief of those who hated and oppressed the plebeians.

THE SACRIFICE OF VIRGINIA.

About half a century after this date, one of these descendants, also named Appius Claudius, was a principal actor in one of the most dramatic events of ancient Rome. The trouble which had long existed between the patricians and the plebeians now grew so pronounced, and the demand for a reform in the laws so great, that in the year 451 B.C. a commission was sent to the city of Athens, to report on the system of government they found there and elsewhere in Greece. After this commission had returned and given its report, a body of ten patricians was appointed, under the title of Decemvirs (or ten men), to prepare a new code of laws for Rome. They were chosen for one year, and took the place of the consuls, tribunes, and all the chief officials of Rome.

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At the head of this body was Appius Claudius. The laws of Rome had previously been only partly written, the remainder being held in memory or transmitted as traditions. A complete code of written laws was desired, and to this work the decemvirs set themselves diligently. After a few months they prepared a code of laws, which was accepted by nobles and people alike as fair and satisfactory, and it was ordered that these laws should be engraved upon ten tables of brass and hung up in the comitium, or place of assembly of the people, where all might read them and learn under what laws they lived. It is probable that the plebeian demand for reform was so great that the decemvirs did not dare to disregard it.

At the end of the year of office of these officials it was felt that they had done so well that it was thought wise to continue them in power for another year. But when the time for election came round, Appius Claudius managed to have his nine associates defeated, he alone being re-elected. The other nine chosen were men whom he felt sure he could control. And now, having a year's rule assured him, he threw off the cloak of moderation he had worn, and began a career of oppression of the plebeians, aided by his subservient associates. The first step taken was to add two new laws to the code, which became known, therefore, as the "Twelve Tables." These new laws proved so distasteful to the people that they almost broke into open rebellion. It was evident that the haughty decemvirs were seeking to increase the power of their class.

The decemvirs did not confine themselves to passing oppressive laws. They began a career of [Pg 77] outrage and oppression that filled Rome with woe. The youthful patricians followed their lead, and insult and murder became common incidents in Rome. When the second year of the decemvirate expired, Appius and his colleagues, knowing that they could not be elected again, showed no intention of yielding up their authority. They were supported by the senate and the patricians, and had gained such power that they defied the plebeians. Those of the people who were active in opposition were quietly disposed of, and so intolerable became the tyranny that numbers of the plebeian party fled from Rome.

While this was going on war broke out with the Sabines and the Æquians. Of the armies sent against these nations, one was commanded by Lucius Sicinius Dentatus, among the bravest of the Romans, and who had fought in one hundred and twenty battles and was covered with the scars of old wounds. On his way to his post this veteran was murdered by bravos sent by Appius Claudius. Decemvirs were now appointed to command the armies, Appius and one of his colleagues remaining in Rome to look after the safety of the city.

The story goes that both armies were beaten by their foes, and forced to retreat within Roman territory. While they lay encamped, not many miles from Rome, an event occurred in the city which gave them new work to do, and proved that the worst enemies of Rome were not without, but within, her walls.

In the army sent against the Æquians was a centurion named Lucius Virginius, who had a [Pg 78] beautiful daughter named Virginia, whom he had betrothed to Lucius Icilius, recently one of the tribunes of Rome. But the tyranny of the decemvirs was directed against the wives and daughters as well as the men of the plebeians, as was now to be strikingly shown.

One day, as the beautiful maiden was on her way, attended by her nurse, to school in the Forum (around which the schools were placed), she was seen by Appius Claudius, who was so struck by her beauty that he determined to gain possession of her, and sought to win her by insidious words. The innocent girl repelled his advances, but this only increased his desire to possess her, and he determined, as she was not to be had by fair means, to have her by foul. He therefore laid a wicked plot for her capture.

Marcus Claudius, one of his clients, instigated by him, seized the girl as she entered the Forum, claiming that she was his slave. The nurse screamed for help, and a crowd quickly gathered. Many of these well knew the maiden, her father, and her betrothed, and vowed to protect her from wrong. But the villain declared that he meant no harm, and that he only claimed his own, and was quite willing to submit his claim to the decision of the law.

Followed by the crowd, he led the weeping maiden to where Appius Claudius occupied the judgment-seat, and demanded justice at his hands. He declared that the wife of Virginius, being childless, had got this child from its mother and presented it to Virginius as her own, and said [Pg 79] that the real mother had been his slave, and that, therefore, the daughter was his slave also. This he would prove to Virginius on his return to Rome. Meanwhile it was but just that the master should keep possession of his slave.

This specious appeal was earnestly combated by the friends of the maiden, many of whom were present in the throng. Virginius, they said, was absent from Rome in the service of the commonwealth. To take such action in his absence was unjust. They would send him word at once, and in two days he would be in the city.

"Let the case stand until he can appear," they demanded. "The law expressly declares that in cases like this every one shall be considered free till proved a slave. The maiden, therefore, should legally be left with her friends till the day of trial. Put not her fair fame in peril by giving up a free-born maiden into the hands of a man whom she knows not."

To this reasonable appeal Appius, with a show of judicial moderation, replied,—

"Truly, I know the law you speak of, and hold it just and good, for it was enacted by myself. But this maiden cannot in any case be free; she belongs either to her father or to her master. And as her father is not here, who but her master can have any claim to her? I decide, therefore, that M. Claudius shall keep her till Virginius comes, and shall require him to give sureties to bring her before my judgment-seat when the day comes for hearing the case between them." [Pg 80]

This illegal decision was far from satisfying the multitude. The decemvirs and their adherents had gained an unholy reputation for dishonorable treatment of the wives and daughters of the people, and it was not safe to trust a maiden in their hands. Word had been hastily sent to Numitorius, the uncle of Virginia, and Icilius, her betrothed, and they now came up in great haste, and protested so vigorously against the sentence, that the surrounding people became roused to fury. Appius, seeing the temper of the throng, and fearing a riotous demonstration, felt forced to change his decision. He said, therefore, that, in view of the rights of fathers over their children, he would let the case rest till the next day.

"If, then," he said, with a show of stern dignity, "Virginius does not appear, I plainly tell Icilius and his fellows that I will support the laws which I have made. Violence shall not prevail over justice at this tribunal."

Obliged to be content with this, the friends of Virginia conducted her home, and Icilius sent messengers in all haste to the camp, to bid Virginius come without an hour's delay to Rome.

Surety was given that the maiden should appear before Appius the next day.

It was fortunate that the army in which Virginius was a centurion had been obliged to retreat, and then lay not many miles from Rome. The messengers sent reached the camp that same evening, and told Virginius of the peril of his daughter. Appius had also sent messengers to his [Pg 81] colleagues in command of the army, secretly instructing them not to let Virginius leave the camp on any pretence. But the messengers of right outstripped those of wrong, and when word came from the decemvirs in command to restrain Virginius he had already been given leave of absence, and was speeding on the road to Rome, spurred by love and indignation.

Morning came, and Appius resumed his judgment-seat, under the delusion that his vile scheme was safe. To his surprise and dismay, he saw Virginius, whom he supposed detained in camp, dressed in mean attire, like a suppliant, and leading his daughter into the Forum. With him came a body of Roman matrons and a great troop of friends, for the affair had roused the people almost to the point of revolt.

"This is not my cause only, but the cause of all," said Virginius, in moving accents, to the people. "If my daughter shall be robbed from me, what father and mother among you all is safe?"

Icilius earnestly seconded this appeal, and the mothers who stood by wept with pity, their tears moving the people even more than the words of the father and lover.

But Appius was not to be moved by tears or appeals. Bent on gaining his unholy ends, he did not even give Virginius time to address the tribunal, but before Claudius had done speaking he hastened to give sentence. The maiden, he said, should be considered a slave until proved to be free-born. In the mean time she should remain in the custody of her master Claudius. [Pg 82]

This monstrous decision, a perversion of all law, natural and civil, filled the people with astonishment. Could the maker of the laws of Rome thus himself set them at defiance? They stood as if stunned, until Claudius approached to lay hands on the maiden, when the women and her friends gathered around her and kept him off, while Virginius broke out in passionate threats that he would not tamely submit to so great a wrong.

Appius had prepared for this. He had brought with him a body of armed patricians, and, supported by them, he bade his lictors to drive back the crowd. Before their threatening axes the unarmed people fell back, and the weeping maiden was left standing alone. Virginius looked on in despair. Was he to be robbed of his daughter in the face of Rome, and in defiance of all justice and honor? There was one way still to save her, and only one.

With an aspect of humility he asked Appius to let him speak one word to the nurse in the maiden's hearing, that he might learn whether she were really his child or not. "If I am not indeed her father, I shall bear her loss the lighter," he said.

Appius, with a show of moderation, consented, and the distracted father drew the nurse and his daughter aside to a spot where stood some butchers' booths, for the Forum of Rome was then a place of trade as well as of justice. Here he snatched a knife from a butcher, and, holding the poor girl in his arm, he cried, "This is the only way, my child, to keep thee free," and plunged the [Pg 83] weapon to her heart.

Then, turning to Appius, he cried, in threatening accents, "On you and on your head be the curse of this blood!"

"Seize the madman!" yelled Appius.

But, brandishing the bloody knife, Virginius broke through the multitude, which readily made way for his passage, and flew to the city gates, where, seizing a horse, he rode with wild haste to the camp of Tusculum.

Meanwhile Icilius and Numitorius held up the maiden's body, and bade the people see the bloody result of the decemvir's unholy purpose. A tumult instantly arose, the people rushing in such fury upon the tribunal that the lictors and armed patricians were driven back, and Appius, stricken with fear, covered his face with his robe and fled into a neighboring house.

Never had Rome been so stirred to fury. The colleague of Appius rushed with his followers to the Forum, but the people were too strong for all the force he could gather. The senate met, but could do nothing in the excited state of public feeling. An attempt to support the decemvirs now might cause the commons once more to secede to the Sacred Hill.

While this was going on in the city, Virginius, followed by many citizens, had reached the camp. Here the encrimsoned knife he held, the blood on his face and body, and the many unarmed citizens who followed him, brought the soldiers crowding round to learn what all this meant.

The tale was told in moving accents. On hearing it the whole army burst into a storm of [Pg 84] indignation. Heedless of the orders of their generals, they rushed excitedly to arms, pulled up their standards, and put themselves in hasty march for Rome. The only leader they recognized was Virginius, who, knife in hand, led the way in the van.

Reaching the city, the soldiers called on the commons to assert their liberties and elect new tribunes, the decemvirs having deprived them of these officials. They then marched to the Aventine Hill, where they selected ten military tribunes. The senate sent to them to know what

they wanted, but they replied that they had no answer to give except to their own friends.

The other army had also heard of the outrage, and soon appeared at the Aventine, led by Icilius and Numitorius, who had hastened with the dreadful story to its camp. It, too, elected ten tribunes, and waited to hear what the senate had to propose. They waited in vain. No word came to them. The senate, distracted by the sudden occurrence, sought to temporize, but the people were in too deadly earnest to be thus dealt with. In the end the armies left the Aventine, marched through the city, and made their way to the Sacred Hill, where the seceding commoners had established themselves on a famous occasion long before. Men, women, and children followed them in multitudes. Once more the city was deserted by the plebeians, and the patricians were left to keep Rome together as they could.

This brought the senate to terms. The decemvirs agreed to resign. Deputies were sent to ask [Pg 85] what the people demanded. They replied that they wanted their tribunes and the right of appeal restored, full indemnity for all the leaders in the secession, and the punishment of their oppressors.

"These decemvirs," said Icilius, "are public enemies, and we will have them die the death of such. Give them up to us, that they may be burnt with fire, as they have richly deserved."

This blood-thirsty desire, however, was not insisted on. All their other requests were granted, and the people returned to Rome. The decemvirs had resigned. Ten tribunes were chosen, among them Virginius and Icilius. The people of Rome had regained the liberty of which they had been robbed by their late oppressors.

But though the decemvirs had been spared from death by fire, they were not forgiven. Virginius, as a tribune, impeached Appius for having given a decision in defiance of the law. The proud patrician appeared in the Forum surrounded by a body of young nobles, but he gained nothing by this bravado. He refused to go before the judge, appealed to the people, and demanded to be released on bail. This Virginius refused. He could not be trusted at liberty. He was therefore thrown into prison, to await the judgment of the people.

This judgment he did not live to hear. Whether he killed himself in prison, or was killed by order of his accusers, we do not know. We only know that he died. His colleague, who had come to his aid on that fatal day, was also thrown into prison, on the charge of having wantonly [Pg 86] scourged an old and distinguished soldier. He also died there. The other decemvirs, with M. Claudius, who had claimed Virginia as his slave, were allowed to give bail, and all fled from Rome. The property of all of them was confiscated and sold.

Rome had experienced enough of decemvirate rule. The tribunes of the people were restored, and thereafter they were both freely chosen by the people, which had not been the case before.

And thus it was that Virginia was revenged and justice once more reigned in Rome.

[Pg 87]

CAMILLUS AT THE SIEGE OF VEII.

We have now to tell the story of another dictator of Rome. Like Cincinnatus, Camillus is largely a creature of legend, but he plays an active part in old Roman annals, and the tale of his doings is well worth repeating.

Rome was at war with the city of Veii, a large and strong city beyond the Tiber, and not many miles away. In the year of Rome 350 (or 403 B.C.) the siege of Veii began, and was continued for seven years. We are told that the Romans surrounded the city, five miles in circumference, with a double wall, but it could not have been complete, or the Veientians could not have held out against starvation so long. For the end of the siege and the taking of the city we must revert to the legendary tale.

For seven years and more, so the legend says, the Romans had been besieging Veii. During the last year of the siege, in late summer, the springs and rivers all ran low; but of a sudden the waters of the Lake of Alba began to rise, and the flood continued until the banks were overflowed and the fields and houses by its side were drowned. Still higher and higher the waters swelled till they reached the tops of the hills which rose like a wall around the lake. In the end they [Pg 88] overflowed these hills at their lowest points, and poured in a mighty torrent into the plain beyond.

The prayers and sacrifices of the Romans had failed to check the flood, which threatened their city and fields, and despairing of any redress from their own gods they sent to Delphi, in Greece, and applied there to the famous oracle of Apollo. While the messengers were on their way, it chanced that a Roman centurion talked with an old Veientian on the walls whom he had known in times of peace, and knew to be skilled in the secrets of Fate. The Roman condoled with his friend, and hoped that no harm would come to him in the fall of Veii, sure to happen soon. The old man

laughed in reply, and said,—

"You think, then, to take Veii. You shall not take it till the waters of the Lake of Alba are all spent, and flow out into the sea no more."

This remark troubled the Roman, who knew the prophetic foresight of his friend. The next day he talked with him again, and finally enticed him to leave the city, saying that he wished to meet him at a certain secret place and consult with him on a matter of his own. But on getting him in this way out of the city, he seized and carried him off to the camp, where he brought him before the generals. These, learning what the old man had said, sent him to the senate at Rome.

The prisoner here spoke freely. "If the lake overflow," he said, "and its waters run out into the sea, woe unto Rome; but if it be drawn off, and the waters reach the sea no longer, then it is woe unto Veii." [Pg 89]

This he gave as the decree of the Fates; but the senate would not accept his words, and preferred to wait until the messengers should return from Delphi with the reply of the oracle.

When they did come, they confirmed what the old prophet had said. "See that the waters be not confined within the basin of the lake," was the message of Apollo's priestess: "see that they take not their own course and run into the sea. Thou shalt take the water out of the lake, and thou shalt turn it to the watering of the fields, and thou shalt make courses for it till it be spent and come to nothing."

What all this could possibly have to do with the siege of Veii the oracle did not say. But the people of the past were not given to ask such inconvenient questions. The oracle was supposed to know better than they, so workmen were sent with orders to bore through the sides of the hills and make a passage for the water. This tunnel was made, and the waters of the lake were drawn off, and divided into many courses, being given the duty of watering the fields of the Romans. In this way the water of the lake was all used up, and no drop of it flowed to the sea. Then the Romans knew that it was the will of the gods that Veii should be theirs.

Despite all this, the army of Rome must have met with serious difficulties and dangers at Veii, for the senate chose a dictator to conduct the war. This was their ablest and most famous man, Marcus Furius Camillus, a leader among the aristocrats, and a statesman of distinguished ability. [Pg 90]

Under the command of Camillus the army hotly pressed the siege. So straitened became the Veientians that they sent envoys to Rome to beg for peace. The senate refused. In reply, one of the chief men of the embassy, who was a skilled prophet, rebuked the Romans for their arrogance, and predicted coming retribution.

"You heed neither the wrath of the gods nor the vengeance of men," he said. "Yet the gods shall requite you for your pride; as you destroy our country, so shall you shortly after lose your own."

This prediction was verified before many years in the invasion of the Gauls and the destruction of Rome,—a tale which we have next to tell.

Camillus, finding that Veii was not to be taken by assault over its walls, began to approach it from below. Men were set to dig an underground tunnel, which should pass beneath the walls, and come to the surface again in the Temple of Juno, which stood in the citadel of Veii. Night and day they worked, and the tunnel was in course of time completed, though the ground was not opened at its inner extremity.

Then many Romans came to the camp through desire to have a share in the spoil of Veii. A tenth part of this spoil was vowed by Camillus to Apollo, in reward for his oracle; and the dictator also prayed to Juno, the goddess of Veii, begging her to desert this city and follow the Romans home, where a temple worthy of her dignity should be built.

All being ready, a fierce assault was made on the city from every side. The defenders ran to the walls to repel their foes, and the fight went vigorously on. While it continued the king of Veii repaired to the Temple of Juno, where he offered a sacrifice for the deliverance of the city. The prophet who stood by, on seeing the sacrifice, said, "This is an accepted offering. There is victory for him who offers the entrails of this victim upon the altar." [Pg 91]

The Romans who were in the secret passage below heard these words. Instantly the earth was heaved up above them, and they sprang, arms in hand, from the tunnel. The entrails were snatched from the hands of those who were sacrificing, and Camillus, the Roman dictator, not the Veientian king, offered them upon the altar. While he did so his followers rushed from the citadel into the streets, flung open the city gates, and let in their comrades. Thus both from within and without the army broke into the town, and Veii was taken and sacked.

From the height of the citadel Camillus looked down upon the havoc in the city streets, and said in pride of heart, "What man's fortune was ever so great as mine?" But instantly the thought came to him how little a thing can bring the highest fortune down to the lowest, and he prayed that if some evil should befall him or his country it might be light.

As he prayed he veiled his head, according to the Roman custom, and turned toward the right. In doing so his foot slipped, and he fell upon his back on the ground. "The gods have heard my prayer," he said. "For the great fortune of my victory over Veii they have sent me only this little [Pg 92]

evil."

He then bade some young men, chosen from the whole army, to wash themselves in pure water, and clothe themselves in white, so that there would be about them no stain or sign of blood. This done, they entered the Temple of Juno, bowing low, and taking care not to touch the statue of the goddess, which only the priest could touch. They asked the goddess whether it was her pleasure to go with them to Rome.

Then a wonder happened; from the mouth of the image came the words "I will go." And when they now touched it, it moved of its own accord. It was carried to Rome, where a temple was built and consecrated to Juno on the Aventine Hill.

On his return to Rome Camillus entered the city in triumph, and rode to the Capitol in a chariot drawn by four white horses, like the horses of Jupiter or those of the sun. Such was his ostentation that wise men shook their heads. "Marcus Camillus makes himself equal to the blessed gods," they said. "See if vengeance come not on him, and he be not made lower than other men."

There is one further legend about Camillus. After the fall of Veii he besieged Falerii. During this siege a school-master, who had charge of the sons of the principal citizens, while walking with his boys outside the walls, played the traitor and led them into the Roman camp.

But the villain received an unexpected reward. Camillus, justly indignant at the act, put thongs in the boys' hands and bade them flog their master back into the town, saying that the Romans did not war on children. On this the people of Falerii, overcome by his magnanimity, surrendered themselves, their city, and their country into the hands of this generous foe, assured of just treatment from so noble a man. [Pg 93]

But trouble came upon Camillus, as the wise men had predicted. He was an enemy of the commons and was to feel their power. It was claimed that he had kept for himself part of the plunder of Veii, and on this charge he was banished from Rome. But the time was near at hand when his foes would have to pray for his return. The next year the Gauls were to come, and Camillus was to be revenged upon his ungrateful country. This story we have next to tell.

[Pg 94]

THE GAULS AT ROME.

We have related in the preceding tale how a Veientian prophet predicted the ruin of Rome, in retribution for the cruelty of the Romans to the people of Veii. It is the story of this disaster which we have now to tell. While the Romans were assailing Veii and making other conquests among the neighboring cities, a new people had come into Central Italy, a fair-faced, light-haired, great-bodied tribe of barbarians, fierce in aspect, warlike in character, the first contingent of that great invasion from the north which, centuries afterwards, was to overthrow the empire of Rome.

These were the Gauls, barbarian tribes from the region now known as France, who had long before crossed the Alps and made themselves lords of much of Northern Italy. Just when this took place we do not know, but about the time with which we are now concerned they pushed farther south, overthrew the Etruscans, and in the year 389 B.C. crossed the Apennines and penetrated into Central Italy.

And now the proud city of Rome was to come face to face with an enemy more powerful and courageous than any it had hitherto known. In the year named the Gauls besieged the city of Clusium, in Etruria, the city of Lars Porsenna, who in former years had aided Tarquin against Rome. The Roman senate, alarmed at their approach, sent three deputies to observe these barbarian bands. What follows is the story as told in Roman annals. It cannot be accepted as the exact truth, though no one questions the destruction of Rome by the Gauls. [Pg 95]

The story goes, then, that the deputies sent to the barbarians, and asked by what right they sought to take a part of the territory of Clusium, a city in alliance with Rome. Brennus, the leader of the Gauls, who knew little and cared less about Rome, replied, with insolent pride, that all things belonged to the brave, and that their right lay in their swords.

Soon after, in a sortie that was made from the city, one of the Roman deputies joined the soldiers, and killed a Gaulish champion of great size and stature. On this being reported to Brennus he sent messengers to Rome, demanding that the man who had slain one of his chiefs, when no war existed between the Gauls and Romans, should be delivered into his hands for punishment. The senate voted to do so, as the demand seemed reasonable; but an appeal was made to the people, and they declared that the culprit should not be given up. On this answer being taken to Brennus, he at once ordered that the siege of Clusium should be abandoned, and marched with his whole army upon Rome.

A Roman army, forty thousand strong, was hastily raised, and crossed the Tiber, marching

towards Veii, where they expected to meet the advancing enemy. But they reckoned wrongly: the Gauls came down the left bank of the river, plundering and burning as they marched. This threw the Romans into the greatest alarm. For many miles above Rome the Tiber could not be forded, there were no bridges, and boats could not be had to convey so large an army. The Romans were forced to march back with all speed to the city, cross the river there, and hasten to meet their foes before they got too near at hand. But when they came within sight of the Gauls the latter were already within twelve miles of Rome. [Pg 96]

The Roman army was drawn up behind the Alia, a little stream whose deep bed formed a line of defence. But the Gauls made their attack upon the weakest section of the Roman army, hewing them down with their great broadswords, and assailing their ears with frightful yells. The Roman right wing, formed of new recruits, gave way before this vigorous charge, and in its flight threw the regular legions of the left wing into disorder. The Gauls pursued so fiercely that in a short time the whole army was in total rout, and flying as Roman army had never fled before.

Many plunged into the river, in hope of escaping by swimming across it. But of these the Gauls slew multitudes on the banks, and killed most of those in the stream with their javelins. Others took refuge in a dense wood near the road, where they lay hidden till nightfall. The remainder fled back to the city, where they brought the frightful tidings of the utter ruin of the Roman army.

The news threw Rome into a panic. Of those who escaped from the battle, the majority had crossed the river and made their way to Veii. No other army could be raised. Most of the other inhabitants left the city, as the people of Athens had done when the army of Xerxes approached. It was resolved to abandon the city to the barbarians, but to maintain the citadel, the home of the gods of Rome. The holy articles in the temples were buried or removed, the Vestal Virgins sent away, and the flower of the patricians took refuge in the Capitol, determined to defend to the last that abiding-place of the guardian gods of Rome. [Pg 97]

But there were aged members of the senate, old patricians who had filled the highest offices in the state, and venerable ministers of the gods, who felt that they had a different duty to perform. They could not serve their country by their deeds; they might by their death. They devoted themselves and the army of the Gauls, in solemn invocations, to the spirits of the dead and to the earth, the common grave of man. Then, attiring themselves in their richest robes of office, each took his seat on his ivory chair of magistracy in the gate-way of his house.

Meanwhile the Gauls had delayed for a day their attack on the city, fearing that the silence portended some snare. When they did enter, the people had escaped with such valuables as they could carry. The Capitol was provisioned and garrisoned, and the aged senators awaited death in solemn calm.

On seeing these venerable men, sitting in motionless silence amid the confusion of the sack of the city, the Gauls viewed them with awe, regarding them at first as more than human. One of the soldiers approached M. Papirius, and began reverently to stroke his long white beard. Papirius was a minister of the gods, and looked on this touch of a barbarian hand as profanation. With an impulse of anger he struck the Gaul on the head with his ivory sceptre. Instantly the barbarian, breaking into rage, cut him down with his sword. This put an end to the feeling of awe. All the old men were attacked and slain, their vow being thus fulfilled. [Pg 98]

Rome, except its Capitol, was now in the hands of the Gauls. The sack and ruin of the city went mercilessly on. But the Capitol defied their efforts. It stood on a hill which, except at a single point, presented precipitous sides. The Gauls tried to storm it by this single approach, but were driven back with loss. They then blockaded the hill, and spent their time in devastating the city and neighboring country.

While this was going on the fugitives from Rome had gathered at Veii, where they daily became more reorganized. And now they turned in their distress to a man whom they had injured in their prosperity. Camillus, the conqueror of Veii, had been exiled from Rome on a charge of having been dishonest in distributing the spoils of the conquered city. He was now living at Ardea, whither messengers were sent, begging him to come to the aid of Rome. He sent word back that he had been condemned for an offence of which he was not guilty, and would not return unless requested to do so by the senate.

But the senate was shut up in the Capitol. How could it be reached? In this dilemma a young man, Pontius Cominius, volunteered for the adventure. He swam the Tiber at night, climbed the hill by the aid of shrubs and projecting stones, obtained for Camillus the appointment as dictator, and returned by the same route. [Pg 99]

The feat of Cominius, whatever its real purpose, came near being a fatal one to Rome. He had left his marks on the cliff. Here the soil had been trodden away and stones loosened; there bushes had been broken or torn from the soil. The sharp eyes of the Gauls saw, in the morning light, these proofs that some one had climbed or descended the hill. The cliff, then, could be climbed. Some Roman had climbed it; why not they? The spot, supposed to be inaccessible, was not guarded. There was no wall at its top. Here was an open route to that stubborn citadel. They resolved to attempt it as soon as night should fall.

It was midnight when the Gauls began to make their way slowly and with difficulty up the steep cliff. The moon may have aided them with its rays, but, if so, it revealed them to no sentinel above. The very watch-dogs failed to scent and signal their approach. They reached the summit, and, to their gratification, no alarm had been given. The Romans slept on.

The fate of Rome in that hour hung in the balance. Had the citadel been taken and its defenders slain, Rome might never have recovered from the blow. The whole course of history might have been changed. It was the merest chance that saved the city from this impending disaster. [Pg 100]

It chanced that on this part of the hill stood the temple of the guardian gods of Rome,—Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva,—and in this temple were kept a number of geese, sacred to Juno. Though food was not abundant, the garrison had spared these sacred geese. They were now to be amply repaid, for the geese alone heard the noise of the ascending Gauls, and in alarm began a loud screaming and flapping of wings.

The noise aroused Marcus Manlius, who slept near. Hastily seizing his sword and shield, he called to his comrades and ran to the edge of the cliff. He reached there just in time to see the head and shoulders of a burly Gaul, who had nearly attained the summit. Dashing the rim of his shield into the face of the barbarian, Manlius tumbled him down the rock, and with him those who followed in his track. The others, dismayed, dropped their arms to cling more closely to the rocks. Unable to ascend or descend, they were easily slaughtered by the guards who followed Manlius. The Capitol was saved. As for the captain of the watch, from whose neglect of duty this peril had come, he was punished the next morning by being hurled down the cliff upon the slaughtered Gauls.

Manlius was rewarded, says the story, by each man giving him from his scanty store a day's allowance of food,—namely, half a pound of corn and five ounces in weight of wine. As for the real defenders of Rome, the geese of the Capitol, they were ever after held in the highest honor and veneration.

As the Capitol could not be taken by assault or surprise, there remained only the slow process of siege. For six or eight months the Gauls blockaded the hill. So says the story, but it was probably not so long. However, in the end the Romans were brought to the point of famine, and offered to ransom their city by paying a large sum of gold. Brennus, the Gaulish king, was ready to accept the offer. His men were suffering from the Roman fever; food had grown scarce; he agreed, if paid a thousand pounds' weight of gold, to withdraw his army from Rome. [Pg 101]

Much gold had been brought by the fugitive patricians into the Capitol. From this the delegates brought down and placed in the scales a sufficient quantity. But while they found the gold, the Gauls found the weights, and it was soon discovered that the wily barbarians were cheating. Their weights were too heavy. Complaint of this fraud was made by the Roman tribune of the soldiers. In reply Brennus drew his heavy broadsword and threw it into the scale with the weights.

"What does this mean?" asked the tribune.

"It means," answered the barbarian, haughtily, "woe to the vanquished!" "*Væ victis esse!*"

While this was going on, says the legend, Camillus, the dictator, was marching to Rome with the legions he had organized at Veii. He appeared at the right minute for the dramatic interest of the story, entered the Forum while the gold was being weighed, bade the Romans take back their gold, threw the weights to the Gauls, and told Brennus proudly that it was the Roman custom to pay their debts in iron, not in gold. [Pg 102]

A fight ensued, as might be expected. The Gauls were driven from the city. The next day Camillus attacked them in their camp, eight miles from Rome, and defeated them so utterly that not a man was left alive to carry home the tale of the slaughter.

This story of the coming of Camillus is too much like the last act of a stage-play, or the dénouement of a novel, to be true. Most likely the Gauls marched off with their gold, though they may have been attacked on their retreat, and most or all of the gold regained.

Camillus, however, is said to have saved Rome in still another way. The old city was in ashes. Most of the citizens were at Veii, where they had found or built new homes. They were loath to come back to rebuild a ruined city. This Camillus induced them to do. Every appeal was made to the local pride and the religious sentiments of the people. A centurion, marching with his company, and being obliged to halt in front of the senate-house, called to the standard-bearer, "Pitch your standard here, for this is the best place to stop at." This casual remark was looked upon as an omen from heaven, and by this and the like means the people were induced to return.

Then the rebuilding of Rome began. The sites of the temples were retraced as far as could be done in the ruins. The laws of the twelve tables and some other records were recovered, but the mass of the historical annals of Rome had been destroyed. Some relics were said to have been miraculously preserved, among them the shepherd's crook of Romulus. [Pg 103]

But the bulk of the possessions of the Romans had vanished in the flames; the streets were mere heaps of ashes; the very walls had been in part pulled down; rubbish and ruin lay everywhere. Rome, like the phœnix, had to be born again from its ashes. Men built wherever they could find a clear spot. Stones and roofing-material were brought from Veii, and one city was dismantled that another might be restored. Stones and timber were supplied to any man from the public lands. The city rapidly rose again. But it was an irregular city; the streets ran anywhere; no effort was made at rule or system in the making of the new Rome.

As for Camillus, he came to be honored as the second founder of Rome. While the Romans

were at work on their new homes they were harassed by their foes, and he was kept busy with the army in the field. He lived for twenty-five years longer, and in the year 367 B.C., when some eighty years of age, he marched again to meet the Gauls in a new assault upon Rome, and defeated them with such slaughter that they left Rome alone for many years afterwards.

Marcus Manlius, the preserver of the Capitol, was not so fortunate. He came forward as the patron of the poor, who began to suffer again from the severe laws against debtors. Finally he began to use his large fortune to relieve suffering debtors, and is said to have paid the debts of four hundred debtors, thus saving them from bondage. This generosity won him the unbounded [Pg 104] affection of the people, who called him the "Father of the Commons." But it aroused the suspicion of the patricians, and some of these, against whom he had used violent language, had him arrested on a charge of treason, perhaps with good reason. Though he showed the many honors he had received for services to his country, he was condemned to death and his house razed to the ground. Thus the patricians dealt with the benefactors of the poor.

[Pg 105]

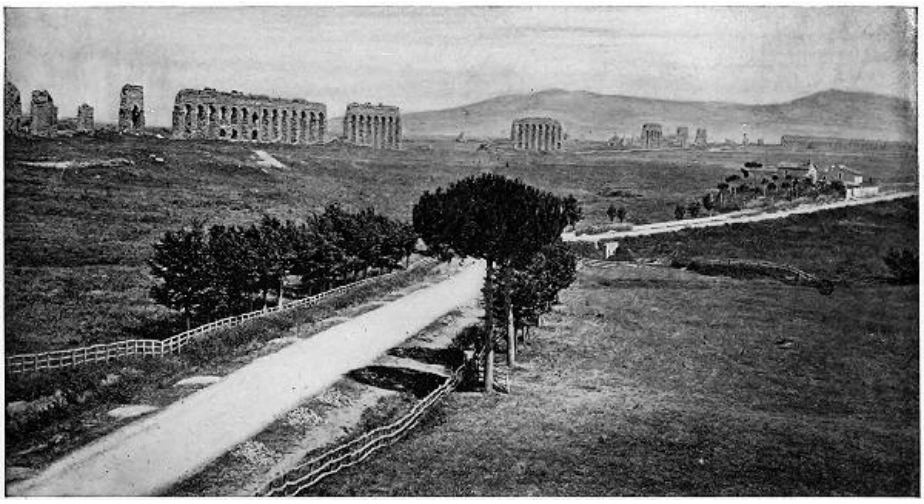
THE CURTIAN GULF.

DURING three years—363 to 361 B.C.—Rome was ravaged by the plague, which was so violent and fatal as to carry off the citizens by hundreds. In its first year it found a noble victim in Camillus, the conqueror of Veii and the second founder of Rome, who four years before had a second time defeated the Gauls. He was the last of the old heroes of Rome, those whose glory belongs to romance rather than history. The Gauls had destroyed the records of old Rome, and left only legend and romance. With the new Rome history fairly began.

But we have another romantic tale to tell before we bid adieu to the story of early Rome. In the second year of the pestilence a strange and portentous event occurred. The Tiber rose to an unusual height, overflowed with its waters the great circus (*Circus Maximus*), and put a stop to the games then going on, which were intended to propitiate the wrath of heaven, and induce the gods to relieve man from the evil of the plague.

And now, in the midst of the Forum, there yawned open a fearful gulf, so wide and deep that the superstitious Romans viewed it with awe and affright. Whether it was due to an earthquake or the wrath of the gods is not for us to say. The Romans believed the latter; those who prefer may believe the former. But, so we are told, it seemed bottomless. Throw what they would in it, it [Pg 106] stood unfilled, and the feeling grew that no power of man could ever fill its yawning depths.

Man being powerless, the oracles of the gods were consulted. Must this gaping wound always stand open in the soil of Rome? or could it in any way be filled and the offended deities who had caused it be propitiated? From the oracle came the reply that it must stand open till that which constituted the best and true strength of the Roman commonwealth was cast as an offering into the gulf. Then only would it close, and thereafter forever would the state live and flourish.



RUINS OF THE ROMAN AQUEDUCTS.

The true strength of Rome! In what did this consist? This question men asked each other anxiously and none seemed able to answer. But there was one man in Rome who interpreted rightly the meaning of the oracle. This was a noble youth, M. Curtius by name, who had played his part valiantly in war, and gained great fame by brave and manly deeds. The true strength of Rome? he said to the people. In what else could it lie but in the arms and valor of her children? This was the sacrifice the gods demanded.

Going home, he put on his armor and mounted his horse. Riding to the brink of the gulf, he,

before the eyes of the trembling and awe-struck multitude, devoted himself to death for the safety and glory of Rome, and plunged, with his horse, headlong into the gaping void. The people rushed after him to the brink, flung in their offerings, and with a surge the lips of the gap came [Pg 107] together, and the gulf was forever closed. The place was afterwards known by the name of the Curtian Lake, in honor of this sacrifice.

There are two other stories of this date worth repeating, as giving rise to two great names in Rome. T. Manlius, the future conqueror of the Latins, fought with a gigantic Gaul on the bridge over the Anio on the Salarian road. Slaying his enemy, he took from his neck a chain of gold (*torques*), which he afterwards wore upon his own. From this the soldiers called him Torquatus, which name his descendants ever afterwards bore.

In a later battle Marcus Valerius fought with a second gigantic Gaul. During the combat a wonderful thing happened. A crow perched on the helmet of the Roman, and continued there as the combatants fought. Occasionally it flew up into the air, and darted down upon the Gaul, striking at his eyes with its beak and claws. The Gaul, confounded by this attack, soon fell by the sword of his foe, and then the crow flew up again, and vanished towards the east. The name of Corvus (crow) was added to that of Valerius, and was long afterwards borne by his descendants.

These stories are rather to be enjoyed than believed. They probably contain more poetry than history, particularly that of Curtius and the gulf. Yet they were accepted as history by the Romans, and are given in all their detail in the fine old work of Livy, the rarest and raciest of the story-tellers of Rome.

[Pg 108]

ANECDOTES OF THE LATIN AND SAMNITE WARS.

The conquest of Italy by Rome was attended by many interesting events, of which we propose to relate here some of the more striking. The capture and burning of Rome by the Gauls, and the dispersal of her army and people, ruinous as it seemed, was but an event in her career of conquest. The city was no sooner rebuilt than the old régime of war was resumed, and it was no longer a struggle between neighboring cities, but of Rome against powerful confederacies and peoples, such as the Volscians, the Etruscans, the Latins, the Campanians, and the Samnites, the final conquest of which gave her the dominion of Italy.

The war with the Latins was attended with some circumstances showing strongly the stern and indomitable spirit of the Romans. This war was carried into Campania, in Southern Italy; and here, on a celebrated occasion, when the two armies lay encamped in close vicinity on the plain of Capua, the Roman consuls issued a strict order against skirmishing or engaging in single encounters with the enemy. The two peoples were alike in arms and in language, and it was feared that such chance combats might lead to confusion and disaster.

The only man to disobey this order was T. Manlius, the son of one of the consuls. A Latin [Pg 109] warrior, Geminus Metius, of Tusculum, challenged young Manlius to meet him in single combat; and the youthful warrior, fired by ambition and warlike zeal, and eager to sustain the honor of Rome, accepted the challenge, despite his father's order. If killed, his fault would be atoned; if successful, victory over a noted warrior must win him pardon and praise.

The duel that ensued was a fierce and gallant one. It ended in the triumph of the young Roman, who laid his antagonist dead at his feet. Shouts of triumph from the Roman soldiers hailed his victory; and when he had despoiled his slain foe of his arms, and borne them triumphantly from the field, the exultation of the Romans was as unbounded as the chagrin of the Latins was deep. Towards his father's tent the young victor proudly went, through exulting lines of troops, and laid his spoils in triumph at the feet of the stern old man.

The poor youth, the rejoicing soldiers, knew not the man with whom they had to deal. A military order had been disobeyed. To old Manlius the fact that the culprit was his son, and that he had added honor to the Roman arms, weighed nothing. Discipline stood above affection or victory. Turning coldly away, the iron-hearted old Roman ordered that the soldiers should be immediately summoned to the prætorium, or general's tent, and that his son should be beheaded before them.

This cruel and inhuman order filled the whole army with horror. Yet none dared interfere, and [Pg 110] the unnatural mandate was obeyed, in full view of an army whose late exultation was turned to deepest woe and indignation. The youngest soldiers never forgave the consul for his inhuman act, but regarded him with abhorrence to the end of his life. But their hatred was mingled with fear and respect, and the stern lesson taught was doubtless felt for years in the discipline of the armies of Rome.

The next event worthy of record took place in the vicinity of Mount Vesuvius, under whose very shadow a fierce battle was fought between the Latin and Roman armies, with the then silent

volcano as witness. Two centuries more were to pass before Rome would learn what fearful power lay sleeping in this long voiceless mountain.

Before the battle joined, the gods, as usual, were appealed to. During the night both consuls had dreamed the same dream. A figure of more than human stature and majesty had appeared to them, and told them that the earth and the gods of the dead claimed as their victims the general of one party and the army of the other. When the sacrifices were made, the signs given by the entrails of the victims signified the same thing. It was resolved, therefore, that if the army of Rome anywhere gave way, the general commanding on that side should devote himself, and the army of the enemy with him, to the gods of death and the grave. "Fate," said the augurs, "requires the sacrifice of a general from one party and an army from the other. Let it be our general and the Latin army that shall perish."

It was the left wing of the Romans, commanded by the consul Publius Decius, that first gave [Pg 111] way. The consul at once accepted his fate. By the direction of the chief priest, he wrapped his consular toga around his head, holding it to his face with his hand, and then set his feet upon a javelin, and repeated after the priest the words devoting him to the gods of death. Then, arming himself at all points, and wrapping his toga around his body in the manner usual in sacrifices, he sprang upon his horse, and spurred headlong into the ranks of the enemy, where he soon fell dead.

This sacrifice filled the Romans with hope, and the Latins, who understood its meaning, with dismay. Yet the latter, after being driven back, soon recovered, and, despite the self-devotion of Decius, would probably have won the victory had not the remaining consul brought up his reserve troops just in time. In the end the Latins were utterly defeated, and Vesuvius looked down on the massacre of one army by the swords of another, scarcely a fourth of the Latins escaping. Thus the gods seemed to keep their word, though probably the Roman reserve force had more to do with the victory than all the gods of Rome.

The next event which we have to relate took place during the second Samnite war. Its hero was L. Papirius Cursor, one of the favorite heroes of Roman tradition, and the avenger of the disgrace of the Caudine Forks, the story of which we have next to tell. This famous soldier is said to have possessed marvellous swiftness of foot and gigantic strength, with extraordinary capacity [Pg 112] for food, while his iron strictness of discipline was at times relieved by a rough humor. All this made his memory popular with the Romans, who boasted that Alexander the Great would have found in him a worthy champion, had that conqueror invaded Italy.

The event we have now to narrate occurred early in the war. One of the consuls, being taken ill, was ordered to name a dictator to replace him, and chose Papirius Cursor. This champion appointed Q. Fabius Rullianus, another famous soldier, his master of the horse, and marched out to attack the Samnites.

As it happened, the auspices taken by the dictator at Rome before marching to the seat of war were of no particular significance. Not satisfied with them, he decided to take them again, and returned to Rome for this purpose, the auspices being of a kind which could only be taken within the city walls. He ordered the master of the horse to remain strictly on the defensive during his absence.

Fabius did not obey this order. He attacked the enemy and gained some advantage. The annals say that he won a great victory, defeating the Samnites with a loss of twenty thousand men; but the annals have a habit of magnifying small affairs into large ones where they have any object to gain.

On hearing that his orders had been disobeyed, Papirius hurried back to the camp in a violent rage, and with the intention of making such an example of discipline as Manlius had made in the execution of his son. On reaching camp he ordered that Fabius should be immediately executed. His authority as dictator gave him power for this violent act; but he failed to reckon on the spirit [Pg 113] of the soldiers, who supported Fabius to a man, and broke into a violent demonstration that was almost mutiny. So strong was their feeling that the furious dictator found himself obliged to halt in his purpose.

But Fabius knew too well the iron nature of his antagonist to trust his life in his hands. That night he fled from the camp to Rome, and immediately appealed to the senate for protection. Papirius followed in hot haste, and while the senators were still assembling arrived in Rome, where, under his authority as dictator, he gave order for the arrest of the culprit. In this critical situation the prisoner's father, M. Fabius, appealed to the tribunes for the protection of his son, saying that he proposed to carry the case before the assembly of the people.

The tribunes found themselves in a dilemma. Papirius warned them not to sanction so flagrant a breach of military discipline, nor to lessen the majesty of the office of dictator, and they found themselves hesitating between their duty to support the absolute power of the dictator and their abhorrence of an exercise of this power that must shock the feelings of the whole Roman people. The people themselves relieved their tribunes from this difficulty. They hastily met in assembly, and by a unanimous vote implored the dictator to be merciful, and for their sakes to forgive Fabius. His authority thus acknowledged, Papirius yielded, and declared that he pardoned the master of the horse. "And the authority of the Roman generals," says Livy, "was established no [Pg 114] less firmly by the peril of Q. Fabius than by the actual death of the young T. Manlius."

It was well for Rome that Fabius was spared, for he afterwards proved one of their ablest

generals. The time came, also, when he was able to confer a benefit upon Papirius Cursor. This was during a subsequent war with the Etruscans, in which he commanded as consul and gained great victories. Meanwhile a Roman army was defeated by the Samnites, and on the news of this defeat reaching Rome the senate at once resolved to appoint Papirius once more as dictator.

But this appointment must be made by a consul. One consul was with the defeated army, perhaps dead. It was necessary to apply to Fabius, the other consul, and the declared enemy of the proposed dictator. To overcome his personal feelings, a deputation of the highest senators was sent him, who read him the senate's decree and strongly urged him to support it. Fabius listened in dead silence, not answering by word or look. When they had ended, he abruptly withdrew from the room. But at dead of night he pronounced, in the usual form, the nomination of Papirius as dictator. When the deputies thanked him for his noble conquest over his feelings, he listened still in dead silence, and dismissed them without a word in answer.

We must now pass over years of war, in which both Fabius and Papirius gained honor and fame, and come to an occasion in which the son of Fabius led a Roman army as consul, and met [Pg 115] with a severe defeat by a Samnite army. He had been tricked by the Samnites, and great indignation was aroused against him in Rome. It was proposed to remove him from his office, a disgrace which no consul ever experienced in Roman history. It was also proposed that old Fabius should be appointed dictator. But the aged soldier, to preserve the honor of his son, offered to go with him as his lieutenant, and the offer was accepted by the senate.

A second battle ensued, in the heat of which the consul became surrounded by the enemy, and his aged father led the charge to his rescue. His example animated the Romans, they followed him in a vigorous assault, and a complete victory was won. Twenty thousand Samnites were slain, four thousand taken prisoners, and with them their general, C. Pontius. After other victories the younger Fabius returned to Rome and was given a triumph, while behind him rode his old father on horseback, as one of his lieutenants, delighting in the honor conferred on his son. The Samnite general was made to walk in the procession, and at its end was taken to the prison under the Capitoline Hill and there beheaded. It was thus that Rome dealt with its captured foes.

[Pg 116]

THE CAUDINE FORKS.

Westward from Rome rise the Apennine Mountains, the backbone of Italy; and amid their highest peaks, where the snow lies all the year long, and whence streams flow into the two seas, dwelt the Sabines, an important people, from whom came the mothers of the Roman state. There is a legend concerning this people which we have now to tell. For many years they had been at war with their neighbors, the Umbrians; and at length, failing to conquer their enemies by their own strength, they sought to obtain the help of the divinities. They made a vow that if victory was given to them, all the living creatures born that year in their land should be held as sacred to the gods.

The victory came, and they sacrificed all the lambs, calves, kids, and pigs of that year's birth, while they redeemed from the gods such animals as were not suitable for sacrifice. But, as it appeared, the deities were not satisfied. The land refused to yield its fruits, and the Sabines were not long in deciding why their crops had failed. They had neither sacrificed nor redeemed the children born that year, and had thus failed in their duty to the gods.

To atone for this fault, all their children of that year's birth were devoted to the god Mamers, [Pg 117] and when they had grown up they were sent away to make themselves a home in a new land. As the young men started on their pilgrimage a bull went before them, and, as they fancied that Mamers had sent this animal for their guide, they piously followed him. He first lay down to rest when he had come to the land of the Opicans. This the Sabines took for a sign, and they fell on the Opicans, who dwelt in villages without walls, and drove them out from their country, of which the new-comers took possession. They then sacrificed the bull to Mamers; and in after-ages they bore the bull for their device. They also took a new name, and were afterwards known as Samnites.

While the Romans were extending their dominion in Central Italy, the Samnites were conquering the peoples farther south. Their dominion became great, and at one time included the famous cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii and many others of the cities of the southern plains. In the centre of the Samnite country stood a remarkable mountain mass, an offshoot from the Apennines. This mountain, now called the Matese, is nearly eight miles in circumference, and rises abruptly in huge wall-like cliffs of limestone to the height of three thousand feet. Its surface is greatly varied in character, now sloping into deep valleys, now rising into elevated cliffs, of which the loftiest is six thousand feet high. It is rich in springs, which gush out in full flow, and disappear again in the caverns with which limestone rocks abound. Its valleys yield abundant pasture and magnificent beech forests, while on its highest summits the snow tarries till late [Pg 118] summer, and in the hottest months of summer the upland pastures continue cool.

This mountain fastness formed the citadel from which the Samnites issued in conquering excursions over the surrounding country, and enabled them in time to extend their dominion far and wide, and to rival Rome in the width and importance of their state. Thus Rome and Samnium approached each other step by step, and the time inevitably came when they were to join issue in war.

Three wars took place between the Romans and the Samnites. In the first of these Valerius Corvus (the origin of whose name of Corvus we have already told) led the Roman army to victory. In honor of this victory Rome received from Carthage (with which city it was to engage in a desperate contest in later years) a golden crown, for the shrine of Jupiter in the Capitol.

In 329 B.C. Rome finally overcame the Volscians, with whom they had been many years at war, and three years afterwards war with the Samnites was again declared. The latter were invading Campania, in which country lay the volcano of Vesuvius and the city of Naples. Rome came to the aid of the Campanians, and a war began which lasted for more than twenty years.

Of this war we have but one event to tell, that in which Rome suffered the greatest humiliation it had met with in its entire career, the famous affair of the Caudine Forks. It was in the fifth campaign of the war that this event took place. Two Roman armies had marched into Campania [Pg 119] and threatened the southern border of Samnium, which the Samnite general Pontius was prepared to defend. His force occupied the passes which led from the plain of Naples into the higher mountain valleys; but he deceived the Romans by spreading the report that the whole Samnite army had gone to Apulia, where they were besieging the city of Luceria. His purpose was to lure the Romans into these difficult defiles under the impression that the Samnites were trusting to the natural strength of their country for its defence.

The trick succeeded. The Roman consuls believed the story, and, in their haste to go to the aid of their allies in Apulia, chose the shortest route, that which led through the Samnian hills. The absence of the Samnite army would enable them, they thought, to force their way through Samnium without difficulty; and, blinded by their false confidence, the consuls recklessly led their men into the fatal pass of Caudium.

This pass was a narrow opening in the outer wall of the Apennines, which led from the plain of Campania to Maleventum. To-day it is traversed by the road from Naples to Benevento, and is called the valley of Arpaia. In the past it was famous as Caudium.

Into this defile the Romans marched between the rugged mountain acclivities that bounded its sides, and through the deep silence that reigned around. The pass seemed utterly deserted, and they expected soon to emerge into a more open valley in the interior of the hills. [Pg 120]

But as they advanced the pass contracted, until it became but a narrow gorge, and this they found to be blocked up with great stones and felled trees. Brought to a halt, the troops stood gazing in dismay and dread on these obstacles, when suddenly the silence was broken, loud war-cries filled the air, and armed Samnites appeared as if by magic, covering the hills on both flanks, and crowding into the pass in the rear.

The Romans were caught in such a trap as that from which Cincinnatus had rescued a Roman army many years before. But there was here no Cincinnatus with his stakes, and they were far from Rome. The entrapped army made a desperate effort to escape, attacking the Samnites in the rear, and seeking to force their way up the rugged surrounding hills. They fought in vain. Many of them fell. The Samnite foe pressed them still more closely into the rocky pass. Only the coming of night saved them from total destruction.

But escape was impossible. The gorge in front was completely blocked up. The pass in the rear was held by the enemy in force. The flanking hills could hardly have been climbed by an army, even if they had not been occupied. No resource remained to the Romans but to encamp in the broader part of the narrow valley, and there wait in hopeless despair the outcome of their folly.

The Samnites could well afford to let them wait. The rear was held by the bulk of their army. The obstacles in front were strongly guarded. Every possible track by which the Romans might [Pg 121] try to scale the hills was held. Some desperate attempts to break out were made, but they were easily repulsed. Nothing remained but surrender, or death by famine.

One or other of these alternatives had soon to be chosen. A large army, surprised on its march, and confined within a barren pass, could not have subsistence for any long period. Nothing was to be gained by delay, and they might as well yield themselves prisoners of war at once.

So the Romans evidently thought, and without delay they put themselves at the mercy of their conquerors. "We yield ourselves your captives," they said, "to do with as you will. Put us all to the sword, if such be your decision; sell us into slavery; or hold us as prisoners until we are ransomed: one thing only we ask, save our bodies, whether living or dead, from all unworthy insults."

In this request they forgot the record that Rome had made; forgot how often noble captives had been forced to walk in Roman triumphs and been afterwards slain in cold blood in the common prison; forgot how they had recently refused the rites of burial to the body of a noble Samnite. But Pontius, the Samnite general, was much less of a barbarian than the Romans of that age. He was acquainted with Greek philosophy, had even held conversation, it is said, with Plato, and was not the man to indulge in cruel or insulting acts.

"Restore to us," he said to the consuls, "the towns and territory you have taken from us, and withdraw the colonists whom you have unjustly placed on our soil. Conclude with us a treaty of peace, in which each nation shall be acknowledged to be independent of the other. Swear to do this, and I will grant you your lives and release you without ransom. Each man of you shall give up his arms, but may keep his clothes untouched; and you shall pass before our army as prisoners who have been in our power and whom we have set free of our own will, when we might have killed or sold them, or held them for ransom." [Pg 122]

These terms the consuls were glad enough to accept. They were far better than they would have granted the Samnites under similar circumstances. Pontius now called for the Roman fecialis, whose duty it was to conclude all treaties and take all oaths for the Roman people. But there was no fecialis with the army. The senate had sent none, having resolved to make no terms with the Samnites, and to accept only their absolute submission. They had never dreamed of such a turn of the tide as this.

In the absence of the proper officer, the consuls and all the surviving officers took the oath, while it was agreed that six hundred knights should be held as hostages until the Roman people had ratified the treaty. Why Pontius did not insist on treating with the senate and people of Rome at once, instead of trusting to them to ratify a treaty made with prisoners of war, we are not told. He was soon to learn how weak a reed to lean upon was the Roman faith.

The treaty made, the humiliating part of the affair came. The Roman army was obliged to march under the yoke, which consisted of two spears set upright and a third fastened across their tops. Under this the soldiers of the legions without their arms, and wearing but a single article of clothing,—the campestre or kilt, which reached from the waist to the knees,—passed in gloomy succession. Even the consuls were obliged to appear in this humble plight, the six hundred hostage knights alone being spared. [Pg 123]

This was no peculiar insult, but a common usage on such occasions. The Romans had imposed it more than once on defeated enemies. They were now to endure it themselves, and the affair, under the name of the Caudine Forks, has become famous in history.

Pontius proved, indeed, generous to his foes. He supplied carriages for the sick and wounded, and furnished provisions to last the army until it should arrive at Home. When that city was reached the senate and people came out and welcomed the soldiers with the greatest kindness. But the wounded pride of the legionaries could not be soothed. Those who had homes in the country stole from the ranks and sought their several dwellings. Those who lived in Rome lingered without the walls until after the sun had fallen, and then made their way home through the darkness. The consuls were obliged to enter in open day, but as soon as possible they sought their homes, and shut themselves up in privacy.

As for the city, it went into mourning. All business was suspended; the patricians laid aside their gold rings and took off the red border of their dresses which marked their rank; the plebeians appeared in mourning garbs; there was as much weeping for those who had returned in dishonor as for those left dead on the field; all rejoicings, festivals, and marriages were set aside for a year of happier omen. [Pg 124]

The final result was such as might have been expected from the earlier record of Rome. The senate refused to recognize the treaty. The defeated consuls themselves sustained this bad faith, saying that they and all the officers should be given up to the Samnites, as having promised what they were unable to perform.

This was done. Half stripped, as when they passed under the yoke, and their hands bound behind their backs, the officers were conducted by the fecialis to the Samnian frontier, and delivered to the Samnites as men who had forfeited their liberty by their breach of faith. The surrender completed, Postumius, one of the consuls, struck a fecialis violently with his knee,—his hands and feet being bound,—and cried out,—

"I now belong to the Samnites, and I have done violence to the sacred person of a Roman fecialis and ambassador. You will rightfully wage war with us, Romans, to avenge this outrage."

This transparent trick was wasted on Pontius. He refused the victims offered him. They were not the guilty ones, he said. The legions must be placed again in the Caudium Valley, or Rome keep the treaty. Anything else would be base and faithless. [Pg 125]

The treaty was not kept. The war went on. And nearly thirty years afterwards, as we have told in the preceding story, Pontius, who had behaved so generously to the Romans, was led as a prisoner in a Roman triumph, and then basely beheaded while the triumphal car of the victor ascended the Capitoline Hill. His death is one of the darkest blots on the Roman name. "Such a murder," we are told, "committed or sanctioned by such a man as Q. Fabius, is peculiarly a national crime, and proves but too clearly that in their dealings with foreigners the Romans had neither magnanimity, nor humanity, nor justice."

[Pg 126]

THE FATE OF REGULUS.

We have followed the growth of Rome from its seed in the cradle of Romulus and Remus to its early maturity in the conquest of Italy. Its triumph over the Latins, Samnites, and Etruscans had made it virtually master of that peninsula. In the year 280 B.C. it was first called upon to meet a great foreign soldier in the celebrated Pyrrhus of Epirus, who had invaded Italy. How this great soldier scared the Romans with his elephants and defeated them in the field, but was finally baffled and left the country in disgust, we have told in "Historical Tales of Greece." It was not many years after this that Rome herself went abroad in search of new foes, and her long and bitter struggle with Carthage began.

The great city of Carthage lay on the African side of the Mediterranean, where it had won for itself a great empire, and had added to its dominion by important conquests in Spain and Sicily. Settled many centuries before by emigrants from the Phœnician city of Tyre, it had, like its mother city, grown rich through commerce, and was now lord of the Mediterranean and one of the great cities of the earth. With this city Rome was now to begin a mighty struggle, which would last for many years and end in the utter destruction of the great African city and state. [Pg 127]

Pyrrhus of Epirus, on leaving Sicily, had said, "What a grand arena this would be for Rome and Carthage to contend upon!" And it was in the island of Sicily that the struggle between these two mighty powers began. In the year 264 B.C., nearly five centuries after the founding of Rome, that city first sent its armies beyond the borders of Italy, and the long contest between Rome and Carthage was inaugurated.

Some soldiers of fortune, who had invaded Sicily and found themselves in trouble, called upon Rome for help. Carthage, which held much of the island, was also appealed to, and both sent armies. The result was a collision between these armies. In two years' time most of Sicily belonged to Rome, and Carthage retained hardly a foothold upon that island.

This rapid success of the Romans in foreign conquest encouraged them greatly. But they were soon to find themselves at a disadvantage. Being an inland power, they knew nothing of ocean warfare, and possessed none but small ships. Carthage, on the contrary, had a large and powerful fleet, and now began to use it with great effect. By its aid the Carthaginians took from Rome many towns on the coast of Sicily. They also landed on and ravaged the coasts of Italy. It was made evident to the Roman senate that if they looked for success they must meet the enemy on their own element, and dispute with Carthage the dominion of the sea.

How was this to be done? The largest ships they knew of had only three banks of oars. [Pg 128] Carthage possessed war vessels with five banks of oars, and built on a plan different from that of the smaller vessels. Rome had no model for these ships, and was at a loss what to do. Fortunately a Carthaginian quinquereme (a ship with five banks of oars) ran ashore on the coast of Italy, and was captured and sent to Rome. This served as a model for the shipwrights of that city, and so energetically did they set to work that in two months after the first cutting of the timber they had built and launched more than a hundred ships of this class.

And while the ships were building the crews selected for the quinqueremes were practising. Most of them had never even seen an oar, and they were now placed on benches ashore, ranged like those in the ships, and carefully taught the movements of rowing, so that when the ships were launched they were quite ready to drive them through the waves. The Romans, who could fight best hand to hand, added a new and important device, providing their ships with wooden bridges attached to the masts, and ready to fall on an enemy's vessel whenever one came near. A great spike at the end was driven into the deck of the enemy's ship by the weight of the falling bridge, and held her while the Romans charged across the bridge.

The new fleet was soon tried. It met a Carthaginian fleet on the north coast of Sicily. The Romans proved poor sailors, but the bridges gave them the victory. These could be wheeled round the mast and dropped in any direction, and, however the Carthaginians approached, they [Pg 129] found themselves grappled and boarded by the Romans, whose formidable swords soon did the rest. In the end Carthage lost fifty ships and ten thousand men, and with them the dominion of the seas.

This success was a great event in the history of Rome. The victory was celebrated by a great naval triumph, and a column was set up in the Forum, which was adorned with the ornamental prows of ships.

Three years afterwards Rome resolved to carry the war into Africa, and for this purpose built a great fleet of three hundred and thirty ships, and manned by one hundred and forty thousand seamen, in addition to its soldiers or fighting men. These were largely made up of prisoners from Sardinia and Corsica, Carthaginian islands which had been attacked by the Roman fleets. The two consuls in command were L. Manlius Vulso and M. Atilius Regulus.

The great fleet of Rome met a still greater Carthaginian one at Ecnomus, on the southern coast of Sicily, and here one of the greatest sea-fights of history took place. In the end the Romans lost twenty-four ships, while of those of the enemy thirty were sunk and sixty-four captured. The remainder of the enemy's fleet fled in all haste to Carthage.

The Romans now prepared to take one of the greatest steps in their history,—to cross the sea

to the unknown African world. The soldiers murmured loudly at this. They were to be taken to a new and strange land, burnt by scorching heats and infested with noisome beasts and monstrous serpents; and they were to be led into the very stronghold of the enemy, where they would be at their mercy. Even one of their tribunes supported the soldiers in this complaint. But Regulus was equal to the occasion: he threatened the tribune with death, forced the soldiers on board, and sailed for the African coast. [Pg 130]

The event proved very different from what the soldiers had feared. The army of Carthage was so miserably commanded that the Romans landed without trouble and ravaged the country at their will; and instead of the scorching heats and deadly animals they had feared, they found themselves in a fertile and thickly-settled country, where grew rich harvests of corn, and where were broad vineyards and fruitful orchards of figs and olives. Towns were numerous, and villas of wealthy citizens covered the hills.

On this rich and undefended country the hungry Roman army was let loose. Villas were plundered and burnt, horses and cattle driven off in vast numbers, and twenty thousand persons, many of them doubtless of wealth and rank, were carried away to be sold as slaves. Meanwhile the army of Carthage lurked on the hills, and was defeated wherever encountered. Regulus, who had been left in sole command of the Roman army, overran the country without opposition, and boasted that he had taken and plundered more than three hundred walled towns or villages.

The Carthaginians, who were also attacked by roving desert tribes, who proved even worse than the Romans, were in distress, and begged for peace. But the terms offered by Regulus were so intolerable that it was impossible to accept them. "Men who are good for anything should either conquer or submit to their betters," said Regulus, haughtily. He had not yet learned how unwise it is to drive a strong foe to desperation, and was to pay dearly for his arrogance and pride. [Pg 131]

The tide of war turned when Carthage obtained a general fit to command an army. An officer who had been sent to Greece for soldiers of fortune brought with him on his return a Spartan named Xanthippus, a man who had been trained in the rigid Spartan discipline and had played his part well in the wars of Greece. He openly and strongly condemned the conduct of the generals of Carthage; and, on his words being reported to the government, he was sent for, and so clearly pointed out the causes of the late disasters that the direction of all the forces of Carthage was placed in his hands.

And now a new spirit awakened in Carthage. Xanthippus reviewed the troops, taught them how they should meet the Roman charge, and filled them with such enthusiasm and hope that loud shouts broke from the ranks, and they eagerly demanded to be led at once to battle.

The army numbered only twelve thousand foot, but had four thousand cavalry and a hundred elephants, in which much confidence was placed. The demand of the soldiers was complied with; they boldly marched out, and now no longer to the hills, but to the lower ground, where the devastation of the enemy was at once checked. [Pg 132]

Regulus was forced to risk a battle, for his supply of food was in peril. He marched out and encamped within a mile of the foe. The Carthaginian generals, on seeing these hardy Roman legions, so long victorious, were stricken with something like panic. But the soldiers were eager to fight, and Xanthippus bade the wavering generals not to lose so precious an opportunity. They yielded, and bade him to draw up the army on his own plan.

In the battle that ensued the victory was due to the cavalry and elephants. The cavalry drove that of Italy from the field, and attacked the Roman rear. The elephants broke through the Roman lines in front, furiously trampling the bravest underfoot. Those who penetrated the line of the elephants were cut to pieces by the Carthaginian infantry. Of the whole Roman army, two thousand of the left wing alone escaped; Regulus, with five hundred others, fled, but was pursued and taken prisoner; the remainder of the army was destroyed to a man. The defeat was total. Rome retained but a single African port, which was soon given up. Xanthippus, crowned with glory and richly rewarded, returned to Greece to enjoy the fame he had won.

For five years Regulus remained a prisoner in Carthage, while the war went on in Sicily. Here, in the year 250 B.C., the Romans gained an important victory at Panormus (now Palermo), and Carthage, weary of the struggle, sent to Rome to ask for terms of peace. With the ambassadors came Regulus, who had promised to return to Carthage if the negotiations should fail, and whom the Carthaginians naturally expected to use his utmost influence in favor of peace. [Pg 133]

They did not know their man. Regulus proved himself one of those indomitable patriots of whom there are few examples in the ages. On reaching the walls of Rome he refused at first to enter, saying that he was no longer a citizen, and had lost his rights in that city. When the ambassadors of Carthage had offered their proposal to the senate, Regulus, who had remained silent, was ordered by the senate to give his opinion of the proposed treaty. Thus commanded, he astonished all who heard by strongly advising the senate not to make the treaty. He might die for his words, he might perish in torture, but the good of his country was dearer to him than his own life, and he would not counsel a treaty that might prove of advantage to the enemy. He even spoke against an exchange of prisoners, saying that he had not long to live, having, he believed, been given a secret poison by his captors, and would not make a fair exchange for a hale and hearty Carthaginian general.

Such an instance of self-abnegation has rarely been heard of in history. It has made Regulus

famous for all time. His advice was taken, the treaty was refused; he, refusing to break his parole, or even to see his family, returned to Carthage with the ambassadors, knowing that he was going to his death. The rulers of that city, so it is said, furious that the treaty had been rejected through his advice, resolved to revenge themselves on him by horrible tortures. His eyelids were cut off, and he was exposed to the full glare of the African sun. He was then placed in a cask driven full of nails, and left there to die.

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It is fortunate to be able to say that there is no historical warrant for this story of torture, or for the companion story that the wife and son of Regulus treated two Carthaginian prisoners in the same manner. We have reason to believe that it is untrue, and that Regulus suffered no worse tortures than those of shame, exile, and imprisonment.

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HANNIBAL CROSSES THE ALPS.

In the year 235 B.C. the gates of the Temple of Janus were closed, for the first time since the reign of Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, nearly five centuries before. During all that long period war had hardly ever ceased in Rome. And these gates were soon to be thrown open again, in consequence of the greatest war that the Roman state had ever known, a war which was to bring it to the very brink of destruction.

The end of the first Punic War—as the war with Carthage was called—left Rome master of the large island of Sicily, the first province gained by that ambitious city outside of Italy. Advantage was also taken of some home troubles in Carthage to rob that city of the islands of Sardinia and Corsica,—a piece of open piracy which redoubled the hatred of the Carthaginians.

Yet Rome just now was not anxious for war with her southern rival. There was enough to do in the north, for another great invasion of Gauls was threatened. And about this time the Capitol was struck by lightning, a prodigy which plunged all Rome into terror. The books of the Sibyl were hastily consulted, and were reported to say, "When the lightning shall strike the Capitol and the Temple of Apollo, then must thou, O Roman, beware of the Gauls." Another prophecy said that the time would come "when the race of the Greeks and the race of the Gauls should occupy the Forum of Rome."

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But Rome had its own way of dealing with prophecies and discounting the decrees of destiny. A man and woman alike of the Gaulish and of the Greek race were buried alive in the Forum Boarium, and in this cruel way the public fear was allayed. As for the invasion of the Gauls, Rome met and dealt with them in its usual fashion, defeating them in two battles, in the last of which the Gaulish army was annihilated. This ended this peril, and the dominion of Rome was extended northward to the Alps.

It was fortunate for the Romans that they had just at this time rid themselves of the Gauls, for they were soon to have a greater enemy to meet. In the first Punic War, Carthage had been destitute of a commander, and had only saved herself by borrowing one from Greece. In the second war she had a general of her own, one who has hardly had his equal before or since, the far-famed Hannibal, one of the few soldiers of supreme ability which the world has produced.

During the peace which followed the first Punic War Carthage sent an expedition to Spain, with the purpose of extending her dominions in that land. This was under the leadership of Hamilcar, a soldier of much ability. As he was about to set sail he offered a solemn sacrifice for the success of the enterprise. Having poured the libation on the victim, which was then duly offered on the altar, he requested all those present to step aside, and called up his son Hannibal, at that time a boy of but nine years of age. Hamilcar asked him if he would like to go to the war. With a child's eagerness the boy implored his father to take him. Then Hamilcar, taking the boy by the hand, led him up to the altar, and bade him lay his hand on the sacrifice, and swear "that he would never be the friend of the Romans." Hannibal took the oath, and he never forgot it. His whole mature life was spent in warfare with Rome.

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From the city of New Carthage (or Carthagena), founded by Carthage in Spain, Hamilcar gradually won a wide dominion in that land. He was killed in battle after nine years of success, and was succeeded by Hasdrubal, another soldier of fine powers. On the death of Hasdrubal, Hannibal, then twenty-six years of age, was made commander-in-chief of the Carthaginian armies in Spain. Shortly afterwards his long struggle with Rome began.

Hannibal had laid siege to and captured the city of Saguntum. The people of Saguntum were allies of Rome. That city, being once more ready for war with its rival, sent ambassadors to Carthage to demand that Hannibal and his officers should be surrendered as Roman prisoners, for a breach of the treaty of peace. After a long debate, Fabius, the Roman envoy, gathered up his toga as if something was wrapped in it, and said, "Look; here are peace and war; take which you choose." "Give whichever you please," was the haughty Carthaginian reply. "Then we give you war," said Fabius, shaking out the folds of the toga. "With all our hearts we welcome it," cried the

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Carthaginians. The Romans left at once for Rome. Had they dreamed what a war it was they were inviting it is doubtful if they would have been so hasty in seeking it.

War with Rome was what Hannibal most desired. He was pledged to hostility with that faithless city, and had assailed Saguntum for the purpose of bringing it about. On learning that war was declared, he immediately prepared to invade Italy itself, leading his army across the great mountain barrier of the Alps. He had already sent messengers to the Gauls, to invite their aid. They were found to be friendly, and eager for his coming. They had little reason to love Rome.

A significant dream strengthened Hannibal's purpose. In his vision he seemed to see the supreme god of his fathers, who called him into the presence of all the gods of Carthage, seated in council on their thrones. They solemnly bade him to invade Italy, and one of the council went with him into that land as guide. As they passed onward the divine guide warned, "See that you look not behind you." But at length, heedless of the command, the dreamer turned and looked back. He saw behind him a monstrous form, covered thickly with serpents, while as it moved houses, orchards, and woods fell crashing to the earth. "What mighty thing is this?" he asked in wonder. "You see the desolation of Italy," replied the heavenly guide; "go on your way, straight forward, and cast no look behind." And thus, at the age of twenty-seven, Hannibal, at the command of his country's gods, went forward to the accomplishment of his early vow. [Pg 139]

His route lay through northern Spain, where he conquered all before him. Then he marched through Gaul to the Rhone. This he crossed in the face of an army of hostile Gauls, who had gathered to oppose him. He had more difficulty with his elephants, of which he had thirty-seven. Rafts were built to convey these great beasts across the stream, but some of them, frightened, leaped overboard and drowned their drivers. They then swam across themselves, and all were safely landed.

HANNIBAL CROSSING THE ALPS.

Other difficulties arose, but all were overcome, and at length the mountains were reached. Here Hannibal was to perform the most famous of his exploits, the crossing of the great chain of the Alps with an army, an exploit more remarkable than that which brought similar fame to Napoleon in our own days, for with Hannibal it was pioneer work, while Napoleon profited by his example.

The mountaineers proved to be hostile, and gathered at all points that commanded the narrow pass. But they left their posts at night, and Hannibal, when nightfall came, set out with a body of light troops and occupied all these posts. When morning dawned the natives, to their dismay, found that they had been outgeneralled.

Soon after the day began the head of the army entered a dangerous defile, and made its way in a long slender line along the terrace-like path which overhung the valley far below. The route proved comparatively easy for the foot-soldiers, but the cavalry and the baggage-animals only made their way with great difficulty, finding obstacles at almost every step. [Pg 140]

The sight of the struggling cavalcade was too much for the caution of the natives. Here was abundant plunder at their hands. From many points of the mountain above the road they rushed down upon the Carthaginians, arms in hand. A frightful disorder followed. So narrow was the path that the least confusion was likely to throw the heavily-laden baggage-animals down the precipitous steep. The cavalry horses, wounded by the arrows and javelins of the mountaineers, plunged wildly about and doubled the confusion.

It was fortunate for Hannibal that he had taken the precaution of the night before. From the post he had taken with his light troops the whole scene of peril and disorder was visible to his eyes. Charging down the hill, he attacked the mountaineers and drove them from their prey. But it was a dearly bought victory, for the fight on the narrow road increased the confusion, and in seeking the relief of his army he caused the destruction of many of his own men.

At length the perilous defile was safely passed, and the army reached a wide and rich valley beyond. Here was the town of Montmélian, the principal stronghold of the mountaineers. This Hannibal took by storm, and recovered there many of his own men, horses, and cattle which the natives had taken, while he found an abundant store of food for the use of his weary soldiers. [Pg 141]

After a day's rest here the march was resumed. During the next three days the army moved up the valley of the river Isère without difficulty. The natives met them with wreaths on their heads and branches in their hands, promising peace, offering hostages, and supplying cattle. Hannibal mistrusted the sudden friendliness of his late foes, but they seemed so honest that he accepted some of them as guides through a difficult region which he was now approaching.

He had reason for his mistrust, for they treacherously led him into a narrow and dangerous defile, which might have easily been avoided; and while the army was involved in this straitened pass an attack was suddenly made by the whole force of the mountaineers. Climbing along the mountain-sides above the defile, they hurled down stones on the entangled foe, and loosened and rolled great rocks down upon their defenceless heads.

Fortunately Hannibal, moved by his doubts, had sent his cavalry and baggage on first. The attack fell on the infantry, and with a body of these he forced his way to the summit of one of the cliffs above the defile, drove away the foe, and held it while the army made its way slowly on. As for the elephants, they were safe from attack. The very sight of these huge beasts filled the barbarians with such terror that they dared not even approach them. There was no further peril, and on the ninth day of its march the army reached the summit of the Alps. [Pg 142]

It was now the end of October. The grass and flowers which carpet that elevated spot in summer had become replaced by snow. In truth, the climate of the Alps was colder at that period than now, and snow lay on the higher passes all through the year. The soldiers were disheartened by cold and fatigue. The scene around them was desolate and dreary. New perils awaited their onward course. But no such feeling entered Hannibal's courageous soul. Fired by hope and ambition, he sought to plant new courage in the hearts of his men.

"The valley you see yonder is Italy," he said, pointing to the sunny slope which, from their elevated position, appeared not far away. "It leads to the country of our friends, the Gauls; and yonder is our way to Rome." Their eyes followed the direction of his pointing hand, and their hearts grew hopeful again with the cheerfulness and enthusiasm of his words.

Two days the army remained there, resting, and waiting for the stragglers to come up. Then the route was resumed.

The mountaineers, severely punished, made no further attacks; but the road proved more difficult than that by which the ascent had been made. Snow thickly covered the passes. Men and horses often lost their way, and plunged to their death down the precipitous steep. Onward struggled the distressed host, through appalling dangers and endless difficulties, losing men and animals at every step. But these troubles were trifling compared with those which they were now to endure. They suddenly found that the track before them had entirely disappeared. An [Pg 143] avalanche had carried it bodily away for about three hundred yards, leaving only a steep and impassable slope covered with loose rocks and snow.

A man of less resolution than Hannibal might well have succumbed before this supreme difficulty. The way forward had vanished. To go back was death. It was impossible to climb round the lost path, for the heights above were buried deep in snow. Nothing remained but to perish where they were, or to make a new road across the mountain's flank.

The energetic commander lost not an hour in deciding. Moving back to a space of somewhat greater breadth, the snow was removed and the army encamped. Then the difficult engineering work began. Hands were abundant, for every man was working for his life. Tools were improvised. So energetically did the soldiers work that the road rapidly grew before them. As it was cut into the rock it was supported by solid foundations below. Many ancient authors say that Hannibal used vinegar to soften the rocks, but this we have no sufficient reason to believe.

So vigorously did the work go on, so many were the hands engaged, that in a single day a track was made over which the horses and baggage-animals could pass. These were sent over and reached the lower valley in safety, where pasture was found.

The passage of the elephants was a more difficult task. The road for them must be solid and wide. It took three days of hard labor to make it. Meanwhile the great beasts suffered severely [Pg 144] from hunger, for forage there was none, nor trees on whose leaves they might browse.

At length the road was strong enough to bear them. They safely passed the perilous reach. After them came Hannibal with the rear of the army, soon reaching the cavalry and baggage. Three days more the wearied host struggled on, down the southward slopes of the Alps, until finally they reached the wide plain of Northern Italy, having safely accomplished the greatest military feat of ancient times.

But Hannibal found himself here with a frightfully reduced army. The Alps had taken toll of their invader. He had reached Gaul from Spain with fifty thousand foot and nine thousand horse. He reached Italy with only twenty thousand foot and six thousand horse. No fewer than thirty-three thousand men had perished by the way. It was a puny force with which to invade a country that could oppose it with hundreds of thousands of men. But it had Hannibal at its head.

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HOW HANNIBAL FOUGHT AND DIED.

THE career of Hannibal was a remarkable one. For fifteen years he remained in Italy, frequently fighting, never losing a battle, keeping Rome in a state of terror, and dwelling with his army in comfort and plenty on the rich Italian plains. Yet he represented a commercial city against a warlike state. He was poorly supported by Carthage; Rome was indomitable; great generals rose to command her armies; in the end the mighty effort of Hannibal failed, and he was forced to leave Rome unconquered and Italy unsubdued.

The story of his deeds is a long one, a record of war and bloodshed which our readers would be little the wiser and none the better for hearing. We shall therefore only give it in the barest outline.

Hannibal defeated the Romans on first meeting them, and the Gauls flocked to his army. But of the elephants, which he had brought with such difficulty over the Rhone and the Alps, the cold of December killed all but one. But without them he met a large Roman army at Lake Trasimenus, and defeated it so utterly that but six thousand escaped.

Rome, in alarm, chose a dictator, Fabius Maximus by name. This leader adopted a new method of warfare, which has ever since been famous as the "Fabian policy." This was the policy of [Pg 146] avoiding battle and seeking to wear the enemy out, while harassing him at every opportunity. Fabius kept to the hills, followed and annoyed his great antagonist, yet steadily avoided being drawn into battle.

For more than a year this continued, during all which time Fabius grew more and more unpopular at Rome. The waiting policy was not that which the Romans had hitherto employed, and they became more impatient as days and months passed without an effort to drive this eating ulcer from their plains. In time the discontent grew too strong to be ignored. A *man of business*, who was said to have begun life as a butcher's son, Varro by name, became the favorite leader of the populace, and was in time raised to the consulship. He enlisted a powerful army, ninety thousand strong, and marched away to the field of Cannæ, where Hannibal was encamped, with the purpose of driving this Carthaginian wasp from the Italian fields.

It was a dwarf contending with a giant. The vainglorious Varro gave Hannibal the opportunity for which he had long waited. The Roman army met with such a crushing defeat that its equal is scarcely known in history. Baffled, beaten, and surrounded by Hannibal's army, the Romans were cut down in thousands, no quarter being asked or given, till when the sun set scarce three thousand men were left alive and unhurt of Varro's hopeful host. Of Hannibal's army less than six thousand had fallen. Of the Roman forces more than eighty thousand paid the penalty of their [Pg 147] leader's incompetence.

Hannibal did not advance to Rome, which seemed to lie helpless before him. He doubtless had good reasons for not attempting to capture it. Maharbal, his cavalry general, said, "Let me advance with the horse, and do you follow; in four days from this time you shall sup in the Capitol." Hannibal, on the contrary, sent terms of peace to Rome. These the Romans, unconquerable in spirit despite their disaster, refused. He then marched to southern Italy and established his head-quarters in the rich city of Capua, which opened its gates to him, and which he promised to make the capital of all Italy.

Hannibal won no more great victories in Italy, though he was victor in many small conflicts. The Romans had paid dearly for their impatience. Fabius was again called to the head of the army, and his old policy was restored. And thus years went on, Hannibal's army gradually decreasing and receiving few reinforcements from home, while Rome in time regained Capua and other cities.

At length, in the year 208 B.C., Hasdrubal, the brother of Hannibal, who commanded the Carthaginian armies in Spain, resolved to go to his brother's aid. He crossed the Alps, as Hannibal had done, following the same pass, and making use of the bridges, rock cuttings, and mountain roads which his brother had made eleven years before.

Had this movement been successful, it might have been the ruin of Rome. But the despatches of Hasdrubal were intercepted by the Romans. Perceiving their great danger, they raised an [Pg 148] army in haste, marched against the invader, and met him before he could effect a junction with his brother. The Carthaginians were defeated with great slaughter. Hasdrubal fell on the field, and his head was cruelly sent to Hannibal, who, as he looked with bitter anguish on the gruesome spectacle, sadly remarked, "I recognize in this the doom of Carthage."

Yet for four years more Hannibal remained in the mountains of Southern Italy, holding his own against Rome, though he had lost all hopes of conquering that city. But Rome had now a new general, with a new policy. This was the famous Scipio, and the policy was to carry the war into Carthage. Fabius had done his work, and new measures came with new men. Scipio led an army

into Spain, which he conquered from Carthage. Then he invaded Africa, and Hannibal was recalled home, after his long and victorious career in Italy.

Hannibal had never yet suffered a defeat. He was now to experience a crushing one. With a new army, largely made up of raw levies, he met the veteran troops of Scipio on the plains of Zama. Hannibal displayed here his usual ability, but fortune was against him, his army was routed, the veterans he had brought from Italy were cut down where they stood, and he escaped with difficulty from the field on which twenty thousand of his men had fallen. It was an earlier Waterloo.

His flight was necessary, if Carthage was to be preserved. He was the only man capable of saving that great city from ruin. Terms of peace were offered by Scipio, severe ones, but [Pg 149] Hannibal accepted them, knowing that nothing else could be done. Then he devoted himself to the restoration of his country's power, and for seven years worked diligently to this end.

His efforts were successful. Carthage again became prosperous. Rome trembled for fear of her old foe. Commissioners were sent to Carthage to demand the surrender of Hannibal, on the plea that he was secretly fomenting a new war. His reforms had made enemies in Carthage, his liberty was in danger, and nothing remained for him but to flee.

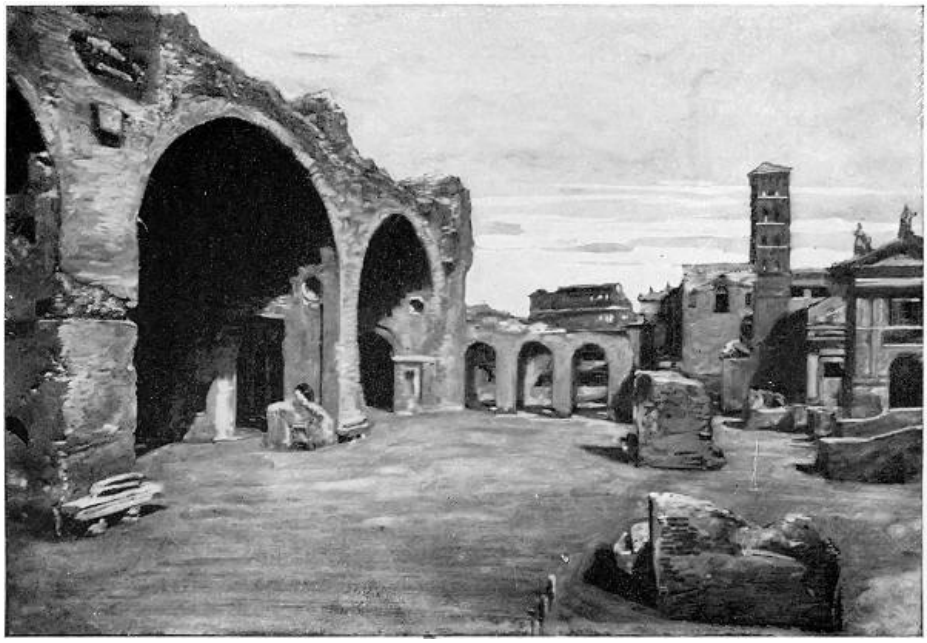
Escaping secretly from the city, the fugitive made his way to Tyre, the mother-city of Carthage, where he was received as one who had shed untold glory on the Phœnician name. Thence he proceeded to Antioch, the capital of Antiochus, king of Syria, and one of the successors of Alexander the Great.

During the period over which we have so rapidly passed the empire of Rome had been steadily extending. In addition to her conquests in Spain and Africa, Macedonia, the home-realm of Alexander the Great, had been successfully invaded, and the first great step taken by Rome towards the conquest of the East.

The loss of Macedonia stirred up Antiochus, who resolved on war with Rome, and marched with his army towards Europe. Hannibal, who had failed to find him at Antioch, overtook him at Ephesus, and found him glad enough to secure the services of a warrior of such world-wide fame.

Antiochus, unfortunately, was the reverse of a great warrior, and by no means the man to cope [Pg 150] with Rome. Hannibal saw at a glance that his army was not fit to fight with a Roman force, and strongly advised him to equip a fleet and invade Southern Italy, saying that he himself would take the command. But nothing was to be done with Antiochus. He was filled with conceit of his own greatness, was ignorant of the power of Rome, and was jealous of the glory which Hannibal might attain. His guest then advised that an alliance should be made with Philip, king of Macedonia. This, too, was neglected, and the Romans hastened to ally themselves with Philip. Antiochus, puffed up with pride, pointed to his great army, and asked Hannibal if he did not think that these were enough for the Romans.

"Yes," he replied, sarcastically, "enough for the Romans, however greedy they may be."



THE BATHS OF CARACALLA.

It proved as he feared. The Romans triumphed. Hannibal was employed only in a subordinate naval command, in which field of warfare he had no experience. Peace was made, and Antiochus agreed to deliver him up to Rome. The greatest of Rome's enemies was again forced to fly for his life.

Hannibal now took refuge with Prusias, king of Bithynia. Here he remained for five years. But even here the implacable enmity of Rome followed him. Envoys were sent to the court of Prusias to demand his surrender. Prusias, who was a king on a small scale, could not, or would not,

defend his guest, and promised to deliver him into the hands of his unrelenting foes.

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Only one course remained. Death was tenfold preferable to figuring in a Roman triumph. Finding the avenues to his house secured by the king's guards, the great Carthaginian took poison, which he is said to have long carried with him in a ring, in readiness for such an emergency. He died at Libyssa, on the eastern shore of the sea of Marmora, in his sixty-fourth year, as closely as we know. In the same year, 183 B.C., died his great and successful antagonist, Scipio Africanus.

Thus perished, in exile, one of the greatest warriors of any age, who, almost without aid from home, supported himself for fifteen years in Italy against all the power of Rome and the greatest generals she could supply. Had Carthage shown the military spirit of Rome, Hannibal might have stopped effectually the conquering career of that warlike city.

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ARCHIMEDES AT THE SIEGE OF SYRACUSE.

THE city of Syracuse, the capital of Sicily, rose to prominence in ancient history through its three famous sieges. The first of these was that long siege which ruined Athens and left Syracuse uncaptured. The second was the siege by Timoleon, who took the city almost without a blow. The third was the siege by the Romans, in which the genius of one man, the celebrated mathematician and engineer Archimedes, long set at naught all the efforts of the besieging army and fleet.

This remarkable defence took place during the wars with Hannibal. Such was the warlike energy of the Romans, that, while their city itself was threatened by this great general, they sent armies abroad, one into Spain and another into Sicily. The latter, under a consul named Appius, besieged Syracuse by sea and land. Hoping to take the city by sudden assault, before it could be properly got ready for defence, Appius pushed forward his land force, fully provided with blinds and ladders, against the walls. At the same time a fleet of sixty quinqueremes under the consul Marcellus advanced to the assault from the side of the harbor. Among these vessels were eight which had been joined together two and two, and which carried machines called sackbuts. These [Pg 153] consisted of immensely long ladders, projecting far beyond the bows, and so arranged that they could be raised by ropes and pulleys, and the end let fall upon the top of the wall. Four men, well protected by wooden blinds, occupied the top of each ladder, ready to attack the defenders of the walls while their comrades hastened up the ladder to their aid.

There was only one thing on which the consuls had not counted, and that was that Syracuse possessed the greatest artificer of ancient times. They had to fight not Syracuse alone but Syracuse and Archimedes; and they found the latter their most formidable foe. In short, the skill of this one man did more to baffle the Romans than the strength and courage of all the garrison.

The historian Polybius has so well told the story of this famous defence, that we cannot do better than quote from his work. He remarks, after describing at length the Roman preparations, —

"In this manner, then, when all things were ready, the Romans designed to attack the towers. But Archimedes had prepared machines that were fitted to every distance. While the vessels were yet far removed from the walls, he, employing catapults and balistæ that were of the largest size and worked by the strongest springs, wounded the enemy with his darts and stones, and threw them into great disorder. When the darts passed beyond them he then used other machines, of a smaller size, and proportioned to the distance. By these means the Romans were [Pg 154] so effectually repulsed that it was not possible for them to approach.

"Marcellus, therefore, perplexed with this resistance, was forced to advance silently with his vessels in the night. But when they came so near to the land as to be within the reach of darts, they were exposed to a new danger, which Archimedes had contrived. He had caused openings to be made in many parts of the wall, equal in height to the stature of a man, and to the palm of the hand in breadth. Then, having planted on the inside archers and little scorpions, he discharged a multitude of arrows through the openings, and disabled the soldiers that were on board. In this manner, whether the Romans were at a great distance or whether they were near, he not only rendered useless all their efforts, but destroyed also many of their men.

"When they attempted also to raise the sackbuts, certain machines which he had erected along the whole wall inside, and which were before concealed from view, suddenly appeared above the wall and stretched their long beaks far beyond the battlements. Some of these machines carried masses of lead and stone not less than ten talents [about eight hundred pounds] in weight. Accordingly, when the vessels with the sackbuts came near, the beaks, being first turned by ropes and pulleys to the proper point, let fall their stones, which broke not only the sackbuts but the vessels likewise, and threw all those who were on board into the greatest danger.

"In the same manner also the rest of the machines, as often as the enemy approached under cover of their blinds, and had secured themselves by that protection against the darts that were discharged through the openings in the wall, let fall upon them stones of so large a size that all the combatants on the prow were forced to retire from their station. [Pg 155]

"He invented, likewise, a hand of iron, hanging by a chain from the beak of a machine, which was used in the following manner. The person who, like a pilot, guided the beak, having let fall the hand and caught hold of the prow of any vessel, drew down the opposite end of the machine, that was inside of the walls. When the vessel was thus raised erect upon its stern, the machine itself was held immovable; but the chain being suddenly loosened from the beak by means of pulleys, some of the vessels were thrown upon their sides, others turned with their bottoms upward, and the greatest part, as the prows were plunged from a considerable height into the sea, were filled with water, and all that were on board thrown into tumult and disorder.

"Marcellus was in no small degree embarrassed when he found himself encountered in every attempt by such resistance. He perceived that all his efforts were defeated with loss, and were even derided by the enemy. But, amidst all the anxiety that he suffered, he could not help jesting upon the inventions of Archimedes.

"'This man,' said he, 'employs our ships as buckets to draw water, and, boxing about our sackbuts, as if they were unworthy to be associated with him, drives them from his company with disgrace.' Such was the success of the siege on the side of the sea.

"Appius also, on his part, having met with the same obstacles in his approaches, was in like manner forced to abandon his design. For while he was yet at a considerable distance, great number of his men were destroyed by the balistæ and the catapults, so wonderful was the quantity of stones and darts, and so astonishing the force with which they were thrown. The means, indeed, were worthy of Hiero, who had furnished the expense, and of Archimedes, who designed them, and by whose directions they were made. [Pg 156]

"If the troops advanced nearer to the city, they either were stopped in their advance by the arrows that were discharged through the openings in the walls, or, if they attempted to force their way under cover of their bucklers, they were destroyed by stones and beams that were let fall upon their heads. Great mischief also was occasioned by these hands of iron that have been mentioned; for they lifted men with their armor into the air and dashed them upon the ground. Appius, therefore, was at last constrained to return back again into his camp."

This ended the assault. For eight months the Romans remained, but never again had the courage to make a regular attack, depending rather on the hope of reducing the crowded city by famine. "So wonderful, and of such importance on some occasions, is the power of a single man, and the force of science properly employed. With so great armies both by sea and land the Romans could scarcely have failed to take the city, if one old man had been removed. But while he was present they did not even dare to make the attempt; in the manner, at least, which Archimedes was able to oppose." The story was told in past times that the great scientist set the Roman ships on fire by means of powerful burning glasses, but this is not believed. [Pg 157]

The end of this story may be briefly told. The Romans finally took the city by surprise. Tradition tells that, as the assailants were rushing through the streets, with death in their hands, they found Archimedes sitting in the public square, with a number of geometrical figures drawn before him in the sand, which he was studying in oblivion of the tumult of war around. As a Roman soldier rushed upon him sword in hand, he called out to the rude warrior not to spoil the circle. But the soldier cut him down. Another story says that this took place in his room.

When Cicero, years afterwards, came to Syracuse, he found the tomb of Archimedes overgrown with briers, and on it the figure of a sphere inscribed in a cylinder, to commemorate one of his most important mathematical discoveries.

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THE FATE OF CARTHAGE.

In all the history of Rome there is no act of more flagrant treachery and cruelty than that of her dealings with the great rival city of Carthage. In the whole history of the world there is nothing more base and frightful than the utter destruction of that mighty mart of commerce. The jealousy of Rome would not permit a rival to exist. It was not enough to drive Hannibal into exile; Carthage was recovering her trade and regaining her strength; new Hannibals might be born; the terror of the great invasion, the remembrance of the defeat at Cannæ, still remained in Roman memories.

Cato the Censor, a famous old Roman, now eighty-four years of age, and who had served in the wars against Hannibal, hated Carthage with the hatred of a fanatic, and declared that Rome would never be safe while this rival was permitted to exist.

Rising from his seat in the senate, the stern old man glowingly described the power and wealth of Carthage. He held up some great figs, and said, "These figs grow but three days' sail from Rome." There could be no safety for Rome, he declared, while Carthage survived.

"Every speech which I shall make in this house," he sternly declared, "shall finish with these words: 'My opinion is that *Carthage must be destroyed* (*delenda est Carthago*.)'" [Pg 159]

These words sealed the fate of Carthage. Men of moderate views spoke more mercifully, but Cato swayed the senate, and from that day the doom of Carthage was fixed.

The Carthaginian territory was being assailed and ravaged by Masinissa, the king of Numidia. Rome was appealed to for aid, but delayed and temporized. Carthage raised an army, which was defeated by Masinissa, then over ninety years of age. The war went on, and Carthage was reduced to such straits that resistance became impossible, and in the end the city and all its possessions were placed at the absolute disposal of the senate of Rome, which, absolutely without provocation, had declared war.

An army of eighty thousand foot and four thousand horse was sent to Africa. Before the consuls commanding it there appeared deputies from Carthage, stating what acts of submission had already been made, and humbly asking what more Rome could demand.

"Carthage is now under the protection of Rome," answered Censorinus, the consul, "and can no longer have occasion to engage in war; she must therefore deliver without reserve to Rome all her arms and engines of war."

Hard as was this condition, the humiliated city accepted it. We may have some conception of the strength of the city when it is stated that the military stores given up included two hundred thousand stand of arms and two thousand catapults. It was a condition to which only despair could have yielded, seemingly the last act of humiliation to which any city could consent. [Pg 160]

But if Carthage thought that the end had been reached, she was destined to be rudely awakened from her dream. The consuls, thinking the city now to be wholly helpless, dropped the mask they had worn, and made known the senate's treacherous decree.

"The decision of the senate is this," said Censorinus, coldly, to the unhappy envoys of Carthage: "so long as you possess a fortified city near the sea, Rome can never feel sure of your submission. The senate therefore decrees that you must remove to some point ten miles distant from the coast. *Carthage must be destroyed.*"

The trembling Carthaginians heard these fatal words in stupefied amazement. On recovering their senses they broke out into passionate exclamations against the treachery of Rome, and declared that the freedom of Carthage had been guaranteed.

"The guarantee refers to the people of Carthage, not to her houses," answered the consul. "You have heard the will of the senate; it must be obeyed, and quickly."

Carthage, meanwhile, waited in gloomy dread the return of the commissioners. When they gave in the council-chamber the ultimatum of Rome, a cry of horror broke from the councillors. The crowd in the street, on hearing this ominous sound, broke open the doors and demanded what fatal news had been received.

On being told, they burst into a paroxysm of fury. The members of the government who had submitted to Rome were obliged to fly for their lives. Every Italian found in the city was killed. The party of the people seized the government, and resolved to defend themselves to the uttermost. An armistice of thirty days was asked from the consuls, that a deputation might be sent to Rome. This was refused. Despair gave courage and strength. The making of new arms was energetically begun. Temples and public buildings were converted into workshops; men and women by thousands worked night and day; every day there were produced one hundred shields, three hundred swords, five hundred pikes and javelins, and one thousand bolts for catapults. The women even cut off their hair to be twisted into strings for the catapults. Corn was gathered in all haste from every quarter. [Pg 161]

The consuls were astonished and disappointed. They had not counted on such energy as this. They did not know what it meant to drive a foe to desperation. They laid siege to Carthage, but found it too strong for all their efforts. They proceeded against the Carthaginian army in the field, but gained no success. Summer and winter passed, and Carthage still held out. Another year (148 B.C.) went by, and Rome still lost ground. Old Cato, the bitter foe of Carthage, had died, at the age of eighty-five. Masinissa, the warlike Numidian, had died at ninety-five. The hopes of the Carthaginians grew. Those of Rome began to fall. The rich booty that was looked for from the sack of Carthage was not to be handled so easily as had been expected. [Pg 162]

What Rome lacked was an able general. One was found in Scipio, the adopted son of Publius Scipio, son of the great Scipio Africanus. This young man had proved himself the only able soldier in the war. The army adored him. Though too young for the consulship, he was elected to that high office, and in 147 B.C. sailed for Carthage.

The new commander found the army disorganized, and immediately restored strict discipline to its ranks. The suburb of Megara, from which the people of the city obtained their chief supply of fresh provisions, was quickly taken. Want of food began to be felt. The isthmus which connected the city with the mainland was strongly occupied, and land-supplies were thus cut off.

The fleet blockaded the harbor, but, as vessels still made their way in, Scipio determined to build an embankment across the harbor's mouth.

This was a work of great labor, and slowly proceeded. By the time it was done the Carthaginians had cut a new channel from their harbor to the sea, and Scipio had the mortification to see a newly-built fleet of fifty ships sail out through this fresh passage. On the third day a naval battle took place, in which the greater part of the new fleet was destroyed.

Another winter came and went. It was not until the spring of 146 B.C. that the Romans succeeded in forcing their way into the city, and their legions bivouacked in the Forum of Carthage.

But Carthage was not yet taken. Its death-struggle was to be a desperate one. The streets [Pg 163] leading from the Forum towards the Citadel were all strongly barricaded, and the houses, six stories in height, occupied by armed men. For three days a war of desperation was waged in the streets. The Romans had to take the first houses of each street by assault, and then force their way forward by breaking from house to house. The cross streets were passed on bridges of planks.

Thus they slowly advanced till the wall of Bosra—the high ground of the Citadel—was reached. Behind them the city was in flames. For six days and nights it burned, destroying the wealth and works of years. When the fire declined passages were cleared through the ruins for the army to advance.

Scipio, who had scarcely slept night or day during the assault, now lay down for a short repose, on an eminence from which could be seen the Temple of Esculapius, whose gilded roof glittered on the highest point of the hill of Bosra. He was aroused to receive an offer from the garrison to surrender if their lives were spared. Scipio consented to spare all but Roman deserters, and from the gates of the Citadel marched out fifty thousand men as prisoners of war.

Hasdrubal, the Carthaginian commander, who had made so brave a defence against Rome, retired with his family and nine hundred deserters and others into the Temple of Esculapius, as if to make a final desperate defence. But his heart failed him at the last moment, and, slipping out alone, he cast himself at Scipio's feet, and begged his pardon and mercy. His wife, who saw his [Pg 164] dastardly act, reproached him bitterly for cowardice, and threw herself and her children into the flames which enveloped the Citadel. Most of the deserters perished in the same flames.

"Assyria has fallen," said Scipio, as he looked with eyes of prevision on the devouring flames. "Persia and Macedonia have likewise fallen. Carthage is burning. The day of Rome's fall may come next."

For five days the soldiers plundered the city, yet enough of statues and other valuables remained to yield the consul a magnificent triumph on his return to Rome. Before doing so he celebrated the fall of Carthage with grand games, in which the spoil of that great city was shown the army. To Rome he sent the brief despatch, "Carthage is taken. The army waits for further orders."

The orders sent were that the walls should be destroyed and every house levelled to the ground. A curse was pronounced by Scipio on any one who should seek to build a town on the site. The curse did not prove effective. Julius Cæsar afterwards projected a new Carthage, and Augustus built it. It grew to be a noble city, and in the third century A.D. became one of the principal cities of the Roman empire and an important seat of Western Christianity. It was finally destroyed by the Arabs.

[Pg 165]

THE GRACCHI AND THEIR FALL.

In the assault by the Roman forces on Megara, the suburb of Carthage, the first to mount the wall was a young man named Tiberius Gracchus, brother-in-law of Scipio, the commander, and grandson of the famous Scipio Africanus. This young man and his brother were to play prominent parts in Rome.

One day when the great Scipio was feasting in the Capitol, with other senators of Rome, he was asked by some friends to give his daughter Cornelia in marriage to Tiberius Gracchus, a young plebeian. Proud patrician as he was, he consented, for Gracchus was highly esteemed for probity, and had done him a personal service.

On his return home he told his wife that he had promised his daughter to a plebeian. The good woman, who had higher aims, blamed him severely for his folly, as she deemed it. But when she was told the name of her proposed son-in-law she changed her mind, saying that Gracchus was the only man worthy of the gift.

Of Cornelia's children three became notable, a daughter, who became the wife of the younger Scipio, and two sons, Tiberius and Caius Gracchus, who are known in history as "The Gracchi." Their father became famous in war and peace, taking important steps in the needed movement of [Pg 166] reform. He died, and after his death many sought the hand of the noble Cornelia in marriage, among them King Ptolemy of Egypt. But she refused them all, devoting her life to the education of her children, for which she was admirably fitted by her lofty spirit and high attainments.

Concerning this lady, one of the greatest and noblest which Rome produced, there is an anecdote, often repeated, yet well worth repeating again. A Campanian lady who called upon her, and boastfully spoke of her wealth in gold and precious stones, asked Cornelia for the pleasure of seeing her jewels. Leading her visitor to another room, the noble matron pointed to her sleeping children, and said, "There are my jewels; the only ones of which I am proud."

These children were born to troublous times. Rome had grown in corruption and ostentation as she had grown in wealth and dominion. When the first Punic War broke out Rome ruled only over Central and Southern Italy. When the third Punic War ended Rome was lord of all Italy, Spain, and Greece, and had wide possessions in Asia Minor and Northern Africa. Wealth had flowed abundantly into the imperial city, and with it pride, corruption, and oppression. The great grew greater, the poor poorer, and the old simplicity and frugality of Rome were replaced by overweening luxury and greed of wealth.

The younger Tiberius Gracchus, who was nine years older than his brother, after taking part in [Pg 167] the siege of Carthage, went to Spain, where also was work for a soldier. On his way thither he passed through Etruria, and saw that in the fields the old freeman farmers had disappeared, and been replaced by foreign slaves, who worked with chains upon their limbs. No Cincinnatus now ploughed his own small fields, but the land was divided up into great estates, cultivated by the captives taken in war; while the poor Romans, by whose courage these lands had been won, had not a foot of soil to call their own.

This spectacle was a sore one to Tiberius, in whose mind the wise teachings of his mother had sunk deep. Here were great spaces of fertile land lying untilled, broad parks for the ostentation of their proud possessors, while thousands of Romans languished in poverty, and Rome had begun to depend for food largely upon distant realms.

There was a law, more than two hundred years old, which forbade any man from holding such large tracts of land. Tiberius thought that this law should be enforced. On his return to Rome his indignant eloquence soon roused trouble in that city of rich and poor.

"The wild beasts of the waste have their caves and dens," he said; "but you, the people of Rome, who have fought and bled for its growth and glory, have nothing left you but the air and the sunlight. There are far too many Romans," he continued, "who have no family altar nor ancestral tomb. They have fought well for Rome, and are falsely called the masters of the world; but the results of their fighting can only be seen in the luxury of the great, while not one of them [Pg 168] has a clod of dirt to call his own."

Cornelia urged her son to do some work to ennoble his name and benefit Rome.

"I am called the 'daughter of Scipio,'" she said. "I wish to be known as 'the mother of the Gracchi.'"

It was not personal glory, but the good of Rome, that the young reformer sought. He presented himself for the office of tribune, and was elected by the people, who looked upon him as their friend and advocate. And at his appeal they crowded from all quarters into the city to vote for the re-establishment of the Licinian laws,—those forbidding the rich to hold great estates.

These laws were re-enacted, and those lands which the aristocrats had occupied by fraud or force were taken from them by a commission and returned to the state.

All this stirred the proud land-holders to fury. They hated Gracchus with a bitter hatred, and began to plot secretly for his overthrow. About this time Attalus, king of Pergamus, moved by some erratic whim, left his estates by will to the city of Rome. Those who had been deprived of their lands claimed these estates, to repay them for their outlays in improvement. Gracchus opposed this, and proposed to divide this property among the plebeians, that they might buy cattle and tools for their new estates.

His opponents were still more infuriated by this action. He had offered himself for re-election to the office of tribune, promising the people new and important reforms. His patrician foes took [Pg 169] advantage of the opportunity. As he stood in the Forum, surrounded by his partisans, an uproar arose, in the midst of which Gracchus happened to raise his hand to his head. His enemies at once cried out that he wanted to make himself king, and that this was a sign that he sought a crown.

A fierce fight ensued. The opposing senators attacked the crowd so furiously that those around Gracchus fled, leaving him unsupported. He hastened for refuge towards the Temple of Jupiter, but the priests had closed the doors, and in his haste he stumbled over a bench. Before he could rise one of his enemies struck him over the head with a stool. A second repeated the blow. Before the statues of the old kings, which graced the portals of the temple, the tribune fell dead.

Many of his supporters were slain before the tumult ceased. Many were forced over the wall at the edge of the Tarpeian Rock, and were killed by their fall. Three hundred in all were slain in the

fray.

Thus was shed the first blood that flowed in civil strife at Rome. It was a crimson prelude to the streams of blood that were to follow, in the long series of butcheries which were afterwards to disgrace the Roman name.

Tiberius Gracchus may well be called the Great, for the effect of his life upon the history of Rome was stupendous. He held office for not more than seven months, yet in that short time the power of the senate was so shaken by him that it never fully recovered its strength. Had he been [Pg 170] less gentle, or more resolute, in disposition his work might have been much greater still. Fiery indignation led him on, but soldierly energy failed him at the end.

Caius Gracchus was in Spain at the time of his brother's murder. On his return to Rome he lived in quiet retirement for some years. The senate thought he disapproved of his brother's laws. They did not know him. At length he offered himself as a candidate for the tribuneship, and so convincing was his eloquence that the people supported him in numbers, and he was elected to the office.

He at once made himself an ardent advocate of his brother's reforms, and with such impassioned oratory that he gained adherents on every side. He made himself active in all measures of public progress, advocating the building of roads and bridges, the erection of mile-stones, the giving the right to vote to Italians in general, and the selling of grain at low rates to the deserving poor. The laws passed for these purposes are known as the Sempronian laws, from the name of the family to which the Gracchi belonged.

By this time the rich senators had grown highly alarmed. Here was a new Gracchus in the field, as eloquent and as eager for reform as his brother, and who was daily growing more and more in favor with the people. Something must be done at once, or this new demagogue—as they called him—would do them more harm than that for which they had slain his brother.

They adopted the policy of fraud in place of that of violence. The people were gullible; they [Pg 171] might be made to believe that the senators of Rome were their best friends. A rich and eloquent politician, Drusus by name, proposed measures more democratic even than those which Gracchus had advocated. This effort had the effect that was intended. The influence of Gracchus over the popular mind was lessened. The people had proved fully as gullible as the shrewd senators had expected.

Among other measures proposed by Gracchus was one for planting a colony and building a new city on the site of Carthage. The senate appeared to approve this, and appointed him one of the commissioners for laying out the settlement. He was forced to leave Rome, and during his absence his enemies worked more diligently than ever. Gracchus was defeated in the election for tribune that followed.

And now the plans of his enemies matured. It was said that the new colony at Carthage had been planted on the ground cursed by Scipio. Wolves had torn down the boundary-posts, which signified the wrath of the gods. The tribes were called to meet at the Capitol, and repeal the law for colonizing Carthage.

A tumult arose. A man who insulted Gracchus was slain by an unknown hand. The senate proclaimed Gracchus and his friends public enemies, and roused many of the people against him by parading the body of the slain man. Gracchus and his friends took up a position on the Aventine Hill. Here they were assailed by a strong armed force.

There was no resistance. Gracchus sought refuge at first in the Temple of Diana, and [Pg 172] afterwards made his way to the Grove of the Furies, several of his friends dying in defence of his flight. A single slave accompanied him. When the grove was reached by his pursuers both were found dead. The faithful slave had pierced his master's heart, and then slain himself by the same sword.

Slaughter ruled in Rome. The Tiber flowed thick with the corpses of the friends of Gracchus, who were slain by the fierce patricians. The houses of the murdered reformers were plundered by the mob, for whose good they had lost their lives. For the time none dared speak the name of Gracchus except in reprobation. Yet he and his brother had done yeoman service for the ungrateful people of Rome.

Cornelia retired to Misenum, where she lived for many years. But she lived not in grief for her sons, but in pride and triumph. They had died the deaths of heroes and patriots, and she gloried in their fame, declaring that they had found worthy graves in the temples of the gods.

So came the people to think, in after-years, and they set up in the Forum a bronze statue to the great Roman matron, on which were inscribed only these words: To Cornelia, the Mother of the Gracchi.

[Pg 173]

JUGURTHA, THE PURCHASER OF ROME.

Masinissa, the valiant old king of Numidia, who had ravaged Carthage in its declining days, left his kingdom to his three sons. On the death of Micipsa, the last remaining of these, in 118 B.C., he, in turn, left the kingdom to his two sons. They were still young, and Jugurtha, their cousin, was appointed their guardian and the regent of the kingdom.

Shrewd, bold, ambitious, and unscrupulous, Jugurtha was the most dangerous man in Numidia to whose care the young princes could have been confided. Scipio read his character rightly, and said to him, "Trust to your own good qualities, and power will come of itself. Seek it by base arts, and you will lose all."

Some of the young nobles in Scipio's camp gave baser advice. "At Rome," they told him, "all things could be had for money." They advised him to buy the support of Rome, and seize the crown of Numidia.

Jugurtha took this base advice, instead of the wise counsel of Scipio. He was destined to pay dearly for his ambition and lack of faith and honor. One of the young princes showed a high [Pg 174] spirit, and Jugurtha had him assassinated. The other fled to Rome and sought the support of the senate. Jugurtha now, following the suggestions of his false friends, sent gold and promises to Rome, purchased the support of venal senators, and had voted to him the strongest half of the kingdom; Adherbal, the young prince, being given the weaker half.

But the young man was not left in peace, even in this reduced inheritance. Jugurtha sent more presents to Rome, and, confident of his strength there, boldly invaded the dominions of Adherbal. A Roman commission threatened him with Rome's displeasure if he did not keep within his own dominions. He affected to submit, but as soon as the commissioners turned their backs the daring adventurer renewed his efforts, got possession of his cousin through treachery, and at once ordered him to be put to death with torture.

Since Rome had become great and powerful no one had dared so openly to contemn its decrees. But Jugurtha knew the Romans of that day, and trusted to his gold. He bought a majority in the senate, defied the minority, and would have gained his aim but for one honest man. This was the tribune Memmius, who, seeing that the senate was hopelessly corrupt, called the people together in the Forum, told them of the crimes of Jugurtha, and demanded justice and redress at their hands.

And now a struggle arose like that between the Gracchi and the rich senators. Jugurtha sent more gold to Rome. An army was despatched against him, but he purchased it also. He gave up [Pg 175] his elephants in pledge of good faith, and then bought them back at a high price. The officers divided the money, and the army failed to advance.

Jugurtha would have triumphed but for Memmius, who resolutely kept up his attacks. In the end the usurper was ordered to come to Rome,—under a safe-conduct. He came, and here by his gold purchased one of the tribunes, who protected him against the wrath of Memmius and the people. But Memmius was resolute and determined. Another Numidian prince was found and asked to demand the crown from the senate. Jugurtha learned what was afoot, and sent an agent, Bomilcar by name, to assassinate the new prince. An indictment was laid against Bomilcar, but Jugurtha, fearing to have his own share in the murder exposed, sent him off secretly to Africa.

This was too much, even for the purchased members of the senate. Such open disdain of the majesty of Rome no man, however avaricious, dared support. Jugurtha had a safe-conduct, and could not be seized, but he was ordered to quit Rome immediately. He did so, and as he passed out of the gates he looked back and said, "A city for sale if she can find a purchaser."

The remainder of Jugurtha's history is one of war. The time for winning power by bribery was past. The people were so thoroughly aroused and incensed that none dared yield to cupidity. The indignation grew. The first army sent against Jugurtha was baffled by the wily African, caught in a defile, and only escaped by passing under the yoke, and agreeing to evacuate Numidia. [Pg 176]

This disgrace stirred Rome more deeply still. A new consul was elected and a new army raised. A commission was appointed to inquire into the conduct of the senate, and several of the leading members were found guilty of high treason and put to death without mercy. Rome had begun to purge itself.

The new general, Metellus, was not one to be sent under the yoke. He defeated Jugurtha in the field and pursued him so unrelentingly that soon the African usurper was a fugitive, without an army, and with only some fortresses under his control.

Metellus had with him as his principal officer a man who was to become famous in Roman history. This man, Caius Marius, was then fifty years of age. Yet he had years enough before him to play a mighty part. He was a man of the people, rough and uneducated; scorned learning, but had a vigorous ambition and a striking military genius. He claimed to be a *New Man*, knew no Greek, and boasted that he had no images but "prizes won by valor and scars upon his breast."

This man made himself the favorite of the populace, was elected consul, and by undisguised trickery took the conduct of the war out of the hands of Metellus just as the latter was about to

succeed. With him to Africa went another man who was to become equally famous, L. Cornelius Sulla, the future chief of Rome. Sulla was not a *New Man*. He was an aristocrat, knew Greek better than Marius knew Latin, was educated and dissipated, and showed the marks of a [Pg 177] dissolute life in his face. When he rode into the camp of Marius at the head of the cavalry he had seen no service, and the rugged soldier looked with contempt on this effeminate pleasure-seeker who had been sent as his lieutenant. He soon learned his mistake, and before the campaign ended Sulla was his most trusted officer and chief adviser.

In the subsequent conduct of the war there is an interesting story to tell. There were two hill-forts in Numidia which still remained in Jugurtha's control. One of these was taken easily. The other—which contained all that was left of the usurper's treasures—was a formidable place, which long defied the Roman engineers. It stood on a precipitous rock, with only a single narrow ascent; was well garrisoned and supplied with arms, food, and water; and so long defied all the efforts of Marius that he almost despaired of its capture.

In this dilemma a happy chance came to his aid. A Ligurian soldier, a practised mountaineer, being in search of water, saw a number of snails crawling up the rock in the rear of the castle. These were a favorite food with him, and he gathered what he saw, and climbed the cliff in search of more. Higher and higher he went, till he had nearly reached the summit of the rock. Here he found himself near a large oak, which had rooted itself in the rock crevices, and grew upward so as to overtop the castle hill.

The Ligurian, led by curiosity, climbed the tree, and gained a point from which he could see the castle, undefended on this side, and without sentinels. Having taken a close observation, he [Pg 178] descended, carefully examining every point as he went. He now hastened to the tent of Marius, recounted to him his exploit, and offered to guide a party up the perilous ascent.

Marius was quick to seize this hopeful chance. Five trumpeters and four centurions were selected, who were placed under the leadership of the mountaineer. Laying aside all clothing and arms that would obstruct them, they followed the Ligurian up the rock. He, an alert and skilful climber, here and there tied ropes to projecting points, here lent them the aid of his hand, here sent them up ahead and carried their arms after them. At length, with great toil and risk, they reached the summit, and found the castle at this point undefended and unwatched, the Numidians being all on the opposite side.

Marius, being apprised of their success, ordered a vigorous assault in front. The garrison rushed to the defence of their outer works. In the heat of the action a sudden clangor of trumpets was heard in their rear. This unexpected sound spread instant alarm. The women and children who had come out to watch the contest fled in terror. The soldiers nearest the walls followed. At length the whole body, stricken suddenly with panic, took to flight, followed in hot pursuit by their foes.

Over the deserted works the Romans clambered, into the castle they burst, all who opposed them were cut down, and in a short time the place which had so long defied them was theirs, [Pg 179] while the four trumpets to which their victory was due sounded loudly the war-peal of triumph.

Jugurtha was still at large. He was supported by Bocchus, king of Mauritania, whose daughter he had married. Sulla was sent to demand his surrender. Bocchus refused at first, but at length, through fear of Rome, consented, and the bold usurper was betrayed into Sulla's hands.

The end of Jugurtha was one in accordance with the brutal cruelty of Rome, yet it was one which he richly deserved. It was in the month of January, 104 B.C., three years after his capture, that Marius entered Rome in triumphal procession, displaying to the people the spoils of his victories, while before his car walked his captive in chains.

The African seemed sunk in stupor as he walked. He was roused by the brutal mob, who tore off his clothes and plucked the gold rings from his ears. Then he was thrust into the dungeon at the foot of the Capitoline Hill. "Hercules, what a cold bath this is!" he exclaimed. There he who had defied Rome and lorded it over Africa starved to death. A prince of the line of Masinissa succeeded him on the throne.

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THE EXILE AND REVENGE OF MARIUS.

MARIUS and Sulla, the heroes of the Jugurthine War, in later years led in greater wars, in which they gained much fame. They ended their careers in frightful massacres, in which they gained great infamy. Rome, which had made the world its slaughter-house, was itself turned into a slaughter-house by these cruel and revengeful rivals.

There was rarely any lack of work for the swords of Rome. While Marius was absent in Africa a frightful peril threatened the Roman state. A vast horde of barbarians was sweeping downward

from the north. The Germans of Central Europe had ravaged Switzerland and invaded Gaul. Every army sent against them had been defeated with great slaughter. Italy was in immediate danger of invasion, Rome in imminent peril. Marius was sadly needed, and on his return from Africa was hailed as the only man who could save the state.

Instantly he gathered an army and set out for Gaul, Sulla going with him as a subordinate officer. Two years were spent in marches and counter-marches, and then (B.C. 102) he met the enemy and defeated them with immense slaughter. Reserving the richest of the spoils, he devoted the remainder to the gods, and, as he stood in a purple robe, torch in hand, about to [Pg 181] apply the flame to the costly funeral pile, horsemen dashed at full speed through the open lines of the troops, and announced that for a fifth time he had been elected consul of Rome.

In this war Sulla also showed valor and won fame. But he had grown jealous of the glory of Marius, and left his army to join that of the consul Catulus, who was being driven backward by another great horde of barbarians. Marius, having beaten his own foes, hastened to the relief of his associate; the flight was stopped, and a battle ensued in which the invading army was swept from the face of the earth, and Rome freed for centuries from danger of barbarian invasion.

Sulla and Catulus had their share in this victory, but the people gave Marius the whole honor, called him the third founder of their city (as Camillus had been the second), and gathered in rejoicing multitudes to witness his triumph.

While this war was going on there was dreadful work at home. The slaves had, for the second time, broken into insurrection. This servile war was mainly in Sicily, where thousands of slaves were slain. Of the captives, many were taken to Rome to fight with wild beasts in the arena, but they disappointed the eager spectators by killing each other. This outbreak only made slavery at Rome harder and harsher than before.

Years passed on, and then another war broke out. The Italian allies, who had helped to make Rome great, claimed rights of citizenship and suffrage. These were denied, and what is known as [Pg 182] the Social War began. Sulla and Marius took part in this conflict, which ended in favor of Rome, though the franchise fought for was in large measure gained. It was of little value, however, since all who held it were obliged to go to the city of Rome to vote.

During these various conflicts the rivalry between Marius and Sulla grew steadily more declared. The old plebeian, now seventy years of age, was jealous of the honors which his aristocratic rival had gained in the Social War, and a spirit of bitter hatred, which was to bear dire results, arose in his heart.

Events to come were to blow this spark of hatred into a glowing flame. A new war threatened Rome. Mithridates the Great, king of Pontus, in Asia Minor, was pursuing a career of conquest, and the Roman provinces in Asia were in danger. War was determined on, and Sulla, who had already held successful command in the East, claimed the command of the new army. Marius, old as he was, wanted it, too, and by his influence with the new citizens of Rome succeeded in defeating Sulla and gaining the appointment of general in the war against Pontus.

This vote of the tribes precipitated a contest. The Social War was not yet fully ended, and Sulla hastened to the camp where his soldiers were besieging a Samnite town. It was his purpose to set sail for the East before he could be superseded. He was too late. Officials from Rome reached the camp almost as soon as he, bearing a commission from Marius to assume the command. It was a critical moment. Sulla must either yield or inaugurate a civil war.

He chose the latter. Calling the soldiers together, he told them that he had been insulted and [Pg 183] injured, and that, unless they supported him, they would be left at home, and a new army raised by Marius would obtain the spoils of the Mithridatic war. Stirred by this appeal to their avarice, the legions stoned to death the officers sent by Marius, and loudly demanded to be led to Rome.

Their coming took Marius by surprise, and threw the city into consternation. No one had dreamed of such daring and audacity. To lead a Roman army against Rome was unprecedented. The senate sent an embassy asking Sulla to halt till the Fathers could come to some decision. He promised to do so, but as soon as the envoys had gone he sent a force that seized the Colline Gate and entered the city streets. Here their progress was stopped by the people, who hurled tiles and stones upon their heads from the house-tops.

The whole army soon followed, and Sulla entered the city with two legions at his back. The people again opposed their march, but Sulla seized a torch and threatened to burn the city if any hostility were shown. This ended all opposition, except that made by Marius, who retreated to the Capitol, where he proclaimed liberty to all slaves who would join his banner. This did him much more harm than good; his adherents dispersed; he and his chief supporters were forced to seek safety in flight.

And now we have a story of striking interest to tell. It would need the powers of invention of a [Pg 184] romancer to devise a series of adventures as remarkable as those which befell old Marius in his flight. It is one of the strangest stories in all the annals of history, a marked illustration of the saying that fact is often stranger than fiction.

Marius fled to Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, in company with Granius, his son-in-law, and five slaves. He proposed to take ship there for Africa, where his influence was great. His son followed him by a different route, and arrived at Ostia to find that his father had put to sea. There

was another vessel about to sail, which the son took, and in which he succeeded in reaching Africa.

The older fugitive had no such good fortune. The elements pronounced against him, and a storm drove the vessel ashore near Circeii. Here the party wandered in distress along the desolate coast, in imminent danger of capture, for emissaries of Sulla were scouring the shores of Italy in his pursuit. Fortunately for the old general, he was recognized by some herdsmen, who warned him that a troop of cavalry was approaching. Not knowing who they were, and fearing their purpose, the fugitives hastily left the road and sought shelter in the forest that there came down near to the coast.

Here the night was miserably passed, the fugitives suffering for want of food and shelter. When the dawn of the next day broke, their forlorn walk was resumed, there being no enemy in sight. By this time the whole party, with the exception of Marius, was greatly depressed. He alone kept up his spirits, telling his followers that he had been six times consul of Rome, and that a seventh consulship would yet be his. [Pg 185]

There seemed little hope of such a turn of fortune as the hungry fugitives dragged wearily onward. For two days they kept on, making about forty miles of distance. At the end of that time peril of capture came frightfully near. A body of horsemen was visible at a distance, coming rapidly on. No friendly forest here offered shelter. The only hope of escape lay in two merchant vessels, which were moving slowly close in shore.

Calling loudly for aid, Marius and those with him plunged into the water and swam for these vessels. Granius reached one of them. Marius was so exhausted that he could not swim, and was supported with difficulty above the water by two slaves till the seamen of the other vessel drew him on board.

He had barely reached the deck when the troop of horsemen rode to the water's edge, and their leader called to the captain of the vessel, telling him that it was the proscribed Marius he had rescued, and bidding him at once to deliver him up.

What to do the captain did not know. The officer on shore threatened him with the vengeance of Sulla if he failed to yield the fugitive. Marius, with tears in his eyes, earnestly begged for protection from the captain and crew. The captain wavered in purpose, but finally yielded to Marius and sailed on. But he did so in doubt and fear, and on reaching the mouth of the river Liris he persuaded Marius to go ashore, saying that the vessel must lie to till the land-wind rose. The instant the boat returned the faithless captain sailed away, leaving the aged fugitive absolutely alone on the beach. [Pg 186]

Walking wearily to the sorry hut of an old peasant, which stood near, Marius told him who he was, and begged for shelter. The old man hid him in a hole near the river, and covered him with reeds. While he lay there the horsemen, who had followed the vessel along the shore, came up, and asked the tenant of the hut where Marius was.

The shivering fugitive, in fear of being betrayed, rose hastily from his hiding-place and dashed into the stream. Some of the horsemen saw him, he was pursued, and, covered with mud and nearly naked, the old conqueror was dragged from the river, placed on a horse, and carried as a captive to the neighboring town of Miturnæ. Here he was confined in the house of a woman named Fannia till his fate could be determined.

A circular letter had been received by the magistrates from the consuls at Rome, ordering them to put Marius to death if he should fall into their hands. This was more than they cared to do on their own responsibility, and they called a meeting of the town council to decide the momentous question. The council decided that Marius should die, and sent a Gaulish slave to put him to death.

It was dark when the executioner entered the house of Fannia. The slave, little relishing the task committed to his hands, entered the room where Marius lay. All the trembling wretch could see in the darkness were the glaring eyes of the old man fixed fiercely on him, while a deep voice came from the couch, "Fellow, darest thou slay Caius Marius?" [Pg 187]

Throwing down his sword, the Gaul fled in terror from those accusing eyes, crying out, loudly, "I cannot slay Caius Marius!"

The magistrates made no further effort to put their prisoner to death. They managed that he should escape, and he made his way to the island of Ischia, which Granius had already reached. Here a friendly ship took them on board, and they sailed for Africa.

But the perils of the fugitive were not yet at an end. The ship was forced to stop at Erycina, in Sicily, for water. Here a Roman official recognized Marius, fell upon the party with a company of soldiers, and slew sixteen of them. Marius was nearly taken, but managed to escape, the vessel hastily setting sail. He now reached Africa without further adventure.

His son and other friends had arrived earlier, and, encouraging news being told him, he landed near the site of ancient Carthage. The prætor, learning of his presence, and advised of the revolution at Rome, sent him word to quit the province without delay. As the messenger spoke Marius looked at him with silent indignation.

"What answer shall I take back to the prætor?" asked the man.

"Tell him," said the old general, with impressive dignity, "that you have seen Caius Marius sitting among the ruins of Carthage."

Meanwhile his son had reached Numidia, where he was outwardly well received by the king, yet held in captivity. He was at length enabled to escape by the aid of the king's daughter, and joined his father. Marius was not further molested. [Pg 188]

Yet it would have been well for the fame of Caius Marius had his life ended here. He would nave escaped the infamy of his later years, and the flood of blood and vengeance in which his career reached its end. He had friends still in Rome. Sulla had made many foes by his capture of the city. Among the new consuls elected was Cornelius Cinna, who quickly made trouble for the ruler of Rome. Sulla, finding his power abating, and fearing assassination by friends of Marius, concluded to let the senate fight its own battles, and shipped his troops for Greece, leaving Rome to its own devices, while he occupied himself with fighting its enemy in the East.

No sooner had he gone than civil war began. Fighting took place in the streets of Rome. Cinna moved in the senate that Marius should be restored to his rights. Failing in this, he gathered an army and threatened his enemies in Rome.

News of all this soon reached old Marius in Africa. At the head of a thousand desperate men he took ship and landed in Etruria. Here he proclaimed liberty to all slaves who would join him, and soon had a large force. He also gained a small fleet. He and Cinna now joined forces and marched on Rome.

The senate, which stood for Sulla, had meanwhile been gathering an army for the defence of the city. But few of those ordered from afar reached the gates, and of the principal force the greater part deserted to Marius. The city was soon invested on all sides. The ships of Marius captured the corn-vessels from Sicily and Africa. A plague broke out in the city, which decimated the army of the senate. In the end beleaguered Rome was forced to open its gates to a new conqueror. [Pg 189]

All the senate asked for was that Cinna would not permit a general massacre. This he promised. But behind his chair, in which he sat in state as consul, stood old Marius, whose face threatened disaster. He was dressed in mean attire; his hair and beard hung down rough and long, for neither had been cut since the day he fled from Rome; on his brow was a sullen frown that boded only evil to his foes.

Evil it was, evil without stint. Rome was treated as a conquered city. The slaves and desperadoes who followed Marius were let loose to plunder at their will. Octavius, the consul who had supported the senate, was slain in his consular chair. A series of horrible butcheries followed. Marius was bent on dire vengeance, and his enemies fell in multitudes. Followed by a band of ruffians known as the Bardiæi, the remorseless old man roamed in search of victims through the city streets, and any man of rank whom he passed without a salute was at once struck dead.

The senators who had opposed his recall from exile fell first. Others followed in multitudes. Those who had private wrongs to revenge followed the example of their chief. The slaves of the army killed at will all whom they wished to plunder. So great became the licentious outrages of these slaves that in the end Cinna, who had taken no part in the massacres, fell upon them with a body of troops and slew several thousands. This reprisal in some measure restored order in Rome. [Pg 190]

Sulla, meanwhile, was winning victories in the East, and the news of them somewhat disturbed the ruthless conquerors. But for the present they were absolute, and the saturnalia of blood went on. It ended at length in the death of Marius.

Since his return he had given himself to wine and riotous living. This, after the privations and hardships he had recently suffered, sapped his iron constitution. He was elected to the seventh consulship, which he had predicted while wandering as a fugitive on the south Italian shores. But he fell now into an inflammatory fever, and in two weeks after his election he ceased to breathe. Great and successful soldier as he had been, his late conduct had won him wide-spread detestation, and he died hated by his enemies and feared even by his friends.

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THE PROSCRIPTION OF SULLA.

While Marius and his friends were ruling and murdering in Rome, Sulla, their bitter enemy, was commanding and conquering in the East, biding his time for revenge. He drove the Asiatic foe out of Greece, taking and pillaging Athens as an episode. He carried the war into Asia, forced Mithridates to sue for peace, and exacted enormous sums (more than one hundred million dollars in our money) from the rich cities of the East. Then, after giving his soldiers a winter's rest in

Asia, he turned his face towards Rome, writing to the senate that he was coming, and that he intended to take revenge on his enemies.

It was now the year 83 B.C. Three years had passed since the death of Marius. During the interval the party of the plebeians had been at the head of affairs. Now Sulla, the aristocrat, was coming to call them to a stern account, and they trembled in anticipation. They remembered vividly the Marian carnival of blood. What retribution would his merciless rival exact?

Cinna, who had most to fear, proposed to meet the conqueror in the field. But his soldiers were not in the mood to fight, and settled the question by murdering their commander. When spring [Pg 192] was well advanced, Sulla left Asia, and in sixteen hundred ships transported his men to Italy, landing at the port of Brundusium.

On the 6th of July, shortly after his landing, an event occurred that threw all Rome into consternation. The venerable buildings of the Capitol took fire and were burned to the ground, the cherished Sibylline books perishing in the flames. Such a disaster seemed to many Romans a fatal prognostic. The gods were surely against them, and all things were at risk.

Onward marched Sulla, opposed by a much greater army collected by his opponents. But he led the veterans of the Mithridatic War, and in the ranks of his opponents no man of equal ability appeared. Battle after battle was fought, Sulla steadily advancing. At length an army of Samnites, raised to defend the Marian cause, marched on Rome. Caius Pontius, their commander, was bent on terribly avenging the sufferings of his people on that great city.

"Rome's last day," he said to his soldiers, "is come. The city must be annihilated. The wolves that have so long preyed upon Italy will never cease from troubling till their lair is utterly destroyed."

Rome was in despair, for all seemed at an end. The Samnites had not forgotten a former Pontius, who had sent a Roman army under the Caudine Forks, and had been cruelly murdered in the Capitol They thundered on the Colline Gate. But at that critical moment a large body of cavalry appeared and charged the foe. [Pg 193] It was the vanguard of Sulla's army, marching in haste to the relief of Rome.

A fierce battle ensued. Sulla fought gallantly. He rode a white horse, and was the mark of every javelin. But despite his efforts his men were forced back against the wall, and when night came to their relief it looked as if nothing remained for them but to sell their lives as dearly as possible the next morning.

But during the night Sulla received favorable news. Crassus, who commanded his right wing, had completely defeated a detachment of the Marian army. With quick decision, Sulla marched during the night round the enemy's camp, joined Crassus, and at day-break attacked the foe.

The battle that ensued was a terrible one. Fifty thousand men fell on each side. Pontius and other Marian leaders were slain. In the end Sulla triumphed, taking eight thousand prisoners, of whom six thousand were Samnites. The latter were, by order of the victor, ruthlessly butchered in cold blood.

This was but the prelude to an equally ruthless but more protracted butchery. Sulla was at last lord of Rome, as absolute in power as any emperor of later days. In fact, he had himself appointed dictator, an office which had vanished more than a century before, and which raised him above the law. He announced that he would give a better government to Rome, but to do so he must first rid that city of its enemies.

Marius, whom Sulla hated with intense bitterness, had escaped him by death. [Pg 194] By his orders the bones of the old general were torn from their tomb near the Anio and flung into that stream. The son of Marius had slain himself to prevent being taken. His head was brought to Sulla at Rome, who gazed on the youthful face with grim satisfaction, saying, "Those who take the helm must first serve at the oar." As for himself, his fortune was now accomplished, he said, and henceforth he should be known as Felix.

The cruel work which Sulla had promised immediately began. Adherents of the popular party were slaughtered daily and hourly at Rome. Some who had taken no part in the late war were slain. No man knew if he was safe. Some of the senators asked that the names of the guilty should be made known, that the innocent might be relieved from uncertainty. The proposition hit with Sulla's humor. He ordered that a list of those doomed to death should be made out and published. This was called a Proscription.

But the uncertainty continued as great as ever. The list contained but eighty names. It was quickly followed by another containing one hundred and twenty. Day after day new lists of the doomed were issued. To make death sure, a reward of two talents was promised any one who should kill a proscribed man,—even if the killer were his son or his slave. Those who in any way aided the proscribed became themselves doomed to death.

Men who envied others their property managed to have their names put on the list. A partisan of Sulla was exulting over the doomed, when his eye fell on his own name in the list. [Pg 195] He hastily fled, and the bystanders, judging the cause, followed and cut him down. Catiline, who afterwards became notorious in Roman history, murdered his own brother, and to legalize the murder had the name of his victim placed on the list.

How many were murdered we do not know. Probably little less than three thousand in Rome. The stream of murder flowed to other cities. Several of these defied the conqueror, but were taken one by one and their defenders slain. To all cities which had taken part with the Marians the proscription made its way. Of the total number slain during this reign of terror no record exists, but the deliberate butchery of Sulla went far beyond the ferocious but temporary slaughter of Marius.

Murder was followed by confiscation. Sulla ordered that the property of the slain should be sold at auction and the proceeds put in the treasury. But the favorites of the dictator were the chief bidders, the property was sold at a tithe of its value, and the unworthy and dissolute obtained the lion's share of the spoil.

During this period of murder and confiscation we first hear the names of a number of afterwards famous Romans. Catiline we have named. Pompey took part in the war on Sulla's side, was victorious in Sicily and Africa, and on his return was hailed by his chief with the title of Pompey the Great. Another still more famous personage was Julius Cæsar. Sulla had ordered that all persons connected by marriage with the Marian party should divorce their wives. Pompey [Pg 196] obeyed. Cæsar, who was a nephew of Marius and had married the daughter of Cinna, boldly refused. He was then a youth of nineteen. His boldness would have brought him death had not powerful friends asked for his life.

"You know not what you ask," said Sulla; "that profligate boy will be more dangerous than many Mariuses."

Cæsar, not trusting Sulla's doubtful humor, escaped from Rome, and hid in the depths of the Sabine mountains, awaiting a time when the streets of the capital city would be safer for those who dared speak their minds.

Another young man of rising fame showed little less boldness. This was Cicero, who had just returned to Rome from his studies in Greece. He ventured to defend Roscius of Ameria against an accusation of murder made by Chrysogonus, a prime favorite of Sulla. Cicero lashed the favorite vigorously, and won a verdict for his client. But he found it advisable to leave Rome immediately and resume his studies at Rhodes.

Sulla ended his work by organizing a new senate and making a new code of laws. Three hundred new members were added to the senate, and the laws of Rome were brought largely back to the state in which they had been before the Gracchi.

This done, to the utter surprise of the people he laid down his power and retired from Rome, within whose streets he never again set foot. He had no occasion for fear. He had scattered his veterans throughout Italy on confiscated estates, and knew that he could trust to their support. [Pg 197] Before his departure he gave a feast of costly meats and rich wines to the Roman commons, in such profusion that vast quantities that could not be eaten were cast into the Tiber. Then he dismissed his armed attendants, and walked on foot to his house, through a multitude of whom many had ample reason to strike him down.

He now retired to his villa near Puteoli, on the Bay of Naples, with the purpose of enjoying that life of voluptuous ease which he craved more than power and distinction. Here he spent the brief remainder of his life in nocturnal orgies and literary converse, completing his "Memoirs," in which he told, in exaggerated phrase, the story of his life and exploits.

He lived but about a year. His excesses brought on a complication of disorders, which ended, we are told, in a loathsome disease. The senate voted him a gorgeous funeral, after which his body was burned on the Campus Martius, that no future tyrant could treat his remains as he had done those of his great rival Marius.

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THE REVOLT OF THE GLADIATORS.

At the beginning of the first Punic War, or war with Carthage, a new form of entertainment was introduced into Rome. This was the gladiatorial show, the fights of armed men in the arena, the first of which was given in the year 264 B.C., at the funeral of D. Junius Brutus. These exhibitions were long confined to funeral occasions, money being frequently left for this purpose in wills, but they gradually extended to other occasions, and finally became the choice amusement of the brutal Roman mob. The gladiators were divided into several classes, in accordance with their particular weapons and modes of fighting, and great pains were taken to instruct them in the use of their special arms. But in the period that followed the death of Sulla Rome was to have a gladiatorial exhibition of a different sort.

In the city of Capua was a school of gladiators, kept by a man named Lentulus. It was his practice to hire out his trained pupils to nobles for battles in the arena during public festivals.

His school was a large one, and included in its numbers a Thracian named Spartacus, who had been taken prisoner while leading his countrymen against the Romans, and was to be punished for his presumption by making sport for his conquerors. [Pg 199]

But Spartacus had other and nobler aims. He formed a plot of flight to freedom in which two hundred of his fellows joined, though only seventy-eight succeeded in making their escape. These men, armed merely with the knives and spits which they had seized as they fled, made their way to the neighboring mountains, and sought a refuge in the crater of Mount Vesuvius. It must be borne in mind that this mountain, in that year of 73 B.C., was silent and seemingly extinct, though before another century passed it was to awake to vital activity. It was only biding its time in slumber.

It was better to die on the open field than in the amphitheatre, argued Spartacus, and his followers agreed with him. Their position in the crater was a strong one, and the news of their revolt soon brought them a multitude of allies,—slaves and outlaws of every kind. These Spartacus organized and drilled, supplying them with officers from the gladiators, mostly old soldiers, and placing them under rigid discipline. It was liberty he wanted, not rapine, and he did his utmost to restrain his lawless followers from acts of violence.

Pompey, the chief Roman general of that day, was then absent in Spain, fighting with a remnant of the Marian forces. Two Roman prætors led their forces against the gladiators, but were driven back with loss, and the army of Spartacus swelled day by day. The wild herdsmen of Apulia joined him in large numbers. They were slaves to their lords, whom they hated bitterly, and here was an opening for freedom and revenge. [Pg 200]

It was soon evident that Rome had on its hands the greatest and most dangerous of its servile wars. Spartacus was brave and prudent, and possessed the qualities of an able leader. Unfortunately for him, he led an unmanageable host. In the next year both the consuls took the field against him. By this time his army had swelled to more than one hundred thousand men, and with these he pushed his way northward through the passes of the Apennines. But now insubordination appeared. Crixus, one of his lieutenants, ambitious of independent command, led off a large division of the army, chiefly Germans. He was quickly punished for his temerity, being surprised and slain with the whole of his force.

Spartacus, wise enough to know that he could not long hold out against the whole power of Rome, kept on northward, hoping to pass the Alps and find a place of refuge remote from the stronghold of his foes. Both the consuls attacked him in his march, and both were defeated, while he retaliated on Rome by forcing his prisoners to fight as gladiators in memory of the slain Crixus.

Reaching the provinces of the north, his diminished force was repulsed by Crassus, one of the richest men of Rome, who had taken the field as prætor. Spartacus would still have fought his way towards the Alps but for his followers, whose impatient thirst for rapine forced him to march southward again.

Every Roman force that assailed him on this march was hurled back in defeat. He even meditated an attack on Rome itself, but relinquished this plan as too desperate, and instead employed his men in collecting arms and treasure from the cities of central and southern Italy. Discipline was almost at an end. The wild horde of slaves and outlaws were beyond any strict military control. So great and general were their ravages that in a later day the poet Horace promised his friend a jar of wine made in the Social War, "if he could find one that had escaped the ravages of roaming Spartacus." [Pg 201]

In the year 71 B.C. the most vigorous efforts were made to put down this dangerous revolt. Pompey was still in Spain. The only man at home of any military reputation was the prætor Crassus, who had amassed an enormous fortune by buying up property at famine prices during the Proscription of Sulla, and in speculative measures since.

He was given full command, took the field with a large army, restored discipline to the beaten bands of the consuls by cruel and rigorous measures, and assailed Spartacus in Calabria, where he was seeking to rekindle the Servile War, or slave outbreak, in Sicily. He had even engaged with pirate captains to transport a part of his force to Sicily, but the freebooters took the money and sailed away without the men.

And now began a struggle for life and death. Spartacus was in the narrowest part of the foot of Southern Italy. Crassus determined to keep him there by building strong lines of intrenchment across the neck of land. Spartacus attacked his works twice in one day, but each time was repulsed with great slaughter. But he defended himself vigorously. [Pg 202]

Pompey was now returning from Spain. Crassus, not caring to be robbed of the results of his labors, determined to assault Spartacus in his camp. But before he could do so the daring gladiator attacked his lines again, forced his way through, and marched for Brundusium, where he hoped to find ships that would convey him and his men from Italy.

As it happened, a large body of Roman veterans, returning from Macedonia, had just reached Brundusium, and undertook its defence. Foiled in his purpose, Spartacus turned upon the pursuing army of Crassus, like a wolf at bay, and attacked it with the energy of desperation. The battle that ensued was contested with the fiercest courage. Spartacus and his men were fighting for their lives, and the result continued doubtful till the brave gladiator was wounded in the thigh

by a javelin. Falling on his knee, he fought with the courage of a hero until, overpowered by numbers, he fell dead.

His death decided the conflict. Most of his followers were slain on the field. A strong body escaped to the mountains, but these were pursued, and many fell. Five thousand of them made their way to the north of Italy, where they were met by Pompey, on his return from Spain, and slaughtered to a man.

Crassus took six thousand prisoners, and these he disposed of in the cruel Roman way of dealing with revolted slaves, hanging or crucifying the whole of them along the road between Rome and Capua. [Pg 203]

Thus ended far the most important outbreak of Roman gladiators and slaves. The south of Italy suffered horribly from its ravages, but not through any act of Spartacus, who throughout showed a moderation equal to his courage and military ability. Had it not been for the lawless character of his followers his career might have had a very different ending, for he had shown himself a commander of rare ability and unconquerable courage.

[Pg 204]

CÆSAR AND THE PIRATES.

We have spoken of the pirates who agreed to convey the forces of Spartacus from Italy to Sicily, but faithlessly sailed away with his money and without his men. From times immemorial the Mediterranean had been ravaged by pirate fleets, which made the inlets of Asia Minor and the isles of the Archipelago their places of shelter, whence they dashed out on rapid raids, and within which they vanished when attacked.

This piracy reached its highest power during and after the Social and Civil Wars of Rome, the outlaws taking prompt advantage of the distractions of the times, and gaining a strength and audacity unknown before. Their chief places of refuge were in the coast districts of Cilicia and Pisidia, in Asia Minor, while in the mountain valleys which led down from Taurus to that coast they had strongholds difficult of access, and enabling them to defy attack by land.

They were now aided by Mithridates, who supplied them with money and encouraged their raids. So great became their audacity that they carried off important personages from the coast of Italy, among them two prætors, whom they held to ransom. They ravaged all unguarded shores, and are said to have captured in all four hundred important towns. The riches gained in these raids were displayed with the ostentation of conquerors. The sails of their ships were dyed with that costly Tyrian purple which at a later date was reserved for the robes of emperors; their oars were inlaid with silver, and their pennants glittered with gold. As for the merchant fleets of Rome, they made their journeys under constant risk, and there was danger, if the pirates were not suppressed, that they would cut off the entire grain-supply from Africa and Sicily. [Pg 205]

The most interesting story told in connection with these marauders is connected with the youthful days of Julius Cæsar, afterwards so great a man in Rome.

In the year 76 B.C. Cæsar, then a young man of twenty-four, and seemingly given over to mere enjoyment of life, with no indications of political aspiration, was on his way to the island of Rhodes, where he wished to perfect himself in oratory in the famous school of Apollonius Melo, in which Cicero, a few years before, had gained instruction in the art. Cicero had taught Rome the full power of oratory, and Cæsar, who was no mean orator by nature, and recognized the usefulness of the art, naturally sought instruction from Cicero's teacher.

He was travelling as a gentleman of rank, but on his way was taken prisoner by pirates, who, deeming him a person of great distinction, held him at a high ransom. For six weeks Cæsar remained in their hands, waiting until his ransom should be paid. He was in no respect downcast by his misfortune, but took part freely in the games and pastimes of the pirates, and, according to Plutarch, treated them with such disdain that whenever their noise disturbed his sleep he sent orders to them to keep silence. In his familiar conversations with the chiefs he plainly told them that he would one day crucify them all. Doubtless they laughed heartily at this pleasantry, as they deemed it, but they were to find it a grim sort of jest. [Pg 206]

Cæsar was released at last, the ransom paid amounting to about fifty thousand dollars. He lost not a moment in carrying out his threat. Obtaining a fleet of Milesian vessels, he sailed immediately to the island in which he had been held captive, and descended upon the pirates so suddenly that he took them prisoners while they were engaged in dividing their plunder. Carrying them to Pergamus, he handed them over to the civil authorities, by whom his promise of crucifying them all was duly carried out. Then he went to Rhodes, and spent two years in the study of elocution. He had proved himself an awkward kind of prey for pirates.

These worthies continued their depredations, and became at length so annoying that

extraordinary measures were taken for their suppression. Pompey, then the most powerful man in Rome, was given absolute control over the Mediterranean. This was not done without opposition, for it was feared that he aspired to kingly rule. "You aspire to be Romulus; beware of the fate of Romulus," said some of the opposing senators.

Despite opposition the power was given him, and he used it with remarkable results. A large fleet was at once got ready and put to sea, confining its operations at first to the west of the [Pg 207] Mediterranean, and driving the piratical fleets towards their lurking-places in the east. Land troops meanwhile guarded the coasts. In the brief space of forty days he reported to the senate that the whole sea west of Greece was cleared of pirates.

Then he sailed for the Archipelago, swept its inlets, spread his ships everywhere, and drove the foe towards Cilicia. Here they gathered their fleet and gave him battle, but suffered a total defeat. A surrender followed, to which he won them over by lenient terms. In three months from the day he began his work the war was ended, and the pirates who had so long troubled the republic of Rome had retired from business.

[Pg 208]

CÆSAR AND POMPEY.

THERE were three leaders in Rome, Pompey, whom Sulla had named the Great, Crassus, the rich, and Cæsar, the shrewd and wise. Two of these had reached their utmost height. For Pompey there was to be no more greatness, for Crassus no more riches. But Cæsar was the coming man of Rome. After a youth given to profligate pleasures, in which he spent money as fast as Crassus collected it, and accumulated debt more rapidly than Pompey accumulated fame, the innate powers of the man began to declare themselves. He studied oratory and made his mark in the Roman Forum; he studied the political situation, and step by step made himself a power among men. He was shrewd enough to cultivate Pompey, then the Roman favorite, and brought himself into closer relations with him by marrying his relative. Steadily he grew into public favor and respect, and laid his hands on the reins of control.

There was a fourth man of prominence, Cicero, the great scholar, philosopher, and orator. He prosecuted Verres, who, as governor of Sicily, had committed frightful excesses, and drove him from Rome. He prosecuted Catiline, who had made a conspiracy to seize the government, and [Pg 209] even to burn Rome. The conspirators were foiled and Catiline killed. But Cicero, earnest and eloquent as he was, lacked manliness and courage, and was driven into exile by his enemies.

There remained the three leaders, Pompey, Cæsar, and Crassus, and these three made a secret compact to control the government, forming what became known as a *triumvirate*, or three man power. Pompey married Julia, the young and beautiful daughter of Cæsar, and the two seemed very closely united.

Cæsar was elected consul, and in this position won public favor by proposing some highly popular laws. After his year as consul he was made governor of Gaul, and now began an extraordinary career. The man who had by turns shown himself a dissolute spendthrift, an orator, and a political leader, suddenly developed a new power, and proved himself one of the greatest soldiers the world has ever known.

Gaul, as then known, had two divisions,—Cisalpine Gaul, or the Gaulish settlements in Northern Italy; and Transalpine Gaul, or Gaul beyond the Alps, including the present countries of France and Switzerland. In the latter country Rome possessed only a narrow strip of land, then known as the Province, since then known as the country of Provence.

From this centre Cæsar, with the small army under his command, consisting of three legions, entered upon a career of conquest which astonished Rome and drew upon him the eyes of the civilized world. He had hardly been appointed when he received word that the Helvetian tribes of [Pg 210] Switzerland were advancing on Geneva, the northern outpost of the Province, with a view of invading the West. He hastened thither, met and defeated them, killed a vast multitude, and drove the remnant back to their own country. Then, invited by some northern tribes, he attacked a great German band which had invaded Northern Gaul, and defeated them so utterly that few escaped across the Rhine. From that point he made his way into and conquered Belgium. In a year's time he had vastly extended the Roman dominion in the West.

For nine years this career of conquest continued. The barbarian Gauls proved fierce and valiant soldiers, but at the end of that time they had been completely subdued and made passive subjects of Rome. Cæsar even crossed the sea into Britain, and look the first step towards the conquest of that island, of which Rome had barely heard before.

During this career of conquest many hundreds of thousands of men were slain. But, then, Cæsar was victorious and Rome triumphant, and what mattered it if a million or two of barbarians were sacrificed to the demon of conquest? It mattered little to Rome, in which great

city barbarian life was scarcely worth a second thought. It mattered little to Cæsar, who, like all great conquerors, was quite willing to mount to power on a ladder of human lives.

Meanwhile what were Cæsar's partners in the Triumvirate doing? When Cæsar was given the province of Gaul, Pompey was made governor of Spain, and Crassus of Syria. Crassus, who had [Pg 211] gained some military fame by overcoming Spartacus the gladiator, wished to gain more, and sailed for Asia, where he stirred up a war with distant Parthia. That was the end of Crassus. He marched into the desert of Mesopotamia, and left his body on the sands. His head was sent to Orodes, the Parthian king, who ordered molten gold to be poured into his mouth,—a ghastly commentary on his thirst for wealth.

Pompey left Spain to take care of itself, and remained in Rome, where he sought to add to his popularity by building a great stone theatre, large enough to hold forty thousand people, where for many days he amused the people with plays and games. Here, for the first time, a rhinoceros was shown. Eighteen elephants were killed by Libyan hunters, and five hundred lions were slain, while hosts of gladiators fought for life and honor.

While thus seeking popular favor, Pompey was secretly working against the interests of Cæsar, of whose fame he had grown jealous. His wife Julia died, and he joined his strength with that of the aristocrats; while Cæsar, a nephew of old Marius, was looked upon as a leader of the party of the people.

Pompey's power and influence over the senate increased until he was virtually dictator in Rome. Cæsar's ten years' governorship in Gaul would expire on the 1st of January, 49 B.C., and it was resolved by Pompey and the senate to deprive him of the command of the army. But Cæsar was not the man to be dealt with in this summary manner. His career of conquest ended, he [Pg 212] entered his province of Cisalpine Gaul, or Northern Italy, where he was received as a great hero and conqueror. From here he sent secret agents to Rome, bribed with large sums a number of important persons, and took other steps to guard his interests.

Meanwhile the senate tried to disarm Cæsar by unfair means. They had the power to shorten or lengthen the year as they pleased, and announced that that year would end on November 12, and that Cæsar must resign his authority on the 13th. Curio, a tribune of Rome and Cæsar's agent, said that it was only fair that Pompey also should give up the command of the army which he had near Rome. This he refused to do, and Curio publicly declared that he was trying to make himself a tyrant.

Finally the senate decreed that each general should give up one legion, to be used in a war with the Parthians. There was no such war, but it was pretended that there soon would be. Pompey agreed, but he called upon Cæsar to send him back a legion which he had lent him three years before. Cæsar did not hesitate to do so: he sent Pompey's legion and his own; but he took care to win the soldiers by giving each a valuable present as he went away. These legions were not sent to Asia, but to Capua. The senate wanted them for use nearer than Parthia.

Cæsar was then at Ravenna, a sea-side city on the southern limit of his province. South of it flowed a little stream called the Rubicon, which formed his border-line. Here he took a bold step. He sent a letter to the senate, offering to give up his command if Pompey would do the same. A [Pg 213] violent debate followed in the senate, and a decree was passed that unless Cæsar laid down his command by a certain day he should be declared an outlaw and enemy of Rome. At the same time the two consuls were made dictators, and the two tribunes who favored Cæsar—one of them the afterwards famous Marc Antony—fled for safety from Rome.

The decree of the senate was equivalent to a declaration of war. On the one side was Pompey, proud, over-confident, and unprepared. On the other was Cæsar, knowing his strength, satisfied in the power of the money he had so freely distributed, and sure of his men. He called his soldiers together and asked if they would support him. They answered that they would follow wherever he led. At once he marched for the Rubicon, the limit of his province, to cross which stream meant an invasion of Italy and civil war.

Plutarch tells us that he halted here and deeply meditated, troubled by the thought that to cross that stream meant the death of thousands of his countrymen. After a period of such meditation, he cried aloud, "The die is cast; let us go where the gods and the injustice of our foes direct!" and, spurring his horse forward, he plunged into the stream.

This story, which has been effectively used by a great epic poet of Rome, probably relates what never happened. From all we know of Cæsar, the question of bloodshed in attaining the aims of his ambition did not greatly trouble his mind. Yet the story has taken hold, and "to cross the [Pg 214] Rubicon" has become a proverb, signifying the taking of a step of momentous importance.

Cæsar, after the legions sent the senate, had but a single legion left with him. He sent orders to others to join him with all haste, but they were distant. As for Pompey, knowing and despising the weakness of his rival, he had made no preparations. He had Cæsar's two legions at Capua and one of his own at Rome, while thousands of Sulla's veterans were settled in the country round. "I have but to stamp my foot," he said, "and armed men will start from the soil of Italy."

He did not stamp, or, if he did, the armed men did not start. Cæsar marched southward with his accustomed rapidity. Town after town opened its gates to him. Labienus, one of his principal officers, deserted to Pompey. Cæsar showed his contempt by sending his baggage after him. Two legions from Gaul having reached him, he pushed more boldly still to the south. The cities taken

were treated as friends; there was no pillage, no violence. Everywhere Cæsar won golden opinions by his humanity.

Meanwhile Pompey's armed men came not; his rival was rapidly approaching; he and his party of the senate fled from Rome. They reached Brundusium, where Cæsar with six legions quickly appeared. The town was strong, and Pompey took his time to embark his men and sail from Italy. Disappointed of his prey, Cæsar turned back, and entered Rome on April 1, now full lord and master of Italy and its capital city. In the treasury of that city was a sacred hoard of money, [Pg 215] which had been set aside since the invasion of the Gauls, centuries before. The people voted this money for his use. There was no more danger from the Gauls, it was said, for they had all become subjects of Rome. Yet the keeper of the treasury refused to produce the keys, and when Cæsar ordered the doors to be broken open, tried to bar his passage into the sacred chamber.

"Stand aside, young man," said Cæsar, with stern dignity; "it is easier for me to do than to say."

Cæsar was not the man to rest while an enemy was at large. Pompey had gone to the East. There was no fleet with which to follow him; and in Spain Pompey had an army of veterans, who might enter Italy as soon as he left it. These must first be dealt with.

This did not delay him long. Before the year closed all Spain was his. Most of the soldiers of Pompey joined his army. Those who did not were dismissed unharmed. Everywhere he showed the greatest leniency, and everywhere won friends. On his return to Rome he gained new friends by passing laws relieving debtors and restoring their civil rights to the children of Sulla's victims.

He remained in Rome only eleven days, and then sailed for Greece, where Pompey had gathered a large army. It was January 4, 48 B.C., when he sailed. On June 6 of the same year was fought, at Pharsalia, in Thessaly, a great battle which decided the fate of the Roman world.

Pompey's army consisted of about forty-four thousand men. Cæsar had but half as many. But [Pg 216] his men were all veterans; many of those of Pompey were new levies, collected in Asia and Macedonia. The battle was fierce and desperate. During its course the cavalry of Pompey attacked Cæsar's weak troops and drove them back. The infantry advanced to their support, and struck straight at the faces of the foe. Plutarch tells us that this cavalry was made up of young Romans, of the aristocratic class and proud of their beauty, and that the order was given to Cæsar's soldiers to spoil their beauty for them. But this story, like many told by Plutarch, lacks proof.

Whatever was the cause, the cavalry were broken and fled in disorder. Cæsar's reserve force now attacked Pompey's worn troops, who gave way everywhere. Cæsar ordered that all Romans should be spared, and only the Asiatics pursued. The legions, hearing of this, ceased to resist. The foreign soldiers fled, after great slaughter. Pompey rode hastily from the field.

The camp was taken. The booty captured was immense. But Cæsar would not let his soldiers rest or plunder till they had completed their work. This proved easy; all the Romans submitted; the Asiatics fled. Pompey put to sea, where he had still a powerful fleet. Africa was his, and he determined to take refuge in Egypt. It proved that he had enemies there. A small boat was sent off to bring him ashore. Among those on board was an officer named Septimius, who had served under Pompey in the war with the pirates.

Pompey recognized his old officer, and entered the boat alone, his wife and friends watching [Pg 217] from the vessel as he was rowed ashore. On the beach a number of persons were collected, as if to receive him with honor. The boat stopped. Pompey took the hand of the person next him to assist him to rise. As he did so Septimius, who stood behind, struck him with his sword. Pompey, finding that he was among enemies, made no resistance, and the next blow laid him low in death. His assassins cut off his head and left his body on the beach. Here one of his freedmen and an old soldier of his army broke up a fishing-boat and made him a rude funeral pile. Such were the obsequies of the one-time master of the world.

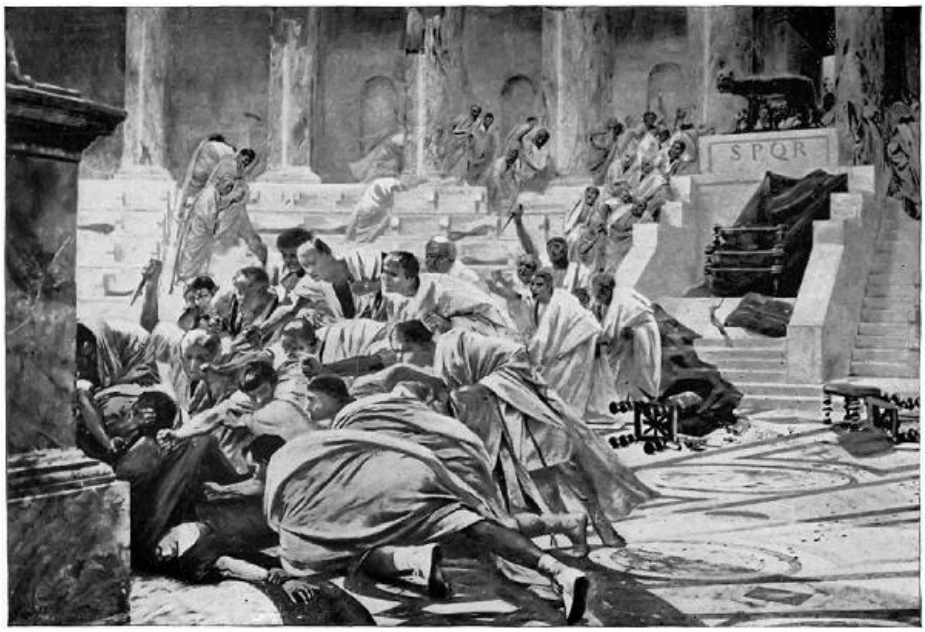
The battle of Pharsalia practically ended the struggle that made Cæsar lord of Rome. Some more fighting was necessary. Africa was still in arms. But a few short campaigns sufficed to bring it to terms, while a campaign against a son of Mithridates ended in five days, Cæsar's victory being announced to the senate in three short words, "Veni, vidi, vici" (I came, I saw, I conquered). Then he returned to Rome, where he shed not a drop of the blood of his enemies, though that of gladiators and wild animals was freely spilled in the gorgeous games and festivals with which he amused the sovereign people.

[Pg 218]

THE ASSASSINATION OF CÆSAR.

THE republic of Rome was at an end. The army had become the power, and the will of the head

of the army was the law, of the state. Cæsar celebrated his victories with grand triumphs; but he celebrated them more notably still by a clemency that signified his innate nobility of character. Instead of dyeing the streets of Rome with blood, as Marius and Sulla had done before him, he proclaimed a general amnesty, and his rise to power was not signalized by the slaughter of one of his foes.



THE ASSASSINATION OF CÆSAR.

He signalized it, on the contrary, by an activity in civil reform as marked as had been his energy in war. The title and privilege of Roman citizenship had so far been confined to Italians. He extended it to many parts of Gaul and Spain. He formed plans to drain the Pontine marshes, to make a survey and map of the empire, to form a code of laws, and other great works, which he did not live to fulfil. Of all his reforms, the best known is the revision of the Calendar. Before his time the Roman year was three hundred and fifty-five days long, an extra month being occasionally added, so as to regain the lost days. But this was very irregularly done, and the civil year had got to be far away from the solar year. To correct this Cæsar was obliged to add ninety [Pg 219] days to the year 46 B.C., which was therefore given the unprecedented length of four hundred and forty-five days. He ordered that the year in future should be three hundred and sixty-five and one-fourth days in length, a change which brought it very nearly, but not quite, to the true length. A new reform was made in 1582, by Pope Gregory XIII., which made the civil and solar years almost exactly agree.

Cæsar did not live to see his reforms consummated. He was murdered, perhaps because he had refused to murder. In a few months after he had brought the civil war to an end he fell the victim of assassins. The story of his death is famous in Roman history, and must here be told.

After his triumphs Cæsar, who had been dictator twice before, was named dictator for the term of ten years. He was also made censor for three years. These offices gave him such unlimited power that he was declared absolute master of the lives and fortunes of the citizens and subjects of Rome. Imperator men called him, a term we translate emperor, and after his return from Spain, where he overthrew the last army of his foes, the senate named him dictator and imperator for life.

These high honors were not sufficient for Cæsar's ambition. He wished to be made king. He had no son of his own, but desired to make his power hereditary, and chose his grandnephew Octavius as his heir. But he was to find the people resolutely bent on having no king over Rome.

To try their temper some of his friends placed a crown on his statue in the Forum. Two of the [Pg 220] tribunes tore it off, and the crowd loudly applauded. Later, at the festival of the Alban Mount, some voices in the crowd hailed him as king. But the mutterings of the multitude grew so loud, that he quickly cried, "I am no king, but Cæsar."

At the feast of the Lupercalia, on February 15, he was approached by Marc Antony, as he sat in his golden chair, and offered an embroidered band, such as the sovereigns of Asia wore on their heads. The crowd failed to applaud, and Cæsar pushed it aside. Then the multitude broke out in a roar of applause. Again and again he rejected the glittering bauble, and again the people broke into loud cries of approval. It was evident that they would have no king. At a later date it was moved in the senate that Cæsar should be king in the provinces; but he died before this decree could be put in effect.

There was discontent at Rome. Even the clemency of Cæsar had made him enemies, for there were many who hoped to profit by proscription. His justice made foes among those who wished to grow rich through extortion and oppression. He secluded himself while engaged on his reforms, and this lost him popularity. A conspiracy was organized against him by a soldier named Caius Cassius and others of the discontented. For leader they selected Marcus Junius Brutus, who believed himself a descendant of the Brutus of old, and was won to their plot by being told that,

while his great ancestor had expelled the last king of Rome, he was resting content under the rule of a new king.

[Pg 221] Brutus, at length convinced that Cæsar was seeking to overthrow the Roman republic, and that patriotism required him to emulate the famous Brutus of old, joined the conspiracy, which now included more than sixty persons, most of whom had received benefits and honors from the man they wished to kill. But no considerations of gratitude prevailed; they determined on Cæsar's death; and the meeting of the senate called for the Ides of March (March 15) was fixed for the time and place of the projected murder.

The morning of that day seemed full of omens and warnings. The secret was oozing out. Cæsar received more than one intimation of impending danger. A soothsayer had even bidden him to "beware of the Ides of March." During the preceding night his wife was so disturbed by dreams that in the morning she begged him not to go that day to the senate, as she was sure some peril was at hand. Her words failed to trouble Cæsar's resolute mind, but to quiet her apprehensions he agreed not to go, and directed Marc Antony to preside over the senate in his stead.

When this word was brought to the assembled senate the conspirators were in despair. Their secret was known to too many to remain a secret long. Even a day's delay might be fatal. An hour might put Cæsar on his guard. What was to be done? Unless their victim could be brought to the senate chamber all would be lost.

[Pg 222] Decimus Brutus, one of the conspirators who had been favored by Cæsar's bounty, went hastily to his house, and, telling him that the senate proposed that day to make him king of the provinces, bade him not to yield to such idle matters as auguries and dreams, but show himself above any such superstitious weakness. These cunning arguments induced Cæsar to change his mind, and he called for his litter and was carried forth.

On his way to the senate new intimations of danger came to him. A slave had in some way discovered the conspiracy, and tried to force himself through the crowd to the dictator's litter, but was driven back by the throng. Another informant was more fortunate. A Greek philosopher, Artemidorus by name, had also discovered the conspiracy, and succeeded in reaching Cæsar's side. He thrust into his hand a roll of paper containing a full account of the impending peril. But the star of Cæsar that day was against him. Thinking the roll to contain a petition of some sort, he laid it in the litter by his side, to examine at a more convenient time. And thus he went on to his death, despite all the warnings sent him by the fates.

The conspirators meanwhile were far from easy in mind. There were signs among them that their plot had leaked out. Casca, one of their number, was accosted by a friend, "Ah, Casca, Brutus has told me your secret." The conspirator started in alarm, but was relieved by the next words, "Where will you find money for the expenses of the ædileship?" The man evidently referred to an expected office.

[Pg 223] Another senator, Popillius Lænas, hit the mark closer. "You have my good wishes; but what you do, do quickly," he said to Brutus and Cassius.

The alarm caused by his words was doubled when he stepped up to Cæsar, on his entrance to the chamber, and began to whisper in his ear. Cassius was so terrified that he grasped his dagger with the thought of killing himself. He was stopped by Brutus, who quietly said that Popillius seemed rather to be asking a favor than telling a secret. Whatever his purpose, Cæsar was not checked, but moved quietly on and took his seat.

Immediately Cimber, one of the conspirators, approached with a petition, in which he begged for the recall of his brother from banishment. The others pressed round, praying Cæsar to grant his request. Displeased by their importunity, Cæsar attempted to rise, but was pulled down into his seat by Cimber, while Casca stabbed him in the side, but inflicted only a slight wound. Then they all assailed him with drawn daggers.

Cæsar kept them off for a brief time by winding his gown as a shield round his left arm, and using his sharp writing style for a weapon. But when he saw Brutus approach prepared to strike he exclaimed in deep sorrow and reproach, "*Et tu, Brute!*" (Thou too, Brutus!) and covering his face with his gown, he ceased to resist. Their daggers pierced his body till he had received twenty-three wounds, when he fell dead at the base of the statue of Pompey, which looked silently down on the slaughter of his great and successful rival.

[Pg 224] What followed this base and fruitless deed may be briefly told. The senators not in the plot rose in alarm and fled from the house. When Brutus turned to seek to justify his deed only empty benches remained. Then the assassins hurried to the Forum, to tell the people that they had freed Rome from a despot. But the people were hostile, and the words of Brutus fell on unfriendly ears.

Marc Antony followed, and delivered a telling oration, which Shakespeare has magnificently paraphrased. He showed the mob a waxen image of Cæsar's body, pierced with wounds, and the garment rent by murderous blades. His words wrought his hearers to fury. They tore up benches, tables, and everything on which they could lay their hands, for a funeral pile, placed on it the corpse, and set it on fire. Then, seizing blazing embers from the pile, they rushed in quest of vengeance to the houses of the conspirators. They were too late; all had fled. The will of the dictator, in which he had made a large donation to every citizen of Rome, added to the popular fury, and a frenzy of vengeance took possession of the people of Rome.

ANTONY'S ORATION OVER CÆSAR.

We must give the sequel of this murderous deed in a few words. Marc Antony was now master of Rome. He increased his power by pretending moderation, and having a law passed to abolish the dictatorship forever. But there were other actors on the scene. Octavius, whom Cæsar's will had named as his heir, took quick steps to gain his heritage. Antony had taken possession of Cæsar's wealth, but Octavius managed to raise money enough to pay his uncle's legacy to the citizens of Rome. A third man of power was Lepidus, who commanded an army near Rome, and [Pg 225] was prepared to take part in the course of events.

Octavius was still only a boy, not yet twenty years of age. But he was shrewd and ambitious, and soon succeeded in having himself elected consul and put at the head of a large army. Cicero aided him with a series of orations directed against Antony, which were so keen and bitter, and had such an effect upon the people, that Antony was declared a public enemy. Octavius marched to meet him and Lepidus, who were marching southward with another large army.

Instead of fighting, however, the three leaders met in secret conclave, and agreed to divide the power in Rome between them. This compact is known as the Second Triumvirate. Its members followed the example of Marius and Sulla, not that of Cæsar, and resolved to extirpate their enemies. Each of them gave up personal friends to the vengeance of the others. Of their victims the most famous was Cicero, who had delivered his orations against Antony in aid of Octavius. The ambitious boy was base enough to yield his friend to the vengeance of the incensed Antony. No less than three hundred senators and two thousand knights fell victims to this new proscription, which while it lasted made a reign of terror in Rome.

Brutus and Cassius had meanwhile made themselves masters of Greece and the eastern provinces of Rome, and were ready to meet the forces of the Triumvirate in the field. The decisive battle was fought on the field of Philippi in Northern Greece. The division of Cassius was [Pg 226] defeated, and he killed himself in despair. Twenty days afterwards another battle was fought on the same field, in which Brutus was defeated, and likewise put an end to his life. The triumvirs were undisputed lords of Rome. The imperial rule of Cæsar had lasted but a few months, and ended with his life. But with Octavius began an imperial era which lasted till the end of the dominion of Rome.

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ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

The battles of Philippi and the death of Brutus and Cassius put an end to the republican party to whom Cæsar owed his death. The whole realm was handed over to the imperial Triumvirate, who now made a new division of the vast Roman world. Antony took as his share all the mighty realm of the East; Octavius all the West. To Lepidus, whom his powerful confederates did not take the trouble to consult, only Africa was left.

The after-career of Antony was a curious and impressive one. He loved a bewitching Egyptian queen, and for a false love lost the vast dominion he had won. The story is one of the most romantic and popular of all that have come to us from the past. It has been told in detail by Plutarch and richly dramatized by Shakespeare. We give it here in brief epitome.

Fourteen years previously Antony had visited Alexandria, and had there seen the youthful Cleopatra, then a girl of fifteen, but already so beautiful and attractive that the susceptible

Roman was deeply smitten with her charms. Later she had charmed Cæsar, and now when the lord of the East set out on a tour of his new dominions, the love queen of Egypt left her capital for Cilicia with the purpose of making him her captive.

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It was midsummer of the year 41 B.C. when Antony arrived at Tarsus, on the river Cydnus. Up this stream to visit him came, in more than Oriental pomp, the beautiful Egyptian queen. The galley that bore her was gorgeous beyond comparison. Its sails were of Tyrian purple; silver oars fretted the yielding wave, while music timed their rise and fall; the poop glittered with burnished gold; rich perfumes filled the air with fragrance. Here, on a splendid couch, under a spangled canopy, reclined Cleopatra, attired as Venus, and surrounded by attendants dressed as Graces and Cupids. Beautiful slaves moved oars and ropes, and the whole array was one of wondrous charm. We cannot do better than quote Shakespeare's vivid description of this unequalled spectacle:

"The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burned on the water; the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water that they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggared all description; she did lie
In her pavilion—cloth-of-gold of tissue—
Outpicturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature; on each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colored fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool."

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The people of Tarsus ran in crowds to gaze on this wondrous spectacle, leaving Antony alone in the Forum. At the request of Cleopatra he came also, and was so captivated at sight that he became her slave. He forgot Rome, forgot his wife Fulvia, forgot honor and dignity, through his wild passion for this Egyptian sorceress. Following her to Alexandria, he laid aside his Roman garb for the Oriental costume of the Egyptian court, gave way to all Cleopatra's pleasure-loving caprices, and lived in a perpetual round of orgies and festivities, heedless of honor and duty, and caring for naught but love and sensual enjoyment.

Intoxicated with pleasure, Antony did not know what risk he ran. Shortly before Octavius had been spoken of as a boy, whom it would be easy to manage and control. He was feeble and sickly, —so much so, indeed, that just at this time his death was reported in Rome. But the "boy" was ambitious, astute, and far-seeing, and Marc Antony was descending to ruin with every step he took in his career of folly and profligacy.

The history of the succeeding years is long, but must here be made short. The two lords of Rome were changed from friends to enemies by the act of Fulvia, the wife of Antony. Octavius had married her daughter Claudia, and now divorced her. Anger at this, and a hope of winning Antony from the seductions of the Egyptian queen, caused her to organize a formidable revolt against Octavius. She succeeded in raising a large army, but Antony was still too absorbed in Cleopatra to come to her aid, and Agrippa, the able general of Octavius, soon put down the revolt.

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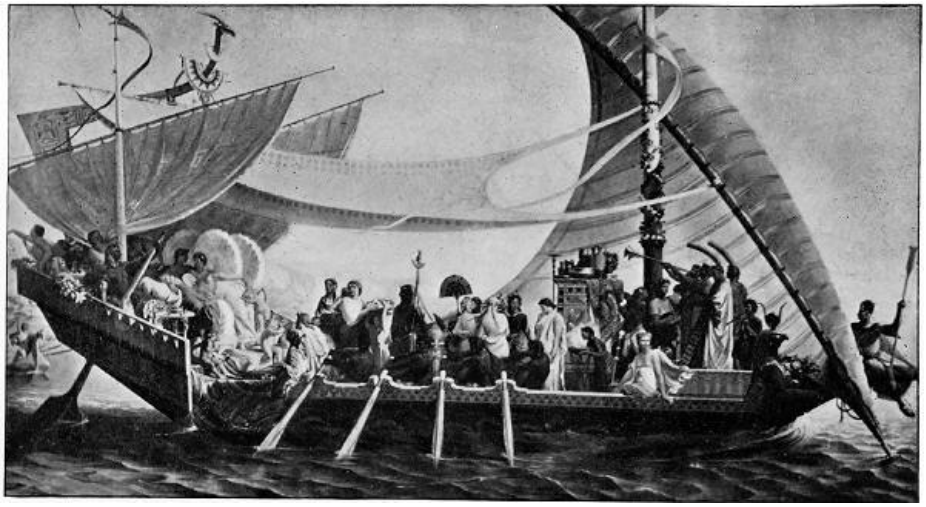
Then, when it was too late to help her, Antony awoke from his lethargy, and sailed to battle with Octavius. He besieged Brundusium. But Fulvia had died, the soldiers had no heart for civil war, and the great rivals again made peace. Antony married Octavia, the sister of Octavius, they divided the Roman world between them as before, and Rome was made happy by a grand round of games and festivities.



THE GALLEY OF CLEOPATRA.

For three years Antony remained true to his new wife, and aided Octavius in putting down the

foes of Rome. Then, during a campaign in Syria, his old passion for the fascinating Egyptian returned, he called Cleopatra to him, dallied with her instead of prosecuting his march, and in the end was forced to retreat in haste from the barbarian foe.

For three years now Antony was the willing slave of the enchanting queen. The courage and stoical endurance of the soldier vanished, and were replaced by the soft indulgence of the voluptuary. The rigid discipline of the camp was exchanged for the idle and often childish amusements of the Oriental court. Cleopatra enchained him with an endless round of pleasures and profligacies. Now, while in a fishing-boat on the Nile, the queen amused him by having salted fish fixed by divers on his hook, which he drew up amid the laughter of the party. Again she wagered that she would consume ten million sesterces at a meal, and won her wager by drinking vinegar in which she had dissolved a priceless pearl. All the enjoyments that the fancy of the cunning enchantress could devise were spread around him, and he let the world roll unheeded by [Pg 231] while he yielded to their alluring charm.

Antony posed at festive tables in the character of the god Osiris, while Cleopatra played the rôle of Isis. He issued coins which bore her head and his. He gave away kingdoms and principalities in the East to please her fancy. It was her hope and aim to lead her yielding lover to the conquest of Rome, and to rule as empress of that imperial city.

But the madness of Antony led to destruction, not empire. The story of his doings was repeated at Rome, where the voluptuary lost credit as Octavius gained it. Antony's friends urged him to dismiss Cleopatra and fight for the empire. Instead of this the infatuated madman divorced Octavia and clung to the Egyptian queen.

This act led to an open rupture. Octavius, by authority of the senate, declared war, not against Antony, but against Cleopatra. Antony was at length roused. He gathered an army in haste, passed to Ephesus and Athens, and everywhere levied men and collected ships. A last and great struggle for the supreme headship of the Roman world was at hand.

Octavius was not skilled in war, but he had in Agrippa one of the ablest of ancient generals, and was wise enough to trust all warlike operations to him. Antony had strongly fortified himself at Actium, on the west coast of Greece, while the strong fleet he had gathered lay in its spacious bay. Here took place one of the decisive battles of the world's history.

Antony had made the fatal mistake of bringing Cleopatra with him. Under her advice he played [Pg 232] the part of a poltroon instead of a soldier. His chief officers, disgusted by his fascination, deserted him in numbers, and, yielding to her urgent fears, he resolved to fly with the fleet and abandon the army.

In this act of folly he failed. A strong gale from the south kept the fleet for four days in the harbor. Then the ships of Octavius came up, and the two fleets joined battle off the headland of Actium.

The ships of Antony were much larger and more powerful than those of Octavius. Little impression was made on them by the light Italian vessels, and had Antony been a soldier still, or Cleopatra possessed as much courage as guile, the victory might well have been theirs. But battle was no place for the pleasure-loving queen. Filled with terror, she took advantage of the first wind that came, and sailed hastily away, followed by sixty Egyptian ships.

The moment Antony discovered her flight he gave up the world for love. Springing from his ship-of-war into a light galley, he hastened in wild pursuit after his flying mistress. Overtaking her vessel, he went on board, but seated himself in morose misery at a distance, and would have nothing to do with her. Ruin and despair were now his mistresses.

Their commander fled, the ships fought on, and yielded not till the greater part of them were in flames. Before night they were all destroyed, and with them perished most of those on board, [Pg 233] while all the treasure was lost. When the army heard of Antony's desertion the legions went over to the conqueror. That brief sea-fight had ended the war.

For a year Octavius did not trouble his rival. He spent the time in cementing his power in Greece and Asia Minor. Cleopatra tried her fascinations on him, as she had on Cæsar and Antony, but in vain. She sought to fly to some place beyond the reach of Rome, but Arabs destroyed her ships. At length Octavius came. Antony made some show of hostility, but Cleopatra betrayed the fleet to his rival and all resistance ended. Octavius entered the open gates of Alexandria as a conqueror.

The queen shut herself up in a building which she had erected as a mausoleum. It had no door, being built to receive her body after death, and word was sent out that she was already dead.

When these false tidings were brought to Antony all his anger against the fair traitress was replaced by a flood of his old tenderness. In despair he stabbed himself, bidding his attendants to lay his body beside that of Cleopatra.

Still living, he was borne to the queen's retreat, where, moved by pity, she had him drawn up by cords into an upper window. Here she threw herself in agony on his body, bathed his face with her tears, and continued to bemoan his fate until he was dead.

She afterwards consented to receive Octavius. He spoke her fairly, but she was wise enough to see that all her charms were lost on him, and that he proposed to degrade her by making her [Pg 234]

walk as a captive in his triumph.

With a cunning greater than his own, Cleopatra promised to submit. She had no apparent means of taking her life in the cell, every dangerous weapon was removed by his orders, and he left her, as he supposed, a safe victim of his wiles.

He did not know Cleopatra. When his messengers returned, at the hour fixed, to conduct her away, they found only the dead body of Cleopatra stretched upon her couch, and by her side her two faithful attendants, Iris and Charmion. It is said that she died from the bite of an asp, a venomous Egyptian serpent, which had been secretly conveyed to her concealed in a basket of fruit; but this story remains unconfirmed.

Plutarch tells the story thus: "But when they opened the doors they found Cleopatra stark dead, laid upon a bed of gold, attired and arrayed in her royal robes, and one of her two women, who was called Iris, dead at her feet, and the other woman (called Charmion) half dead, and trembling, trimming the diadem which Cleopatra wore upon her head.

"One of the soldiers, seeing her, angrily said to her, 'Is that well done, Charmion?' 'Very well,' said she again, 'and meet for a princess descended from the race of so many noble kings.' She said no more, but fell down dead, hard by the bed.

"Now Cæsar, though he was marvellous sorry for the death of Cleopatra, yet he wondered at her noble mind and courage, and therefore commanded that she should be nobly buried and laid by Antony."

Thus ends the story of these two famous lovers of old. Octavius, afterwards known as Cæsar Augustus, reigned sole emperor of Rome, and the republic was at an end. He was not formally proclaimed emperor, but liberty and independence were thereafter forgotten words in Rome. He ended the old era of Roman history by closing the Temple of Janus, for the third time since it was built, and by freely forgiving all the friends of Antony. He had nothing to fear and had no thirst for blood and misery. Base as he had shown himself in his youth, his reign was a noble one, and during it Rome reached its highest level of literary and military glory. [Pg 235]

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AN IMPERIAL MONSTER.

A BEING, half monster, half madman, had come to empire in Rome. This was Caius Cæsar, great-grandson of Augustus, who in his short career as emperor displayed a malignant cruelty unsurpassed by the worst of Roman emperors, and a mad folly unequalled by any. The only conceivable excuse for him is mental disease; but insanity which takes the form of thirst for blood, and is combined with unlimited power, is a spectacle to make the very gods weep. We describe his career as the most exaggerated instance on record of mingled folly and malignity.

Brought up in the camp, he was christened by the soldiers Caligula, from the soldier's boots (*caligæ*) which he wore. By shrewd dissimulation he preserved his life through the reign of Tiberius, and was left heir to the throne along with the emperor's grandson. But, deceiving the senate by his pretended moderation, he was appointed by that body sole emperor.

They little knew what they did. Tiberius, who appears to have read him truly, spoke of educating him "for the destruction of the Roman people," and Caligula seemed eager to make these words good. At first, indeed, he seemed generous and merciful, mingling this affectation with a savage profligacy and voluptuousness. Illness, however, apparently affected his brain or destroyed what little moral nature he possessed, and he quickly embarked on a career of frightful excess and barbarity. [Pg 237]

The great wealth left by Tiberius—over twenty-five million dollars—was expended by him in a single year, and to gain new funds he taxed and robbed his subjects to an incredible extent. One of his methods of finance was to force wealthy citizens to gamble with him for enormous sums, and when they lost their all (they dared not win), he would make their lives the stake and bid their friends redeem them. In addition to this open robbery of the rich, taxes of all sorts were laid and unlimited oppressions enforced. The new edicts of the emperor were written so small and posted so high as to be unreadable, yet no excuse of ignorance of the law was admitted in extenuation of a fault.

The funds obtained by such oppressive means were lavished on the most extravagant follies. We are told of loaves of solid gold set before his guests, and the prows of galleys adorned with diamonds. His favorite horse was kept in an ivory stable and fed from a golden manger, and when invited to a banquet at his own table was regaled with gilded oats, served in a golden basin of exquisite workmanship.

In addition to these domestic follies, he built villas and laid out gardens without regard to cost; and, that he might vie with Xerxes, he constructed a bridge of ships three miles long, from Baiæ

to Puteoli, on which he built houses and planted trees. This madness was concluded by throwing a great many of his guests from the bridge into the sea, and by driving recklessly with his war-galley through the throng of boats that had gathered to witness the spectacle. [Pg 238]

These cruelties were mild compared with his more deliberate ones. Rome was filled with executions, the estates of his victims being confiscated; and it was his choice delight to have these victims tortured and slain in his presence while at dinner, the officers being bidden to protract their sufferings, that they might "feel themselves die." On one occasion he expressed the mad wish that all the Roman people had but one neck, that he might strike it off at a blow.

Priding himself on the indifference with which he could gaze on human torture, it was one of his enjoyments to witness criminals torn to pieces by wild beasts, and if criminals proved scarce he did not hesitate to order some of the spectators to be thrown into the arena. In the same manner, if a full supply of gladiators was wanting, he would command Roman knights to battle in the arena, taking delight in the fact that this was viewed as an infamous pursuit. He kept two lists containing names of knights and senators whom he intended to put to death, and these contained the majority of both those bodies of Roman patricians. He is said to have put one man to death for being better dressed than himself, and another for being better looking.

He married more wives than he had years of empire; but when one of these wives, Drusilla by name, died, he affected the bitterest grief, exiling himself to Sicily, and letting his beard and hair grow into wild disorder. On his return to Rome his subjects found themselves in a dangerous quandary. Those who made a show of sadness were declared guilty of disrespect to the memory of the queen, who had been translated to the joys of heaven. Those who seemed glad were adjudged equally guilty for not mourning her loss. And those who showed neither joy nor sorrow were accused of criminal indifference to his feelings. One man, who sold warm water in the streets, was sentenced to death for daring to pursue his occupation on so solemn an occasion. [Pg 239]

At a loss, as it would appear, in what madness next to indulge, Caligula finally not only declared himself a god, but erected a temple to his own divinity, and created a college of priests to serve at his altar. Among these were some of the first senators of Rome, who vied with each other in adulation to this impious wretch. Not content with these, he made his wife a priest, then his horse, and at length became a priest to himself. He played with the dignities of the realm in the same manner as with its religion, raised the ministers of his lusts to the highest offices, and finally went so far as to make his horse a consul of Rome.

In his position as a deity he pretended to be equal to and on friendly terms with Jupiter, and would whisper in the ears of his statue as if they were in familiar intercourse. He had a machine constructed to vie with Jupiter's thunder, and during the lightning of a storm would challenge the god to mortal combat by hurling stones into the air. [Pg 240]

This succession of mad frolics and ruthless cruelties should, it would seem, have satisfied even a Caligula, but he managed to overtop them all by a supreme piece of folly, which stands alone among human freaks. Hitherto his doings had been those of peace; he now resolved to gain glory in war, and show the Romans what a man of soldierly mettle they had in their emperor. There were no particular wars then afoot, but he would make one, and resolved on an invasion of Germany, whose people were at that time quiet subjects or allies of Rome.

To decide with him was to act. The army was ordered to prepare with the utmost haste, and was driven so fiercely that all was in confusion, the roads everywhere being blocked up with hurrying troops and great convoys of provisions, all converging rapidly on the line of march. Not waiting their arrival, he put himself at the head of the first legions gathered, and set out on the march with such furious speed that the legionaries were utterly exhausted with fatigue. Then, suddenly changing his mood, he affected the slow progress and military pomp of an Oriental king.

On reaching the borders of Germany the emperor found no foes and showed no fancy for fighting. Concealing some boys in a wood, he got up a mock battle with them, and at its end congratulated the troops on their valor and felicitated himself on his success. Next, the British island being still under process of conquest, he marched his army, two hundred thousand strong, to the sea-shore of Gaul, and drew them up in line of battle. The legionaries stolidly obeyed, wondering in their stern souls what new madness the emperor had in mind. [Pg 241]

They were soon to know. He bade them to fill their helmets with sea-shells, "the spoils of the ocean due to the Capitol and the palace." Then he distributed large sums of money among the troops, giving a reward for valor to each, and bidding them "henceforth to be happy and rich."

This was all well for the army, but the people of Rome must be impressed with the glory and victorious success of their emperor. Such a career was worthy a triumph; and to the German hostages and criminals, destined to figure in the procession to the Capitol, he added a number of tall and martial Gauls, chosen without regard to rank or condition, whom he ordered to learn German, that they might pass for German captives.

And now, his military expedition having ended without shedding the blood of a foe, Caligula's insane thirst for blood arose, and he determined to glut it out of the ranks of his own army. There were in it some regiments which had mutinied against his father on the death of Augustus. He ordered these to be slaughtered for their crime. Some of his higher officers representing to him the danger of such a proceeding, he changed his mind, and gave orders that these legions should be decimated. But the whole army showed such symptoms of discontent with this cruel order that

Caligula was seized with consternation, and fled in a panic to Rome. [Pg 242]

On reaching the city the senate proved bold enough to vote him an ovation instead of the triumph on which he had set his mind. Incensed at this, he met the advances of the patricians with stinging insults, and perhaps determined in his mind to be deeply revenged for this premeditated slight.

Whatever he had in view, he did not live much longer to afflict mankind. Four months more brought him to the end of his flagitious career. There was a brave soldier of the palace guard, Cassius Chærea by name, who happened to have a weak voice, and whom Caligula frequently insulted in public for this fault of nature. These insults in time grew heavier and viler than the veteran could bear, and he organized a conspiracy with a few others against the emperor's life. Meeting him without guards, the conspirators assailed him with their daggers and put an end to his base life.

Thus died, after twenty-nine years of life and four years of power, one of the vilest, cruellest, and maddest of the imperial demons who so long made Rome a slaughter-house and an abomination among the nations.

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THE MURDER OF AN EMPRESS.

Nero was lord of Rome. Chance had placed a weak and immoral boy in unlimited control of the greatest of nations. Utterly destitute of principle, he gradually descended into the deepest vice and profligacy, which was soon succeeded by the basest cruelty and treachery. And one of the first victims of his treachery was his own mother, who had murdered her husband, the Emperor Claudius, to place him on the throne, and had now committed the deeper fault of attempting to control her worthless and faithless son.

She had threatened to replace him on the throne with his half-brother Britannicus, and Nero had escaped this difficulty by poisoning Britannicus. She then opposed his vicious passions, and made a bitter foe of his mistress Poppæa, who by every artifice incensed the weak-minded emperor against his mother, representing her as the only obstacle to his full enjoyment of power and pleasure.

At length the detestable son was wrought up to the resolution of murdering her to whom he owed his life. But how? He was too cowardly and irresolute to take open means. Should he remove her by poison or the poignard? The first was doubtful. Agrippina was too practised in [Pg 244] guilt, too accustomed to vile deeds, to be easily deceived, and had, moreover, by taking poisons, hardened her frame against their effect. Nor could she be killed by the knife and the murder concealed. The murder-seeking wretch, who had no plan, and no stronger person than himself in whom he could confide, was at a loss how to carry out his wicked purpose.

At this juncture his tutor Anicetus came to his aid. This villain, who bitterly hated Agrippina, was now in command of the fleet that lay at Misenum. He proposed to Nero to have a vessel built in such a manner that it might give way in the open sea, and plunge to the bottom with all not prepared to escape. If Agrippina could be lured on board such a vessel, her drowning would seem one of the natural disasters of the open sea.

This suggestion filled with joy the mind of the unnatural son. The court was then at Baiæ, celebrating the festival called the Quinquatria. Agrippina was invited to attend, and Nero, pretending a desire for reconciliation, went to the sea-shore to meet her on her arrival, embraced her tenderly, and conducted her to a villa in a pleasant situation, looking out on a charming bay of the Mediterranean.

On the waters of the bay floated a number of vessels, among which was one superbly decorated, being prepared, as she was told, in her honor as the emperor's mother. This was intended to convey her to Baiæ, where a banquet was to be given to her that evening.

Agrippina was fond of sailing. She had frequently joined coasting parties and made pleasure [Pg 245] trips of her own. But for some reason, perhaps through suspicion of Nero's dark project, she now took a carriage in preference, and arrived safely at Baiæ, much to the discomfiture of her worthless son.

Nero, however, was cunning enough to conceal his disappointment. He gave her the most gracious reception, placed her at table above himself, and by his affectionate attentions and his easy flow of talk succeeded in dispelling any suspicions his mother may have entertained.

The banquet was continued till a late hour, and when Agrippina rose to go Nero attended her to the shore, where lay the sumptuously decorated vessel ready to convey her back to her villa. Here he lavished upon her marks of fond affection, clasped her warmly to his bosom, and bade her adieu in words of tender regret, disguising his fell purpose under the utmost show of

tenderness.

Agrippina went on board, attended by only two of her train, one of whom, a maid named Acerronia, lay at the foot of her mistress's couch, and gladly expressed her joy at the loving reconciliation which she had just perceived.

The night was calm and serene. The stars shone with their brightest lustre. The sea extended with an unruffled surface. The vessel moved swiftly, at no great distance from the shore, under the regular sweep of the rowers' oars. Yet little way had been made when there came a disastrous change. A signal was given, and suddenly the deck over Agrippina's cabin sank in, [Pg 246] borne down by a great weight of lead.

One of the attendants of the empress was crushed to death, but the posts of Agrippina's couch proved strong enough to bear the weight, and she and Acerronia escaped and made their way hastily to the deck. Here confusion and consternation reigned. The plot had failed. The vessel had not fallen to pieces at once, as intended. Those who were not in the plot rushed wildly to and fro, hampering, by their distracted movements, the operations of the guilty. These sought to sink the vessel at once, but in spite of their efforts the ship sank but slowly, giving the intended victims an opportunity to escape.

Acerronia, with instinctive devotion to her mistress, or a desire to save her own life, cried out that she was Agrippina, and pathetically implored the mariners to save her life. She won death instead. The assassins attacked her with oars and other weapons, and beat her down to the sinking deck. Agrippina, on the contrary, kept silent, and, with the exception of a wound on her shoulder, remained unhurt. Dashing into the dark waters of the bay, she swam towards the shore, and managed to keep herself afloat till taken up by a boat, in which some persons who had witnessed the accident from the shore had hastily put out. Telling her rescuers who she was, they conveyed her up the bay to her villa.

Agrippina had been concerned in too many crimes of her own devising to be deceived. The treachery of her son was too evident. Without touching a rock, and in complete calm, the vessel had suddenly broken down, as if constructed for the purpose. Her own wound and the murder of [Pg 247] her maid were further proofs of a preconcerted plot. Yet she was too shrewd to make her suspicions public. The plot had failed, and she was still alive. She at once despatched a messenger to her son, saying that by the favor of the gods and his good auspices she had escaped shipwreck, and that she thus hastened to quiet his affectionate fears. She then retired to her couch.

Meanwhile Nero waited impatiently for the news of his mother's death. When word was at length brought him that she had escaped, his craven soul was filled with terror. If this should get abroad; if she should call on her slaves, on the army, on the senate; if the people should learn of the plot of murder, and rise in riot; if any of a dozen contingencies should happen, all might be lost.

The terrified emperor was in a frightful quandary. He sent in all haste for his advisers, but none of them cared to offer any suggestions. At length the villanous Anicetus came to his aid. While they talked the messenger of Agrippina had arrived, and was admitted to give his message to the prince. As he was speaking Anicetus foxily let fall a dagger between his legs. He instantly seized him, snatched up the dagger and showed it to the company, and declared that the wretch had been sent by Agrippina to assassinate her son. The guards were called in, the man was ordered to be dragged away and put in fetters, and the story of the discovered plot of Agrippina was made public.

"Death to the murderess!" cried Anicetus. "Let me hasten at once to her punishment." [Pg 248]

Nero gladly assented, and Anicetus hurried from the room, empowered to carry out his murderous intent.

Meanwhile the news of the peril and escape of the empress had spread far and wide. A dreadful accident had occurred, it was said. The people rushed in numbers to the shore, crowded the piers, filled the boats, and gave voice to a medley of cries of alarm. The uproar was at length allayed by some men with lighted torches, who assured the excited multitude that Agrippina had escaped and was now safe in her villa.

While they were speaking a body of soldiers, led by Anicetus, arrived, and with threats of violence dispersed the peasant throng. Then, planting a guard round the mansion, Anicetus burst open its doors, seized the slaves who appeared, and forced his way to the apartment of the empress.

Here Agrippina waited in fear and agitation the return of her messenger. Why came he not? Was new murder in contemplation? She heard the tumult and confusion on the shore, and learned from her attendants what it meant. But the noise was suddenly hushed; a dismal silence prevailed; then came new noises, then loud tones of command, and violent blows on the outer doors. In dread of what was coming, the unhappy woman waited still, till loud steps sounded in the passage, the attendants at her door were thrust aside, and armed men entered her chamber.

The room was in deep shadow, only the pale glimmer of a feeble light breaking the gloom. A [Pg 249] single maid remained with the empress, and she, too, hastened to the door on hearing the tramp of warlike feet.

"Do you, too, desert me?" cried Agrippina, in deep reproach.

At that moment Anicetus entered the room, followed by two other ruffians. They approached her bed. She rose to receive them.

"If you come from the prince," she said, "tell him I am well. If your intents are murderous, you are not sent by my son. The guilt of parricide is foreign to his heart."

Her words were checked by a blow on the head with a club. A sword-thrust followed, and she expired under a number of mortal wounds. Thus died the niece, the wife, and the mother of an emperor, the daughter of the celebrated soldier Germanicus, herself so stained with vice that none can pity her fate, particularly as she had committed the further unconscious crime of giving birth to the monster named Nero.

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BOADICEA, THE HEROINE OF BRITAIN.

PRASUTAGUS, the king of the Icenians, a tribe of the ancient Britons, had amassed much wealth in the course of a long reign. On his death, in order to secure the favor of the Romans, now masters of the island, he left half his wealth by will to the emperor and half to his two daughters. This well-judged action of the barbarian king did not have the intended effect. No sooner was he dead than the Romans in the vicinity claimed the whole estate as theirs, ruthlessly pillaged his house, and seized all his effects.

This base brigandage roused Boadicea, the widowed queen, to a vigorous protest, but with the sole result of bringing a worse calamity upon her head. She was seized and cruelly scourged by the ruthless Romans, her two daughters were vilely maltreated, and the noblest of the Icenians were robbed of their possessions by the plunderers, who went so far as to reduce to slavery the near relatives of the deceased king.

Roused to madness by this inhuman treatment, the Icenians broke into open revolt. They were joined by a neighboring state, while the surrounding Britons, not yet inured to bondage, secretly resolved to join the cause of liberty. There had lately been planted a colony of Roman veterans at [Pg 251] Camalodunum (Colchester), who had treated the Britons cruelly, driven them from their houses, and insulted them with the names of slaves and captives; while the common soldiers, a licentious and greedy crew, still further degraded and robbed the owners of the land.

The invaders went too far for British endurance, and brought a terrible retribution upon themselves. Paulinus Suetonius, an able officer, who then commanded in Britain, was absent on an expedition to conquer the island of Mona. Of this expedition the historian Tacitus gives a vivid account. As the boats of the Romans approached the island they beheld on the shore the Britons prepared to receive them, while through their ranks rushed their women in funereal attire, their hair flying loose in the wind, flaming torches in their hands, and their whole appearance recalling the frantic rage of the fabled Furies. Near by, ranged in order, stood the venerable Druids, or Celtic priests, with uplifted hands, at once invoking the gods and pouring forth imprecations upon the foe.

The novelty and impressiveness of this spectacle filled the Romans with awe and wonder. They stood in stupid amazement, riveted to the spot, and a mark for the foe had they been then attacked. From this brief paralysis the voice of their general recalled them, and, ashamed of being held in awe by a troop of women and a band of fanatic priests, they rushed to the assault, cut down all before them, and set fire to the edifices and the sacred groves of the island with the [Pg 252] torches which the Britons themselves had kindled.

But Suetonius had chosen a perilous time for this enterprise. During his absence the wrongs of the Icenians and the exhortations of Boadicea had roused a formidable revolt, and the undefended colonies of the Romans were in danger.

In addition to the actual peril the Romans were frightened with dire omens. The statue of victory at Camalodunum fell without any visible cause, and lay prostrate on the ground. Clamors in a foreign accent were heard in the Roman council chamber, the theatres were filled with the sound of savage howlings, the sea ran purple as with blood, the figures of human bodies were traced on the sands, and the image of a colony in ruins was reflected from the waters of the Thames.

These omens threw the Romans into despair and filled the minds of the Britons with joy. No effort was made by the soldiers for defence, no ditch was dug, no palisade erected, and the assault of the Britons found the colonists utterly unprepared. Taken by surprise, the Romans were overpowered, and the colony was laid waste with fire and sword. The fortified temple alone held out, but after a two days' siege it also was taken, and the legion which marched to its relief was cut to pieces.

Boadicea was now the leading spirit among the Britons. Her wrongs had stirred them to revolt, and her warlike energy led them to victory and revenge. But she was soon to have a master-spirit to meet. Suetonius, recalled from the island of Mona by tidings of rebellion and disaster, marched hastily as far as London, which was even then the chief residence of the merchants and the centre of trade and commerce of the island.

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His army was small, not more than ten thousand men in all. That of the Britons was large. The interests of the empire were greater than those of any city, and Suetonius found himself obliged to abandon London to the barbarians, despite the supplications of its imperilled citizens. All he would agree to was to take under his protection those who chose to follow his banner. Many followed him, but many remained, and no sooner had he marched out than the Britons fell in rage on the settlement, and killed all they found. In like manner they ravaged Verulamium (St. Albans). Seventy thousand Romans are said to have been put to the sword.

Meanwhile Suetonius marched through the land, and at length the two armies met. The skilled Roman general drew up his force in a place where a thick forest sheltered the rear and flanks, leaving only a narrow front open to attack. Here the Britons, twenty times his number, and confident of victory, approached. The warlike Boadicea, tall, stern of countenance, her hair hanging to her waist, a spear in her hand, drove along their front in a warlike car, with her two daughters by her side, and eloquently sought to rouse her countrymen to thirst for revenge.

Telling them of the base cruelty with which she and her daughters had been treated, and painting in vivid words the arrogance and insults of the Romans, she besought them to fight for their country and their homes. "On this spot we must either conquer or die with glory," she said. "There is no alternative. Though I am a woman, my resolution is fixed. The men, if they prefer, may survive with infamy and live in bondage. For me there is only victory or death."

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Stirred to fury by her words, the British host poured like a deluge on their foes. But the Roman arms and discipline proved far too much for barbarian courage and ferocity. The British were repulsed, and, rushing forward in a wedge shape, the legions cut their way with frightful carnage through the disordered ranks. The cavalry seconded their efforts. Thousands fell. The rest took to flight. But the wagons of the British, which had been massed in the rear, impeded their flight, and a dreadful slaughter, in which neither sex nor age was spared, ensued. Tacitus tells us that eighty thousand Britons fell, while the Roman slain numbered no more than four hundred men.

Boadicea, who had done her utmost to rally her flying hosts, kept to her resolution. When all was lost, she took poison, and perished upon the field where she had vowed to seek victory or death. With her decease the success of the Britons vanished. Though they still kept the field, they gradually yielded to the Roman arms, and Britain became in time a quiet and peaceful part of the great empire of Rome.

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ROME SWEPT BY FLAMES.

Nero, the cruel coward under whom Rome for its sins was made to suffer, could scarcely devise follies and atrocities enough to please his profligate fancy. He offended the pride and sense of decorum of Rome by forcing senators and women of the highest rank to appear as gladiators in the arena. He exposed himself to ridicule by appearing as an actor in the theatre at Naples, which theatre, as soon as the audience dispersed, tumbled to pieces,—a little late so far as Nero himself was concerned. Returning to Rome, he indulged in every species of vice and folly, lavishing the wealth of the state with the utmost prodigality. On the lake of Agrippa he had a pavilion erected on a great floating platform, which was moved from point to point by the aid of boats superbly decorated with gold and ivory, while to furnish the banquet here given, animals of the chase were sought in the whole country round, and fish were brought from every sea and even from the distant ocean. When night descended a sudden illumination burst forth from all sides, and music resounded from every grove. These are the mentionable parts of the festival. Vile scenes were exhibited of which nothing can be said.

Finally, at a loss in what deeper excess of vice and ostentation to indulge, the crowned reprobate set fire to Rome that he might enjoy the spectacle of an unlimited conflagration. This wickedness, it is true, is doubted by some historians, but we are told that during the prevalence of the flames a crew of incendiaries threatened anyone with death who should seek to extinguish them, and flung flaming torches into the dwellings, crying that they acted under orders.

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In all the history of Rome this fire was far the most violent and destructive. Breaking out in a number of shops stored with combustible goods, and driven by the winds, it raged with the utmost fury, neither the thick walls of the houses nor the enclosures of the temples sufficing to stay its frightful progress. The form of the streets, long, narrow, and winding, added to the mischief, and the flames swiftly sped alike through the humblest and the stateliest quarters of the mighty capital.

"The shrieks and lamentations of women, the infirmities of age, and the weakness of the young and tender," says Tacitus, "added misery to the dreadful scene. Some endeavored to provide for themselves, others to save their friends, in one part dragging along the lame and impotent, in another waiting to receive the tardy, or expecting relief themselves; they hurried, they lingered, they obstructed one another; they looked behind, and the fire broke out in front; they escaped from the flames, and in their place of refuge found no safety; the fire raged in every quarter; all were involved in one general conflagration.

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"The unhappy wretches fled to places remote, and thought themselves secure, but soon perceived the flames raging round them. Which way to turn, what to avoid, or what to seek, no one could tell. They crowded the streets; they fell prostrate on the ground; they lay stretched in the fields, in consternation and dismay resigned to their fate. Numbers lost their whole substance, even the tools and implements by which they gained their livelihood, and, in that distress, did not wish to survive. Others, wild with affliction for their friends and relations whom they could not save, embraced voluntary death, and perished in the flames."

The story goes that, while the city was in its intensest blaze, Nero watched it with high enjoyment from a tower in the house of Mæcenas, and finally went to his own theatre, where in his scenic dress he mounted the stage, tuned his harp, and sang the destruction of Troy.

How far Nero was guilty and to what extent the stories told of him were true will never be known, but he was destined to feel the calamity himself, for in time the devouring flames reached the imperial palace, and laid it with all its treasures and surrounding buildings in ruins. For six days the fire raged uncontrolled, and then, when it seemed subdued, a new conflagration broke out and burned with all the old fury, spreading still more widely the area of ruin and devastation.

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The number of buildings destroyed cannot be ascertained. Not only dwellings and shops, but temples, porticos, and other public buildings, were destroyed, among them the most venerable monuments of antiquity, which the worship of ages had rendered sacred; and with these the trophies of uncounted victories, the inimitable works of the great artists of Greece, and precious monuments of literature and ancient genius, were irrecoverably lost.

Whether or not this fire took place through Nero's orders, and was played to by him on the harp, he showed more feeling for the people and more good sense in the rebuilding of the city than could have been expected from one of his weak and vicious character. By his orders the Field of Mars, the magnificent buildings erected by Agrippa, and even the imperial gardens were thrown open to the houseless people, and sheds for their shelter were erected with all possible haste. Household utensils and all kinds of useful implements were brought from Ostia and other neighboring cities, and the price of grain was reduced. But all this failed to gain the good-will of the people, who were exasperated by the story that Nero had exulted in the grandeur of the flames, and harped over burning Rome.

When the fire was at length subdued, of the fourteen quarters of Rome only four were left entire; the remainder presented more or less utter ruin. The conflagration in the time of the Gauls had been little more complete, while the wealth now consumed was incomparably greater. The whole world had been robbed of its treasures to feed the flames of Rome. But the haste and ill-judged confusion with which the city was rebuilt after the irruption of the Gauls was not now repeated. A regular plan was formed; the new streets were made wide and straight; the elevation of the houses was defined, and each was given an open area before the door, and was adorned with porticos. The expense of these porticos Nero took upon himself. He ordered also that the new houses should not be contiguous, but that each should be surrounded by its own enclosure; and, in order to hurry the work, he offered rewards to those who should finish their buildings in a fixed period. As for the refuse of the fire, it was removed at Nero's expense to the marshes of Ostia in the ships that brought corn up the Tiber.

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These regulations, while they must have made much confusion among the rival claimants of building sites, added greatly to the beauty and comfort of the new city, and the Rome which rose from the ruins was far more stately and handsome than the Rome which had vanished in ashes and smoke. But Nero, while showing some passing feeling for the people and some wisdom in the rebuilding of the city, did not hesitate to use a generous portion of the devastated space for his own advantage. His palace had been destroyed, and he built a new and most magnificent one on the Palatine Hill, the famous "golden house," which after-ages beheld with unstinted admiration.

But he did not confine his ostentation to the palace itself. A great space around it was converted into pleasure-grounds for his amusement, in which, as Tacitus says, "expansive lakes and fields of vast extent were intermixed with pleasing variety; woods and forests stretched to an immeasurable length, presenting gloom and solitude amid scenes of open space, where the eye wandered with surprise over an unbounded prospect."

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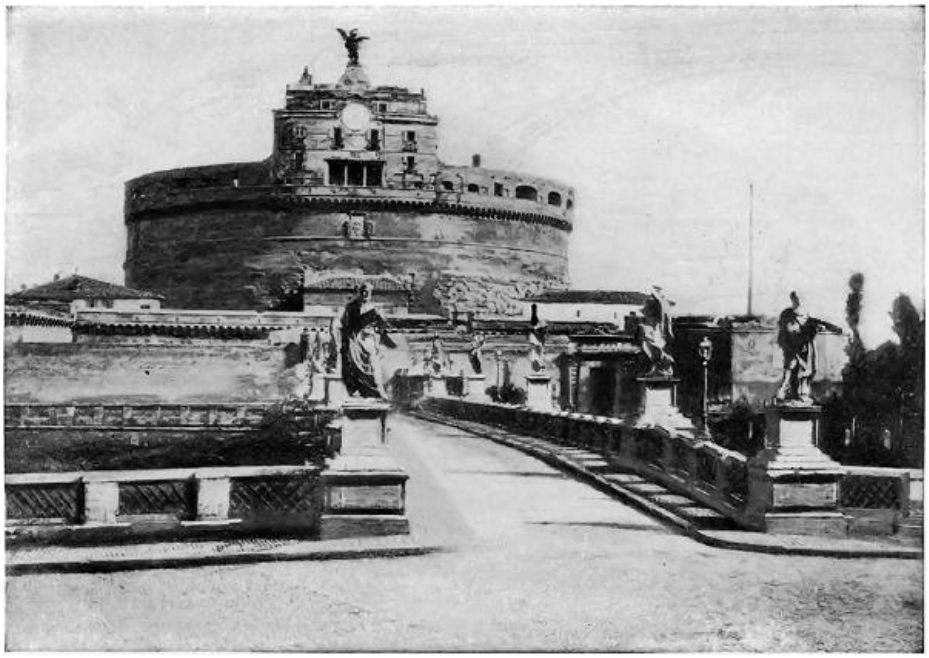
But nothing that Nero could do sufficed to remove from men's minds the belief that on him rested the infamy of the fire. This public sentiment troubled and frightened him, and to remove it he sought to lay the burden of guilt on others. It was now the year 64 A.D., and for at least thirty years the new sect of the Christians had been spreading in Rome, where it had gained many adherents among the humbler and more moral section of the population. The Christians were far from popular. They were accused of secret and evil practices and debasing superstitions, and on this despised sect Nero determined to turn the fury of the populace.



THE TOMB OF HADRIAN.

With his usual artifice he induced a number of abandoned wretches to confess themselves guilty, and on their purchased evidence numbers of the Christians were seized and convicted, mainly on the plea of their sullen hatred of the whole human race. A frightful persecution followed, Nero perhaps hoping, by an exhibition of human suffering, so dear to the rabble of Rome, to turn the thoughts of the people from their own losses.

The captives were put to death with every cruelty the emperor could devise, and to their sufferings he added mockery and derision. Many were nailed to the cross; others were covered with the skins of wild beasts, and left to be devoured by dogs; numbers were burned alive, many of these, covered with inflammable matter, being set on fire to serve as torches during the night. [Pg 261]

That the public might see this tragic spectacle with the more satisfaction, it was given in the imperial gardens. The sports of the circus were added to the tortures of the victims, Nero himself driving his chariot in the races, or mingling with the rabble in his coachman's dress. These cruel proceedings continued until even the hardened Roman heart became softened with compassion, spectators failed to come, and Nero felt obliged to yield to a general demand that the persecutions should cease.

While all this went on at Rome, the people of the whole empire suffered with those of the capital city. Italy was ravaged and the provinces plundered to supply the demand for the rebuilding of the city and palace and the unbounded prodigality of the emperor. The very gods were taxed, their temples being robbed of golden treasures which had been gathering for ages through the gifts of pious devotees; while in Greece and Asia not alone the treasures of the temples but the statues of the deities were seized. Nero was preparing for himself a load of infamy worthy of the most frightful retribution, and which would not fail soon to reap its fitting reward.

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THE DOOM OF NERO.

We have perhaps paid too much attention to the enormities of Caligula and Nero. Yet the mad freakishness of the one and the cowardly dissimulation of the other give to their stories a dramatic interest which seems to render them worth repeating. Nero, one of the basest and cruelest of the Roman emperors, is one of the best known to readers, and the interest felt in him is not alone due to the story of his life, but as well to that of his death, which we therefore here give.

A conspiracy against him among some of the noblest citizens of Rome was discovered and punished with revengeful fury. It was followed, a few years afterwards, by a revolt of the armies in Gaul and Spain. This was in its turn quelled, and Nero triumphed in imagination over all his enemies. But he had lost favor alike with the army and the people, and an event now happened that threw the whole city into a ferment of anger against him.

Food was scarce, and the arrival of a ship from Alexandria, supposed to be loaded with corn, filled the people with joy. It proved instead to be loaded with sand for the arena. In their [Pg 263]

disappointment the people broke at first into scurrilous jests against Nero, and then into rage and fury. A wild clamor filled the streets. On all sides rose the demand to be delivered from a monster. Even the Prætorian guards, who had hitherto supported the emperor, began to show signs of disaffection, and were wrought to a spirit of revolt by two of the choice companions of Nero's iniquities, who now deserted him as rats desert a sinking ship. The senate was approached and told that Nero was no longer supported by his friends, and that they might now regain the power of which they had been deprived.

Some whisper of what was afloat reached Nero's ears. Filled with craven fury, he resolved to massacre the senate, to set fire again to the city, and to let loose his whole collection of wild beasts. He proposed to fly to Egypt during the consternation that would prevail. A trusted servant, to whom he told this design, revealed it to the senate. It filled them with fear and rage. Yet even in so dire a contingency they could not be prevailed upon to act with vigor, and all might have been lost by their procrastination and timidity but for the two men who had organized the revolt.

These men, Nymphidius and Tigellinus by name, went to the palace, and with a show of deep affliction informed Nero of his danger. "All is lost," they said: "the people call aloud for vengeance; the Prætorian guards have abandoned your cause; the senate is ready to pronounce a dreadful judgment. Only one hope remains to you, to fly for your life, and seek a retreat in Egypt."

[Pg 264] It was as they said; revolt was everywhere in the air, and affected the armies near and far. Nero sought assistance, but sought it in vain. The palace, lately swarming with life, was now deserted. Nero wandered through its empty chambers, and found only solitude and gloom. Conscience awoke in his seared heart, and he was filled with horror and remorse. Of all his late crowd of courtiers only three friends now remained with him,—Sporus, a servant; Phaon, a freedman; and Epaphroditus, his secretary.

"'My wife, my father, and my mother doom me dead!'" he bitterly cried, quoting a line from a Greek tragedy.

With a last hope he bade the soldiers on duty to hasten to Ostia and prepare a ship, on which he might embark for Egypt. The men refused.

"'Is it, then, so wretched a thing to die?'" said one of them, quoting from Virgil.

This refusal threw Nero into despair. He hurried to the Servilian gardens, with a vial of deadly poison, which, on getting there, he had not the courage to take. He returned to the palace and threw himself on his bed. Then, too agitated to lie, he sprang up and called for some friendly hand to end his wretched life. No one consented, and in his wild despair he called out, in doleful accents, "My friends desert me, and I cannot find an enemy."

The world had suddenly fallen away from the despicable Nero. A week before he had ordered it at his will, now "none so poor to do him reverence." His craven terror would have been pitiable in any one to whom the word pity could apply. In frantic dread he rushed from the palace, as if with [Pg 265] intent to fling himself into the Tiber. Then as hastily he returned, saying that he would fly to Spain, and yield himself to the mercy of Galba, who commanded the revolted army. But no ship was to be had for either Spain or Egypt, and this plan was abandoned as quickly as formed.

These and other projects passed in succession through his distracted brain. One of the most absurd of them was to go in a mourning garb to the Forum, and by his powers of eloquence seek to win back the favor of the people. If they would not have him as emperor, he might by persuasive oratory obtain from them the government of Egypt.

Full of hope in this new project, he was about to put it into effect, when a fresh reflection filled his soul with horror. What if the populace should, without waiting to hear his harmonious accents and unequalled oratory, break out in sudden rage and rend him limb from limb? Might they not assail him in the palace? Might not a seditious mob be already on its way thither, bent on bloody work? Whither should he fly? Where find refuge?

Turning in despair to his companions, he asked them, wildly, "Is there no hiding-place, no safe retreat, where I may have leisure to consider what is to be done?"

Phaon, his freedman, told him that he owned an obscure villa, at a distance of about four miles from Rome, where he might remain for a time in concealment.

This suggestion, in Nero's state of distraction, was eagerly embraced,—in such haste, indeed, [Pg 266] that he left the palace without an instant's preparation, his feet destitute of shoes, and no garment but his close tunic, his outer garments and imperial robe having been discarded in his distraction. The utmost he did was to snatch up an old rusty robe as a disguise, covering his head with it, and holding a handkerchief before his face. Thus attired, he mounted his horse and fled in frantic fear, attended only by the three men we have mentioned, and a fourth named Neophytus.

Meanwhile, the revolt in the city was growing more and more decided. When the coming day showed its first faint rays, the Prætorian guards, who had been on duty in the palace, left their post and marched to the camp. Here, under the influence of Nymphidius, Galba was nominated emperor. This was an important innovation in the government of Rome. Hitherto the imperial dignity had remained in the family of Cæsar, descending by hereditary transmission. Nero was the last of that family to wear the crown. Henceforth the army and its generals controlled the

destinies of the empire. The nomination of Galba by the Prætorian guard signalized the new state of things, in which the emperors would largely be chosen by that guard or by some army in the field.

The action of the Prætorian guard was supported by the senate. That body, awaking from its late timidity, determined to mark the day with a decree worthy of its past history. With unanimous decision they pronounced Nero a tyrant who had trampled on all laws, human and divine, and condemned him to suffer death with all the rigor of the ancient laws. [Pg 267]

While this revolution was taking place in the city the terror-stricken Nero was still in frantic flight. He passed the Prætorian camp near enough to hear loud acclamations, among which the name of Galba reached his ear. As the small cavalcade hastened by a man early at work in the fields, he looked up and said, "These people must be hot in pursuit of Nero." A short distance farther another hailed them, asking, "What do they say of Nero in the city?"

A more alarming event occurred soon. As they drew near Phaon's house the horse of Nero started at a dead carcass beside the road, shaking down the handkerchief by which he had concealed his face. The movement revealed him to a veteran soldier, then on his way to Rome, and ignorant of what was taking place in the city. He recognized and saluted the emperor by name.

This incident increased Nero's fear. His route of flight would now be known. He pressed his horse to the utmost speed until Phaon's house was close at hand. They now halted and Nero dismounted, it being thought unsafe for him to enter the house publicly. He crossed a field overgrown with reeds, and, being tortured with thirst, scooped up some water from a muddy ditch and drank it, saying, dolefully, "Is this the beverage which Nero has been used to drink?"

Phaon advised him to conceal himself in a neighboring sand-pit, from which could be opened for him a subterraneous passage to the house, but Nero refused, saying that he did not care to be buried alive. His companions then made an opening in the wall on one side of the house, through which Nero crept on his hands and knees. Entering a wretched chamber, he threw himself on a mean bed, which was covered with a tattered coverlet, and asked for some refreshment. [Pg 268]

All they could offer him was a little coarse bread, so black that the sight of it sickened his dainty taste, and some warm and foul water, which thirst forced him to drink. His friends meanwhile were in little less desperation than himself. They saw that no hope was left and that his place of concealment would soon be known, and entreated him to avoid a disgraceful death by taking his own life.

Nero promised to do so, but still sought reasons for delay. His funeral must be prepared for, he said, and bade them to dig a grave, to prepare wood for a funeral pile, and bring marble to cover his remains. Meanwhile he piteously bewailed his unhappy lot; sighed and shed tears copiously; and said, with a last impulse of vanity, "What a musician the world will lose!"

While he thus in cowardly procrastination delayed the inevitable end, a messenger, whom Phaon had ordered to bring news from Rome, arrived with papers. These Nero eagerly seized and read. He found himself dethroned, declared a public enemy, and condemned to suffer death with the rigor of ancient usage. Such was the decree of the senate, which hitherto had been his subservient slave.

"Ancient usage?" he asked. "What do they mean? What kind of death is that?" [Pg 269]

"It is this," they told him. "Every traitor, by the law of the old republic, with his head fastened between two stakes, and his body stripped naked, was slowly flogged to death by the lictors' rods."

Dread of this terrible and ignominious punishment roused the trembling wretch to some semblance of courage. He produced two daggers, which he had brought with him, and tried their points. Then he replaced them in their scabbards, saying, "The fatal moment is not yet come."

Turning to Sporus, he said, "Sing the melancholy dirge, and offer the last obsequies to your friend." Then, rolling his eyes wildly around, he exclaimed, "Why will not some one of you kill himself, and teach me how to die?"

He paused a moment. No one seemed inclined to adopt his suggestion. A flood of tears burst from his eyes. Starting up, he cried, in a tone of wild despair, "Nero, this is infamy; you linger in disgrace; this is no time for dejected passions; this moment calls for manly fortitude."

These words were hardly spoken when the sound of horses was heard advancing rapidly towards the house. Theatrical to the end, he repeated a line from Homer which the noise of hoofs recalled to his mind. At length, driven to desperation, he seized his dagger and stabbed himself in the throat,—but cowardice made the stroke too feeble. Epaphroditus now lent his aid, and the next thrust was a mortal one.

It was time. The horses were those of pursuers. The senate, informed of his probable place of refuge, had sent soldiers in haste to bring him back to Rome, there to suffer the punishment decreed. In a minute afterwards a centurion entered the room, and, seeing Nero prostrate and bleeding, ran to his aid, saying that he would bind the wound and save his life. [Pg 270]

Nero looked up languidly, and said, in faint tones, "You come too late. Is this your fidelity?" In

a moment more he expired.

In the words of Tacitus, "The ferocity of his nature was still visible in his countenance. His eyes fixed and glaring, and every feature swelled with warring passions, he looked more stern, more grim, more terrible than ever."

Nero was in his thirty-second year. He had reigned nearly fourteen years. Tacitus says of him, "The race of Cæsars ended with Nero; he was the last, and perhaps the worst, of that illustrious house."

The tidings of his death filled Rome with joy. Men ran wildly about the streets, their heads covered with liberty caps. Acclamations of gladness resounded in the Forum. Icelus, Galba's freedman and agent in Rome, whom Nero had thrown into prison, was released and took control of affairs. He ordered that Nero's body should be burned where he had died, and this was done so quickly and secretly that many would not believe that he was dead. The report got abroad that he had escaped to Asia or Egypt, and from time to time impostors appeared claiming to be Nero. The Parthians were deluded by one of these impostors and offered to defend his cause. Another made trouble in the Greek islands. Nero's profligate companions in Rome, who alone mourned his death, while affecting to believe him still alive raised a tomb to his memory, which for several years they annually dressed with the flowers of spring and summer. But the world at large rejoiced in its delivery from the rule of a monster of iniquity.

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THE SPORTS OF THE AMPHITHEATRE.

In no other nation upon the earth and no other period of history has enjoyment taken so cruel and brutal a shape as in the Roman empire. The fierce people of the imperial city seemed to have a native thirst for blood and misery, which no amount of slaughter in the arena, of the sufferings of captives and slaves, or of the torments of persecuted Christians sufficed to assuage. The love of theatrical representations, which has proved so potent and unceasing with other nations, had but a brief period of prevalence in Rome, its milder enjoyment vanishing before the wild excitement of the gladiatorial struggle and the spectacle of rending beasts and slaughtered martyrs.

It was not in the theatre, but in the amphitheatre, that the Romans sought their chief enjoyment, and few who wished the favor of the Roman people failed to seek it by the easy though costly means of gladiatorial shows. The amphitheatre differed from the theatre in forming a complete circle or oval instead of a semicircle, with an arena in the centre instead of a stage at the side. It also greatly surpassed the theatre in size, the purpose being to see, not to hear.

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These buildings were at first temporary edifices of wood, but of enormous size, since one which collapsed at Fidenæ, during the reign of Tiberius, is said to have caused the death of fifty thousand spectators. The first of stone was built by the command of Augustus. But the great amphitheatre of Rome, the Flavian, whose mighty ruins we possess in the Colosseum, was that begun by Vespasian, and finished by Titus ten years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

This vast building is elliptical in shape and covers about five acres of ground, being six hundred and twelve feet in its greatest length and five hundred and fifteen in greatest breadth. It is based on rows of arches, eighty in number, and rises in four different orders of architecture to a height of about one hundred and sixty feet. The outside of this great edifice was encrusted with marble and decorated with statues. Interiorly its vast slopes presented sixty or eighty rows of marble seats, covered with cushions, and capable of seating more than eighty thousand spectators. There were sixty-four doors of entrance and exit, and the entrances, passages, and stairs were so skilfully constructed that every person could with ease and safety reach and leave his place.

Nothing was omitted that could add to the pleasure and convenience of the spectators. An ample canopy, drawn over their heads, protected them from the sun and the rain. Fountains refreshed the air with cooling moisture, and aromatics profusely perfumed the air. In the centre was the arena or stage, strewn with fine sand, and capable of being changed to suit varied spectacles. Now it appeared to rise out of the earth, like the gardens of the Hesperides; now it was made to represent the rocks and caverns of Thrace. Water was abundantly supplied by concealed pipes, and the sand-strewn plain might at will be converted into a wide lake, sustaining armed vessels, and displaying the swimming monsters of the deep.

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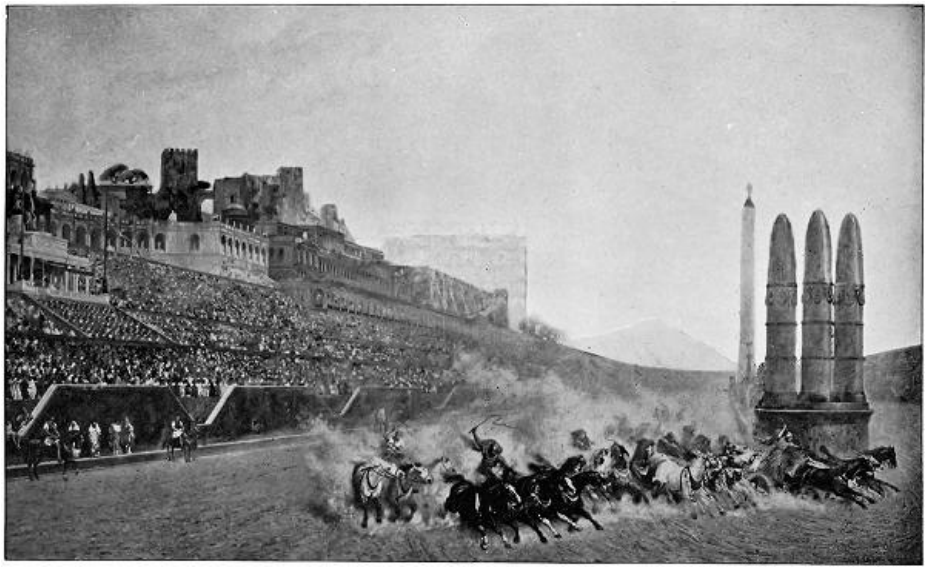
In these spectacles the Roman emperors loved to display their wealth. On various occasions the whole furniture of the amphitheatre was of amber, silver, or gold, and in one display the nets provided for defence against wild beasts were of gold wire, the porticos were gilded, and the belt or circle that divided the several ranks of spectators was studded with a precious mosaic of beautiful stones. In the dedication of this mighty edifice five thousand wild beasts were slain in the arena, the games lasting one hundred days.

The first show of gladiators in Rome was one given by Marcus and Decius Brutus, on the occasion of the death of their father, 264 B.C. Three pairs of gladiators fought in this first contest. This gladiatorial spectacle was continued on funeral occasions, but afterwards lost its religious character and became a popular amusement, there being schools for the training of gladiators, whose pupils were recruited from the captives of Rome, from condemned criminals, and from vigorous men desirous of fame.

As time went on the magnificence of these spectacles increased. Julius Cæsar gave one in which three hundred and twenty combatants fought. Trajan far surpassed this with a show that [Pg 275] lasted for one hundred and twenty-three days, and in which ten thousand men fought with each other or with wild beasts for the pleasure of the Roman populace.

The gladiators were variously armed, some with sword, shield, and body armor; some with net and trident; some with noose or lasso. The disarmed or overthrown gladiator was killed or spared in response to signals made by the thumbs of the spectators; while the successful combatant was rewarded at first with a palm branch, afterwards with money and rich and valuable presents.



ROMAN CHARIOT RACE.

The gladiators were not always passive instruments of Roman cruelty. We have elsewhere described the revolt of Spartacus and his brave struggle for liberty. Other outbreaks took place. During the reign of Probus a revolt of about eighty gladiators out of a school of some six hundred filled Rome with death and alarm. Killing their keepers, they broke into the streets, which they set afloat with blood, and only after an obstinate resistance and ample revenge were they at length overpowered and cut to pieces by the soldiers of the city. But such outbreaks were but few, and the Roman multitude usually enjoyed its cruel sports in safety.

We cannot here describe the many remarkable displays made by successive emperors, and which grew more lavish as time went on. Probus, about 280 A.D., gave a show in which the arena was transformed into a forest, large trees, dug up by the roots, being transported and planted throughout its space. In this miniature forest were set free a thousand ostriches, and an equal [Pg 276] number each of stags, fallow deer, and wild boars. These were given to the multitude to assail and slay at their will. On the following day, the populace being now safely screened from danger, there were slain in the arena a hundred lions, as many lionesses, two hundred leopards, and three hundred bears.

The younger Gordian, in his triumphal games, astonished the Romans by the strangeness of the animals displayed, in search of which the whole known world was ransacked. The curious mob now beheld the graceful forms of twenty zebras, and the remarkable stature of ten giraffes, brought from remote African plains. There were shown, in addition, ten elks, as many tigers from India, and thirty African hyenas. To these were added a troop of thirty-two elephants, and the uncouth forms of the hippopotamus of the Nile and the rhinoceros of the African wilds. These animals, familiar to us, were new to their observers, and filled the minds of their spectators with wonder and awe.

Gladiators, as we have said, were not confined to slaves, captives, and criminals. Roman citizens, emulous of the fame and rewards of the successful combatant, entered their ranks, and men of birth and fortune, thirsting for the excitement of the arenal strife, were often seen in the lists. In the reign of Nero, senators, and even women of high birth, appeared as combatants; and Domitian arranged a battle between dwarfs and women. As late as 200 A.D. an edict forbidding women to fight became necessary.

The emperors, as a rule, were content with sending their subjects to death in those frightful [Pg 277] shows; but one of them, Commodus, proud of his strength and skill, himself entered the lists as a combatant. He was at first content with displaying his remarkable skill as an archer against wild animals. With arrows whose head was shaped like a crescent, he cut asunder the long neck of the ostrich, and with the strength of his bow pierced alike the thick skin of the elephant and the scaly hide of the rhinoceros. A panther was let loose and a slave forced to act as its prey. But at the

instant when the beast leaped upon the man the shaft of Commodus flew, and the animal fell dead, leaving its prey unhurt. No less than a hundred lions were let loose at once in the arena, and the death-dealing darts of the emperor hurtled among them until they all were slain.

During this exhibition of skill the emperor was securely protected against any chance danger from his victims. But later, to the shame and indignation of the people, he entered the arena as a gladiator, and fought there no less than seven hundred and thirty-five times. He was well protected, wearing the helmet, shield, and sword of the *Secutor*, while his antagonists were armed with the net and trident of the *Retiarius*. It was the aim of the latter to entangle his opponent in the net and then despatch him with the trident, and if he missed he was forced to fly till he had prepared his net for a second throw.

As may be imagined, in these contests Commodus was uniformly successful. His opponents were schooled not to put forth their full skill, and were usually given their lives in reward. But the [Pg 278] emperor claimed the prize of the successful gladiator, and himself fixed this reward at so high a price that to pay it became a new tax on the Roman people. Commodus, we may say here, met with the usual fate of the base and cruel emperors of Rome, falling by the hands of assassins.

The gladiatorial shows were not without their opponents in Rome. Under the republic efforts were made to limit the number of combatants and the frequency of the displays, and the Emperor Augustus forbade more than two shows in a year. They were prohibited by Constantine, the first Christian emperor, in 325 A.D., but continued at intervals till 404. In that year Telemachus, an Asiatic monk, filled with horror at the cruelty of the practice, made his way to Rome, and during a contest rushed into the arena and tried to part two gladiators.

The spectators, furious at this interruption of their sport, stoned the monk to death. But the Emperor Honorius proclaimed him a martyr, and issued an edict which finally brought such exhibitions to an end.

There was another form of spectacle at Rome, in its way as significant of cruelty and ruthlessness, the Triumph, each occasion of which signified some nation conquered or army defeated, and thousands slain or plunged into misery and destitution. The victorious general to whom the senate granted the honor of a triumph was not allowed to enter the city in advance, [Pg 279] and Lucullus, on his return from victory in Asia, waited outside Rome for three years, until the desired honor was granted him.

Starting from the Field of Mars, outside the city walls, the procession passed through the gayly garlanded streets to the Capitol. It was headed by the magistrates and senate of Rome, who were followed by trumpeters, and then by the spoils of war, consisting not only of treasures and standards, but of representations of battles, towns, fortresses, rivers, etc.

Next came the victims intended for sacrifice, largely composed of white oxen with gilded horns. They were followed by prisoners kept to grace the triumph, and who were put to death when the Capitol was reached. Afterwards came the gorgeous chariot of the conqueror, crowned with laurel and drawn by four horses. He wore robes of purple and gold taken from the temple of Jupiter, carried a laurel branch in his right hand, and in his left a sceptre of ivory with an eagle at its tip. After him came the soldiers, singing *Io triumphe* and other songs of victory.

On reaching the Capitol the victor placed the laurel branch on the cap of the seated Jupiter, and offered the thank-offerings. A feast of the dignitaries, and sometimes of the soldiers and people, followed. The ceremony at first occupied one day only, but in later times was extended through several days, and was frequently attended with gladiatorial shows and other spectacles for the greater enjoyment of the Roman multitude.

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THE REIGN OF A GLUTTON.

THE death of Nero cut all the reins of order in Rome. Until now, as stated in a preceding tale, some form of hereditary succession had been followed, the emperors being of the family of Cæsar, though not his direct descendants. Now confusion reigned supreme. The army took upon itself the task of nominating the emperor, and within less than two years four emperors came in succession to the royal seat, each the general of one of the armies of Rome.

Galba, who headed the revolt against Nero, and succeeded him on the throne, reigned but seven months, being overthrown by Otho, who conspired against him with the Prætorian guards. The new emperor reigned only three months. The army of Germany proclaimed their general—Vitellius—emperor, marched against Otho, and defeated him. He ended the contest by committing suicide. Vitellius reigned less than a year. The army of the East rebelled against him, proclaimed their general—Vespasian—emperor, and a new civil war broke out, which was closed by the speedy downfall of Vitellius. It is the story of this man, emperor for less than a year, which we have here to describe.

The three men named were alike unfit to reign over Rome. Galba was very old and very incompetent, Otho was a declared profligate, and Vitellius was a glutton of such extraordinary powers that his name has become a synonyme for voracity. He had by his arts and his skill as a courtier made himself a favorite with four emperors of widely differing character,—Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. The suicide of Otho had now made him emperor himself, and he gave way without stint to the peculiar vice which has made his name despicable, that of inordinate love of the pleasures of the table. [Pg 281]

After the death of Otho, says Tacitus, "Vitellius, sunk in sloth, and growing every day more contemptible, advanced by slow marches towards the city of Rome. In all the villas and municipal towns through which he passed, carousing festivals were sufficient to retard a man abandoned to his pleasures. He was followed by an unwieldy multitude, not less than sixty thousand men in arms, all corrupted by a life of debauchery. The number of retainers and followers of the army was still greater, all disposed to riot and insolence, even beyond the natural bent of the vilest slaves.

"The crowd was still increased by a conflux of senators and Roman knights, who came from Rome to greet the prince on his way; some impelled by fear, others to pay their court, and numbers, not to be thought sullen or disaffected. All went with the current. The populace rushed forth in crowds, accompanied by an infamous band of pimps, players, buffoons, and charioteers, by their utility in vicious pleasures all well known and dear to Vitellius.

"To supply so vast a body with provisions the colonies and municipal cities were exhausted; the fruits of the earth, then ripe and fit for use, were carried off; the husbandman was plundered; and his land, as if it were an enemy's country, was laid waste and ruined." [Pg 282]

THE COLISEUM AT ROME.

The followers of Vitellius were many of them Germans and Gauls, so savage of aspect as to create consternation in Rome. "Covered with the skins of savage beasts, and wielding large and massive spears, the spectacle which they exhibited to the Roman citizens was fierce and hideous." They were as savage as they looked, and many conflicts took place both outside and inside of Rome, in which numbers of citizens were slaughtered. In fact, the march of Vitellius to Rome was almost like that of a conqueror through a captive province.

The conduct of Vitellius and his army in Rome was an abhorrent spectacle of sloth and licentiousness. All discipline vanished. The Germans and Gauls entered into the vilest habits of the city, and by their disorderly lives brought on an epidemic disease which swept thousands of them away. Vitellius, lost in sluggishness and gluttony, wasted the funds of the state on his pleasures, and laid severe taxes to raise new funds. "To squander with wild profusion," says Tacitus, "was the only use of money known to Vitellius. He built a set of stables for the charioteers, and kept in the circus a constant spectacle of gladiators and wild beasts; in this manner dissipating with prodigality, as if his treasury overflowed with riches."

While the Vitellian army was indulging in riot, bloodshed, and vice, and the populace was kept amused by the frightful gladiatorial shows, the emperor spent his days in a sloth and gluttony that stand unrivalled in imperial records. We may quote from Whyte-Melville's romance of "The Gladiators" a sketch of a Vitellian banquet whose characteristic features are taken from exact history: [Pg 283]

"A banquet with Vitellius was no light and simple repast. Leagues of sea and miles of forest had been swept to furnish the mere groundwork of the entertainment. Hardy fishermen had spent their nights on the heaving wave, that the giant turbot might flap its snowy flakes on the emperor's table broader than its broad dish of gold. Many a swelling hill, clad in the dark oak coppice, had echoed to ringing shout of hunter and deep-mouthed bay of hound, ere the wild boar yielded his grim life by the morass, and the dark, grisly carcass was drawn off to provide a standing dish that was only meant to gratify the eye. Even the peacock roasted in its feathers was too gross a dainty for epicures who studied the art of gastronomy under Cæsar; and that taste

would have been considered rustic in the extreme which could partake of more than the mere fumes and savor of so substantial a dish. A thousand nightingales had been trapped and killed, indeed, for this one supper, but brains and tongues were all they contributed to the banquet; while even the wing of a roasted hare would have been considered far too coarse and common food for the imperial board.

"It would be useless to go into the details of such a banquet as that which was placed before [Pg 284] the guests of Cæsar. Wild boar, pasties, goats, every kind of shell-fish, thrushes, beccaficoes, vegetables of all descriptions, and poultry, were removed to make way for the pheasant, the guinea-hen, the capon, venison, ducks, woodcocks, and turtle-doves. Everything that could creep, fly, or swim, and could boast a delicate flavor when cooked, was pressed into the service of the emperor; and when appetite was appeased and could do no more, the strongest condiments and other remedies were used to stimulate fresh hunger and consume a fresh supply of superfluous dainties."

Deep drinking followed, merely to stimulate fresh hunger. The disgusting story is even told that the imperial glutton was in the habit of taking an emetic to empty his stomach, that he might begin a fresh course of gluttony.

Certain artists in the preparation of original dishes employed themselves in devising new and appetizing compounds of food for the table of Vitellius. They were sure of an ample reward if they should succeed in pleasing the imperial palate. Failure, however, was attended by a severe penance. The artist was not permitted to eat any food but his own unsuccessful dish until he had atoned for his failure by a success.

While Vitellius was thus sunk in sloth and gluttony his destiny was on its march. A terrible and disgraceful retribution awaited him. He had never been emperor of all the Roman empire. The army of Syria had declared for Vespasian, its general; and while Vitellius had been wasting his [Pg 285] means and ruining his army by permitting it to indulge in every vice and excess, his rival in the East was carefully laying his plans to insure success. He finally seized Alexandria, thus being able at will to starve Rome, by cutting off its food-supply; and sent Antonius Primus, his principal general, with a strong force to Italy.

The progress of Antonius in Italy was rapid. City after city fell into his hands. The fleet at Ravenna declared for Vespasian. The general of Vitellius sought to carry his whole army over to Antonius, but found his men more faithful than himself. The Vitellians were defeated in two battles; Cremona was taken and destroyed; all was at risk; and yet Vitellius remained absorbed in luxury. "Hid in the recess of his garden, he indulged his appetite, forgetting the past, the present, and all solicitude about future events; like those nauseous animals that know no care, and, while they are supplied with food, remain in one spot, torpid and insensible."

At length awakened from his stupor, Vitellius took some steps for defence. He was too late. His men deserted their ranks; the army of Antonius steadily advanced. Filled with terror, the emperor called an assembly of the people and offered to resign. The people in violent uproar refused to accept his resignation. He then proposed to seek a retreat in his brother's house. This the populace also opposed and forced him to return to the palace.

This attempted abdication brought civil war into the city. Sabinus, the brother of Vespasian, raised a force and took possession of the Capitol. He was besieged here, and in the conflict that [Pg 286] ensued the Capitol was set on fire and burned to the ground. It was the second time this venerable edifice had been consumed by the flames. Sabinus was taken prisoner, and was murdered by the mob.

News of this revolt and its disastrous end hastened the march of Antonius. Once more, as in the far-off days of the Gaulish invasion, Rome was to be attacked and taken by a hostile army. It was assailed at three points, each of which was obstinately defended. Finally an entrance was made at the Collinian gate, and the battle was transferred to the open streets, in which the Vitellians defended themselves as obstinately as before.

And now was seen an extraordinary spectacle. While two armies—one from the East, one from the North—contended fiercely for the possession of Rome, the populace of that city flocked to behold the fight, as if it was a gladiatorial struggle got up for their diversion, and nothing in which they had any personal interest. Tacitus says,—

"Whenever they saw the advantage inclining to either side, they favored the contestants with shouts and theatrical applause. If the men fled from their ranks, to take shelter in shops or houses, they roared to have them dragged forth and put to death like gladiators for their diversion. While the soldiers were intent on slaughter, these miscreants were employed in plundering. The greatest part of the booty fell to their share. Rome presented a scene truly shocking, a medley of savage slaughter and monstrous vice; in one place war and desolation; in [Pg 287] another bathing, riot, and debauchery. The whole city seemed to be inflamed with frantic rage, and at the same time intoxicated with bacchanalian pleasures. In the midst of rage and massacre, pleasure knew no intermission. A dreadful carnage seemed to be a spectacle added to the public games."

It was a spectacle certainly without its like in the history of nations.

The battle ended in the complete overthrow of the army of Vitellius. The camp was taken, and all that defended it were slain. And now took place a scene which recalls that of the last days of

Nero. Vitellius, seeing that all was lost, was in an agony of apprehension. He left the palace by a private way to seek shelter in his wife's house on the Aventine. Then irresolution brought him back to the palace, which he found deserted. The slaves had fled. The dead silence that reigned filled him with terror. All was solitude and desolation. He wandered pitiably from room to room, and finally, weary and utterly wretched, sought a humble hiding-place. Here he was discovered and dragged forth.

And now the populace, who had lately refused his deposition, turned upon him with the bitterest insults and contumely. With his hands bound behind him and his garment torn, the obese old glutton was dragged through crowds who treated him with scoffs and words of contempt, not a voice of pity or sympathy being heard. A German soldier struck at him with his sword, and, missing his aim, cut off the ear of a tribune. He was killed on the spot.

As Vitellius was thus dragged onward, his captors, with swords pointed at his throat, forced [Pg 288] him to raise his head and expose his bloated face to scorn and derision. They made him look at his statues, which were being tumbled to the ground. They pointed out to him the place where Galba had perished. They pricked his body with their weapons. With endless contumely they brought him to the public charnel, where the body of Sabinus had been thrown among those of the vilest malefactors.

A single expression is recorded as coming from his lips. "And yet," he said, to a tribune who insulted his misery, "I have been your sovereign."

His torment soon ended. The rabble fell on him with swords and clubs and he died under a multitude of wounds. Even after his death those who had worshipped him in the height of his power continued to shower marks of rage and contempt upon his remains. Thus perished one of the most despicable of all the emperors who disgraced Rome, to make room for one whose wisdom and virtue would make still more contemptible the excesses of his gluttonous predecessor.

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THE FAITHFUL EPONINA.

THOUGH Rome had extended its conquests over numerous tribes and nations of barbarians, and reduced them to subjection, much of the old love of liberty remained, and many of the later Roman wars were devoted to the suppression of outbreaks among these unwilling subjects. In the reign of Vespasian occurred such a rebellion, followed by so remarkable an instance of womanly devotion that it has since enlisted the sympathy of the world.

Julius Sabinus, a leading chief among the Ligones, a tribe of the Gauls, led by ambition and daring, and stirred by hatred of the Roman dominion, resolved to shake off the yoke of conquest, and by his arts and eloquence kindled the flame of rebellion among his countrymen. Gathering an army, he drove the Romans from the territory of his own people, and then marched into the country of the Sequani, whom he hoped to bring into the revolt.

But the discomfiture of the Romans lasted only until they could bring their forces together. A battle ensued between the hastily-levied followers of Sabinus and a disciplined Roman army, with the inevitable result. The barbarians were defeated with great slaughter, the death of most, the flight of the others, bringing the rebellion to a disastrous end.

Sabinus was among those who escaped the general carnage. He sought shelter from his [Pg 290] pursuers in an obscure cottage, and, being hotly and closely tracked, he set fire to his lurking-place and caused a report to be spread that he had perished in the flames. He had been attended in his flight by two faithful freedmen, and one of these, Martialis by name, sought Eponina, the loving wife of the chief, and told her that her husband was no more, that he had perished in the flames of the burning hut.

Giving full credit to the story, Eponina was thrown into a transport of grief which went far to convince the spies of Rome that she must have received sure tidings of her husband's death, and that Sabinus had escaped the vengeance of Rome. For several days her grief continued unabated, and then the same messenger returned and told her that her husband still lived, having spread the report of his death to throw his pursuers off his track.

This information brought Eponina as lively joy as the former news had brought her sorrow; but knowing that she was watched, she affected as deep grief as before, going about her daily duties with all the outward manifestations of woe. When night came she visited Sabinus secretly in his new hiding-place, and was received in his arms with all the joy of which loving souls are capable. Before the dawn of day she returned to her home, from which her absence had not been known.

During seven months the devoted wife continued these clandestine visits, softening by caresses and brave words her husband's anxious care, and supplying his wants as far as she was [Pg 291]

capable. At the end of that time she grew hopeful of obtaining a pardon for the fugitive chief. For this purpose she induced him to disguise himself in a way that made detection impossible and accompany her on a long and painful journey to Rome.

Here the earnest and faithful woman made every possible effort to gain the ear and favor of the emperor and to obtain influence in high places. She unhappily found that Roman officials had no time or thought to waste on fugitive rebels, and that compassion for those who dared oppose the supremacy of Rome was a sentiment that could find no place in the imperial heart. Repelled, disappointed, hopeless, the unhappy woman and her disguised husband retraced their long and weary journey, and Sabinus again sought shelter in the dens and caves which formed his only secure places of refuge.

And now the faithful wife, abandoning her home, joined him in his lurking-place, and for nine long years the devoted couple lived as homeless fugitives, mutual love their only comfort, obtaining the necessaries of life by means of which we are not aware. By the tenderest affection Eponina softened the anxieties of her husband, the birth of two sons served still more to alleviate the misery of their distressful situation, and all the happiness that could possibly come to two so circumstanced attended the pair in their straitened place of refuge.

At the end of nine years the hiding-place of the fugitives was discovered by their enemies, and they were seized and sent in chains to Rome. Here Vespasian, who had gained a reputation for [Pg 292] kindness and clemency, acted with a cruelty worthy of the worst emperors of Rome. The pitiable tale of the captives had no effect upon him; the devotion of the wife roused no sympathy in his heart; Sabinus had dared rebel against Rome, no time nor circumstance could soften that flagitious crime; without hesitation the chief was condemned to death, and instant execution ordered.

This cruel sentence changed the tone of Eponina. She had hitherto humbly and warmly supplicated her husband's pardon. Now that he was dead she resolved not to survive him. With the spirit and pride of a free-born princess she said to Vespasian, "Death has no terror for me. I have lived happier underground than you upon your throne. You have robbed me of all I loved, and I have no further use for life. Bid your assassins strike their blow; with joy I leave a world which is peopled by such tyrants as you."

She was taken at her word and ordered by the emperor for execution. It was the darkest deed of Vespasian's life, a blot upon his character which all his record for clemency cannot remove, and which has ever since lain as a dark stain upon his memory.

Plutarch, who has alone told this story of love unto death, concludes his tale by saying that there was nothing during Vespasian's reign to match the horror of this atrocious deed, and that, in retribution for it, the vengeance of the gods fell upon Vespasian, and in a short time after wrought the extirpation of his entire family.

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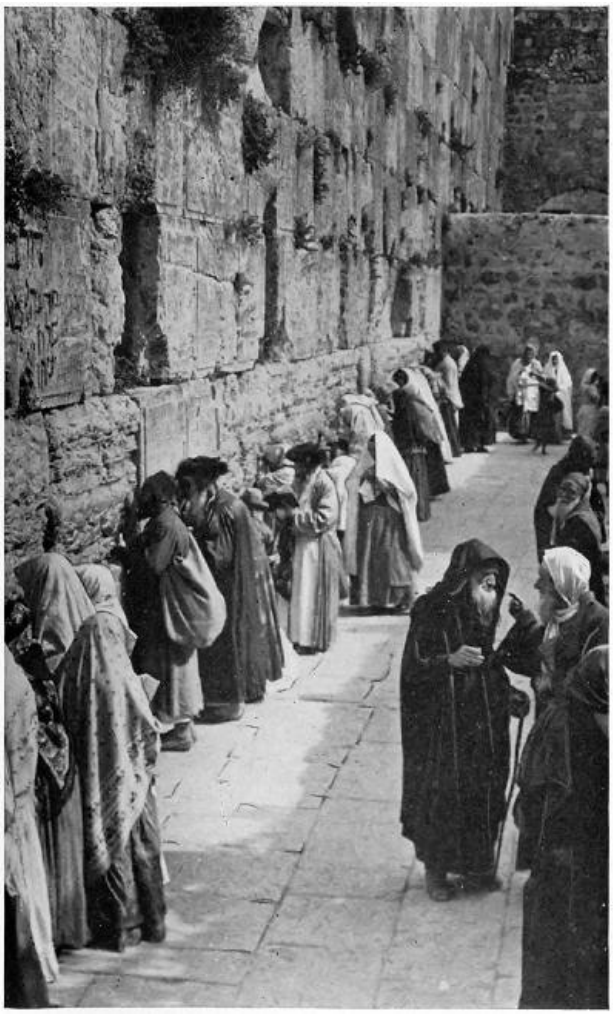
THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM.

Christ had not long passed away from the earth when the reign of peace and brotherly love which He had so warmly inculcated ceased to exist on the soil of Judæa. Forty years after He foretold the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem that noble edifice had ceased to exist, Jerusalem itself was burned to the ground, and a million of people perished by sword and flames. It is this lamentable tale which we have now to tell.

Caligula, the mad emperor, first roused the indignation of the Jews, by demanding that his statue should be placed in that holy shrine in which no image of man had ever been permitted. War would have followed, for the Jews were resolute against such an impious desecration of their Temple, had not the sword of the assassin removed the tyrant.

But the discontent of the Jews was not ended. They were resolved that no image of the Cæsars should be brought into their land, and carried this so far that when the governor of Syria wished to march through a part of their territory to attack the Arabs, they objected that the standards of the legions were crowded with profane images, which their sacred laws did not permit to be seen in their country. The governor yielded to their remonstrance, and marched around the land of [Pg 294] Judæa.

This concession did not allay the discontent. Felix, a governor under Claudius, by oppression and cruelty aroused a general spirit of revolt. Gessius Florus, appointed by Nero governor of Judæa, found his province in a state of irritation and tumult. His avarice and robbery of the people ripened this to war. The province broke into open rebellion. It was quickly invaded by Gallus, the governor of Syria, who marched through the country to the walls of Jerusalem. But he was not a soldier, and was quickly forced to abandon the siege and retreat in haste, losing six thousand men in his flight.



THE JEWS' WAILING PLACE,
JERUSALEM.

Nero now, finding that Rome had an obstinate struggle on its hands, chose Vespasian, a soldier of renown, to conduct the war. This he did with the true Roman energy and thoroughness, subduing the whole country, and capturing every stronghold except Jerusalem, within two years. He was called from this work to the struggle for the empire of Rome, leaving his able son Titus to complete the task.

The taking of Jerusalem was not to be easily performed. The city was of immense strength. It stood upon two hills, Mount Sion to the south, Mount Acra to the north. The former, being the loftiest, was called the upper, and Acra the lower, city. Each of these hills was surrounded by a wall of great strength and elevation, their bases washed by a rapid stream that ran through the valleys of Hinnom and Cedron, to the foot of the Mount of Olives. A third hill, Mount Moriah, was [Pg 295] the seat of the famous Temple, an immense group of courts and edifices which looked more like a citadel than a sanctuary of religious faith. The true temple stood separate, in the midst of these buildings, its interior being divided by a curtain into two parts, of which the inmost was the Holy of Holies. The total group of edifices was nearly a mile in circumference.

Jerusalem, unfortunately for its defence, had, during the conquest of the country, become filled with fugitives. To these the celebration of the Passover, now at hand, added other great numbers, so that when the army of Titus invested it, it was crowded with a vast multitude of human beings. Filled with religious enthusiasm, accustomed to war, and believing that the Lord of Hosts would come to their aid, the garrison displayed a desperate resolution that the Romans were to find very difficult to overcome.

Yet it was as much due to themselves as to the Roman arms that the city at length fell. Resolute as the Jews were in defence against the foreign foe, they were divided among themselves, the city being held by three factions bitterly hostile to each other. One of these, known as the Zealots, under Eleazer, held the Temple. Another, under John of Gisela, an artful orator but a man of infamous character, occupied another portion of the city. A third, whose leader was named Simon, a man known for crime and courage, held still another section. These three parties kept Jerusalem in tumult. There were ferocious battles in the streets; houses were plundered, families slain, and when Titus encamped before the walls, he had before him a city [Pg 296] distracted by civil war and its streets filled with blood and carnage.

The story of the siege of Jerusalem is far too long a one to be told in detail. Several times during the siege Titus offered terms of pardon and amnesty to the besieged, but all in vain. Divided as they were among themselves, they were united in hostility to Rome. The siege began and proceeded with the usual energy shown by a Roman army. Mounds were erected, forts built, warlike engines constructed. Darts and other weapons were rained into the city, great stones

were flung from engines, every resource known to ancient war was practised. A breach was at length made in the walls, the soldiers rushed in, sword in hand, and the section of the city known as Salem was captured. Five days afterwards Bezetha, a hill to the north of the Temple, was taken by Titus, but he was here so furiously assailed by the garrison that he was forced to retreat to his camp.

Some days of quiet now followed, while the Romans prepared for a second attack. The factions in the city, fancying that their foes had withdrawn in despair, at once resumed their feuds, and the streets again ran with blood. John invaded the Temple precincts, overcame the party of Eleazer, and a general massacre followed which desecrated With slaughter every part of the holy place.

Soon the Romans advanced again, and the two remaining factions united in defence. Now the Romans penetrated the city, now they were driven out in a fierce charge, and their camp nearly [Pg 297] taken. And now famine came to add to the horrors of the siege, and made frightful havoc in the dense multitude with which every part of the city was thronged. The dead and dying filled the streets, the wounded soldiers perished of starvation, groans and lamentations resounded in every quarter; to rid themselves of the hosts of dead John and Simon had them thrown from the walls, to fester in heaps before the Roman works. Among the scenes of horror related, a woman was seen to kill and devour her own infant child.

At length the Romans made such progress that all the city was theirs except the Temple enclosure, into which the remainder of the garrison had gathered. Titus wished to save this famous structure, and made a last effort to end the siege by peaceful measures. Josephus, the Jewish historian, who had been taken prisoner during the war, and was now in his camp, was sent into the city, with an offer of amnesty if they would even now yield. The offer was refused, and Titus saw that but one thing remained.

On the next day the assault on Mount Moriah began. The Jews fought with fierce courage, but the close lines and steady discipline of the legions prevailed. The defenders, after a bitter resistance, were forced back; the assailants furiously pursued; the inner court of the Temple was entered; in the uproar of the furious strife the orders of Titus and his officers to save the Temple were unheard; all was tumult, the roar of battle, the shedding of blood. The Jews fought with frantic obstinacy, but their undisciplined valor failed to affect the steady discipline or break the [Pg 298] close array of the legions. Many fled in despair to the sanctuary. Here were gathered priests and prophets, who still declared the Lord of Hosts was on their side, and that He would protect His holy seat.

Even while these assurances were being given the assailants forced the gates. The eyes of the avaricious Romans rested on the golden and glittering ornaments of the Temple, and they sought more fiercely than ever to hew their way through flesh and blood to these alluring treasures. One soldier, frantic with the fury of the fight, snatched a flaming ember from some burning materials, and, lifted by a comrade, set fire to a gilded window of the Temple. Almost in an instant the flames flared upward, and the despairing Jews saw that their holy house was doomed. A great groan of agony burst from their lips. Many occupied themselves in vain efforts to quench the flames; others flung themselves in despairing rage on the Romans, heedless of life now that all they lived for was perishing.

Titus, on learning what had been done, ran in all haste to the scene, and loudly ordered the soldiers to extinguish the flames, signalling to the same effect with his hand. But his voice was drowned in the uproar and his signals were not understood, while the thirst for plunder carried the soldiers beyond all restraint. The holy place of the Temple was still intact. This Titus entered, and was so impressed with its beauty and splendor that he made a strenuous effort to save it from destruction. In vain he begged and threatened. While some of the soldiery tore with wolfish [Pg 299] fury at its gold, others fired its gates, and soon the Holy of Holies itself was in a blaze, and the whole Temple wrapped in devouring flames.

The rapacious soldiers raged through the buildings, rending from them everything of value which the fire had left untouched. The defenders fell by thousands. Great numbers perished in the flames. A multitude of fugitives, including women and children, sought refuge in the outer cloisters. These were set on fire by the furious soldiers, and thousands were swept away by the pitiless hand of death. Word was brought to Titus that a number of priests stood on the outside wall, begging for their lives. "It is too late," he replied; "the priests ought not to survive their temple." Retiring to an outer fort, he gazed with deep regret on the devouring conflagration, saying, "The God of the Jews has fought against them: to him we owe our victory."

Thus perished the Temple of Jerusalem, a magnificent structure, for ages the pride and glory of the Jews. First erected by Solomon, eleven centuries before, it was burnt by the Babylonians five hundred years afterwards. It was rebuilt by Haggai, in the reign of King Cyrus of Persia, and had now stood more than six hundred years, enlarged and adorned from time to time. But Christ had said, "There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." This prophetic utterance was now fulfilled. Thenceforward there was no Temple of the Jews.

But more fighting remained. The defenders made their way into the upper city on Mount Sion, [Pg 300] and here held out bitterly still, rejecting the terms offered them by Titus of unconditional surrender. The place was strong, and defended by towers that were almost impregnable. Better terms might have been extorted from Titus had John and Simon, the leaders of the party of defence, been as brave as they were blatant. But after refusing surrender they lost heart, and hid

themselves in subterranean vaults, leaving their deluded followers to their own devices. The end came soon. A breach was made in the walls. The legions entered, sword in hand, and with the rage of slaughter in heart. A dreadful carnage followed. Neither sex nor age was spared. According to Josephus, not less than one million one hundred thousand persons perished during this terrible siege. Of those that remained alive the most flagrant were put to death, some were reserved to grace the victor's triumph, and the others were sent to Egypt to be sold as slaves. As for the city, it had been in great part consumed by flames. Thus ended the rebellion of the Jews. To rule or ruin was the terrible motto of Rome.

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THE DESTRUCTION OF POMPEII.

On the eastern margin of the Bay of Naples, where it serves as a striking background to the city of that name, stands the renowned Vesuvius, the most celebrated volcano in the world. During many centuries before the Christian era it had been a dead and silent mountain. Throughout the earlier period of Roman history the people of Campania treated it with the contempt of ignorance, planting their vineyards on its fertile slopes and building their towns and villages around its base. Under the shadow of the silent mountain armies met and fought, and its crater was made the fort and lurking-place of Spartacus and his party of gladiators. But the time was at hand in which a more terrible enemy than a band of vengeful rebels was to emerge from that threatening cavity.

The sleeping giant first showed signs of waking from his long slumber in 63 A.D., when earthquake convulsions shook the surrounding lands. These tremblings of the earth continued at intervals for sixteen years, doing much damage. At length, on the 24th of August of the year 79, came the culminating event. With a tremendous and terrible explosion the whole top of the mountain was torn out, and vast clouds of steam and volcanic ashes were hurled high into the air, lit into lurid light by the crimson gleams of the boiling lava below.

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The scene was a frightful one. The vast, tree-like cloud, kindled throughout its length by almost incessant flashes of lightning; the fiery glare that gleamed upward from the glowing lava; the total darkness that overspread the surrounding country as the dense mass of volcanic dust floated outward, a darkness only relieved by the glare that attended each new explosion, formed a spectacle of terror to make the stoutest heart quail, and to fill the weak and ignorant with dread of a final overthrow of the earth and its inhabitants.

The elder Pliny, the famous naturalist, was then in command of a fleet at Misenum, in the vicinity. Led by his scientific interest, he approached the volcano to examine the eruption more closely, and fell a victim to the falling ashes or the choking fumes of sulphur that filled the air. His nephew, Pliny the younger, then only a boy of eighteen, has given a lucid account of what took place, in letters to the historian Tacitus. After describing the journey and death of his uncle, he goes on to speak of the violent earthquakes that shook the ground during the night. He continues with the story of the next day:

"Though it was now morning, the light was exceedingly faint and languid; the buildings all around us tottered, and though we stood upon open ground, yet, as the place was narrow and confined, there was no remaining there without certain and great danger; we therefore resolved to leave the town. The people followed us in the utmost consternation, and, as to a mind distracted with terror every suggestion seems more prudent than its own, pressed in great crowds about us in our way out.

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"Being got at a convenient distance from the houses, we stood still, in the midst of a most dangerous and dreadful scene. The chariots which we had ordered to be drawn out were so agitated backward and forward, though upon the most level ground, that we could not keep them steady, even by supporting them with large stones. The sea seemed to roll back upon itself, and to be driven from its banks by the convulsive motion of the earth; it is certain, at least, that the shore was considerably enlarged, and several sea-animals were left upon it. At the other side a black and dreadful cloud, bursting with an igneous serpentine vapor, darted out a long train of fire, resembling flashes of lightning, but much larger....

"Soon afterwards the cloud seemed to descend and cover the whole ocean, as indeed it entirely hid the island of Capreæ and the promontory of Misenum. My mother strongly conjured me to make my escape at any rate, which, as I was young, I might easily do; as for herself, she said, her age and corpulence rendered all attempts of that sort impossible. However, she would willingly meet death if she could have the satisfaction of seeing that she was not the occasion of mine. But I absolutely refused to leave her, and, taking her by the hand, I led her on; she complied with great reluctance, and not without many reproaches to herself for retarding my flight.

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"The ashes now began to fall on us, though in no great quantity. I turned my head, and observed behind us a thick smoke, which came rolling after us like a torrent. I proposed, while

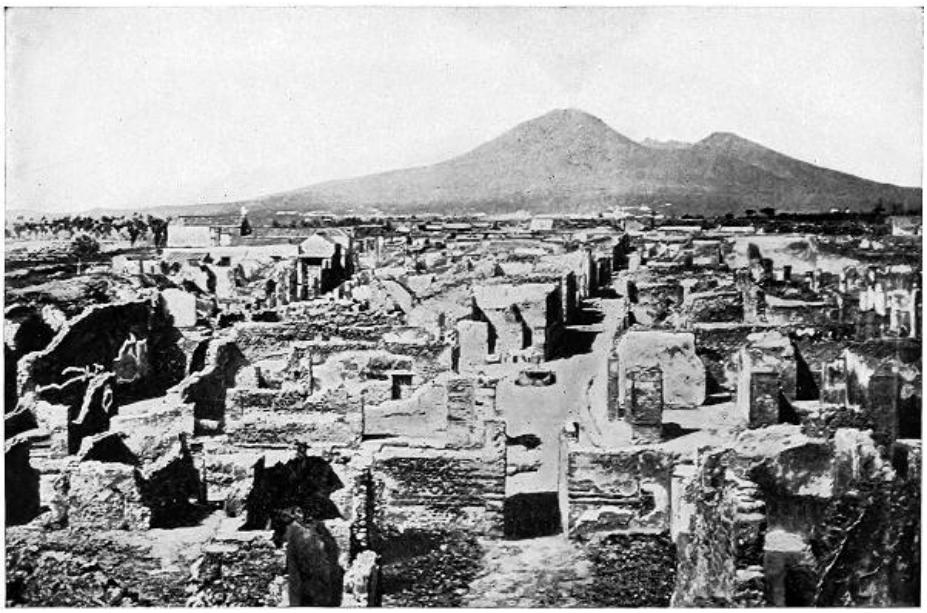
we yet had any light, to turn out of the high-road, lest she should be pressed to death in the dark by the crowd that followed us. We had scarce stepped out of the path when darkness overspread us, not like that of a cloudy night or when there is no moon, but of a room when it is shut up and all the lights extinct. Nothing then was to be heard but the shrieks of women, the screams of children, and the cries of men; some calling for their children, others for their parents, others for their husbands, and only distinguishing each other by their voices; one lamenting his own fate, another that of his family; some wishing to die from the very fear of dying; some lifting their hands to the gods; but the greater part imagining that the last and eternal night was come, which was to destroy the gods and the world together.

"Among these were some who augmented the real terrors by imaginary ones, and made the frightened multitude falsely believe that Misenum was in flames. At length a glimmering light appeared, which we imagined to be rather the forerunner of an approaching burst of flames, as in truth it was, than the return of day. However, the fire fell at a distance from us; then again we were immersed in thick darkness, and a heavy shower of ashes rained upon us, which we were [Pg 305] obliged every now and then to shake off, otherwise we should have been crushed and buried in the heap. I might boast that during all this scene of horror not a sigh or expression of fear escaped from me, had not my support been found in that miserable, though strong, consolation, that all mankind were involved in the same calamity, and that I imagined I was perishing with the world itself.

"At last this dreadful darkness was dissipated by degrees, like a cloud of smoke; the real day returned, and even the sun appeared, though very faintly, and as when an eclipse is coming on. Every object that presented itself to our eyes seemed changed, being covered over with white ashes, as with a deep snow."

This graphic story repeats the experience of thousands on that fatal occasion, in which great numbers perished, while many lost their all. Villas of wealthy Romans were numerous in the vicinity of the volcano, while among the several towns which surrounded it three were utterly destroyed,—Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Stabiæ. Of these much the most famous is Pompeii, which, being buried in ashes, has proved far easier of exploration than Herculaneum, which was overwhelmed with torrents of mud, caused by heavy rains on the volcanic ash.

Pompeii was an old town, built more than six hundred years before, and occupied at the time of its destruction by the aristocracy of Rome. Triumphal arches were erected there in honor of Caligula and Nero, who probably honored it by visits. It possessed costly temples, handsome [Pg 306] theatres and other public buildings, luxurious residences, and all the ostentatious magnificence arising from the wealth of the proud patricians of Rome.



THE RUINS OF POMPEII.

What Pompeii was in its best days we are not now able to estimate. It was essentially, in its architecture, a Greek city, rich and artistic, gay and luxurious. But on February 5, 63 A.D., came the first of the long series of earthquakes, and when it ended nearly all of old Pompeii was levelled with the ground. It was not yet a lost city, but was a thoroughly ruined one. In the years that followed it was rapidly rebuilt, Roman architecture and decoration, of often tawdry and inferior character, replacing the chaste and artistic Greek. Once more the city became a centre of gayety, ostentation, and licentiousness, when, in 79 A.D., the eruption of Vesuvius came, and the overwhelming storm of ashes came down like a thick-descending fall of snow on the doomed city.

The description given by Pliny relates to a less endangered point. Upon Pompeii the ashes settled down in seemingly unending volumes, continuing for three days, during which all was enveloped in darkness and gloom. The citizens fled in terror, such as were able to, though many perished and were buried deep in their ruined homes. On the fourth day the sun began to reappear, as if shining through a fog, and the bolder fugitives returned in search of their lost property.

What they saw must have been frightfully disheartening. Where the busy city had stood was [Pg 307] now a level plain of white ashes, so deep that not a house-top could be seen, and only the upper walls of the great theatre and the amphitheatre were visible. Digging into the fleecy ashes, many of them recovered articles of value, while thieves also may have reaped a rich harvest. The emperor Titus even undertook to clear and rebuild the city, but soon abandoned the task as too costly a one, and for many centuries afterwards Pompeii remained buried in mud and ashes, lost to the world, its site forgotten, and the forms of many of its old inhabitants preserved intact in the bed of ashes in which they had perished.

It was only in 1748 that its site was recognized, and only since 1860 has there been a systematic effort to dig the old city out of its grave. At present nearly one-half—the most important half—of Pompeii has been laid bare, and we are able to see for ourselves how the Romans lived. The narrow streets, fourteen to twenty-four feet wide, are well paved with blocks of lava, which are cut into deep ruts by the wheels of chariots that rolled over them two thousand years ago. On each side rise the walls of houses, two, and sometimes three, stories in height, and some of them richly painted and adorned, while walls and columns are brightly painted in red, blue, and yellow, which must have given the old city a gay and festive hue.

The ornaments, articles of furniture, and domestic utensils found in these houses go far to teach us the modes of life in Roman times, and reveal to us that the Romans possessed many comforts and conveniences for which we had not given them credit. [Pg 308] Even the forms of the inhabitants have in many cases been recovered. Though these forms have long vanished, the hollows made by their bodies in the hardened ashes in which they lay and slowly decayed have remained unchanged, and by pouring liquid plaster of Paris into these cavities perfect casts have been obtained, showing the exact shape of face and body, and even every fold of the clothes of these victims of Vesuvius eighteen hundred years ago. They are not altogether pleasant to see, for they express the agony of those caught in the swift descending death of the falling volcanic shroud, but as tenants of an archæological museum they stand unrivalled in lifelike fidelity.

Herculaneum, which was buried to a depth of from forty to one hundred feet, and with wet material which has grown much harder than the ashes of Pompeii, has been but little explored. It was the larger and more important city of the two, while none of its treasures could have been recovered by their owners. The art relics found there far exceed in interest and value those of Pompeii, but the work is so difficult that as yet very little has been done in the task of restoring this "dead city of Campania" to the light of the modern day.

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AN IMPERIAL SAVAGE.

We have now reached the period in which began the decline and fall of the Roman empire. Its story is crowded with events, but lacks those dramatic and romantic incidents which give such interest to the history of early Rome. Now good emperors ruled, now bad ones followed, now peace prevailed, now war raged; the story grows monotonous as we advance. The reigns of virtuous emperors yield much to commend but little to describe; those of wicked emperors repel us by their enormities and disgust us by their follies. We must end our tales with a few selections from the long and somewhat dreary list.

EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF MARCUS AURELIUS.

After Vespasian came to the throne, a period of nearly two centuries elapsed during most of which Rome was governed by men of virtue and ability, though cursed for a time by the reigns of the cruel Domitian, the dissolute Commodus, the base Caracalla, and the foolish Elagabalus. Fortunately, none of the monsters who disgraced the empire reigned long. Assassination purified the throne. The total length of reign of the cruel monarchs of Rome covered no long space of time, though they occupy a great space in history.

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We have now to tell how the patrician families of Rome lost their hold upon the throne, and a barbarian peasant became lord and master of this vast empire, of which his ancestors of a few generations before had perhaps scarcely heard. The story is an interesting one, and well worth repeating.

Just after the year 200 A.D. the emperor Septimius Severus, father of the notorious Caracalla, while returning from an expedition to the East, halted in Thrace to celebrate, with military games, the birthday of Geta, his youngest son. The spectacle was an enticing one, and the country-people for many miles round gathered in crowds to gaze upon their sovereign and behold the promised sports.

Among those who came was a young barbarian of such gigantic stature and great muscular development as to excite the attention of all who saw him. In a rude dialect, which those who heard could barely understand, he asked if he might take part in the wrestling exercises and contend for the prize. This the officers would not permit. For a Roman soldier to be overthrown by a Thracian peasant, as seemed likely to be the result, would be a disgrace not to be risked. But he might try, if he would, with the camp followers, some of the stoutest of whom were chosen to contend with him. Of these he laid no less than sixteen, in succession, on the ground.

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Here was a man worth having in the ranks. Some gifts were given him, and he was told that he might enlist, if he chose; a privilege he was quick to accept. The next day the peasant, happy in the thought of being a soldier, was seen among a crowd of recruits, dancing and exulting in rustic fashion, while his head towered above them all.

The emperor, who was passing in the march, looked at him with interest and approval, and as he rode onward the new recruit ran up to his horse, and followed him on foot during a long and rapid journey without the least appearance of fatigue.

This remarkable endurance astonished Severus. "Thracian," he said, "are you prepared to wrestle after your race?"

"Ready and willing," answered the youth, with alacrity.

Some of the strongest soldiers of the army were now selected and pitted against him, and he overthrew seven of them in rapid succession. The emperor, delighted with this matchless display of vigor and agility, presented him with a golden collar in reward, and ordered that he should be placed in the horse-guards that formed his personal escort.

The new recruit, Maximin by name, was a true barbarian, though born in the empire. His father was a Goth, his mother of the nation of the Alani. But he had judgment and shrewdness,

and a valor equal to his strength, and soon advanced in the favor of the emperor, who was a good judge of merit. Fierce and impetuous by nature, experience of the world taught him to restrain these qualities, and he advanced in position until he attained the rank of centurion.

After the death of Severus the Thracian served with equal fidelity under his son Caracalla, whose favor and esteem he won. During the short reign of the profligate and effeminate [Pg 312] Elagabalus, Maximin withdrew from the court, but he returned when Alexander Severus, one of the noblest of Roman emperors, came to the throne. The new monarch was familiar with his ability and the incidents of his unusual career, and raised him to the responsible post of tribune of the fourth legion, which, under his rigid care, soon became the best disciplined in the whole army. He was the favorite of the soldiers under his command, who bestowed on their gigantic leader the names of Ajax and Hercules, and rejoiced as he steadily rose in rank under the discriminating judgment of the emperor. Step by step he was advanced until he reached the highest rank in the army, and, but for the evident marks of his savage origin, the emperor might have given his own sister in marriage to the son of his favorite general.

The incautious emperor was nursing a serpent. The favors poured upon the Thracian peasant failed to secure his fidelity, and only nourished his ambition. He began to aspire to the highest place in the empire, which had been won by many soldiers before him. Licentiousness and profligacy had sapped the strength of the army during the weak preceding reigns, and Alexander sought earnestly to overcome this corruption and restore the rigid ancient discipline. It was too great a task for one of his lenient disposition. The soldiers were furious at his restrictions, many mutinies broke out, his officers were murdered, his authority was widely insulted, he could scarcely repress the disorders that broke out in his immediate presence.

This sentiment in the army offered the opportunity desired by Maximin. He sent his emissaries [Pg 313] among the soldiers to enhance their discontent. For thirteen years, said these men, Rome had been governed by a weak Syrian, the slave of his mother and the senate. It was time the empire had a man at its head, a real soldier, who could add to its glory and win new treasures for his followers.

Alexander had been engaged in a war with Persia. He had no sooner returned than an outbreak in Germany forced him to hasten to the Rhine. Here a large army was assembled, made up in part of new levies, whose training in the art of war was given to the care of Maximin. The discipline exacted by Alexander was no more acceptable to the soldiers here than elsewhere, and the secret agents of the ambitious Thracian found fertile ground for their insinuations.

At length all was ripe for the outbreak. One day—March 19, 239 A.D.—as Maximin entered the field of exercise, the troops suddenly saluted him as emperor, and silenced by violent exclamations his obstinate show of refusal. The rebels rushed to the tent of Alexander and consummated their conspiracy by striking him dead. His most faithful friends perished with him; others were dismissed from court and army; and some suffered the cruelest treatment from the unfeeling usurper. Thus it was that the imperial dignity descended from the noblest citizens of Rome to a peasant of a distant province of barbarian origin. It was one of the most striking steps in the decline of the empire.

The new emperor was a man of extraordinary physical powers. He is said to have been more [Pg 314] than eight feet in height, while his strength and appetite were in accordance with his gigantic stature. It is stated that he could drink seven gallons of wine and eat thirty or forty pounds of meat in a day, and could move a loaded wagon with his arms, break a horse's leg with his fist, crumble stones in his hands, and tear up small trees by the roots. His mental powers did not accord with his physical ones. He was savage of aspect, ignorant of civilized arts, destitute of accomplishments, and ruthless in disposition.

He had the virtues of the camp, and these had endeared him to the soldiers, but his barbarian origin, his savage appearance, and his rudeness and ignorance were the contempt of cultivated people, and had gained him many rebuffs in his humbler days. He was now in a position to revenge himself, not only on the haughty nobles who had treated him with contempt, but even on former friends who were aware of his mean origin,—of which he was heartily ashamed. For both these crimes many were put to death, and the slaughter of several of his former benefactors has stained the memory of Maximin with the basest ingratitude.

Rome, in the strange progress of its history, had raised a savage to the imperial seat, and it suffered accordingly. A scion of the despised barbarians of the northern forests was now its emperor, and he visited on the proud citizens of Rome the wrongs of his ancestors. The suspicion and cruelty of Maximin were unbounded and unrelenting. A consular senator named Magnus was [Pg 315] accused of a conspiracy against his life. Without trial or opportunity for defence Magnus was put to death, with no less than four thousand supposed accomplices.

This was but an incident in a frightful reign of terror. The emperor kept aloof from his capital, but he filled Rome, and the whole empire, in fact, with spies and informers. The slightest accusation or suspicion was sufficient for the blood-thirsty tyrant. On a mere unproved charge Roman nobles of the highest descent—men who had served as consuls, governed provinces, commanded armies, enjoyed triumphs—were seized, chained on the public carriages, and borne away to the distant camp of the low-born tyrant.

Here they found neither justice nor compassion. Exile, confiscation, and ordinary execution were mild measures with Maximin. Some of the unfortunates were clubbed to death, some

exposed to wild beasts, some sewed in the hides of slaughtered animals and left to perish. The worst enormities of Caligula and Nero were rivalled by this rude soldier, who, during the three years of his reign, disdained to visit either Rome or Italy, and permitted no men of high birth, elegant accomplishments, or knowledge of public business to approach his person. His imperial seat shifted from a camp on the Rhine to one on the Danube, and his sole idea of government seems to have been the execution of the suspected.

It was the great that suffered, and to this the people were indifferent. But they all felt his avarice. The soldiers demanded rewards, and the empire was drained to supply them. By a single [Pg 316] edict all the stored-up revenue of the cities was taken to supply Maximin's treasury. The temples were robbed of their treasures, and the statues of gods, heroes, and emperors were melted down and converted into coin. A general cry of indignation against this impiety rose throughout the Roman world, and it was evident that the end of this frightful tyranny was approaching.

An insurrection broke out in Africa. It was supported in Rome. But it ended in failure, the Gordians, father and son, who headed it, were slain, and the senate and nobles of Rome fell into mortal terror. They looked for a frightful retribution from the imperial monster. With the courage of despair they took the only step that remained: two new emperors, Maximus and Balbinus, were appointed, and active steps taken to defend Italy and Rome.

There was no time to be lost. News of these revolutionary movements had roused in Maximin the rage of a wild beast. All who approached his person were in danger, even his son and nearest friends. Under his command was a large, well-disciplined, and experienced army. He was a soldier of acknowledged valor and military ability. The rebels, with their hasty levies and untried commanders, had everything to fear.

They took judicious steps. When the troops of Maximin, crossing the Julian Alps, reached the borders of Italy, they were terrified by the silence and desolation that prevailed. The villages and open towns had been abandoned, the bridges destroyed, the cattle driven away, the provisions [Pg 317] removed, the country made a desert. The people had gathered into the walled cities, which were plentifully provisioned and garrisoned. The purpose of the senate was to weaken Maximin by famine and retard him by siege.

The first city assailed was Aquileia, It was fully provisioned and vigorously defended, the inhabitants preferring death on their walls to death by the tyrant's order. Yet Rome was in imminent danger. Maximin might at any moment abandon the siege of a frontier city and march upon the capital. There was no army capable of opposing him. The fate of Rome hung upon a thread.

The hand of an assassin cut that thread. The severity of the weather, the growth of disease, the lack of food, had spread disaffection through Maximin's army. Ignorant of the true state of affairs, many of the soldiers feared that the whole empire was in arms against them. The tyrant, vexed at the obstinate defence of Aquileia, visited his anger on his men, and roused a stern desire for revenge. The end came soon. A party of Prætorian guards, in dread for their wives and children, who were in the camp of Alba, near Rome, broke into sudden revolt, entered Maximin's tent, and killed him, his son, and the principal ministers of his tyranny.

The whole army sympathized with this impulsive act. The heads of the dead, borne on the points of spears, were shown the garrison, and at once the gates were thrown open, the hungry troops supplied with food, and a general fraternization took place. Joy in the fall of the tyrant was [Pg 318] universal throughout the empire, the two new emperors entered Rome in a triumphal procession, people and nobles alike went wild with enthusiasm, and the belief was entertained that a golden age was to succeed the age of iron that had come to an end. Yet within three months afterwards both the new emperors were massacred in the streets of Rome, and the hoped-for era of happiness and prosperity vanished before the swelling tide of oppression, demoralization, and decline.

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THE DEEDS OF CONSTANTINE.

In the century that followed the reign of Maximin great changes came upon the empire of Rome. The process of decline went steadily on. The city of Rome sank in importance as the centre of the empire. The armies were recruited from former barbarian tribes; many of the emperors reigned in the field; the savage inmates of the northern forests, hitherto sternly restrained, now began to gain a footing within the borders; the Goths plundered Greece; the Persians took Armenia; the day of the downfall of the great empire was coming, slowly but surely. One important event during this period, the rebellion of Zenobia and the ruin of Palmyra, we have told in "Tales of Greece." There are two other events to be told: the rise of Christianity, and the founding of a new capital of the empire.

From the date of the death of Christ, the Christian religion made continual progress in the city

and empire of Rome. Despite the contempt with which its believers were viewed, despite the persecution to which they were subjected, despite frequent massacres and martyrdoms, their numbers rapidly increased, and the many superstitions of the empire gradually gave way before the doctrines of human brotherhood, infinite love and mercy, and the eternal existence and happiness of those who believed in Christ and practised virtue. By the time of the accession of the great emperor Constantine, 306 A.D., the Christians were so numerous in the army and populace of the empire that they had to be dealt with more mercifully than of old, and their teachings were no longer confined to the lowly, but ascended to the level of the throne itself.

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The traditional story handed down to us is that Constantine, in his struggle with Maxentius for the empire of the West, saw in the sky, above the mid-day sun, a great luminous cross, marked with the words, "*In hoc signo vinces*" ("In this sign conquer"). The whole army beheld this amazing object; and during the following night Christ appeared to the emperor in a vision, and directed him to march against his enemies under the standard of the cross. Another writer claims that a whole army of divine warriors were seen descending from the sky, and flying to the aid of Constantine.

ARCH OF TITUS, ROME.

It may be said that both these stories, though told by devout authors, greatly lack probability. But, whatever the cause, Constantine became a professed Christian, and as such availed himself of the enthusiastic support of the Christians of his army. By an edict issued at Milan, 313 A.D., he gave civil rights and toleration to the Christians throughout the empire, and not long afterwards proclaimed Christianity the religion of the state, though the pagan worship was still tolerated.

This highly important act of Constantine was followed by another of great importance, the establishment of a new capital of the Roman empire, one which was destined to keep alive some shadow of that empire for many centuries after Rome itself had become the capital of a kingdom of barbarians. On the European bank of the Bosphorus, the channel which connects the Sea of Marmora with the Black Sea, had for ages stood the city of Byzantium, which played an important part in Grecian history.

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On the basis of this old city Constantine resolved to build a new one, worthy his greatness. The situation was much more central than that of Rome, and was admirably chosen for the government of an empire that extended as far to the east in Asia as to the west in Europe, while it was at once defended by nature against hostile attack and open to the benefits of commercial intercourse. This, then, was the site chosen for the new capital, and here the city of Constantinople arose.

We have, in our first chapter, described how Romulus laid out the walls of Rome. With equally impressive ceremonies Constantine traced those of the new capital of the empire. Lance in hand, and followed by a solemn procession, the emperor walked over a route of such extent that his

assistants cried out in astonishment that he had already exceeded the dimensions of a great city.

"I shall still advance," said Constantine, "till He, the invisible guide who marches before me, thinks proper to stop."

From the eastern promontory to that part of the Bosphorus known as the "Golden Gate," the city extended along the strait about three Roman miles. Its circumference measured between ten [Pg 322] and eleven, the space embraced equalling about two thousand acres. Upon the five hills enclosed within this space, which, to those who approach Constantinople, rise above each other in beautiful order, was built the new city, the choicest marble and the most costly and showy materials being abundantly employed to add grandeur and splendor to the natural beauty of the site.

A great multitude of builders and architects were employed in raising the walls and building the edifices of the imperial city, while the treasures of the empire were spent without stint in the effort to make it an unequalled monument. In that day the art of architecture had greatly declined, but for the adornment of the city there were to be had the noblest productions the world had ever known, the works of the most celebrated artists of the age of Pericles.

These were amply employed. To adorn the new city, the cities of Greece and Asia were despoiled of their choicest treasures of art. In the Forum was placed a lofty column of porphyry, one hundred and twenty feet in height, on whose summit stood a colossal statue of Apollo, supposed to be the work of Phidias. In the stately circus or hippodrome, the space between the goals, round which the chariots turned in their swift flight, was filled with ancient statues and obelisks. Here was also a trophy of striking historical value, the bodies of three serpents twisted into a pillar of brass, which once supported the golden tripod that was consecrated by the Greeks [Pg 323] in the temple of Delphi after the defeat of Xerxes. It still exists, as the choicest antiquarian relic of the city.

The palace was a magnificent edifice, hardly surpassed by that of Rome itself. The baths were enriched with lofty columns, handsome marbles, and more than threescore statues of brass. The city contained numbers of other magnificent public buildings, and over four thousand noble residences, which towered above the multitude of plebeian dwellings. As for its wealth and population, these, in less than a century, vied with those of Rome itself.

With such energy did Constantine push the work on his city that its principal edifices were finished in a few years,—or in a few months, as one authority states, though this statement seems to lack probability. This done, the founder dedicated his new capital with the most impressive ceremonies, and with games and largesses to the people of the greatest pomp and cost. An edict, engraved on a marble column, gave to the new city the title of Second or New Rome. But this official title died, as the accepted name of the city, almost as soon as it was born. Constantinople, the "city of Constantine," became the popular name, and so it continues till this day in Christian acceptation. In reality, however, the city has suffered another change of name, for its present possessors, the Turks, know it by the name of Stambol.

An interesting ceremony succeeded. With every return of the birthday of the city, a statue of Constantine, made of gilt wood and bearing in its right hand a small image of the genius of the [Pg 324] city, was placed on a triumphal car, and drawn in solemn procession through the Hippodrome, attended by the guards, who carried white tapers and were dressed in their richest robes. When it came opposite the throne of the reigning emperor, he rose from his seat, and, with grateful reverence, paid homage to the statue of the founder. Thus it was that Byzantium was replaced by Constantinople, and thus was the founder of the new capital held in honor.

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THE GOTHS CROSS THE DANUBE.

The doom of Rome was at hand. Its empire had extended almost inimitably to the east and west, had crossed the sea and deeply penetrated the desert to the south, but had failed in its advances to the north. The Rhine and the Danube here formed its boundaries. The great forest region which lay beyond these, with its hosts of blue-eyed and fair-skinned barbarians, defied the armies of Rome. Here and there the forest was penetrated, hundreds of thousands of its tenants were slain, yet Rome failed to subdue its swarming tribes, and simply taught them the principle of combination and the art of war. Early in the history of Rome it was taken and burnt by the Gauls. Raids of barbarians across the border were frequent in its later history. As Rome grew weaker, the tribes of the north grew bolder and stronger. The armies of the empire were kept busy in holding the lines of the Rhine and the Danube. At length Roman weakness and incompetency permitted this barrier to be broken, and the beginning of the end was at hand. This is the important event which we have now to describe.

In the year 375 A.D. there existed a great Gothic kingdom in the north, extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea, under the rule of an able monarch named Hermanric, who had conquered [Pg 326]

and combined numerous tribes into a single nation. On this nation, just as assassination removed the Gothic conqueror, descended a vast and frightful horde from northern Asia, the mighty invasion of the Huns, which was to shake to its heart the empire of Rome.

The Ostrogoths (Eastern Goths) were conquered by this savage horde. The Visigoths (Western Goths), stricken with mortal fear, hurried to the Danube and implored the Romans to save them from annihilation. For many miles along the banks of the river extended the panic-stricken multitude, with outstretched arms and pathetic lamentations, praying for permission to cross. If settled on the waste lands of Thrace they would pledge themselves to be faithful subjects of Rome, to obey its laws and guard its limits.

Sympathy and pity counselled the emperor to grant the request. Political considerations bade him refuse. To admit such a host of warlike barbarians to the empire was full of danger. Finally they were permitted to cross, under two stringent conditions: they must deliver up their arms, and they must yield their children, who were to be taken to Asia, educated, and held as hostages. Such was the first fatal step in the overthrow of Rome.

The task of crossing was a difficult one. The Danube there was more than a mile wide, and had been swollen with rains. A large fleet of boats and vessels was provided, but it took many days and nights to transport the mighty host, and numbers of them were swept away and drowned by [Pg 327] the rapid current. Probably the whole multitude numbered nearly a million, of whom two hundred thousand were warriors.

Of the conditions made only one was carried out. The children of the Goths were removed, and taken to the distant lands chosen for their residence. But the arms were not given up. The Roman officers were bribed to let the warriors retain their weapons, and in a short time a great army of armed barbarians was encamped on the southern bank of the Danube.

These new subjects of Rome were treated in a way well calculated to convert them into enemies. The officials of Thrace disobeyed the orders of the emperor, sold the Goths the meanest food at extravagant prices, and by their rapacious avarice bitterly irritated them. While this was going on, the Ostrogoths also appeared on the Danube, and solicited permission to cross. Valens, the emperor, refused. He was beginning to fear that he had already too many subjects of that race. But the discontent of the Visigoths had drawn the soldiers from the stream and left it unguarded. The Ostrogoths seized vessels and built rafts. They crossed without opposition. Soon a new and hostile army was encamped upon the territory of the Roman empire.

The discontent of the Visigoths was not long in breaking into open war. They had marched to Marcianopolis, seventy miles from the Danube. Here Lupicinus, one of the governors of Thrace, invited the Gothic chiefs to a splendid entertainment. Their guards remained under arms at the [Pg 328] entrance to the palace. But the gates of the city were closely guarded, and the Goths outside were refused the use of a plentiful market, to which they claimed admission as subjects of Rome.

The citizens treated them with insult and derision. The Goths grew angry. Words led to blows. A sword was drawn, and the first blood shed in a long and ruinous war. Lupicinus was told that many of his soldiers had been slain. Heated with wine, he gave orders that they should be revenged by the death of the Gothic guards at the palace gates.

The shouts and groans in the street warned Fritigern, the Gothic king, of his danger. At a word from him his comrades at the banquet drew their swords, forced their way from the palace and through the streets, and, mounting their horses, rode with all speed to their camp, and told their followers what had occurred. Instantly cries of vengeance and warlike shouts arose, war was resolved upon by the chiefs, the banners of the host were displayed, and the sound of the trumpets carried afar the hostile warning.

Lupicinus hastily collected such troops as he could command and advanced against the barbarians; but the Roman ranks were broken and the legions slaughtered, while their guilty leader was forced to fly for his life. "That successful day put an end to the distress of the barbarians and the security of the Romans," says a Gothic historian.

The imprudence of Valens had introduced a nation of warriors into the heart of the empire; the venality of the officials had converted them into enemies; Valens, instead of seeking to remove [Pg 329] their causes of hostility, marched with an army against them. We cannot here describe the various conflicts that took place. It will suffice to say that other barbarians crossed the Danube, and that even some of the Huns joined the army of Fritigern. The borders of the empire were effectually broken, and the forest myriads swarmed unchecked into the empire.

On August 9, 378, the Emperor Valens, inspired by ambition and moved by the demands of the ignorant multitude, left the strong walls of Adrianople and marched to attack the Goths, who were encamped twelve miles away. The result was fatal. The Romans, exhausted with their march, suffering from heat and thirst, confused and ill-organized, met with a complete defeat. The emperor was slain on the field or burnt to death in a hut to which he had been carried wounded, hundreds of distinguished officers perished, more than two-thirds of the army were destroyed, and the darkness of the night only saved the rest. Valens had been badly punished for his imprudence and the Romans for their venality.

This signal victory of the Goths was followed by a siege of Adrianople. But the barbarians knew nothing of the art of attacking stone walls, and quickly gave up the impossible task. From Adrianople they marched to Constantinople, but were forced to content themselves with ravaging

the suburbs and gazing, with impotent desire, on the city's distant splendor. Then, laden with the rich spoils of the suburbs, they marched southward through Thrace, and spread over the face of a [Pg 330] fertile and cultivated country extending as far as the confines of Italy, their course being everywhere marked with massacre, conflagration, and rapine, until some of the fairest regions of the empire were turned almost into a desert. It may be that the numbers of Romans who perished from this invasion equalled those of the Goths whom imprudent compassion had delivered from the Huns.

As regards the children of the Goths, who had been distributed in the provinces of Asia Minor, there remains a cruel story to tell. Though given the education and taught the arts of the Romans, they did not forget their origin, and the suspicion arose that they were plotting to repeat in Asia the deeds of their fathers in Europe. Julius, who commanded the troops after the death of Valens, took bloody measures to prevent any such calamity. The youthful Goths were bidden to assemble, on a stated day, in the capital cities of their provinces, the hint being given that they were to receive gifts of land and money. On the appointed day they were collected unarmed in the Forum of each city, the surrounding streets being occupied by Roman troops, and the roofs of the houses covered with archers and slingers. At a fixed hour, in all the cities, the signal for slaughter was given, and in an hour more not one of these helpless wards of Rome remained alive. The cruel treachery of this blood-thirsty act remains almost unparalleled in history.

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THE DOWNFALL OF ROME.

Theodosius, the great and noble emperor who succeeded Valens, pacified and made quiet subjects of the Goths. He died in 395, and before the year ended the Gothic nation was again in arms. At the first sound of the trumpet the warriors, who had been forced to a life of labor, deserted their fields and flocked to the standards of war. The barriers of the empire were down. Across the frozen surface of the Danube flocked savage tribesmen from the northern forests, and joined the Gothic hosts. Under the leadership of an able commander, the famous Alaric, the barbarians swept from their fields and poured downward upon Greece, in search of an easier road to fortune than the toilsome one of industry.

Many centuries had passed since the Persians invaded Greece, and the men of Marathon and Thermopylæ were no more. Men had been posted to defend the world-famous pass, but, instead of fighting to the death, like Leonidas and his Spartans of old, they retired without a blow, and left Greece to the mercy of the Goth.

Instantly a deluge of barbarians spread right and left, and the whole country was ravaged. Thebes alone resisted. Athens admitted Alaric within its gates, and saved itself by giving the [Pg 332] barbarian chief a bath and a banquet. The other famous cities had lost their walls, and Corinth, Argos, and Sparta yielded without defence to the Goths. The wealth of the cities and the produce of the country were ravaged without stint, villages and towns were committed to the flames, thousands of the inhabitants were borne off to slavery, and for years afterwards the track of the Goths could be traced in ruin throughout the land.

By a fortunate chance Rome possessed at that epoch a great general, the famous Stilicho, whose military genius has rarely been surpassed. He had before him a mighty task, the forcing back of the high tide of barbarian overflow, but he did it well while he lived. His death brought ruin on Rome. Stilicho hastened to Greece and quickly drove the Goths from the Peloponnesus. But jealousy between Constantinople and Rome tied his hands, he was recalled to Italy, and the weak emperor of the East rewarded the Gothic general for his destructive raid by making him master-general of Illyricum.

Alaric, fired by ambition, used his new power in forcing the cities of his dominion to supply the Goths with the weapons of war. Then, Greece and the country to the north having been devastated, he turned his arms against Italy, and about 400 A.D. appeared at the foot of the Julian Alps, the first invader who had threatened Italy since the days of Hannibal, six hundred years before.

There were at that time two rulers of the Roman empire,—Arcadius, emperor of the East, and [Pg 333] Honorius, emperor of the West. The latter, a coward himself, had a brave man to command his armies,—Stilicho, who had driven the Goths from Greece. But Italy, though it had a general, was destitute of an army. To meet the invading foe, Stilicho was forced to empty the forts on the Rhine, and even to send to England for the legion that guarded the Caledonian wall. With the army thus raised he met the Gothic host at Pollentia, and defeated them with frightful slaughter, recovering from their camp many of the spoils of Greece. Another battle was fought at Verona, and the Goths were again defeated. They were now forced to retire from Italy, Stilicho and the emperor entered Rome, and that capital saw its last great triumph, and gloried in a revival of its magnificent ancient games.

THE LAST COMBAT OF THE GLADIATORS.

In these games the cruel combat of gladiators was shown for the last time to the blood-thirsty populace of Rome. The edict of Constantine had failed to stop these frightful sports. The appeal of a Christian poet was equally without effect. A more decisive action was necessary, and it came. In the midst of these bloody contests an Asiatic monk, named Telemachus, rushed into the arena and attempted to separate the gladiators. He paid for his rashness with his life, being stoned to death by the furious spectators, with whose pleasure he had dared to interfere. But his death had its effect. The fury of the people was followed by shame. Telemachus was looked upon as a martyr, and the gladiatorial shows came to an end, the emperor abolishing forever the spectacle of human slaughter and human cruelty in the amphitheatre of Rome. [Pg 334]

Rome triumphed too soon. Its ovation to victory was the expiring gleam in its long career of glory and dominion. Its downfall was at hand. Fight as it might in Italy, the gate-ways of the empire lay open in the north, and through them still poured barbarian hordes. The myriads of the Huns, rushing in a devouring wave from the borders of China, made a mighty stir in the forest region of the Baltic and the Danube. In the year 406 a vast host of Germans, known by the names of Vandals, Burgundians, and Suevi, under a leader named Rhodogast, or Radagaisus, crossed the Danube and made its way unopposed to Italy. Multitudes of Goths joined them, till the army numbered not less than two hundred thousand fighting men.

As the flood of barbarians rushed southward through Italy, many cities were pillaged or destroyed, and the city of Florence sustained its first recorded siege. Alaric and his Goths were Christians. Radagaisus and his Germans were half-savage pagans. Florence, which had dared oppose them, was threatened with utter ruin. It was to be reduced to stones and ashes, and its noblest senators were to be sacrificed on the altars of the German gods. The Florentines, thus threatened, fought bravely, but they were reduced to the last extremity before deliverance came.

Stilicho had not been idle during this destructive raid. By calling troops from the frontiers, by arming slaves, and by enlisting barbarian allies, he was at length able to take the field. He led the *last* army of Rome, and dared not expose it to the wild valor of the savage foe. On the contrary, he surrounded their camp with strong lines which defied their efforts to break through, and waited till starvation should force them to surrender. [Pg 335]

Florence was relieved. The besiegers were in their turn besieged. Their bravest warriors were slain in efforts to break the Roman lines. Radagaisus surrendered to Stilicho, and was instantly executed. Such of his followers as had not been swept away by famine and disease were sold as slaves. The great host disappeared, and Stilicho a second time won the proud title of Deliverer of Italy.

But the whole army of Radagaisus was not destroyed. Half of it had remained in the north. These were forced by Stilicho to retreat from Italy. But Gaul lay open to their fury. That great and rich section of the empire was invaded and frightfully ravaged, and its conquerors never afterwards left its fertile fields. The empire of Rome ceased to exist in the countries beyond the Alps, those great regions which had been won by the arms of Marius and Cæsar.

And now the time had come for Rome to destroy itself. The mind of the emperor was poisoned against Stilicho, the sole remaining bulwark of his power. He had sought to tie the hands of Alaric with gifts of power and gold, and was accused of treason by his enemies. The weak Honorius gave way, and Stilicho was slain. His friends shared his fate, and the cowardly imbecile who ruled Rome cut down the only safeguard of his throne.

[Pg 336] The result was what might have been foreseen. In a few months after the death of Stilicho, Alaric was again in Italy, exasperated by the bad faith of the court, which had promised and not performed. There was no army and no general to meet him. City after city was pillaged. Avoiding the strong walls of Ravenna, behind which the emperor lay secure, he marched on Rome, led his army under the stately arches, adorned with the spoils of countless victories, and pitched his tents beneath the walls of the imperial city.

Six hundred and nineteen years had passed since a foreign foe had gazed upon those proud walls, within which lay the richest and most splendid city of the world, peopled by a population of more than a million souls. But Rome was no longer the city which had defied the hosts of Hannibal, and had sold at auction, for a fair price, the very ground on which the great Carthaginian had pitched his tent. Alaric was not a Hannibal, but much less were the Romans of his day the Romans of the past.

Instead of striking for the honor of Rome, they lay and starved within their walls until thousands had died in houses and streets. No army came to their relief, and in despair the senate sent delegates to treat with the king of the Goths.

"We are resolved to maintain the dignity of Rome, either in peace or war," said the envoys, with a show of pride and valor. "If you will not yield us honorable terms, you may sound your trumpets and prepare to fight with myriads of men used to arms and with the courage of despair."

[Pg 337] "The thicker the hay, the easier it is mowed," answered Alaric, with a loud and insulting laugh.

He then named the terms on which he would retreat,—*all* the gold and silver in the city; *all* the rich and precious movables; *all* the slaves who were of barbarian origin.

"If such are your demands," asked the envoys, now reduced to suppliant tones, "what do you intend to leave us?"

"Your *lives*," said Alaric, in haughty tones.

The envoys retired, trembling with fear.

But Alaric moderated his demands, and was bought off by the payment of five thousand pounds of gold, thirty thousand pounds of silver, four thousand robes of silk, three thousand pieces of scarlet cloth, and three thousand pounds of pepper, then a costly and favorite spice. The gates were opened, the hungry multitude was fed, and the Gothic army marched away, but it left Rome poor.

What followed is too long to tell. Alaric treated for peace with the ministers of the emperor. But he met with such bad faith and so many insults that exasperation overcame all his desire for peace, and once more the army of the Goths marched upon Rome.

The crime and folly of the court of Honorius at Ravenna had at last brought about the ruin of the imperial city. The senate resolved on defence; but there were traitors within the walls. At midnight the Salarian Gate was silently opened, and a chosen band of barbarians entered the streets. The tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet aroused the sleeping citizens to the fact [Pg 338] that all was lost. Eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, and eight hundred years after its capture by the Gauls, it had again become the prey of barbarians, and the imperial mistress of the world was delivered to the fury of the German and Gothic hordes.

Alaric, while permitting his followers to plunder at discretion, bade them to spare the lives of the unresisting; but thousands of Romans were slain, and the forty thousand slaves who had joined his ranks revenged themselves on their former masters with pitiless rage. Conflagration added to the horrors, and fire spread far over the captured city. The Goths held Rome only for six days, but in that time depleted it frightfully of its wealth. The costly furniture, the massive plate, the robes of silk and purple, were piled without stint into their wagons, and numerous works of art were wantonly destroyed.

But Alaric and many of his followers were Christians, and the treasures of the Church escaped. A Christian Goth broke into the dwelling of an aged woman, and demanded all the gold and silver she possessed. To his astonishment, she showed him a hoard of massive plate, of the most curious workmanship. As he looked at it with wonder and delight, she solemnly said,—

"These are the consecrated vessels belonging to St. Peter. If you presume to touch them, your conscience must answer for the sacrilege. For me, I dare not keep what I am not able to defend."

[Pg 339] The Goth, struck with awe by her words, sent word to Alaric of what he had found, and received an order that all this consecrated treasure should be transported without damage to St. Peter's Church. A remarkable spectacle, never before seen in a captured city, followed. From the Quirinal Hill to the distant Vatican marched a long train of devout Goths, bearing on their heads the sacred vessels of gold and silver, and guarded on each side by a detachment of their armed

companions, while the martial shouts of the barbarians mingled with the hymns of devotees. A crowd of Christians flocked from the houses to join the procession, and through its sheltering aid a multitude of fugitives escaped to the secure retreat of the Vatican.

Not satisfied with plundering the city, the conquerors ended by selling its citizens, save those who could ransom themselves, for slaves. Many of these were redeemed by the benevolent, but as a result of the taking of Rome hosts of indigent fugitives were scattered through the empire, from Italy to Syria.

From this time forward the Western Empire of Rome was the prey of barbarians. In 451 the Huns under Attila invaded Gaul, besieged Orleans, and were defeated at Châlons in the last great victory of Rome. In the following year Attila invaded Italy, and Rome was only saved from the worst of horrors by a large ransom. Three years afterwards, in 455, an army of Vandals, who had invaded Africa, sailed to Italy, and Rome was again taken and sacked. For fourteen days and nights the pillage continued, and when it ended Rome was stripped bare of treasure; the [Pg 340] Christian churches, which had been spared by the Goths, being mercilessly plundered by these heathen conquerors.

A few years more and the Western Empire of Rome came to an end. In the year 476 or 479, Augustulus, the last emperor, was forced to resign, and Odoacer, a barbarian chief, assumed the title of King of Italy. As for the Eastern Empire, it maintained a half-life for nearly a thousand years after, Constantinople being finally taken by the Turks, and made the capital of Turkey, in 1453.

THE END.

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