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# ROMAN PANORAMA

PUBLISHED BY  
THE SYNDICS OF THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

London Office: Bentley House, N.W. 1

American Branch: New York

Agents for Canada, India, and Pakistan: Macmillan

*First edition* 1944

*Reprinted* 1946

„ 1949

*Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge  
(Brooke Crutchley, University Printer)*





A Roman

# ROMAN PANORAMA

*A Background for To-day*

BY

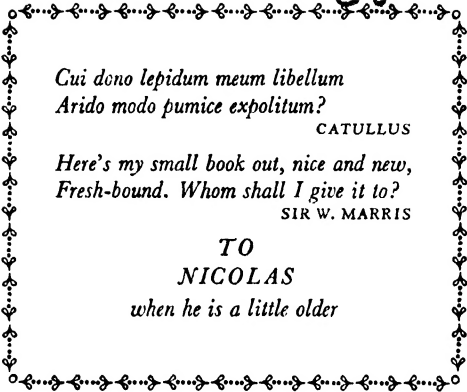
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and late of the Indian Civil Service*

CAMBRIDGE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1949





*Cui dono lepidum meum libellum  
Arido modo pumice expolitum?*

CATULLUS

*Here's my small book out, nice and new,  
Fresh-bound. Whom shall I give it to?*

SIR W. MARRIS

*TO  
NICOLAS  
when he is a little older*

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The Frontispiece and Plates III, V, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XIII are from the *Cambridge Ancient History*.



Roman is the world in which they are living—sufficiently perhaps to stop them asking “what is the *use* of Latin anyway?”

This book, then, has been written to help those who are learning Latin to enjoy the process, and those who have not learnt it to enjoy an important aspect of the world in which they live. The necessary facts are there, I hope; but they are presented in their setting. After all, we are dealing with a living people and we can get to know them best as they move about in their own surroundings, both of time and space, which are wider than any syllabus. Hence the attempt to give the impression of a panorama.

There are dates in the book as well as facts, but I hope that no one will try to learn them by heart. They are there only to give a sense of the passing of time. Sometimes I have put B.C. or A.D. after or before them, and sometimes not, if it seemed unnecessary. Even the facts are not selected (when I could avoid it) to illustrate this or that period of Roman history. What I have tried to do is to give a picture of the Romans, not buried beneath heaps of ‘Roman remains’ (or even of text-books), but alive and on the march.

That is how I like to think of them, and why I think it worth while to study Latin. I should hate to deserve the description which Charles Dickens gives of Cornelia Blimber.\* “There was no light nonsense about Miss Blimber. . . . She was dry and sandy with working in the graves of deceased languages. None of your live languages for Miss Blimber. They must be dead—stone dead—and then Miss Blimber would dig them up like a Ghoul.” I would rather agree with Mrs Blimber, her gushing mamma, that “if I could have known Cicero, and been his friend, and talked with him in his retirement at Tusculum (beautiful Tusculum) I could have died contented”. Only I should not make a habit of saying so, as she did, at ‘evening parties’.

A panorama is difficult enough to contrive without having one’s field of vision, so to speak, confined between the covers of one small book; and in thus attempting the impossible, I lay

\* *Dombey and Son*, ch. 11.

myself open to criticism both for what I have left out and for what I have put in. I cannot defend my selection on a strictly logical principle. I have put in what I thought necessary to illustrate the 'consecutiveness' of history, the growth of ideas and institutions, the evolution of society; what would give depth and colour to the picture; what is alive, and is affecting the lives of men and women to-day. In other words I have put in the things that I am specially interested in myself.

This 'principle' has led me to leave out, or only just to mention, some things which I personally find dull or think unimportant; and some other things which, though exciting and momentous enough, are dealt with fully and better in plenty of other books. By doing this I have been able to include some topics which have, frankly, no examination value at the earlier stages, but which are fascinating in themselves and matter tremendously to-day.

It is not that I ignore the importance of examinations. I hope, but only incidentally, that this book will help those who are taking Latin in the School or even the Higher Certificate, to obtain those indispensable passports to an examination-ridden world; but it makes no pretence of being an examination cram-book. It has been written primarily for enjoyment.

At all events I have enjoyed writing it. It has occupied nights of fire-watching and occasional half-holiday afternoons during three years of war; and amid the 'black-out' of so much that is true, lovely and of good report, I have found it a tonic and an anodyne. So may it prove to others for a little longer. The Romans knew what war was like, and they could 'take it'. Their civilization passed through its Dark Ages, and lived on to make a brilliant contribution to our own.

For the writing of each chapter I have had to consult many authorities—far too many to permit of my expressing here the debt which I owe to each one. When I have quoted them verbatim, I have used inverted commas and have acknowledged the source. But there are a few books to which I owe so much

that it would be sheer ingratitude not to mention them. Such are the 'Roman' volumes of the *Cambridge Ancient History*, and the *Cambridge Companion to Latin Studies*, indispensable throughout; for Part II, the volumes which cover Roman history from 753 to 146 B.C. and from 146 to 30 B.C. in Methuen's *History of the Greek and Roman World*, the former by H. H. Scullard and the latter by F. B. Marsh, and John Buchan's *Augustus*; for Part III, *Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero*, by W. Warde Fowler, and *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, by Jerome Carcopino. I have found much enjoyment, as well as information, in reading them.

I am no less grateful for the help which I have had from people, again too many to mention individually; but I should like to offer a special word of thanks to the Rev. M. P. Charlesworth, President of St John's College, Cambridge, for his advice and encouragement, as well as for his kindness in reading the book in manuscript. How much it owes to my friend and colleague, Mr T. W. Snow, who has corrected the proofs, I am ashamed to admit.

H. G.-H.

*August 1944*

# PART ONE

## LATIN

I am always sorry when any language is lost, for languages are the pedigrees of nations.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, *Boswell's 'Tour to the Hebrides.'*

### CHAPTER I. LATIN & LEARNING

MOST PEOPLE who learn Latin at all start it when they are quite young and go on with it at least till they are sixteen. For about seven hours a week, and for thirty-six weeks in every one of these many years, they work at a subject which is never easy and not, in its early stages, particularly attractive. Even then they will have mastered little more than the elements of the language. Why do they do it? 'Because they are made to' is not a sufficient answer. This chapter, and indeed the whole book, will try to find a better one.

For the moment, let us ask another question: Why, if it comes to that, are people educated at all? It is in order that they may be helped by their education to put the best they have into life and to get the best they can out of it. In other words, in order that they may be happy.

Some of the subjects which they learn at school are obviously useful for this purpose. Everybody wants to know, and can see the point of trying to learn, something about the world of men and things in which he lives and among which he will have to play a man's part. Every master who teaches, say, General Science, Geography or History, can count at the start on two advantages: his pupils understand both why they are learning these subjects and what connexion each has with the other two. The connexion between these three subjects and the rest of the curriculum may not be so obvious, but it is there. Science has been built up by applying the principles of Mathematics; His-

tory, the story of men and nations, leads to the study of the languages which they speak; and the study of languages involves that of literature, in which language finds its highest expression. And so we come at last to the study of Latin, a 'dead' language, for no one speaks it now; but one which is included in our curriculum for the same reason as the other subjects, that without it we cannot really understand the living world of to-day.

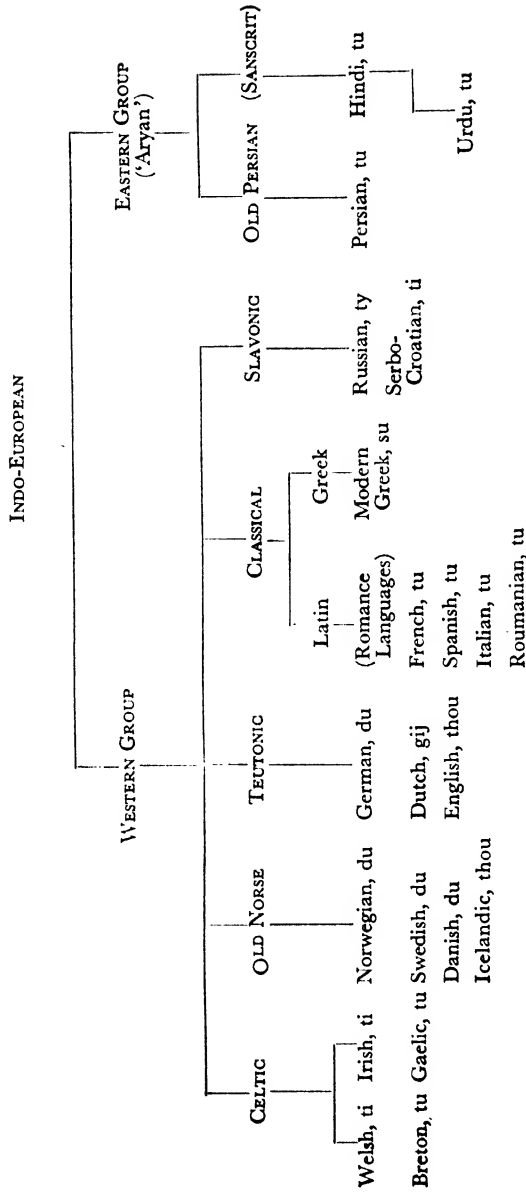
What then is the thread which binds together all the subjects in a normal school curriculum, whether modern or classical, literary or scientific? It is this: they are all parts of one single subject, the study of Man himself—the universe in which he lives, his achievements in the past, his ideas and the words in which he clothes them. More and more subjects force their way into the school time-table; increasing specialization tends to isolate them more and more from one another. But in fact they are all means to one end, Education, and variations on the same theme, Man. To put it another way, every separate subject is merely an aspect of Truth; and Truth is one and indivisible.

We have found, then, part of our answer to the question, why learn Latin? Because without it we cannot understand some important aspects of the living world of to-day. But why, to understand a living world, learn a dead language? English, French, German, yes; and as many other modern languages as we have time for, but why Latin? To answer this very natural question, we shall have to look at the place occupied by Latin among all those languages, our own included, which are descended from a remote common ancestor, the Indo-European language. This would be an obvious thing to do if we were studying a human being; we could understand him best by studying, not only the man himself, but his ancestors and, if he had any, his children. Languages too are living things. They come into being with an inheritance from the past. They have their infancy, their prime and their period of decay. They die, and still through their descendants exercise a vital influence on modern speech. The inheritance bequeathed by Latin and its influence to-day is so great that its family tree is worth a little study. Here it is:



## ‘FAMILY TREE’ OF INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

N.B. The name of each language is followed by the word for ‘you’ or ‘thou’ in that language.



A glance will show that Latin is descended from the same ancestors as most European and some Eastern languages. For some of the former we shall look in vain. Finnish and Hungarian, for instance, belong to a different family altogether; they are members of the same group as Turkish and very distantly connected with Chinese.

The map of Europe showing the countries where the languages on the bottom line are spoken will suggest the idea that they were brought there by successive immigrations of people descended from the original 'Indo-European' stock, who left their homes and wandered east and south and west, becoming divided and subdivided as they went. This is probably true. There must have been, before the great migrations took place, an Indo-European race. Incidentally, the word 'Aryan' is properly used to describe a language, *not* a race, belonging to the Eastern branch of the Indo-European family of languages. We must guard against the temptation to label as 'Aryans' those who speak an Aryan language and to believe that people who speak the same language are descended from the same stock. That this is not so becomes obvious when it is remembered how many people speak English as their mother tongue who are not even white (there are Gaelic-speaking negroes in Nova Scotia!),\* but it seems to have been forgotten of late years in Germany.

The test of relationship between languages is their structure, their grammar, the way they are put together. For instance, all the languages on this 'tree' are inflected, i.e. their nouns have cases, their verbs voices and moods, and their adjectives agree with their nouns, though these inflexions have now disappeared in many instances. Again, they have a small stock of words in common—not those that deal with difficult and abstract ideas, but elementary, primitive words, such as 'I' and 'thou', 'father', 'fire' and so on, together with the numerals up to 100 (which suggests that the first migration took place before people could count up to more than 100!).

\* Descended from the slaves of early Scottish settlers.

	'CLASSICAL'			ROMANCE	TEUTONIC		CELTIC	SLAVONIC	SEMITIC	MONGOLIAN	
	Sanscrit	Persian	Greek		Latin	French					English
1.	eka	yek	heis	unus	un	onc	cin	ven	odin	wāhad	hito
2.	dvā	du	duo	duo	deux	two	zwei	dau	dva	ihnēn	futa
3.	trāyāh	seh	treis	tres	trois	three	drei	tri	tri	thalātha	mi
4.	čatvārah	chahār	tessares	quattuor	quatre	four	vier	cethir	chetýryc	arba'a	yo
5.	pāñca	pañj	pente	quinque	cinq	five	funf	coic	pyat	kħamsah	itsu
6.	śat	shesh	hex	sex	six	six	sechs	se	shest'	sittah	mu
7.	saptā	haft	hepta	septem	sept	seven	sieben	secht	syem	sab'ah	nana
8.	astāu	hasht	octo	octo	huit	eight	acht	ocht	vosyem	thamānyah	ya
9.	nāva	nuh	ennea	novem	neuf	nine	neun	noi	dyevyát	ti's'ah	hokono
10.	dāsa	dah	deka	decem	dix	ten	zehn	deich	dyesyát	'asherah	to
100.	śatām	śad	hekaton	centum	cent	hundred	hundert	cet	sto	mīyah	momo

We have already had an example of this in the case of the pronoun of the second person singular, which is quoted in the family tree from twenty-one Indo-European languages. On page 5 is another example for interest's sake—the numerals from 1 to 10 and the word for 100, quoted from nine Indo-European languages, and from two others, representing the Semitic and the Mongolian families.

Anyone can see a family likeness between the first nine of these languages, and how close it is between Latin and French, which are, so to speak, mother and daughter. But the likeness is gone when we compare them with Arabic and Japanese, which belong to different families from the rest and from each other. These resemblances and differences would stand out even more clearly if we could apply the real test and examine the structure of these languages.

Latin, then, belongs to the great Indo-European family, and to the Western branch of it. It is a 'first cousin' of Greek and a more distant cousin of the original Celtic, Teutonic and Slavonic languages. So far from being descended from Sanscrit, as was once supposed, it is only a distant connexion.\* The resemblances between the two come only from their common ancestor.

When we look at the direct descendants of Latin, or the Romance languages as they are called, we notice that English is not one of them. English is a sister language to German and Dutch, the niece, not the daughter, of Latin and only a cousin of French.† But we may say that having had her aunt to live with her for some time (A.D. 43–400) and, much more important, having always kept in touch with her French cousin, English has grown to *look* more like a genuine daughter language to Latin than, say, Roumanian does. But however many Latin words have been introduced into English from French or other sources (and the English dictionary contains twice as many

\* First realized by Eugene Aram, hanged for murder 1759.

† We are conscious that our analogy has run away with us and that these 'relationships' are getting out of hand; but we are attempting an illustration, not a genealogy.

words of Latin as of Anglo-Saxon origin) the structure of the language remains unalterably Teutonic.

Here then is another reason for learning Latin. A vast number of English words, a large proportion of our literary language, is derived from it—as are all the longer words in this sentence. Some Latin words, and even whole phrases, have become English without any change at all. Expressions like *bona-fide*, *post-mortem*, *viva voce*, etcetera are hardly recognized as Latin, so thoroughly acclimatized have they become; while others are so familiar as to be known by their initials only, like A.M. and P.M. (*ante* and *post meridiem*), £. s. d. (*librae, solidi, denarii*) and D.V. (*Deo volente*). So too English has ‘swallowed whole’ a multitude of such every-day nouns as *genius*, *index*, *omen*, *tribunal*; and such adjectives as *complex* or *senior*. In other words the change has been slight, a mere popular abbreviation. A *dirge* comes from *dirige* (direct us), a query from *quaere* (seek). Others have been lengthened: when a boy is told to parse a word, he is really being asked to say what *pars* (part) of speech it is. But some Latin words have become quite unrecognizable in their journey down the centuries through soldiers’ Latin and French. Who would suspect that a porpoise is really a pig-fish (*porcus-piscis*) or that a glamour-girl, if true to her name, must be a Latin scholar?

The fact is that an Englishman can hardly open his mouth without uttering Latin. Our language is steeped in it, and cannot be really understood, let alone mastered, by anyone who knows none. Whence this flood of Latin words? Not from the Roman occupation of Britain. The country was pretty thoroughly Romanized for 350 years—there is hardly a parish in which the spade has not unearthed some form of Roman remains. But when the legions were recalled to defend Rome, the invading barbarians swept over the Wall and the forts and the camps and the villas, like the incoming tide over children’s sand castles, and left about as much behind. Here and there a Latin word lived on, like *castra* which survives to-day as a ‘Roman remain’ in place-names such as Chester, Doncaster, Exeter or Caerleon (*castra legionis*). The invading Angles and Saxons, who had

already been in contact with Roman civilization, brought some Latin words with them to express the products of the Roman world, such as wine, silk and copper, or Roman measures, such as pound, inch and mile. The coming of Christianity from Rome in the sixth century added a few more, among which creed, font and priest are familiar to-day. But, in its general character, the language spoken by King Harold and his men was the same as that which St Augustine had heard when he came to Britain centuries before. The battle of Hastings decided whether our vocabulary should remain wholly Teutonic or become half Latin.

In France meanwhile, which had been longer and more thoroughly Romanized and where the language of the Roman camps had spread over the country, mingling with and supplanting that of the natives, the barbarian tide came in more gradually and more gently and was absorbed in the soil of the country. It is difficult to say at what point Latin became French. French in fact is Latin, though a 'vulgar' Latin; and was learned by the Gauls not as Cicero, or even as the characters in Plautus, spoke it but as they picked it up from the Roman soldiers, most of whom were foreigners and had had to learn it themselves. That is why the French for a horse does not come from *equus* but from *caballus*, a 'nag', or as the British soldier of 1914 would have said, a 'hairy'. But it was Latin words none the less which William the Conqueror brought from Normandy to mingle with the Anglo-Saxon, as his Norman stock did with theirs, till the people and the language became English.

We need not labour the point that Latin is almost an essential to anyone who would be a modern linguist. It is possible to become fluent in French, Italian or Spanish without it; but it is difficult and far from satisfactory. For Latin gives the key, not only to the structure and vocabulary of these languages, but to the mode of thought of those who use them. Without Latin it is possible to learn French, but it is not possible really to understand French—still less to appreciate French literature.

But what is the need of Latin to one who would understand English? Admittedly it is not so great; for English is a Teutonic, not a Romance, language; and its structure has only a distant connexion with that of Latin. But our vocabulary, the words which we use and especially those in which our literature is written, contains a high proportion of Latin and owes much of its usefulness and beauty to the way in which it combines the weight and dignity of its Latin element with the directness and flexibility of the Anglo-Saxon.

This Latin element has in fact tended to increase. When the Norman-French fused with the Anglo-Saxon to produce English, Latin was not yet a dead language, and continued to colour and to mould the English civilization which grew up in the centuries after the Conquest. At first the leading influence was that of the Church; and the Church spoke Latin. When the Renaissance brought the revival of learning, the learning that was revived was the Classical, and Latin remained the language of the learned for centuries still—of the lawyers, the doctors and the professors. To it constantly the poets turned when they needed to enlarge the sound or the scope of their own language. Education, from the days of the Norman Conquest almost until our own, was based on Latin. Fresh words borrowed from it have never ceased to make their way into English—and still they come. It is not claimed that this Latinization of English has been an unmixed blessing, but only that it is a fact. We may regret the extravagances of the Elizabethans or the more ponderous periods of Dr Johnson, and still more the widening gulf between cultured and every-day speech, between literature and journalism. But it remains a fact that he who is ignorant of Latin cannot really know the meaning of the words he uses himself nor appreciate the subtler beauties of our greatest writers.

If we cannot understand English and French without learning Latin, much less can we understand the Romans themselves. The very sentences, with their strength and order, their firm and regular beat, reflect the image of the minds who framed them and echo the measured tramp of the legions on the march.

But if Latin is a dead language, the Roman people have been dead still longer (though Fascist Italy did not like one saying so). Then why is it important that we should understand the Romans and spend years of our lives trying to learn their language with this as one of the ends in view? Because, while the Latin language is only a distant connexion of English, the Roman character, or the kind of character that the Romans admired, is the direct ancestor of our own. We learn Latin in order to understand not only our literature but ourselves. Our thinking owes more to the Greeks and to the Jews; but in action we are Romans, and the British are men of action rather than of conscious thought. We are like the Romans and they are (sometimes dreadfully) like us. When we look at them, we can as it were stand back and take a look at ourselves.

This is perhaps the chief justification for the remaining chapters of this book, and in the last chapter we shall return to it. Meanwhile let us think for a moment of the actual process of learning Latin as it confronts the average boy. It chiefly consists—and no ‘modern’ methods seem able substantially to alter the fact—in the learning of grammar and syntax and in translation and composition. The process, we have admitted, is dull in its earlier stages. What special advantages result from it?

To learn Latin grammar and syntax is to study the structure and nature not so much of one language but of all (Indo-European) languages, in fact of language itself. The stage of its development at which we study Latin is that of its maturity and prime. It has outgrown its early clumsiness and not yet become fluid and degenerate as did silver Latin and the Latin of the monks. Its grammatical forms are clear, logical and complete. Each separate form has its separate function, is exactly fitted to it and is clearly recognizable. English, by comparison, is formless and English grammar difficult to learn and even to recognize. Grammar is, so to speak, the dry bones of a language; but bones are the foundation on which the living structure is built, and in Latin they can be clearly seen, recognized and distinguished.



'Can these dry bones live?' Even the prophet Ezekiel was doubtful, for there were very many of them 'and lo they were very dry'. But presently 'there was a noise and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone'. So it will happen when anyone who has mastered the grammar, goes on to learn the syntax of the Latin sentence; for he will understand not only the nature of each grammatical form but its relation to the others. In Latin that relationship is perfectly expressed. Each part is subordinated to each other part in a way which brings out their relationship in time and thought both to each other and to the whole sentence. Above all, the relative importance of each part is made clear—of the words to each other, and of the subordinate clauses both to each other and to the main clause. Once again the structure of language itself is what is learned through Latin syntax. It cannot be learned so well from other languages, and the process, dull and difficult though it may be, affords a mental training which is hardly come by otherwise.

Grammar and syntax form the skeleton of any language; but the bones are still dry. Composition 'brings up flesh upon them and covers them with skin'. Does someone ask: what is the point of turning good English into bad Latin? The answer is found in the exceptional merit of the process in training and disciplining the mind. No one can write one correct Latin sentence without concentration and close attention to detail. No one can write an adequate Latin prose without understanding the exact meaning of the English which he is translating, the thought which underlies the words. He will need too the power to think clearly and logically and to distinguish what is of first importance from what is secondary. To write good Latin prose he must cultivate, as well as an ear for idiom, a sense of style and a feeling for beauty.

If it be felt that the best Latin Prose Composition is still 'dead', then we must turn to the great historians and orators of Rome to know what living Latin could be when the breath of life and of genius had been breathed into it. And for the

reading of great literature in any language surely no apology is needed. But he who reads and translates the Latin prose authors will be doubly rewarded. His reading will enrich and in the end delight his mind; and his efforts to translate, as to compose, will force him to get away from the words to the thought which they express, to the idea behind the words.

A mind so disciplined will not be without its 'practical' advantages in the world of to-day. Here are two of them: the first is accuracy of thought and expression; the second is independence of mind. The man who understands words is careful how he uses them himself and watchful when he reads or listens to them; he will not be over-much impressed by their multitude or length. The vague abstractions of the journalist, the resounding phrases of the politician, the special pleading of the propaganda-machine—as he listens to them all, the discipline of Latin keeps his defences up and bids him think for himself. The voice of criticism will not be stifled: what does it all *mean*?

The present writer was once standing on the steps of the Queen's Hotel, Birmingham, where he had been dining with a local captain of industry. As he took his leave, his host said to him: "When you get back to your school, give your boys this message from me: Boys, a leading business man of Birmingham says to you, 'Stick to your Latin—it pays'."

So it does; and not only in the coin of which he was thinking.

## PART TWO

### ROME

Everyone soon or late comes round by Rome.

ROBERT BROWNING, *The Ring and the Book*.

CHAPTER II: THE SETTING.

CHAPTER III: THE CITY.

CHAPTER IV: THE CONSTITUTION.

CHAPTER V: THE MAGISTRATES.

#### CHAPTER II. THE SETTING

THE way in which a man behaves will depend more upon what he is than upon where he lives, and yet the place he lives in will affect his character. It is the same with nations. "The history of a people is determined in the long run by their moral and intellectual qualities, by their character and initiative; but geographical environment has a profound influence on racial characteristics. History is governed, if not determined, by Geography." If our quotation is true, it will be worth our while to form some general idea of Italy, where the Romans lived, if we are to have the best chance of understanding the Romans, what they were like, how they lived and why they behaved as they did.

Everybody knows what Italy looks like on the map (and the reader of this chapter will do well to pull out the map facing p. 68)—a long, thin peninsula stretching down south-eastwards into the Mediterranean from the mainland of Europe and, if extended to include Sicily, almost forming a bridge over it into Africa. Untold ages ago, before the Straits of Gibraltar existed and when the eastern and western portions of the Mediterranean were lakes, Italy did form such a bridge. The Apennines, whose mountain range extends throughout the whole length of the

country, are only a continuation of the Alps in the north-west, themselves continued by the mountains which cross Sicily from east to west, and reappearing as the Atlas Mountains after the hundred miles or so of sea which separate Sicily from Tunisia. The whole range once formed an unbroken 'fold' in the earth's surface.

The most conspicuous features of Italy are the sea and the mountains—no one in the whole peninsula is ever very far from either—and the course followed by the Apennine range as it runs for 1000 miles or so from end to end of Italy decides the other characteristics of the country. Starting on the Riviera coast, the mountains begin by running almost due south-east till they reach the sea again at Ancona on the Adriatic, leaving a large and fertile plain to the north-east between themselves and the Alps, watered by the Po (Padus).

The Po is the only great river of Italy. Otherwise the short distance anywhere between the mountains and the sea makes the rivers small and mostly unnavigable, many of them no less than raging torrents in the winter and no more than dry and stony watercourses in the summer. Add to this the absence of good natural harbours and the tendency of such as there were to silt up (as Ostia, the port of Rome at the mouth of the Tiber, was inclined to do) and we begin to understand why the Italians, with their thousands of miles of coastline, turned their backs upon the sea and looked to the land, in early days, for their means of livelihood rather than to trading overseas. This, though their land was everywhere mountainous.

But the Apennines, as they turn south from Ancona on the Adriatic, where there is scarcely room for a road between the mountains and the sea, keep more or less to the centre of the peninsula during the remainder of their course, and leave other plains between themselves and the sea, smaller than that of the Po but no less fertile, whether on the east or west coast. There are tablelands too among the mountains, connected by not very formidable passes. Compared with the Alps, the Apennines are not particularly high, seldom reaching 10,000 feet or being

snow-capped all the year round; and though no less than three-quarters of the whole of Italy consists of mountain or hill country, it has many attractions to offer to the landsman.

First of these is the climate, which varies considerably in different parts, owing both to the length of the country from north to south and to the different altitudes. There is no reason to suppose that in Roman times it was substantially different from what it is now, though it was probably cooler and moister. Italy is and was a warm, sunny land and the Romans were enthusiastic in praise of its climate, though it can be bitterly cold in winter, especially in the upland valleys, and on the Adriatic coast when the wind blows from the Alps in the north-east or from the mountains of Dalmatia across the sea. The summer is hot compared with our own—even poisonously hot in marshy plains and airless valleys, to say nothing of narrow, badly-drained streets. But in the country at all events the heat was nothing to grumble about, and man and beast stopped work in the middle of the day.

The soil of the valleys is extremely fertile, whether enriched by silt carried down by the rivers or, as in the south, by volcanic ash. In it grew abundantly most of the crops which our own soil produces and many which it cannot. Wheat and barley, for instance, were cultivated from prehistoric times, and oats of a sort for the beasts. Other useful crops, such as hemp, were brought from foreign countries and naturalized, while the opium poppy originated in the Mediterranean area and is perhaps the only plant which it has given to the East.

It is in her fruits that Italy gains most from her sub-tropical climate. The vine and probably the olive were brought there by the Greeks to grow on the lower slopes of the mountains, and their importance in the life of the country no reader of Vergil and no visitor to modern Italy can fail to realize. Most of the fruits of an English garden or orchard were known to the Romans, and we still call most of them by their Latin names. In fact 'apple' and 'berry' are the only two names of fruits which are Anglo-Saxon. All the rest are borrowed from Latin

or some other foreign language. The cherry, for instance, was brought by the Roman general Lucullus from Pontus in Asia Minor and was cultivated in Italy. From there it spread until, as Pliny tells us, 'it grows even as far afield as Britain'. Many others flourished in Italy which are reluctant to grow in our northern climate, such as figs, pomegranates and nectarines. Pumpkins were grown, but not melons. Vergil knew the wild strawberry, though no benefactor of the human race arose to cultivate it till the seventeenth century. But it is well to remember that several things which are among the first to attract attention in a modern Italian landscape were unknown to the Romans. There were no lemon or orange groves in their day; and though cypresses stood sentinel over the farms, and oak trees clothed the hills more thickly than to-day, there were no aloes by the roadside till the Spaniards brought them from Mexico.

The Roman had plenty of vegetables to grow in his garden, and his diet was more vegetarian than ours is. He had no potatoes, of course, but grew most of the other familiar vegetables, such as lettuces (*lactuca*), cauliflowers (*caulis* = a cabbage), onions (*unio*) and radishes (*radix*), of which the English names commemorate him to this day. He had the same liking for the flavour of garlic as the modern Italian has. He was fond of flowers and cultivated a limited number of them—roses in abundance, for which Paestum in Campania was specially famous, lilies growing in the open as well as narcissus and violets. But many of the flowers which we cultivate in our gardens and even our greenhouses grow wild in Italy. As readers of the fourth Georgic know, the Romans were enthusiastic bee-keepers, and they planted thyme and other flowers specially for their benefit. Honey is something of a luxury to us, but to the Romans it was a necessity; for there was no sugar in the Mediterranean world till the conquering Arabs introduced it there in the Middle Ages, and honey had to be used instead.

In the earliest times, before the produce of foreign countries was to be had in Italy, the cereal food of the people consisted of spelt (*far*); but its place was gradually taken by wheat (*triticum*),





I. Mother Earth from the Altar of Peace



which was at first roughly ground in hand-mills and made into a kind of porridge. But though spelt ceased to appear on the table, it was still offered on the altar, the gods being thought to be more conservative than their worshippers. By way of fresh fruit they had figs, grapes and apples, and to some extent olives. Their meat came from the pig and the goose. "Italy and Rome in early days were peculiarly associated with the pig; 'and no animal', wrote Pliny, the naturalist, long afterwards, 'offers more to the palate; it has nearly fifty flavours, while other creatures have only one each'. The sheep was kept for its wool and its milk. The cow had to do the ploughing. Cheese was made, but no butter."\* The early Roman did not care for fish, though the sea provided him with plenty when he wanted it.

But this primitive simplicity did not last. By Plautus' time, the end of the third century B.C., the staple diet of the lower classes is described by one of his characters as 'bread, roast beef and a big tankard, the belly's stand-bys'.† Probably such a meal, which might commend itself no less to the modern Englishman, was the exception rather than the rule in Roman Italy. They were not great meat-eaters—Caesar's legionaries were almost vegetarians—and took slight interest in hunting and fishing.

Agriculture was the occupation, above everything else, of the early Romans. They were formed into twenty-one 'country' tribes as against four 'city' tribes, and to be transferred from the former to the latter was regarded as a degradation. Some of the noblest families in Rome, such as the Fabii and the Lentuli (Bean and Lentil), bore names with an earthy tang: the conqueror of Britain was called Agricola, Farmer.

Unpretentious names were, in fact, habitual with the Romans (they amounted almost to family nick-names), and when these described personal characteristics they became almost insulting. Caesar means 'hairy', and Ahenobarbus, 'brass-beard', which is harmless enough; but Horace was surnamed Flaccus, 'lop-eared', and Ovid, Naso, 'nosey'. How different the Greek

\* T. R. Glover, *The Ancient World*.

† Plautus, *Curc.* 2, 3, 88.

names, like Sophocles, 'renowned for wisdom', or Plutarch, 'lord of wealth'! We English follow the Roman tradition with homely names like Smith or Robinson, Fletcher (the arrow-maker) or Stewart (the stye-ward). We may be rude enough to give a man a name like Cruikshank or Purcell (piglet), or polite enough to call him Armstrong or Latimer (the Latin-scholar—appropriate enough to the bishop and martyr of that name), but we leave to the Germans a name like Siegfried (Joy through Victory).

It was in fact a nation of small-holders, yeomen farmers, who were called from the plough to form the citizen armies of the early Republic. But their victories brought ruin to their farms, when the market was flooded with cheap corn from Sicily and Africa, and after 200 B.C. the breeding of cattle and cultivation of the vine began to pay better than the growing of corn. Meanwhile constant wars drained the farms of their labourers, who could not compete with imported slave labour. Civil wars completed the ruin of the yeoman farmer. His ravaged lands were bought up by rich speculators and turned into large estates or ranches (*latifundia*), whose absentee landlords employed only slave-gangs and whose sole interest in them was as a source of income. Sheep and cattle, horses, goats and pigs found alternate summer and winter pasture in the mountains or plains. The yeoman, who had built the greatness of Rome, drifted to the towns. *Latifundia perdidere Italiam.*

No description of Roman Italy, let alone so brief a one as this, can even suggest the beauty of its countryside or the deep and abiding love for it which was part of every Roman's inheritance and which inspired the noblest literature in his language. Long after the great days of country life were over, the Romans remained at heart a nation of countrymen.

The debt which they owed to their country was indeed unusually great; for Italy might have been planned to protect the childhood of a nation and then, as it grew up to vigorous youth and maturity, to send it out into the world, conquering and to conquer. In the earliest times, Italy was self-contained

and exclusive. Shut off from the continent of Europe by the great Alpine barrier to the north and by the sea on her other three sides, she gave her peoples time to develop the arts of peace and war. Her own mountains, the Apennines, gave them a rigorous training and developed that hardihood and manliness which her soft climate and fertile soil might never have produced. And yet the mountain passes which separated her valleys were not too difficult. It seemed as if she invited men to cross them and to meet one-another. And when one city in the centre of Italy, built on seven low hills on the Latin plain, developed a genius for government and organization, the union of Italy was already in sight.

The Alpine passes could be crossed and the surrounding seas navigated, and it was well for Italy that this was so. Her fertile soil was bound to attract invaders, and only the hardy and the adventurous could hope to win a foothold on it. When the invader became a settler, the spirit of adventure remained and drove him to trade or to conquest over the mountains and seas by which he had come.

Who were these invaders and when did their invasions begin? With those of the remotest prehistoric ages we are hardly concerned. They probably came from North Africa and settled in North Italy by way of Gibraltar and in South Italy by way of Tunis, at a time when it was possible to cross from Africa to Europe by land bridges at both places. Others of a different type followed them from Switzerland. Compared even with other stone- and bronze-age peoples, they seem to have been backward in achievement.

It was not until about the middle of the second millennium B.C. that there occurred an event which was to shape the destiny of Italy and of Europe, the arrival of a new people from the North, speaking an Indo-European language from which Latin is directly descended. These men forged bronze instead of smelting it, burned their dead instead of burying them, fortified their settlements with ramparts and a ditch, and showed themselves inventive and adaptable by the ready skill with which they took

to agriculture instead of hunting as a means of livelihood. Is it fanciful to trace in embryo the gestures and the genius of Rome?

Their new culture had far-reaching effects, for they kept open their communications with the North, turning them into trade routes along which the wares which they imported or manufactured spread to the south of Italy. Iron superseded bronze, and then another wave of invaders, of similar stock, came down from the North, penetrating farther to the South than their predecessors. One group of them settled as far south as Latium and were using the Forum at Rome more than 1000 years B.C. And so it went on. Successive waves of invaders, some from the north, others from overseas, settled and spread throughout Italy, sometimes driving their predecessors into remoter or less accessible parts of the country, sometimes settling down to live beside them till both were fused into one people.

As they went on, they divided and subdivided till they formed the welter of different tribes whom we meet in the early days of Roman history as recorded in the pages of Livy. Such were the Latini, the Marsi, Æqui, Hernici, Aurunci, Opici and Volsci: and in another group who appeared later, the Sabini, Vestini, Marrucini, Paeligni, Frentani, Samnites, Hirpini and Lucani. Meanwhile it must not be supposed that the aboriginal inhabitants of Italy, dark-skinned descendants of neolithic men, were exterminated or driven out. In some cases, like that of the Ligurians, and the Siculi who emigrated to Sicily and gave their name to it, they seem to have maintained a separate existence. In general they mingled with successive waves of invaders, but though they lost their identity, their stock remained and formed the basic element in the population of Italy. It lives on in the swarthy South Italian of to-day.

Meanwhile other races invaded and settled in the peninsula, of which the most important were the Etruscans and the Greeks. Where the Etruscans came from is still disputed by the learned, but they are tending to the belief that Herodotus was right and that their original home was in Asia Minor. Be that as it may, they appear to have been a sea-faring race, and small groups of

them came in their ships to Tuscany, on the west coast of Central Italy, somewhere between 1000 and 800 B.C. Vigorous, ruthless and more civilized than the Italians, they formed an aristocracy of conquest which reduced the conquered to serfdom, as the Norman Conquest did the Saxons. It was not long before they set their subject peoples to work clearing the forests, draining the marshes, and building cities, well-planned, fortified and self-governing. Their own occupations were commerce, piracy and war, by the fruits of which and of their subjects' toil they built up a highly developed and luxurious civilization and extended their sway northwards and southwards in Italy and overseas to Corsica. Such an empire, extending over half Italy and beyond, might have united her people and have resulted in the spread of a common culture. But success brought riches and riches luxury. The Etruscans began to lose their early vigour and then to quarrel among themselves. They collapsed suddenly and fell back within the limits of Etruria, leaving the destiny and the civilization of Italy to a people who had once been their subjects, the citizens of Rome.

We may be thankful that it was so. The Etruscans had qualities which might have made them the leaders of the world and left the world the better for it. They had vitality, enterprise and some political capacity. As builders and engineers they were second to none in their day, and as artists second only to the Greeks. Their material civilization represented an advance on anything that had been seen at all events on the mainland of Europe. They certainly knew how to enjoy life. But there was something sinister about them. They were cruel, and found pleasure in butchering their captives and in gladiatorial shows, and in the midst of all their luxury, there was a dark background to their lives. This was their religion, which, like that of the Egyptians, was largely concerned with death, and their lives were darkened by the fear of it. Like many frightened people to-day they were superstitious and had constant resort to sooth-sayers, who decided the right moment for action by observing the flight of birds or by examining the entrails of a sacrificed

animal. In the Romans too there was an element of cruelty and superstition—nor is it difficult to see where they learned it—but though they were cruel, the future conquerors of the world did not fear death.

It is almost with a sense of relief that we turn to consider the Greeks, whose earliest settlers arrived not long after the first of the Etruscans, believing themselves to be following in the wake of Odysseus. Apart from legendary colonies founded by Greek warriors returning from the Trojan War, as Vergil tells that Rome was by Æneas, the first Greek colony in the West was founded about 740 B.C. at Cumae in Campania, and by the sixth century B.C. so numerous were the Greek colonies in South Italy and Sicily that the whole of this region was known as Greater Greece (*Magna Graecia*). The Greeks came as settlers rather than as conquerors, and the peaceful history of their first colonists at Cumae is typical. They taught the Latins to write. We ourselves, no less than the Etruscans, owe our alphabet to them. They brought their bright and kindly deities from Greek Olympus to draw the devotion of Italy away from the sombre and haunted religion of the Etruscans; and the oracles of the Cumaeen Sibyl were believed to contain the destinies of Rome. The brilliant civilization of *Magna Graecia* had far-reaching effects in Southern Italy and Sicily. It gave to the Italians contact with Greek thought and art which they never forgot and swept them out of their backwater into the main current of Mediterranean civilization.

We speak of a Mediterranean, rather than of a European, civilization. A great mountain system runs in an almost unbroken line from the Pyrenees across Europe through the Balkans, and on through Asia Minor, Persia and across the north of India into the far East; and just as it has cut off India from Tibet, and Persia from Russia, so in early days it cut off the three peninsulas of Spain, Italy and Greece from the rest of Europe. These countries, alike in having a mountain barrier on the north and the sea open to their ships on three sides of them, alike in their climate and its produce, became aware that they

had much in common and tended to evolve a likeness as well in social and political life. The Alps, which both protected Italy and also cut her off from Europe, forced her to make contact with the Mediterranean world. Here again the Italian had reason to be grateful to his country; for in this world she occupied the central position.

The Etruscans and the Greeks found their way into Italy at a time when the early ancestors of the Romans had not long been settled there themselves. Their civilizations developed side by side with that of the Latins and their influence was on the whole gradual and peaceful. But far away across the Alps, hidden from the dwellers in Italy among the forests and marshes of Central Europe, lived innumerable tribes of Celtic\* barbarians who had broken away in prehistoric times from the original Indo-European stock to which the Romans too belonged. Driven by what impulse we cannot be sure—over-population, pressure from Teutonic tribes on the east, a change in the climate, or just love of adventure—they began to move southwards; and in the fifth century their first marauding bands broke through the mountain barrier which cuts off the three peninsulas from the rest of Europe. The Gallic tribe of Insubres defeated the Etruscans near modern Milan in 426 and settled down there. Others were encouraged by their success to follow them, pouring over the Alpine passes into the wide and fertile valley of the Po, till the whole of the territory between the Alps and the Apennines became known as Cisalpine Gaul, or Gaul-this-side-of-the-Alps.

These Gauls were a handsome race—according to Polybius, the most beautiful people on earth—and to the stocky Romans they seemed a race of giants. “They had attained a high level of culture in some respects, but in others they were mere savages. Given to drunkenness, human sacrifices and head-hunting, fickle, adventurous and brave, they rushed naked into battle on

\* They are usually referred to nowadays as Celts, because they spoke a Celtic dialect ultimately derived from the Indo-European language and so remotely connected with Latin, as Welsh is to-day. The Romans however spoke of them as Gauls, and we have retained this traditional name in later references.

foot, on horseback or in chariots; their iron weapons, long swords, high stature, streaming hair and weird cries terrified the disciplined armies of the south when first they appeared. But their staying power and sense of unity were short-lived, as they scattered to plunder or to enjoy their spoil. They were warriors and stock-breeders, impatient of the discipline of agriculture, but with ready adaptability some gradually settled down and became good farmers.”\*

But wandering and fighting were in their blood and a rising of the Gauls remained a source of dread to Rome for centuries—they had a special word for it, *tumultus*—and the constant menace gave a sense of unity to Italy as nothing else could, for as fast as one wave of invaders was absorbed or civilized, another would come pouring in over the mountain-wall and the trouble began all over again. Though no Gallic army crossed the Apennines after their defeat in 225, it was not till 89 that the boundary of Italy was extended as far as the Po. The whole of Cisalpine Gaul as far as the Alps was not included till 42 B.C.

Thus many peoples were drawn to Italy by her natural advantages and her central position in the Mediterranean world. Of these, three played the largest part, the Etruscans contributing the arts of city life and government, the Greeks commerce and the graces of life, the Gauls their superb physique. By the genius of Rome they were fused with the earlier settlers into a single nation.

\* Scullard, *A History of the Roman World*, 753-146 B.C.



## CHAPTER III. THE CITY

OF all the plains and valleys of Italy, one was destined to be the cradle of Western civilization. About fifteen miles from the mouth of the Tiber, a group of hills rises from the Latin plain, commanding both the Tiber valley and an important ford over the river. Settlers upon them had natural defences against attack from the land and were far enough from the sea to be safe from pirates while not being entirely cut off from it. Trade, whether passing east and west along the valley, or north and south across the ford, must pass by their leave.

Despite these advantages, civilization was comparatively slow to strike root in Latium. Traces of occupation by men of the stone and bronze ages are few; but the iron age saw the arrival of the Latins, a section of the Indo-European invaders from the North. Their first settlement may, as Roman legend suggests, have been at Alba Longa, a few miles south of Rome; but it was not long before their shepherds founded on the Palatine hill a village which in the fullness of time the world was to acclaim as the Eternal City.

This first settlement on the Palatine took place more than a thousand years B.C. It consisted of groups of huts, round or elliptical, with small plots of cultivated land about them and clumps of trees in between, and the whole may have been defended by an earthwork and a fence. Such was 'Roma Quadrata' as the later Romans called it from the 'foursquare' shape of the area as they reconstructed it.

Meanwhile other settlers began to make their homes on the hills outside, different in their customs from those prevailing on the Palatine, for they buried their dead instead of cremating them, and belonging to a different branch of the invading Indo-European stock. These newcomers were probably Sabines, and it was not long before they came to an understanding with the earlier settlers. As shepherds and, as time went on, cultivators, the two groups had much in common. Their religious observances too brought them into contact with one another.

And so after about 800 B.C. all the settlers joined in a League of the Seven Hills, and in a religious festival which was named accordingly the Septimontium. This important step—it was the first in the direction of Italian unity which it needed another 700 years to complete—was a very tentative one. The various villages on their different hills were not amalgamated in any way, nor were they included in the limits of a single defence work. They remained separate, while acknowledging their neighbourliness and expressing it in the common festival of the Septimontium. The seven hills thus associated were not, incidentally, the same as those on which Rome came to be built, but included only two of them, the Palatine and Velian, and part of a third, the Esquiline. The number seven was arrived at by counting their separate spurs.

The third stage of development, reached in the course of the seventh century, was known as the City of the Four Regions, so called after the four *regiones* into which its area was later divided. This included, besides the original Septimontium, the Quirinal and Viminal hills and part of the Forum, and was traditionally associated with the name of Romulus, the legendary founder of the city in 753 B.C. It lay within the *pomoerium* (*post-murum*, for the wall, when built, was outside it), the sacred furrow marked out by a plough to show the area which was under the protection of the city's gods. In the sixth century the so-called Servian city included the Capitol and the whole of the Esquiline as well, the entire area being enclosed by a single earthwork. When a stone wall, also called Servian, was built in the fourth century taking in the Aventine, the number of the seven hills was complete. They were the Palatine, Capitoline, Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Viminal and Quirinal.

Such is, in brief and over-confident résumé, what we can say of the 'foundation' and the early growth of Rome. What then of the familiar and colourful stories, inseparable from it, which Vergil and Livy have hallowed and passed on to us? 'It is the melancholy duty of the historian to record' (as Gibbon loves to say in the *Decline and Fall*) that there is but little in them save

colour and familiarity. The arrival of Æneas from Troy, his marriage with the daughter of Latinus, the 'aboriginal' king, the foundation of Alba Longa by Ascanius, or Iulus as the Romans called him, Romulus and Remus, the wolf their foster-mother, even the wall over which Remus leapt—all must go by the board, including the date of the founding of Rome in 753. These stories tell us much that is interesting about the way in which the imagination of the Romans worked under the stimulus of Greek legend, but little for which archaeology or history can find evidence.

It is not until we come to the kings that tradition and history can to some extent find common ground. After all there were kings everywhere in those early days, so why not in Rome? In order to fill the gap between the fall of Troy and the founding of the Republic, the Romans held that thirteen kings reigned at Alba Longa beginning with Æneas, and seven at Rome beginning with Romulus. The first thirteen are a pure invention but the last seven become, so to speak, increasingly historical as they go on. Romulus and Titus Tatius, the first two kings of Rome, are legendary figures only. That Romulus reigned jointly with Titus Tatius, that he organized the 'rape of the Sabine women' and that he founded Rome as a city of refuge may reflect an attempt to explain the republican plan of having two consuls, the absorption into Rome of the Sabine element, and the unpopularity of the conquering Romans. Even so, the two of them are no more than lay figures.

The next three kings begin to take more solid form. Numa Pompilius, a Sabine as his name tells us, may not have founded all the institutions ascribed to him, any more than Moses or Solon did for the Jews and the Greeks, but he stands out as the 'priest-king' who organized the religion, the priestly colleges and the calendar of early Rome. These things were done, and can only have been done, by a real person. Why not by Numa Pompilius?

This peaceful king was succeeded by the warrior Tullus Hostilius, whom tradition credits with the destruction of Alba

Longa after an attack by its inhabitants. His existence is supported on the positive side by a building called the Curia Hostilia, the first meeting-place of the Senate, and on the negative by the disappearance of Alba from history at about this time (though the famous combat of the Horatii and the Curiatii is legendary only). Ancus Martius who came after him was much adorned by legend out of compliment to the Marcian clan, but the story that he founded a colony at Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, though this was not done for another 300 years, rightly suggests the extension of Roman influence during his time as far as the sea.

With the last three kings we reach the transition from legend to history. They coincide with a period in which the Etruscans dominated Rome, and if the first two of them were not actually Etruscans by race, they ruled in the Etruscan interest. The last was certainly an Etruscan. It is equally certain that the Romans owed much to this period of Etruscan sovereignty. They realized it themselves, and attributed to L. Tarquinius Priscus such benefactions as the construction of the Cloaca Maxima, or main sewer, to drain the Forum, and the institution of the Roman Games. His successor, Servius Tullius, was credited with many reforms. Some, like the building of the stone 'Servian' wall round the city, are probably later achievements; but others, such as the inclusion within its boundary of the Capitol and the Esquiline and, at all events in principle, the organization of the people into 'tribes', 'classes' and 'centuries', may well be his doing. Even the unpopularity of the next and last king of Rome, L. Tarquinius Superbus, could not efface from memory and tradition the debt which she owed to the Etruscans.

The fact is that in material civilization the Etruscans were superior to the Romans, and it is hardly too much to say that under them Rome first became a city. Her streets were laid out and paved in the Etruscan style, and a drainage system began to make habitable the marshy ground that lay between the seven hills. Temples were built, one to Diana on the Aventine, and another on the Capitol which, later dedicated to Jupiter

Optimus Maximus, became the 'Metropolitan Church' of Rome. A new bridge carried trade over the Tiber and Rome's commercial and cultural relations were extended throughout Italy and beyond. Politically too the Romans had much to learn from their conquerors. The Etruscan kings gave them a centralized government and political organization as well as such familiar symbols of authority as the lictor's *fasces*, the senator's curule chair and purple-bordered toga. These reforms, together with improved military equipment, raised the prestige and increased the influence of Rome among her neighbours, as witness the treaty with the Latins for which Servius Tullius may well have been really, as well as traditionally, responsible. Her commercial importance grew at the same time till even the great trading city of Carthage took notice and made a treaty with her in 509.

But despite all this Rome never was an Etruscan city. The Etruscans in Rome were, in position and numbers, a few leading families rather than a garrison of conquerors. In race, language, institutions and religion, Rome remained essentially Latin. As such she emerged when a revolution drove the last of the Tarquins from his throne. Not that the revolution was as immediately and completely successful as Roman tradition liked to record. Lars Porsena of Clusium probably succeeded in capturing the city despite Horatius' defence of the bridge. But the Etruscan power was declining, soon to disappear. The revolt of the Latins, traditionally against Rome on behalf of the ejected Tarquins, was more probably against the Etruscans, thus incidentally helping the Romans to eject their king. The immediate and successful reorganization of the city under the consuls shows that the evolution of the Roman genius for government had been going on steadily during the Etruscan interlude and had emerged from it unimpaired.

The next hundred and twenty years, from the expulsion of the Etruscans to the sack of Rome by the Gauls in 390, was not a period which saw any expansion of the city or much building of note. The fact is that the Romans were too much taken up

with troubles at home and abroad, with the fighting of wars and the founding of colonies, to have time for it. Expansion indeed was unnecessary. The 'Servian' wall was designed to enclose a larger space than was then covered by buildings; and though little public building is recorded for some time to come, commercial quarters had room to spread along the river bank; a cattle market was included within the city wall, and other markets were set up outside it. For such public building as there was, Greek influence was now responsible. Greek gods were introduced into the city, and Greek artists were employed to build new temples for them and to redecorate the old ones.

The capture of Rome by the Gauls in 390 after the battle of Allia was a disaster which shook the city, almost literally, to her foundations. Livy's picturesque account may exaggerate, but there is no reason to doubt either the devastation of Rome or the despair of the Romans. The wooden houses were all burned, only the temples were left standing and the people seriously considered a mass migration to Veii, being restrained only by the firmness of their general, Camillus. They started to rebuild at once; but the urgent need for haste made planning impossible. People built what they could where they could—the lines of the old streets were disregarded and houses were put up even over the sewers. Such was the determination and energy of the Romans that the rebuilding was complete within a year, though Livy tells us that it looked more as if the inhabitants had each seized his bit of land than as if it had been allotted to him. And yet the new city was even on a bigger scale than the old one in order to accommodate refugees from neighbouring towns.

It was not really until the Punic Wars were over and the Romans had, comparatively, a little peace, that the improvement of the city could be taken in hand, though something was done to drain and fill up low-lying ground. Military roads and aqueducts were built to supply practical needs, the first of each, the Appian Way and the *Aqua Appia*, being planned by Appius Claudius in 312. The settlement with Carthage at the end of the first Punic War, by which Rome acquired her first province

of Sicily in 241, gave a fresh impetus to building and town-planning; and in the second century B.C., after the defeat of Hannibal at Zama, Rome began to look quite a different city. New temples were built for the gods, better houses for the patricians and tenements for the poorer citizens. Then too were built the first of the many basilicas which later became such conspicuous features of Rome, their roofs being supported on pillars only and thus providing large halls suitable for all sorts of business and other purposes. The streets began to be paved with stone, more bridges were built and new districts were laid out, this time on a symmetrical plan. Towards the middle of the century marble was used increasingly for public buildings and concrete was introduced.

Generally speaking, however, the development of the city during the Republican period seems to have been quite un-systematic. While the patricians were vying with one another in the erection of luxurious and splendid private houses on the hills of Rome, the valleys between them and the Tiber, where the absence of proper drainage exposed the inhabitants to malaria and floods, were crowded with mean dwellings, intersected by narrow streets and alley-ways, rather like London before the Great Fire. Sulla seems at least to have realized the problem, and Julius Caesar planned its solution; but the dagger of Brutus left most of his ideas to be carried out by his successor.

Augustus' policy aimed at keeping the city population happy and contented. His first step was to enlarge the boundaries of Rome. He pulled down the old encircling walls—there was no one left now from whom to fear attack—and allowed the city to spread to nearly twice its former extent. But by the end of his reign the population too had nearly doubled and was approaching a million, and the poorer folk were still miserably crowded. So the Emperor did what he could to make them forget it. He divided the whole area of the city for purposes of administration into fourteen *regiones*, or boroughs, enforced and extended Caesar's municipal regulations and above all added to the beauty and convenience of Rome by the erection of

splendid public buildings, such as basilicas and (the first of their kind) public baths. The people would be healthier and happier if they spent more of their time out of doors and less in their wretched homes.

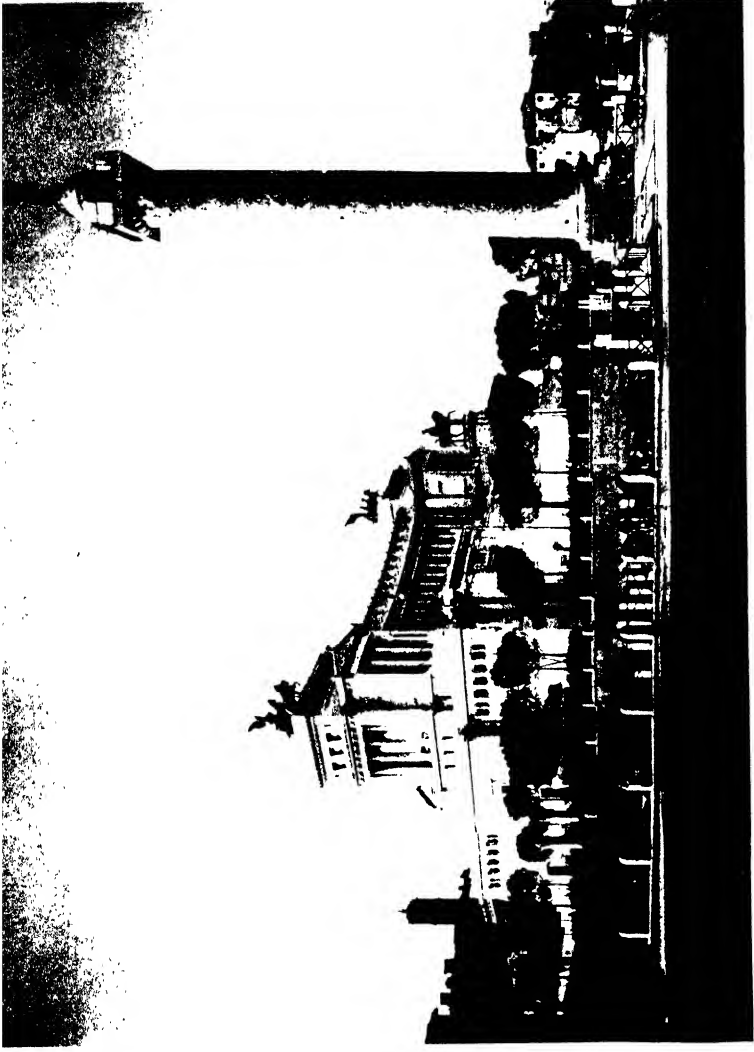
The discovery of the quarries at Carrara made possible Augustus' boast that he had found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble; but that was true only of parts of it, even if they were the most conspicuous. Neither he nor his predecessor did so much for the cleansing and rebuilding of Rome as did the great fire which swept through the poorer quarters during the reign of Nero. Men said that the Emperor 'fiddled while Rome was burning' and whispered that it had been set on fire by his orders. At all events he took the chance to appropriate some of the devastated area for his own use; and he compelled private owners to rebuild their houses more substantially, leaving room for wider streets.

And still the city grew, till its population reached what was probably its maximum of a million and a half in the second century A.D. One Emperor after another erected more and yet more magnificent buildings. To mention only a few of the best known, Vespasian began the building of the Colosseum, Trajan, greatest builder of them all, laid out a new and splendid forum, with a covered market and the famous Column rising between two public libraries. His successor Hadrian built the Pantheon, Caracalla the vast baths that bear his name,\* while those of Diocletian, now almost vanished, were even larger. And so it went on till A.D. 330, when Constantine, himself a builder with an immense basilica to his credit, moved the seat of government from Rome to Constantinople.

More important than these public buildings were the aqueducts which supplied the vast population of Rome with water. The first, as we have noted, was built at the end of the fourth century B.C., and by the end of the first century A.D. there were ten of them, with a total length of 300 miles, for forty of which they were carried over the valleys above ground. One, the

\* See the illustration on p. 199.

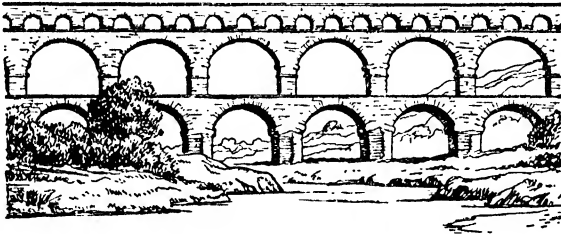




II. The Forum of Trajan and the Victor Emmanuel Monument



*Aqua Claudia*, included a tunnel three miles long and three feet wide by seven in height. The Romans had no blasting-powder, so the rock in the tunnel was heated by fire and then split by pouring cold water over it. Many aqueducts have survived as witness to the Roman genius for engineering and for architecture. The accuracy of their work is shown by a gradient sometimes as slight as 1 in 3000. They had 'traps' to catch the sediment, filters to stop the passage of débris, and arrangements by which the water could be emptied while repairs were being carried out. The water thus brought to Rome was stored in reservoirs



The Roman aqueduct near Nîmes

and distributed all over the city by underground pipes. Estimates of the quantity used every day vary from 53 to 300 gallons per head of the population; but it was obviously precious, and heavy fines were imposed on those who tried, as they often did, to divert it on the way.

But a city is more than the sum-total of its buildings, and in tracing the growth of the city from the first prehistoric settlement to the vast and teeming capital of the Caesars, we have attempted no description of the magnificence and beauty which made Rome the loveliest thing in the world, as Vergil calls her, the incomparable, the wonder of all mankind. Nor would it be much more helpful to see her as she is to-day, a modern city, superimposed upon the city of the Popes more obviously than on that of the Caesars. Ruins, in fact, are often misleading to any but the trained imagination. How many can revive, for instance, the splendour and the life of the Forum, now that excavation has done its best—and its worst—by looking down

on it from the Capitol, where a mangy wolf in a cage, and little else, serves to remind the sightseer where he stands? He might form a better picture, perhaps, if he would turn from the rather depressing site of the old Forum to the near-by monument of King Victor Emmanuel, of which the rather flamboyant, marble-and-gilt magnificence would not have seemed out of place in imperial Rome.\*

And yet here, in this low-lying tract among the seven hills, little more than two hundred yards long by fifty wide, the Romans found the centre of their universe for nearly a thousand years. Round it to a large extent their lives and the life of the State revolved. Wherever they looked as they walked about it they saw the temples of their gods, the memorials of their great men, the spoils of their enemies, their history written in stone. Here was the seat of government, the oldest meeting-place of the Senate. Here were the Courts of Law; and from here the bankers controlled the finance, and the merchants the commerce, of the world. What the Romans felt in their Forum, the British might feel for Westminster and Piccadilly, Whitehall and 'the City', rolled into one. It would be the first place visited by the legionary or the governor back from some 'outpost of empire'. Here the provincial would stand agape on his first visit to Rome. And as the four corners of the world were brought within the Roman *imperium*, Spaniards and Armenians, Britons and Arabs learned, as they elbowed one another in the Forum, something of what it meant to be able to boast '*Civis Romanus sum*'.

That Rome was a mighty city, lovely and beloved, is obvious—what her poets have sung the archaeologist's spade has confirmed—and we should prefer to let that be the conclusion of our chapter. But it is worth noting that those who sang the praises of Rome did not always care to live there. Cicero, it is true, could not be really happy anywhere else, but even he was thankful to retire pretty frequently to one or another of his five country houses. Vergil and Horace were always glad to get away and Juvenal, a hundred and fifty years later, seems to

\* See Plate facing p. 32.

have found city life stimulating enough to the mind but physically almost intolerable.

Throughout all her long history Rome was a city of palaces and slums; and most people had to live in the slums. So limited was the available space, so large the ever-growing population, that huge blocks of tenement houses, many-storeyed and overhanging the street, rose ever higher, jerry-built and liable to collapse or to catch fire. Between them, dark, crowded and insanitary, there crawled about sixty miles of roads, varying in width from the *itinera*, mere footpaths 6 feet wide, to ordinary streets, *vici*, of less than 15 feet and a few *viae*, main thoroughfares, from 15 to 20 feet across. These zigzagged up and down and round about the seven hills, without system, without pavements and without much light or air.

The result was less like a modern than a mediaeval city, its streets an inextricable maze in which it was both easy and dangerous to get lost. Caesar made the most stringent laws about street cleaning. Every householder was responsible for his own frontage, and if he neglected to keep it clean and his walls in good repair, the aediles were instructed to get the work done for him by a contractor and to send him in the bill. But somehow people continued to evade the law and the streets of Rome were, by modern standards, filthy. The pedestrian was apt to return home with mud up to his knees.

Worse than the mud were the smells. Rome had a fine system of sewers and water-supply but never found out how to use them properly, or how to connect them with any but the ground floors of the great blocks of tenements. The result was that people living in the upper storeys emptied the slops out of their windows into the streets below, to the embarrassment and peril of the passers-by. Even in imperial times open drains still ran through the streets, poisoning the air and breathing pestilence. This, in a hot climate!

But despite these risks and drawbacks, the streets were perpetually overcrowded. There were no 'tubes' or trams making it possible for a man to live outside the city and a long way from

his work, or to carry those who had to live inside it out into the country for recreation or a change of air when their work was done. The result was a congestion in the narrow streets and alleys so formidable even in Caesar's time that he forbade the passage through them of any wheeled vehicle during the hours of daylight; and in this respect at all events his orders continued to be strictly enforced. But the streets were still too narrow to carry the ceaseless flow of pedestrians, not to mention the pack-mules of the merchants and the litters of the wealthy, which were still allowed. Progress moreover was made increasingly difficult by pedlars hawking their wares in the streets and by shopkeepers who pushed their goods farther and farther out into the roadway, until at the end of the first century A.D. the Emperor had to forbid it altogether. Even this did nothing to control yet another curse of life in Rome, the noise; for the tradesmen, driven back inside their shops, had to cry their wares the more lustily. And so "in sun and shade a whole world of people came and went, shouted, squeezed and thrust through lanes unworthy of a country village".\*

When darkness fell, the normal life of the streets came to an end. The shops were barred and shuttered and ordinary folk went home and locked their doors. Bolts needed to be strong, for a whole underworld of burglars would soon be abroad in search of weak ones. The peaceful citizen who ventured out of doors in the pitch darkness (there was never any system of street lighting in Rome) ran a grave risk of being robbed or even murdered. No prudent man, says Juvenal, went out to dinner without having made his will, though a rich man stood a better chance, travelling as he did in a litter with a large escort of torch-bearers and armed slaves. The fact is that the corps of *vigiles*, night-watchmen or police, founded by Augustus, could not cope, 7000 strong though it was, with the advantage which darkness gave to crime.

Rich and poor alike had to face a congestion of traffic greater even than by day; for night let loose upon the narrow streets

\* Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*.

the whole mass of vehicles needed to supply the wants of so vast a population. Strings of waggons poured in from the country, and if one of them broke down, the road was blocked till it could be moved again. Rumbling wheels and squeaking axles, drovers yelling themselves hoarse, made a nightly hubbub even more hideous than that of day, if of a different kind. Insomnia was not the least of the inconveniences of Rome.

But however true in fact the picture which the satirists have drawn for us, we must beware of taking it too seriously. It is extraordinary what people can stand if they are accustomed to it, and no doubt millions of them contrived to live in Rome and to like it. Happiness is not the same as comfort, though the twentieth century is too much inclined to think so. It was quite another aspect of Roman life which did the real harm, the way in which it turned the townsman from a peasant into a cosmopolitan. The greatness of Rome, the foundation of her power and of her very existence, was the peasant, who was citizen and soldier as well; and as Rome became the capital, not merely of Latium, nor even of Italy, but of the world, the Romans themselves began to deteriorate. "The fundamental peasant-citizen-soldier gave way, as farmer to slave, as citizen to the vast urban proletariat, living on government doles and the bribes of politicians."

"It was literally Rome that killed Rome. The great cosmopolitan city of gold and marble. . . had nothing in common with the old capital of the rural Latin state. It served no social function, it was an end in itself, and its population came from every nation under Heaven to draw their government doles and to attend the free spectacles with which the government provided them. It was a vast, useless burden on the back of the Empire, which broke at last under the increasing strain."\* Truly, as Pericles said of Athens, it is not walls but men that make a city.

\* Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion*.

## CHAPTER IV. THE CONSTITUTION

THE achievements of Rome were made possible by a combination of three things—the character of her people, the might of her arms and the genius of her government. It is with the last of these that this chapter deals; and it will be less concerned with the complicated and embittered struggles which first developed, and in the end destroyed, the political institutions of Rome, than with trying to explain what those institutions were and how they worked.

The Roman constitution, like the British, was shaped throughout its history by two characteristics of both peoples, love of liberty and hatred of change, of which the first has played the greater part in English history and the second in that of Rome. In both countries the government traced its authority back to a monarchy, though in neither was the power of the king unrestrained. In Rome as in England the early kings were expected to defer to a Council of Elders, and in Rome the crown was not even hereditary. When the king died a viceroy was appointed by the Council to nominate his successor, but his nomination had to be confirmed—or it might be rejected—by the whole citizen-body, the *Populus Romanus*. Once confirmed in their office, the kings of Rome held it for life and they were not bound, except by convention, to take or even to ask the advice of the elders, any more than the Tudor kings of England were obliged to summon Parliament; though they too had to be ‘confirmed’ on their accession and must not exceed the powers sanctioned by custom. This semi-absolute monarchy persisted in Rome till Tarquin the Cruel, and in England till Charles I, when ‘the right divine of Kings to govern wrong’ produced a revolution.

Royal power is by its nature ‘absolute’, because the king is thought to be the only man who knows the will of the gods (perhaps like Æneas he is descended from them); and he is therefore the only person qualified to lay down the law, to regulate worship and to lead his people in a war which the gods



can be expected to favour. The primitive king is therefore his people's High Priest, Lawgiver and Commander-in-Chief.

Such were the early kings of Rome, and such the absolute power (known as the *imperium*) which, when they were driven out, was not abolished but merely resumed by the whole body of citizens. In theory therefore the change was from absolute monarchy to complete democracy. But the Romans, as we have said, hated change and clung to the 'custom of their ancestors' (*mos maiorum*), with the result that in practice the constitution was far from being a democratic one. Polybius, a Greek historian of the second century B.C., admired the Roman constitution for the way in which it combined and blended within itself the three fundamental principles of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, represented by the Consuls, the Senate and the People. Of these three the People came first in theory, the Consuls next and the Senate last. In practice this order was reversed. The old formula, *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, meant what it said.

A word first about the *Populus Romanus*, the whole citizen-body, which included every citizen, whether 'patrician' or 'plebeian'. The difference between these two classes within this body was sharply felt and in early days clearly defined; but what exactly had made the difference, scholars do not seem to agree. Some say that it was a difference of race; that the patricians were the conquering invaders and the plebeians the earlier inhabitants, like our Normans and Saxons. Others, that the patricians were the original settlers, like the Pilgrim Fathers in America, and the plebeians the later arrivals. But more probably the difference was mainly economic, and the two 'orders' were only the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' under yet another name. The struggle between them for political power was long and even more than usually embittered.

The patricians started with every advantage that wealth and power can give, and they formed a closed caste. They alone might sit in the Senate, hold the highest offices of state or become members of the colleges of priests. They were thus in control of

government, justice and religion. These privileges descended to their families, who claimed the monopoly of them almost as by divine right; wherefore they refused to intermarry with plebeians. Long after their monopoly had been wrested from them, these families continued to form the 'old aristocracy' and retained much of their real power and prestige even to the end of the Republic.

Against the patricians the plebeians struggled, from the fall of the monarchy onwards for nearly five hundred years, first for protection and then for equality. The plebeians won; and the explanation of their victory is to be found in the constant wars of Rome. They were needed as soldiers; and as soldiers will, they discovered not only their importance but their power. So they hit on the method which they called 'secession' and which we call a general strike, and left Rome in a body just at the times when their services were urgently required in the ranks. In this way they were able to build up their own plebeian Assembly, the *Concilium Plebis*, and their own officers, the *Tribuni Plebis*, till the patricians were forced to recognize them both. There was no bloody revolution in the long history of the struggle between the orders. Instead, 'the Revolution was rendered part of the Constitution'.

But the issue of the struggle was one which neither side could have foreseen. The patricians had been forced to share their political privileges with the plebeians, and the constitution was made in theory a complete democracy. But while such a process usually results in a levelling down, in Rome it resulted in a 'levelling up'. For the plebeian families, now admitted to the Senate and the magistracies, though they remained socially distinct from the old aristocracy, combined with them politically to form a new nobility, not of birth but of office. This new 'governing class' soon proceeded to close its ranks. The newcomers, *novi homines*, were proud of their *nobilitas* and were as determined as the old aristocracy not to share their privileges with other plebeians who might try to follow in their footsteps. So they combined with the old families to keep the consulship

to themselves, and so successfully that, during the last two centuries of the Republic, its holders were drawn almost as exclusively from the nobility (whether old or new) as they had been in the days before the first *novus homo*, Lucius Sextius, became consul in 366 B.C. It needed a Marius or a Cicero to break through the ring.

And so the five hundred years of the 'struggle of the orders' resulted to all intents and purposes in little real change. When it started, the government was in the hands of the patricians. When it ended, the plebeians had secured almost everything they wanted and the constitution was a pure democracy in form. But such was the conservatism of the Romans that the real power was restricted to a new aristocracy, hardly to be distinguished from the old. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

But in the course of the struggle the plebeians had secured one change at least which was of real and lasting importance. The commanding position which they won for their tribunes was no paper victory. Two Tribunes of the People appear very early in the fifth century B.C. as popular champions. They were bound to leave their doors open all night for those who might want their help, and were not allowed to leave Rome for more than a few hours at a time. Anyone who laid hands on them the People swore to kill, and it was not long before they were recognized by law as 'sacrosanct'. Their number was gradually raised from 2 to 5 and from 5 to 10. Their function was originally defensive, to stand up for the rights of the proletariat against the patricians and the magistrates; and they gradually acquired powers which were no less formidable for being accepted as constitutional. Chief of these was their veto, the right to forbid or annul by *intercessio* any official act. In this way they became more powerful than the magistrates, for they could bring the whole machinery of the State to a standstill.

Not unnaturally they were at first unpopular with the ruling classes and attempts were made to limit and even to suppress their powers and to keep them out of the Senate House. But in vain. They started with no more than the right to sit on a bench

outside the doors of the Curia and listen at the keyhole; but they soon got inside, and once in they were not long in making themselves heard. Next they gained the right to veto *senatus consulta*, then to summon meetings of the Senate, and in 120 B.C. the right to vote. It is typical of the Senate that by the time they had acquired this, they had become comparatively tame. But Caesar turned the tables on the Senate by his skilful (and unscrupulous) employment of a tribune as his private agent to frustrate their plots against him. In the end, an office which had been created in order to defend the poor against the patricians was used by the Emperors to deprive the Senate and People alike of their liberties. The absolute power of Augustus and his successors was based on their possession of a tribune's powers, the *tribunicia potestas*.

Meanwhile, throughout Republican times and to some extent under the Empire, meetings of the whole citizen-body, the *Populus Romanus*, were held. They were called *Comitia* and there were three of them: the *curiata* which voted by districts, the *centuriata* by military 'companies' and the *tributa* by political 'tribes'. In all three voting was by groups, not by individuals, on proposals laid before them by a magistrate. The *Comitia Curiata* originally confirmed the appointment of a king and invested him with the *imperium*, and in later times its only function was to do the same for his successors, the consuls and praetors—a pure formality, as thirty lictors and four augurs were enough to constitute a quorum! The actual election of these higher magistrates lay with the *Comitia Centuriata*, which also decided between peace or war and acted as a court of appeal (*provocatio*) from capital sentences passed by a magistrate. The lesser magistrates were elected, and appeals from lesser sentences were heard, by the *Comitia Tributa*, which gradually superseded the *Centuriata* as the chief legislative assembly of the People, till it became merged in its turn in the *Concilium Plebis*. This was not, like the three *comitia*, a meeting of the whole people but of the plebeians; and it was only gradually that it became 'official' (and probably more inclusive) and had the

right to act as an elective body, a court of law and a legislative assembly.

Here we may give a passing glance to the ordinary stages through which a proposal must pass, during Republican times, before it became a law. First, those who supported the proposal must get the ear of a consul; for he, as president, must decide whether, and in what form, he should *referre rem ad Senatum*, lay it before the Senate. At this stage, when being considered by the Senate, it was known as a *relatio*, and a debate took place about it. Individual senators would be asked to address the House, by the formula *quid censes?*, 'what is your opinion?' Votes (*sententiae*) were recorded by the 'ayes' and the 'noes' dividing into separate groups (*ire in sententiam*) and if 'the ayes had it', the *relatio* became a *senatus consultum*, which literally means 'the senate's advice'; and it now became the consul's duty to bring the matter before the Popular Assembly in the form of a *rogatio*, a request.

The Assembly, be it noted, had no power to propose legislation on its own. It must wait till it was 'asked' by a consul acting on the 'advice' of the Senate. Even then it could neither discuss nor amend a *rogatio*. Two tablets were issued to its members, one marked V, for VTI ROGAS ('as you ask') and the other A, for ANTIQVO ('I move the previous question'). All they could do was to hand in one or the other, and either reject the proposal or, by accepting it, turn the *rogatio* into a *lex*.

But legislation was not so completely in the hands of the consuls as this method of law-making suggests; for there was another method which could be used as a way round. At least by the middle of the fourth century, if the consuls or the Senate were proving obstructive, a Tribune of the People could summon the *Concilium Plebis* and lay any measure directly before it. If it was passed, it was known as a *plebiscitum*, and had the force of law.

The theory, then, of the Roman Constitution was that the supreme power in the State belonged to the sovereign People, who passed on their executive power to the magistrates. The

Senate was there to give advice. But in practice it was neither the People nor the magistrates, but the Senate, who were the real rulers of Rome.

Two reasons chiefly produced this result—first the permanency, and second the ability, of the Senate. Magistrates came and went. During their year of office they depended on the backing of the Senate against interference by a colleague, and when the year was over they became private citizens again. But the Senate went on for ever. The citizens might come to Rome once a year for the elections, but they had neither the time nor the knowledge to take part in the day-to-day business of government. The Senate had both; for its members lived in Rome and government was the main business of their lives. The Popular Assemblies could vote on a measure, but they could not discuss it; the discussion took place in the Senate before it was submitted to them. Moreover the business with which they had to deal soon grew to be outside the knowledge or even the interest of the citizens, who were glad enough to have it done for them without their being consulted. And so the conduct of public affairs passed gradually but completely into the hands of the Senate, till it combined in itself the functions performed in Britain by the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Civil Service—in fact even more, for the Senate was responsible for the provinces in a way in which, since the passing of the Statute of Westminster in 1931, the British Parliament has not been responsible for the Dominions.

The continual crises, both of war and politics, through which Rome passed during the centuries of her expansion, increased the need and the authority of a strong central body like the Senate, which emerged from the Punic Wars with overwhelming prestige and unrivalled experience. But something more is needed to explain its supremacy and its success, and this is found in the high level of individual ability which its members seemed able to produce in successive generations. Public spirit, a sense of justice and responsibility, capacity for leadership—these were qualities for which the average senator could be relied on, at all

events during the great age of senatorial government which lasted to the end of the Punic Wars. As the old Roman poet Ennius puts it in one unforgettable line, *Moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque*:\* 'Rome lives by her traditions and her men'.

Who were the men who, from their seats in the Senate House, controlled the destinies first of Rome, then of Italy and finally of the whole civilized world? Originally they were chosen by the consuls, and later by the censors, from all classes alike within the citizen-body; but gradually the choice was restricted, by custom rather than by law, to those who were descended from former consuls or from the holders of lesser magistracies, while a few vacancies went to those who had distinguished themselves in war. The Senate thus came to consist of ex-magistrates and the descendants of magistrates. It formed an aristocracy of birth and office, being partly hereditary and partly selective, and fresh plebeian blood was occasionally introduced by the *novi homines*, 'outsiders' as we might say, whose own ability, rather than some ancestor's, had won them a magistracy and through it a seat in the Senate House.

From the earliest times almost to the end of the Republic the Senate consisted of 300 members. The dictator Sulla nearly doubled its numbers by promoting to it distinguished members of the equestrian order; and Julius Caesar raised them to 900 in an attempt to strengthen the foundations of the Empire by admitting men from the provinces. Augustus diminished both its numbers and its responsibilities, and the process was continued in both directions by succeeding Emperors till the Senate was reduced to little more than a collection of dignified 'yes-men'.

But in its great days (and they lasted for 400 years) the senators numbered 300—too unwieldy a body, it might be thought, to conduct the complicated and extensive business of government. And so it must have proved, but for the Roman sense of reasonableness and respect for tradition which once

\* This appears to be the correct version of the line: see 'Notes and Queries', April 8th, 1944.

again made an 'impossible' arrangement workable. It was in fact a small number of senators only, a sort of inner cabinet, who shaped its policy and directed its decisions. When the *Consulares* had spoken, those who had held the highest office in the State, the rest were content to follow their lead. When feelings ran high in the Senate House, as they sometimes did, it was rarely over a question of principle; and even personal rivalries were seldom carried to a point which endangered the Republic.

As an aristocracy of office, compact, experienced and public-spirited, the senators had proved exceptionally fitted to direct the policy of Rome, and to organize and inspire the Romans, during times of war. It was in fact force of circumstances and force of character that gave the Senate its power. But when victory made Rome the arbiter of East and West, and the senators were confronted with new problems of diplomacy, finance and government, they broke under the strain. With success came temptation to abuse it. Times were changing and they could not adapt themselves to change. And with troubles springing up all over the world, as the conquered peoples stirred uneasily, the Senate grew first tired and then slack. The decline of the Roman Republic had set in. Its fall might be delayed, but could not be prevented. During the last century B.C. its forms survived, but its life had gone out in a welter of blood and civil war. The Republic was, so to speak, dead before Caesar and Pompey killed it.

When Augustus at last restored peace (though not without a deal more bloodletting) he tried to put new life into some, at all events, of the Republican institutions. But he was less concerned with formulae than with facts, and these made any real revival of Republicanism impossible. The times needed a strong, centralized government, the people were crying out for it, and Augustus must either supply it or plunge the world back into the chaos and despair from which he had rescued it.

Even so, he wished to be a constitutional ruler, and to make what changes were necessary with the least possible appearance



of change. The Romans (how like the British!) would stomach even revolutionary changes provided that the old names were retained; so Augustus styled himself no more than *princeps*, leader of the Senate, and retained the old magistracies. But in fact he was supreme, partly because he had been given the powers of a tribune and a proconsul for life, and even more because of his overwhelming personal prestige. He was careful to see that the new constitution was confirmed in legal form by the Senate and the People; but in neither was there a single vote against it. If Augustus was in fact an absolute monarch, it was at least as much by the will of the people as by his own.

No such scruples restrained most of his successors, whose conduct was often as despotic as their powers; though not many of them went so far as his great-grandson, Caligula, who is said to have exclaimed, 'Would that the Roman people had only one head!' and who made his horse a consul. And yet the imperial government of Rome became in time "one of the most complex and yet smooth-running systems of government known to history. . . . Later there were to be revolts against this or that Princeps, but never against the Principate."\*

\* John Buchan, *Augustus*.

## CHAPTER V. THE MAGISTRATES

IT was the People who, as we have seen, gave the king his *imperium*, and to the People the *imperium* reverted when the king was driven out. But they could not, obviously, carry out his duties personally. For practical purposes of government they had to entrust it to certain officials.

But though in this way they surrendered the executive power to the magistrates, they need not have surrendered their control over them. It was by the Popular Assemblies that the magistrates were elected and the laws passed. For any office or even a seat in the Senate, plebcians were eligible equally with patricians, at all events by the middle of the fourth century B.C. The power of the People was still supreme, had they wished to exercise it. But the whole citizen-body was too unwieldy to do much more than say 'yes' or 'no' to a law or a candidate; and such was the people's respect for authority and, in later times, their laziness, that they could generally be relied upon to vote as they were told or paid to vote. The idea of representative government, of the election by the whole body of a smaller body to represent it, had not yet come into existence; and as the number of citizens increased, it became increasingly difficult for them to act all together, and increasingly convenient to leave all action to the officials.

As the People tended to let the real power slip from their hands, it might be supposed that the magistrates would exercise it, for they were legally in a very strong position. The power entrusted to them by the People was unlimited, as that of the kings had been. To disobey a magistrate was no ordinary crime. It was treason.

But if a magistrate's power was unlimited, pains had been taken and safeguards devised to make sure that no magistrate should be unlimited in the use he made of it. For instance, the highest magistracy, the consulship, was held by two men at the same time and they held it for one year only. In this way each acted as a check on the other—for each could veto the proposals





(i) A young woman of the 2nd century A.D.



(ii) Augustus as a young man



(iii) Livia in middle age



(iv) An unknown man

### III. Roman Portrait-Busts

of his colleague—and neither had time to make himself all-powerful.

The only exception was made in times of national crisis so grave as to justify the risk; and then the consuls, if the Senate agreed, might appoint one man as dictator for a limited period of six months, during which he alone exercised supreme power in every department of the State. The ordinary magistrates continued to function, but the dictator could override any of them. He had wider powers of punishment than they and there was no appeal from his verdict; nor could he be called to account for his acts as dictator when the six months were over. He appointed a *Magister Equitum* (Master of the Horse) to be his second-in-command, and to take his place if he had to leave Rome.

However, so great was the Roman reverence for *mos maiorum* that tradition itself was the best of all safeguards. For instance, as the kings had a Council of Elders to advise them, tradition insisted that the consuls in their turn should consult the Senate. They were not bound to take its advice, but in fact they dared not disregard it. After all, the senators were their predecessors in office and they themselves would be senators for the rest of their lives. However, it was actually to the consuls, and not to the Senate, that the absolute power, the *imperium*, was handed on by the People when they took it away from the kings.

The two consuls were the chief magistrates of the Republic, joint heads of the State. They 'inherited' every power and every duty of the kings except that of High Priest, for which a separate official was created. And so conservative was the influence of religion that in this single instance even the hated name of king was left unchanged, and he was known as the *Rex Sacrorum*. But consuls, unlike their royal predecessors, were elected every year by the Popular Assembly. In early times none but patricians could hope to reach the consulship, but later it was thrown open to plebeians; and the principle was established by the third century B.C. that both consuls might be plebeians and one must be. In the last century of the Republic, the date of the

consular elections was fixed for July and the consuls-elect took office on the first of January following.

It was inevitable as time went on that some of the consul's duties and responsibilities should be transferred from him to other officials. But despite this decentralization, as we should call it, the consul was still regarded as the successor of the king and his office was the greatest honour that the State could bestow upon a citizen.

Though relieved of some of his duties, he still had plenty left. As long as he remained in Rome he was the supreme civil magistrate, head of the government and the administration, though he shared the responsibility with his colleague. He was the superior of all other magistrates, even after the office of tribune had been invented to protect the interests of the common people. He called meetings of the Senate and of the Popular Assembly and presided over both, and was responsible for seeing that their decrees were carried out; though the very phrase *senatus consultum* reminds us that it was in theory the consul who consulted the Senate and not the Senate who gave him orders.

The foreign relations of the government were entirely in the hands of the consuls. They alone carried on negotiations between Rome and the heads of foreign states. Despatches and reports from abroad were submitted to them first, and they received foreign ambassadors and introduced them into the Senate. In this way they combined the office of Foreign Secretary with that of Prime Minister.

But their power during their year of office was greater than that of any two ministers of the British Crown, or even of the entire Cabinet. They were in supreme charge of the whole machinery of state; and they could enforce their authority by summoning, arresting and punishing anyone who gave them trouble, though such a person had always the right of appeal (*provocatio*) to the People. Their power was attended by impressive symbols. Whenever they appeared in public there walked before them, as once before the kings, twelve lictors, one behind the other, each carrying a bundle of rods called

*fasces* with an axe in the middle, to signify their power to punish even with death; but when the right of appeal was granted, the axe was removed from the *fasces* and only one of the two consuls retained the twelve lictors. It remained for Mussolini to restore the axe to the *fasces*, and thus significantly to revive the symbol, not of the consuls, but of the dictator and commander-in-chief.



The Fasces

For when the consuls went outside the city to command the armies of the Republic, the axe was restored to the *fasces* as a sign that there was no appeal, and was withdrawn again only when they re-entered the city. This was symbolic of the absolute power which they wielded as commanders-in-chief, for, except that they could neither declare war nor conclude peace, they were in supreme charge of the conduct of a war. They raised the armies in the first place by holding a levy of the citizens; they decided what contingents the 'allied' cities must provide, and it was to them that the soldiers took their oath of allegiance. Within his *provincia*—the country or countries which had been assigned to him as his sphere of duty—a consul reigned supreme as any king; for he had absolute power not only in military matters but in all, including the power of life and death.

But this unlimited power was only retained by a consul so long as he remained in his *provincia*. When he left it, he must leave his army behind; and that is why when Julius Caesar\* crossed the Rubicon which divided his province of Gaul from Italy he knew, and is said to have exclaimed, that the die was cast. For he brought his army across with him and that was a breach of the constitution and so an act of rebellion.

Great as was the power of the consuls, it must be remembered that it was greater in theory than in practice. The merely legal safeguards designed to prevent them from abusing their power—the fact for instance that there were two of them—did comparatively little to hamper their work or cramp their initiative. The Romans were too conservative a people to change an old-

\* Caesar was, of course, a proconsul, at the time.

established, if awkward, custom, but they were too practical to let it stand in the way of efficiency, and the difficulty was avoided by each consul carrying out the chief duties of his office in alternate months. The real limitation of their power came from tradition, the unwritten law which turned the 'advice' of the Senate into the driving-force of the State.

We have already noted some decentralization of the consul's duties. In 366 a praetor was appointed to act as a general assistant to them, the name, curiously enough, being a revival of that by which the consuls were originally called.\* He could perform any of the consuls' duties if necessary, and took their place when they were absent from Rome, but his special function was that of supreme judge. He was more than a lawyer—he was actually a law-maker. For while any magistrate could publish an edict laying down the lines along which he proposed to conduct his office, the praetor's edict, issued annually, soon acquired the force of law and became the foundation of the great legal system of Rome.

It was not long before it was found impossible for one praetor to cope with the work, for Rome was increasingly concerned with the legal relations not only between citizens, but between foreigners, or between citizens and foreigners. So while the chief praetor, the *praetor urbanus*, continued to administer and develop citizen law, another, the *praetor peregrinus*, was appointed to deal with foreigners. How additional 'foreign praetors' came to be appointed and how the *ius praetorium* was developed till it overshadowed the *ius civile* will be told in the last chapter. For the moment we may note that the number of praetors was gradually raised from the original two to sixteen under Julius Caesar.

Next in seniority after the praetors came the aediles, generally four in number. Their name is said to derive from the Temple (*aedes*) of Ceres where they originally kept the archives of the plebs; and they were certainly much concerned with buildings, whether temples or other public buildings which it was their duty to maintain, or private houses which they could compel

\* The *prae-itor*, the man who goes in front.



the owners either to maintain or pull down. Their duties were many and various, but mostly of the 'practical' kind and such as are performed to-day by the police and the municipal authorities. They were in charge of the drains and water-supply of the city, involving the upkeep of the sewers and aqueducts, and the cleaning of the streets. They had to maintain the food-supply, and were in control of the markets and the distribution of corn. They regulated weights and measures. They were also responsible for public order and police work generally; and they had considerable judicial powers for dealing with offences against their regulations.

There was another duty which made the office of aedile specially sought after by the ambitious. This was the supervision of most of the great public festivals or *ludi*, which they vied with one another in providing on a magnificent scale. Individuals spent prodigious sums of money in this way in order to attract the notice of the people and to secure their votes when standing for the higher offices. Julius Caesar, for instance, "outdid all predecessors, for the very cages of the wild beasts were of silver and he produced three hundred and twenty pairs of gladiators".\*

The quaestorship was the lowest of the four offices which entitled the holders to a seat in the Senate. The quaestors probably started as the consuls' secretaries, but in later times their work was mainly financial. They were in charge of the Treasury and, incidentally, of the State archives, which were kept in it as well as the State funds. In earlier times there were two of them, but as the finances of Rome became more complicated, their number was raised to four, then to eight and in the last century B.C. to twenty.

Two of them, *quaestores aerarum*, always remained at the Treasury. The others were generally away from Rome. For instance, when a consul was commanding a Roman army in the field, he always had a quaestor on his staff who took charge of the whole financial side of the campaign. He acted as paymaster to the troops and supervised the sale, for the benefit of the Treasury, of

\* John Buchan, *Julius Caesar*.

booty and slaves. Similarly when a proconsul or proprætor was appointed to be governor of a province, he too took a quaestor with him to relieve him of the financial side of his work, such as the collection of taxes. Other quaestors had special posts, of which the most important was that of the *quaestor ostiensis* who lived at Ostia, the port of Rome, and was responsible to the aedile for the city's corn supply.

These four magistracies, the quaestorship, aedileship, praetorship and consulship, made up the *cursus honorum*, the political ladder (if we may change the metaphor) up which the ambitious must climb in order to reach the highest position in the State; and the offices must be held in that order. Election was by the People, and all full citizens were eligible. They were supposed to have unblemished records, symbolized by the *toga candida* or white toga which they wore for the occasion and from which the word 'candidate' is derived. It is on record that if there were stains on their togas (not to say their records) which they wished to hide, they whitened them with chalk. Candidates for the quaestorship must not be less than twenty-seven years old and were expected to have done eight years' military service. Allowing for the regulation interval of two years between each successive office, we might suppose that the lowest age for the consulship would be thirty-six; but it appears to have been about thirty-nine, and rather later after Sulla's time.

Outside the *cursus honorum*, yet an office of great importance and influence, was that of the censors. At first they were regarded as junior to the chief officers of State, but such was its power that the censorship steadily advanced in dignity till it came to be looked upon as the climax of a political career and was usually held after the consulship. The importance enjoyed by the censor derived from his two chief functions, one financial and the other social, in which he was practically free from any control except that of his colleague.

On the censors' importance in public finance there is no need to dwell. They were the chief financial officers of the State, its Chancellors of the Exchequer. They were responsible for fixing

and for collecting the taxes, and they controlled the spending of them. As the revenues of Rome increased, so did the importance of the censor's office.

Their influence was even greater, and their power almost unlimited, in the social and political world. The censor was chief registrar of the State and he entered in his registers the name of every citizen, his political 'tribe', his social 'order', and his property. But he was more than a mere recorder. He was *censor morum* as well, sole judge of a man's fitness to be a senator or a knight, or even to be a citizen at all. He had only to put a 'black mark' (*censoria nota*) against a name, and the man might be ruined socially, politically or both. How arbitrarily their powers were sometimes used is illustrated by the career of Cato, the famous censor of 184 B.C., who showed himself equally efficient and puritanical in finance, politics and morals. He repressed the extortions of the tax-collectors, taxed at thirty times the normal rate property which he chose to regard as proof of extravagance, degraded a senator for kissing his wife in the presence of their daughter, and a knight for having grown too fat to sit a horse. No wonder that Cicero complained that the censor's pen was as sharp, and might be as lethal, as a dagger.

The censorship completes the list of the principal offices in Rome, and one of the most remarkable things about it is that the offices are in fact so few. The officials tended to increase in number as the State expanded and they were of course assisted by minor officials, of whom there were twenty-six (the *viginti sex viri*), with duties varying from those of lesser judicial officers to those of sanitary inspectors. They had, too, executive staffs such as lictors, clerks (*scribae*), messengers (*viatores*) and criers (*praecones*). But there was no permanent Civil Service; and the number of those responsible for maintaining the life and government of so great a nation remained conspicuously small. Moreover no salary was attached to these offices; they were called *honores*, honours, and in the best days of the Republic they were regarded as such.

The difficulties involved in such a system were overcome partly by the fact that a large amount of the actual work of government was done in the Senate House itself or occasionally by the appointment of advisory boards of senators; but more important was the practice known as *prorogatio imperii*, the extension of a magistrate's powers so as to allow a consul or a praetor, when his year of office was over, to continue to 'act' in the same capacity. This device, invented to cope with emergencies in time of war, came to be accepted as a regular practice and in time made possible the military autocrats whose rivalries overthrew the Republic.

Meanwhile "thanks to an ingrained instinct for compromise, and against pushing any principle to its logical conclusion, the . . . system worked. It ought not to have worked, but it did."\* These words were written, not of the Roman system of government in Republican times, but of the British in 1942; and so near akin is the genius of the two peoples that they are equally true of either.

The fact is that the Roman constitution ultimately depended, even more than all constitutions must, on the capacity of the government to govern and the willingness of the people to be governed. Technical difficulties were got over by the innate respect which the Romans felt for their constitution and their refusal to take advantage of the cracks in its structure. When the respect was gone, the cracks widened till the whole edifice became unsound. The time came when it was no longer possible to shore up and underpin; the only plan was to pull the whole thing down and rebuild. Fortunately for Rome and for the world, the double task of demolition and reconstruction was carried out by such great political architects as Julius Caesar and his great-nephew Augustus.

\* Lord Elton, *St George or the Dragon*.

## PART THREE

### THE ROMANS ABROAD

“The greatnesse of the Roman people was not so much discerned by what it tooke, as by what it gave.”

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE, *Of the Roman Greatnesse.*  
(Florio's translation.)



CHAPTER VI: THE CONQUEST OF ITALY.    CHAPTER VII: THE CONQUEST OF THE WORLD.    CHAPTER VIII: THE PROVINCES.    CHAPTER IX: THE EMPIRE.    CHAPTER X: THE ARMY.    CHAPTER XI: THE ARMY (CONT.)



#### CHAPTER VI. THE CONQUEST OF ITALY

THE pages of Livy are full of fighting—of patricians quarrelling with plebeians, of Rome warring against her neighbours, of “old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago”. His wars, both little and great, seem endless and his proper names unfamiliar and confusing, names of tribes, of towns, and above all of people. They seem to recur with ‘damnable iteration’; and the present writer must confess to having, in his youth, found Livy both difficult and dull. If there should be some who feel the same to-day, it is probably for the same two reasons: failure to ‘see the wood for the trees’ and failure to use a map. This chapter will attempt to save the reader from both these drawbacks, by explaining in outline what it was all about, and by providing a map. It aims as well at helping him by these means to understand and enjoy one of the most colourful and entertaining of historians.

##### I. THE LATIN LEAGUE

The earliest stages in Rome's struggle to become the mistress of Italy, though at a time when she could have had no consciousness of her destiny, were described in chapter III, which told the

story of how she drove out the Tarquins and helped to break the power of the Etruscans. She emerged from this ordeal to find herself confronted by the jealousy of her nearest neighbours, the townships of Latium. For Republican Rome claimed to continue the leadership of Latium which her kings had exercised, a claim which the Latins resented; and now that they saw her weakened by domestic quarrels, they felt that the time had come to 'put her in her place'. A Latin League was formed from which Rome was excluded, and at once made itself ready for war. Romans and Latins met, and the battle of Lake Regillus was fought, in 496. Victory, despite the help given them by the 'Great Twin Brethren', cannot have been decisively on the Roman side, as she had to renounce her claims to leadership and entered the League as an equal. But the importance of this little war does not lie in the victory of either side, but in the shadow of coming events cast by the terms of the treaty of peace which followed. Rome and the Latins swore perpetual peace on the terms of what we should call an offensive and defensive alliance, and *an equality of rights between Roman citizens and those of any Latin city*. Here in embryo is the principle which led in time to a united Italy.

## 2. THE HERNICI, ÆQUI AND VOLSCI

The Romans and the Latins were in fact anxious to come to terms, for they were both alike in danger from enemies on the east and south, the Æqui and the Volsci. Between these two tribes, as between the upper and the nether millstone, lay the Hernici, and Rome took advantage of their troubles, which in anticipation were her own, to include them too in her alliance with the Latins as a buffer-state between the Æqui and the Volsci. A second principle of Roman statecraft underlay this treaty: *divide et impera*, divide and rule.

The Volsci were not slow to realize the strategical value to the Romans of this triple alliance. Whatever are the historic facts behind the legend of the renegade Coriolanus, the aim of his attack on Tusculum at the head of the Volscian army seems

to have been to drive a wedge between the Hernici and the Latins and to open up communications with the Æqui, who at the same time were descending on Latium from the east. Tusculum fell to a 'pincers' movement, but it was soon recovered by the Latins and the Hernici. These two members of the triple alliance seem to have borne the brunt of the fighting which dragged on for the next twenty years. The Romans indeed suffered a disaster when in 458 the consul Minucius was trapped in a valley and only five horsemen escaped to bring the news to Rome. But Cincinnatus was 'called from the plough' to be dictator and before he returned to it again succeeded in defeating the Æqui in the very same valley.

And still the war dragged on; but the Romans were gaining in strength and, taking the offensive, they won a decisive victory over the Æqui at Mount Algidus in 431. Gradually they wore down the Volsci also and by the end of the century the war had almost petered out. A hundred years of fighting had secured for Rome more than just the recovery of territory lost. In the course of it three generations of her sons had learned the art and the discipline of war; and when only a few years later disaster almost overwhelmed her, the Volsci and the Æqui were in no position to take advantage of it. They had learned their lesson.

### 3. VEII

In this 'hundred-years war' great issues were at stake, but we must not forget that the campaigns themselves and the forces employed were on a very small scale. In the spring the rival armies would sally out to burn each other's crops and there would be serious fighting, perhaps, while the campaigning season lasted; and then everyone would go home again till next year.

How small Rome was in the early days and how limited in resources we are reminded by the fact that Etruscan Veii, only fifteen miles away to the north on the other side of the Tiber, was her larger, stronger and more prosperous rival. This rivalry was of long standing, for Rome blocked the expansion of Veii

down the Tiber valley; and in the course of it the Romans suffered at least one serious defeat ('the destruction of the Fabii' at Cremera in 477). But as the power of the Etruscans declined and that of Rome, backed by the Latin League, became more formidable, Veii relapsed into peace and obscurity for the next forty years. But whichever side held Fidenae, whose situation between the two made it a key position, directly threatened the other. This village was constantly taken and retaken and remained in Roman hands during Veii's period of quiescence. The trouble flared up again in 428; and though we cannot be sure of the details which Livy gives, it is plain that the issue left Rome in firm possession of Fidenae.

But as long as Veii remained independent Rome could not feel safe; and with Fidenae secured as a base of operations, it was decided to attempt the reduction of Veii itself and to put an end to the menace. Surrounded on three sides by precipitous cliffs and almost impregnable, the city could only be reduced by siege; and so it was, and probably by a long one, even if it did not last ten years (the 'classic' duration since the siege of Troy!), nor need all the stratagems ascribed to Camillus.

The chief importance of this long-drawn-out struggle is again found in the settlement which brought it to an end in 396. The territory of the Veii was annexed by Rome and incorporated in her own, which thus became the largest in Latium, and the Veiians were made Roman citizens. At the same time Rome advanced farther and planted colonies of her citizens where they would secure her frontier with Etruria. Her allies too were given a large share in her conquests, larger in fact than her own, though more scattered and so a source of weakness rather than of strength. Rome, who had been only too glad a century ago to gain admission to the Latin League as an equal, emerged from the long struggle as the dominant and most powerful of its members. The League became restive and might well have taken up arms to maintain their rights, had not there burst upon Latium a storm which threatened the very existence of them all.



## 4. THE GALLIC INVASION

This new and greater danger came from the North—the Gauls were on the move. Some of their tribes, after bursting through the Alpine passes, had settled down in the valley of the Po, and there had learned the arts of peace and agriculture. But some could not or would not settle down. The Senones under Brennus attacked the Etruscans, now too weak to offer serious resistance, and swept on to Rome, 30,000 strong. To meet them Rome put into the field the largest army she had ever mustered, 10,000 men (!) with perhaps half as many again of allied contingents. In 390 the armies met on the banks of the Allia, eleven miles north of Rome, and the Romans, caught between the out-flanking Gauls and the river, were cut to pieces, only a few survivors escaping to Veii or to Rome. In three days the Gauls were in possession of Rome, though the Capitol, saved from their assault by Manlius and the geese, or more probably by the natural strength of its position, held out for some months. But in the end it was not Roman arms but the payment of a thousand pounds of gold which induced the Gauls to depart. They took with them what they had come to get, the plunder of the city, and they left behind them ruin and desolation, only the temples standing, and a memory which the Romans never forgot.

## 5. THE RECOVERY OF ROME

The sack of Rome by the Gauls destroyed, besides the city, most of the advantages which Rome had won by the previous hundred years of fighting. Even before the disaster her neighbours, whether allies or victims, were gathering to the attack; and now that the fear of the Gauls was lifted, their smouldering resentment blazed up. The Etruscans were quickly dealt with by Camillus and gave no more trouble for thirty years. Some of the Latin cities stood firmly by their allegiance, but the Volsci formed a centre for malcontents and this time drew Rome's old allies, the Hernici, to their side. The Æqui also took the field against her. But it was the Volscians who gave most trouble.

Livy records a series of Roman victories which would be more convincing if there were fewer of them, for however often and decisively defeated, the Volscians always seem able to return to the attack.

After a lull in the fighting from 377 to 367 (during which the Romans were amply occupied with discord at home) a settlement was made with the Hernici, who were re-admitted to the Latin League. Next, some Etruscan cities, taking fright at the renewal of the League, tried to rebel but were quickly brought to heel. The Gauls, whose occasional raids meanwhile had continued to give trouble, began to realize that they could accomplish little against walled cities and withdrew behind the Apennines. Only the Volsci remained in open opposition, however much others, and the League in particular, disliked the dominant position which Rome had once more attained. Rome, foreseeing trouble, was glad to renew her alliance with the Samnites, a people settled in Central Italy and themselves threatened by their neighbours in the South. The trouble came in 348 when Rome, in making a treaty with Carthage, claimed the right to do so on behalf of all her neighbours. This was too much for the Volsci; and with the Latin League emboldened to make one last bid for freedom, war broke out yet again, with Campania too joining in to assert her rights against Rome. It was quickly over and by 338 the League, the Volsci and the Campanians were forced to acknowledge that it was useless any longer to 'kick against the pricks'.

#### 6. THE SAMNITES

Rome's friendly overtures to the Samnites had been dictated by fear: she knew that she must settle accounts with the Volsci and the Latin League, and suspected that she must one day settle with the Samnites. Now that the first danger had been removed, it remained to deal with the second; and Rome prepared for a Samnite war by a 'policy of encirclement'. She extended her influence over Campania, into whose fertile plain the Samnites were sending raiders and even garrisons. She planted colonies

in positions of strategic importance along the western frontier of Samnium and subdued or overawed the intervening mountain tribes, Vestini, Marsi, Paeligni, Marrucini. She even threatened the rear of the Samnites by making an alliance with the Apulians. In whatever direction the Samnites wished to increase their 'living-space', they found the way blocked by Rome.

The inevitable war broke out in 326, and its first phase ended, after five years of desultory fighting, in a resounding defeat for Rome. Both consular armies were trapped and surrounded in the valley of the Caudine Forks and were starved into surrender. Among the humiliating terms was one which compelled the Roman army to pass beneath a 'yoke' of spears.

The blow to Rome's prestige was severe. The Latin League held firm (Rome's clemency in the past had its reward) but Campania wavered, and another five years were needed before the Romans could seek revenge for their humiliation. Even so it was long before they had it. But they went doggedly on, undeterred by the Etruscans, the Æqui and even the Hernici throwing in their lot with the Samnites, and wore their enemies down, as much by the building of strategic roads as by experiments in new tactics. By the end of the century they had pushed the Samnites back into their own territory.

There the Samnites would have remained had not a fresh invasion of Gauls given them another chance. They succeeded in joining forces with the invaders and there followed in 295 the great battle of Sentinum, won for the Romans by the devotion of P. Decius Mus. However it was not until 290, after thirty-seven years of war, that the exhausted Samnites finally came to terms. The menace of the Gauls remained: they were in fact the advance-guard of those barbarians who in the end overthrew the Roman Empire.

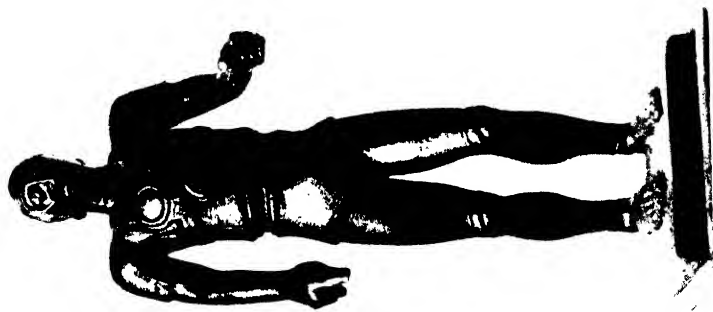
## 7. THE GREEKS

The long Samnite War gave Rome undisputed control of Central Italy, and at the same time brought the South within her sphere of interest. The Greek cities there were wealthy and by this time

decadent. Four hundred years or more had passed since the Greeks first settled in Italy; but in all that time they still had not learned to trust, and to combine with, one another. So when they were attacked by their Italian neighbours, Lucanian or Bruttian, they either succumbed or hired mercenaries from the Greek mainland to defend them. But these did not always prove satisfactory or successful; and when the Samnite War brought the Roman legions to South Italy, some of the Greek cities were sufficiently impressed to invite their help when occasion arose. Rome, on her side, was glad to keep foreign influence out of Italy, the whole of which she was now beginning to look on as her own preserve.

Accordingly when Thurii invited Rome to send her help against the Lucanians, she sent it, and took other Greek cities under her protection too. This was resented by Tarentum, which claimed, though without much justification, to be the leading city in Magna Graecia. The Tarentines attacked and sank some Roman ships which appeared off their harbour, and then marched to Thurii, drove out the Roman garrison and sacked the town in 282. Rome declared war and Tarentum appealed for help to King Pyrrhus of Epirus.

Pyrrhus landed with 25,000 men and twenty elephants; and when the consular army gave him battle at Heraclea, with approximately equal numbers, the citizen militia of Rome was encountering for the first time a professional army using the tactics and the formation by which Alexander the Great had conquered the East. The legion could make no impression on the Greek phalanx, the cavalry horses were stampeded by their first sight of elephants, and the Romans left 7000 men upon the field. But the loss of 4000 to Pyrrhus was more serious, for he could not, like the Romans, replace casualties—hence the phrase, ‘a Pyrrhic victory’. However, a victory it was; and he followed it up by making a dash for Rome, hoping that her allies would desert to him. But he was disappointed, and fell back for the winter on Tarentum, whence he tried to inveigle the Romans into making peace. Old Appius Claudius shamed them into a



IV. Sarmite and Greek Soldiers



refusal, and another battle was fought on the banks of the Aufidus with much the same result as at Heraclea.

But the war was proving more expensive than Pyrrhus cared about; and when at the same moment he received two attractive invitations to transfer his help to Greece and to Sicily, he suddenly left Italy for Sicily. This just gave the Romans time to deal with his Italian supporters, and when he came back after a lightning campaign in which he almost drove the Carthaginians out of Sicily, they were ready for him. This time they avoided pitched battles, kept their armies in touch with one another and even captured some of the famous elephants. The volatile Pyrrhus remembered that he was wanted in Greece.

With Pyrrhus gone, no serious opposition to Rome was left. It remained only to 'mop up' the cities, whether Greek or Italian, of South Italy, to settle accounts with old enemies and to punish defaulting allies.

#### 8. RETROSPECT

The sketch which we have given of the stages by which Rome grew, from a settlement of shepherds on the Palatine, to be the mistress of Italy, is of course incomplete. The incidents described have been chosen as typical, in their causes and effects, of a process which went on for three hundred years, during which the sphere of Roman influence was always tending to expand from the centre outwards. The expansion went on sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another, and sometimes in several directions at once. Seen at a glance the process may be summed up like this:

Rome took the lead over her neighbours under the Etruscan kings. She was in control of Latium by 496, and of the centre of Italy after the defeat of the Volsci and Æqui in 431, though neither conquest was final. The siege of Veii in 396 was only an incident in the long struggle against the Etruscan towns in the North, which came gradually under the Roman power as the Etruscans were weakened by the Gauls. Meanwhile the Samnite Wars drew the Romans towards the South and East, and brought

them into contact with the cities of Magna Graecia, which the retirement of Pyrrhus to Greece in 275 left at their mercy. Thus by the middle of the third century B.C. we may describe the Roman conquest of Italy as complete, except for the country between the Apennines and the Alps. This, known as Cisalpine Gaul, was reduced and controlled by Roman colonies and roads in 220, but it did not become part of Italy till 42 B.C.

By these endless wars Rome gained more than power and territory. She gained experience. She learned in a hard school the art of war, and developed the qualities on which that art depends, discipline, endurance, thoroughness, a cool temper and the ability to lead. The same courage which faced a ring of angry neighbours after the Gauls left Rome in ruins in 390, refused to 'despair of the Republic' in 216, when the flower of her army was cut to pieces by Hannibal at Cannae.

#### 9. THE SETTLEMENT

Such were the qualities by which Rome conquered Italy. But it is one thing to conquer a country and quite another to govern it; for military and political genius, either of them rare enough, do not often go together. Rarest of all perhaps is the conquering race which can so govern as to make the conquered proud to be its subjects. Yet such was the achievement of Rome.

Most conquerors have looked upon the conquered as victims to be exploited, but Rome showed in these early days that her own attitude was both wiser and more humane. The principle which she adopted, for instance when she brought the Latin League to an end in 338, was to give the conquered cities both an interest and a share in the Roman dominion; and it was upon this principle, developed in the light of experience, that she based the settlement of 266. It had proved its worth when King Pyrrhus tried and failed to detach the Italians as a whole from their allegiance to Rome; and was to prove it again when the great Hannibal failed in the same way.

Under this settlement all the inhabitants of Italy were either incorporated into Rome or allied with her. The former were



citizens (*cives*), the latter, though *socii* (allies), were also *peregrini* (foreigners). The citizens included, besides those actually living in Rome or her territory, those who went out from her midst to form the nucleus of the citizen-colonies (*coloniae*), each a miniature Rome, planted down, especially on the coasts, to form defensive outposts with a standing garrison. Also counted as citizens were the inhabitants of towns incorporated into the Roman state—as were some of her nearer neighbours when the Latin League was broken up. They were allowed to keep their local magistrates but were naturally under the close supervision of Rome, where they enjoyed full citizen rights.

These rights consisted in chief of two public and two private rights, the public right to vote and to stand for office (*ius suffragii* and *ius honorum*) and the private right to make a contract (*ius commercii*) and a legally recognized marriage (*ius connubii*). Nor did the Romans forget (as too many people do to-day) that there can be no rights apart from duties; and the rights of Roman citizenship carried with them the duty to pay taxes and to serve in the legions in time of war.

Between those who, as citizens, had all these rights and duties and the 'foreign allies' who had none of them, came an intermediate class, those who had some of them but not all. Such towns were known as *municipia*, from their having to bear the same burdens (*munia*) as full citizens; but they had only half—the private half—of the citizens' rights. They could make a valid contract or marriage, but could not vote or stand for office. The Romans left them a certain amount of self-government and interfered little with their local manners and customs, while holding out to them the chance of being raised to the status of full citizens if they showed that they deserved it. They had all been absorbed by 150 B.C.

The rest of Italy consisted of 'allied' states (*socii*) bound to Rome each by a separate treaty, the inhabitants of which were not Roman citizens but foreigners, *peregrini*. No tribute was imposed upon these *Civitates Foederatae*, but each must send its contingent of soldiers to serve as 'allies' under the orders of

Rome. Naturally the terms of their alliance (*foedus*) varied greatly. Some were specially privileged, like the former members of the Latin League, who had complete freedom to manage their own affairs, and their magistrates became Roman citizens. Others like the Samnites, who were regarded as dangerous, were divided into smaller units by separate alliances, firmly attached to Rome and closely watched. Between these extremes separate and individual agreements, nicely adjusted to the history and the civilization of each 'ally', distinguished each state from its neighbours and bound it closely to Rome. This system was not only adaptable but progressive, for any state could hope to increase its privileges by showing itself fit for them until it reached the final goal, admission to the full citizenship of Rome.

Such was the discipline on which was built the unity of Italy, not just a political unity based on force, but a community of interest, of responsibility and, increasingly as time went on, of civilization. If each state had lost something of its liberty, it gained much in that security and happiness which only Roman law and order could give; and in course of time men ceased to think of themselves as Sabines or Samnites or even Etruscans and regained a wider freedom, a deeper self-respect, first as Italians and then as Roman citizens.

The Romans were the first people to discover 'how to rule free men', and their dominion lasted in one form or another for nearly 1700 years from these early times when its guiding principles, which they never wholly forgot, were first put into practice. The British Empire, in growth and development so strangely paralleled by the Roman, has carried these principles a step further.







## CHAPTER VII. THE CONQUEST OF THE WORLD

HARDLY was the conquest of Italy achieved, when Rome had to face a new peril and a greater than ever before, and for the next sixty years to fight for her existence against the Phoenician power of Carthage. But more than the existence of Rome was at stake in these Punic Wars. Like the wars of the Greeks against the Persians 300 years before and those of the British against the Germans more than 2000 years later, Rome's struggle against Carthage was to decide, for centuries to come, which of two modes of thought, two types of civilization, was to prevail in Europe.

The story of that struggle, dramatic and momentous as it was, cannot be told here. Its course was decided by the military genius of Rome, embodied in her great general, Scipio, and supported by the tenacity, the readiness for sacrifice and the 'will to victory' of the Roman People. The united will of the nation triumphed over the single will of Hannibal, a greater military genius than Scipio, but unsupported by his government at home. That victory marked a turning-point in the history of Rome and of the ancient world. Echoes of it are still heard to-day.

Our purpose here is to trace its more immediate consequences. While Rome's conquest of Italy had been a gradual and by no means certain progress, her conquest of the world was made not only possible but inevitable by the defeat of Carthage. That it took so long to achieve is partly because she found it true of the "untravell'd world", as Ulysses did, that its "margin fades for ever and for ever when I move"; and partly that the Romans at first neither realized nor welcomed the prospect of world-dominion. They had no desire to add to their responsibilities by annexing territories overseas; and when they first did so, they were driven to it by motives neither of imperial nor of commercial ambition, but merely of self-protection. The acquisition of Rome's earliest 'province', Sicily, is a case in point.

If the immediate issue of the first Punic War was the same which has ensnared the Italians of to-day, the lure of *mare nostrum*, the actual *casus belli* was the island of Sicily. Carthage was already a menace to Rome, still some way off but drawing gradually closer. On land she dominated North Africa, and had a firm foothold in Spain and Sardinia. Her fleet ruled the Western Mediterranean and blocked the outlet to the western ocean. When she seemed likely to make herself mistress of Sicily as well, the Romans, reluctant as they were to be drawn into a new and foreign war, realized that their survival as well as their commerce was threatened and determined to stop, whatever the cost might be, the nearer approach of Carthage. For they knew, as we know now, that he who holds both Tunis and Sicily controls the Mediterranean.

When the first Punic War was over in 241 and the Carthaginians had been driven from the island, Rome could not afford to risk their coming back. She had no choice but to annex it. Once she had done that she had to choose—and the choice was a momentous one indeed—what to do with the new acquisition. Conquered territory in Italy she had either absorbed or bound to herself by treaty, imposing no tribute of money or produce, but demanding from the conquered military service as allies with the armies of Rome. She could, of course, treat the Sicilians in the same way. But they were likely to prove reluctant and incompetent soldiers. Then why not let them pay tribute, to which they were well accustomed, in lieu of military service? It seemed an easy and a natural decision; but by taking it, the Romans embarked on a course which led to world dominion and was destined to destroy first the institutions, and in the end the character, to which she had owed her victories.

By the end of the second Punic War in 201, of which the issue had been uncertain almost to the end, Rome was near to exhaustion and would have been glad enough to rest awhile and nurse her wounds. The last thing she wanted was another war, let alone the acquisition of fresh territories. She had in fact

acquired two new provinces, those of Nearer and Farther Spain, but only, as in the case of Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia, because she could not afford to let Carthage reoccupy them. She annexed no territory in Africa. How comes it then—and the Roman People were the first to ask the question—that within two years of the battle of Zama, Rome was again at war, this time in the East with Philip of Macedon? It was not a popular war: the Senate had to use much propaganda to frighten the People into it. The probability is that the Senate itself was frightened.

Philip, King of Macedon and successor to the Greek portion of Alexander's empire, had already shown himself the enemy of Rome by allying himself with Hannibal during the most critical years of the Punic War. He had been dealt with at the time; but now he was on the war-path again, not only intimidating the rest of Greece, but intriguing with Antiochus of Syria to divide the lands of the Near East between them. Rome was concerned for Greece on grounds both of sentiment and security, and for Egypt as an increasingly important source of her corn-supply. The Senate, having only just secured the western Mediterranean, could not afford to see its eastern end controlled by hostile neighbours. When Greece implored their aid against the depredations of Philip, the war-weary People of Rome had to be persuaded, and even tricked, into going to her aid. The war was not a long one, as wars went in those days. Philip was defeated in 196 and put, literally, in his place. But his kingdom was not abolished and his power, though restricted, was not destroyed. No territory was annexed by Rome.

Rome used her victory chiefly to make a liberal and, it was hoped, a lasting settlement of Greece. Amid scenes of perfervid enthusiasm, the Roman envoy proclaimed that the Greeks, both in Europe and Asia, were to be free, with Rome to guarantee their freedom against all comers. Philip and Antiochus were thus 'warned off'.

But some people cannot take a warning, and Antiochus was one of them. Misinterpreting Rome's clemency as weakness, he marched through Asia Minor and on into Thrace. The Romans,



who had undertaken that Greece should be independent and had accordingly withdrawn their armies, restricted themselves to protests and diplomacy. Antiochus, swollen with conceit and egged on by Hannibal, now a refugee in his camp, negotiated only so long as he needed time to complete his plans. Rome, realizing that these plans included the occupation of Greece and even an invasion of Italy, at last declared war. One battle was enough and Antiochus, deserting his troops, took refuge in Asia Minor. But the Romans decided to make an end, and entrusted the settlement to the conqueror of Hannibal, Scipio Africanus. First Antiochus' fleet was driven from the sea; then, with the loyalty of Philip secured by Scipio's personal influence, the Roman army crossed the Hellespont and for the first time set foot in Asia. Pressing on, they met the bulk of the Syrian army and routed it at the battle of Magnesia in 190. Asia, like Greece, had been won at a single blow.

Scipio's terms were, as usual, not ungenerous. Antiochus had to pay a large indemnity (which he could well afford) and withdraw to the east bank of the river Halys, which divides Asia Minor roughly in two. Hannibal was allowed to escape.\* Friendly states, like Pergamum and Rhodes, were rewarded with an increase of their territory. The Greek cities of Asia Minor were made free and independent. The Roman armies withdrew to Italy, leaving not one soldier behind in either Greece or Asia. All that Rome asked of these countries was to keep quiet.

The Greeks had received back their freedom with joy but soon proceeded to abuse it. They quarrelled and fought endlessly among themselves and each party to these quarrels assailed the Senate with their wearisome appeals. Meanwhile, Philip, whose loyalty during the war with Antiochus had been suitably rewarded, was steadily increasing the military resources of Macedon and told the Romans to their faces, when they remonstrated, that 'his sun had not altogether set'. He died in 179 before he could challenge Rome again, but his son, Perseus,

\* He remained an implacable foe of Rome and a constant intriguer among her enemies till he committed suicide in order to avoid falling into her hands.

soon showed that he meant to carry out his father's schemes. He intrigued with the enemies of Rome and affronted her friends until the Senate, exasperated and reluctant, declared war upon him. He was defeated in 168, if not so quickly as Antiochus, no less decisively.

Once again in the hour of victory, Rome held her hand. Macedonia was divided into four small republics but was left substantially free. So was Greece. But the old sentimental admiration for things Greek, which men like Scipio had felt so strongly, was gone. Rome was tired of wars, but even more tired of the petty squabbling of the Greeks. Beset with fresh problems in Spain, Africa, and Egypt, her patience was wearing rather thin. And so, when it became necessary to send a force to Macedonia to deal with a pretender to the throne of Philip and Perseus, Rome decided that she had had enough trouble from that quarter. Abandoning her policy of leaving Greece free and independent, she declared Macedonia a Roman province in 148 and appointed a governor whose authority was to include Illyricum and Epirus as well.

Meanwhile quarrelling between the Greek states went from bad to worse, and began to take on an anti-Roman tinge. Corinth in particular showed herself irreconcilable and, when reproached by Rome, insulted her envoys and stirred up other cities to defiance. Troops had to be dispatched from Macedonia to restore the situation; and when they met with serious opposition, the Senate, in exasperation, instructed Mummius to make a fresh and final settlement in Greece. Mummius was no Scipio. He knew little of Greek culture and cared less. His first step towards carrying out his instructions was to burn Corinth to the ground, shipping the countless art treasures of the city over to Italy and contracting (so the story goes) for the replacement of any that might be lost on the voyage! Other 'rebel' cities were punished with almost equal severity; and all alike were reduced to the level of separate 'allies' of Rome, forced to pay taxes and placed under the supervision of the Roman governor of Macedonia. Though Greece was not formally taken over as a province

for another hundred years, her freedom was gone for ever. She had only herself to thank for the loss of it.

In the same year, 146, Africa was added to the growing number of Roman provinces. The final defeat of Hannibal at Zama had left Carthage to the mercy of Rome; and not unnaturally less mercy had been shown to her than to the more attractive and less dangerous Greeks. But even so she could not keep the peace with her neighbours and Rome welcomed the opportunity to make an end of her. Tricked into the surrender, first of hostages and next of arms, the Carthaginians were only then informed that they must surrender their city also for total destruction. Even so it took the Roman army two years of siege to overcome the natural strength of their walls and the desperate courage of their defence. Nothing in the long drama of Rome's struggle against Carthage did so much credit to the conquered and so little to the conqueror as this last act.

The beginning of the Punic Wars found Rome little more than a provincial city. The destruction of Carthage left her a world power, in undisputed control of the western Mediterranean. She had stepped outside Italy and had acquired, reluctantly and because she was afraid, the provinces of Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia, Spain and Africa. How anxious she was not to add to these commitments we have seen in her treatment of Greece and Syria. But as history has proved again and again and as the British found in India, those who acquire provinces cannot always stop when and where they will. A strong and civilized power tends to absorb, as by some law of nature, weak and less civilized neighbours with whom it is brought into contact. And so Rome was now to find in Asia.

Expansion was inevitable, but the Romans were now no longer reluctant. During a war, there are always some people who contrive to make money out of it, and the Punic Wars saw the rise to prominence of a new moneyed class, the Equites, capitalists. As trade and treasure began to flow into Rome, these people sought overseas investments for their money and began to look on the acquisition of provinces in a new light, as

a source of revenue and a field for speculation. The year 146, which saw the destruction of Rome's two chief commercial rivals, Carthage and Corinth, marks the end of a chapter in the story of her expansion and ushers in the age of annexation for its own sake. The next hundred years saw fifteen provinces added to the dominion of Rome, and it could no longer be said that the Romans were reluctant to annex them.

No single Roman soldier had, as we have seen, been left behind in Asia; and none was used to conquer the first province there. In fact Rome did not conquer Pergamum; it was bequeathed to her by the will of its ruler, King Attalus III, in 133. Thus it strangely came about that Rome was involved in a new world, half Oriental and half Greek, from which she had been at pains to disentangle herself. The kingdom of the House of Attalus extended as far west as Thrace and as far east as the river Halys. As soon as rival claimants could be removed and order restored, Rome incorporated the European territories in the province of Macedonia and in 129 formed the rest into a new province of Asia, though she was careful to leave a wide strip along the eastern boundary to serve under puppet kings as a buffer state between herself and Syria.

One of the kings whose authority was confirmed, and his dominions extended, in this way was Mithridates V of Pontus. His kingdom lay along the northern coast of Asia Minor, and he was now permitted to extend his influence southwards in return, it was said, for his loyal services to Rome but actually for large cash payments to the Roman general. Time was to prove that Rome had got the worst of the bargain. For the moment, however, her position seemed both advantageous and secure. She had acquired a valuable province together with the fabulous treasures of the Attalids. Her influence was extended and her peace was guaranteed by protectorates lying between her territory and that of Syria, while Syria and Egypt alike acknowledged her leadership and (generally) did as they were told. She was mistress now of the eastern Mediterranean as of the western.

The death of Mithridates V in 120 did not in all probability cause much of a stir in Rome; but the young son who now succeeded him was destined to shake to their foundations both the commercial and the political might of Rome. For thirty years Mithridates VI held his hand; and while he watched the growth of anarchy and incompetence in Italy and of corruption and rebellion in the provinces, where hatred of Rome was bitter and universal, he dreamed his dream of uniting Asia under his rule as a great Graeco-Oriental empire. But he was no mere dreamer. By aggression, intrigue and intermarriage, he succeeded in consolidating most of Asia Minor under himself, carefully avoiding a clash with Rome till he was ready for it. When he had collected and trained a vast army and fleet, when his alliances reached to Armenia and Parthia and his intrigues to Syria and Egypt, then at last in 88 Mithridates was ready; and almost his first act was to order the massacre of more than 80,000 Romans living in Asia Minor.

For all his cruelty, Mithridates the Great stirs our sympathy and our admiration. For he was the champion of the 'underdog', of the 'small nationalities', and of the helpless millions of the oppressed. They were powerless till he rallied them and embodied in his single self the resentment of the world, exploited by the greed of the Republic. He failed in the end—the genius and the resources of Rome were too much for him; but for twenty-five years he defied her best generals and nearly brought her dominion down with him.

Of the three 'Mithridatic Wars' which followed, the details cannot be given here. The Romans won, but it took them twenty-five years to do it. The campaign spread westward over Greece and in the east brought Rome face to face with Parthia. It ruined the peasants of Asia and the financiers of Italy. The sea was infested by pirates. But there was one consequence of which the danger was greater if less obvious. The gravity of the crisis caused the Roman People to arm Pompey with powers so far-reaching as to make him, had he wished to use them, absolute master of the State. He used them instead to clear the sea of

pirates, to end the war with Mithridates, and so to add to the Roman Empire the provinces of Bithynia, Pontus, Syria and Crete, while such eastern Mediterranean states as were not also annexed were entrusted to friendly and subservient rulers.

On his return to Italy in 62, where his arrival was awaited in fear and trembling, Pompey astonished his enemies and disappointed his friends by disbanding his armies, and appeared in Rome as a private citizen. But his career had revealed rather than caused the breakdown of the old Republican forms of government. Rome could be saved only by a master; the one question now was who that master would be. It might still be Pompey; but he realized it too late.

Almost at the same time there returned to Rome from Spain another but a less well-known general, Julius Caesar. The two formed a political alliance which included the millionaire, Crassus, and was strong enough to defy the Senate, which disliked all three of them. In the two years which followed, Caesar completed his arrangements for another five, and in 58 left to take command of the Roman armies in Gaul. The West in fact needed him as much as the East had needed Pompey. As long as Gaul remained unsubdued, the Celtic and German tribes always threatened and often invaded Italy; and the Rhine was as necessary a frontier as the Euphrates. Earlier excursions into Gaul had whetted the appetite of the Romans without solving the problem. The Riviera, known as Narbonese Gaul, and still called Provence, 'The Province', had been annexed sixty years since, but Gaul remained continually in revolt and must be 'pacified' if Rome was to have peace.

Caesar's Gallic War lasted for ten years; and when it was over Rome was mistress of Gaul and Caesar was soon to be master of Rome. Though he had but four more years to live, his work in the West was permanent. The Rhine remained the western boundary of the Empire, and Roman civilization lived on in Gaul when Rome herself had fallen to the barbarian. The language and the culture of France are his enduring monument.

It remained for succeeding Emperors, and particularly for Augustus, to complete his work. In the East, the protectorates established by Pompey were definitely annexed as provinces, so as to bring the frontiers of the Empire up to the Euphrates, and the same process secured the whole of the Mediterranean coast of Africa. In the North Augustus took the important step of extending the frontier to the Danube, and linking it with the frontier of the Rhine. This involved the annexation of the provinces of Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia, Moesia and Thrace, their whole extent covering roughly what is now—or was recently—Austria, part of Hungary, Jugo-Slavia, and Bulgaria. With this Augustus was content, and advised his successors to devote their energies to the work of consolidating and organizing, rather than to further expansion. For a hundred years they acted on his advice, though Britain, which Julius Caesar had realized must be Romanized if Gaul was to continue Roman, was annexed in part during Claudius' reign (A.D. 43). The conquest of England was completed by Domitian's general Agricola in 81; and the Emperor Hadrian built the great wall from the Tyne to the Solway to keep out the Picts between 121 and 127. In the reign of the Emperor Trajan (98–117), who revived the old 'forward' policy, the Roman Empire reached its greatest extent with the addition of new provinces in the north and east. If Assyria soon forgot the Romans, the Roumanians still claim to derive their name, their language and their blood from the garrisons of Dacia; and the stately column which Trajan erected in the Forum still stands to commemorate the addition of this, the last European province, to the Roman Empire.\*

Such in barest outline is the story of the Roman Empire, its rise and expansion. It gave to the peoples of the world what they longed for most, as people always do—peace, civilization and the rule of law. Four centuries after the death of Augustus, its greatest architect, the last of the classical poets† of Rome

\* See Plate II, facing p. 32.

† Claudian, *de Consulatu Stilichonis* (early 5th century A.D.).

acclaimed her as the one Power which had made citizens, not enemies, of those whom she had conquered and had united them with herself—even the most distant of them—as members of one world-wide family. And he went on: ‘There will never be an end of her dominion.’ In a sense there never has been. In the eastern half of the Empire, a Roman Emperor reigned at Constantinople till 1453, when the last of the Constantines fell, sword in hand, defending its walls against the Turk. Meanwhile in the West, where despotism gradually undermined the Roman character till the barbarians overwhelmed the frontier forts and garrisons, the Roman Empire struck new roots and lived on in new institutions. The Holy Roman Empire was built on its prestige and the Papacy on its organization. Its principles are to-day embodied in the British Empire, and find their logical fulfilment in a Commonwealth.



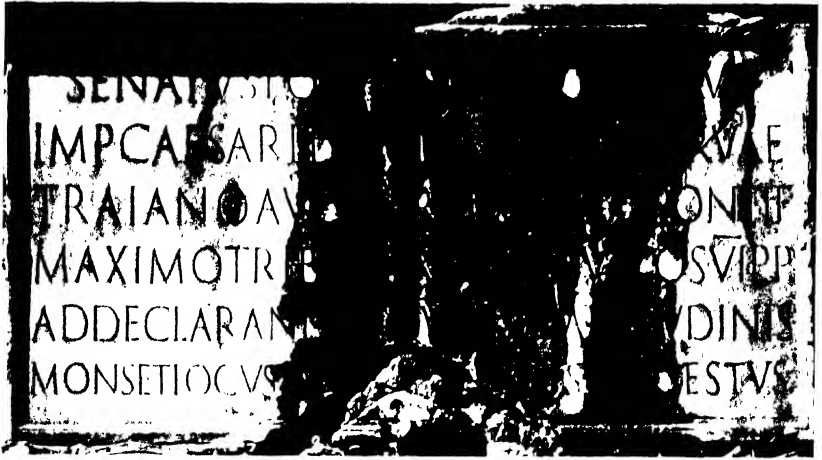
## CHAPTER VIII. THE PROVINCES

WHATEVER be the derivation of the word *provincia* (and nobody seems to know) it meant originally the sphere within which a magistrate exercised his *imperium*. As Roman magistrates had increasingly to do this in countries overseas, the word acquired, and became restricted to, a geographical sense; and a province came to mean the territory over which, by virtue of his *imperium*, a magistrate had jurisdiction.

The provinces of the Roman Empire were almost all acquired by conquest; and this coloured the whole attitude of the Romans towards them. The first step towards the organization of a conquered country was the arrival there, as soon after its annexation as was convenient, of ten commissioners sent out by the Senate. They would investigate local conditions, consult the victorious general, and in due course publish a *lex provincialis* or provincial charter, usually in the general's name, setting out a scheme of administration. Such provincial charters might be altered later on by a magisterial edict or Roman law; but they often decided for a long time to come the general lines which the administration of the province would follow. For instance, in Bithynia the *lex provincialis* (named, after Pompey who conquered it, the *lex Pompeia*) was still the basis of Roman administration there in the reign of Trajan two hundred years later.

The *lex provincialis* divided the province into administrative districts, organized and improved the existing arrangements for local government, laid down rules for the administration of justice and fixed the methods by which taxation would be raised. Generally speaking its arrangements were neither unjust nor oppressive, at all events on paper. They were deliberately framed to meet local conditions and no attempt was made to impose a rigid system. The control exercised over the various communities (*civitates*) which made up the province differed according to their degree of civilization and the amount of trouble they were likely to cause. Local institutions, laws and customs were left





(a) Inscription at the base of Trajan's Column (2nd century A.D.)



(b) Modern commercial lettering based upon it (20th century A.D.)

## V. Roman Lettering

undisturbed and the provinces might do much as they pleased provided that Roman interests were not affected.

The next step was to appoint a governor, a praetor in the earliest instances, then a proprætor and later a proconsul. Almost till the end of the Republic, he proceeded to take up his appointment as soon as his year of office in Rome was over, and decided which province he should govern either by drawing lots or by coming to an understanding with his colleague. He was accompanied by his staff—two quaestors to relieve him of the financial side of his work, clerks, orderlies and even soothsayers. Besides this *cohors* of officials, a provincial governor usually took with him an unofficial retinue of *comites*, friends or relations who wanted to see the world, young men to act as his A.D.C.s or attachés, and even scholars and poets to beguile or to celebrate his term of office. No salary was paid to a provincial governor, but he was given a good round sum by the treasury to cover his expenses, and he was not asked to account for it.

On appointment to his province and before he arrived in it, the new governor proceeded to publish his 'edict'. The *lex provincialis* laid down only the broad and general framework of the administration. Details were left to be filled in by the *edictum provinciale* of the governor. As time went on, these edicts tended to follow a stock pattern; and this made for uniformity of government throughout the Empire and helped to spread the principles of Roman Law, on which the edict was based, and which would govern all cases not covered by it.

But much, all too much, was still left to the governor himself. What mattered to the provincial was not so much the governor's edict as the spirit in which he would interpret it, his personal character and temperament. For his duties were wide and his power almost unlimited. In addition to keeping an eye on taxation and finance, "he was bound to preserve the peace within his province and to preserve its frontiers from attack. He acted as judge, holding court regularly in different parts of his province to settle cases which might come before him on appeal from the local courts. He might carry on diplomatic

negotiations with client kings or independent tribes in the neighbourhood, and he might have to supervise the construction of roads and other public works. He was also expected to exercise some degree of control over the activities of local governments and his consent was often necessary before they were permitted to contract loans for any purpose. His functions were thus at once military, judicial, administrative and sometimes diplomatic.”\*

To cope with this mass of business his powers were those of a consul in command of an army (see chapter VI, p. 51). That is to say that within his province the proconsul was an uncrowned king, in absolute control of the garrison, and as judge limited only by the *lex provincialis*, his own edict and such local rights and privileges as he chose to recognize. Against his verdict in criminal cases no provincial could appeal. To cope with such responsibilities he had little direct training or experience to help him. He generally arrived in his province ignorant of its needs and conditions, an amateur sent out to govern it for a year or two as the reward of a successful political career. And yet, such was in fact the training and experience which public life afforded, and such was the capacity for organization and government which seems to have been innate in Romans of the governing class, that few governors failed for want of ability. What they lacked all too often was strength of character.

Once the new governor had arrived in his province (and his predecessor was bound to leave it within thirty days) the length and slowness of communications with Rome removed him far from control and even criticism. But all his life he had been, as we have said, a politician; and he was therefore likely to be concerned less with what the province, than with what Rome, expected of him. Rome in fact regarded him less as a governor, responsible for the well-being of those whom he governed, than as an agent responsible to Rome for Roman interests.

Of these interests the chief in the eyes of the Romans was the income which they expected to receive from the province in the

\* F. B. Marsh, *A History of the Roman World*, 146-30 B.C.

form of taxes. The levying of these was not the personal duty of the governor, but their amount depended largely on the success of his administration and he must exercise a general supervision over the work both of the quaestors, who were his own financial officers, and over the *publicani*, who were the agents of the *equites*.

Taxation of the provinces started when Sicily, the first province to be acquired, was annexed in 241 B.C. It was based on the theory that Rome stepped straight into the shoes of the previous rulers and 'inherited' both their duties and their rights. Any land which they owned passed to the ownership of Rome, any revenues paid to them must be paid to the Roman treasury. During the 'century of annexation' (145-44 B.C.) this theory gave way to another, that *all* land in the provinces was the property of the Roman People, from which it followed logically that all provincials, if they wanted to remain in occupation, must pay taxes by way of rent to their landlords. As a result of the influx of money from overseas, the taxation of Roman citizens resident in Italy had been abolished in 167 B.C.; and the old distinction between citizens, who were liable to taxation, and 'allies', who were not, was thus reversed. The payment of taxes became the hall-mark of a province; and any place outside Italy which paid taxes was regarded as a province even before it was annexed. Communities within a province might be granted complete self-government as a special privilege, but they must still pay taxes; and if they were granted exemption from taxation they became automatically self-governing, for they were no longer part of the province and its governor had no more concern with them.

Taxes (*vectigalia*) were, broadly speaking, collected in one or other of two ways. Most provinces paid a *stipendium*, or fixed sum, collected by the individual communities themselves and handed over by them to the governor's quaestors, who paid them in to the Roman treasury. The tax was generally on land; but to this *stipendium soli* a *stipendium capitis* or poll-tax was added later on as a means of taxing those whose incomes came from

trade and not from land. In times of emergency an income-tax was sometimes levied.

Some provinces, however, such as Sicily and Asia, paid no fixed sum, but tithes (*decumae*) on their produce, together with customs-duties (*portoria*) and pasture-dues (*scripturae*); and as these provinces were the ones that brought in most revenue (Cicero says that the others hardly paid for their administration) the collection of these tithes was perhaps the one problem of provincial administration with which the Roman public was both familiar and concerned.

The method by which they were collected seems, to modern minds, both incompetent and vicious. The censor, as the head of the Roman treasury, entrusted this important duty neither to the provincial governor nor to any other magistrate, but to private companies of financiers, to whom he sold by auction the right to collect the taxes of a particular province, whether the auction was held on the spot, as at Syracuse in Sicily, or in Rome as in the case of Asia. This astonishing procedure needs some explanation.

The financiers referred to were drawn chiefly from the equestrian order, the moneyed class which rose to prominence and power during the Punic Wars. They needed scope for increasing their already large fortunes and found it in the 'farming' of the provincial taxes, in which connexion they were known as *publicani*, a term which became almost synonymous with *equites*. For the purposes of so vast a financial undertaking they formed themselves into joint stock companies (*societates*), their shares in which were known as *partes* and smaller shares, such as those subscribed for by the general public, as *particulae*.

Having raised the necessary capital in this way, they sent a representative to attend the auction, at which the censors knocked down to the highest bidder the right to collect the revenue of a Roman province. As this chiefly consisted of a tenth of the value of its produce, the bidding depended on an accurate estimate of the cost of collection and a bold speculation as to the total on which the tenth would be calculated. This involved forecasting

the state of the harvest, the immunity of the province from war, the efficiency of the governor's administration and, not least, what his attitude would be towards themselves. Having calculated all this, the *publicani* still had to allow for a reasonable profit for themselves and their shareholders. Had this auction been held every year, no one but the wildest speculator would have dared to bid; but with the contract secured for five years ahead, good years might be expected to alternate with bad and a sort of average could be worked out with a reasonable margin of safety. Even so miscalculations might be made; as they were when the *publicani* underestimated the time it would take the province of Asia to recover from the Mithridatic Wars. Innumerable Romans were threatened with ruin, and their plea for the revision of the Asiatic Contract became a major political issue for years.

The actual business of collection was organized by the managing director (*magister*) of the successful company, who remained in Rome, kept the accounts, conducted the correspondence and received the reports and revenues sent to him by his agents in the province. Another director went to the province and personally superintended their work. These agents must have amounted in Asia to a small army, and ranged in pay and importance from a man like Zacchaeus, of whom St Luke says that he was 'chief among the publicans, and he was rich', to the writer of the first Gospel, 'Matthew the publican', who may have been no more than a humble clerk in the Customs House. They remained permanently in the province and were re-engaged by successive companies of tax-farmers, till they became something like a permanent but private Civil Service. An interesting comparison might be drawn between the companies of *publicani* and the East India Company.

The system of which we have given this summary account was, as we said, a vicious one; but the state of the provinces in the last century of the Republic was due less to the arrangements made by the Senate, whether for administering them or for collecting the revenue, than to their failure to supervise the



carrying out of those arrangements. Here they left the provincial governor a free hand. Their interests depended on his competence, those of the provincials on his character; and the two interests did not always coincide.

It is not easy to judge clearly and to speak moderately when we have to assess the sufferings of the provinces under Republican rule, or to fix the responsibility for it. The Senate undoubtedly desired their good government (for disorders caused trouble and expense), and not all governors acted as Verres did in Sicily or Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem. It is unfortunate for all Roman governors that these should be the two with whom we are most familiar. Cicero himself was a good governor of Cilicia, humane and upright, loved by his subjects and respected even by the *publicani*, whom he firmly restrained, and it is from him that we hear the most bitter invective against the whole system of provincial government. But it is significant that hardly another Roman writer is sufficiently interested in the problem to mention it; and that Cicero himself remained blind to what we should consider some of his elementary obligations. When he left his province after governing it for one year only with scrupulous honesty and without doing a single illegal act, he contrived to take back with him more than two million sesterces (£17,500). This despite the fact that he describes the state of Cilicia when he took over the province as a disgrace to civilization, chiefly owing to the depredations of his predecessors whose conduct had been "more like that of a wild beast" than of a Roman magistrate.

But with every allowance made for the exaggerations of an orator and the humaner outlook of our own times, it cannot be doubted that the state of the provinces during the last century of the Republic amounted to a grave and increasing scandal. Witness the whole series of laws designed to prevent extortion (*leges de repetundis*) which seem, like the degrees on a clinical thermometer, to record, while they cannot restrain, the rising fever of the unhappy patient. Some of the reasons for this state of affairs have already been suggested, and others are not far to seek.

As chief of these perhaps, we note the fact that the ruling caste in Rome was not free to engage in trade. A senator might practise at the Bar; but while an English barrister may not sue for his fee, a Roman was not supposed to accept one. Thus, as soon as ability made its way to the top, it found enterprise barred to it save in one direction—that of the twin careers of politics and arms. Now success in politics, of which the attainment of the consulship was the chief, depended on a series of elections to this and to subsidiary offices; and the People, who thus had power without responsibility, expected to be paid for their votes at a progressively increasing rate. The vast sums which the ambitious politician had to spend in this way he could not make and must therefore borrow. Julius Caesar, for instance, who started his political career at the time when Verres was in Sicily, was in debt to the tune of 25,000,000 sesterces (nearly a quarter of a million sterling) within ten years, though he had not yet been elected consul.

Debts thus accumulated must be repaid—but how? Only one way was open to the successful, but debt-ridden, politician, the exploitation of some province as its governor. This, therefore, was the point of view from which he looked forward to the term of provincial administration which, as a *propraetor* or *proconsul*, he might expect. He might hope, as its military commander, to win for himself power and reputation as well; but be that as it might, he must at least repay his debts.

In this ambition he could hardly fail, for within his province his will was law. There was, as Cicero wrote to his brother Quintus, “no appeal, no means of complaint, no Senate, no public meeting”. The whole power of the State, executive, judicial and administrative, was his and his alone. He did not have to look for the money; it fell into his lap. As supreme judge, he could put justice up for sale at his own price. As head of the government, he need only stay where he was and his subjects vied with each other in securing, for adequate consideration, his good will. As commander-in-chief he could billet his soldiers where he would and be well paid by those who were reluctant

to entertain them. We are told it made little difference to a provincial city whether it was captured by a hostile army or rescued by a Roman.

It must be remembered, too, that a Roman governor had none of those restraints of tradition, education or religion which we take for granted. Born and brought up in a slave-owning community, he early learned that not all human beings had human rights. He grew up with a sense of his own superiority as a Roman over all "lesser breeds without the Law".\* There was no public opinion in favour of just dealing; nothing in the Roman religion, nothing in the accepted code of morals, which cared for the interests of those who were not Romans. Government in the interest of the governed was an idea that had not yet been born.

Even if a particular governor did not care, or did not need, to oppress the provincials, it was difficult for him to prevent others doing it. His staff, in any case, expected opportunities of plunder proportionate to his rank as well as theirs. But difficult as it was for him to restrain them, there were others whom he could not restrain—the *publicani*. They alone in his province were not responsible to him, but to those to whom he was himself responsible, the Roman People. A bad governor was only too ready to co-operate with them for the enrichment of them both. Against a more scrupulous governor they always had a weapon in reserve, the threat of prosecution.

In fact, prosecution by one party or another was the lot which all governors, whether good or bad, might have to expect on returning to Rome at the end of their term of office; but the good were probably in greater danger of conviction.

A bad governor might be prosecuted by the provincials. But even if the provincials were left with sufficient spirit and optimism to prosecute, they had but little chance of gaining a verdict from the Roman courts. The right to sit as jurors, once confined to the patricians, was disputed by the new monied class, the *equites*, in the course of an embittered struggle which went on,

\* The *ius civile*, Roman Citizen Law, was not applicable to provincials.

with varying result, between the reforms of Gaius Gracchus in 123 B.C. and those of Pompey and Crassus in 70 B.C. But whatever the constitution of the courts at a given moment, a patrician jury would look indulgently on sins of which they had been, or hoped to be, guilty themselves; and the equestrian order (to which the *publicani* belonged) could be trusted to condone a governor's extortion, provided that he had connived at their own. If he had refused his connivance, he might know what to expect.

So, between the governor and the tax-collector, the hapless provincial was ground as between the upper and the nether millstone. "Words cannot express", said Cicero, and he said it in the Forum at Rome, "the bitterness with which we are hated among foreign nations, owing to the wanton and outrageous conduct of the men whom we have sent to govern them."\* Small wonder that he added privately, "they are absolutely sick of life".†

But in the issue of any trial there must be a certain element of doubt; and the retiring governor had only one way of removing it—by bribing the court. This method, though generally certain, was expensive; and a large sum must be allowed for it in considering the total profit which a governor had to make out of his province. And so it came about that the ordinary proconsul went to his province with the confident expectation of making not one, but three, fortunes: one to pay his debts, one to bribe his judges and one to keep for himself. Verres congratulated himself on having fully realized this expectation.

How, then, did the provinces survive? The answer is, first, that all Roman governors were not like Verres; there were plenty of honest ones, and of the dishonest, few had either the genius or the opportunity for misgovernment that he had. And after all Verres was brought to book and others too. The fact is that the Senate would not willingly let things go so far that their own interests were threatened. A ruined province could not supply either corn or cash, and Rome needed both; so that while

\* Cicero, *pro lege Manilia*, 22. 65.

† *Tædet omnino vitas.*

Roman governors were given all too much rope, some of them did contrive to hang themselves. Moreover the laws of economics were on the side of the provincials. "The balance of trade was steadily against Rome and in favour of the East, since from the East came most of the articles of luxury for which the West was rapidly acquiring a taste. With the restoration of peace therefore, the booty began to return to its source and the prosperity of the Eastern cities began to revive."\* So it came about that provinces which had been bled white by their conquerors, their governors and the Civil Wars, survived to flourish again when Augustus gave a lasting peace to the Roman world.

If the debit side of the provinces' account with the Republic is long, there is something on the credit side as well. The Romans were cynics but not hypocrites. Their rule was openly and unashamedly for the benefit of the rulers. They did not pretend that they felt a call to bring the blessings of their particular 'Kultur' to the barbarians or of their particular religion to the 'poor, benighted heathen'. When they persecuted, as the Emperors did the Druids and the Christians, it was in the name of law and order. They normally pursued what has been called a policy of broadminded toleration, though it was actually a policy of indifference, and in matters of religion, language, local customs and even laws and forms of government, they were only too glad to interfere as little as possible with their subjects. This attitude may not have been creditable to the Romans, but it had its advantages for the provincials. Some even hold that the local self-government which thrives so vigorously in our own country to-day is part of the 'legacy of Rome'. At all events it left them a larger measure of freedom than most of them had enjoyed under their native rulers, and enabled Roman law and civilization to make its way among them, not by dint of propaganda, but simply on its own merits.

But when all is said and done and posterity comes to make up the account between the Republic and the provinces, it is a debit balance that is left. If so, fate was not long in adjusting it.

\* F. B. Marsh, *A History of the Roman World*, 146-30 B.C.

It was the acquisition of the provinces which made necessary professional armies too large and too distant to be controlled by the Senate, and "the menace of domination by military leaders haunts the last century of the Republic". Only a new form of government could save the provinces, and only a revolution could bring it about. It was left to the Roman Emperors to avenge the provinces on Rome.

## CHAPTER IX. THE EMPIRE

THE greatest achievement of Rome, possibly the greatest political achievement of all time, was the Roman Empire. The Latin authors usually read in schools are mostly concerned with the Republic; but Europe to-day, and the British Commonwealth in particular, are the heirs not of the Republic but of the Empire. It was under the Empire that the Roman legions built their roads from the Firth of Forth to the Euphrates, and left the *patois* of their camps to become the *lingua franca* of the world.

The death of Julius Caesar plunged the world once more into darkness and despair—"a despair hard to realize in our days, when settled and orderly government saves us from all serious anxiety about our lives and property".\* Perhaps we find it easier to realize now, thirty years after those words were written. Brutus might philosophize about the murder of his friend and Cicero, in his doctrinaire zeal for Republicanism, write exultant letters to his murderers; but there is plenty of evidence that the man in the street, the peasant in the field, felt nothing but horror. He knew little about politics and cared less for forms of government. All he wanted was peace—peace at any price, even at the price of liberty—and Caesar had brought peace at last to a world exhausted and ravaged by nearly a century of civil war. Now it must all start over again. And when after another fifteen years of bloodshed, Caesar's great-nephew, Augustus, returned to Rome in triumph and the doors of the Temple of Janus, shut only in times of peace, were closed at last, it seemed as if hope itself was born again.

Philosophers and writers continued to shed their literary tears over the grave of Republican liberties. But in truth the Republic had been dead for a century, though the Ciceros and Catos of the time refused to realize it; and the common man enjoyed under the Empire the only liberty he cared about. If his right to vote was gone, his right to life and the pursuit of happiness were at last secured to him.

\* W. Warde Fowler, *Rome* (written in 1911).

It is not pretended that the Empire proved an unmixed blessing in the city of Rome itself. It gradually turned the aristocracy into irresponsible courtiers. It debauched the common people and increased the pace at which the shiftless and the shifty poured into the capital to minister to its luxury or to claim their share of its free bread and circuses. The city mob defied the efforts even of the best Emperors and was quick to reflect the vices of the worst, till in the end the unhealthy life and morals of the capital infected the whole of the Empire, sapped its vitality and made it a prey to the more virile barbarians. Yet the Emperors cannot altogether be held responsible. The deterioration, which some failed and others did not try to arrest, had started when the Republic conquered Carthage, and continued steadily under the Republic and the Empire alike.

With the provinces and dependencies, now become the Roman Empire, the case was far otherwise—the change brought them no loss of liberty and they had everything else to gain by it—and in balancing the account between the two forms of government, it is well to remember that the provinces included, during the great days of the Empire, the whole of the civilized world. So at least the Romans thought. “Dazzled with the exterior sway, the irresistible strength and the real or affected moderation of the emperors, they permitted themselves to despise, and sometimes to forget, the outlying countries which had been left in the enjoyment of a barbarous independence; and they gradually usurped the licence of confounding the Roman monarchy with the globe of the earth”\*—the *orbis terrarum*. Despite the lamentations of disgruntled conservatives and sentimental radicals, whether in those days or in these, it is very certain that the vast majority of mankind shed none but tears of joy at the coming of the Empire, which meant to them the end of anarchy and exploitation and the dawn of an age which was to bring them unexampled prosperity.

Such is the view of the Empire which was taken, even when it was past its prime, by the African Elder Tertullian, a good

\* Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1, ch. 1.



hater of Rome when she persecuted his Church. "Certainly the world is more cultivated and better stocked than it was. All places are now accessible, all are known, all are full of trade. Pleasant estates have done away with solitudes that once had an evil fame; fields have conquered forests, cattle have put to flight wild beasts, sands are sown, rocks are planted with vines, marshes are drained, and there are more cities now than houses formerly. Everywhere are houses, everywhere people, everywhere life."

The great architect of the Roman Empire was Augustus. When his great-uncle Julius was murdered he was a boy of nineteen, though with a year's experience as a soldier already behind him. Many more years of fighting lay ahead, but when it was all over in 29 B.C. and the Temple of Janus\* was closed for the third time only in Roman history, he had given back peace to the world. He had much else to give before he died in A.D. 14, but nothing that the world valued quite so much. The Senate were expressing the passionate gratitude of mankind when they dedicated, halfway through his reign, *Ara Pacis Augusti*, an altar to 'Augustan Peace'. The lovely fragments of it which survive are carved with none of the usual symbols of victory—trophies of arms or gangs of prisoners—but with country scenes and the 'kindly fruits' which the earth was free once more to bring forth in due season.

Though peace was restored, the problems which lay before the young Emperor were formidable indeed. Here we are concerned with one of them only, his task of restoring the prosperity and reorganizing the government of the provinces. He found them unwieldy, impoverished and chaotic, a mere welter of 'nations, kindreds and languages', rather like the old Austrian Empire in 1918. He left them to his successor prosperous, loyal and well governed.

Under the Republic the basis of all provincial government was taxation. It is therefore not surprising to find that Augustus' first step was to make a general survey\* of the resources of the

\* See p. 92.

Empire. And so "it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed"; though the translators of St Luke, our only but accepted authority for the world-wide scope of the decree, would have been more explicit if they had written 'that all the world might be taxed justly'.\* For such was the object with which Augustus carried out this gigantic task, a sort of Doomsday Book of the world, and on it was based a scheme of taxation which lasted for three hundred years.

The next step was to reform the administration. Its failure under the Republic had been due in chief to the short tenure of a governor's appointment and to his freedom from control. In the place of irresponsible amateurs Augustus now appointed as governors men of his own choosing, generally from among the senators, and personally responsible to himself not only, as before, for the revenues of the provinces but for their prosperity and happiness. Their term of office might be extended at the Emperor's pleasure. Their salaries were fixed, and on a sufficiently liberal scale to attract able men without tempting the unscrupulous; and to show what his own idea of government was, Augustus assumed responsibility for three provinces himself. The result was the same as was achieved by the same methods when the Indian Civil Service replaced the East India Company after the Mutiny. The most corrupt administration in the world became before long the most benevolent.

It is not intended to suggest that after the accession of Augustus there were no more bad governors. Human nature does not change in a day; and out-of-the-way, unimportant provinces especially were not likely to secure the best type of administrator. Judaea, for instance, a small sub-province, had little to offer but difficulties and annoyances beyond the ordinary. The whole list of its governors (or procurators as they were called) contains no distinguished Roman name. The best known of them, Pontius Pilate, came of an equestrian, not a senatorial,

\* The actual meaning of the original Greek is: 'that a census should be taken of all the world'. Compare the Revised Version.

family and early showed himself tactless, cruel and corrupt. In the brief moment when the fiercest light of all history beat upon his throne, he did little to maintain the reputation of Roman governors for strong and even-handed justice. A later governor, Antonius Felix, was of even less distinguished origin, being a freedman, brother of Pallas, Nero's favourite and boon-companion. A cruel profligate, he is best remembered to-day for his disappointed hopes of extracting a bribe from St Paul.\*

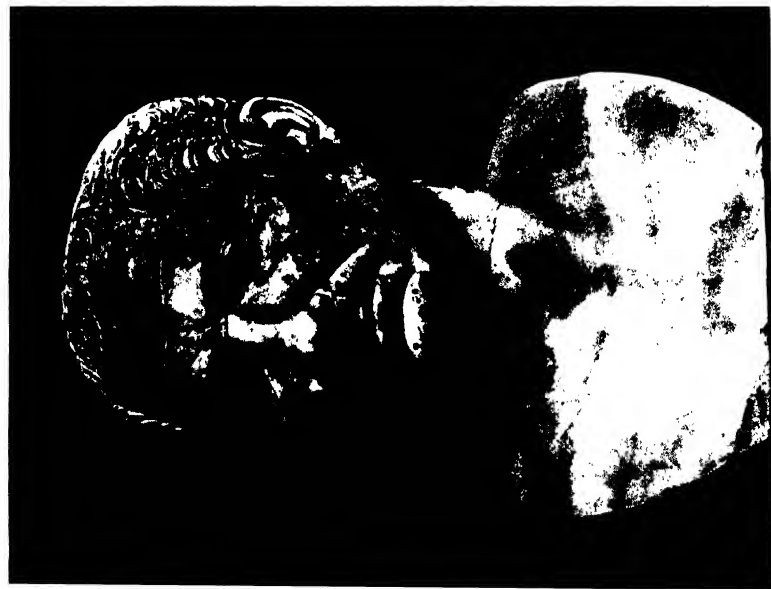
But such survivals of the 'bad old days' were exceptional and became increasingly rare. For more important than any change in administrative method was the change of spirit which Augustus inspired, not only in his governors but throughout the Roman world. After a century of wars and calamities men had lost heart. Augustus realized that men 'cannot live by bread alone', that what they needed to rescue them from apathy and despair was not only peace, nor even efficient government, but a new loyalty—belief in a person and a cause. And this he gave to them by teaching them to believe in him, to believe in Rome and her mission in the world, to believe in themselves. Faced with something of the same problem, Hitler taught the Germans the same lesson; but the man, his mission and his people were different.

A man whose Roman conservatism made him disguise his own absolute power under Republican forms and whose highest title was not 'Emperor' but *Princeps*, Leader of the Senate, was careful to retain and foster in the provinces such aids to self-respect and *esprit de corps* as they had enjoyed under the Republic. Local customs, festivals and cults were encouraged, local prejudices were respected and local self-government (the nearest thing, perhaps, to representative government in the ancient world) was left to occupy the talents and stimulate the patriotism of the municipalities. But these were reorganized on the Roman pattern. The local leaders were given Roman titles, their assembly was called a Senate, and there soon arose in the cities, as they grew and multiplied, an eager imitation of Roman

\* See Acts xxiv. 26.



VI b. Augustus





civilization, together, it must be admitted, with the extravagance, bad taste and pleasure-seeking of the Capital.

The civilization which was developed from these beginnings gradually covered the Roman world with prosperous townships, for Rome was a great believer in towns. As they drove their great commercial and military roads through the length and breadth of the Empire, towns sprang up along them. The standing camps of the frontier legions, or the market towns which grew up as trade increased, soon became great cities, whose inhabitants displayed their pride both in themselves and in Rome by the lavish scale of their public buildings—baths, colonnades and circuses in the Roman manner. Other towns were built to receive colonies of Roman citizens or grew up naturally as life became more civilized and men were drawn from the villages to live nearer to the Law Courts and the Senate House, or merely to the theatres and shops. And be it remembered that all four were as near the Roman model as the provincials could make them.

Whence this pride in Rome so deeply and universally felt by those whom she had conquered? It can partly be explained by the sheer genius of Rome for government. We say 'of Rome' and not merely 'of Augustus'; for the principle which endeared Roman civilization to the provinces is one which had guided the Romans in the earliest days of her Italian conquests.\* In those far-off days Rome had not been content with treating the conquered as allies and giving them varying degrees of privilege. She had held out to them one and all the hope that they might one day become Roman citizens. This, the highest and most coveted of all privileges, successive Roman Emperors now extended to the provinces, sparingly and even grudgingly at first, but with increasing generosity as time went on and the provincials showed themselves worthy, as well as eager, to receive it. The chief magistrates of provincial towns received the citizenship *ex officio*, foreign soldiers enlisting in the legions were granted it on their discharge, individuals and whole communities were

\* See chapter iv, p. 68.

enfranchised as a sign of special favour. And so the number increased until by a decree of the Emperor Caracalla in A.D. 212 all free men within the four corners of the Empire became citizens of Rome.

The hope of such a reward was indeed a powerful stimulus to loyalty. But the respect and love, and finally the adoration, which the provincials felt for Rome is not wholly explained by self-interest or ambition. It was due to the overwhelming prestige of Rome, based on the blessings which Roman rule conferred upon them, the obvious superiority of Roman culture to their own, and the methods by which these were brought home to their 'business and bosoms'. The Romans never thrust their superior civilization down other people's throats, they sometimes seemed unconscious of it themselves. Rather they planted it down in distant lands together with their colonies and their markets and they left it to be judged on its merits till it 'leavened the whole lump'.

Of these blessings the greatest was simply that of peace, for which, as we said earlier in this chapter, the provinces were ready to pay even with their liberty. But it is doubtful if either they or their conquerors felt that their liberty was in fact being sacrificed. They probably had no less of it under the Republic than previously under their own rulers, and more of it under the Empire than under the Republic. True, they could not make war on their neighbours, regulate the amount of their taxes or appoint their highest judicial officers—these functions were reserved to the imperial power—but they had never been able to; and for the rest they were, or they seemed, free to govern themselves.

If the provincials did not realize that they had sacrificed their liberty, neither did the Romans realize that they had taken it away. To them liberty did not mean that a man was free to do anything he liked. That was a state, not of freedom, but of anarchy. *Libertas* to the Roman meant freedom from arbitrary rule, and with his instinct for law and order he came near to realizing that it is only made possible by obedience to law. But

it was left to an obscure Jew in a remote province of the Empire to coin the immortal phrase 'the law of liberty'.\*

The same race provides us with our best authority for the state of the Roman Empire in the first century of its existence. Other writers on the provinces (and they are few) see them from the superior view-point of the Roman official. St Luke, as he travelled with St Paul up and down the roads of Greece and Asia Minor, saw the Roman Empire through the eyes of a freedman and a Jew. Though men still lived who could remember the devastation wrought by the civil wars and Republican governors, the country through which they travelled was prosperous and settled, a country of thriving cities strung out along the great Roman roads, roads which were safe and therefore crowded. "Standing on one of them," wrote a modern traveller, † "it is not difficult to people it again with the traffic of Paul's day: the bands of jugglers and dancing-girls on their way to Antioch—the Paris of the East—cohorts on the march, merchants from Baghdad and Damascus, itinerant Greek philosophers, gladiators, men with caged beasts for the circus at Antioch, pagan priests begging their way with a god in a tent: and somewhere in that crowd, symbols of the old world and the new, a Roman senator travelling in state on some imperial business, and, humbly and on foot, a Christian on a greater mission."

As he trudged along the wide, straight roads St Paul, like any other traveller through a Roman province, had the advantage of Roman justice and Roman toleration. Local magistrates might treat him harshly, as in the capital city of Macedonia, but a hint that he was a Roman citizen reduced them to a proper sense of what the governor would have to say to them. When the fanatical crowd in Jerusalem would have murdered him, he was rescued and courteously treated by the commander of the Roman garrison. It was not that the Romans were partial to

\* James i. 25. Compare Cicero, *pro Cluentio*, § 146: 'we are all bondmen to the law in order that we may be free'.

† H. V. Morton, *In the Steps of St Paul*.



Jews. Though Julius Caesar had favoured them and they could usually find some influential backer, they were generally disliked and rather feared. Tacitus describes them as 'orientals, commercially adroit and religiously aloof'. To the Roman officer, it was simply a question of law and order, a matter of duty.

Nor did Rome look with any more favour on Christians, whom they found it difficult at first to distinguish from Jews and liked no better for that. True, a Roman centurion, Cornelius, was the first non-Jewish Christian and the first of an ever-increasing number; but that was a purely private matter. The coming of yet another mystery-cult from the East excited no official interest unless and until it seemed likely to cause a breach of the peace. For instance when Gallio, the deputy governor of Achaëa, was asked to stop St Paul preaching, he satisfied himself that no offence against Roman law was being committed and contemptuously cleared the court without calling on the defence. As for the religious issues involved he "cared for none of these things". The historian Gibbon may well have had such a man in his mind when he wrote: "The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful." But it was the Roman magistrates who made possible the 'missionary journeys'; and of those who looked with tolerant contempt upon the fiery little Jew as he stood before them in the dock, not one foresaw what would be his own claim to immortality—that he had preserved the life of St Paul; still less that by so doing he was letting loose a force which would challenge and one day defeat the whole might of the Roman Empire.

Of that imperial power, and of the wealth and prosperity which it had brought to the Mediterranean countries, there was evidence enough to be seen by the traveller of those days. Wherever he went, his road took him through fine cities, their temples, public buildings and great houses gleaming with marble. Through their streets passed the wealth of the East and

West, carried by waggons or long strings of camels from the great harbours on the coast, whose quays were piled high with luxuries consigned to Rome.

Just such a busy harbour, so flourishing and proud a city, was Tarsus, where St Paul was born; to-day "a shabby little town, crouched in a swamp, where rows of wooden shacks face each other across roadways of hard mud". So writes a recent traveller 'in the steps of St Paul'. Travellers of an earlier day, Cicero among them, described the ships that crowded into the great harbour and the canal which connected it with an inland lake, now a tract of marsh and a breeding place for mosquitoes. What has happened? The same that has happened in every land that came under the old Turkish Empire. It is not so much that the Turk destroyed the old civilization. He just neglected to keep it up—to keep the walls water-tight, to dredge the rivers, to repair the roads. He did not cut down all the trees, but he neglected to tether his goats; and they, ranging at will, nibbled every young shoot and ringed the bark of every sapling. Earthquakes and armics have done much to destroy the Graeco-Roman cities of Asia Minor; but for the devastation that reigns there now we have chiefly to thank the Old Turk and his goat.

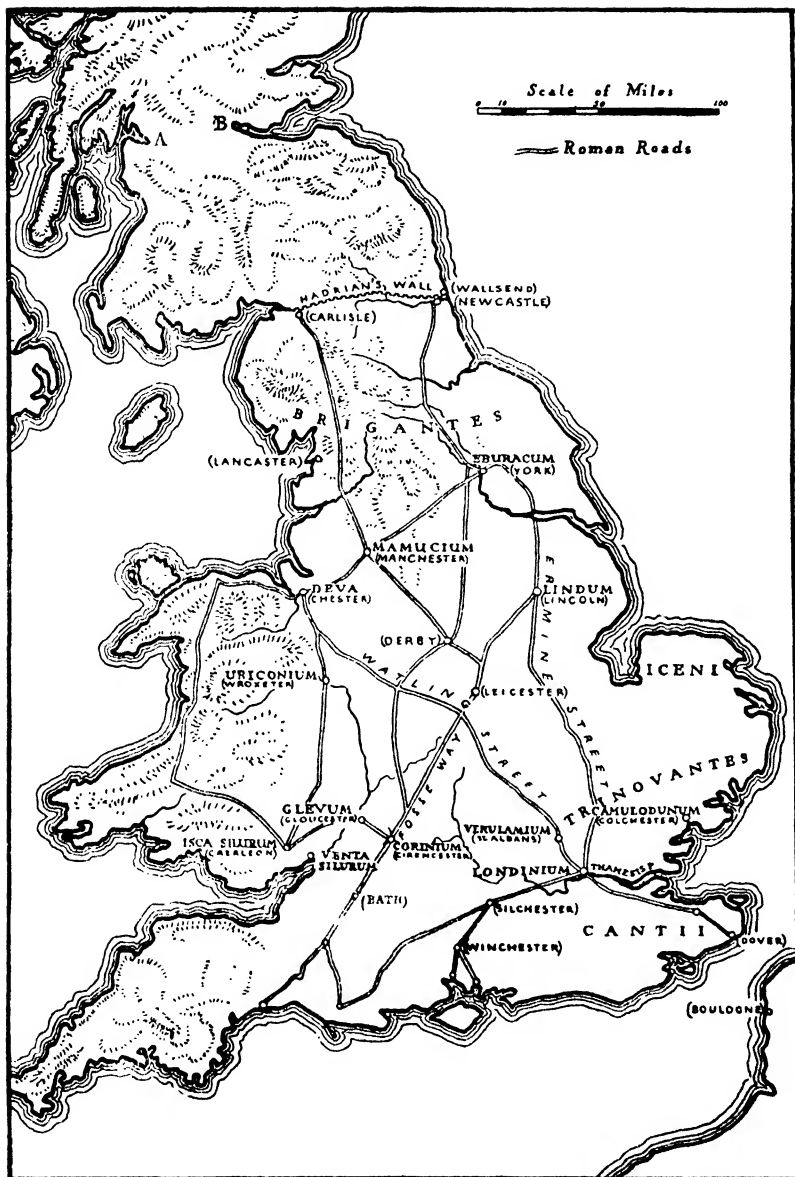
But in St Paul's day and for centuries afterwards the Turks had not yet descended upon the Levant from the mountains of Khorasan. As the ordinary provincial went about his business or, increasingly, his pleasure, it seemed to him that the fortune of Rome must be eternal, and he scarcely gave a thought to the perils lurking behind the Euphrates, the Danube or the Rhine, where Augustus had established the boundaries of the Empire.

In fact the second century A.D., the age of the Antonines as this period is called, proved to be the golden age of the Roman Empire, one of those rare interludes when humanity seems to be given a respite from its self-inflicted sufferings. Gibbon at all events had no doubt about it, for he wrote in *The Decline and Fall*: "if a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would without hesitation name that which

elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus", that is to say from A.D. 96 to 180, the age of the Antonines. What that age meant to the provinces and what repayment the provinces were already making to Rome, may be guessed from the fact that of the four great Emperors who followed one another during this brilliant epoch, none was a Roman or even an Italian by birth. Trajan and Hadrian came from Spain, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius from Gaul.

Hadrian in particular was a great traveller. Where the frontiers of the Empire were concerned he believed in seeing for himself. And when, in the course of his first tour, he visited Britain, he was not content with what he saw. Britain had, of course, been reconnoitred by Julius Caesar, fearing trouble in Gaul from that quarter, and had been occupied under the Emperor Claudius as far north as a line drawn from Gloucester to Colchester. Domitian's great general Agricola pushed right on into Wales and Scotland, but by Hadrian's time the limits of effective Roman occupation were Chester, York and Lincoln. Beyond that the natives of Yorkshire and Northumberland were always giving trouble, and Hadrian decided that the frontier must be advanced to include them. His eye for country selected the right place for the new frontier, the narrow 'waist' of the island of Great Britain; and there, between the Solway Firth and the mouth of the Tyne, the Great Wall of Hadrian was built from sea to sea.

Scotland was never wholly conquered by the Romans. Antoninus Pius built another wall between the Firths of Forth and Clyde, but that was the limit of the Roman advance. A later Emperor, Severus (an African, by the way), had designs upon the Highlands, but died at York before he could carry them out. Gibbon's explanation, though unflattering, may not be far wrong: "the native Caledonians preserved in the northern extremity of the island their wild independence, for which they were not less indebted to their poverty than to their valour. Their incursions were frequently repelled and chastised, but their country was never subdued. The masters of the fairest and



Roman Britain, showing the main roads and towns south of Hadrian's Wall. There were some roads and forts north of this and a turf wall from A to B.

most wealthy climates of the globe turned with contempt from gloomy hills assailed by the winter tempest, over which the deer of the forest were chased by a troop of naked barbarians." Ireland too remained unconquered. Agricola had looked enviously at it, and the interior of the island was well known to the Romans in the age of the Antonines; but apparently it did not attract them and they seldom went there, though the stamp of a travelling oculist has been found at Tipperary.

It used to be thought that the 'ancient Britons' were a race of blue-painted savages, held down for a while by a Roman garrison and then left, still savages and still wearing woad, to fall a prey to others stronger and no less savage than themselves. But recent investigation has shown that this is false. The 'ancient Britons' were hardly less civilized when the Romans came than the Gauls had been, and were almost as thoroughly Romanized when they went away. After all, three hundred and fifty years is a long time. In the course of it, the Britons learned the arts, the language and the civilization of Rome, and the Romans intermarried with the Britons, till a sort of Roman-British race and culture grew up. Why then did it not survive in Britain as it did in Gaul?

The old answer, 'because the Romans went away', will not do. The Britons counted themselves as Romans, and many a Roman family had come, through long residence, to count itself British. By the fifth century A.D. the blood of both was very mixed. The answer is, rather, that when the legions were withdrawn, Britain was assailed on three sides by the Saxons, Picts and Scots.\* Their houses were burned, their farms ruined and their institutions wiped out. The Roman-British civilization perished by the sword. The centre of the Empire had been transferred meanwhile from Rome to Constantinople, and the loss of so distant a province was little felt there.

This brief glance which we have been able to take at two

\* The original home of the Scots was Northern Ireland, from which they crossed to Scotland and gave their name to the whole country. For an earlier parallel, see page 20.

widely separated parts of the Roman Empire suggests, as no mere statement can, what the world owed to the *immensa Romanæ pacis maiestas*, as Pliny called it, the boundless majesty of Roman peace. It is difficult to find a modern parallel. The *pax Britannica* suggests itself, and the British Empire is in some ways like the Roman in so far as it is a commonwealth of English-speaking nations. But the world of to-day is divided by questions of nationalism, religion and colour, while the Roman world knew no such barriers. National unity, for instance, has been forged on the anvil of history since the end of the Middle Ages; in Roman times it simply did not exist. Racial differences existed. A Gaul and a Spaniard were proud of being such, but they were prouder of being Roman citizens; just as a Yorkshireman and a Lancastrian keep their local loyalties and even, in some fields, their local rivalries; but they are Englishmen first.

On the other hand, a sense of imperial unity was helped by the ease and readiness with which men travelled in Roman times. One language, Latin, would take a man anywhere, with Greek as an increasingly useful second. If a Roman wanted to migrate from one end of the Empire to the other, he found himself still surrounded and supported in his new home by the law, the institutions and the civilization of Rome. Such migration was common. Witness the tombstone which can be seen to-day at South Shields, erected by a devoted husband to the memory of his wife. He was a Syrian from Palmyra, she a British lady. Intermarriage was made easier by the absence of a 'colour-bar'. In fact there were few coloured peoples in the Roman world (Asia Minor and North Africa were both 'white man's countries' in those days) and the Romans do not seem to have had any of the 'superiority complex' of a conquering race which prevents intermarriage with the conquered and makes the conquerors disliked, as the British have sometimes deserved to be.

The result was like no Empire of later times. It was nearer to the Middle Ages' conception of 'Christendom', and it achieved something of what Europe once hoped from the League of Nations. No wonder that Rome, centre and symbol of the

Empire, came to be thought of as the Eternal City. Within the Empire such a belief came to be an article of faith; and even the rude barbarian beyond its frontiers felt a strange awe of "that city, so distant yet so omnipresent in its power, which to his imagination, in her world-wide dominion and marvellous vitality, was a superhuman force".\* And yet the writing on the wall was there for all to read. St Augustine read it aright, and in his great book, the *Civitas Dei*, taught that no earthly city is eternal; only the City of God passes not away.

Augustine lived to see the capture of Rome by Alaric the Goth in 410, an event so shattering that the world, including even Alaric himself, stood aghast at what he had done. Yet his deed was only an incident, if the culminating one, in the long and awe-inspiring story of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Why that decline and fall took place is a question which has been debated for a thousand years by countless writers before and after Gibbon, but the complete answer has not yet been found. In fact the causes were many and complex. But not the least of them was, as Augustine pointed out, the decay of the old Roman virtues, the deterioration, moral and physical too, of the Roman stock. It is significant that even as early as the reign of Vespasian (69-79), Italians were ceasing to be recruited for the army. The great cities became increasingly lazy, hybrid and vicious. The middle classes, backbone of any civilization, were ruined first by pleasure-seeking and then by taxation. The great and gilded city of Rome drained the provinces of men and money. As the Emperors became more absolute in their power and control, there was less initiative to resist, or ability to replace, a bad one and the work of government was carried out, not by a Senate of free men, but by a civil service of freedmen. The heart of the Empire became sick and the infection spread outwards through the provinces till decadence became general.

But the decline, however caused, was gradual, and we cannot fix a date for the fall. First on one side and then on another, the barbarians came in over the frontier defences like the tide

\* Samuel Dill, *Roman Society in the last Century of the Western Empire*.

over a low-lying coast. In one place they burst through like a flood, inundating a whole province. In another they came trickling through, hardly noticed. Sometimes they came as an armed host, sometimes as a succession of raiding parties, and at others as peaceful settlers. Even when a whole country had been submerged, a district or a fortress would remain Roman, like an island or a solitary rock amid the waves of barbarism. But still the tide rolled in, till at last "the earth was without form. . . and darkness was upon the face of the deep". Only the Christian Church, to which Gibbon loves to suggest that the catastrophe was due, continued throughout the Dark Ages to enshrine that Spirit which in the fullness of time "moved upon the face of the waters. . .and there was light".



## CHAPTER X. THE ARMY

MOST of the previous chapters of this book have been concerned, directly or indirectly, with the exploits of the Roman army. Of this army we must now give some account; but before we go on to tell of weapons and tactics, of marches, camps and sieges, we must lay stress on what was the real foundation of Rome's military greatness—the quality of her soldiers, their capacity for loyalty, discipline and endurance, without which neither generalship nor weapons can bring victory. The Romans have been described as a nation of farmers; but they were a nation of soldiers as well, and in the early days of the Republic every able-bodied Roman was both. Italy is a mountainous country, and work on a hill-farm is hard, breeding stout hearts as well as sturdy limbs: hillmen make good soldiers the world over.

From the earliest times of the Republic we find the Romans serving in the army simply as a civic duty, without pay, and in most cases providing their own arms and equipment. No distinction was made between the privileged and the unprivileged classes, except that those who were better off, and therefore better armed, fought in front, with the poorest and worst-armed in the rear. It was a citizen-militia which conquered Italy, and every citizen served in it as a matter of duty and a matter of course. It was known as a 'levy' or 'gathering' (*legio*).

But with the best will in the world it was difficult for the yeoman-farmer to maintain himself in the field without pay and without a chance to keep his farm going; so that the early campaigns, though numerous, were necessarily short; and it is said that no Roman army had ever kept the field during the winter before the siege of Veii at the end of the fifth century B.C. This famous siege is supposed to have lasted ten years; and during it pay was introduced for the first time to enable the Roman army to keep in being, and the first step was thus taken towards changing the citizen-militia into a professional army.

The first general to pay his troops was the dictator Camillus,

and many important changes in army organization are attributed to him. Though it is probable that the most permanent of these, such as the enlistment of soldiers for a long term of service and the reorganization of the legion, really took place later, the Romans always thought of him as one of the makers of their military greatness, and they were right to do so.

It is probable that in his day the Romans still fought in a solid mass, with a front of five hundred men six ranks deep—a formidable thrusting force but rather unwieldy, though the use of cavalry (or rather mounted infantry) and a horde of lightly armed men who hung about on the wings, may have helped to make up for this. The whole formation was known as a *phalanx*, and was probably learned from the Etruscans or even the Greeks. Its unit was the *centuria* of 100 men. Its chief officers were known as *tribuni militum* and it was under the personal command of a consul.

This form of army organization lasted about fifty years after Camillus, by which time experience had proved the Roman spears no match for the long swords of the Gauls, and the Roman *phalanx* ill-adapted to the rough country among which the Samnite Wars were fought. Accordingly about the middle of the fourth century B.C., the Roman infantryman was re-armed with a heavy javelin (*pilum*), while an attempt was made to give the *phalanx* more flexibility by adopting what is known as the 'manipular' system. The legion, no longer organized as a single unit, was divided into 45 companies of 60 men each; the name *manipulus* being taken from the 'handful' or bundle of straw stuck on a pole, which was the company's original standard. These maniples were drawn up in three lines from front to rear; and despite many changes suggested by later experience, this formation (and its chief weapon, the *pilum*) was maintained in principle from the middle of the fourth century B.C. till the last century of the Republic.

The long wars against Carthage made the Roman army more professional and the military genius of Scipio realized the need of still greater flexibility. The maniples were reduced to 30, of

120 men each, and the three lines, now made independent of one another, could operate independently, the third often acting as a reserve. Each unit was encouraged to develop self-reliance and initiative, and these qualities were developed in the individual soldier by improved training and arms-drill.

The creation of a standing professional army was the work of Marius at the end of the second century B.C. He realized that incessant wars had made the citizen-soldier unfitted and often unwilling to return to civilian life, and he called for volunteers from all classes—the old property qualifications were abolished—to enlist for twenty years' service or longer, swearing loyalty to their general and looking to him for advancement in their profession. He made the cohort, consisting of three maniples, one from each line, the unit of his army, and a legion consisted of ten cohorts doubled in strength, the *velites* being abolished. Each legion was given a number and a silver eagle (*aquila*) to be carried as a standard.

Julius Caesar followed the same lines as his great-uncle Marius and made further improvements of his own. He relied more on efficiency than numbers, and sent his recruits for a long period of training and of service in garrisons and outposts before he would enrol them in his fighting legions. He encouraged time-expired soldiers to remain with the colours by offering them special pay and privileges, and chose his centurions from among them, while giving the command of the legions to his own deputies, *legati*, experienced professional officers chosen by himself, instead of the *tribuni militum* elected by the People.

The result was an ever-increasing distinction between the soldier and the civilian, which grew steadily wider throughout imperial history. The soldier owed his allegiance to the general and looked to him for food, pay and promotion. His life and interests were centred in the camp, the only home he knew. As *esprit de corps* increased, patriotism grew weaker; and in creating such an army Marius, Julius Caesar and Augustus forged a weapon which first struck down the Republic and in the end degraded and weakened the Empire.

Such was the process which turned a primitive citizen-militia into the most efficient professional army in the world. We must now attempt to describe it in greater detail, and we must begin, as this chapter began, by noticing the type of man who was recruited for it and the training which he was given; for on these all the rest depends.

On presenting himself at the depot, the recruit, at all events in later days, produced a testimonial of good character and was put through a stiff physical examination. His height was measured and he was tested for speed, agility and strength, though neither his eyes nor his teeth, apparently, were looked at. Countrymen were preferred to town-dwellers. Once accepted, the recruit was sent off to start his training, with a note from the recruiting officer of which a copy was kept at the depot and filed, together with the acknowledgment. At the training centre he was given physical drill, both out of doors and in a gymnasium, weapon-training, and route marches in rough country, with practice in tent-pitching and digging. Besides all this he had to learn to swim. When passed as efficient he was posted to a legion and very soon realized, as will the reader when he has finished this chapter, that a Roman soldier needed all the training he could get.

The organization of a legion was, as we have seen, constantly changing, but we can only describe it as it was at one particular period of Roman history—that of the Punic Wars; partly because of their special interest and importance, partly because the organization of those days lasted, with some modifications, from Camillus to Julius Caesar and on into imperial times; and partly too because the best description which we have of it is that of the historian Polybius, who tells what he saw himself in the armies of Scipio Africanus (the younger) who destroyed Carthage in 146 B.C.

In the army of the Punic Wars all able-bodied citizens between the ages of seventeen and forty-five were liable for service except the poorest—and the poorest too if great need arose. The normal size of the forces was two armies, each commanded by a consul

and each consisting of two legions, though the number of legions might be increased almost indefinitely. Perhaps the best way to show how the legion was organized will be to give a diagram first and to explain it afterwards. Here, then, is the legion drawn up in line of battle:

Hastati	□ □	□ □	...	{ 10 maniples (20 centuries)	of 120 men = 1200
Principes	□ □		...	{ 10 maniples (20 centuries)	of 120 men = 1200
Triarii	□ □	□ □	...	{ 10 maniples (20 centuries)	of 60 men = 600
Velites					= $\frac{1000}{4000}$

The names of the three ranks were merely traditional by the second century B.C. and had disappeared by Julius Caesar's time. Originally the *hastati* were armed with spears and we must suppose that they skirmished in front, falling back through the *principes*, who then became the first line and did the principal fighting. The *principes* were also known as *antepilani*, being stationed in front of the third line, *pilani*, who were armed with *pila* but were more often known as *triarii*. Each soldier was separated by an interval of one and a half paces from the next, so as to have plenty of room to use his weapons.

It will be noticed from the diagram that an interval (equal to the frontage of a maniple) was left between each maniple and the next, while the maniples of the second line covered the intervals of the first, the result being what the Romans called a *quincunx* and we should call a 'diamond' or 'chess-board' formation; the word shows how the mind of the Roman farmer-soldier turned to the way in which the trees were planted in his orchard at home. It was through these intervals that the first line fell back if necessary, but it is probable that the intervals were closed as each line in succession engaged the enemy. They were kept open in the battle of Zama to let Hannibal's elephants charge harmlessly through; but that was a special arrangement for the occasion.

Besides the three lines of heavy infantry, the legion included





VII. 'Mulus Marianus'

a body of light-armed troops, known as *velites*, and drawn from the lowest class of citizen. These were not divided into maniples, but were equally distributed between the three lines, numbering 1000 in all.

A small force of 300 cavalry was attached to each legion and stationed on the wings. It was divided into ten troops or *turmae*, and these were subdivided into three sections of ten, each commanded by a *decurio*.

The chief officers of the legion, after the consul, were the military tribunes. They were elected by the People from among those who had served in at least five campaigns, and six of them were appointed to each legion, their authority being limited to no one part but extending over the whole. In the absence of the consul, they took it in turns to command. A *praefectus fabrum* was in charge of the engineers.

Next in rank to the *tribunus militum* came the *centurio*. As his name implies, he commanded a 'century' (of a hundred men in the earliest days but later of sixty) or a half-maniple, and there were invariably sixty centurions to a legion. They were something like our sergeant-majors, but they held commissioned rank and were chosen from the ranks by the tribunes on their merits. They were the backbone of the Roman army.

A centurion's chief badge of rank was a stick (*vitis*) and it is often supposed that they were a brutal body of men. So they sometimes were, and made fortunes out of selling promotion and exemption from fatigues. Tacitus mentions one who was nicknamed *cedo alteram* ('another, please') from his exclamation when he broke his stick on the back of a man whom he was flogging. But there must have been plenty of others like Caesius Valens the decurion, whose detachment, when on guard-duty in Egypt, scratched and painted their good wishes for him on the rocks: *Caesio dec. feliciter* (Here's luck to our commander Caesius): *homini bono* (He's a good fellow): *gratias agimus omnes commilitones qui sub cura eius sumus* (we are grateful to him, all of us soldiers who are in his charge).

There were great differences in seniority between one cen-



turion and another. Of the two in each maniple, the centurion of the right-hand century was the senior. The centurions of the second line (*principes*) were senior to those of the first (*hastati*), and those of the third (*triarii*) were senior to them both. In each line the maniples were numbered one to ten, and their centurions took precedence in that order, so that they were themselves nicely graded in seniority from one to sixty, the centurion of the right-hand 'century' of the first maniple of the third line being the senior in the legion. He was known as the *centurio primi pili* or simply *primipilus*, and was a person of great importance, ranking next after the tribunes and having a seat on the military council. After him came the rest in order down to the centurion of the left-hand 'century' of the tenth maniple of the first line.

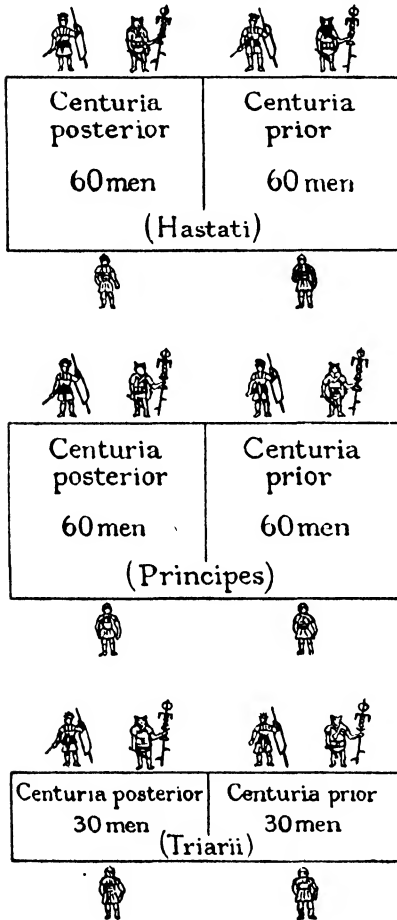
A centurion or a decurion had the right to appoint his own lieutenant as his second-in-command. This junior officer was known as an *optio*, probably from the fact that he was the man whom his superior wanted (*optabat*). He stood in the rear of the 'century', while the centurion stood in front. The senior option had the privilege of carrying the standard of the legion and the title of *Aquilifer*.

The private soldiers, *gregarii milites*, differed in seniority in the same way as the centurions, and gained promotion by working their way up from the tenth maniple to the first, and from the *hastati* to the *principes* and finally to the *triarii*. When they reached the senior 'century' of the first maniple of the *triarii*, their next step would be to the rank of centurion. There was thus a ladder of promotion for every man in the legion to climb, from the most junior private to the senior centurion.

We can now complete the picture of the maniple, the unit of the Roman army during the Punic Wars. It consisted, as we have seen, of 120 men and four officers. It was divided into two 'centuries' of sixty men, each commanded by its centurion, the senior (*prior*) in charge of the right-hand 'century' and the junior (*posterior*) of the left. A centurion stood at the head of each 'century', with his *vexillarius* or standard-bearer beside him, and the two options brought up the rear.

At the same time there was another subdivision of the legion which probably existed during the Punic Wars and which in the

## THE COHORT as originally organized.



300 legionaries

100 velites

---

400 men

6 centurions

6 options

---

12 officers

*(In order to show their faces the officers have turned about.)*

armies of Marius and Julius Caesar became more important than the maniple as a tactical and administrative unit. This was the cohort. It consisted of three maniples in depth, and there-

fore included one maniple from each of the three lines. There were invariably ten cohorts in a legion, each consisting of 120 *hastati*, 120 *principes* and 60 *triarii* (the maniples of the third line being only half the strength of the first two), to which must be added 100 light-armed *velites*. The strength of a cohort was therefore 400 men.

The normal strength of a legion, thus organized, can therefore be estimated at 127 officers (counting the consul) and 4000 men, with a force of 300 cavalry and 60 officers attached to each legion. The number of maniples, thirty, and the number of cohorts, ten, never varied; but if the total strength of the legion was increased, as it often was, it was done by raising the number of men in each maniple or cohort. By adding to the strength of the legion an equal or greater number of 'allies' who always served with it, we arrive at a total strength for the combined force of nearly 10,000 men, as follows:

<i>Romans</i>	Legionaries	4000 men	127 officers
	Cavalry	300 "	60 "
<i>Allies</i>	Infantry	4000 "	127 "
	Cavalry	900 "	180 "
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		9200 "	494 "

Our picture of the Roman army has so far left out these allied contingents, which represented, as it will be remembered, the one service which the Italian *socii* were obliged to do for Rome. The total number of soldiers which each allied city must be ready to furnish was fixed by the terms of its treaty of alliance, and it was for the consul, when enrolling his army, to decide what proportion of this total he required on the particular occasion. Generally speaking the number of allied infantry on service was the same as that of the Roman infantry and the number of cavalry three times as great. The whole contingent was divided equally between the two consular armies and was placed under twelve Roman officers, chosen by the consuls and ranking with the tribunes, who were known as *praefecti sociorum*. Each consul then chose from his allied contingent one-fifth of the infantry and one-third of the cavalry, all picked men, and

these formed a special corps (*extraordinarii*) which he always kept by him on the march or in camp, the remainder being divided into two 'wings' (*alae*). This organization lasted till the 'Social' War (90–88 B.C.) when the Italian *socii*, having made good their claim to become *cives*, claimed also the citizen's right to serve in the legions.

One other class of soldier must not be left out of the picture, the auxiliaries. These were not allies but foreign mercenaries, hired by the Romans to fight for them. They were chiefly employed as cavalry; but there were other contingents of a special character, such as the camel-corps (*dromedarii*), slingers from the Balearic Islands, dart-throwers from North Africa and archers from Crete. The *socii* were armed and supplied by Rome, but these auxiliaries kept the arms and equipment of the countries from which they came.

It will be remembered that the organization of the legion which we have described is roughly that of the second century B.C. Its main features—the 60 centuries and 30 maniples, now regrouped to form ten cohorts, its officers and their system of promotion, and the soldiers' weapons—remained the same until late imperial times. But the three ranks were abolished, though their names were kept as an indication of seniority. The cohort, now commanded by a *praefectus*, became more and more important and independent, co-operating with the other nine in the legion; and arranging for the co-operation of its own centuries, in whatever formation suited the tactics of a particular battle. Its numbers varied, being more often 600 than 400. Meanwhile the *velites* were abolished, their place being taken, when necessary, by the *auxilia*; and the *socii*, as we have noted, were incorporated in the legion. The full strength of the legion might be anything from 6000 to 3000, the latter number being usual in the armies of Julius Caesar, and it was commanded by a *legatus*.

We must now describe in greater detail how the Roman soldier was armed. The *velites* of earlier days were skirmishers, light infantry. They were protected only by a plain helmet and

a circular shield 3 feet across, while they carried a sword and a javelin (*hasta* or *veru*). This last was less than 4 feet long, and was meant to be thrown at the enemy.

The legionaries proper were heavy infantry and all three lines were armed alike at the time of the Punic Wars. The body of every soldier was completely protected. His shield (*scutum*), which was copied from those of the Samnites, was of oblong shape, 4 feet long or more by  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet broad, and consisted of two thicknesses of wood, then one of canvas, then a fourth of leather. It was curved outwards, with an iron rim round its top and bottom edges and a boss in the middle. It must have been a ponderous but effective weapon of defence. His body was further protected by a breastplate of brass or more often of leather (*lorica*) reinforced with plates of metal, under which he wore a woollen tunic which hung down almost to his knees something like a kilt. His legs were bare (he felt the cold so much in Gaul that he had to take to trows!) except for a greave from the knee to the ankle of his right leg only—his left leg was guarded by his shield. On his feet he wore hob-nailed sandals (*caligae*) fastened with many thongs. His helmet (*cassis*) was of bronze and had extensions to cover his forehead and his cheeks. It was surmounted by a ridge running from front to back and bearing a crest of scarlet or black feathers as much as 18 inches high, which must have added greatly to the first impression he made upon the enemy. The crest of a centurion's helmet ran across it, from ear to ear, by way of distinguishing him, while his standard-bearer wore a wolf-skin instead of a helmet.



Roman soldier, end of 1st century B.C.

The legionary's weapons of offence consisted chiefly of two heavy javelins and a sword. The former (*pila*) were nearly 7 feet long, the thick shaft being of wood and fitted with more than 4 feet of iron ending in a barbed head. It was so made that if it stuck in an opponent's shield, it bent at the join, so that it

was difficult to pull out; and as the handle trailed on the ground, the shield was difficult to use. The sword (*gladius*) was short (2 feet long or less), heavy, pointed and double-edged, so that it could be used equally well for cutting or thrusting. But the military manuals taught the recruit to prefer the point: cutting and slashing seldom inflicted a mortal blow and exposed the right arm and side, but of the point 'two inches in the right place are enough'—*puncta duas uncias adacta mortalis est*. When not in use the sword hung in a scabbard on the legionary's right side, suspended by a belt (*balteus*) from his waist or left shoulder. As protection against the weather he wore a cloak (*sagum*) over his shoulders which reached to his knees, rust-red for a private, white for an officer and scarlet for a general.

The Roman cavalry—but Romans soon gave up serving as such—wore a breastplate and carried a stout buckler. Their chief weapon was a strong spear with a point on the butt as well as the 'business end', and they also carried javelins and a sword. They had no proper saddles but rode their small horses on two blankets, the under one of felt or leather, and they had no stirrups: these were not used till the sixth century A.D. when they were imported into Europe from China. Their horses were usually unshod.

The cavalry was the weakest part of the Roman army. Camillus had tried to make something of them, but theirs was an unpopular branch of the service and Romans soon ceased to enlist in it despite its high pay and privileges. They preferred to rely on their *socii* for cavalry; but as time went on it was found better to employ foreign mercenaries, unreliable as they sometimes proved. Caesar, for instance, was once reduced to mounting his legionaries on the horses of his untrustworthy Gauls. It was not until the last days of the Empire that the cavalry came into their own. With swarms of barbarian horsemen attacking the frontiers, it became necessary to enrol a large force of cavalry; and these became more important than the infantry on whom Rome had put her trust for a thousand years. The result was less like a Roman than a mediaeval army.

When on the march the Roman soldier was still more heavily

loaded, and he was described as *impeditus*. 'Impeded' he certainly was, for he was carrying, beside his weapons, rations for at least a fortnight, a cooking-pot and three or four stakes, as well as various tools and 'gadgets', with his helmet swung by a strap from his belt. Scipio went so far as to make his men carry twice the usual quantity of provisions and number of stakes. But even the normal load must have been heavy enough—hardly less than 100 lb., for only such things as tents were carried by the transport animals—but the Romans were proud of the powers of endurance which their men possessed and which a special training by P.T. instructors called *exercitatores* was designed to give them. These powers they sorely needed. The regulation pace for an army on the march was four miles an hour, and twenty miles were ordinarily covered in a day—no more, however, than is expected of the French Foreign Legion.

At the 'full pace' (*plenus gradus*) they covered twenty-four miles in five hours, with which we can only compare the forty miles once covered in ten hours by a company of the Guides (Indian Army) in 1916.\*

The order of march varied, and depended on the likelihood of an attack by the enemy. If none was expected, the army marched in a single column with the picked force, the *extraordinarii*, forming the vanguard. Next came the right wing of the main allied contingent, followed by their baggage-train and that of the *extraordinarii*. The legions came next, each followed by its baggage, and the left wing of the allies formed the rear-guard. The legions and the allied 'wings' changed places with each other every day. In open country when an attack was to be expected, the three lines of the legion marched in parallel columns, and if a sudden attack was feared they adopted a formation known as *agmen quadratum*, something like a hollow square, with the baggage in the middle.

The nature of the Roman soldier's weapons suggests at once what was the invariable object of his generals—to get to close

\* G. G. Coulton records in *Fourscore Years* that a six-mile-an-hour pace is compulsory for the Italian Bersaglieri!

quarters with the enemy, and win the battle by superiority in infantry. The legion drawn up in line of battle is shown in the diagram on p. 112. The cavalry would be drawn up on either wing.

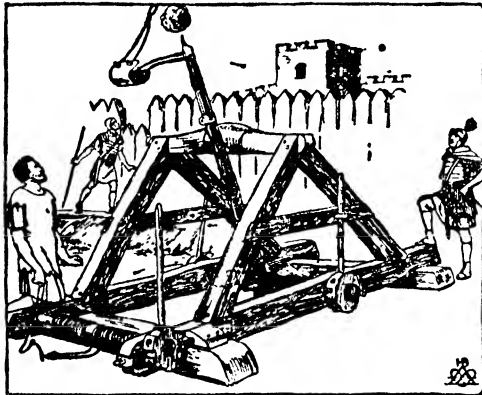
The tactics employed were generally as follows. The battle was begun by the *velites*, who skirmished ahead of the legionaries and drove off any light forces opposed to them. They then retired through the intervals between the maniples, which were then closed—it must have been a dangerous moment—and then the legionaries advanced shoulder to shoulder. Meanwhile the cavalry charged on either flank and tried to work their way round to attack the enemy in flank and rear. As the legions got within range, they flung their heavy javelins, thus disorganizing the front rank opposed to them, and followed this up by a charge of which the sheer weight and impetus must have been devastating. In the hand-to-hand fighting which followed they relied on their short swords and their discipline for victory.

These are obviously infantry tactics. Though so often successful, the Romans sometimes achieved only a half-victory owing to their seemingly incurable weakness in cavalry. It is noticeable that the most serious defeats suffered by their arms were inflicted by opposing generals who had good cavalry and knew how to use it.

The Romans would always choose a fight in the open; but if the enemy took refuge in a walled town, they were ready to attack him there as well. They preferred to take the place by storm, and to this end they adopted an ingenious formation known as the *testudo*, the front rank only holding their shields in front of them, the others above their heads; so that viewed from above by those who wanted to pour down molten lead, torches or stones upon them, the formation looked like the back of a tortoise. In this way they could get close up under a wall and make a breach in it; or else other soldiers, clambering on the back of the tortoise, might reach the top of the wall in this way. When the walls were too high for this, scaling ladders were used.



If the defences were too strong for a direct assault, the Romans would settle down to a siege. They began by building a rampart all round the town, so as to cut off its supplies. If possible they diverted its water-supply as well. They then attacked the walls with various devices. Sheds were built to protect the soldiers as they attacked the walls, some being movable on wheels, as were towers, from the top of which the walls could be overlooked and drawbridges, even, lowered onto them. Battering rams were brought up, some by hand; and others (such as the one Josephus saw in action against the walls of Jerusalem) vast iron-



A Roman Siege-engine. From *Everyday Life in Roman Britain*, written and illustrated by Marjorie and C. H. B. Quennell. Published by B. T. Batsford, Ltd.

shod beams, as much as a hundred feet long, were suspended by the middle from above, drawn back by ropes and then let loose to swing against the masonry. Tunnels also were dug below ground to undermine the foundations. Meanwhile the defenders were under fire from various engines, of which the catapult, or *scorpio*, a sort of upright crossbow, discharged arrows, and the *ballista*, a bigger machine with a higher trajectory, hurled beams and stones—a quarter of a mile according to Josephus.

It is interesting to notice how the 'eternal peasant' comes out in the names which the soldiers gave to these devices. The protective sheds were called *musculi*, little mice, and the movable ones *vineae*, arbour. More obvious names were the ram (*aries*), the tortoise (*testudo*), the rabbit (*cuniculus*) for the underground tunnel, or the scorpion (*scorpio*) for the catapult with a sting in its tail. At all events when such names were invented, the backbone of the army was still the yeoman farmer.

CHAPTER XI. THE ARMY (*continued*)

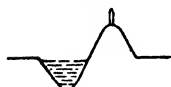
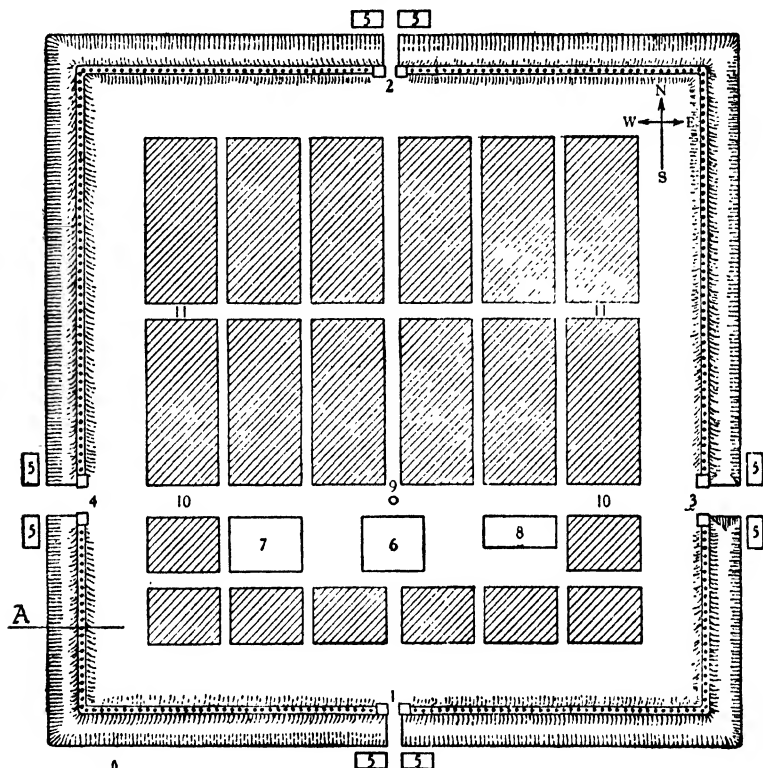
THE ROMANS did not care for sieges; but they were thorough, and they learned the art partly from their enemies, such as the Greeks in early days, and partly perhaps from their own experience in constructing fortifications. For instance, a Roman army never halted for a single night—whether before or after a battle or even while one was going on—without constructing a fortified camp capable of containing and defending the whole force, men, beasts and baggage. So much did the Roman soldier take this for granted, that he did not speak of arriving at a place after, say, five days' march but 'at the fifth camp' (*pervenire ad locum quintis castris*). The plan of every camp was the same, both in winter and summer, and whether it was to be occupied for a night or for a year; and as a result every man knew exactly where to go and what to do in any emergency.

The choice of a camp site was regarded as of first importance, and the selection was made by a tribune or even by the general in person. He would go forward, accompanied by some engineers, and look for an open piece of ground within easy reach of forage, fuel and water, and if possible with a downward slope in the forward direction. This he proceeded to mark out, first planting a small white flag on the spot where Headquarters were to stand, and then other flags of different colours to mark the four corners. The rest was done by the soldiers when they came up, each man knowing his particular task and able to see at a glance where it lay.

Here is a diagram showing the plan of a camp as Polybius describes it from what he had seen so often when in the field with Scipio's army. It would contain a regular consular army of two legions and the corresponding contingents of cavalry and allied troops, in all a force of nearly 20,000 men (see p. 116). The *porta praetoria* usually faced east, but in order to make the camp easier to describe we are going to assume that it faced south.

The first thing to be done was to dig the surrounding ditch, the earth from it being thrown inwards to form the rampart.

On top of this each soldier planted the stakes which he carried with him, to form a palisade. These defences, the well-known *fossa*, *agger* and *vallum* (this last made of *valli*!), enclosed the



SECTION  
THROUGH  
A

### ROMAN CAMP (2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C.)

1. *Porta Praetoria.* 2. *Porta Decumana.* 3. *Porta Principalis dextra.*
4. *Porta Principalis sinistra.* 5. *Stiones.* 6. *Praetorium.* 7. *Forum.*
8. *Quaestorium.* 9. *Ara.* 10. *Via Principalis.* 11. *Via Quintana.*

whole camp area, an exact square with sides of about 2100 feet, though the shape was changed to a rectangle in imperial times. Unfortunately we do not know what were the measurements of these works, which were doubtless fixed. Caesar talks of a *fossa*

at Dyrrhachium fifteen feet deep, surmounted by an *agger* ten feet high by ten broad. But such spade-work as a nightly exercise would surely have been too much even for a Roman army, after the day's march.

Inside the square a space 200 feet wide was kept clear all round between the ramparts and the camp. Besides being useful for troop movements or even for the storage of booty, this made it unlikely that any missile hurled from outside would reach the tents. Directly crossing the camp from east to west and roughly dividing it into three equal parts were two roads. The *via principalis*, 100 feet wide, separated the army headquarters from the rest of the camp, and ended in a gate in the rampart on either side, the *porta principalis, dextra* and *sinistra*. This area, which was at the back of the camp, included the consul's quarters or *praetorium*\* in the middle, with the *quaestorium*, for his quaestors and office staff, on one side and an open space, the camp *forum*, on the other. Here too, or along the *via principalis*, stood the altars and the eagles of the legions. Between these and the south side of the perimeter were the tribunes' quarters, the hospital, and the tents of the *extraordinarii* and the other picked troops. A fifty-foot road led from the *porta praetoria*, which bisected the south side, to the *praetorium* and was continued from it through the whole camp till it bisected the north side at the *porta decumana*.

The whole space north of the *via principalis* was given over to the troops. Their tents were arranged in six rectangles, bisected from east to west by a second transverse road, 50 feet wide, and intersected by five roads of the same width running north and south, with the cavalry on either side of the centre road. A trooper and his horse were allowed as much space as four infantrymen.

As long as the army remained in camp, a regular camp routine was followed. At daybreak every morning there was an officers' parade. The tribunes paraded before the consul's tent

\* So called owing to the fact that in earliest days the consul, when in command of an army, was called a praetor; see footnote to p. 52.

and the centurions before the tribunes'. The orders for the day were then issued by the consul to the tribunes and passed on by them to the centurions, through whom they finally reached the troops. Guards were posted both by day and night, 'quaternions of soldiers' as they are called in the Acts, each consisting of four men who took it in turns to watch, one at a time. Outlying pickets (*stationes*) were also posted beyond the perimeter.

If an attack was made upon a picket—or for that matter upon any isolated body of troops, in a fort, on outpost duty, or wherever it might be—the S.O.S. signal was given by sending up a column of smoke by day or by lighting a fire by night. This, incidentally, is responsible for much of the knowledge which we have of the Roman soldier and his ways. For as he had to bury his rubbish instead of burning it (for to do so would have been to give the alarm) the modern excavator can tell from what he left behind in his rubbish pit, the sort of things which he had with him, and the sort of life he lived, on active service.

The pass-word was given to the sentries (*vigiliae*), not by word of mouth, but written on a tablet of wood. All the guard posts were visited once during every watch, and an ingenious system made it certain that if any sentry were absent or asleep, he would be detected and his three companions made witnesses against him. A court-martial inevitably followed.

Discipline in the Roman army was strict and punishments were both numerous and harsh. Death was the penalty for grave offences like desertion, or even for failing to pass the watchword, while lesser misdeeds were punished by flogging or pack-drill or by loss of pay or privileges. A whole legion might be punished by being put on short rations or made to bivouac outside the camp, while mutiny or cowardice was dealt with by 'decimation', i.e. the execution of one man in every ten (not of the majority of them, as the misuse of the word in modern journalese suggests).

But there were rewards as well as punishment. The highest was the *corona graminea*, a grass crown awarded to a senior officer for saving an army in peril or a besieged city. For personal

valour, the Roman V.C. was a crown of oak leaves, the *corona civica*, for the man who saved the life of a fellow-soldier in battle. The holders of it were honoured for the rest of their lives. When they entered a public building all those present rose to their feet; and they had the right to sit in seats reserved for Senators at public entertainments. Other 'crowns' were awarded to the first man to scale a wall or enter an enemy's camp. Distinguished service might also be recognized by the award of a metal disc (worn on the chest like a huge medal) or of a necklet or armlet, or by promotion, increase of pay or exemption from fatigues.

To a successful general victory brought special rewards. His troops saluted him as *Imperator* and crowned him with a wreath of laurel; and meanwhile his dispatches were on their way to the Senate, who might decree for him the highest award of all, the utmost ambition of every Roman general, a Triumph. For more ordinary victories an Ovation might be granted, a triumph on a smaller scale; but the triumph itself was a rare distinction, only awarded for victory, complete and final, which brought new territory beneath Roman rule and left a minimum of 5000 enemy dead upon the field. For an ovation, only 300 corpses were considered necessary.

A triumph was the only occasion when a general might bring his army with him beyond the limits of his *provincia* and parade it through the streets of Rome: he could not triumph if he had already entered the city himself. Cicero, who rather ludicrously aspired to one for his petty military successes against guerilla bands in Cilicia, hung about for months outside the capital, hoping against hope that he might enter it in triumph; but on the eve of the outbreak of the civil war, the Senate had something more important to think about.

A triumph was the occasion of the most lavish and imposing spectacle that Rome could devise. The whole city made holiday for the occasion—the streets were decorated, the statues wreathed with flowers, every altar ablaze. The general and his army bivouacked overnight on the Campus Martius and entered Rome next day by a special *Porta Triumphalis*. The procession

was led by the city magistrates, who surrendered their powers to the triumphant general for the day. Next came trumpeters, sounding as if for the charge, and then a string of waggons bearing the spoils of victory and *tableaux* representing incidents in the campaign. These were followed by priests, and oxen for sacrifice, gorgeously apparelled; and after them walked strings of captives with their king and chief notables at their head, if they had survived—these too destined for sacrifice, as they were put to death in a prison while the procession was still going on and as an essential part of the festivities.

A band of musicians and dancers came next, and then the victorious general himself. He rode in a triumphal four-horsed chariot, robed in purple and wearing his laurel crown, attended by his children and his chief officers. A slave stood by him, holding over his head an oak-leaf crown in gold, and another whispered in his ear occasional reminders that even he was mortal. Last of all came the long procession of his soldiers, their javelins wreathed with laurel, shouting and singing in his honour, and bandying rude jokes about him—for so custom allowed and even demanded.

The immense procession passed beneath triumphal arches along the Sacred Way to the Forum, whence the general climbed the Capitoline Hill to the Temple of Jupiter. There the oxen were sacrificed and he laid his wreath upon the knees of the god. The day ended with a state banquet given by the Senate and with feasting everywhere for soldiers and citizens. But the general's honours did not end with the day. He retained the right to wear his laurel wreath, land was given him to build a house and when he died his ashes were buried within the city walls. Small wonder that under the Empire, only the Emperor was allowed to triumph!

Marches, battles and sieges were the chief, but they were not the only, labours which the soldier was called upon to undertake. Our own country provides good examples of two other characteristic works of the Roman army, fortifications and roads. The former were needed to safeguard a conquered country and the latter to govern and civilize it.



VIII. Hadrian's Wall





As an example of Roman fortification, we need not look further than Hadrian's Wall (see page 102 and Plate VIII). Between the Solway Firth and the Mouth of the Tyne, each end built out into the water, it crossed seventy-three miles of hill and dale, 20 feet high in some parts and 9 feet thick, stone-faced with an inner core of concrete, and with a military road behind it. At intervals along its length stood seventeen great forts and the last one to the East is still known as Wallsend. Lesser forts were built between them at regular intervals of about a mile, with two watch-towers between each; so that the whole length of the wall was divided in this way into sections of about 500 yards. Along the top of it was a rampart-walk wide enough for the patrolling sentries. Men of the three legions, composing the regular garrison of Britain, were employed to build it. Each unit of each legion was given its own section of the wall to build, and inscribed its name there on a tablet—the proud record of a great and lasting achievement.

The Roman roads which crossed the Empire from end to end were also built by Roman soldiers; and so well has their work stood the test of time that in England Roman roads are still a 'feature of the landscape'. Several of them are main roads to this day, like Ermine Street between London and York, or the Fosse Way from Ilchester through Bath and Leicester to Lincoln.

The Romans called a military road a *via munita*, because it was built like a fortification on foundations of stone. These were covered with a layer of small stones, closely packed, and the surface was sometimes paved but more often of rammed gravel. In fact it is frequently difficult to tell the difference between a Roman road and a macadamized road of the nineteenth century.

However, the lay-out of the road is generally conclusive evidence. Roman roads are almost proverbially straight; and even when, as in England particularly, they are not really so, they look straight, because they are laid out in straight sections and change their direction by angles and not by curves. The change of direction is usually made on hill-tops, and all that can be seen at one glance is the section which runs straight from

one hill-top to the next. This fondness for hill-tops and for ridges probably has a military reason behind it: the high ground, with the good views all round which it gave, was safer than the valleys, which were more thickly wooded then than now, and might shelter hordes of barbarians in ambush. For this reason too, if a Roman road must run through a forest, the trees were cut down for a hundred yards on either side of it.

When a Roman road came to a river, a bridge was built; and this was work to which the legions were accustomed from the uses of war. Their most famous military bridge was perhaps the one built by Julius Caesar over the Rhine, of which he has left us a detailed account in his *Gallic War*, while Livy records another fitted with a mechanical contrivance for propelling reluctant elephants across a river in a sitting position.

Such soldiers were indeed 'Jacks of all trades'. Much leisure was thought bad for them and by way of keeping them out of mischief they might be required to do, and they did, almost anything, from great building-works like fortresses and harbours, canals and even amphitheatres, to planting vineyards or stamping out a swarm of locusts.

Considering how much was expected of him, neither the rations nor the pay of the Roman soldier were extravagant. The former were mainly vegetarian, and consisted of wheat (which he had to grind for himself), pulse for making porridge, vegetables, a little lard and oil, and some sour wine to wash it down with. He was given little meat and did not like it—in fact he looked on it as an emergency or 'iron' ration—but he seems to have taken kindly to oysters when stationed in Britain. Not a particularly interesting diet, we may think, but there seem to have been few complaints about it.

Pay, on the other hand, was a frequent source of discontent and sometimes of mutiny. Originally it was not intended to do more than pay the soldier's out-of-pocket expenses in the field after providing for his food and clothes, and when he first received a regular sum (*stipendium*) it was only 60 *denarii* a year, or about 50s., though he might get double pay as a reward for

valour or on promotion to be a centurion. In the Punic Wars it was twice as much. Caesar raised the legionary's pay to 225 *denarii* and Domitian to 300, adding a lump sum of 3000 *denarii* as a gratuity upon retirement.

And yet somehow the Roman soldier contrived to live on about three-fifths of his pay and was encouraged to save the rest by opening an account with the regimental bank. Such deposits were kept in ten sacks, one for each cohort, with an eleventh added for contributions to a burial club, and these were always placed beside the regimental standards. It was unlikely that a thrifty soldier would desert either his savings or his standard; that he would desert them both was unthinkable.

But at the best of times a soldier had more to hope from winning booty than from drawing pay and what attracted him to the army was the life which it offered. 'Join the army and see the world'—the prospect brought recruits to the Roman army as it does to the British.

Life in the army was certainly a varied and adventurous one. Wars hardly ever ceased during the thousand years of Rome's history, and even in intervals of peace, her soldiers were employed not only on the public works already mentioned but on any number of 'special duties'. The 'day book' has survived of a Spanish cohort stationed in Moesia (Bulgaria). One man is entered as 'in Greece on corn-supply', another as 'on garrison duty at Tyras', a third as 'on an expedition across the Danube', a fourth as 'on guard duty at the mines', and so on indefinitely. Occasionally a grimmer entry appears opposite a name, such as *perit in aqua* (drowned) or *occisus a latronibus* (murdered by brigands) or more frequently just  $\theta$ , the first letter of a Greek word meaning 'dead'.

Such was life in the Roman army which won the Empire and, though never more than 400,000 strong, kept its vast frontier line inviolate for three and a half centuries and more. It is sad to record that this same army made in the end an important contribution to its downfall. The army entered politics. For it was more than the Roman army. It was, or it thought itself,

the Roman People, the successor of the Popular Assemblies. Had not the chief of these been the *Comitia Centuriata*, the People on a military basis? When the army spoke, it was with the Voice of the People.

This claim was soon abused. It became the custom of successive Emperors to distribute a *largesse* to the soldiers on their accession, and this *donativum*, as it was called, was soon regarded as a matter not of bounty but of right. Without the support of the army no Emperor could ascend the throne, and the army tended to support the most liberal candidate. The worst offenders were the Praetorian Guard. These nine regiments of household troops, started by Augustus, formed the Emperor's personal body-guard; and they were spoiled and indulged by later Emperors till they dominated Rome from their camp outside it and on one occasion they openly put up the imperial throne for auction.

From the days of the Republic onwards the tendency had been to recruit fewer Italians and more foreigners; and it was these latter who had, as it were, the casting vote when it came to choosing a new emperor. So the barbarians controlled the Empire, which they were paid to guard. Moreover the growth of professional armies, permanently quartered in standing camps and separated from one another by vast distances, tended increasingly to confine their lives to their own camp, their outlook to their own interests, and their allegiance to their own general. Him they were ready to follow to the world's end; and if he wished to become Emperor and they thought he would reward them adequately, they were quite ready to march on Rome itself.

Such was the vicious practice which, as we have seen, denuded Britain of its defenders. When the full strength of all the Roman armies was needed to thrust back the barbarian from the frontiers, it was dissipated in their fighting one another to decide which of a number of ambitious generals should be Emperor of Rome.

And yet the Roman army remains one of the marvels of the

world. "A vast territory was never more economically garrisoned: twelve hundred men at Lyons kept order throughout the whole of Gaul. Wherever the legions went they spread Roman ideas and the Latin tongue. Famous cities sprang from the field-force canteens which grew up beside their permanent camps. On little but wheaten porridge they faced the suns of the East, the snows and forests of central Europe, and the desolate barrens of the North, and made the desert a habitable place. For generations their morning reveille was to sound at the outposts of empire and their harness to clank on the world's horizons, and they held the gates of civilization long enough to preserve for the future the most vital part of the bequest of Rome."\*

It may seem strange that a chapter entitled 'The Roman Army' should end with a short account of the Roman navy. It is not that the subject is insufficiently important to have a chapter to itself—without command of the sea the Romans could not have won the Punic Wars—but that they never really became sailors; they remained essentially foot-soldiers. And just as their cavalry were little more than infantry on horseback, so their navy long remained an army on shipboard.

The Romans, like the Jews, avoided and distrusted the sea, and from the same cause, the lack of good natural harbours in their coastline. When they took to it, it was because they had to, in order to defeat a great sea-faring nation, the Carthaginians. So proud were they of having in the end defeated their foe on his own element, that they loved to tell the story of how they built their first war-ship by copying a Carthaginian vessel, accidentally stranded on their coast. Actually they had possessed war-ships and even naval dockyards long before; but it was in fact the prodigious efforts which the Punic Wars called forth which turned them into a great power by sea as well as by land.

The fleet was at first regarded as a branch of the army, and it came under the command of a consul; but as it was inevitably separated from the rest of his command, he appointed a *prae-*

\* John Buchan, *Augustus*.

*fectus classis* to take charge of it for him. Early in the second century B.C. this officer was invested with the *imperium* and the fleet became a separate 'province'.

But when the principal danger was past the Romans lost interest in their navy. The service had never been popular. The crews, and sometimes the ships themselves, were supplied by maritime allies who became known as *socii navales*; but even these tried to evade a service so lacking in prestige, and later on most of the sailors were freedmen or even slaves, under the orders of a free-born captain and helmsman. The marines were drawn from the lowest of the Roman proletariat, though they were sometimes stiffened with legionaries. By the last century B.C. the Roman navy had ceased to rule the waves.

But if the Romans did not care to police the seas—and after all, no other power was left to dispute the mastery with them—private enterprise was not slow to see its opportunity. A host of pirates soon made their appearance. Consisting of the ruined and the desperate of all nations, whom the incessant wars had deprived of all other hopes of livelihood, they looted and levied tribute from the coast towns of the Mediterranean and brought sea-borne trade to a standstill. Even Roman troopships had to wait for bad weather before they dared put to sea. With the corn-supply in danger, and the *publicani* threatened with ruin, something had to be done about it. Two naval expeditions failed; and when the great Pompey, armed with supreme power and backed by the whole resources of the State, cleared the seas of pirates within forty days, he had to use diplomacy, as well as his great gifts of generalship, to do it.

The Romans however continued to regard their fleet as something of a 'necessary evil'. It is doubtful whether they maintained a standing navy; they seem to have built ships and used them as and when the need arose. Even then they put to sea only during the summer (as did the battleships of the British navy as late as 1745) and hugged the coast as much as they could; with the result that times of need found them lacking in experience and seamanship.

The general name for a war-ship was *navis longa*, as being built for speed and therefore long and narrow by comparison with merchant ships, which needed space for cargo. They were of various types, of which quinqueremes and triremes were the commonest. Some people think that these names indicate the number of banks of oars, one above the other, by which the ship was rowed. But five such banks are a practical impossibility, and the names more probably refer to the number of men that pulled each oar—five on a quinquereme, three on a trireme and so on. A quinquereme may have had as many as twenty-five oars on each side and a crew of 300. The rowers were below the deck.

On the deck the troops stood, protected by bulwarks, ready to board the enemy; and various devices were used to make this possible by grappling, the object being to enable the Romans to fight hand to hand in the way that they understood so well. At the same time two more definitely nautical manœuvres were employed. One consisted in ramming the enemy with the bronze 'beak' projecting from the bow below the water line; and the other in passing close alongside him so as to shear away his oars and leave him disabled.

The civil war revived an interest in sea-power, but even Caesar did not grasp its importance, a failure which twice brought him to the brink of disaster. After Pompey's death, the Republican fleet was put in charge of his son, Sextus, who had been keeping the sea as a sort of privateer with the remains of his father's ships, and he was given the resounding title of *praefectus classis et orae maritimae*. This fleet then remained a formidable threat to Octavian, and after suffering some severe defeats, he settled down, with the help of Agrippa, to outbuild Sextus. Agrippa created a new naval base, the Portus Julius, a new type of war-ship and new engines of war; and after four months of unsuccessful fighting, in which Octavian was within an ace of losing his cause and his life, the decisive battle was fought at Naulochus in 36 B.C. Between five and six hundred ships must have been in action, and after a desperate struggle



Sextus Pompeius was utterly defeated. Another naval victory at Actium in 31 B.C., when his lighter vessels outfought the great ships of Antony and Cleopatra, left Octavian undisputed master of the Roman world. In gratitude to Agrippa, the 'architect of victory', he awarded him a new distinction, the *corona classica*, decorated with the prows of ships in gold. It is the origin of our naval crown.

As Augustus, Octavian remembered what he owed to his fleet, and succeeding Emperors followed his example in keeping up a standing navy. Enterprise increased and seamanship was learned with experience. The squadron which, under the orders of Domitian's general, Agricola, sailed round Britain in A.D. 84 and thus discovered it to be an island, must have been stout-hearted, as well as skilful, navigators.

## PART FOUR

### THE ROMANS AT HOME

“Merely corroborative detail, intended to give artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative.”

W. S. GILBERT, *The Mikado*.



CHAPTER XII: MEN AND WOMEN.    CHAPTER XIII: CHILDREN AND SLAVES.  
CHAPTER XIV: THE GODS.    CHAPTER XV: HOUSES, PALACES AND SLUMS.  
CHAPTER XVI: THE DAILY ROUND.    CHAPTER XVII: THE DAY'S WORK.  
CHAPTER XVIII: THE DAY'S PLAY.



#### CHAPTER XII. MEN & WOMEN

WE have been so much concerned with the Romans in various public capacities—as politicians, administrators and soldiers—that we may seem to have forgotten, as people sometimes do forget, that they were also individuals, husbands and fathers, with homes and private lives of their own.

What, for instance, did the Romans look like? They were of mixed blood (like ourselves and everybody else) and they became increasingly mixed as conquest outside Italy brought hordes of foreign slaves and adventurers into Rome. But even so, there must have been such a thing as a typical Roman face. There was in fact, as we can tell from the long and brilliant series of Roman portrait-busts which has survived. These began as death-masks, moulded in wax over the features of the dead, and a natural likeness continued to be the first object of the Roman sculptor. The result, thanks to his artistic genius, was so life-like that we need be in no doubt about the appearance of the Romans.

To the present writer they look remarkably like ourselves! On the whole their features are perhaps rather ‘bolder’, their necks thicker, and their heads flatter than ours; but at least the

type is Nordic rather than Latin, more British than Italian. The Roman nose may not be common now, but not many Romans seem to have had it. The long upper lip gives some of the portraits a Celtic look, and one delightful portrait of a lady looks distinctly French; but the Emperor Galba's portrait might be taken for John Bull and the living image of many a Roman bust may be found to-day in the bar-parlour of an English public house.

To complete the picture we must add that the Romans were clean-shaven—or fairly clean; for in the course of nearly 300 years of practice the Roman barber continued to use an iron razor and water, but no soap. Early Republicans wore hair and beard long, till Scipio Africanus the younger set the opposite fashion. The future Emperor Augustus wore a beard when he returned from Gaul in 39 B.C.; but falling violently in love with his future wife Livia, he cut it off to improve his looks. His successors, and Roman Society generally, continued to shave until the Emperor Hadrian let his beard grow. He is said to have done this to avoid the pain, and to conceal the scars, caused by the barber; and to have been gratefully followed by his subjects, who had more reason to dread the *tonsor's* chair than we the dentist's.

Were the Romans tall or short, big men or small? The general evidence of archaeology makes it clear that they were, by our standards, a race of small build and stature. For example, the doorways in the forts along Hadrian's Wall are remarkably narrow; and a pair of soldier's sandals recently dug up from beneath the Bank of England show that the wearer had a slimmer foot than most of us. But if archaeology proves that the Romans were small, history proves that they were amazingly 'tough'.

Of a Roman's dress no detailed description will be attempted here: our illustration\* does it better and takes less time about it. His chief out-door garment, the *toga*, is familiar through pictures and statues, and the figures in our illustration show the way in which it was usually worn from the last days of the

\* Plate XIII facing p. 209.

Republic onwards. What may surprise some readers is its appearance when not in use and laid out flat; for it then took shape as the segment of a circle, with its straight edge  $8\frac{1}{2}$  feet long and a maximum depth of 7 feet. To put it on so as to look like the men in our illustration must have been difficult enough; but even more difficult to keep it on, as the Romans appear to have done, without any fastenings.

The toga was made of wool, of which it retained the natural white colour. It was kept clean by the fuller; and if a man was seen wearing a dirty one, he was probably on his way to court, where he hoped that his sordid appearance would excite pity. If his toga was of dark wool, he was in mourning. A purple stripe on a white toga (it extended along the whole of its straight side) indicated a priest or a magistrate, or a senator on a festival day, wearing the coveted *toga praetexta*, while the embroidered *toga picta* was restricted under the Republic to a general celebrating a triumph and under the Empire to consuls. The emperor himself wore a purple toga. Plain or *praetexta*, the Romans were certainly proud of the toga, which they regarded as their national costume, the garb of peace and civilization as contrasted with that of the soldier or the peasant. Even in death they were not parted from it, for it served them as a shroud.

If the weather was specially cold, travellers wore a thick cloak reaching nearly to the ankles, with a hole through which they put their heads and a hood to draw over them. Hats were not worn, except as an eccentric and foreign fashion (Augustus nearly always wore a Greek one), but leather boots, covering the whole foot and laced with thongs, were the usual thing for out-of-doors. The peasant's *calceus* was much like a modern boot, but senators wore ornamental ones, with elaborate bindings rather like Malvolio's cross-garters. These were sometimes tied half-way up the calf, with complicated fastenings there and lower down as well, and with a crescent-shaped ivory ornament attached to the front. Soldiers and peasants wore a heavy sandal with a hob-nailed sole.

Indoors the Roman took off his toga and wore only his *tunica*,

of which a glimpse can be seen in our illustration where the folds of the toga leave the wearer's right arm and shoulder free; or he might wear more than one, if he felt the cold, as Augustus did. It was a sort of shirt with short sleeves (long sleeves were thought effeminate), made of wool or linen, plain for the ordinary citizen or ornamented with a broad purple stripe, the 'laticlave', from the neck to the waist if the wearer were a senator, or with two narrow stripes for an equestrian. It was fastened at the waist with a belt and reached a little below the knees. On his feet he wore a pair of sandals or slippers.

So far we have attempted to describe the outward appearance only of the Romans. What were they like in themselves? What sort of a character and personality had the average Roman? There was of course no such person and as many different characters could be found in Rome as in London. But even so, certain main characteristics can be seen constantly recurring throughout their long history; and we may speak of a typical Roman no more unreasonably than we do of a typical Englishman.

Physically the Roman was a cross between two predominant strains, the immigrant northerner and the 'native' southerner. Temperamentally he was of the North. He was not, though it sounds paradoxical, a 'Latin'—quick, emotional, artistic and unstable. He was more like a Scot than a modern Italian, though it must be admitted that he had fewer inhibitions. He wept unashamedly when he felt like it, and when he lost his temper he sometimes forgot his dignity. We have a vivid eyewitness account of a spitting-match which took place between partisans, in the Law Courts of all places.\* He had a certain sense of humour but generally of a crude and even a grim type. Cicero's was often delightful (though he loved puns), and he could laugh at himself on occasions; but in him and others of a later age, the native wit of Rome had been sharpened and polished by the influences of Greece. His virtues were those of the northern peasant, as the word *virtus* shows in its original meaning, which

\* Cicero, *ad Quintum Fratrem*, II, 3, 2.

expresses the qualities most needed in a man (*vir*), physical courage and indifference to pain, ability to 'endure hardness', self-control, industry. Such were the virtues prized by the yeoman, whether as farmer or soldier, and we may add to them those of independence and self-respect; but he seldom recognized them in anyone who was not a Roman.

Succeeding ages mellowed and amplified these primitive qualities, and there emerge the trinity of Roman characteristics, *gravitas*, *pietas* and *simplicitas*. *Gravitas* meant a sense of responsibility, the feeling that 'life is real, life is earnest', not a thing to be trifled with—that was *levitas*. It left no room for sentiment and not much for a sense of humour. Next came *pietas*, which had little to do with piety, but means a sense of what a man owes to the gods and to his country, to his neighbour and above all to his family. It enjoins obedience to the higher power whether human or divine, and is the basis of Roman conservatism, of his feeling for law and order, his sense of justice and loyalty. *Simplicitas* was a humbler quality which, so to speak, prevented the others from getting out of hand. It was the quality which enables a man 'to see life steadily and see it whole', and which gave the Roman his balance and common sense, his complete lack of sentimentality. It kept his feet on the ground and his eyes fixed on 'practical' matters: he might look at the stars, but only astronomically. To these three, Roman history bids us add one more, *constantia*, the power to 'stick it'.

Such were the virtues of the typical Roman as we learn them from the portrait-gallery of Livy's history; or such (should we say?) the *mores maiorum*, the traditional Roman character, of which Cicero lamented the decline and which Augustus was so anxious to reintroduce. 'Back to the good old times', cries Horace as he damns four generations in three lines.\* But 'all times when old are good' as Byron reminds us, and when exactly was the golden age of Roman virtue? Certainly not in the second century B.C. as Cicero seems to think despite the evidence of Polybius who was alive at the time. Actually it was then that

\* *Odes*, III, 6.

Panaetius came to Rome and taught the Stoic ideas of virtue, which the patriotism of later Romans appropriated as their own. There is no historical evidence that the 'good old times' ever existed, or that the typical Roman virtues were ever universal or even common.

Thus the historians; but the virtues with which the Romans credited their ancestors were those which they admired themselves, and no man can admire a virtue without possessing the capacity for it. Moreover, Roman history could not have happened unless the Romans had in fact possessed these qualities to a large extent and in many instances. And if the 'old times' were not altogether good, it is because the Romans also possessed the defects of these self-same qualities. Our typical Roman was 'virtuous' in the Roman sense, but he was also hard, 'canny' and cruel, limited in his imagination and narrow in his sympathies, devoid of culture till he learned it from the Greeks and then unable to control it, greedy of wealth and luxury and a ready prey to their temptations.

But a man is more than the sum of his virtues and vices, and whatever else they were not, the Romans were men. In mind and character, as in outward appearance, they seem more like the men of our own race than those who, as Latins, claim to be descended from them: Scottish in many of their best qualities as well as in their rather grim tenacity and that touch of ruthlessness which seems indispensable to success, as success is generally understood; Victorian English in their solid magnificence, their love of tradition, their vulgar ostentation; and what can only be described as British in their sturdy common sense, their talent for compromise, their concern with action rather than with ideas, and in the strange way in which they combined insensibility to the feelings of others with a genius for government. British no less in a certain practical idealism, a code of duty and discipline which they seldom expressed and never quite forgot.

This character, or rather its finer qualities, the Romans of all ages felt that they owed to family life. They may indeed claim

to have created the idea of 'home'. In earlier times and other regions of the world homes, as we understand them, were things unknown: all that the Greeks, for instance, could show was the house and nothing more, a place to eat and sleep in. With the Romans it was different. What they felt about their homes we may gather from Cicero. After he had been forced into exile, his enemies had torn down his house and tried to secure that it should never be rebuilt. On his return he pleaded for its restoration, and he had on his side all the Roman prejudice against the destruction of a home. "Is there anything", he asks, "more hallowed, more closely hedged about with sanctity, than the home of each individual citizen? Therein he has his altars, his hearth, his household gods, his private worships, his rites and ceremonies. For all of us this is a sanctuary so holy that to tear away a man from it is an outrage to the law of heaven."\*

Law, custom and religion combined to stress the importance of the family. The word itself is Roman; but the *familia* included far more than any English translation can express. We think of the family as consisting of father, mother and the children (and perhaps the dog), with grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins vaguely included if one happens to like them. The Romans meant by *familia* a man and his wife, their children, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, slaves and even, in the strict sense, the 'furniture and effects'. It certainly included also the household gods.

Of this household the *paterfamilias* was unmistakably the master. No Victorian 'papa' could compare with him as a domestic tyrant, at all events in theory, for he was not only the head, but actually the owner, of his family. In early days he had the power of life and death over all his *familiares* and could even sell them into slavery; and though such power fell into disuse, he remained the legal 'owner' not only of his wife, children and slaves, but of his sons' wives and children. There was little that any of them could do without his consent. Anything acquired by a son became the property of his father; and

\* Hugh Last, *The Legacy of Rome*, quoting Cicero, *pro domo sua*.



it follows that a son could not even make a will, for he had nothing of his own to leave. Such was the power of the *paterfamilias*. Custom, experience and common sense did much to modify it, and hen-pecked husbands and rebellious children were not unknown in Rome; but the *patria potestas* underlay the Roman conception both of the Law and of the State for a thousand years.

But here again we see the common sense, the feeling of responsibility, which never deserted the Romans. The *paterfamilias* had absolute powers, but he seldom abused them. He might have been a tyrant, but he preferred to act like a magistrate, judicially and with due observance of tradition; or rather, he preferred, when a magistrate, to act like a *paterfamilias*. In politics we have seen more than one 'impossible' arrangement made possible by this characteristic of the Romans. It was something that they had learned at home.

The home and all the rights of citizenship, whether public or private, were held to derive from a legal marriage, *iustum matrimonium*, and to the Romans marriage was an extremely serious business. It was the expression, not of two people's affection, but of their families' sense of duty—their duty to keep up the sacred rites on which the well-being of the family depended and their duty to provide male children for the service of the State. The proper result in a conflict between love and duty the story of Dido and Æneas shows clearly enough! If the husband and wife should come to love one another (as they often did), that was a happy accident. Those most concerned in a Roman marriage were not the bride and bridegroom, but the family and the State.

Marriages took place, in fact, at a time when the bride at least was too young to 'know her own mind'. Cicero betrothed his beloved daughter Tullia when she was ten years old and she was married three years later; nor is there any reason to suppose that this was unusual. A boy became engaged at an age when many English boys are still at school and a girl of nineteen was regarded as definitely 'on the shelf'.





## IX A Memorial to a Husband and Wife

This delightful monument was probably erected about 80 B.C. at the end of Sulla's dictatorship, or possibly a little later. The treatment of the veil shows that the wife's head has been 'restored'.

[1] AURELIUS L. L.

HERMIA

LANTIVS DE COLLE

VIMINALE

HAEC QUAE ME LAVIO PRAECESSIT CORPORE CASTO  
 CONIUNX UNA MEO PRAEDITA AMANS ANIMO  
 FIDO FIDA VIRO VIVISTI STUDIO PARILI QUI  
 NULLA IN AVARITIA CESSIT AB OFFICIO

[1.] Aurelius Hermia, Lucius' Freedman,

Butcher of the Viminal Hill

She whose chaste body went before me to the grave, was my loving wife, one with me in heart. In life she was faithful and loyal to her husband, as I to her, and never failed in her duty through any selfishness

AURELIA L. L.

PHILEMATIO

VIVA PHILEMATIUM SUM AURELIA NOMINATA  
 CASTA PUDENS VOLGET NOSTRA FIDA VIRO  
 VIR CONLIBERTUS TUI LIBERI QUI CARO FHEU  
 REFUTI TE VIRO PLUS SUPRAQUE PARENS  
 SEPIEM ME NATAVI ANNORUM GRATIO IPSI RECEPI  
 QUADRAGESIMA ANNOS NATA NEXIS POTIOR  
 ILLE MIO OFFICIO ADSIDUO FLOREBAT AD OMNIS...

Aurelia Philemation, Lucius' Freedwoman

In life I was known as Aurelia Philemation, chaste, modest, retiring and faithful. The same master gave freedom to me and to my husband, from whom alas! I am now parted. He was in very truth a father to me and much more. He took me under his protection when I was seven years old and I was forty when I died. In unwavering devotion to me, he was vigorous towards every...

This 'engagement' was a promise only, not a binding contract—if the bride and bridegroom took an invincible dislike to one another, it could be broken without a scandal—but it was the occasion of a simple ceremony. Their parents, who had of course arranged the match, pledged the couple to each other, and the boy gave the girl a ring which she placed, in the presence of the company, on the third finger of her left hand, as the custom is to-day. Why on this particular finger the Romans probably forgot, as we do. But the Egyptians knew that it was because a nerve led straight from it to the heart!

On her wedding day the bride put on her wedding-dress, a tunic secured round the waist by a knotted woollen girdle, with a yellow cloak and sandals to match. Her former clothes and her toys she laid aside and dedicated to her father's household gods. Over her hair, parted with a spear in recollection of older and ruder marriage customs, she wore a flame-coloured veil which hung down over her face, and on top of that a wreath of sweet herbs—orange-blossom did not come in until imperial times. Thus adorned, she stood with her parents to welcome the guests and to await the bridegroom and his relations.

When the omens had been taken, the whole company adjourned to offer prayer and sacrifice to the gods, and then the young couple joined hands and pronounced their vows. *Ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia*. The words defy translation, but surely a union of wills could not be better expressed. The marriage service was now over and the guests offered their good wishes: *feliciter*, 'here's luck'.

Another sacrifice, and then to the 'wedding breakfast', followed by other festivities lasting till nightfall, when the bride must leave her father and mother and be carried off (for so she was in pantomime) to her new home. Two of her husband's friends took her by either hand and one or more carried torches, while three bridesmaids went with her, carrying her distaff and spindle. She herself carried three copper coins in her hand, one for her husband, representing her dowry, one for the *lares* of his house, and one for those of the nearest cross-roads. The pro-

cession set out with music and singing, and nuts were thrown to be scrambled for by the children in the streets, a happy symbol of the nursery-to-be. Arrived at her new home, the bride smeared the door-posts with fat and oil and wreathed them with wool. Then she was lifted over the threshold—to avoid an ill-omened stumble, the Romans said; but had they forgotten that guardian spirits lived under the doorstep and might take action to protect it if an unfamiliar step was heard coming in? Safe inside, she received the gifts of fire and water from her husband, showing that he entrusted to her the running of his house.

Only once again would she be carried over the threshold and led from her home by torchlight; and that was when she was leaving it for the last time on the way to her funeral pyre. Her whole married life was lived 'between the two torches', *inter utramque facem*, as the Roman poet said.

Next morning the bride of yesterday, now a Roman matron (in her early teens!), sacrificed on her husband's altar, and in the evening a banquet was held by way of a house-warming party. Her new position was one of dignity and responsibility. When she went out (though she would not do so unescorted or without her husband's knowledge) she wore a distinctive garment, the *stola matronalis*, and passers-by made way for her. At home she was in entire charge of the household, all the members of which addressed her as *domina*. She took a share with her husband in the family worship, and joined him at meals, though while he reclined, she sat, nor did she take any wine. He would consult her on all ordinary matters; but when politics or intellectual questions were being discussed, she was expected to remain silent.

Such was the lot of a married woman in the last century of the Republic. Her interests from earliest times had been supposed to be confined, like those of the old German *Hausfrau*, to kitchen, church and children. But a celebrated inscription shows that to many women marriage meant more than that: "Here is the tomb of a most beautiful lady. She loved her husband with

her whole heart, she bore two sons . . . ; cheerful in converse, dignified in mien, she kept the house, she spun wool."

*Domi mansit, lanam fecit.* The words express with devastating simplicity what was expected of the Roman matron until well on in imperial times, but the opening words of the inscription show how much more she often achieved. Nor must it be supposed that this limited ideal was invariably accepted even in Republican times. Wars have often resulted in increased freedom for women (their husbands are not at home to look after them!), and the Punic Wars were no exception. By the second century B.C. women were allowed to own property and even to think for themselves, and during the first, the feminist movement gained further successes and caused not a few scandals. The old form of marriage by which a woman passed into the ownership, *in manum*, of her husband was used less and less, so that she remained under the legal ownership of her father who might be expected to leave her, now that she was married, to do very much as she liked.

The Social and the Civil wars only increased the pace at which the old Roman forms and ideals of marriage were falling into disuse. Under the old form, divorce was difficult and rare, but now it became common. A man had only to say to his wife, 'Take your things away' (*tuas tibi res agito*), and she must reply, 'Keep your things to yourself' (*tuas tibi res habeto*); and so saying she must be gone. But a wife could divorce her husband no less. Sulla and Pompey were five times married, Julius Caesar and Mark Antony four times each. Even Cicero divorced Terentia, his faithful wife for thirty years, and married an heiress younger than his own daughter, only to divorce her before long. Terentia however consoled herself by remarrying twice and living to the age of a hundred.

And yet the last days of the Republic provide, as well, shining examples of loving and dutiful wives, like Julia, whose devotion to her husband Pompey and her father Caesar made a breach between them impossible while she lived; or like Octavia, sister of Augustus, wife of the faithless Antony, who loved and cared

for the children of her successful rival. But Vice is always better advertised than Virtue, especially if practised in 'high society'. Among humbler folk the older ideal lived on, and even the aristocracy was conscious of it. The poet Catullus, dissolute though he was, wrote of true marriage with tenderness and dignity. A well-known inscription, written about 8 B.C. by a husband who had lost his wife after forty-one years of happy married life together through good times and bad, gives us in its closing words the Roman conception of the perfect wife: "You were a faithful wife to me," he says, "and an obedient one: you were kind and gracious, sociable and friendly: you were assiduous at your spinning: you followed the religious rites of your family and your state, and admitted no foreign cults or degraded magic: you did not dress conspicuously, nor seek to make a display in your household arrangements. Your duty to our whole household was exemplary: you tended my mother as carefully as if she had been your own. You had innumerable other excellencies, in common with all other worthy matrons, but these I have mentioned were peculiarly yours."\*

Augustus realized how much harm a lax view of marriage had done to the State, and did all he could to recall the traditional view, even passing laws to enforce it. But things had gone too far and despite Augustus and his laws, revived and reinforced by his successors, they soon went further. The fact is that social laws are useless if not supported by a social conscience. Augustus' own daughter Julia was involved in a scandal (as *paterfamilias* and Emperor, he banished her to an island and the poet Ovid to the shores of the Black Sea†) and some of the worst women in history were found among the wives and daughters of succeeding Emperors.

But despite all the scandal that colours the lurid pages of Juvenal, the Empire also produced some of the best. In the reign of Claudius, the wife of Caecina Paetus set him the example, when he was condemned to commit suicide, by

\* Quoted by W. Warde Fowler, *Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero*.

† At Tomi, the modern Constanza, the Roumanian oil-port.

plunging a dagger into her own breast and then handing it to him with the immortal words *Paete, non dolet*, 'It doesn't hurt, Paetus'. Seneca's young wife and many another noble lady refused to survive her husband when he, too, fell under an Emperor's displeasure. Martial, who wrote his scurrilous epigrams towards the end of the first century, finds room for the portrait of more than one devoted and accomplished wife. And if virtue was not unknown in the households of the rich and amid the vice and frivolity of the Capital, we need not doubt that in humbler or remoter homes happy marriages were commoner. Too many inscriptions have survived bearing the letters S.V.Q. (*sine ulla querela*—in perfect harmony) for us to doubt it.

But there is no denying the wholesale disregard of the marriage tie and the frequency of divorce during the age of the Antonines. The philosopher Seneca did not exaggerate when he said: "No woman need blush to break off her marriage, since the most illustrious ladies have adopted the practice of reckoning the year not by the names of the consuls but of their husbands. They divorce in order to remarry. They marry in order to divorce."\* A reaction was bound to come and the motive was supplied by the Christian Church, which was unfortunately led to oppose the emancipation of women by the way in which some emancipated women behaved.

However there is no doubt of the improvement in women's education and the widening of their interests which took place under the Empire. Their power, always great within the four walls of their homes, increased proportionately in the world outside and even 'behind the throne' itself. Whether as beauties or as bluestockings they made their influence felt, secretly in politics and openly in social life, as well as in music and art and even in sport. There was actually a 'Court of Matrons', *conventus matronarum*, to deal with questions of court etiquette. As in eighteenth-century England, they drew to their *salons* the ambitious as well as the fashionable, for their patronage could help, and even make, almost any career.

\* Seneca, *de Beneficiis*.



Meanwhile their position in law, too, had steadily improved. Even under the Twelve Tables (450 B.C.) the property of men who died without making a will was divided equally between their sons and daughters. Augustus gave legal freedom to any woman who was the mother of three children, and by Hadrian's reign a woman could make a will and dispose of her own property. She was allowed to choose her own husband without her father's consent or even in opposition to it. When a great jurist of the second century maintained that a marriage is made by the consent of the contracting parties, and that a father could not give his daughter in marriage against her will, we seem to have reached a conception of marriage more Christian than Roman. And yet, nearly two centuries later still, we find the greatest statesman and writer of his day praising his daughter for virtues which were probably less rare under the Empire than we suppose, and he used the old formula to do it: 'she kept the house, she spun wool'.

Strangely enough in a country where women's lives and occupations were for centuries so clearly separated from those of men, their clothes were much alike. The women wore two garments in the house, and went to bed in them as well—an under-tunic called a *subucula*, and over it a *stola* or long tunic, reaching nearly to the ground in the case of a married woman, with a narrow border round the hem. It was high-waisted, and a short fold was allowed to hang over the girdle. Either the *stola* or the *subucula* had sleeves. Her slippers or sandals were the same as men's, and so were her boots when she walked out of doors.

A woman's out-door cloak, the *palla*, was a long rectangular piece of woollen material, which she draped round her very much as a man did his toga. But there must have been an infinity of ways in which she could do it, and though the two garments were much the same, the *palla*, like some women's clothes to-day, may have gained its distinctively feminine touch from the way it was worn. Unlike the toga, it was often highly coloured. In putting it on, and in her toilet generally, she used a mirror of

polished metal (in which she could only see her face 'darkly', as St Paul reminds us). This was ordinarily made of lead, the best ones being manufactured at Brundisium; but such was the growth of luxury under the Empire that, according to Pliny, 'every servant-girl must have her silver one nowadays'.

Women wore no hats, though a fold of the *palla* could be thrown over the head, and styles of hair-dressing remained simple even under the early Emperors, though they attained a variety and elaboration in later times which it would be tedious to describe.\* If, in fact, we have given the impression that Roman ladies on the whole dressed simply, we must remember that even in early days they probably made the most of the resources at their disposal; and that those of the Empire spent no less time, thought and money on their toilettes than does the modern film-star, from whom, at all events in the use of make-up, jewels and bright colours, they had nothing to learn except moderation.

But these extravagances were un-Roman, due to foreign, and in particular to oriental, influences. It is in earlier and less sophisticated times that we shall find the typical Roman matron, and we shall find her, characteristically, at home and looking after her children.

\* See Plate III (i), p. 49.



The *Palla*

## CHAPTER XIII. CHILDREN &amp; SLAVES

How closely the Christian Church has preserved the ceremonial of a Roman wedding will have been obvious from our description in the last chapter. It is all there, the religious and the social side, the bridal veil and wreath, the orange-blossom and the primitive fertility-emblems (only we throw confetti instead of nuts), even to the superstition that May is an unlucky month to be married in and June a lucky one. The Roman, and the Christian ceremony no less, looked forward to the birth of children as its prime object; but the Roman inclined to limit the object of matrimony to this public duty and to ignore "the mutual society, help and comfort which the one ought to have of the other".

At all events Metellus Macedonicus, censor in 131 B.C., had no doubts about it and thought fit to harangue the people on the subject. "If we could do without wives", he urged, "we should be rid of that nuisance. But since Nature has decreed that we can neither live comfortably with them nor live at all without them, we must look rather to our permanent interests than to a passing fancy." A typical specimen of Roman humour and Roman hardness; and Augustus, with the same object in view, quoted it with approval.

The birth of a child, or rather of a son, was eagerly expected from a young couple. As soon as the baby was born and had been washed, the father took it up into his arms as a sign that he acknowledged it a member of the family. Or he might not take it up; and then the wretched infant was 'exposed', in other words murdered by being thrown on a rubbish heap and left to die unless some passer-by took pity on it. Nor was this practice confined to the earliest days of Rome. It was not made illegal till the third century A.D., and was openly practised before that date and secretly after it. It was in fact the recognized way of getting rid of unwanted daughters or weakly sons.

Once he had taken up the child, the father assumed responsibility for it. True, he still had the right to put his child to death—

there was a case of it in the first century B.C.—but he rarely did so and the law soon afterwards forbade it. On the ninth day after birth, or the eighth if it was a girl, a ceremony took place rather like our Christening. The child was solemnly ‘purified’ and probably received the first of the three names which every Roman bore, the *praenomen* or ‘Christian’ name. The other two it inherited; the second, or *cognomen*, from the *gens* or clan to which its father belonged, and the third, or *agnomen*, from his particular *familia*, or branch of that *gens*. Presents were made to the baby by members of the family, including the slaves, of miniature implements, such as a sickle, axe or sword, made of metal; and these were strung on a necklace and worn by the child—they were supposed to avert the evil eye. At the same time the *bullā* was hung round the child’s neck. This was a hollow ball, made of leather, bronze or gold, according to the parents’ means, and contained a ‘lucky charm’. It was worn by all free-born boys till they came of age between their fifteenth and eighteenth year, and by girls till they married.

During their earliest years the upbringing of children was left entirely to their mother, though she sometimes employed an elderly relative as a sort of governess to play with them. They had plenty of games such as blind-man’s-buff, marbles (played with nuts) and ‘ducks and drakes’, various ball-games, and toys such as dolls, hoops, tops and stilts, and they were presumably as happy as the children who play the same games to-day. As they grew older the father would take on the education of the boys, leaving the girls to their mother, and in the early days of the Republic the children probably had no more education than their parents could give them. Judged by results they seem to have profited by it, Spartan though it must have been. Varro, consul in 216 B.C., tells us that he was only given one tunic and a toga, seldom allowed a bath, and made to ride bareback; when he came home from working on the farm, he and his sisters were expected to wait at table on their parents. Cato, the censor in 184, refused to allow anyone but himself to instruct his son and taught him to read, write, fence and swim, as well,

we may be sure, as a host of moral maxims. He even wrote a History of Rome in big letters, so that his son could read it.

But the best part of such an education was probably the time which boys spent in their father's company, seeing and sharing in his life and occupations and so learning how to do the same things themselves. They listened while their father gave advice or expounded the law to his clients, or to the conversation which went on when guests were invited; or they accompanied him when he went out to dinner or even to the Senate House. They were definitely 'to be seen and not heard' (though they might be asked to sing at dinner old songs in praise of ancestral heroes), and modesty, *pudor*, was considered the first of youthful virtues. This may be connected with the way in which boys and girls alike were brought up to take part as acolytes in the religious rites of the family, a duty which may account for their ordinary dress, the *toga praetexta* with the purple stripe, being the same as that of a magistrate or priest.

Daughters, meanwhile, were left to their mother, and their education was as practical as their brothers'. They followed her about the house and learned what would now be called 'domestic science and housewifery', which included in those days the all-important spinning and weaving of wool.

Such an education demanded both interest and leisure on the part of the parents. But as Rome expanded and the father's duties filled his life or called him far from home, leisure at all events grew less and schools were started to give children the education which their father had no time for—we hear of one as early as 250 B.C. For another hundred years the more earnest fathers continued to teach their sons at home and the wealthier ones did the same by means of private tutors; but increasingly as time went on those who could afford it sent their sons to school. Some think that their sisters went with them or to a separate school; but the evidence is not sufficient, though Martial speaks of one schoolmaster as being equally detested by boys and girls alike.

The little boys were taken to school by a *paedagogus*. The word

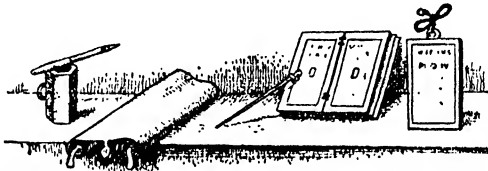
is Greek and reminds us of the revolution in Roman education which came through contact with Greece. Beginning in the middle of the third century B.C., the influence of Greece steadily made its way into Roman life, through contact with her colonies in Italy, through the influx of Greek slaves and finally through the conquest of Greece itself. But in the sphere of the mind, Greece had by that time already captivated Rome.

It was unfortunate for education that while the Roman felt that he was not so clever as the Greek, he knew in his heart that he was the better man of the two. This made him despise the Greeks whom he employed as schoolmaster or even nurse to his son, and to be afraid that they would make him as effeminate as themselves. To a certain extent the father was right. The *paedagogus* was usually a slave, and the 'elementary' schoolmaster (*litterator*) the same or a freedman; and though their culture might be high, their morals were often low and their authority nil. But when the teacher's order was met by his pupil's question, 'Am I your slave or are you mine?', what was the proper answer? Only one was possible—the stick, which can enforce 'discipline' but cannot secure respect; and sometimes it was the boy who used it on the master. But perhaps educational genius is too much to expect of a man who, like Horace's master, the flogger Orbilius, charged only eight *asses* (less than a shilling) a month for his instruction. It is a pleasure to record that in later days there was an improvement in the status of schoolmasters and more chance for them to make both reputation and fortune. They were even exempted from the payment of rates: could public recognition go further?

The educated Roman, or the wealthier Roman who wanted his son to be educated, sent him at the age of seven to an 'elementary' school, kept by a *litterator* ('teacher of letters'). He started out with his *paedagogue*, his satchel and his lantern and arrived at the school before daybreak, a grim, sparsely-furnished building called, ironically enough, a *ludus* (a place of pastime) or by the Greek word *schola* (a place of leisure). There he sat on a chair or a bench, his writing-tablet of wood covered

with wax upon his knee, his *stilus*, or pointed pen, in his hand. And there for five years he stayed, painfully but thoroughly mastering the three R's, writing copies, taking down masses of 'wise saws' and copybook maxims as well as passages of good literature to be learned by heart. One syllable wrong and the master's whip would make a pretty pattern on his hide, so Plautus tells us. If he got it right, a little boy might be rewarded by a piece of pastry and an older one by a book as a prize.

Books were in the form of rolls, originally made from the bark of trees—*liber* meant bark before it meant a book. Later the Egyptian papyrus-plant was used to make a kind of paper (the



Writing materials. (Inkpot and reed pen; roll; stilus with wax tablets; calculation table.)

two words are the same) which, though thin and brittle, had a pleasant yellow-brown colour, restful to the eyes in a sunny climate. This was cut into long strips and rolled round a stick (*umbilicus*), the projecting ends of which were painted or gilded, while the edges of the roll itself were smoothed with pumice-stone.\* The writing was done with a reed pen and ink in columns from top to bottom of the roll, which was held by the reader in both hands. His right hand unrolled it from the bottom while his left hand rolled it up from the top, in such a way as to leave visible just so much as he was reading. So the rolls were called *volumina*, and we still speak of volumes, though our books take their form from the slips of wood coated with wax which were used for taking notes, or by schoolboys, as we have seen, instead of slates.

Boys left the 'elementary' school at the age of twelve, presumably without much regret, and went for the next stage of

\* See the dedication on p. iv of this book.

their education to one kept by a *grammaticus*. Here the curriculum increasingly tended to follow Greek lines—*grammaticus* is only *litterator* translated into Greek. Its main subject was literature, and boys learned Homer instead of the Twelve Tables by heart. The best authors were read, both Greek and Latin, and they were read aloud, with almost as much attention paid to pronunciation and expression as to understanding what they meant. Discussion was encouraged, and in this way a boy probably picked up some history and more mythology, while something of both may have emerged from moral lessons drawn from the lives of famous Romans. No attempt, however, seems to have been made to arouse the critical faculty or to teach the scientific method. Composition was practised both in prose and verse, but more by way of analysis and paraphrase than in order to encourage a boy to think for himself and to write what he thought. All quite useful, it may be, as an intellectual exercise, but it gave a training in literature and not in life. Even Cato, who hated innovations, studied Demosthenes to improve his oratory. The fact is that such an education aimed at making a boy a good speaker, *orator*; and Cicero was not the only Roman who made the mistake of thinking that a good orator must also be a good man.

Attempts were made to introduce physical training on Greek lines; but the Romans thought that here they had nothing to learn—the fact being that their exercises aimed only at war, those of the Greeks at grace, beauty and balance. Music and dancing became popular among boys and girls, but were regarded as frivolous, if not actually frowned on, by their elders. Cicero said that ‘no one dances unless he is either drunk or mad’, and Sallust considered music ‘more of an accomplishment than a necessity for a decent girl’. However, the *grammaticus* approved of dancing and even of music, which were taught by visiting masters; but only for the value which these subjects were supposed to have for the future orator.

Another ‘extra’ subject was mathematics, that is to say geometry and calculation. Of this the Roman father thoroughly



approved, for he could see that it had a practical value. Every Roman, from the small shopkeeper and clerk to the great capitalist or the provincial governor, must be able to deal with money and the Roman system of calculating money was excessively difficult. Roman figures are awkward things (there was no symbol for 0) and were seldom written down where it could be avoided. Calculation was done in the head, or with the help of a contrivance called an *abacus*, with strings or grooves to represent the scale (units, tens, hundreds, etc.) and beads which moved along them and represented numbers. We cannot be surprised that the Romans produced no great mathematician, despite their belief in the educational value of arithmetic.

So the battle went on between the 'practical' and the ideal: should a boy be trained to make a living or educated to make something of life? Parents and schoolmasters are arguing about it still. In Rome, the schoolmasters won; and they used their victory, as we shall see, to teach their pupils not how to live but how to talk.

Many a boy's secondary education ended when he had learned what the *grammaticus* could teach him. Only the 'fortunate few' passed on to what was regarded as the crown of education, 'rhetoric' or the art of public speaking. This was more like being promoted to a Sixth Form than a change of school—at first, at all events, the *grammaticus* and the *rhetor* taught in one building. The tragedy was that literature and rhetoric were really taught as one subject and as a means to one end—the training of a good speaker.

This training was artificial and barren to a degree, the sort of thing that Molière laughs at in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and we need not give its wearisome details. Real eloquence is the product of genius and sincerity, not of the elaborate rules and systems to which the *rhetor* reduced them.

However, the profitless routine was lightened by plenty of holidays at the regular State festivals, with extra ones for triumphs or gladiatorial shows.\* In the summer the schools

\* See chapters XI and XVIII.

closed altogether; for "during the hot weather", as Martial says, "boys are learning quite enough if they keep fit".

The young Roman left school and came of age at about the time in his life when an English boy takes his School Certificate, though it might be earlier or later as his parents thought fit—in the sunshine of Italy youth matures more quickly than in our northern climate. The occasion was marked by an impressive ceremony. On the day appointed, a sacrifice took place in the house, and the boy's distinctive dress, the *toga praetexta* and the *bullae*, was solemnly dedicated to the gods of the home. In their place he put on the *toga virilis*, the plain white toga of manhood, and then went with his father and a crowd of relations and friends to the Forum, where his name was entered on the register of full citizens. He came back a man and a citizen, presumed capable of looking after himself, his property and his education.

This education he often continued in order to fill the gap until he was qualified to start his professional life. Some young men persuaded their fathers to send them to a university abroad, especially to Athens which, although Greece had been conquered, retained her prestige as the intellectual capital of the world. Cicero, Caesar, Augustus and Horace all studied abroad and doubtless learned there more about life and human nature than in all the years they spent at school. No less perhaps was learned by an ambitious young man who spent the same period in the chambers of some great lawyer or on the staff of a distinguished general. But by that time they had left behind the school of literature and rhetoric, and entered the school of experience.

Taken as a whole the education of the upper classes in Rome—the lower classes were not 'educated'—was not good. Its one aim, the training of the orator, was insufficient in itself and the method employed was ill-suited even to the end in view, with its verbal acrobatics, its utter unreality, its superficiality and its bombast. But what might be excused when success in real life depended upon a man's ability to speak in the Forum or the Senate House, became wholly meaningless, a dreary farce,

when free speech perished under the Empire. The young Roman left school trained neither to think nor to act, but only to make speeches; and that he was no longer allowed to do in public.

This melancholy conclusion brings us naturally to the last member of the *familia* with whom this chapter has to deal—the slave; for education left the Roman too proud and too incompetent to perform most of the routine and much of the skilled work needed to maintain his civilization.

Of this civilization, indeed of the whole ancient world, slavery was a fundamental institution. Its rightfulness was not questioned. The Stoic philosopher might teach the duty of treating slaves with kindness, or the Christian affirm that ‘with God there is neither bond nor free’; but the fundamental immorality of slavery simply did not occur to either of them. We do well to recognize that Rome, like Athens, rested on a foundation of slave labour.

The position of a slave was simple. He was a chattel: not a person but a thing, a *res* not a *persona*. He himself, and all that he had or might acquire, was the property of his master. Over him his master had absolute power. He might treat him kindly, or he might starve, beat or kill him. That was as his master chose, and at all events under the Republic the State had nothing to say about it. The slave had no duty but obedience to his master. The State claimed nothing from him and offered him neither recognition nor protection.

On the other hand the slave’s position was not without hope. To give slaves their freedom was a common form of reward. Moreover from earliest times the slave was given an incentive to work and the chance to buy his freedom by saving up some money of his own, a *peculium* as it was called, consisting of such trifles as he could earn here and there when he had done all his master required of him. When this had reached a sufficient total his master would ‘manumit’ him; and once free, a *res* no longer but a *persona*, Rome did something to atone for the past by making him a Roman citizen. As a freedman and a dependent of his former owner, he might not be quite on the same social



**N. A School Scene**

From a tombstone from Neumagen in Germany; note the gully expression  
on the face of the boy who is coming in late



level as his fellow-citizens; but his children were accepted everywhere. Horace's father was a freedman, and Horace was far from being ashamed of it.

Much the largest supply of slaves came from war, in which slavery was the ordinary lot of the prisoner or at least of the non-combatant. Julius Caesar casually records after a victory in Gaul that the number of slaves disposed of to the dealers had reached a total of 53,000. Æmilius Paullus, another unusually humane Roman, sold into slavery, by the orders of the Senate, no less than 150,000 freeborn inhabitants of Epirus who had backed the wrong side in the war against Perseus.

Besides victorious generals, kidnappers did a brisk trade, in which respectable Romans like the elder Cato invested as a profitable speculation. The King of Bithynia, when asked by Marius to supply him with soldiers, regretted that he could not—the slave-traders had been there first. With wars so frequent and slave-traders so enterprising, it is no wonder that an important slave market like the little island of Delos could handle 10,000 a day, all destined for Rome.

It is impossible to calculate their total number. Estimates of the slaves in Rome itself at the end of the Republic vary from 280,000 to 900,000, the latter figure being probably nearer to the truth, though amounting to more than half the total population of the city. At all events there were enough of them to bring their price within the means of any ordinary Roman. He had only to go to one of the city slave-markets, where the dealers exposed their wares under the eye of the aedile, and pick up what he wanted—or what he thought he wanted, for there was as much 'slave-coping' at Rome as horse-coping in Ireland. He need not spend more than £10 or so on an ordinary workaday slave, though prices varied, of course, according to age, condition and accomplishments. Cases were known in which as much as £1000 was paid for a single slave.

How did the Roman treat his slaves? No single answer is possible, for their treatment varied according to the times they lived in, the work they did and, above all, the master to whom

they belonged. They experienced every form of treatment, from the bestial cruelty dealt out to them by a woman like the infamous Sassia\* to the deep affection and lifelong friendship which Cicero gave to his slave Tiro, who edited the famous letters after his death†.

One of the main occupations on which slaves were employed was agriculture; and in early days, when they worked on the land side by side with their masters, they were generally well treated. The Roman farmer was not often cruel to his farm animals, and as such he regarded his slaves; but Cato, who wrote a treatise on husbandry, seriously debates whether it is more economical to treat a slave well so as to get a longer period of work out of him, or to work him to death quickly and buy a new one. Some farmers went in for breeding slaves like any other stock, and those born on the estate—they were called *vernae*—were specially valued and were likely to be better treated. But far worse conditions obtained on the great estates, one of which is known to have employed more than four thousand slaves. These *latifundia* were mostly given up to pasture, and were worked by chain-gangs of slaves housed in semi-underground *ergastula*. During the Civil Wars many a freeborn Roman disappeared into these slave prisons and was never heard of again.

The numbers of these slaves and their desperate condition were a menace to the peace and even the security of Rome. They formed the worst element in the rival armies of Marius and Sulla, who offered them their freedom as soldiers. Racketeers like Clodius and Milo enlisted them as private gangsters who fought bloody battles in the streets of Rome. But they were far more dangerous when they rose *en masse*, as they sometimes did, and defied the very legions. Slave revolts twice spread devastation over the island of Sicily, and in the heart of Italy in 73 B.C. the slaves and gladiators under Spartacus defeated first a praetor and then the two consuls, and were only put down after two years and the death of their leader.

\* See Cicero, *pro Cluentio*, chapters LXIII to LXVI.

† He is believed to be the inventor of shorthand.

Those employed in towns were generally better treated. It was partly that they lived more closely with their master and had more chance of gaining his affection; but even so they had no more rights than his dog, and both were sometimes chained to the door-post when left on guard over the house. But more often their better treatment was due to their greater value. A herdsman was no more than the beasts he tended—he could be replaced—but a skilled cook, valet, hairdresser or accountant was a dead loss if he were so ill-treated or underfed that he could not do his work. The same applied to another large section of the slave population,



Floor mosaic in entrance to house at Pompeii with the words 'Cave canem' (Beware of the dog).

those let out on hire. Crassus the triumvir kept 500 of them and made huge profits by hiring them out to building-contractors. The profits would be less if the labourers were unfit to labour.

But all the time influences were at work which made gradually for the betterment of the slaves' lot. They were, after all, members of a man's *familia*. Many of them had been born in it and had grown up with his children, and sometimes he grew fond of them despite himself. Many slaves were better educated than their masters, and as their doctors and private secretaries, gained great influence over them. And so, besides being allowed to buy their freedom, they were often given it. 'Manumission' became common and even fashionable, whether it was done to mark some family occasion or under the terms of a master's will. Sulla manumitted 10,000 of his slaves at once, and the practice, though not often on this scale, became so common that Augustus found it necessary to impose restrictions.

Under the Empire the lot of the slave became on the whole less harsh. It is true that the number of slaves had increased



## CHAPTER XIV. THE GODS

THE ROMANS had many religions: sometimes we find them existing side by side and sometimes imposed one on top of the other like strata in a rock; but few of them can be called religion in our sense of the word. "For *religio* meant primarily awe, nervousness, scruple—much the same in fact as that feeling which in these days we call superstition; and secondarily, the means taken, under the authority of the State, to quiet those feelings by the performance of rites meant to propitiate the gods."\* The Roman did not speculate about the nature of his gods; it was the priests' business to keep him on the right side of them, and he himself was only concerned to see that the ritual necessary for that purpose was exactly carried out. "Neither truth and falsehood nor virtue and vice had anything to do with the worship of the gods. It was a mere affair of custom and tradition. To give the gods their due was piety, and knowledge of the ritual was holiness. Public duty or philosophical study might be a school of virtue; but religion was rather the reverse."† To a Roman, law made morality instead of being based upon it: the *ius divinum* was part of the *ius civile*, the former telling him how to keep on good terms with the gods, the latter with his fellow-citizens.

The earliest religion of the Romans, as of most peoples, is called animism, the belief that the supernatural (we can hardly yet call it the divine) is everywhere; rather as we believe that electricity is everywhere, but concentrated more in some places and substances than others, a force to be reckoned with, either of good or of evil as it is usefully or harmfully directed. The early Roman was much concerned with this 'supernatural force', and especially with the places which it usually frequented, such as clumps of trees, rocks or streams. As he drew near such a place, especially when dusk was falling, he would murmur '*numen*

\* Warde Fowler, *Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero*.

† H. M. Gwatkin, *Early Church History to 313 A.D.* It is fair to add, however, that the Romans felt strongly the binding nature of an oath, the sanction for which was the god by whom they had sworn it.

*inest*', much as we might say, 'It's haunted', or as the peasants of Southern Europe cross themselves.

And so *numen*, the vague supernatural force, became *numina*, spirits, which haunted the primitive Roman at every step, on the farm or in the home as much as in the open country. Being of a practical turn of mind, he was only interested in them because they might do him much harm or much good; and as he was concerned to get them on his side, he gradually evolved, by experience and tradition, a set of rules for dealing with them out of which was developed in time the *ius divinum* or religious law.

Such was and long remained the religion of the Roman peasant. The spirits were always about him and he could not, for he dared not, forget them for a moment. One spirit, the Lar, guarded the boundary of his land where it touched his neighbour's, another, Silvanus, where it reached the edge of the wood; and he was careful to 'beat the bounds' of his farm (as is still done in some English parishes) to keep evil spirits off his land and to remind the guardian spirits of their sphere of duty, taking with him his farm animals, ox, sheep and pig, by sacrifice of which he hoped to secure immunity for the rest of his stock. The Roman, as we have more than once remarked, remained a countryman at heart all through his history; and at heart he remained an animist too. Horace and Vergil, and even the sophisticated Juvenal, dwelt with affection and respect on the simple country rites and maybe half believed in them. The Roman soldier, stationed far afield, sensed and revered the presence of strange *numina* about him; and Christianity, latest of the religions of Rome, found the villagers, *pagani*, still clinging to their ancestral rites, and dubbed them pagans.

Important as were the Lares of the farm, they became even more so when, as *Lares domestici*, they joined the Penates as guardian spirits of the home and lived inside. Here too lived the spirits of dead ancestors\* whose special merits raised them to

\* It is, however, doubtfully correct to speak of ancestor-worship among the Romans.

the position of family heroes, chief among them being the *Lar familiaris*, the founder of the house, while the more ordinary departed were known as *di parentes*. The custom of the *Parentalia*, regular offerings at their tombs, ensured that they rested in peace—and stayed where they were. Less creditable ancestors and any who were forgotten and therefore offended were known as *larvae* and *lemures* (we still use the words, but in a very different sense!) and were kept at a distance by an annual scattering of black beans throughout the house. The Penates, originally the spirits which presided over the store-cupboard, included Vesta, the fire spirit who lived on the hearth; and with them went a strange but important spirit, the *genius* of the *paterfamilias*. All these were essentially good spirits, for all of them guaranteed in one way or another the continuity of the *gens* and the stability of the house. To them the hearth was sacred and the dinner-table too: a portion of food was set aside for them, and a libation poured, after every meal, while in later days images of the Lares and Penates were placed on the table to show that they were sharing with the family in the meal.

These household gods, as we may now call them, had their special place in the central room of the house, the *atrium*, and wealthier folk made them a shrine there, the *lararium*. They played an intimate part in the whole life of the family and prayers were offered to them not only on great family occasions of joy or mourning, but whenever one of its members went on a journey or came home again. Of these family rites the *paterfamilias* himself was priest, and the whole family his assistants; their worship both proclaimed the unity of the family—including all its members, human and divine, past as well as present—and ensured its continuation.

Upon this family worship was based the worship of the State which, as the super-family, had its own hearth, its own Lares and Penates. Throughout all Roman history the sacred fire of Vesta was kept burning. Quirinus may be regarded as the *Lar familiaris* of the city, for he was Romulus, its founder, under another name. The rustic Silvanus was still more disguised as

Mars, when he changed his interests, as the Romans did theirs, from agriculture to war. Jupiter, originally thought of as the *numen* of the lightning, easily asserted himself as god of the sky and father of all below it—his name means sky-father. Juno looked after the interests of women and Janus kept watch over the gates of the city as over the door of the farm-house.

Thus the city like the home had its own Lares and Penates to ensure its continuity; and instead of the Genius of the *pater-familias* there was the Genius of the Roman People, of Rome and finally of the Emperor, who was thus regarded as the father of his people. But it will be noticed that the Roman, so vague about the *numina* who made up his earliest spirit-world, is now beginning to personify them and to give them special characteristics. They are more than spirits now, they are *dei*, gods.

Their ritual too began on the same family basis. Their chief ministrant was the Rex, whether as actual king and so father of his people, or as *Rex sacrorum*, the successor to his religious duties under the early Republic. The Vestal Virgins represented his daughters, and the various gods had their *flamines*, or 'kindlers' of their altars. The *rex* had also a body of experts in the *ius divinum* to help him, called for some unknown reason *pontifices*; and the chief of these, the *pontifex maximus*, gradually superseded him and acquired power so great as to make himself nearly the most important person in the State. He was the supreme authority in all religious matters; he drew up rules for sacrifices and festivals and regulated the calendar, with its *dies fasti* and *nefasti* on which public business might and might not be done. It seemed to the ordinary citizen that the whole welfare of the State depended upon him, for he and his fellow-pontiffs were the link between the city and its gods. Julius Caesar thought it worth while to become Pontifex Maximus himself and after him no one but the Emperor was allowed to hold the office. For many centuries the title has been borne, and still is borne, by the Popes of Rome.

Besides the pontiffs there was a college of augurs whose duty it was to interpret omens in various ways. Omens were con-

sidered immensely important, as being the means by which the gods signified their will to men, and all Romans were constantly on the look out for them. Almost any happening of an unusual nature might be considered an omen, and any *paterfamilias*, magistrate or general was competent to observe it; but to interpret the omen, to decide whether it was a good or bad one, needed the special skill of an augur.



An Augur.

Besides the countless circumstances in which private superstition might discover an omen, such as a sneeze or a stumble or a tingling of the ears, there were two chief ways in which these were taken on behalf of the State. One was by the observation of birds, the 'messengers of Jupiter', the sky-god. The *auspex*—the derivation of the word (*avis, spicere*) shows that he was the observer—would go to a suitable place commanding a wide view of the sky; and he would mark out with a wand a special piece of ground from which to observe a special area of the sky, and would pitch a tent there, all three being known as his *templum*. (In Rome or in a general's camp a suitable place existed properly consecrated beforehand.) There the *auspex* would sit and watch the sky, in a silence which must be unbroken, for *alites*, that is to say, those birds which gave omens by their flight; and he would listen, too, for the cries of *oscines*, birds who gave omens by their voices, as well as looking out for lightning or other ominous happenings.

Good omens came from the east, bad omens from the west; and as the Roman *auspex* looked towards the south, his left-hand side was lucky and his right unlucky. The Greeks however faced north; and as the Romans, especially the Roman poets, came increasingly under their influence, they sometimes took the Greek point of view and called the right-hand side the lucky one. This tends to confusion, and it is simpler to remember that

whichever way one faced, the east was the side for favourable omens.

Omens were also taken from the feeding of chickens, especially by a general on a campaign. He took them about with him in a coop and when he wanted to 'take the auspices' he fed them with a cake made of pulse. If they ate greedily, and especially if they let some food fall from their beaks, the omens were good, but any sign of distaste on their part boded ill. The story was told (as an awful warning) of the Roman admiral whose fowls went off their feed on an important occasion during the first Punic War, and who ordered them to be thrown into the sea, saying, 'If they will not eat, let them drink'. But so rash an impiety brought the punishment which it deserved; for he lost nearly all his ships in the action which followed, and dying in disgrace

He left a name at which the world grew pale,  
To point a moral or adorn a tale.

Not less important in augury than birds were beasts offered for sacrifice. If the victim approached the altar with any sign of reluctance the omens were bad. When it had been slaughtered, its entrails were examined, and the liver especially, for any sign of abnormality; and even the flames that consumed them and the ascending smoke gave signs to the learned of the will of the



A sacrifice. (A pig, a sheep, and a bull are about to be sacrificed.  
The priest, veiled, stands at the altar.)

gods. This branch of the science of divination probably came to the Romans from the Etruscans, and the entrails examined were not always those of animals. Human sacrifices were not made illegal in Rome till 94 B.C.

If the omens were particularly bad and prodigies multiplied in earth and sky, the Romans would turn to the Sibylline books. These were probably Greek in origin and were connected by tradition with the Etruscan house of Tarquin. They did not 'give the auspices' themselves, but they were supposed to tell what gods were showing their resentment and by what attentions their anger could be appeased.

This slight sketch of a complicated 'art' will at least suggest the importance which the Romans attached to it. They dared take no step without finding out whether the gods approved and might be expected to bless it. They were not trying to foretell the future—to do so by dreams or astrology they thought rather silly—but simply to find out in a practical way what they ought to do. Should a farmer sow his field, or a father give his daughter in marriage or a general offer battle? The augur said 'Yes' or 'No'; and it is characteristic of the Roman that he expected no reason to be given. This was turned to advantage by unscrupulous politicians who, with the help of an obliging augur, could obstruct public business indefinitely by observing unfavourable omens.

The native Roman gods had never been exclusive. There were any number of them, and from time to time room was made for more: why keep out anyone who might contribute something to the public weal? The story of their inclusion is the history of Rome's expansion, the widening of her interests, her trade and her dominion. Her Latin neighbours gave her Diana of Aricia, whose priest, slaying and being slain in turn, guarded the mysterious 'golden bough'; Hercules came from the trading cities of Magna Graecia; Minerva was brought in by Etruscan artists, Ceres with the corn trade from Sicily. A time of national danger brought the disreputable Cybele, the *Magna Mater*, from Asia Minor.

But the change brought about by foreign contacts became

almost a revolution when the contact was with Greece herself. One after another the gods of Olympus made their way into the Roman Pantheon (a Greek word, by the way, for the 'temple of all the gods') and the resemblance of each to some Roman 'opposite number' was discovered or invented. Zeus was identified with Jupiter, Athene with the Etruscan Minerva, and Ares, Greek god of war, with the once rustic Mars. Apollo was included with hardly an attempt to Romanize him and Æsculapius came in on his merits, for the Romans knew little of the art of healing.

The Greek gods were in fact a livelier and a more interesting company than those of Rome, and they brought their colourful legends and their low morality with them; but they had already lost the respect of their creators and they could do nothing to satisfy the spiritual needs of the country of their adoption. Their worship too came under the *ius divinum*, itself a part of the *ius civile*. Religion was just a matter of law, and worship the affair of a State department.

If a religion is to be successful, that is if it is to satisfy the conscience and the aspirations of man, it must do two things at least for him: it must help him to be virtuous in this life and ensure him happiness in the life to come. The Roman State-religion could do neither. It was concerned with ritual, not with morals, in which its gods were inferior to their worshippers. As for a life beyond the grave, it had little to say and that little was not encouraging. By the end of the Republic the best minds had ceased either to believe in the gods or to hope for Heaven. Caesar denied the immortality of the soul. Cicero, who could not bring himself to do that, especially after the death of his beloved daughter,\* had to be content with rather vague hopes and with pouring scorn on the old legends of Hades and Cerberus and Styx. He even wanted to build an altar to his Tullia,

\* Pancirollus records in his *Rerum Memorabilium sive Deperditarum*, 1612, the discovery in his own time of "the sepulchre of Tullia, Cicero's daughter, wherein was a lamp even then still burning; but on the admission of air it went out. It had burned for 1550 years more or less."



for 'all goodness is divine'. But the belief of the educated Roman about life after death is perhaps best illustrated by a common epitaph of slaves: 'I was not, I was. I am not, I care not.'

The old gods were dying. Towards the end of the Republic, the priests were mere officials, the temples began to fall into decay, and in their hearts men worshipped the goddess of fate or chance linked, but not really connected, with the old Roman goddess Fortuna. Superstition increased, as it does among sceptics, and fear, which always lurked behind *religio*, took increasing hold. People went in constant dread of prodigies, and almost any unusual happening might pass as such; any old wives' tale was readily and fearfully believed. And not only by the vulgar; even men like Cicero, Varro and Cato admitted to having been horribly frightened by some irresponsible 'prophecy' which they heard during the Civil War. When a veritable prophet arose, it was to denounce the gods in the name of science and to redeem mankind from the degradation and terrors of religion by an appeal to 'natural' morality. But morality does not often come naturally, and Lucretius, though he poured scorn alike on State-religion and on superstition, had no new religion to offer in its place; and man, being incurably religious, cannot live by scientific bread alone.

Augustus understood human nature better; and as he tried to bring back the old Roman virtues, he strove no less to bring back the old beliefs and the old observances on which, he felt, those virtues were based. He recalled men to a sense of duty, *pietas*, and reminded them that their first duty was to the Roman gods on whom the greatness of Rome depended; after all, "their cult was a kind of national anthem".\* He rebuilt temples, restored statues, revived priesthoods and ritual; and induced Vergil to weave his ideas into the *Æneid* and Horace to express them in his *Carmen Saeculare*. His New Order was heralded by a Recall to Religion.

With consummate statecraft, Augustus contrived to associate this religious revival with his own family. His own belief was

\* John Buchan, *Augustus*.

in himself and in his country; he worshipped the *Fortuna Romae*, and this he induced his subjects to identify with the fortune of his House. When Vergil in opening his first Georgic with an invocation to the Emperor spoke of him as a god, he was using the language of poetic licence; but he was expressing with passionate sincerity a devotion felt also by the majority of his fellow-Romans. Augustus did not allow himself to be worshipped in Italy during his lifetime; but he was officially deified after his death, as Julius Caesar had been, and emperor-worship thenceforward became a recognized institution of the Empire. But it was impossible to restrain the provinces even in the Emperor's lifetime, and Augustus was publicly worshipped there together with *Dea Roma*. To the eastern provinces this was natural enough. Their kings had always claimed to be divine (Cicero only just escaped divine honours in Cilicia), and a temple was erected to Augustus in Mysore. In the west the altars, often before dedicated to noble qualities, were erected without a qualm to one who seemed to embody them all. The whole world in fact had been looking for deliverance, and only worship could express their gratitude to the deliverer. But emperor-worship was a political rather than a religious institution, and it came to mean little more than respect and loyalty to the Roman Empire. There was no satisfaction here for the deeper needs of the human spirit.

Such needs were keenly felt in the last century B.C. The preface to Livy's history reflects, with its eloquence and despair, his conviction of moral defeat, a sense not merely of failure but of sin; and the poetry of Vergil is infused with his desire for redemption, even if it was but a human redeemer to whom the fourth ('Messianic') Eclogue is looking forward. But more ordinary people could not wait. Amid the terror and exhaustion of the Punic War, men had already tried a shorter cut to salvation; and in 204 B.C. the first of the mystery religions entered Rome from the East.

"The worship of the Phrygian Mother of the gods was adopted by the Romans towards the end of their long struggle with

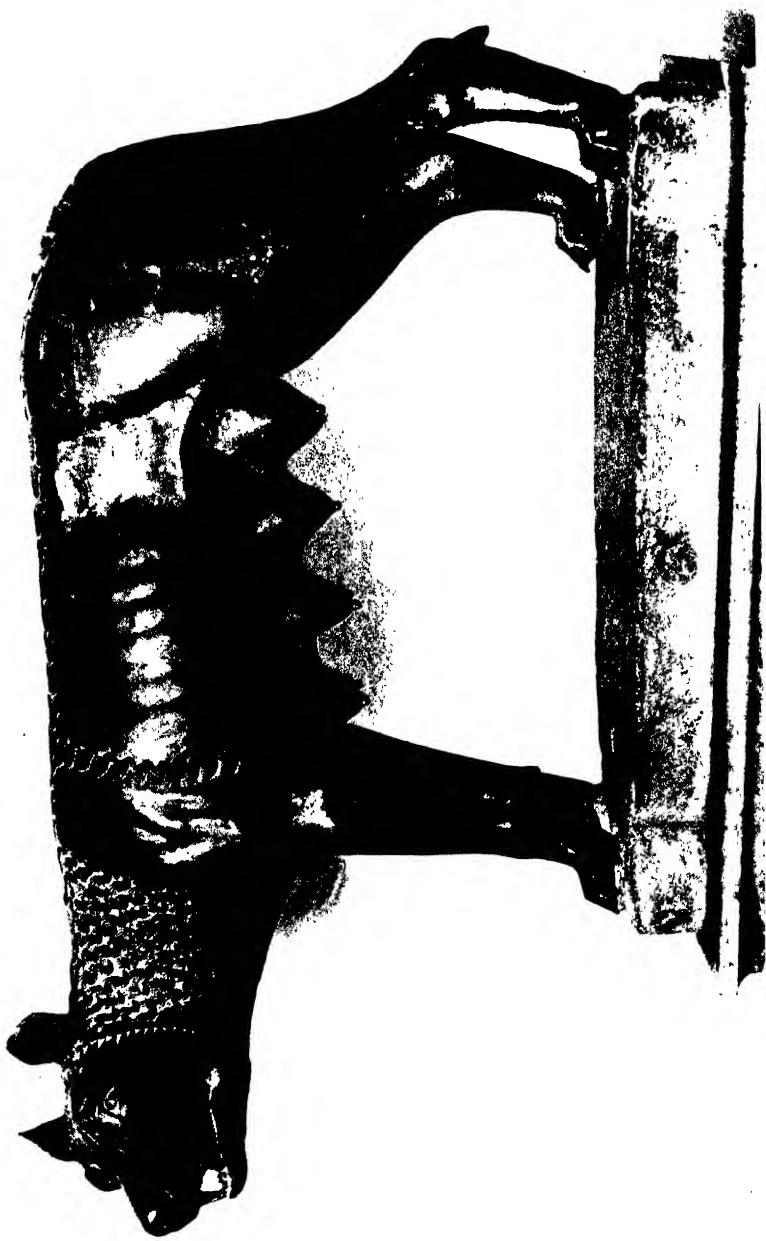
Hannibal. For their drooping spirits had been opportunely cheered by a prophecy, alleged to be drawn from that convenient farrago of nonsense, the Sibylline books, that the foreign invader would be driven from Italy if the great oriental goddess were brought to Rome. Accordingly ambassadors were dispatched to her sacred city, Pessinus in Phrygia. The small black stone which embodied the mighty divinity was entrusted to them and conveyed to Rome, where it was received with great respect and installed in the Temple of Victory on the Palatine Hill. It was the middle of April when the goddess arrived; and she went to work at once. For the harvest that year was such as had not been seen for many a long day, and in the very next year Hannibal and his veterans embarked for Africa. As he looked his last on the coast of Italy, fading behind him in the distance, he could not foresee that Europe, which had repelled the arms, would yet yield to the gods, of the Orient. The vanguard of the conquerors had already encamped in the heart of Italy before the rearguard of the beaten army fell sullenly back from its shores.”\*

The cult of Cybele was only the first, though possibly the worst, of these invaders, and with its barbaric ritual, its blend of crude savagery and spiritual aspiration, it was typical of the rest. That of Isis, purest and gentlest of the mysteries, with its special appeal to women, soon followed from Egypt; but while Cybele and Attis were officially welcomed, unsuccessful attempts were constantly made to expel the worship of Isis and Osiris, which was suppressed no less than four times in ten years between 58 and 48 B.C. and only recognized a hundred years later. Mithras, making his way from Persia into Rome about the same time, attracted innumerable worshippers especially in the Roman armies, who set up altars to him in every frontier town and camp, celebrating his birthday on 25 December till the Christians took it from him.

All these and others too were nature-cults—dramas of the crops which grow and ripen and are cut down, to spring again

\* Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.





XI. The Etruscan She-wolf

with the quickening power of the longer, warmer days. Their deities were not the serene, untroubled dwellers on a remote Olympus; they suffered, died and rose from the dead. To their initiates they offered an impressive ritual, purification from sin by mysterious rites, communion with themselves by some form of sacrament, and the hope of sharing in their resurrection. Their appeal was personal, to the individual soul; and such virtues as they taught did not include patriotism. Religion, like Rome herself, had become more Oriental than Roman.

Such half-baked mysticism could not attract the more educated or the more sensitive; and these turned rather to philosophy. The younger Scipio had started the fashion, and his brilliant circle studied under Panaetius the Stoic, lately come from Athens. The Romans were not naturally philosophers—they were concerned rather with means than with ends in life—but the Stoicism of Panaetius was more a code of behaviour than a philosophy and taught the virtues which the Roman aristocracy already admired; so that when they succeeded in linking it, though somewhat vaguely, with the State-religion it seemed to the finer spirits to offer an ideal approach to the good life; and we have seen that it could teach not only how to live but how to die.\*

But philosophy is not religion, and a high moral code needs more than intellect to support it. Stoicism taught men to be virtuous in this life but gave them no hope of life after death. The mysteries promised resurrection but were too often the enemies of virtue. And so both failed, equally if for different reasons, to satisfy what can only be called under the Empire the religious hunger of the people. They were no less impotent to support the claims and institutions of the State. Roman society had had as its foundation the belief, ingrained in every Roman citizen, that the State came first, the individual only second. But the old religion, in which this belief was centred, was now no more than a dead show; and in its place the religions of the East were teaching that the material world is an illusion, and

\* See p. 149.

that a man's chief concern is to win for himself salvation in the world to come. The pagan world was old and tired. Society was decadent. The State, overgrown, unwieldy and exhausted, seemed to keep going only by the momentum gained in a thousand years of history.

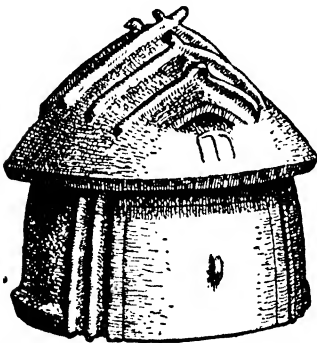
Your creeds are dead, your rites are dead,  
Your social order too.  
Where tarries he, the Power who said,  
'See, I make all things new'?\*

Under the Emperor Constantine the religion of Christ was first tolerated and then adopted in the new capital, Constantinople. What appeal had this religion, which began in a stable during the reign of Augustus, and had apparently come to an ignominious end on a gallows some thirty years later in the reign of Tiberius? Partly at least that it was all things to all men. It offered to simple folk freedom from fear, to the initiate of Cybele or Isis mysteries more impressive and convincing than their own, and a Redeemer with history, not mythology, behind Him. To the Stoic philosopher, instead of a vague 'world-soul' uncomfortably identified with Zeus, it proclaimed not only the greatness but the power and the love of God. The last of the pagan and persecuting Emperors died, men said, with the words "You've won, Galilean!" upon his lips; and it was a cry of despair. But the conqueror was a greater than Caesar and the common people heard Him gladly.

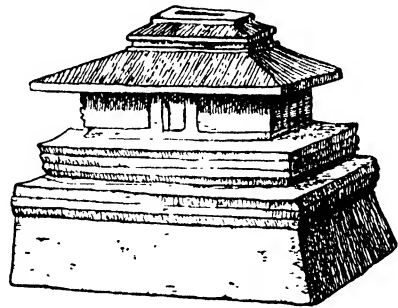
\* Matthew Arnold.

## CHAPTER XV. HOUSES, PALACES &amp; SLUMS

WE have noticed how much the Roman owed to his home life, and we must now go on to see the kind of home in which he lived. In early times it was just four walls and a roof (or one wall, as the earliest settlement on the Palatine consisted of round or elliptical huts) with a hole in the roof to let out the smoke—or even without the hole, so that it had to escape through the door, for there were no windows. Curiously enough considering



Burial urn made in the shape of an early Italian hut dwelling.



Burial urn made with upper part in the shape of a somewhat later type of Italian hut dwelling.

the genius for architecture which they developed later on, it was many centuries after the founding of their city that the Romans made any substantial advance upon this primitive type of dwelling. But in the warmer climate of Italy people spend more of their time out of doors than we do; and until well into the third century B.C. houses were still being built in Rome of wood or unbaked bricks, roofed with thatch or wooden tiles; and it was only when the conquest of the East brought foreign wealth and foreign luxury into Rome that people began to want something better, and to realize that a house should be more than just a means of keeping out the weather.

Once this idea had been grasped, progress in house-building became extraordinarily rapid, and people had no sooner realized



that they were living in squalor than they began to dream of 'dwelling in marble halls'. Marcus Lepidus, consul in 78 B.C., was the first to introduce marble from Numidia into Rome for paving the threshold of his house, which he then thought to be the finest in the city. But a hundred better ones were built before the end of the Republic a generation later. How large and how magnificent were the houses of the rich and noble during this epoch we can judge from the prices paid for them. Cicero gave more than £30,000 for the house of the millionaire, Crassus. That of Clodius cost more than four times as much. And when the house of Scaurus was burned to the ground by his slaves, he was considered to have lost altogether little short of a million.

It seems a far cry from such extravagant splendour to the smoky hut in which, only a century or two before, the ancestors of these great ones had been content to live during the 'good old days'. And yet this same hut was never quite lost sight of by the conservative Romans. As the *atrium*, it survived all down their history as the centre of the house, to which every other room was but an addition, though it was no longer made a 'black room' by the smoke. We can distinguish various types of Roman house, each of which was a home: the *casa* or primitive hut; the *domus* or *villa*, private house of the well-to-do in town or country; even the *palatium* of the great and powerful. The *casa* consisted of an *atrium* and nothing more; and in each of the others the centre, the one indispensable room however many others had been added on, was still the *atrium*. Only in *insulae*, the many-storeyed rookeries which housed the poor in Rome, was there no proper *atrium* and therefore no chance to live a real home life.

For in this *atrium* was centred the religious as well as the social life of the family. Here was the hearth, the abode of Vesta; here the *Lar familiaris*, the spirit of the founder of the family, had his little altar, and opposite the door stood the *lectus genialis*, symbolizing the continuous life of the family and the Genius of the *paterfamilias*.\* Round the walls, like portraits in an English

\* See p. 168.

dining-room, stood busts of distinguished ancestors, if the family was a noble one, their waxen faces painted to the life but in the case of the older nobility blackened with the smoke which gave the *atrium* its name—*fumosae imagines*, Cicero called them. In this room the past joined with the present in the life of the family, the divine with the human. Or so the early Roman believed; and of all their traditional beliefs this one perhaps was the last to die, at all events in the country.

There the peasant lived on in his cottage, which differed but little from that which had housed his 'rude forefathers' for unnumbered centuries; but as agriculture increased and prospered, a more substantial farmhouse was built by the yeoman-farmer. The size of such a *villa rustica* would correspond with that of the farm. A large one would be built round two courts. At the entrance of the outer court stood the cottage of the farm-bailiff (*vilicus*), so that he could keep an eye on everyone going out or coming in. Opening off this court were the kitchen, storerooms and workrooms, with granaries above them and cellars below. The inner court was the farmyard with stables and cowsheds round it. There were quarters for the slaves in both courts, including on the great estates a horrible *ergastulum* for those who were kept in chains, and a pond in the middle.

But as the yeoman-farmer was driven from his smallholding by slave labour and cheap imports from abroad, many a farmhouse was taken over by men who had made a fortune at Rome, converted into a 'villa', fitted with central heating and otherwise modernized for use as a holiday resort.

To the rich townsman a country villa seemed almost a necessity. Life at Rome was exhausting, not only because of the pace at which it was lived, but by reason of the noise and smoke and crowds; and a hard-worked politician or barrister or financier felt the need to escape sometimes to the hills in the autumn or to the bay of Naples in the winter, if he was to keep his health and his sanity. But there were no hotels to stay at, except for post-houses along the main roads, so he must build or buy a house of his own. If he wanted to vary the climate or scenery

of his holiday, or to spend it occasionally near a friend's villa, or even to be sure of a comfortable night's rest on the way, he must have more than one country house. Cicero had no less than six. None of these was luxurious, and they varied from a converted farm-house 'with every modern convenience' to a 'week-end cottage'. What he valued was the air, the view and the surroundings.

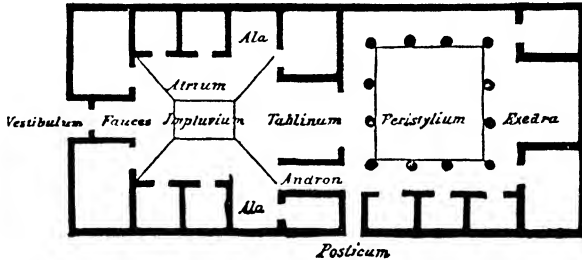
In style and furnishing such villas were more Greek than Roman, with the front door opening straight into an enclosed garden and not into the *atrium*, which lay behind. Rooms and colonnades could be added to an indefinite number, and there might be some farm land attached to remind the house of what it had once been. But Cicero and his friends seem to have taken no interest in farming (their letters never mention it) and they used their villas as places to which they could escape to read or write, to get a breath of fresh air and to be themselves.

Their very number suggests the restlessness with which the owners tried to find, now in one, now in another, peace or distraction for nerves worn out by life in Rome. "Many a man we see not knowing what he wants and ever trying a change of scene as if it would enable him to lay down his burden. His carriage whirled him away to his country house; but no sooner has he crossed the threshold than he starts to yawn, and either seeks forgetfulness in sleep or hurries back to the city again. But it is himself that he is trying to escape."\* The villas of a man like that were houses-in-the-country rather than country-houses, and tended more and more to reproduce the luxury and the rather ineffective over-civilization of the rich city-dweller.

It is to the town that we must go to find the more typical home, the *domus* which housed a single family as distinct from the *insula*, the large block of tenements, where many poorer families were crowded together. Rome, with its great population and limited space, had its special problems and its houses were specially built to solve them, so that a country town will furnish a more normal type of house, such as can be seen to-day at Pompeii.

\* Lucretius, *de Rerum Natura*, III, 1057.

From the outside a Roman private house cannot have been much to look at. The windows which opened on to the street were few and small: for the most part it turned its back on the street and opened its doors and windows on to the courts round which it was built; and residential parts of a Roman town must have been, like those of an Eastern city, disappointing enough till a glimpse was caught through some open housedoor of the taste and comfort concealed behind blank walls.



Plan of normal Pompeian house. Mau, *Pompeji in Leben und Kunst*, p. 230, fig. 116.

This front door, *ianua*, was recessed in the wall (the space in front of it being known as the *vestibulum*) and opened either into a passage, *fauces*, or straight into the *atrium*. This was a large room lighted centrally by an opening in the ceiling towards which the roof sloped down so as to let the rain water run off it into a tank in the floor underneath, called an *impluvium*. This was made into a decorative feature of the *atrium* by placing columns or statues about it; but it may also have been a source of irritation from the mosquitoes which it bred, and of danger too after the malaria germ was imported into Italy by Hannibal's soldiers. In early days the *atrium* had been the one living-room, kitchen and dining-room of the family; but other rooms were added, opening out of it, and to one of these the *lares* were withdrawn as a sort of chapel. Others were used as bedrooms, and those on either side of the *vestibulum* were often let as shops, while two large recesses called *alae*, opening to the right and left at the opposite end from the front door, were used by noble families to house the *imagines* of their illustrious

ancestors. Between them was another opening across which a curtain was hung, separating the *atrium* from the *tablinum*, a recess rather than a separate room, in which the family took its meals, though it was later used as an additional reception room, meals being taken in a small dining-room opening off it.

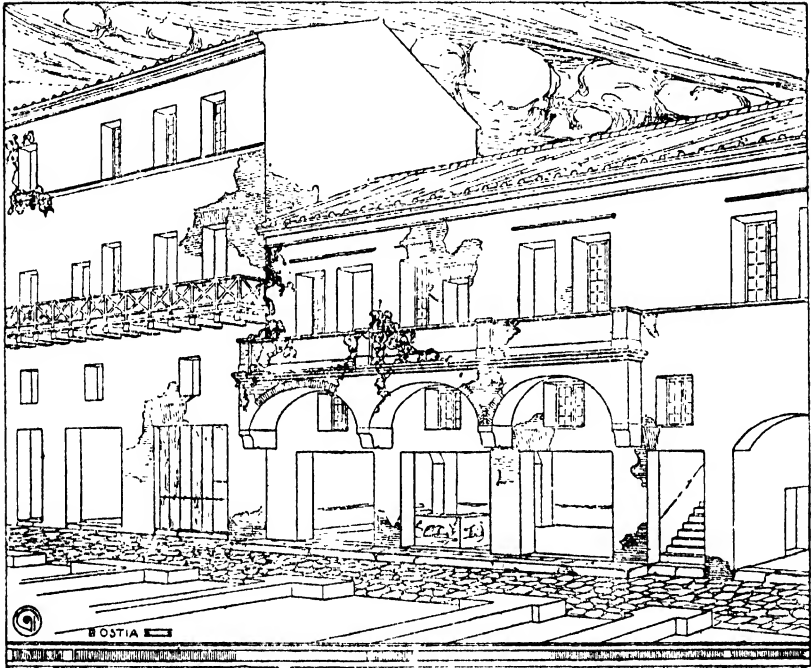
As can easily be seen from the plan, the house, as we have described it so far, was self-contained, just an *atrium* with some extensions and additions. But when contact with Greece produced a revolution in the Roman's idea of a house, as it did in so many other of his ideas, his natural conservatism supported by all his religious and family traditions kept this, the Roman part of the house, almost unaltered; he merely built a Greek addition to it out behind.

As the *atrium* was the centre of the Roman part of the house, so the Greek part was centred in the *peristylum*. This was a garden-court, planted with trees, shrubs and flowers and often surrounded with columns (a glimpse of it can be seen in Plate XII). It was enclosed by a wall or colonnade interrupted with various buildings, and a door usually gave access to a side street. On the west side small bedrooms faced the morning sun, and other additions were 'sun-parlours', loggias and even dining-rooms, all of them more or less open on the side facing the garden. When meals ceased to be cooked in the *atrium*, the kitchen also was transferred to the peristyle, together with the bathroom and lavatory.

So as time went on the peristyle became more and more the living quarters of the family. The *atrium* degenerated into a mere reception room for visitors, like the drawing-rooms of suburbia, and the family lived, received its more intimate friends, slept and took its meals, more and more often in the peristyle. After all, with its greater space and privacy, its more 'modern' arrangement and its greater scope for individual taste, it was much the pleasanter part of the house.

The typical Roman house which we have attempted to describe grew up first round the *atrium* and then round the peristyle, expanding as the needs and tastes of the Roman

family expanded; and it was obviously capable of continuing to expand to an almost unlimited extent in almost any direction. For instance, early Roman houses were all on one floor; but one or more upper storeys were sometimes added as early as the third century B.C., with an outside staircase leading up to them



Houses in 'Via di Diana', Ostia (restored).

from the street. As one of the prodigies which forecast the invasion of Hannibal, Livy mentions an ox which committed suicide by climbing up to the third floor and throwing itself headlong down! The upper storeys might be used for almost any purpose—they were sometimes let as flats—and it became fashionable to have an upstairs dining-room. This tendency to build upwards almost reached skyscraper proportions in Rome, and when the upper storeys were made to overhang the street,

successive Emperors tried, not very successfully, to stop it and to limit the height of buildings.

Though forbidden to build higher the Romans could extend the ground-plan of their houses almost indefinitely. Rich men added libraries, gymnasiums, galleries for the display of their art treasures, and in particular bathrooms, which became increasingly numerous and luxurious and included hot-air and vapour baths, which were invented before the end of the Republic. And so it went on till houses grew into mansions covering many acres with their grounds, and mansions into palaces which spread for miles.

The word *palatium* derives from the Palatine hill on which Augustus lived, but some magnificent houses had been built there in Republican days by men famous in Roman history. One of the earliest of these palaces was built by Gnaeus Octavius, consul in 165. It was pulled down by Scaurus in order to enlarge his own house, and this came later into the possession of Cicero's bugbear, Clodius. Another famous house on the Palatine was that of the orator, Crassus, censor in 92, in the gardens of which stood the four famous lotus trees, which continued to grow there till they were burned down in Nero's great fire, well over a hundred years later. But it was surpassed by the house of Quintus Catulus, the colleague of Marius in the consulship of 102, near which stood another belonging to the famous tribune, Marcus Livius Drusus. This passed into the hands of Crassus, the millionaire, who sold it to Cicero. But for sheer magnificence and luxury the highest point was probably reached by the houses of Sallust, the historian, and of Lucullus, the conqueror of Mithridates. Both were specially famous for their gardens. The *Horti Sallustiani* spread from the Quirinal on which the house was built, across the valley and up on to the Pincian hill the other side, on which stood the equally famous house and gardens of Lucullus. The latter were indeed a sort of 'Naboth's vineyard' to that Roman Jezebel, Messallina, wife of the Emperor Claudius. She procured the murder of their owner and in due time was murdered there herself. They became thereafter one of the most treasured possessions of the Emperors of Rome.

But in times when the rich are growing richer it often happens that the poor are growing poorer; and having glanced at the palaces which crowned the hills, we must make our way down to the crowded and airless valleys between, where the 'masses' lived in slums, such as the Subura between the Esquiline and the Quirinal or the Argiletum farther down near the Forum.

Poor families could not expect to have a house to themselves, and for lack of space they were crowded together in great blocks of flats called *insulae* as distinct from *domus*. They certainly did not deserve to be called homes; for their single rooms served as little more than dormitory and kitchen, from which the inhabitants were glad to escape into the streets during most of the day. The name *insula* comes from the fact that they were 'detached', surrounded by streets as an island is by water; and they opened their windows outwards on to the street instead of turning their backs upon it and facing inwards onto a court, as the private *domus* did.

Seen from the outside, in fact, an *insula* looked imposing. The first thing one would notice about it was its height. As early as the third century B.C. *insulae* of three storeys were common, and under the Empire they often rose to six. Augustus tried to limit their height to seventy feet; but his law must have been evaded, as the *insula* of Felicula was renowned for the way in which it towered above the surrounding six-storey buildings. The whole block together with its garden might have a frontage of three hundred feet and a depth of a hundred. It was built of wood, brick and rubble, often tastefully combined. Its doors and windows were numerous and large, and a colonnade was sometimes thrown out to form a screen round the ground floor. The severity of its façade was further broken by balconies and window-boxes, bright with flowers or hiding the wall with trails of greenery—pathetic evidence that the poor town-dweller was still peasant at heart.

The outside of the building would compare more than favourably with the concrete blocks in which the poor are all too often housed in modern Europe, but inside it is to be hoped that we have nothing like them left. The entire ground floor was often



the residence of the speculator who had built the *insula*, or let to a single wealthy family; and in that case it counted as a *domus* and was as comfortable as any other, with its central heating, water laid on from the mains and indoor sanitation. Or it might be divided into a number of shops, each proprietor and his family occupying the room or rooms on the floor above his shop, which might be connected with it by an outside staircase. We know that Caelius, a friend of Cicero's, had a flat (*aedicula*) in one of the better-class *insulae*, for which he paid a rent of about £250 a year; but for the most part the upper storeys, each identical with the one below, contained a mass of rooms (*cenacula*) into which the poor were crowded right up to the roof. Their rents were once low as rents go nowadays—the poorest paid 7*s.* a week in Cicero's day—but as Rome became more crowded rents continued to rise, and families were forced to huddle into a single room that they might sub-let the others. Such conditions breed vice and lawlessness, and it is not surprising that a large staff of porters was needed, if only to keep order, under an *insularius*, a slave appointed by the landlord to collect the rents.

In such a building most of what we consider the comforts and even the decencies of life were missing. True, it had good-sized windows; but if the day was cold or windy the lodgers must either close the curtains or shutters and sit in darkness, or leave them open and freeze. There was no heating system. The Roman hypocaust\* was useless for the heating of a many-storeyed building, and no trace of one has been found in any *insula*. Fireplaces there were none, and a portable brazier made a poor substitute. Chimneys were lacking, and smoke must escape through the window. Water might be laid on to the ground floor; but though its aqueducts and sewers were the pride of Rome, neither was connected with the upper storeys. There were no lavatories above street level, and water for all purposes must be carried up. Those flights of stairs must have reduced washing to a minimum and left nothing over for scrubbing walls and floors. Those who could afford the trifling cost, betook them-

\* See p. 190.

selves for their personal needs to the public baths and the public latrines which, oddly enough by contrast, were luxurious to a fantastic degree. The less fortunate or less fastidious were reduced to indescribable shifts.

As compensation for dirt, vermin and discomfort, these lodging-houses did not even provide the poor with reasonable security for life and property. They were too often jerry-built, with much wood employed in their construction; and the use of portable stoves, candles, lamps and torches to heat and light them at night, meant an ever-present risk of fire—dread of it haunted rich and poor alike. The lodger on the top storey might not know that there was a fire two or three floors below him; but it was a poor consolation that he would be the last to burn! Moreover the strength of the walls, which were not allowed by law to be more than 18 inches thick, was not enough to support a building 60 or 70 feet high, and to the din of Rome was often added the roar of collapsing *insulae*. Out of these tragedies Crassus made his millions by buying up the 'devastated area' for its site-value and then rebuilding. Even Cicero had a little money invested in squalor and over-crowding.

Nothing has been said about the decoration or the furniture to be found in an *insula*, for the simple reason that the poor had but little and that of no value or interest to any but themselves. But this they probably did not mind too much. They spent most of their time out of doors among the magnificent public buildings of Rome, many of which were specially designed for their comfort, their entertainment and the relief of some, at all events, of their necessities. To a certain extent this applies also to the rich, whose houses we should think over-decorated, while our grandfathers would have thought them under-furnished.

Carpets, for instance, were unknown. Floors were made of cement, overlaid in wealthy houses with stone, marble or mosaics. Walls too were sometimes lined with marble or even glass, but were more often painted, usually in a series of panels containing figures, the effect being somewhat gaudy for English taste. Ceilings were left bare and beams uncovered, though the spaces

between them were filled in by the very rich with gold, ivory or paintings. The use of materials like these, and especially of marble, gave a certain pompous magnificence to the hall of a Roman noble, while the dignity of the tall columns softened its vulgarity and good proportions produced an effect of spaciousness.

The lighting of the principal rooms, the *atrium* and peristyle, came, as we have seen, from above. The upper rooms had windows, but without glass until later imperial times, and fitted only with shutters and curtains to keep out the sun or rain, thereby shutting out air and light as well. Some people added a kind of network or trellis to keep snakes and other such creatures from getting in.

The heating of a private house was often left to the sun, the rooms specially intended for use in the winter being built so as to make the most of it. Portable braziers were sometimes used, burning coal or charcoal, though their smoke must have been as big a nuisance in the *domus* as in the *insula*. One room or perhaps two in the most luxurious houses might enjoy something like our central heating. From a furnace-chamber below ground

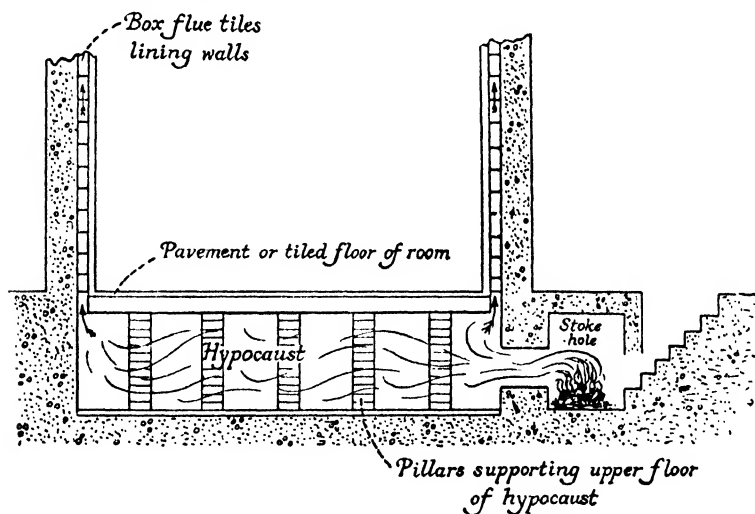


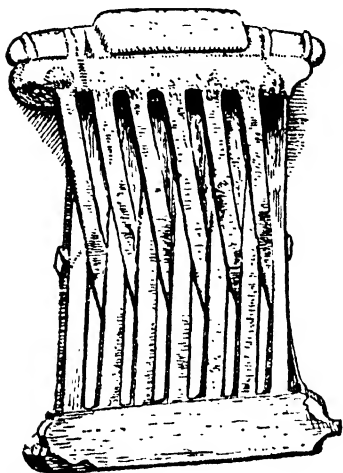
Diagram of a Hypocaust.

a passage led to a heating chamber, or hypocaust, immediately underneath the room which it was intended to heat. The hot air from the furnace, to say nothing of the smoke and soot, circulated beneath the floor and warmed it, special precautions being taken in constructing the floor to prevent fumes from penetrating into the room. These were carried off by pipes concealed in the hollow walls; and after circulating through box-flues arranged to form a radiator, escaped into the open air through openings under the eaves. A good specimen of this primitive but effective system of central heating can be seen to-day on the site of Verulamium, near St Albans.

Furniture, as we have said, was scanty. In that climate a feeling of air and space is more to be desired than a quantity of furniture; and the Romans specialized in beds or couches (one served for both) to sleep on at night, to sit on by day and to recline on at table. In essentials the Roman bed or couch was as simple as an Indian 'charpoy'—a wooden frame supported on four feet with girths stretched from side to side as supports for a mattress; but as time went on it became the most luxurious affair imaginable. Not only were rare and costly woods used for its construction, inlaid with ivory, tortoiseshell or precious metals, but it was sometimes cast in solid bronze or even silver. The feet were elaborately carved, and made of a different material from the rest, ivory, silver or gold. On the bedstead was a mattress and pillows, stuffed with dried herbs in poor houses but with wool, feathers or even swan's down for the rich. The bedclothes were the most luxurious that wealth, often without taste, could design, generally purple in colour and embroidered with figures in gold. Thus completed, the bed stood so high that the Roman, like the author of the hundred and thirty-second Psalm, had to 'climb up into his bed', and steps were placed beside it for the purpose.

Next in importance to beds came tables. These were not large and were usually round, made when possible of the same costly materials as the bed. Horace had one made of white marble, *simplex munditiis*, combining simplicity with neatness; but the

rich and ostentatious went in for precious woods and metals. For table tops (no tablecloth was used) they valued especially the

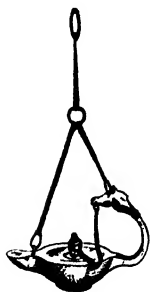


Sella Curulis. From a plaque in the Musée Calvet, Avignon.

effect which we get from burr-walnut, while the legs (generally three) might be made of ivory and carved to resemble a lion's paw. A single table of this kind might change hands at a thousand pounds or more. 'Half round' tables were designed under the Empire to stand against the wall and display, on a series of shelves one above the other, the artistic treasures of the house.

Chairs were little used, for couches took their place. The Roman *sella*, even the magistrate's *sella curulis* of ivory, or Julius Caesar's of gold, was only a folding stool which they carried about with

them.\* 'Great ladies' sometimes reclined in a *cathedra*, a chair with a sloping back—Augustus had them in his palace—but such things were usually reserved either for a schoolmaster when teaching or for a religious dignitary. That is why we talk of the 'chair' of a university professor and why the Pope is said to speak *ex cathedra*.



A lamp.

Otherwise the furniture of a Roman house, even the greatest, consisted only of necessary things like lamps, ranging from the simplest thing in terra-cotta, just a container for olive-oil and a single wick, to an imposing 'standard' lamp in ornamental bronze. For the rest, there was little more than plate and linen, though on these too the wealthy were prepared to spend fortunes, silver being

'nothing accounted of' in the days of the Emperors. And we may also class as furniture (too many Romans would have re-

\* See p. 29.



XII. The Atrium of a Roman House



garded them as nothing else!) the works of art, and in particular the statues, without which no self-respecting millionaire thought his house complete.

But we must remember that it is these things, the silver, bronze and gold of the wealthy houses, which have been preserved for us through the ages. The humble utensils of the poor, the wood and earthenware, are dust like those who used them. Nor must we forget that the *insulae*, crowded to the tiles with proletarian families, out-numbered the single-family *domus* of the well-to-do by twenty-six to one in Rome of the fourth century A.D. It is for the most part only the great houses of imperial Rome of which the ancient writers have left us descriptions. Reading some of them "one seems to relive a scene of the 'Arabian Nights', set in spacious unencumbered rooms where wealth is revealed only by the profusion and depth of the divans, the iridescence of damask, the sparkle of jewellery and of damascened copper—and yet all the elements of that comfort to which the West has grown so much attached are lacking".\* The fact is that the extremes of poverty and wealth alike make a home impossible.

\* Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*.



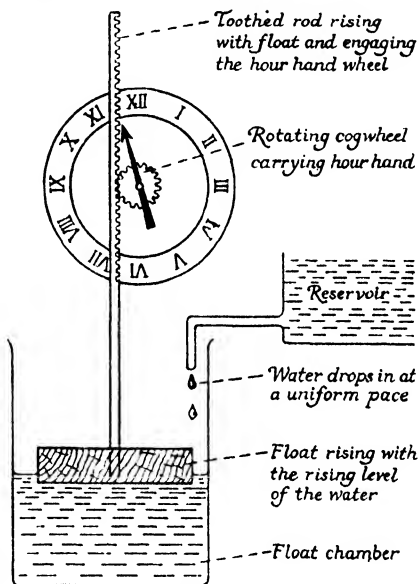
## CHAPTER XVI. THE DAILY ROUND

IN the early days when, as we have so often remarked, the Romans were farmers, their daily lives were regulated by the sun, which they were more certain of being able to see in the climate of Italy than we can be in ours. Their day had two fixed points, sunrise and sunset, about which there could be no mistake, and they needed nothing more.

This was all very well for countrymen, but Rome was already a great and growing city before they had any sort of a clock. There they added mid-day to the other two as a third fixed point and divided the day (as we do) between *ante* and *post meridiem*. In order to get this right and to enable public and private

business to take place with some degree of punctuality, it was the duty of a minor official to observe the passage of the sun between certain of the loftier public buildings and to announce its passing of the meridian by proclamation in the Forum. This was the nearest that the Romans had got to a sundial centuries after the Greeks had learned its use from the Babylonians.

At the beginning of the first Punic War one of the consuls for the year 264 brought back among the booty taken from Catania in Sicily the first sundial to be erected in Rome; but it took the Romans another hundred years to realize that as Rome is on a different latitude from that of Sicily, it always told the wrong



A water-clock.

time. Meanwhile they probably regarded it as an ingenious foreign contraption, and went on guessing the time by the sun.

But even the most accurately-adjusted sundial cannot tell the time at night or on a cloudy day; and the Romans had to put up with this drawback until a water-clock was introduced in 159. After that the time could be told at any hour of the day or night and in any weather. Both sundials and water-clocks became increasingly popular and increasingly elaborate; some were so small that they could be carried like watches, and others 'chimed' the hours by whistling! But the Romans were never slaves to their clocks; which was just as well, perhaps, as their clocks cannot have been very accurate.

Moreover, though their day was divided into twelve hours, the hours were not subdivided into minutes, one reason being that the number of minutes in each hour would have varied according to the time of year. The day ran from sunrise to sunset, so that the hours were longer in the summer than in the winter and varied from a maximum length of  $65\frac{1}{2}$  minutes at midsummer to a minimum of  $44\frac{1}{2}$  minutes at midwinter, the hours of the night being correspondingly shorter in summer and longer in winter.

The Romans started their day much earlier than we do (or rather, than we did before 'double summer-time' made early risers of us all), and probably for the same reason as Pepys, the diarist—the want of any artificial light good enough to work by. A busy man would begin work before sunrise, as we know that Cicero, Horace, Pliny and Augustus did; and some, like Cicero, suffered from bad eyesight as a result. The Romans went early to bed for the same reason. There was no street lighting, and the flickering light of any number of olive-oil lamps was insufficient to keep a house properly lighted after dark.

A Roman bedroom was not such as to tempt anyone to linger in it, for it was small and scantily furnished, while anything by way of decoration was considered effeminate. In Rome, at all events, it would hardly have been possible to sleep after sunrise. The traffic in the streets and the servants in the house made too

much din. But getting up was not such a business for the Roman as it is for us. He had gone to bed in his shirt and it did not take him a minute to slip on his toga and his shoes. He did not wash or shave before breakfast; and this consisted only of a drink of water with or without a little bread and cheese or honey. He had but to get out of bed and within a few minutes he was ready for the business of the day. His wife had little more to do on getting up than he had, but she probably took longer over it, as she had less to occupy her for the rest of the day. It was not till later that she would seriously address herself to her toilette with the help of an *ornatrix* or professional tire-woman, while he, perhaps, was at the barber's for the same purpose.

The day's work, as we have said, often started before dawn. It was the only way in which a public man, at all events, could be sure of getting a little time to himself—it might be to prepare a speech for the Senate House or a brief for the Courts or just to write a few private letters. For after sunrise the whole population of the city was astir, the children on their way to school and artisans to their work; and soon the crowd of morning callers, *turba salutantium*, would be upon him.

These were his *clientes*, in earlier times acquaintances from the world of business or of politics, personal friends in need of advice or just dropping in to see him. Many of them would stay till he left his house to go to the Forum and would accompany him there—the Roman had an incurable liking for being surrounded by friends and for moving about in a crowd. As early as the second century B.C. Gaius Gracchus was famous both for the crowd of clients which followed him about, and for the charm of manner with which he dealt with them. Some of them he would invite to return later and to share the evening meal with his family; and all his regular callers would expect their *patronus* to help them if they needed it, and were ready to make themselves useful to him at election times and in other ways.

This curious but not unattractive Roman custom degenerated under the Empire. The client rapidly developed into the mere hanger-on, who called on his patron not even in the hope of

being asked to dinner but in expectation of the basket (*sportula*) of food which it became customary to give instead. Even this was later changed into a sum of money (100 *quadrantes* or about two shillings), which must have been all that stood between many an unsuccessful man and sheer destitution. What services this obsequious crowd could have performed in return it is hard to see. Doubtless their patron found ways of making use of them, but it is likely that he valued them chiefly as ministers to his vanity and to the social prestige which their number gave him.

Thus accompanied, the great man would make his way to the Forum, and there we must leave him to engage in his business, his politics, his lawsuit or whatever it might be; or just to idle away the morning in picking up the latest news and gossiping with his friends. For the Forum was to Rome what Rome was to the rest of the world, its very hub and centre, round which revolved the life of the State and the business of every citizen.

In Republican times, when life was simpler and more leisurely, a Roman might expect to get home for dinner (*cena*) at about mid-day, his last meal being a light supper in the evening. But in Rome, as in England, pressure of business continually postponed the dinner-hour, until it became the custom to have a light lunch (*prandium*) at mid-day and not to dine until the day's work was over, say between three and four o'clock. Sometimes the Senate House or the Law Courts did not rise till dusk, for displays of oratory tended more and more to prolong their sittings; and we must presume that politicians and lawyers either took a packet lunch with them or adjourned to some nearby eating-house. But a man of leisure went home and usually made a cold lunch off the remains of last night's *cena*. After it he took his *siesta*, as most people do to-day in hot climates, though Cicero had to do without it at the busiest times of his life and Caesar, when he stayed with him in 45 B.C., seems to have done the same.

Thus rested and refreshed, the busy man went back to his affairs at about 1.30, but most people had finished their work by lunch time (it must be remembered that they had been at it

since dawn) and could give the rest of the day to exercise and social life. They might do no more than go for a walk, as Caesar did on the occasion referred to, or for a stroll round the Town, where there was always something to see and hear and a chance to do a little illicit gambling on the quiet. Or they might go in for something more strenuous, a swim in the Tiber, a ride or a game of ball on the Campus Martius, or indoor exercise in a gymnasium or wrestling school. But we get the impression that they took exercise less because they enjoyed it, or even in order to keep fit, than as a preliminary to taking a bath.

Bathing did not, so to speak, come naturally to the Romans. In early times they washed their extremities daily and took a bath on market-days, that is once in every nine. But when they had acquired a liking for the bath, they took to it with a thoroughness and an enthusiasm unequalled in history before or since. Some private houses had a single bathroom as early as the third century B.C., but a hundred years later Scipio's was small and dark, and the water, when hot, was often muddy. By the end of the Republic both private and public baths were in general use and were already elaborate and luxurious, though less so than they were to become under the Empire. Public baths (*balneae*) were originally intended for those who could not afford a private bathroom. The regular charge for admittance was a farthing, and Augustus' minister, Agrippa, built baths to which the people were admitted free. However when Atia, Augustus' mother, preferred to use the public baths, it was not long before they became the resort of every class of citizen from the Emperor downwards.

Baths of hot air (*thermae*) as well as of hot water were installed in every well-equipped villa as well as in the public baths, the heat being supplied by hypocausts.\* The general plan was the same in both. After taking off his clothes in a dressing-room, the bather entered the 'hot room', where he sat for some time to induce perspiration and then took a hot bath. He went next to the 'tepid room', where he was rubbed, or rather scraped,

\* See p. 190.



The Great Hall of the baths of Caracalla (Emperor from A.D. 211 to 217). (Reconstruction.)

down and massaged with oil, and last into the 'cold room', where he might take a cold plunge or just cool off before returning to the dressing-room.

Such was the provision which was considered the minimum necessary for a private or public establishment in imperial times, and of public baths Rome ultimately contained not less than a thousand. Ingenuity and luxury were combined in the great *thermae* erected by successive Emperors to include, within and around one gigantic building, almost every amenity which made for the health and enjoyment of the body and of the mind as well. Each was larger and more magnificent than the one before, till those of Diocletian covered more than thirty acres.

"The primary feature of these *thermae* was every type of bath that ingenuity could devise: hot, cold and hot-air baths, the swimming bath and the tub bath. Externally the enormous quadrilateral was flanked by porticos full of shops and crowded with shopkeepers and their customers; inside it enclosed gardens and promenades, stadia and rest-rooms, gymnasiums and rooms for massage, even libraries and museums. This imposing group of buildings was surrounded by an esplanade, cooled by shade and playing fountains, which gave space for playing-grounds and was enclosed by a continuous covered promenade."\* The Baths, in short, offered all the attractions of a modern spa but added amenities which are hardly to be found in all or any of such establishments to-day. It is not surprising that by the second century A.D. the public baths had become the favourite afternoon rendezvous of the entire population of Rome, men and women alike, and the place where they spent most of their leisure.

That this was so brought both gain and loss to the Romans. Some, of course, abused their opportunities. The Emperor Commodus, for instance, (like Napoleon on St Helena) bathed far too often, taking as many as eight hot baths a day, a form of self-indulgence which could not fail to soften the body and fray the nerves. Others frequented the Baths for all manner of evil purposes and at times gave them a bad name. But on the whole

\* Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*.

they added to the health and happiness of the people. The Emperors who built them provided opportunities for every form of self-improvement. Works of art were there to delight the eye and form the taste, such as the famous statue of Laocoon which once adorned the Baths of Trajan. Their libraries invited the people to read and to think, while their gymnasia encouraged the Greek conception of athletics as a means to preserve the balance between body and mind. "Thus for many generations they kept decadence at bay by returning to the ancient ideal which had inspired their past greatness and which Juvenal still held before them as a boon to pray for, a healthy mind in a healthy body."\* *Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano.*

Refreshed by his bath and invigorated by his exercise, the Roman went home for his dinner. When the habit of afternoon bathing came in, the custom of dining at mid-day went out, and dinner-time followed as soon as bathing-time ended, that is at about four o'clock, or a little earlier in winter. The Roman may well have looked forward to his dinner, for though evening was drawing in he had not yet had anything that could be called a square meal. His breakfast (*ientaculum*) was never more, and often less, than our early morning tea, his mid-day *prandium* a mere 'snack lunch' *post quod non sunt lavandae manus*, as Seneca said, too slight for a man to need to wash his hands after it. Something more substantial by way of a *cena* was now clearly needed.

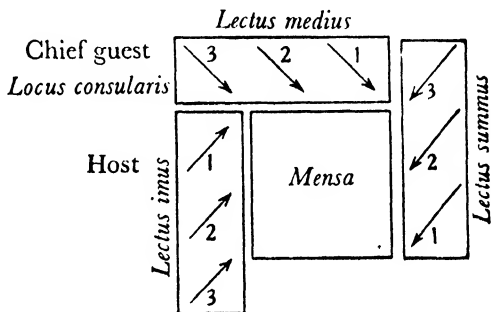
The old-fashioned mid-day dinner used to be taken by the whole family in the *atrium*, the husband reclining on a couch, his wife sitting at his feet and their children perched on stools opposite them, while the slaves sat round on benches. Dinner in those days was just a break in the day's work, which would go on again when the meal was over. By the last century of the Republic, all this had changed. The dining-room was separate from the *atrium*, either a recess opening out of it, or in the greater privacy of the peristyle or even upstairs. Everything in it was designed for the comfort of people whose day's work was over and to whom dinner gave their one opportunity in the day of

\* Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome.*



taking their ease, enjoying the society of their family or friends and satisfying their hunger.

The Roman did not sit down to dinner, he lay down; that is to say he assumed the most comfortable position in which he could remain for a long time, reclining on his left side and leaning on his elbow. The couch on which he lay was made with a slight slope, so that the edge was raised a little above the level of the table. It was provided with a mattress and coverlets and a pillow to support his left side. The arrangement of the table



is best shown by a diagram, which will also explain why the dining-room was called a *triclinium*. The arrows indicate the positions in which the guests reclined. The place of honour was number 3 at the middle couch, the host's place being number 1 on the lowest couch, from which it was easy for him both to talk to his chief guest and to keep an eye on the meal generally. One side of the table was left open for the slaves to set down the dishes upon it.

It will be noticed that the table in our diagram is laid for nine people. It was customary that the diners should not be less than three, the number of the Graces, or more than nine, the number of the Muses. If room had to be found for more, it was considered bad manners to squeeze four or even five onto one couch, as Cicero accuses his enemy, Calpurnius Piso, of doing; any host who knew how to behave would have another table and set of couches brought in.

The fact is that a Roman dinner, though an intimate affair, was attended with strict ceremony. The guests would come in evening dress of Greek fashion, and on arrival would take off their outdoor shoes and put on slippers. An usher (*nomenclator*) then announced them and conducted each, in order of precedence, to his couch and his place on it. The table was laid with a cloth in later times, the earlier custom being to wipe the wood or marble top after each course, and each place was provided with spoons and toothpicks. Knives were a later refinement and forks were unknown, with the result that hands needed to be washed after each course, and slaves carried round jugs of water, pouring it over the diners' hands and drying them on a towel. Each guest was given a napkin which he spread in front of him to protect his couch, and he might bring one of his own with him in which to take home, without being thought in the least ill-mannered, any tit-bit that he liked.

Dinner ordinarily consisted of three parts: the hors d'œuvres (*gustatio*), the *cena* proper and the dessert (*mensae secundae*). The hors d'œuvres were 'appetisers', such as lettuces, shell-fish and most frequently eggs, and Horace uses the expression *ab ovo usque ad mala* (from the eggs to the apples) when he means 'from beginning to end'. The second, and substantial part of the dinner, consisted of a number of courses, two in early times, then three and finally any number up to the twenty-two of the mad Emperor Elagabalus. These were the *pièces de résistance* and might consist of fish, flesh, fowl or of all three. An interval followed when an offering was made to the Lares, and the dessert came last, cakes and fruit both fresh and dried.

The Romans drank moderately with their meal. They began it with a libation, and after the *gustatio* mead was served made with honey. Italian or imported Greek wines were drunk with the *cena*, but mixed with water in about equal parts; to drink wine neat was regarded as unusual and vicious behaviour, and both beer and spirits were unknown. Drunkenness, when there was any, happened during the *comissatio*, a sort of drinking-match which came after the dinner. One of the guests was

chosen as master of ceremonies (*magister* or *arbiter bibendi*) and he arranged the drinking of healths (*bene tibi!* or *vivas!*), deciding what should be the proportion of water to wine, how many glasses must be drained at a draught, who should be toasted and in what order. Such a *comissatio*, if the *magister bibendi* were not careful, must have been something of a strain.

A Roman dinner was ample and took a long time—the elder Pliny was thought extremely moderate in spending only three hours over it. But it will be remembered that by dinner-time the Roman must have been considerably hungry for what was his one square meal in the twenty-four hours. Moreover what he valued at dinner was not only the food and drink, though doubtless he did ample justice to both, but the sense of leisure and repose at the end of his working day and the opportunity to enjoy the society and conversation of his friends. In such an atmosphere the discussion of politics, literature and philosophy contributed no less to the evening's enjoyment among educated people than the meal itself.

This is not to deny that rich and irresponsible people sometimes indulged in fantastic orgies of gluttony, drunkenness and debauchery—and under the Empire responsibility declined as riches increased. It is only a reminder that such were the exceptions, not the rule. Horace really did dislike *Persicos apparatus*, the elaborate luxury imported from the East, and in any age there were more Romans like him than like Trimalchio, the grotesque *nouveau-riche* whose coarse and eccentric feast was laughed at by Petronius in Nero's reign. But a full-dress Roman banquet was admittedly an imposing and long-drawn-out affair, often lasting eight or ten hours with intervals for various forms of cabaret, which must have been a help to sorely-tried digestions.

Another form of relief was vomiting which, if it did not happen naturally, was induced when necessary. Cicero records that Caesar resorted to this when dining with him, and though it was probably part of a medical treatment which he was undergoing at the time, others employed the same means to enable them to eat and drink yet more. *Vomunt ut edant*, says Seneca,

*edunt ut vomant*, and he says it with disgust; but hiccups and even ruder noises were regarded, as in the East to-day, as signs of polite appreciation.

But though gluttony and intemperance increased under the Empire, they were never general. On the whole the Romans were an abstemious race. The reader of Cicero's letters will notice how little mention there is in them of what he ate or drank on any occasion and how much of the company and the conversation.

When dinner was over at last, the Roman's day was over too. No more work seems to have been done after it and before long he retired for the night. It is not surprising that he went early to bed when we remember how early he would have to rise next morning.

## CHAPTER XVII. THE DAY'S WORK

OUR picture of the 'trivial round' leaves out the 'common task' and may suggest that the Romans did not do much work. But it would be as grave an error to suppose that the 'Romans at home' were a nation of idlers as that the 'Romans abroad' were all officials. Some idlers there were in Rome, as in all great cities whether of to-day or yesterday, such as the wretched hangers-on whom we saw in the last chapter dependent for their daily bread on performing punctually the 'merry-go-round of salaams'. There was too a mass of idlers, dependent not on private charity but on the public dole, which had been steadily growing since war and slaves and foreign corn began the ruin of the yeoman farmer; a throng of paupers, 320,000 of them by Julius Caesar's time, chronically out of work and well content to remain so, whom the State maintained on free corn. Nor must we leave out the *rentier* class, absentee landlords of estates in the provinces, shareholders in the companies which farmed the taxes,\* aristocrats who seemed to live by borrowing money to lend to one another. It is the luxury and vice of the idle rich, the degradation and crime of the idle poor, which fill the pages of the satirists, and which catch the reader's eye and hold his interest still.

But looked at as a whole, life in Rome was not like that. The city was, after all, not only the home of a great population whose wants must somehow be supplied, but the centre, commercial and financial, legal and political, of the world. All roads led to Rome, and all sea-routes too, bringing in the wealth of the farthest East and West, to be paid for by the work of Roman administrators, financiers and merchants: The amount of labour required to maintain the population and the power of Rome was, in fact, enormous.

Of the workers of Rome, the aristocracy were in olden days not the least conspicuous. The ordinary senator must have got through a prodigious amount of work, as readers of chapter IV

\* See p. 84.

will recall; and besides his duties as an administrator he had to lead the armies of the Republic and to govern its provinces. Instead, or in addition, he might practise at the bar, and Cicero, with the writing of many books thrown in, may well have been the hardest-worked Roman of his day. But Cicero was an aristocrat by achievement, not birth, and the great days of the aristocracy were past by his time, when senators were apt to think more of their private interests and pleasures than of their work for the State. Attendance at the Senate House was not good, and even Brutus ('the noblest Roman of them all'!) so far forgot the duties and even the rules of his order as to lend money to the Town Council of Salamis in Cyprus at 48 per cent—and he got his 'pound of flesh'. The younger generation, men like Cicero's enemy Clodius or his friend Caelius, turned politics and law into a source of income or amusement and if they needed more of either were ready to lend themselves to any desperate venture.

Under the Empire the aristocracy lost most of its opportunities, even for usefulness. The Emperor concentrated in himself all the powers formerly exercised by the magistrates; the work of government was done by him and his professional underlings, and free discussion, at all events of politics, was barred. The Senate met only to applaud the decisions of its *princeps*. The result was that those aristocrats who were minded to follow a professional career found in the Law Courts their best and almost only opportunity. Even there the work was supposed to be unpaid, and how the Roman advocate (like Cicero) made his money we do not know; but doubtless grateful clients found a way.

Let us pause here for a moment to watch a Roman law court at its work.

Criminal cases were originally heard and dealt with by the king, in his capacity as *paterfamilias* of his people, then by the consuls before the whole body of citizens, and later, when this became inconvenient, by the *praetor*, assisted by a body of *iudices*, called his *consilium*. He presided over a *quaestio*, whether *perpetua*,

a standing criminal court, or *extraordinaria*, a special court set up to deal with a particular case.

The earliest seat of justice in Rome was the Tribunal, a raised platform at one end of the Forum where the praetor used to sit in state; but in the last centuries of the Republic the number of courts increased, and in Cicero's day they were held in great *basilicae* near the Forum. But the open-air atmosphere was preserved. People drifted in and out, standing in a circle or *corona* round the *subsellia* on which the litigants sat.

In criminal cases a private citizen might act as *accusator* on behalf of the State. He must himself serve the summons on the accused (*reus*) and bring him into court—if necessary by the scruff of his neck. There the *iudices*, who were almost the same as our jury, were sworn in and if they were not objected to by the accused, the trial began. The court listened first to a brief outline of the case and was then addressed by the rival counsel (*patroni* or *advocati*—there was no distinction between barrister and solicitor). There seem to have been few rules of evidence to restrain their eloquence, or that of the witnesses, whose *testimonium* was given in the course of the speeches. If a witness could not, or even would not, be present in court, his statement might be read aloud. The evidence of slaves was always given in this way; for it was usually thought necessary to torture them first, in order to be sure that they would speak the truth! Special witnesses called *laudatores* gave evidence of the social standing or blameless life of the defendant. He, meanwhile, appeared in court looking the picture of misery, having used neither razor nor comb, and wearing his oldest and dirtiest clothes; all this being intended to melt the hearts of the *iudices*.

When everyone had had his say, the clerk of the court closed the proceedings by announcing '*dixerunt*', and the *iudices* retired in *consilium* to consider their verdict. Each was provided with a waxed *tabula*, which he marked either with an A for *Absolvo*, 'Not guilty', or with a C for *Condemno*, 'Guilty', or with NL for *Non Liquet*, 'Not proven', as they still say in Scottish courts. This he placed in an urn, and the verdict was decided by a







XIII. Togati  
*Left* An Orator  
*Right* A Priest



majority, the defendant getting the benefit of the doubt in the event of a tie.

A verdict of guilty might be followed by a *litis aestimatio*, proceedings to assess the penalty. This was not likely to be severe. Only in case of the gravest crimes could a Roman citizen be executed, beaten or even put in prison: \* when St Paul reminded his gaolers of this at Philippi, he was set free at once. Even in a grave case, the accused was not taken into custody and so had every chance to escape a severe sentence by going into exile before or after the verdict. Lesser criminals might be punished by a fine or by the infliction of *infamia*, a form of disgrace which affected their political and social position.

A fair trial, such as every Roman citizen could rely on getting, shows something of the Roman's respect for law. "Since it is the Law which gives us all the advantages which we enjoy, our rights, our freedom, our security," said Cicero, "for God's sake let us abide by the Law."†

This respect for law the Romans never lost; but under the Empire litigation increased till it seemed to be, as in modern India, almost an end in itself, and the long-drawn speeches of counsel became mere displays of rhetoric for the entertainment of the crowd. But as the barrister's role declined in usefulness, that of the 'jurisconsult' increased. These were famous lawyers who were invited to advise the praetor on points of law and who gave counsel's opinion to clients in important cases. Their *responsa* commanded so much respect that they exercised in this way an important influence in shaping and developing the law, and Augustus actually made them binding upon the Courts.

Such was the profession in which some aristocrats found scope for their energy and even for their ambitions. Otherwise they followed such occupations as they could, sometimes in futile conspiracy against the throne, and sometimes in an endless round of pleasure-seeking and novelty-hunting. Others again,

\* Cicero says that "it is a crime to imprison a Roman citizen, a sin to scourge him and murder to put him to death" (*Verr.* II, 5, 66, § 170).

† Cicero, *pro Cluentio*, § 155.

perhaps the nobler sort, turned to the search for truth in philosophy, literature or science. These men at least were not idlers, though the results achieved often fell short of the effort expended. Pliny the naturalist put up a record, which can hardly have been beaten since, by working for twenty hours out of the twenty-four, beginning by candle-light even in the summer and going to bed for a few hours' sleep at one o'clock in the morning.

Part of the trouble with the senators was that they were not supposed to engage in commerce, which was almost entirely in the hands of the Equestrian Order. This originally consisted of those who were well enough off to supply a horse of their own for service with the cavalry—hence the name—but they soon shed any military connexion and were legally recognized simply as capitalists, men possessing a minimum of 400,000 sesterces (a little over £3000), free-born and of good character. These were the financiers and merchants who made great fortunes out of the newly conquered provinces. Crassus, for instance, colleague of Caesar and Pompey in the first Triumvirate, had over £1,500,000 invested in land alone. Such fortunes may be more suggestive of America in the nineteenth century than of Rome two thousand years earlier; and the millionaires of both countries had this at least in common, that they made their money by exploiting new worlds. This was done by the *equites* in two ways, as *publicani* conducting the public business of collecting the revenues of the provinces, or as *negotiatores* engaged on private business of their own, business as vast and as varied as that which occupies the great commercial and financial houses and even the stock exchange of any modern capital.

The *equites* gained, while the senators lost, by the change from Republic to Empire. Their property qualification remained the same, but admission to the order was controlled by the Emperor, and little attention was paid to their being free-born or even, as time went on, of good character. If their profits from collecting the taxes decreased as their rapacity was restrained, new and more honourable opportunities in the public service were opened to them, from commands in the army and governor-

ships of certain provinces to a host of 'jobs' all over the world, which entitled the holders to an adequate and regular salary from the imperial exchequer. The Knights had in fact been raised by Augustus to the position of a privileged 'upper middle class'. They supplied the majority of officials all over the Empire, especially at any point where the personal interests of the Emperor were concerned; and they came, in time, to control its whole administration.

Meanwhile private trade increased as peace and prosperity returned to the Empire. The banks extended their financial operations and contractors grew rich as the public buildings of the capital rose ever more magnificent and the provincial cities strove to imitate them.

In these operations freedmen played an important part under the Empire. Mostly Levantine, they valued money above all else and pursued it with single-hearted devotion, conspicuous ability and the success which, by their own standards, they deserved, till most of the trade and industry of Rome was in their hands. Their fortunes made, they proceeded to spend their wealth without the restraint of either taste, morals or education. What could be expected of a man like Petronius' hero, who thought that Hannibal fought in the Trojan War?

Such, all too often, were the leaders of 'big business', the city magnates of imperial Rome; and a host of lesser men, managers, clerks, accountants and the like, found employment in their offices. Retail shops distributed the goods of the importers, and employed skilled artisans to give them just the finish demanded by Roman taste. An army of labourers and dockers, porters and drovers, was needed to maintain the roads and docks, to provide the transport and to handle at every stage the immense volume of merchandise which was ever flowing into Rome.

People sometimes think that all this sort of work was done at Rome by slaves, and that in competition with their labour the free man had no chance. Slavery certainly contributed to the ruin of Italian agriculture;\* but while public slaves did a certain

\* See p. 18.

amount of work for the State, by far the greater part of their work was done in the households or on the estates of rich men, and did not materially reduce the free labourer's chance of making a living. "Never at any period did the Roman proletariat complain of the competition of slave labour as detrimental to its own interests. Had there been no slave labour, the small freeman might indeed have had a wider field of enterprise, and have been better able to accumulate a small capital by undertaking work for the great families which was done, as it was, by their slaves. But he was not aware of this, and the two kinds of labour, the paid and the unpaid, went on side by side without active rivalry."\* Moreover, thanks to the *Pax Romana*, the supply of slaves began to dry up; and machines, in our sense of the word, did not exist.

To earn a living by the sweat of one's face was regarded as vulgar, an opinion deriving from the tradition of the aristocracy, whose slaves had long since made them independent of paid labour. But most people, at all events in the towns, could not be self-supporting in this way, and provided enough work for a large artisan and labouring population. These workmen early formed themselves into guilds (*collegia*), so early in fact that the idea was supposed to have been started by King Numa. Though the *collegia* were in fact trade-unions, they were considerably different from ours. They were recognized legal incorporations existing for the interest of their trade, and trying to secure concessions for it, for instance in taxation. But they were small and local and do not seem to have concerned themselves with things like systems of apprenticeship, wages or attempts to better the political and social position of the labourer. Money was sometimes distributed at their 'guild feasts', but there was no support from union funds for the sick or for the widows and children of members. During the whole period of the Empire, we hear of only two strikes; for a whole population of slaves was available as 'blackleg' labour. *Collegia* were more like Friendly Societies, to promote good will and constant reunions among the members,

\* W. Warde Fowler, *Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero*.

and especially to carry on a common cult and perhaps a chapel in honour of their patron deity.

Any three persons could form such a *collegium* and few of them had a membership of more than a thousand. Their constitution was democratic, for the members made their own rules, arranged their own meetings, fixed the subscription and elected their Master annually. They included almost every trade and occupation. Besides 'butchers, bakers and candlestick-makers', there were guilds of augurs and magistrates, military guilds (but restricted to subalterns and N.C.O.'s), *collegia funeraticia* or burial clubs, and even *collegia* of late-drinkers and long-sleepers!\*

As time went on these *collegia* developed a tendency not unknown even in our own trade-union movement; they went in more and more for politics of a left-wing type until, in the last century of the Republic, their main object seems to have been to secure for their members the most that could be made out of political corruption and violence. Laws for their suppression were passed four times in the ten years between 64 and 55 B.C. and Julius Caesar abolished all clubs of whatever kind, with the single exception of Jewish synagogues. Augustus revived the *collegia*, but they had to show that they would fulfil a useful purpose before they could obtain a licence, and they took a long time to live down their bad reputation. Such was the government's dislike of secret associations that it brought suspicion upon the Christian Churches. Gradually however they returned to older and better ways, and the trade-unions were conspicuously loyal and useful institutions under the later Empire.

The number and variety of the *collegia* (no less than 2500 inscriptions concerning them have survived!) suggest the countless trades by which the poorer elements in the city's population made their living. This number was increased by two special

\* Among those who signed an election appeal, painted on a house-wall at Pompeii, are *seribibi universi* and *dormientes universi*. Was it, perhaps, a leg-pull at the candidate's expense?

circumstances. First, the ever-growing number of people who lived in *insulae* and had not enough room there to bake their own bread, to weave or even wash their own clothes or to live the self-sufficient life of the old Roman family. And second, the enormous volume of imports which was brought to Rome from the ends of the earth and stored in her great warehouses (*horrea*), and which in the course of being transported, unloaded, distributed and sold to the people gave employment to an army of labourers, middlemen and retailers.

Among this motley collection of breadwinners there appear to have been hardly any women. Only one feminine *collegium* is known, that of the *sociae mimae*, the actresses' union. Inscriptions record a few of them in the professions, such as doctors and teachers, and here and there a female clerk, stenographer or secretary; but except for those occupations which were exclusively female, such as those of midwife, nurse, ladies' hairdresser and the like, the emancipation of women does not seem to have led them into trade. Women were not unknown in finance and employed agents through whom to conduct business; but though female plumbers have left their names stamped on the lead of water-pipes, inscriptions have revealed only one fishwife (*piscatrix*), one female costermonger (*negotiatrix leguminaria*), and one dressmaker (*vestifica*) against twenty men tailors. The fact is that the Roman woman, despite the freedom which she had steadily gained since the third century B.C., remained essentially a stay-at-home. Even the household shopping was done for her by her husband.

In many ways conditions of work for the small shopkeeper or citizen were better in Rome than in modern England; but they had two difficulties at least which we have not. The first was lack of police protection. Crimes of violence were every-day occurrences in Rome at any period of her history and the law was powerless to deal with them—indeed, it left to every citizen the right and the duty to protect and avenge himself. The small man had little chance to do either, and his person and his property were in constant peril.

In the next place, supposing that fire, burglary or a slump in trade made him unable to meet his liabilities, what could he do? There was no law of bankruptcy until Augustus' time to enable him to come to terms with his creditors and start again. He must borrow, on the security of his stock or even his person. Moneylenders were numerous and ready to oblige; but the normal rate of interest was 12 per cent per annum and a sufferer from 'temporary financial embarrassment' would be lucky not to have to pay more. If he could neither pay nor borrow, his creditor had the right to seize his goods or even reduce him to slavery. No wonder that the cry of *novae tabulae!* (clean slates) brought many a broken man to support a desperate cause like the conspiracy of Catiline during Cicero's consulship in 63.

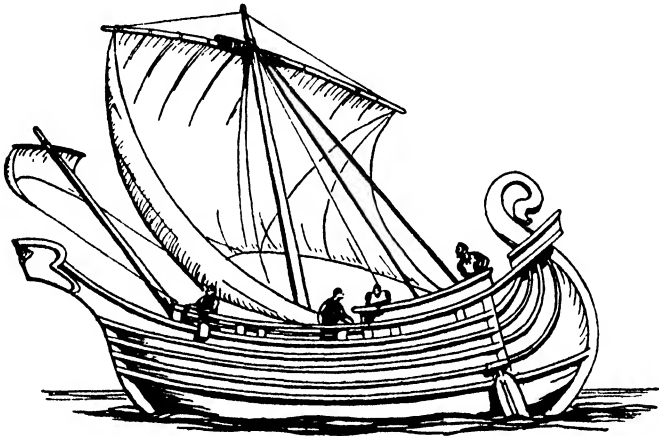
If the stay-at-home shopkeeper took risks, so did the merchant whose business took him to the four corners of the Empire. The theory that 'trade follows the flag' was true also of the Roman eagles, and as the armies of Rome imposed peace upon the world, overseas trade grew and multiplied. Augustus came of banking stock. He realized the political as well as the economic importance of commerce, for holding the Empire together while his 'New Order' was still in the experimental stage. To this end he studied maps. He built roads, and yet more roads, improved harbours and built new ones, organized an imperial Post, and made the way of the traveller speedy and safe. It is doubtful if it has been more so at any time in history till people could travel in trains; and the trains, whether in England or the Balkans, follow where the Roman roads showed the way.

In earlier days travellers mostly went by sea. The position of Italy in the Mediterranean made that the obvious thing to do. But the Romans never took kindly to the sea. They could build big ships of over 1000 tons, but most were less than a third of that size (mere fishing smacks!), and the winds and waves of the Mediterranean are treacherous. So they avoided it altogether from the middle of November to the middle of March. It was rash to sail even in late September, as did the ship which was carrying St Paul and which was battered to pieces on the rocks



of Malta. Later still in the year, even official dispatches were carried overland.

But in the summer, not only the calm, blue waters of the Mediterranean, but greyer seas beyond, were crowded with shipping, carrying goods and travellers to and from Rome and her farthest provinces. So important were the merchantmen who kept Rome supplied with the necessities of life that the corporations of shipowners, *navicularii marini*, were increasingly



A merchant ship of the time of the Empire

recognized by the Emperors and were given the status of a Merchant Navy, with special privileges.

A ship's passenger list might include almost any sort of traveller—officials on government business, young men doing the 'grand tour', merchants and soldiers, sightseers and globe-trotters; and a list even of their principal cargoes would take up too much space. We can only mention a few—lead and iron, oysters and hunting-dogs from Britain; pottery, woollen goods and farm-produce from Gaul; corn, wine and oil, gold, silver and base metals, dyes and linen-yarns from Spain. North Africa sent slaves and gold-dust, ebony, ivory and wild animals for the arena; Egypt provided a third of the total corn-supply as well

as paper, glass and linen; while luxuries of every sort poured in from Syria and the far East.

Egypt and Syria were the clearing-houses for this Eastern trade, carried in ships across the Indian Ocean or by caravans along the ancient trade-routes from distant China. A ship outward bound from Egypt to India would carry gold and silver plate for sale to native rajahs, Roman currency for cash transactions (it was valued in India, and much of the Indian trade was paid for in cash), various metals in which India is poor, tools and weapons, and a quantity of cheap trinkets which would appeal to the humbler folk. Italian wines, we know, were well thought of in Madras.

Such a ship would call at the ports of Eritrea, then down the Red Sea, out through the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, and so across the Indian Ocean. Sailing at the end of July, with the South-west Monsoon behind him, her captain might hope to reach Barygaza (Broach) in forty days, ten weeks out from Egypt. There a regular pilot-service was maintained to guide ships between the sand-bars and up-river to the port; and this alone gives an idea how important its commerce was. Here he would unload his cargo and fill his hold instead with the luxuries of the East, spices and fine cotton-cloth, tortoiseshell and Chinese silks, pearls and precious stones. And he would be sure to take some pepper on board; for the Romans were so fond of it that they were prepared to buy it at 15s. a pound. Nor was this all. A statuette of Lakshmi, Hindu goddess of Prosperity, has been found at Pompeii; and the first tiger to enter Europe (since the sabre-toothed variety died out) was brought to Samos by ambassadors from India who visited Augustus there.

If our captain was not frightened by travellers' tales of flat-nosed savages and horse-faced cannibals reputed to live in the South, he might continue his voyage down the west coast of India till December, when the North-east Monsoon started which would carry him home again. One Roman at least visited Ceylon, and Roman merchandise made its way as far as Siam and Java. The merchants grew bolder, and in the reign

of Marcus Aurelius a party of them visited the imperial Court of China, whose official record tells that "they brought offerings of ivory, rhinoceros horn and tortoiseshell; from that time dates intercourse with this country".

The Indian trade, even in the early days of the Empire, was in fact greater in volume than that of any other country. A hundred and twenty ships, we are told, sailed for Egypt and India in a year. The cargoes which they brought back were worth more than £1,000,000. "So much", said Seneca, "our luxuries and our ladies cost us!" That such voyages brought more than a modest profit to the traders with the East is proved by the style in which they were able to live when they retired and set up as country gentlemen like the East India Company's Nabobs, their counterpart in eighteenth-century England. Inscriptions, we are glad to note, frequently record their gifts to local charities and the 'esteem and regard' in which they were held by their fellow-citizens.

Sea travel was generally the quickest, but not always. The great rivers of Europe, too, were used as trade-routes. A Roman knight in Nero's reign led a trading expedition to the Baltic by the all-sea route; but its slaves and furs and amber were more accessible to Rome via the Dnieper. But it was above all the magnificent road system which linked the thriving towns of the Empire with each other and with Rome, and which made the wares of every country available to every other. The whole world, the *orbis terrarum*, became one vast trading area, and trade within it, under the Romans, meant Free Trade. If Rome became over-luxurious, the provinces were enabled to build up a more respectable prosperity. The city of Lyons could afford to send a gift of more than £30,000 to Rome after the great fire of A.D. 64, and a Roman described Gaul in 66 as "flooding almost the whole world with her merchandise". Yet Spain surpassed Gaul in the value of her exports and India surpassed them both.

World trade on such a scale was made possible by Roman peace and Roman roads; and if the modern traveller has some advantages, so had his predecessors in that ancient, yet singularly

'modern' world. "In Roman times, something like internationalism had been achieved from Britain on the west to the Caspian Sea on the east. You could travel on a Roman road from Jerusalem to Boulogne, and Greek or Latin would see you through all the way. If you got into trouble anywhere on this long journey, you had only to proclaim Roman citizenship to receive the same police assistance in Ephesus that you would get at Antioch, in Alexandria or in Rome itself. You would have no difficulties with foreign exchange; one universal gold and silver currency was everywhere accepted, and the bank would give you travellers' cheques which would be cashed by their agents from one end of the Empire to the other. You would not cross a single frontier. How different to-day! Hotels are more numerous and better; neither the sea nor the mountain passes are closed to travellers in the winter." But "what was once an open road is now a series of frontiers, with customs-men and passport officials lying in wait behind barriers, ready to treat the traveller as if he were a spy or a smuggler. Only the international sleeping-cars, whose beds, sheets and blankets are similar in Paris and Istambul, who serve food on the same thick blue plates in Belgrade as in Barcelona, reproduce in their uniformity something like the magnificent standardisation of the Roman road."\*

\* H. V. Morton, *In the Steps of St Paul.*

## CHAPTER XVIII. THE DAY'S PLAY

AT no period in her history was life in Rome 'all work and no play'. The working day was comparatively short—not more than eight hours in summer and as few as six in winter—and the Roman's habit of starting work at daybreak had all the advantages of our artificial 'summer time'. Winter and summer the working people of Rome downed tools early in the afternoon.

True, there was no Sunday to give them one day's rest in seven; but their holidays, though less regular, were probably more numerous than ours. We have only to look at those Roman calendars which have come down to us, and to note how many days out of the 365 are marked with N for *nefas*, meaning days on which it is wrong to do any work. Such were the Ides of every month (the 13th or 15th) and sometimes the Kalends (the 1st) and the Nones (the 5th or 7th). Then there were the time-honoured *feriae*, country festivals in honour of some rustic deity, and the *ludi*, originally state celebrations to return thanks to the gods for some great victory, but turned by custom into annual holidays. To these, successive Emperors added new *ludi* to commemorate great events in their reigns, besides occasional holidays which they might decree on any pretext. Of these holidays some lasted for a day, the more important for a week or a fortnight; and their total in an ordinary year varied from 132 days in the last century B.C. to 159 in the first century A.D. and as many as 200 in the fourth.

That the whole population of Rome made holiday for periods amounting to one day in every two or three, it is hardly possible to believe. There was simply too much work to be done. It is possible that some of the days marked N on the calendar were generally disregarded. The old country festivals, even the old gods in whose honour they had been founded, had gradually been forgotten. No one but the priests bothered about them. In any case much necessary work must have been done on these 'dies

non', as on our Sunday; and when their religious significance was forgotten, much unnecessary work may have been done—also as on our Sunday and for the same reason. But be that as it may, the number of public holidays, kept as such by the people generally, must have been extraordinary. Why else should the Emperor Marcus Aurelius have needed to pass a law limiting holidays to 135 in the year?

The Latin for holidays is *feriae* (the same word as our 'fair'). It originally meant those simple country festivals connected with seed-time and harvest, summer and winter solstice, and with the humble deities who watched over the boundaries, the fields and the livestock of the farm. None but the most necessary farm-work was done on such a day, which was given up to rustic rites and rustic 'fun and games'. Such festivals were still held in Vergil's Italy, and they were being held there still until Mussolini gave the Italians other, and less innocent, things to think about.

The urban proletariat of Rome dropped some of the country festivals and forgot the old meaning of most; but some were retained and never quite lost their country flavour. Such was the great festival of the Saturnalia which went on for a week from 17 December. It began, perhaps, in prehistoric days as an attempt to revive the failing strength of the sun, and finds expression to-day in the traditional jollifications of Christmas. The Romans too gave presents, lighted candles and played games with their children; they too had their 'Christmas dinner', but the servants ate it and their masters waited on them.

But the Romans' chief idea of fun was Games, public *Ludi* organized by the State, for which days were set apart originally known as *feriae*. But these games became so numerous and so important that the word *ludi* was generally used for public holidays, *feriae* being restricted to school holidays. The oldest and most important of the games were the *Ludi Romani*, which went on for a fortnight in September. Like all *ludi*, they were free to the public and were provided at government expense. Enormous sums were spent on them—even in one of the darkest years of the second Punic War the usual grant of 200,000

sesterces (nearly £2000) was increased to 333,333½, because three was a lucky number! Claudius, an economical Emperor, spent more than twice as much upon them. Even so, magistrates ruined themselves by supplementing the Treasury grant out of their own, or their creditors', pockets. The result was no less damaging to the spectators, for the people were degraded by the production of 'sensations' on an ever-increasing and more lavish scale, and were thus taught to look to the State for free entertainment as well as free food, till the time came when, as Juvenal tells us, "the people that once bestowed commands, consulships, legions and all else, now meddles no more and longs eagerly for just two things, bread and circuses".\*

*Panem et circenses*—to provide them strained the resources of the provinces and of the exchequer and reduced the *populus Romanus* to a pauper proletariat. There was at first no deliberate policy behind this. Cheap corn had been provided by the State since the end of the Punic Wars and free corn since 58 B.C.—the government dared not wait to see what the *plebs urbana*, the city mob, would do if it were allowed to go hungry. Frée 'shows' were started even earlier, when the State, at some grave crisis in its history, had decreed the celebration of 'games' in honour of the gods. But the people enjoyed them and they provided the ambitious with an easy way of winning popularity. So they increased and multiplied till the Emperors found that it was as dangerous to let the people get bored as go hungry. The result was that 'games' of one sort or another took place on 59 days a year at the beginning of the first century B.C.; they had doubled in number by the second century A.D. and in the third occupied no less than 175.

The amount of leisure for which the Romans, rich and poor, had to find occupation was thus a considerable problem, both to themselves and to the government. The Baths and the Games supplied the chief answer to it; and as our last chapter gave some account of the Baths, the same must now be attempted for the Games.

\* Juvenal, x, 77-81.

These were of great antiquity and in origin religious; and during the early centuries of the Republic they reflected the tastes and characteristics of the race of peasant-soldiers who took part in them. Their chief features then were military displays and chariot-races. Such were the *Ludi Romani*, oldest and most important of the Roman Public Games. They had their origin in the return of the consuls from a summer campaign to pay the vows which they had made for victory by giving the people an entertainment in honour of Jupiter. After the battle of Lake Regillus in 496 B.C., they were held every year. The triumphal procession went first along the Sacred Way to the Capitol, where the images of the gods were removed from the temples and carried on biers to the Circus, so that they too could take part in the festivities. Before them went bands of young men and boys, dancers and flute-players, with the chariots and charioteers who were about to take part in the races.

The Romans had a great love of horses—though they made indifferent cavalymen, it seems to have been in their blood—and to see the chariot-racing 150,000 people filled the seats in the Circus Maximus, *the* race-course, as distinct from all others, which had been built as long ago as the days of the kings. It was several times enlarged. In Trajan's day it measured 600 yards by 200 and could seat a quarter of a million people. The course was enclosed by tiers of seats, and down the middle of it ran a low wall (called the *spina* because it was the 'backbone' of the course) with three conical cylinders of wood, representing cypress trees, at either end, round which the chariots had to turn. Each race usually consisted of seven laps making a total distance of about two and a quarter miles, each lap involving two of these breath-taking left-handed turns at full speed in a light chariot drawn by two, three or four horses abreast, and even more under the later Empire. The whole spectacle was magnificently staged. It was attended by the highest in the land, whether consul or Emperor, and afforded that combination of splendour and excitement which the Romans loved. It combined the stately ritual of a Spanish bull-fight with the mass-

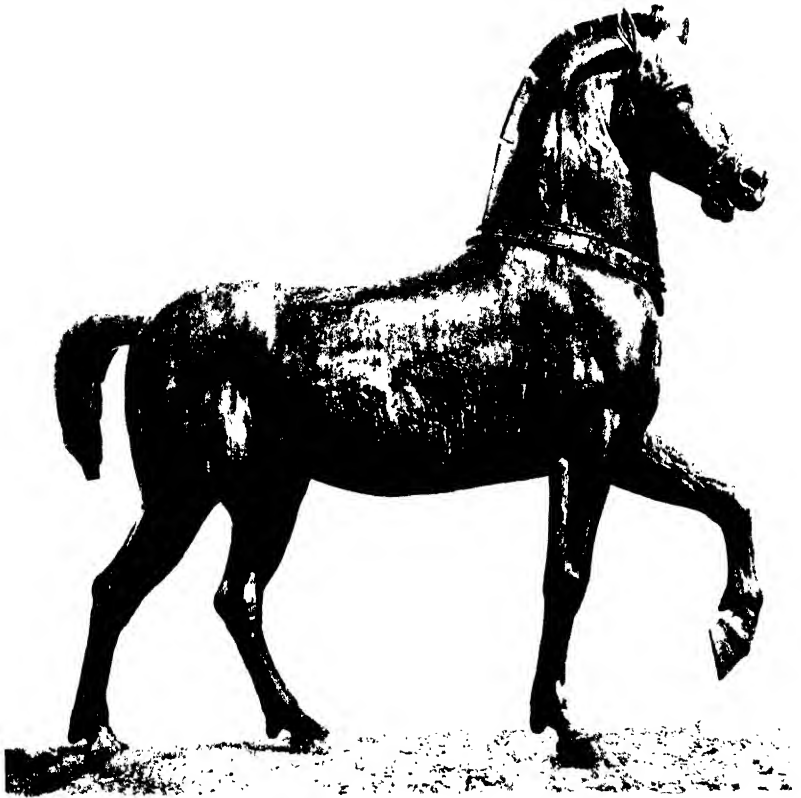


suggestion of a Nazi sports-meeting and the holiday atmosphere of Epsom Downs on Derby Day.

The charioteers, each wearing the colours of his faction, stood erect and motionless behind their shining teams of thoroughbreds, waiting for the presiding official to give a signal by dropping a white handkerchief. The trumpets sounded, the dust began to fly and the excitement of the vast crowd grew almost to frenzy as the chariots sped round the course, trying desperately, and often unsuccessfully, to avoid both each other and the posts round which they had to turn. Vast sums of money changed hands in bets (*sponsiones*); and the resulting excitement was something to which no cup-final, even between two north-country teams, can provide a parallel.

The people who subscribed to the enormous cost of training the teams and their drivers joined together to maintain and support one or other of four factions: the Whites, the Greens, the Blues and the Reds; and such was their rivalry that it often led to rioting and bloodshed. In Constantinople, when the capital of the Empire was transferred there, the 'faction fights' sometimes paralysed the government.

A later feature of the Games, which none the less derived from the days when Romans were rustics, was that of the *venatio*, a sort of wild-beast hunt on the stage, or rather in the arena. This was sometimes harmless enough, in the sense that hunting is harmless—the hunters had their risks as well as the hunted. The real harm was done to the spectators, who soon cared less for the hunting than for the kill. The four quarters of the Empire were ransacked for lions and tigers, panthers, elephants and so forth, which were exterminated for ever in the nearer parts of it, and when they arrived in Rome were slaughtered by thousands at a time to amuse the mob. When Cicero was governor of Cilicia he was always getting letters from Caelius urging him to supply ten times as many panthers as his rival Clodius had got from someone else. But he hated the butchery. "What pleasure can it be to a man of refinement," he said of Pompey's Games in 55 B.C., "when a splendid animal is transfixed by a



XIV. A Roman Chariot-horse



hunting-spear?" The slaughter of elephants shocked even the mob, who hissed Pompey for it.

But the appetite for that sort of thing grows, and soon stifles decent feeling. In the reign of Augustus, 3500 elephants are said to have been killed in the Circus. When Titus opened the Colosseum in A.D. 80, 9000 beasts were killed in one day; and twenty-five years later, the slaughter of 11,000 graced the triumphal Games of Trajan. So far from being shocked, the Romans thoroughly enjoyed it; and when they grew bored with watching armed huntsmen pitted against beasts of prey, fights to the death were staged between the beasts themselves.

Augustus, perhaps unintentionally, started a new fashion, by causing a notorious bandit to be dropped into a cage of wild beasts. The idea caught on, and the throwing of unarmed men *ad bestias* became a common verdict in the Courts and a popular spectacle in the Amphitheatre. Christians were the victims most frequently demanded, for any national calamity was supposed to be their fault ('If the Tiber overflows its banks or the Nile fails to do so', as Tertullian complained); and he who stands to-day in the gaunt ruins of the Colosseum can imagine, if he will, what it felt like to stand there in Nero's day, while the Emperor stared down on the amphitheatre through his emerald eye-glass, and there rose from the crowded tiers a mighty roar as 50,000 people yelled in unison, '*Christianos ad leonem! Christianos ad leonem!*'. '*Tantos ad unum?*' exclaimed Tertullian\*: 'the whole lot to one?'

In earlier times the drama, too, had its place in the Games. Plays were made part of the *Ludi Romani* in 364 B.C., and the Roman Theatre prospered and declined as the Roman People preserved and then lost its original character. In fact the same is true of the Games as a whole, and by the last century of the Republic their early simplicity had long been lost and their religious associations well-nigh forgotten.

Both tragedies and comedies were once a feature of the *ludi*, whether national in character or adapted from the Greek, or a mixture of the two such as Plautus wrote; and they obviously

\* Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, XL. He was an African and sometimes wrote bad Latin.

presumed an intelligent audience. If the Romans were coarse, they were also quick-witted, and lines into which a reference could be read to personalities or politics of the day were often cheered to the echo. In the best days of the drama, there was no permanent theatre; it was thought good that the audience should stand and so be forced, as Scipio Nasica once said, to brace their bodies while they relaxed their minds. The first stone theatre was built on the Campus Martius by Pompey in 55 B.C., to seat nearly 30,000 people.

But it was far too late to save the drama. What the audience now came to see was less the play or the acting than the stage display. Little in fact was produced but farces or mimes. Lavish costumes, 'properties' and 'effects', the personal magnetism of some famous 'star', coarse jokes, grotesque dancing—these now charmed the city mob and drove the Muses out of the theatre. Stage favourites, like successful charioteers, acquired immense popularity and used it to gain an influence in politics as well as society which was almost always pernicious.

The Romans of imperial times had little taste for anything but pantomime, and that both extravagant and crude; and the degradation of the theatre for which Plautus and Terence once wrote their plays could go no further when its jaded audience demanded blood-letting to 'brighten up' the drama. To produce the necessary thrills, wretches were condemned to die 'in character' upon the stage; and the memory of Æschylus was insulted by the actual torture of a living Prometheus.

But the drama could hardly be expected to flourish at Rome in view of the rival attractions. It is on record that as early as 160 B.C. the theatre in which a play of Terence was being performed was deserted by the audience in favour of an exhibition of gladiators. The fact is that it was not first, nor only, in the theatre that Roman taste degenerated. We have seen how the comparatively innocent chariot races and wild-beast shows gradually changed into orgies of excitement and bloodshed; and we must face the fact that there was a streak of cruelty in the Roman make-up as well as of coarseness. They owed it in part to their contact in early days with the Etruscans; but we must

not forget that the audiences which once took a delight in manly sports and simple entertainments were not the same as those which were bored with anything but slaughter. By the end of the Republic, two influences had corrupted the very blood-stream of Rome, slaves and immigrants. The majority of both were Oriental; and when Juvenal complained that the Orontes had overflowed into the Tiber from Syria, he was only speaking the truth in a picturesque way. The Roman proletariat, ninety per cent of foreign extraction, carried a strong oriental strain; and they showed it not least in their appetite for cruelty.

Of this the final expression was, of course, the gladiatorial shows. They were Etruscan in origin and, like the *Ludi*, religious. Just as in the earliest days of horse-racing the inside horse of the winning pair was sacrificed at the end of the race, so human sacrifices were once made at their tombs to appease the shades of dead Romans, and from these it is but a short step to fights to the death, such as were regularly staged by way of funeral games by private individuals.

These entertainments remained private till 105 B.C. Marius was reorganizing the army at the time and it was thought that his soldiers might improve in their weapon training if they practised against gladiators. So a combat was provided by the State for the first time. From then onwards gladiatorial shows became a regular feature of the Games and increasingly of every Roman holiday. From Rome they spread to the four corners of the Empire, with the single and honourable exception of Athens. They were called *munera*; and the word, meaning a gift and recalling their original purpose as offerings to the dead, was used from the days of Marius till they came to an end 500 years later. Their suppression at long last was the achievement of Christianity alone; but in the meantime they had threatened the civilization, and corrupted the morals, of the world.

No description of these *munera* will be attempted here; their general characteristics are too well known and their details are too revolting. We would rather ask why such degrading spectacles took hold upon a great nation. Etruscan and Oriental influences had, as we have suggested, much to answer for; but

so had the brutality, lack of sensibility and craving for excitement which was native to the Roman character; while most of us dislike the sight of blood, the Romans positively enjoyed it. Circumstances only increased these characteristics; they must always have been there. At first, perhaps, some practical value was attached to the shows as offerings to the dead, a means of training soldiers or, as even Cicero admitted, an unrivalled way of teaching contempt for pain and death—are not young fox-hunters ‘blooded’ to this day? But all pretence of usefulness was soon abandoned, and the scores of thousands who flocked to the Amphitheatre went there only because they expected to enjoy the kind of thing that they would see. All-in wrestling draws its crowds to-day.

But though they may not have known it, and certainly would not have cared, there was some excuse for them. Their forefathers had all been warriors, and the time came when the *Pax Romana* had abolished war. Political excitement took its place and they still had their blood-letting at election times; but under the Caesars, politics had no more interest for the People. So they looked to the Amphitheatre to bring the needed excitement back into their lives and to enable them to do their blood-letting by proxy.

If the People was all-unconscious of this, their rulers were not. A people that yawns, whether from hunger or from boredom, is ripe for revolution, and the Emperors, knowing this, provided, on an ever-increasing and more lavish scale, both ‘bread and circuses’. Moreover the public holidays gave the Emperor his best opportunity for maintaining contact with his people and keeping his finger on their pulse. The voice of the People was no longer heard in politics, but it was loudly raised in the amphitheatre; and as they saw their *Princeps* in his box, his majesty heightened by all the scenic effects employed by a Hitler or a Mussolini, and yet deigning to share the relaxations of his subjects, popular emotion expressed itself in a mass demonstration of excited loyalty. The Roman Emperors, no less than the dictators of to-day or yesterday, were shrewd psychologists.

# PART FIVE

## ROMAN REMAINS

"We are all of us dust and ashes."

"True, my lord; but in some we recognize the dust of gold and the ashes of the Phoenix."

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR, *Imaginary Conversations*.

### CHAPTER XIX. PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

To many people—perhaps to most—the mere phrase ‘Roman Remains’ will suggest ruins; and the present writer, at all events, must confess that he finds ruins depressing. There is indeed an interest, even a thrill, to be had in following the grassy track that was once a Roman military road; but there is pathos too. We tread so silently along the way whose cobbles once rang beneath the hobnails of the legions. Here and there we can trace the massive walls and towers which once defended some Roman township; but the great ditch is more than half filled up and the walls, if the site is in a ‘built-up area’, are only preserved on sufferance as picturesque ruins. What must it have been like to see the road with its stream of traffic, and the town alive with people like ourselves, buying and selling in the market-place the objects which, cracked or rusted with age, we have been looking at in the local museum? The imagination strains and falters, and we turn away with a feeling almost of sadness.

But it is not with ruins that we are here concerned. ‘Roman remains’ of that kind litter the world from Scotland to Iraq; but the mighty race of which they are the gravestones is dead and gone these many centuries. Then why bother about them? How much more interesting the busy modern town, and the life of to-day which hurries along the road that leads to it! Why bother? Well, for one reason, because the road is very likely a Roman one with a macadam surface; and for another, because



the people in the cars that stream along it to the town would not be what they are if the Romans had not been there before them.

We began this book by asking the question, why learn Latin? We must end by trying to answer it. But half the answer has been given already in the chapters that come between. Latin is worth learning because that is the only way really to know one of the greatest peoples that the human race has yet produced. The Romans are worth knowing for themselves. And the other half of the answer is this. Though Latin is called a dead language, it is active and creative still through the peoples of to-day who use its words 'in modern dress' and whose thoughts are coloured by them. Though the Romans themselves are dead, Roman achievement and Roman thought is very much alive. It has been all-important in shaping the minds and destinies of every generation of Europeans since Julius Caesar. It is shaping ours to-day, and no future world will be so 'modern' as to leave it quite behind.

Rome has been fortunate in her historians, and yet unfortunate in the impression which they give of her history. Livy wrote of the Republic at a time "when amid the horrors of civil war men set themselves to idealize the heroes of antiquity and thus left a gloomy picture of unmitigated deterioration. As there was no great historian in sympathy with the imperial regime, the reputation of the early Empire was left mainly in the hands of Tacitus and Suetonius, the former of whom riddled it with epigrams while the latter befouled it with scandal."\* It remained for the decline and fall of the Roman Empire to be chronicled by the English historian, Gibbon, and it is upon that awe-inspiring catastrophe that our eyes have been fixed ever since, until Rome has become for many people, and particularly for members of our own imperial race, a colossal failure and an awful warning.

So J. C. Stobart points out in *The Grandeur that was Rome*; and he goes on to show how false to history this conception is. The destiny of Rome in world history was nothing less than the

\* *The Grandeur that was Rome.*

making of Europe. There was no decline when the kings made way for the Republic, nor when the Republic in turn made way for the Empire. There was no fall, but further progress, "when the artificial frontiers of the Rhine and the Danube broke down, and the new nations came into their inheritance". No fall, but a re-birth. And yet even Stobart entitles his book 'The Grandeur that *was* Rome'.\* What we are concerned with here is the Roman grandeur that still is, and has become part of the living inheritance of to-day.

Of this living grandeur there survives so much that we can afford to be exclusive. Shall we include as 'living' the great monuments of Roman architecture that have come down to us intact? Triumphal columns and arches, for instance, which have survived to remind the country towns of Europe and even of Asia and Africa that their past is greater than their present? No. The Arch of Titus and the Column of Trajan are still among the wonders of the world; but their physical grandeur is not living. They are survivals, in the modern world but not of it. They adorn the present but do not serve it, except as an inspiration.

And yet it is hard to describe as altogether dead an inspiration which is directly responsible for the Arc de Triomphe and the Place Vendôme in Paris, the Marble Arch and Nelson's Column in London. But these were built at a time of classical revival. However skilfully adapted to meet the circumstances of their day, there is something about them which suggests the reproduction; and we cannot bring ancient art to life by reproducing it.

If we must be strict and leave out the actual buildings which have survived from Roman times, we must include with thankfulness and admiration some of the principles of architecture which have come down to us from those master-builders and which are still shaping our modern building and adapting themselves to needs and purposes of which their creators never dreamed. The arch and the vault, out of which grew the dome,

\* The phrase is, of course, taken from Edgar Allan Poe's poem, *To Helen*.

are Roman. That is not to say that no one ever made either before them; but "it was under Roman auspices and in the service of Roman Imperial architecture that they became the essential and fertile elements, big with possibilities, on which the whole future of European building on the great scale was to depend".\* From St Peter's at Rome and St Paul's in London to the latest Town Hall in a busy manufacturing town, the inspiration is Roman and is alive.

Or is the *very* latest Town Hall built of steel and concrete instead of the bricks which the Romans, through the Italians, taught us to use? No matter. The first people to use concrete for building on a great scale were the Romans. True, they always covered their concrete with a facing of brick or marble, and some of our latest erections suggest that it is a pity we do not do the same. In other ways the most modern treatment of the façades of great buildings still follows and develops the principles of Roman architecture, with its long lines of columns and pilasters and arches, its use of monumental and decorative sculpture, whether in the round or in relief, and even the flight of steps which leads up to the main doorway. We had our 'Gothic revival' in the nineteenth century, and even the Gothic would have been impossible without the Roman development of the vault; but to-day we are following a tradition older and more alive.

The Romans were supreme as architects, but what of their art? Does it any longer affect the modern world? Much of it, frankly, does not deserve to. The Romans understood magnificence as few have done, and built on a grand scale. But they were coarse and flamboyant in their tastes; and when they came to decorate their work they were apt to borrow Greek ideas and vulgarize them. But in sculpture they achieved results which have been potent ever since and are fruitful to-day. We have noticed their use of sculpture in relief to ornament the façades of their public buildings. Those on the Underground Building or Broadcasting House in London are their lineal descendants, though showing

\* G. McN. Rushforth, *The Legacy of Rome*.

signs of a 'touch of the tar-brush', a throw-back to savage African art. But when it comes to sculpture in the round, both the form and the fashion of modern portrait statues and busts are Roman. Equestrian statues first became fashionable in Rome; and to the Romans we owe as well the statues which, whether clad in toga or in trousers, commemorate the national heroes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the peril of London's artistic reputation.

The weakest part of Roman statues was usually the treatment, stiff and conventional, of the figure. A Greek statue, even though headless, is still beautiful; but a Roman statue without a head has lost most of its interest and artistic merit. Their best work as sculptors was therefore the portrait bust, which dispensed with the figure altogether. Here was a genuinely Roman art, of which they may claim to be the originators and almost the perfecters. The making of death-masks,\* from which these portraits took their origin, they learned from the Etruscans, who had it from the East. So from the start they were concerned to 'get a likeness'; and they made this more possible by an invention of their own, that of the 'shoulder bust', which reproduced the set of the head upon the shoulders and so gave more character to the face. The result is a series of Roman portraits, vivid and lifelike, whose bold and masterly technique interprets to us the personality, as well as showing us the features, of men and women, individual and living to this day. If Epstein's portrait busts are, as some think, his greatest work, they owe not a little of their greatness to the Roman tradition.

Such portraits have been described as the natural expression of the Roman genius; for portraiture is a practical art and their genius was essentially (though not exclusively) practical. More strictly practical was another art, perhaps the only other, in which the Romans were supreme: the art of lettering. Roman lettering is designed first and foremost to be read—to be read moreover on inscriptions, often set high up over a doorway or on a triumphal arch, and by people who were not so well

\* See also p. 137 and Plate III, facing p. 49.

accustomed to reading as we are. It had therefore the first merit that all good lettering must have, a merit sometimes overlooked in England during the Gothic revival: it was easy to read. The design of each letter emphasizes the special characteristic of the letter. There is no fancy ornamentation to distract the eye; the spacing is perfect, the essentials stand out bold and clear, and of non-essentials there are none.

Inscriptions record matters of importance; so the lettering must be dignified. They adorn great public buildings; so it must be beautiful. In fact, no lettering is more beautiful than the old Roman. That on Trajan's Column, for instance, has become almost a standard of good lettering. It is as beautiful as it is easy to read, and not least *because* it is easy; a good example, surely, of the modern theory of functional art.

The influence of Roman lettering has been, and still is, unbounded. It is hardly too much to say that English printing has been good or bad as that influence has waxed or waned. It reached its lowest during the nineteenth century (a glance at the inscriptions, later than 1840, in any churchyard will confirm this) and was revived, largely through the work of William Morris. Since then it has gradually strengthened its hold on English lettering, which to-day is often as good as in that 'classical' century, the eighteenth. It harmonizes perfectly with the aims of modern architecture, which are expressed once more in beauty of line and freedom from superfluous ornament. Here, if anywhere, we can see the living force of Roman greatness and its unbounded influence; for it extends wherever print is read.

It is sad to think that the influence of Roman lettering is to-day more obviously alive than that of Roman literature. It is true, as the late Archbishop of Canterbury once remarked, that the Greeks are chiefly to be studied for their literature, the Romans for their history. But that is not to deny that some of the world's greatest literature is written in Latin. It has been the fashion among critics in the past to assert that the Romans were a practical people only: their genius expressed itself in the making of roads and laws, not of literature and works of art,

in which they could get no further than imitation of the Greek. In short, that the Romans as a race were prosaic folk, lacking in creative imagination.

For this view, false as we believe it to be, the Romans have largely themselves to thank, for to some extent they were the inventors of it. It was their fate to come next in history to a race of artists, the most gifted that the world had seen; and from their first contacts with the Greeks they had a strong 'inferiority complex' about them. But though the Greeks remain the supreme artists, perhaps of all time, this does not mean that the Romans had no creative imagination (after all, the stock from which they came was not too distantly related to the Greek), but they used it in another way.

The difference is largely one of religion. That of the Greeks was more anthropomorphic: they worshipped the Olympians who, for all their superhuman powers, were very much like the ordinary Greek 'writ large'; and their imagination took shape in wonderful stories or myths about them. The Romans worshipped spirits, whether of nature or of their dead, which did not provide good subjects for myth-making. So they turned their imagination, not into fables about gods and heroes, but instead to man himself, his character and his achievements.

We have noticed that as artists in marble or bronze, the Romans did some of their best work in portrait-sculpture. The same is true of them as literary artists, as we can see in Livy's History, that great National Portrait Gallery of Rome, in Tacitus' brilliant full-length study of his father-in-law Agricola, the conqueror of Britain, or in Vergil's picture, no less a true portrait for being an imaginary one, of Æneas. These are no mere representations. They are portraits in the true sense, in which we are enabled, by the creative imagination of great artists, to see the heroes of Roman history through their eyes.

Even when portrait-painting is not the writer's main object, he often achieves it by implication. Few writers have been less self-centred than Julius Caesar, and yet the portrait of the author stands out clearly from his Commentaries, the military

dispatches which give, without a wasted word, at once a picture and a justification of himself and his policy. Even Cicero, who hated Caesar's politics but could not resist his charm, proclaimed his admiration for their stark simplicity and unadorned grace. What a contrast, he says, with the silly writers who must needs be 'frizzing up his exploits with the curling-tongs'!

What a contrast, if it comes to that, with Cicero's own writings, which reflect the temperament of that most likeable of egoists, who for sheer love of words and of the patterns that he could make with them, seldom used one word where two would do! Thanks to his private letters even more than to his speeches and treatises, we probably know him more intimately than any other character of antiquity; and despite his pomposity and his puns, it is difficult not to love him for the high ideals which he sometimes betrayed, the warm heart which sometimes betrayed him, his humour and his humanity. He was so like ourselves, with something of sheer genius thrown in which leaves him, at all events as an orator, the greatest of all time. For what orator since Cicero has not coveted the epithet 'Ciceronian'?

But if the prose writers of Rome were true artists, what of her poets? Are they more than clever imitators? Did not Vergil copy Homer, and Horace the lyric poets of Greece? If we grant—and who will dare deny?—that Vergil and Horace were poets, the question answers itself, and we know why it is that no one of the many who have tried has been successful in copying either of them. It is the perfection of *Italian* imaginative feeling, said Dr Warde Fowler, which is to be found in Vergil. "It touches nothing which it does not illumine, and it illumines all that is good and true and lovely in Italy—the land, the streams, the sea, the animals, the labourers, the family life and affection, the hospitality and good faith, the courage and constancy in war and disaster." That sort of thing is not to be imitated, for no great art can be a mere copy even of a greater.

What Horace and Vergil copied from the Greeks was their metre. It was for this that Horace bids his literary friends to "study the Greek masterpieces, thumb them day and night".

He himself copied the metres of Sappho and Alcaeus, only to make them Roman by adoption, a perfect medium for expressing his Roman outlook, his interest in Roman ways of life and character. Vergil found the metre, and even the outline, of his *Aeneid* in the *Odyssey*, but his inspiration as a poet he found in contemplating the growth of Rome, and the growth of the Italian peoples under her leadership. Such poetry gives a body to the very spirit of Rome and on the lips of such poets the hexameter becomes a Roman measure.

The literary genius of Rome received a new stimulus, in fact a new life, from contact with Greece; but it was there all the time, a native Italian genius. How else can we account for the works which it produced? "As if the imaginative impulse could be transplanted where it did not exist, or the gift of the Muses borrowed like money!"\*

Though much is lost, the best of Latin literature survives. To what extent are we justified in including it among the 'Roman remains' that are alive to-day? In France, there can be no doubt about it. French is Latin, and it is impossible to say at what point her literature ceased to be Latin and became French; and ever since, the influence of the classics has always been strong, sometimes almost paralysing. Attempts have been made to break with the tradition, but they have failed, and it looks as if they would always fail—a nation cannot dig itself up by the roots. The Third Republic could not entirely break away. Why should we suppose that the Fourth Republic will do so?

Elsewhere in Europe too the thread was unbroken. The scholars of the Middle Ages were conscious of no break. Latin poetry, as distinct from Latin verses, was written continuously from the Augustans to the seventeenth century. Scansion gave way to rhyme, or was even combined with it, but the Muse of Catullus, Ovid and Propertius need not blush for the love-lyrics written by the 'wandering scholars' of the eleventh and twelfth

\* Henry Nettleship, in his presidential address to the Classical Society, April 1920.



centuries, and the spirit of old Rome is still alive in that great thirteenth-century hymn, the *Dies Irae*. Throughout the Middle Ages Vergil was held in less reverence only than the Bible; and the *sortes Vergilianae* were regularly consulted in the same way: you shut your eyes, opened the book and placed a finger at random upon a single line, which you then proceeded to search for meanings, hidden or otherwise, that would give the required oracle. The present writer knows one man at least who ascribes to this method his success in forecasting the winner of the Derby!

In the Middle Ages, those who could write at all wrote mostly in Latin, not only weighty treatises on religion and statecraft but ordinary correspondence when need was pressing and intimate; like the twelfth-century undergraduate who wrote to his sister urging her to plead his cause with his brother-in-law, as he lacked both sheets for his bed and a shirt for his back. She sent the sheets and some money 'but not a word to my husband, or I shall be dead and done for'—*mortua essem penitus et destructa*.<sup>\*</sup> And so on down to Erasmus and the Renaissance, which was the rebirth, not so much of classical literature, as of happiness and joy of living in the hearts of men through their rediscovery of it.

After that the influence of Latin literature was greater than ever, for all educated men had a thorough acquaintance with it, and for two centuries more it served as a sort of Esperanto by which the learned all over Europe were able to communicate with one another. Sir Philip Sidney, when he went to Shrewsbury as a boy of twelve in 1564, wrote home to his parents in Latin as well as in French! Dr Johnson, who could not speak French well and would not allow a foreigner to show superiority by speaking English, always used Latin when conversing with a Frenchman, though of course the latter could not understand his English pronunciation. Early in the nineteenth century "English squires, popularly conceived of as fox-hunting, wine-drinking country bumpkins. . . ignorant of much that any secondary schoolboy knows to-day, possessed a knowledge of Latin

\* Quoted by Helen Waddell in *The Wandering Scholars*.

and the Classics, which if it did nothing else, provided the lesser gentry with a link similar perhaps, though more painfully acquired, to that now known as the Old School tie".\* Something of the same kind was true even in the twentieth century, until the Natural Sciences took the place in education held by the Classics for nearly 900 years. And even now scientists use, and sometimes coin, Latin names because these, like the sciences, are international. But the art of classical quotation is dead—killed at last by the so-called 'modern' pronunciation of Latin, which promised to make quotations in that language intelligible to all, and has in fact made them unintelligible to almost everybody.

And yet there is no need to put, say, the year 1914 on the gravestone of Latin literature. More people continue to read and to enjoy it throughout their lives than is generally suspected, not least in times like these when so much else is passing away; and if Latin really is a dead language, we may claim that the corpse is still warm. Doctors write their prescriptions in it to this day, and call the parts of the human body by multitudes of Latin names. If an apt quotation from Vergil, certain to be applauded in Burke's House of Commons, is more likely to draw laughter from our less literate Parliament, Latin is still quoted to some purpose in the Law Courts. *Cui bono?* (who stands to gain?) is as searching a question to-day as when Cicero used to ask it; and many a phrase of lawyers' Latin preserves a jewel of Roman common sense: *De minimis non curat lex*—the law is not concerned with trifles; *Salus populi suprema lex*—the good of the People is the final law. Even among ordinary folk a few tags are still current coin, like Horace's *eheu fugaces*. His *nil desperandum* occurred recently in *The Times* cross-word puzzle; and it is strange but true that a Latin phrase or two is to be found in most modern detective stories.

But the signs of life which we see in Latin literature to-day are not confined to these rather feeble flickerings. What lives and moves and is powerful for good when we let it, is the ideas

\* K. M. R. Kenyon, *A House that was loved*.

which that literature expresses, and that when it is most truly Roman. A good example is Lucretius, scientist and poet, and a Roman before all else. He had a Roman's hatred of tyranny, and a Roman's understanding of law and order; and he is fired with a passionate longing to rescue mankind from the tyranny of superstition and of death through an understanding of Nature, who rules, not capriciously but constitutionally, through the laws of nature. Though fewer people to-day read his great poem *de Rerum Natura*, and though our scientists know more of nature than he did, the issue which drove him to write it has never been more urgently important. The rule of law or the rule of fear. The last war was fought to decide it.

The Roman instinct for order and the sanity of their outlook upon life found an enduring monument in Roman Law. Their law reflects what was best in the Roman character. It pervades their ideas, their institutions and their literature. It contributed much to the shape of Roman, and indeed of European, history and is perhaps their greatest contribution to the world of to-day. So that although Roman Law, as a subject of study in itself, hardly concerns those who are learning Latin, we must include some account of it, however short, in our attempt to estimate how much of Rome remains.

In a sense the Romans may be called the originators of Law as we understand it. Other and earlier peoples had their laws; but they regarded the Law as something which was imposed upon them by the will of a higher power, whether the gods, the king or the city. It was left for the Romans to conceive of Law as something absolute, to be discovered, not invented or revealed. The Greeks may have thought of the idea, but the Romans put it into practice; and for all their feeling of inferiority to the Greeks in the things of the mind, in Law they were their masters, and they knew it.

In the days of the Kings, the Romans too thought of Law as sanctioned by Divine Right; and even when the Republic took their place, it remained a 'mystery' in the hands of the patrician caste. The real beginning of Roman Law was in 451 B.C. when

the Romans, after sending ambassadors to Greece to study the laws of that country, instructed them and ten commissioners to draw up a written code of law. This was the famous *XII Tabulae*, the 'twelve tables', cut on tablets of bronze and exhibited in a public place in 449. Then for the first time the Romans had a *written* code of law. Exactly what laws it contained we do not know, nor does it greatly matter. The important thing is that now no patrician could override it. It was there for all to see and for the humblest to appeal to. Law was a mystery no longer. It was just about a thousand years before Roman Law was codified again, under the Emperor Justinian reigning in Constantinople; and during all that time its development was continuous and unbroken.

Of this Law the Twelve Tables were piously considered to be the source, *fons publici et privati iuris*. Cicero tells us that like all other boys of his generation he had to learn them by heart *tanquam necessarium carmen*, 'a sort of inevitable rigmarole'. The law which was based upon them was the *ius civile* and it applied only to *cives*. Its procedure was old-fashioned and cumbrous, with much of the old religious formality still clinging to it. Precise words, and even gestures, had to be used. One slip, and the case was at an end. For instance, a man once lost his case because he mentioned vines in court by their ordinary name of *vites*, instead of by their legal name of *arbores*. Another rule was that any object in dispute between the parties must be brought into court. In the case of cattle this must have been embarrassing, and in the case of land, one would have thought, impossible. But no; a clod of earth was brought to represent it. Thereafter a variety of forms might be followed. One of the commonest was for the two parties to make a sort of bet (*sponsio*) with one another, each making a deposit of money which was forfeit to the other if he lost his case.

With these illustrations before us of the rigid formality of the old *legis actiones* (and the *lex* referred to was that of the Twelve Tables), we cannot be surprised that they proved more and more inadequate as the power and interests of Rome expanded and

life became more complicated. A more flexible system of law was needed and, for all their conservatism; the Romans found one.

The key to it lay in the right which every Roman magistrate had to issue and post up an 'edict' at the beginning of his term of office. In it he laid down the rules which he intended to enforce, and he might, or might not, include those laid down by his predecessor. Naturally it was the praetor's edict which was the most important, as he was the highest legal authority; and for the same reason his rules gradually assumed the character and force of law. Successive praetors tended more and more to incorporate at all events the best parts of their predecessors' edicts, and there grew up an *edictum tralaticium*, amounting to a set of rules or a body of law handed down from one praetor to another. Under the name of the *ius praetorium* it had largely supplanted the *ius civile* before Cicero's day; and though he learned the Twelve Tables as a boy, he lived to see this *necessarium carmen* banished from the schoolroom.

The *ius praetorium* was described by imperial jurists as the *viva vox iuris civilis* and its purpose was to 'assist, supplement or correct the civil law, for the convenience of the public'. As it was based on common sense and experience, it could grow as Rome grew, keeping abreast of the times, legalizing customs which were proved to be good ones, adapting old laws to new needs and yet preserving what was best in them. Legal procedure was simplified and the cumbersome *legis actiones* fell into disuse.

While the *praetor urbanus* was gradually creating a new body of citizen law by his edict, the *praetor peregrinus* was doing the same for foreigners, and on the expiry of their year of office both were likely to go abroad as governors of provinces. There too they published edicts on their appointment; and as the governor was the highest legal authority in the province, much of his *edictum provinciale* was concerned with the rules of law which he proposed to follow. In course of time and much in the same way as at Rome, the governor's *edictum* became *tralaticium* and de-

veloped into a body of law founded on Roman principles and practice, but drawing upon a wider experience and the ideas and customs of non-Roman peoples. And so there gradually emerged a body of law which was neither that of Rome nor of any one province, but which was arrived at by including as it were the average of the ideas and customs which were found to be common to *all* nations. The Romans called it the *ius gentium*; and the 'levelling' process, by the removal of what was not characteristic of them all, gave new significance to the word *aequitas*, from which we derive the name and idea of Equity.

Meanwhile the influence of Greek philosophers was making itself felt in Rome. The Stoics, in particular, talked of a Law of Nature; not in our scientific sense, but meaning a law which, by the natural light of reason, all men respected, to whatever nation they belonged. In fact the Greeks and the Romans seem to have arrived at the same idea; as usual the Greeks by theory and the Romans by experience. So the two ideas were identified, and the *ius gentium* was thought of as a natural, an absolute, Law, something higher than any national code, on its likeness to which the value of a national code must depend. The Romans called it the Law of Nations, the Stoics called it the Law of Nature and the Christians called it the Law of God. By whichever name, it is one of the noblest conceptions to which man has anywhere attained.

With such a history and such ideas behind it, we need not labour our claim that Roman Law has been one of the forces most powerful in moulding the history of Europe, most intimately affecting the lives and fortunes of ordinary people.

The collapse of the Roman Empire meant, or seemed to mean, the end of Roman Law. But the Church preserved it, with so much else that is precious—did not the Englishman, Thomas Hobbes, say of the Papacy that "it is not other than the Ghost of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof"?\*—and it was the revival of Roman Law in the tenth century which brought the Dark Ages to an end and

\* *Leviathan*, IV, ch. 47.

made possible the idea of Christendom and the civilization of the Middle Ages. For nearly a thousand years it continued to dominate Europe; and though the end of the nineteenth century saw the adoption of more strictly national codes (not always with the happiest results) the moving force behind municipal and international law continues to be Roman.

In England (as distinct from Scotland) no such revival of Roman Law took place. There was a flicker of interest in it under the Normans, and its influence can be seen in the middle of the thirteenth century in Bracton's great work 'On the Laws and Customs of England'. But after that it was confined to the Canon Law of the Church and to its part in the legal education of English lawyers. Compared with the other countries of Europe, England has been little affected by Roman Law.

It is arguable that we are looking towards it more and more at the present time. Ever since the first world war, we have 'sought peace and ensued it' along the lines of a super-national state—call it a League of Nations, the United Nations, or what you will. We have failed in our search; but the Romans succeeded. The peace which we were looking for between the wars, and which we must go on looking for now this war is won, is a *Pax Romana*. The very idea of a super-national state depends on a super-national law; and the Romans found one—they called it the *ius gentium*, the law of international civilization.

“Unity of sentiment was what Rome attained; and it was the only unity worth attainment. Uniformity was neither sought nor secured. . . . Over all the differences of race and culture, which in the Empire were many and great, there supervened a unity, not of language or religion or material civilization, but of common interest in the welfare of the whole.”\* In such a unity lies the hope of the modern world. It is for the chance to realize this hope that we are fighting to-day—not just for the right to live, but for the right to live with our neighbours in the way which we like. That way of life has rested until now on

\* Hugh Last, *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. xi.

three supports, the genius of Greece for freedom and beauty, the genius of Israel for religion and the genius of Rome for law and order. Our theory is Greek, our ideas are Christian, but in action we are the inheritors of Rome. Nor must we forget, in reckoning our debt to her, that it was the Roman roads which brought to us the Greek philosopher and the Christian missionary.

Of this threefold 'classical' civilization the inhabitants of Germany have been and are the foes. Many centuries ago they issued from the depths of their forests to destroy it. Rome fell; but though they laid her towns in ruins and barbarized her civilization, they could not kill the ideas upon which her Empire was built, and which have been the inspiration of Europe ever since. To-day, filled with a hate which springs from a darker barbarism, the Germans are striving to stamp out not only the material, but the spiritual, legacy of Rome.

Rome fell to the barbarian on her frontiers because her spirit was already corrupted by the barbarian within her gates. To-day we hope more confidently to repel the force of German arms than to resist the more insidious attack which is being made from within upon our 'classical' English civilization. It comes from those who are scornful of our classical tradition because they do not understand it, who cannot value it because their standards of value are false.

Interest in the Classics was declining before this war, and the urgent need of technicians during the course of it has quickened the process. The result is that our schools are filled with future citizens earnestly weighing and measuring, and too often allowed to think that nothing is real which the test-tube and the balance cannot prove. This may be unavoidable at the moment; but the moment will pass, and what then? A surfeit of 'scientists' and a dearth of 'humanists', before humanity has learned to control the discoveries with which science has already provided it.

No, the most urgent need of the post-war world is not going to be for more and yet more scientists, but for poets and prophets,



statesmen, artists and dreamers, and above all for saints. Such men are not the automatic product of any one type of education; but our chances of getting them will not be improved if we lose our classical inheritance by neglect. For what does that inheritance amount to? The love of Beauty, the worship of Goodness and the rule of Law. These come to us through Rome and from Rome. We need them to-day, and we shall need them to-morrow, no less than we have needed them in all our yesterdays.

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