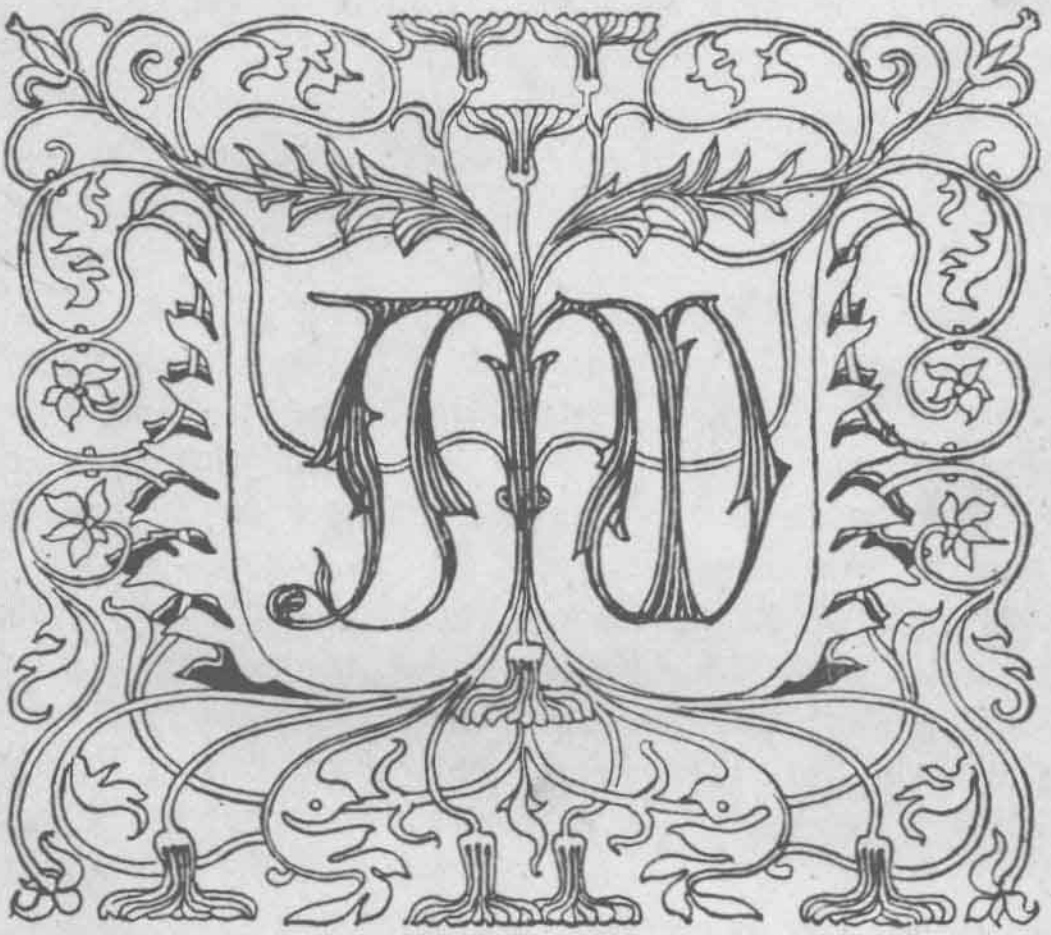
The Story of ROMĖ

by Norwood Young

Illustrated by Nelly Erichsen



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Digna locus Roma est quo Deus omnis eat.

Ovid.

The Story of Rome

PREFACE

THE story of Rome covers an area so vast that it would be pedantic on my part to apologise for the omissions which will be observed on every page of this little book. It is, of necessity, an abridgment of the work of many authors and many volumes.

The small space at my disposal has made it impossible to add to the story of Christianity in Rome any adequate consideration of Roman churches, museums and ruins. I have devoted one chapter, the second, to a slight sketch of the remains lying in the neighbourhood of the Colosseum and Forum Romanum, and I have mentioned the more important of the recent sensational discoveries, but it is too early yet to dogmatise as to their exact significance. Excavation is still being keenly pursued, and new finds may at any moment negative the opinions already formed.

Such other topographical references as the book contains will be found in the last chapter, and in the Appendix, which has a few practical suggestions as to hotels, etc., an itinerary for the hurried visitor, a short list of books, and a very brief statement of the more interesting objects to be found in some of the most important churches.

I have borrowed freely from all the authors whose works are mentioned in the Appendix. I have not

thought it necessary to encumber the text with the constant citation of authorities, but special recognition is due in this place to the following volumes, which have been my constant guides and have supplied me with the passages marked by signs of quotation, viz. :— Lanciani's *Ancient Rome*, *Pagan and Christian Rome*, and *The Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome ;* Middleton's *Remains of Ancient Rome ; Christian and Ecclesiastical Rome*, by M. A. R. Tuker and Hope Malleson ; Bury's *Gibbon*, and his own *Later Roman Empire ;* Hodgkin's *Italy and Her Invaders ;* Mrs Hamilton's translation of Gregorovius's *History of Rome in the Middle Ages ;* Milman's *Latin Christianity ;* Creighton's *History of the Papacy during the Reformation ;* Symonds's *Renaissance in Italy; St. Peter in Rome*, by the Rev. A. S. Barnes ; Boissier's *Archæological Rambles*, translated by D. Havelock Fisher ; and Owen's *Skeptics of the Italian Renaissance.*

I have been greatly assisted by the valuable advice of Mr G. M'N. Rushforth, M.A., of Oriel College, Oxford ; and by my brother, Mr Dalhousie Young, M.A., late of Balliol College, Oxford.

N. Y.

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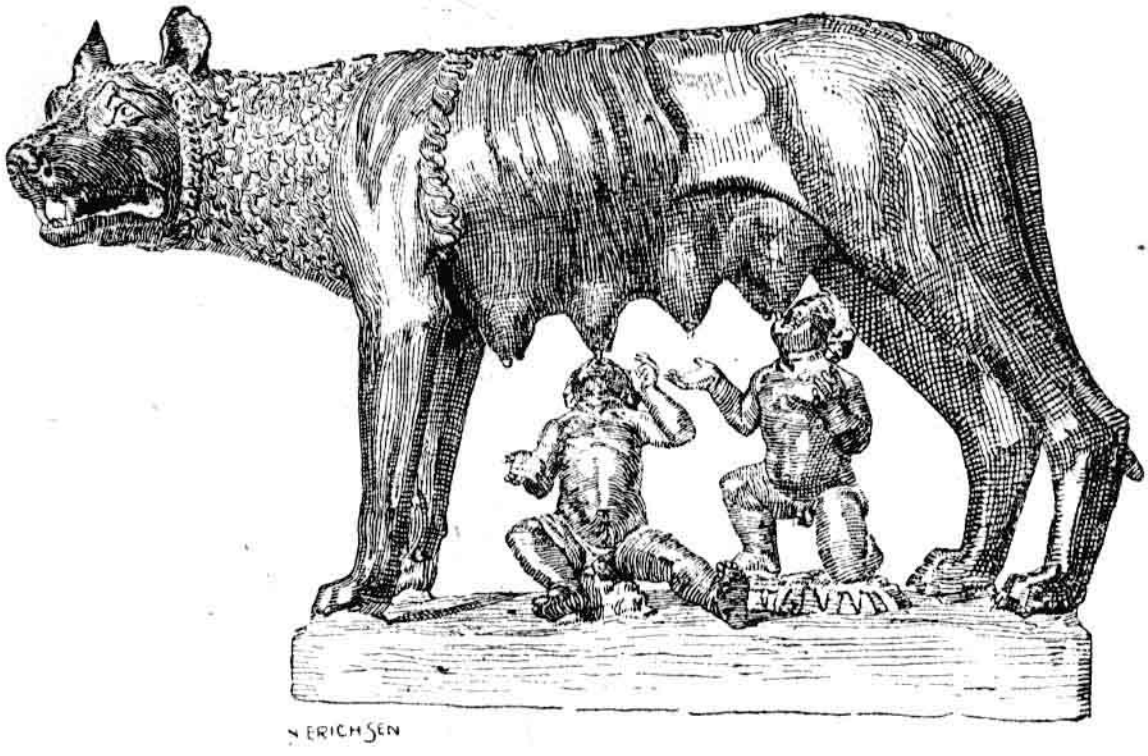

THE WOLF IN THE PALACE OF CONSERVATORS

The Story of Rome

CHAPTER I

The Rise of Rome

'Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento :
Hae tibi erunt artes, pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.'—*Vergil.*

THE origin of a town is to be found in its site. In the period when Rome was first selected for habitation, long before 753 B.C., the legendary date of Romulus, a good site lay amongst fertile plains, with a hill for defence and a river for navigation. Rome had all these advantages. She was nearly in the

centre of a fine pastoral district, bounded by the Sabine and Alban hills on one side, and by the sea on the other.

Her seven hills stood on the banks of the Tiber, far enough from the coast-line to be safe from the attacks of pirates, and near enough for easy communication seawards. These famous hills were the Quirinal, Viminal, Esquiline, Cælian, Aventine, Capitoline and Palatine. Of these only the Aventine, Capitoline and Palatine were near the river. The Aventine, while precipitous towards the Tiber, was open to attack in the other directions, and the Capitoline was too small for settlement. The Palatine satisfied all requirements. It was steep on all sides, and yet afforded convenient access for the herds of the primitive settlers, by the slope upon which now stands the Arch of Titus. The walled town, square in shape, and hence called Roma Quadrata, was entered in the middle of this north-eastern face by the Porta Mugonia. And the Palatine had the further advantage of a central position amongst the hills, surrounded by the six others without being cut off from its close touch with the river.

The Romans believed—and these Roman traditions powerfully affected the history of the capital of the world—that after the fall of Troy, Æneas, carrying with him his father Anchises, his son Ascanius, the Penates or household gods, and the Palladium, a statue of Pallas or Minerva which had fallen from heaven, journeyed to the coast of Latium, where he founded, about three miles from the mouth of the Tiber, the town of Lavinium. This spot was afterwards regarded by the Romans as the sacred repository of their national religion; it was the custom in the time of the Republic for dictators, consuls and other officials to sacrifice at Lavinium when they entered upon office. Ascanius founded Alba Longa on a ridge of the Alban Moun-

tains, where he and a succession of sixteen Latin kings reigned for over 400 years. The last of these kings were the brothers Amulius and Numitor. Amulius, the usurper, compelled Rhea Silvia, the daughter of Numitor, to become a Vestal Virgin, hoping thus to destroy all chance of an heir being born to inherit the throne of Numitor. This scheme was frustrated by the god Mars, whose love for the Vestal was followed by the birth of the twin brothers Romulus and Remus. By the order of Amulius, Rhea was buried alive according to law, and the twins were placed in their cradle upon the Tiber, then in flood, and abandoned to their fate. But the noble river, the 'father' of the Roman people, gently deposited the cradle at the foot of the Palatine, where it was overturned, as the waters receded, on the root of a wild fig-tree. Here a she-wolf gave her milk to the babes, and a woodpecker brought them food. Discovered at length by a shepherd, they were brought up by his wife, and grew to manhood on the Palatine Hill.

The well-known legend need not be related further. It shows that in Roman belief the Palatine was inhabited by shepherds before the foundation of a walled village upon the summit by Romulus. A pastoral people, settled in the Campagna, was under the influence of a controlling centre somewhere in the Alban Mountains. Then a walled town was built upon the Palatine Hill, which, from its position on the Tiber, became the commercial focus of the trade of the neighbourhood.

Thus Rome began her career as the emporium and fortress of the surrounding country. That district, Latium, lies in the centre of Italy.

The whole history of the rise of Rome is thus explained. Rome began by conquering Latium, and thence extended her sway over Italy. Her success

was certain, because after every fight the victor took possession of the most convenient spot; and Rome was therefore always the ultimate home of the dominant race. Whether the conquerors were originally Latins, Sabines or Etruscans, they all became Romans.

The Romans themselves attributed much of their success to the situation of their town. When Rome had been destroyed by the Gauls in 390 B.C., some of the houseless Romans advocated an emigration to the neighbouring town of Veii. Livy has put in the mouth of Camillus, the conqueror of Veii, the following reasons for rebuilding their city[1]:—

'Not without good cause both God and man chose this place for the building of this City: most healthy and wholsome hills: a very convenient and commodious river; to bring in corn and other fruits out of the inland parts, to receive provision and other victuals from the sea-coasts: the sea itself near enough for commodities, and not exposed and open by too much nearness to the dangers of forrain navies: the very heart and centre of all Italy, a place as a man would say, "naturally made, and only for that City to grow and increase in."'

Thus excellently placed with regard to Latium and Italy, Rome was also in the centre of the Mediterranean basin. Thus when the Roman Imperium was at its greatest extension, under Trajan (100 A.D.), and included the whole of the civilised world, it stretched equally in all directions from Rome. From the north of England to Rome is as far as from Rome to Jerusalem; from Gibraltar to Rome the same distance as from Rome to the furthest Roman possessions beyond the Danube. The geographical position of Rome, and the military successes of its citizens, naturally encouraged a political system of centralisation in the

[1] All the translations from Livy in this book are taken from the Elizabethan work of Philemon Holland.

capital; and the practical engineering skill of the Romans furnished the Empire with the necessary arteries, the famous Roman roads, all radiating from the heart, carrying Roman civilisation and life to the furthest limits of Europe.

A time came, however, when it was apparent that the centre of gravity had shifted from Rome. The countries north of the Mediterranean proved more important than those on its shores. A policy of decentralisation was found to be desirable, and therefore centres of executive government were created in the subordinate capitals—Trèves (Trier), Milan (afterwards superseded by Ravenna); and in the east Nicomedia, Antioch, Constantinople. These sub-capitals had the further advantage of being near to the chief points of danger on the frontiers. It also became evident that the peculiar conditions of the site of Rome, which had made her an excellent centre on a small scale, did not suffice for the capital of a great empire. The summits of the seven hills seem to have been the only healthy parts of the city, and they were insufficient for the accommodation of a large population; while the Tiber frequently inundated the lower portions, and was too shallow and small a river for serving as the commercial highway of the world's capital. Julius Cæsar and Augustus both had serious thoughts of removing the seat of Empire. Diocletian virtually did so when he abandoned Rome for Nicomedia. In the fourth century Trier, Milan and Constantinople were the Imperial residences. During the last two centuries of the Empire, Rome seldom received the honour of the Imperial presence.

The rise and fall of Rome may thus be shortly ascribed to her position, as the true centre of Latium and Italy, and the false centre of Europe.

The Roman type, with its manly, self-confident

character, was produced by incessant warfare, both external and internal. The Temple of Janus, closed in peace, open in war, was continuously open (except for a short interval between the first and second Punic Wars) from Numa to Augustus, a period of 650 years. While this process of selection and hardening was steadily raising the conquering type, an equally constant and severe conflict raged inside the city. The struggle between patricians and plebeians continued through the whole period of growth, up to the foundation of the Empire. Its most famous incident was the secession of the plebeians to the Mons Sacer, about three miles from Rome, in B.C. 494. The patricians sent one of their number, Menenius Agrippa, to remonstrate and induce the plebeians to return. Agrippa, as Livy relates, 'after that old and harsh kind of eloquence in those days, spake as men saith to this effect, and told this tale and parable: "Upon a time (quoth he) when as in man's body, all the parts thereof agreed not, as now they do in one, but each member had a several intent and meaning; yea, and a speech by itself: and so it befel, that all other parts besides the belly, thought much and repined that by their carefulness, labor, and ministery, all was gotten, and yet all little enough to serve it: and the belly itself lying still in the midst of them, did nothing else but enjoy the delightsome pleasures brought unto her. Whereupon they mutinied and conspired altogether in this wise, that neither the hands should reach and convey food into the mouth, nor the mouth receive it as it came, nor yet the teeth grind and chew the same. In this mood and fit, whiles they were minded to famish the poor belly, behold the other limbs, yea, and the whole body besides, pined, wasted, and fell into an extreme consumption. Then was it well seen, that even the very belly also did no small service, but fed the others'

parts, as it received food itself: seeing that by working and concocting the meat thoroughly, it digesteth and distributeth by the veins into all parts, that fresh and perfect blood whereby we live, we like, and have our full strength." Comparing herewith, and making his application, to wit, how like this intestine and inward sedition of the body, was to the fell stomach of the commons, which they had taken and born against the senators, he turned quite the people's hearts.'

The interdependence of all classes, thus early appreciated by the Romans, was the solid foundation upon which they built their political system. A sober, religious and manly race, hardened by the ordeal of external and internal battle, gradually fashioned a system of government based upon mutual respect and compromise, in which the rights and the duties of the individual and of the community were sensibly adjusted.

Mommsen tells us how it was done:—

'The great problem of mankind,' says the German historian, 'how to live in conscious harmony with himself, with his neighbour, and with the whole to which he belongs, admits of as many solutions as there are provinces in Our Father's Kingdom; and it is in this, and not in the material sphere, that individuals and nations display their divergencies of character.' And then he makes the following comparison between the Greek and the Roman: 'That Hellenic character, which sacrificed the whole to its individual elements, the nation to the single state, and the single state to the citizen; whose ideal of life was the beautiful and the good, and, only too often, the pleasure of idleness; whose political development consisted in intensifying the original individualism of the several centres, and subsequently led to the internal dissolution of the authority of the state; whose view of religion first

invested the gods with human attributes, and then denied their existence; which gave full play to the limbs in the sports of the naked youth, and gave free scope to thought in all its grandeur and in all its awfulness; and that Roman character which solemnly bound the son to reverence the father, the citizen to reverence the ruler, and all to reverence the gods; which required nothing and honoured nothing but the useful act, and compelled every citizen to fill up every moment of his life with unceasing work; which made it a duty even in the boy to modestly cover the body; which deemed everyone a bad citizen who wished to be different from his fellows; which viewed the state as all in all, and a desire for the state's extension as the only aspiration not liable to censure.'

In Rome, he says, 'the ultimate foundation of the law was in all cases the state; liberty was simply another expression for the right of citizenship in its widest sense; all property was based upon express or tacit transference from the community to the individual; a contract was valid only so far as the community confirmed it. This state which made the highest demands upon its burgesses, and carried the idea of subordinating the individual to the interest of the whole further than any state before or since has done, only did and only could do so by itself removing the barriers to intercourse, and unshackling liberty quite as much as it subjected it to restriction.'

Freedom and discipline are the essential factors in every scheme of government. The secret of prosperity lies in the creation of an equilibrium between the two. The higher the civilisation, the closer will be the approximation to a perfect poise. Greece became powerful by the temporary co-operation of the different entities of her population. Rome conquered the world by the permanent concentration of all individual

energy in the cause of the state. But when Greek liberty became licence, Greece fell; and when Roman discipline degenerated into tyranny, the Roman empire came to an end.

The Empire fell, but Rome had a second career before her. Enriched by the fallen leaves of the Empire, the soil pushed up a new growth even more wonderful than the first. Once more Rome conquered the world, this time by moral influence — a force hitherto unrecognised. Her second child, the Pope, became greater even than Cæsar had been. Taking the track of the Roman legions, the Papal Imperium penetrated further, into countries which they had never trod. But the Pope failed to obtain permanent hold of the new territories. Physical Rome had not prepared them for the reception of moral Rome. And so at the present day the Papal influence is greatest where Cæsar has been strongest.

To turn now from the abstract to the concrete. Let us pay our respects to the city.

There are several excellent points from which good general views may be obtained. On a first visit to Rome the stranger would do well to begin his experiences on the Janiculan Hill, extending them on the Aventine and Palatine, and concluding with the Capitol. A full half-day of four hours (or more) should be given to the expedition.

He should go by way of the Corso, the Piazza del Popolo, the Castle of St. Angelo and St. Peter's, to S. Onofrio, where the carriage will halt; doing so again at Tasso's Oak; and at the open space where stands the large equestrian statue of Garibaldi. The view of St. Peter's from the west edge of this plateau should not be omitted. The most famous panorama of Rome is a little further on, past the Acqua Paola, in front of S. Pietro in Montorio.

There will be a feeling of surprise at the general aspect of flatness, not one of the seven hills being, at first, perceptible. But these historic eminences were never more than large mounds, and in the course of two thousand years their elevation has been diminished by the filling in of the valleys. The mountains in the background are finely visible—on the left Monte Mario; then Monte Soratte; in front the Sabine Hills; on the right the Alban Mountains (the original home of the Roman race), with the towns of Frascati and Grotta Ferrata on their lower slopes, flanked by Monte Cavo.

Glancing over the city, it will be noticed that there are many domes and square-topped towers (campanili), but not a single spire, though some of the campanili—such as that of S. Crisogono in Trastevere, just below the spectator, or S. M. Maggiore facing him on the Esquiline—have a needle point to the square tower. There is nothing northern or Gothic about this town; rather has it a touch of eastern, of Byzantine influence. There is also a general impression of vastness and of utilitarianism, of broad, barrack-like façades pierced with long lines of windows—the Palazzo Farnese, for instance, the Quirinal, and even the Basilica of S. Paolo Fuori, might be taken for hospitals or barns. And this is evidently not an ancient, nor yet a mediæval town. The bones of classic Rome may lie hidden somewhere in the streets below, but are not here visible. Nor does this bright city carry on its face the marks of its sad mediæval life. In the middle age only a small part of the present area was inhabited. That surface was covered with towers, to the number of a thousand—watch-towers on the walls, bell-towers used for the defence of the churches, and separate military fortresses. Only one of them is visible from here, the Torre delle Milizie, to the left of the twin globes and campanile of S. M. Maggiore. All that