

# **STORIES FROM ANCIENT ROME**



The son of “Manlius Torquatus, provoked beyond endurance by the taunts of the Latin champion, rode out from the ranks.”

# **STORIES FROM ANCIENT ROME**

**BY**

**PROF. A. J. CHURCH, M. A.**

*with FRONTISPIECE, SEVEN DRAWINGS  
BY H. R. MILLAR, AND MANY OTHER  
ILLUSTRATIONS*

**YESTERDAY'S CLASSICS**

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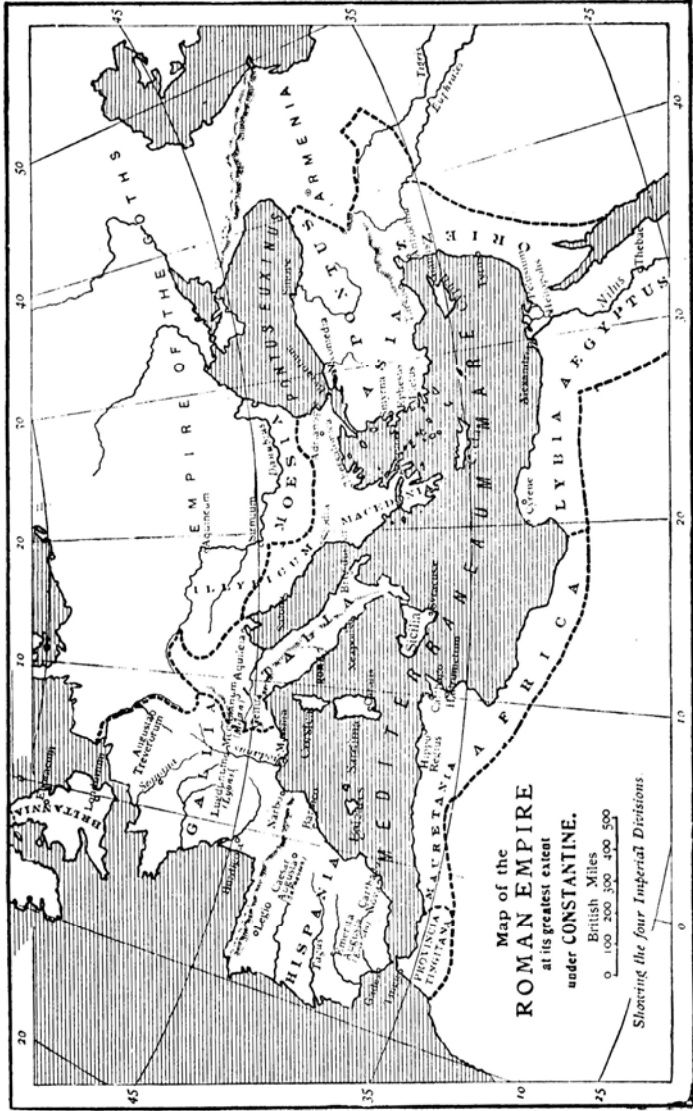
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Map of the  
**ROMAN EMPIRE**  
 at its greatest extent  
 under **CONSTANTINE**.

British Miles  
 0 100 200 300 400 500

Showing the four Imperial Divisions





## CHAPTER I

# THE BEGINNINGS OF A STATE

ABOUT the middle of the eighth century before Christ, there was founded in Italy a new town which was to become the most famous in the world. The site of Rome, for that was the name of the new foundation, was very well chosen. A number of hills—they were reckoned as seven, though there were not so many separate heights—looked down upon a riverside meadow. The hills were steep enough to be easily defended, but not too steep to be built upon.

The river was navigable, and the distance from the sea was not so great as to cause inconvenience, but was enough to make the town safe from the attacks of pirates. The first settlers occupied two of the seven hills, one of the two being certainly the Palatine, the other probably the Quirinal. They seem to have been shepherds or herdsmen. So much we may gather from the oldest names, such, for instance, as that of one of the gates in the first city wall, *Porta mugionis*, “the gate of lowing.”

One of the reasons which probably brought about the settlement at Rome was the fact that the country to the south was troubled by eruptions from a

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volcano. There is, it is true, no volcano now, but the lake of Alba, a town of which I shall soon have to speak, has evidently been at some time a crater. Some settlers may have been fugitives from neighbouring towns, men who had broken the laws and were flying from justice, or who had been driven out by civil strife.

Whoever the inhabitants of the new town may have been or wherever they may have come from, there very soon arose a difficulty which is felt in all young settlements, as in our own colonies in times past or even now—where were they to find wives? The chief of Rome sent envoys to the neighbouring towns, belonging to two peoples known as Latins and Sabines, and asked that the Roman townsfolk might be allowed to intermarry with them.

Rome was not, however, well liked among its neighbours. If its population was partly made up of people who had got into trouble at home, there was good reason why they should not be regarded with favour. At any rate the envoys were not well received, and their request was refused. The Romans then resolved to get by force what they could not persuade their neighbours to give them.

Romulus—who was their chief—proclaimed a great festival, to which, in the name of his people, he invited the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns, together with their wives and daughters. They came in great numbers.

While the guests were looking on at the games, which, as usual, were a part of the festival, the young men of Rome rushed in among them and carried off

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the unmarried women. The men, unprepared and unarmed as they were, could make no resistance. All that they were able to do was to make their own escape.

Of course the angry towns resolved to punish the Romans for this outrage; and if they had combined in an attack on the new State, they would very probably have conquered it. But they were too angry to wait. Even the three Latin towns which had suffered most did not act together. Separately they attacked the Roman territory, and separately they were beaten. One of them was glad to accept the terms which Romulus offered, and was united with Rome.

But when the great Sabine people, under its king, Titus Tatius, advanced to the attack, the danger became serious. The Romans did not venture to meet this powerful enemy in the field, but prepared to defend their walls. But the walls did not sufficiently protect them. The Sabines gained possession of the citadel, by the treachery of a woman, as the Romans declared—they were always ready to account for anything that was not to their credit. However this may have been, the invaders certainly made their way into the city. There the fighting was furious.

At first the Sabines had the best of it, and the Romans fled. Romulus vowed to build a temple to Jupiter the Stayer, if the flight was stopped. His prayer was answered—so runs the story—the Romans turned fiercely upon their pursuers, and these in their turn fell back. Then came another change; the Sabines rallied, and the Romans could do little more than hold their own.

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**“In a pause of battle the Sabine women rushed between the hostile lines.”**

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In a pause of the battle the Sabine women rushed between the hostile lines, some of them carrying in their arms the children whom they had borne to their Roman husbands. They begged of their fathers and brothers on the one side and their husbands on the other, to cease from a strife from which, however it might end, they were bound to suffer. Their entreaties were heard. The battle was stopped; terms of peace were discussed, and in the end the two nations were made into one, under the joint rule of Romulus and Tatius.

Before long Tatius met his death in a private quarrel, and Romulus reigned alone for the rest of his life. His successor, Numa, a Sabine, it would seem, by birth, was a man of peace. His long reign of forty-one years was given to the ordering of religion and law. The two peoples which had been brought together in so strange a way were made into one harmonious whole.

Much might be said of the things that go to prove this union, but it will suffice to mention, as long as the Roman State lasted its citizens were wont to be called by the name of *Quirites*, the very name which the Sabine kings of old had used in addressing their subjects.

The reign of Tullus Hostilius, the warrior-king who succeeded the peaceful Numa, brought another accession to the State of Rome. Some twelve miles to the south stood the ancient city of Alba Longa. Between this city and Rome there was a close tie of kindred. Romulus was the grandson of an Alban king,

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the son of a princess who had been ill-treated by a usurping uncle, and some at least of his subjects in the new city which he had founded had been of Alban birth.

But kinship does not always mean friendship. The Jews, for instance, owned the relationship of nations for which they felt the bitterest hatred, Edom, Midian, Moab and Ammon. So it was with Alba and Rome. There were often border wars between the two States. Out of these was developed in course of time a serious struggle which could but end in the overthrow of one or the other.

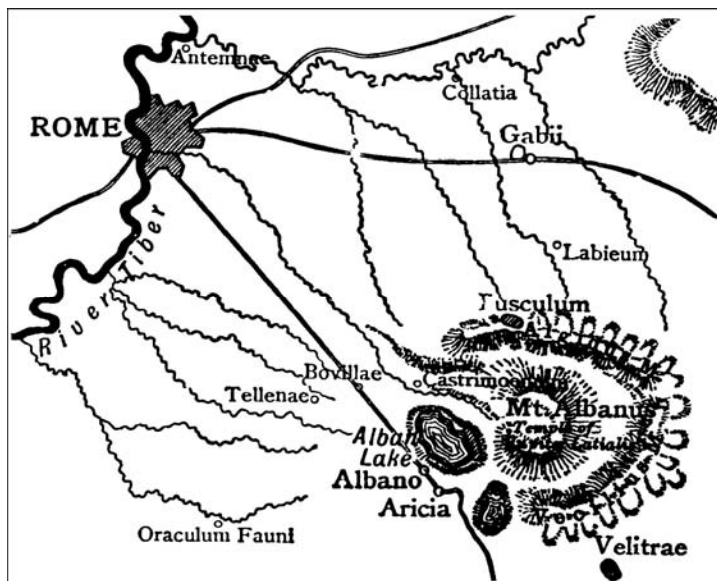
The army of Alba invaded the Roman territory under its king, this monarch fell in battle, and the army retreated within their own borders. The Romans followed them, and a great battle seemed certain, when the Alban general proposed that the quarrel should be fought out by champions chosen from the two sides. The champions of Rome were three brothers of the name of Horatius; those of Alba three Curiatii.

In the conflict that followed two of the Horatii were killed; the third remained unhurt. None of the Alban champions had fallen, but they were all wounded. The surviving Roman contrived to separate them, and was more than a match for each taken by himself. In the end they all fell by his hand.

The army of Alba was now, according to the agreement, at the disposal of the Roman king, and he had soon occasion for its services. One of the most powerful of the Latin cities, which had been for some time in subjection to Rome, made an alliance with the

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Etruscan city of Veii, and on the strength of it declared its independence.



Map of Rome and the Alban Lake

The Roman king summoned the army of Alba to his help. It obeyed, so far as to appear on the field of battle, but it took no part in the struggle. It awaited the result. When victory declared for the Romans, the Alban general came up and offered his congratulations. But the Roman king was not disposed to submit to such treatment. He seized the Alban general, and ordered his body to be fastened to two chariots; they were then driven in different directions, and the unhappy man was torn asunder. This revenge was followed up by destroying the city of Alba and transferring the whole of its population to Rome. Thus did

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Rome within little more than a century from its foundation absorb two considerable peoples.

It is very likely that other great powers, such as the mighty monarchies of the East, have had much the same beginning. But there is an incident in the story of how Rome got the upper hand of Alba which seems to mark the character of the new State. When the victorious Horatius was coming back to Rome, escorted by his comrades, and carrying the spoils of the vanquished champions, the women went forth to meet him, and among them was his sister. She spied among the trophies of the victory a garment which she had made for her betrothed, an Alban youth, and she burst into loud cries of sorrow. This untimely grief stirred his wrath, and he struck her to the ground.

He was tried for the crime upon the spot, condemned—for, indeed, his guilt was obvious—and sentenced to death. As the officers of justice were binding him, that he might undergo his sentence to be scourged and then hanged, the young man cried: “I appeal to the people.” And his cause was tried again before a general assembly. This remitted the penalty upon condition that certain rites of humiliation should be undergone.

It was a sign that the new power, which was to have so great an influence on the history of the world, was to be a rule of law administered by a free people.



## CHAPTER II

### A LIFE AND DEATH STRUGGLE

THE year 510 was a year of revolution in Southern Europe, as in modern times was 1848. It was then that Athens drove out the sons of Pisistratus; it was then that Rome expelled the House of Tarquin. The first Tarquin was an Etrurian noble who had come to Rome at some time in the reign of its fourth king, Ancus Martius. He had become famous there by his wealth and great talents, and had somehow contrived to secure the succession to the throne. Rome had prospered under his rule, and though, after his death, the royal power passed for a while out of his family, the name of Tarquin was still a power in the State.

By help of this, by Etruscan influence, for the Etruscans were near neighbours of Rome, their great city of Veii being but ten miles distant, and by his own daring, the grandson of the first Tarquin became the seventh King of Rome—and the last. It is needless to tell the story of how and why he was expelled.

Though his rule was oppressive, he was able and successful. Rome became the acknowledged chief of the Latin cities; her territory was enlarged at the expense of her neighbours, the Volsci; she had the

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advantage of being on friendly terms with the Etrurians.

It was the bad conduct of one of his sons that caused the king's overthrow and exile. The Romans' latest experience of monarchy made them resolve to change their form of government.

Theirs was to be a free State, though much was to be done and suffered, as we shall see, before freedom was reached. There were to be two heads of the State, who should hold office for a year; they were to be called *Prators* (foremost men), a title which was changed before long into *Consuls* (colleagues).

The expelled monarch was not disposed to accept the new order of things, and he lost no time in attempting to recover his throne. He had not, as had his fellow-sufferer in Greece, the son of Pisistratus, to wait for the slow movements of an Eastern king, who was hundreds of miles away.\* His friends were at hand, for it was, of course, to the Etrurians that he appealed for help.

His first effort, however, was made in another direction. He had friends and helpers at Rome, some who really believed that the old order of things was better than the new, and others who had profited by the royal favour in the past, and looked to profit by it in the future. Tarquin sent envoys to Rome; they were nominally to ask that his private property should be restored to him, really to communicate with a royalist party which had conspired to restore the king to his

\* Hippias, the son of Pisistratus, was expelled in 510. It was not until 490 that the Persians made a real effort to restore him.

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throne. The conspiracy was discovered, however, and it was punished in a way which showed how sternly resolved the chiefs of the new Republic could be to do their duty without fear or favour.

Among the guilty were the two sons of Lucius Junius Brutus, who was one of the recently appointed prætors or consuls. Brutus made no attempt to save his sons from the penalty of their crime. On the contrary, he presided at their trial, pronounced on them the sentence of death, and sat with unmoved countenance while they were scourged and beheaded.

As for the property of the banished family, it was divided among the people, who were thus bound more strongly to support the new order of things.

Not long after, the Roman army met the allies of Tarquin in the field. Before the battle began, Brutus and one of the sons of Tarquin met in single combat. Both were slain. The battle itself had no decisive result, but Tarquin certainly was no nearer than before to recovering his throne.

In the course of the following year, however, he found a more powerful friend. This was Lars Porsena, King of Clusium, and head of the great league of Etrurian cities. The Romans did not venture to meet their new enemy in the field, and they failed to hold their first line of defence. This was the Janiculum Hill on the right or Etrurian bank of the Tiber—Lars Porsena took it by storm.

Rome itself now seemed to be at his mercy, for he had only to cross the bridge which joined the Jani-

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“Horatius held his place till the structure had actually fallen.”

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culum to the city. But here he was baffled by the boldness of three heroic Romans. The three, representing the three great elements in the Roman people, Latin, Sabine, and Etrurian, held the bridge till its supports were cut away, and the river thus rendered impassable. The names of all, Spurius Lartius, Titus Herminius, and Horatius Cocles (Cocles means the One-Eyed), lived for ever in the memories of their countrymen, but the third was held in especial honour. His two comrades retreated to the Roman side while the last supports of the bridge were still standing; Horatius held his place till the structure had actually fallen. Then, weakened as he was by wounds, and burdened with the weight of his armour, he leapt into the river and just succeeded in reaching the Roman bank.

Rome was safe for the time, but the prospect of the future was dark. Lars Porsena had practically command of the whole country; the food supplies were cut off, and the city, which was crowded with fugitives from the rural districts, was in danger of starvation.

A young Roman noble, Caius Mucius by name, thought of a plan, which he told to a number of his friends, of delivering his country by getting rid of its powerful enemy. He made his way into the Etrurian camp, to all appearance unarmed, but carrying a dagger concealed about his person.

The King's secretary was seated in a conspicuous place, busy in receiving applications and petitions. He was clad in a splendid robe of purple, and Mucius, thinking him to be the King, stabbed him to the heart.

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He was at once seized and taken before Porsena. The King threatened him with torture. Mucius replied by thrusting his right hand into the fire, which was burning hard by, and holding it there till it was consumed.

“I am not afraid of your tortures,” he said, “still I will tell you the secret which you wish to extort from me. Know, then, that there are three hundred men who are as determined as I am to rid the country of its most dangerous enemy. One by one they will make the attempt, and you may feel sure that sooner or later they will succeed.”

The King was so impressed with this threat that he resolved to come to terms with so determined an enemy. So he made a proposal for a treaty, and as he was willing to give up his demand that King Tarquin should be restored to his throne, the Romans gladly accepted his terms.

He was to have yet another proof of how bold a race he had to deal with. Hostages, ten boys and as many girls, were handed over to him, to be held in custody till the conditions should be fulfilled; but Clœlia, one of the girl-hostages, contrived to elude the soldiers who were guarding her, and plunged into the river. Her companions followed her example, and all reached the Roman bank in safety. The Romans, however, sent them back, and Porsena, greatly impressed by this display of courage and good faith, set the hostages at liberty, restored without ransom all the prisoners whom he had captured, and even handed over to the besieged for the relief of their distress all the stores in his camp.

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These picturesque stories must not, however, hide from us the truth that Rome had, in fact, to undergo a great humiliation. One Roman writer tells us that the city was surrendered to Porsena; another informs us that among the terms of the treaty was one frequently imposed upon a conquered people—as by Sisera on the Hebrews in the days of Deborah and Barak, and by the Philistines in the time of Saul—that no iron should be used except for agricultural tools.

One more great struggle Rome had to make before her freedom was assured, and this was with her Latin kinsfolk. One of the most powerful of the Latin chiefs was Octavius Mamilius, of Tusculum, who had married a daughter of King Tarquin. The decisive battle took place at the Lake Regillus.

There we hear, for the first time, of a personage who often appears in Roman history. The consuls were superseded for a time, and a dictator whose power was absolute took their place.

One of the old champions of the bridge reappeared and slew the Latin chief. Other deeds of valour were performed; Rome was helped, so the story ran, by the presence of the twin brethren, Castor and Pollux, just as in Spanish history we hear of St. James of Compostella leading on the Christian army against the Moors. In the end the Latin army was routed. This was in 495, and two years later Tarquin died.

The city of Veii, one of the most ancient and most formidable of the enemies of Rome, seems to have taken no part in the campaigns of Porsena. This king represented an adverse party in the Etruscan

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League. We even find him, when he had become friendly to the Romans, gratifying them by a gift of Veientine territory. When we remember that Veii was only twelve miles distant from Rome—less than the distance that Kingston-upon-Thames is from London—we perceive what a fortunate circumstance this was. After the death of Porsena the two cities were constantly at war. It is impossible to do more than note one or two of the principal events. In 476 happened the great disaster of Cremera. It is a strange story. The Veientes, unable to withstand the Roman army in the field, took shelter within their walls, issuing forth when occasion offered to plunder and destroy.

One of the great Roman families, the Fabii, undertook to deal with the trouble. It should be their business to protect their country against these robbers. The whole clan—three hundred and six men, not one of whom, says Livy, the Senate would have deemed unfit for high command—marched out of Rome, and took up a position which commanded the hostile territory. This they held for two years with success; in the third they were lured into an ambush, and perished to a man.

Only one young lad of the Fabian race remained. Happily, he had been left in Rome, for he was to be the ancestor of a race which was to serve the country in after times. Twenty years after this the Romans determined to put an end to the perpetual annoyance of an enemy almost at their gates. They found it no easy task, even though Veii received no help from the other Etruscan cities. The siege lasted for ten years, a period of supreme importance in the



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history of Rome, because she then had for the first time a standing army. In the tenth year a strange phenomenon was observed. The Alban Lake rose so high as to threaten the surrounding country.

The oracle of Delphi being consulted directed that the waters should be drained off, not by the usual channel, but by distributing them over the country, and that this would bring about the capture of the city. This may mean that by making a new outlet the means of driving a mine under Veii was discovered. This seems to have been the way in which the city was taken. A band of Roman soldiers suddenly emerged in the temple of Juno, which stood on the citadel. The inhabitants made a fierce resistance, but after a while, under a promise of their lives, laid down their arms. They were sold into slavery. In such matters the age had no scruples, but the gods of the place could not be disposed of so easily. A pious excuse was therefore invented. Juno was the patron deity of the city, and one of those who had been commissioned to deal with the matter asked her "either," says Livy, "by inspiration or in jest," whether she was willing to go to Rome. Her associates declared that the image nodded assent; some went so far as to say that they heard the words, "I am willing." For some years Veii stood empty; more than once Roman citizens, discontented with their lot at home, took up their abode in it. Once at least a general migration was proposed. But there was no permanent settlement. The place fell into decay. Three centuries and a half later Propertius sang:—

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“O ancient Veii! splendid once and great,  
Her forum graced with throne of royal state;  
Now there the lazy shepherd’s horn is blown,  
And where her chiefs lie dead the harvest mown.”

