

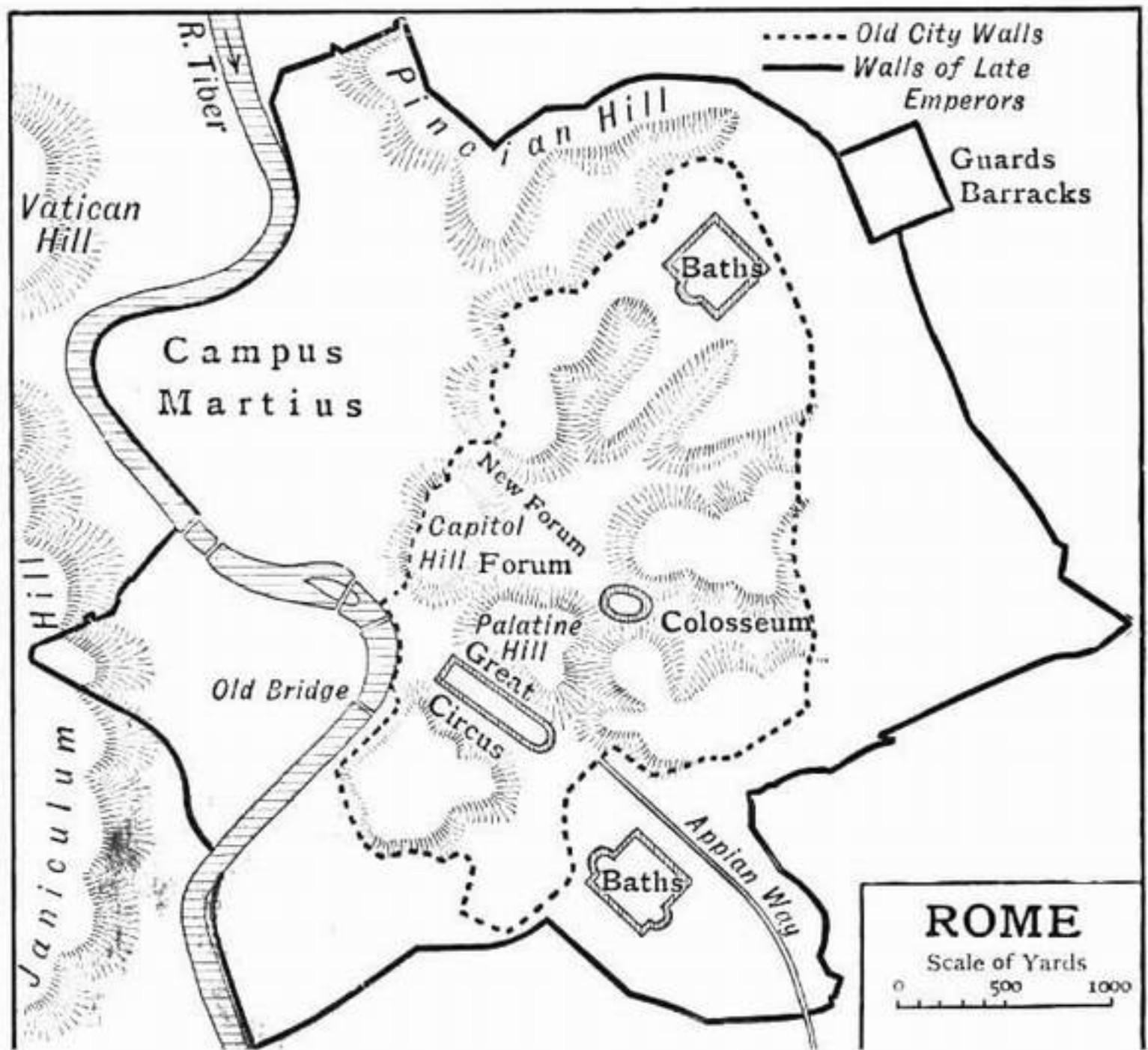
## Chapter Six - The Roman Republic



*The Romans Were Fond Of Pork*

### A. The City On Seven Hills

Rome to-day is still the centre of an empire and the capital of a great country. It is still a crowded and most interesting city; but though there are some impressive relics left of its ancient grandeur, we cannot expect a town that has always had a large population to remain anything like it was two thousand years ago. Yet there are some things that do not change. The natural boundary of the city on its western side is still the yellow-green river Tiber, with the ridges of the Janiculum and the Vatican rising from its further bank. The Romans of to-day, most evenings of the year, can enjoy, as much as their far-off ancestors did, the glorious crimson sunsets over those ridges, when the whole city for a few moments seems to catch fire. There is still an open, public space in the upper loop of the Tiber, the one that curves away from the city, where the Field of Mars was in ancient times. The Pincian Hill, the northern outpost of Rome, and its public gardens where "umbrella" pines and cypresses grow, is the rendezvous of the fashionable world out for a stroll in the cool of the evening, as it was in the days of Cicero and Caesar. The hills on which Rome was built have shrunk with time. But the Capitol, small yet steep, still dominates them.



*Map - Rome*

Looking south-east from its topmost height across a bare plain, the Roman Campagna, you see, twelve miles away, the blue Alban hills, that lead up to the Apennines, the great central "spine" of Italy. If you walk about the streets of Rome in July or August in the afternoon, especially if you are reckless enough to stay on the sunny side, you will realise before very long why well-to-do Romans of the ancient world deserted the capital at that time of the year and fled to their villas among the cool woods and waterfalls of the Albans or on the cliffs of the lovely bay of Naples.



*The Bay Of Naples - A View from the district fashionable in Roman times.*

The history of Rome really begins about 500 B.C., i.e. when Athens was under the rule of "tyrants" and the Greek cities of the Asia Minor coast were restless under Persian overlords. It was about that time that Rome became a republic. According to legends, which contain a certain amount of truth, for a hundred and fifty years before that, Rome had been ruled by kings, the last of whom had been hated "foreigners," Etruscans from the large province immediately to the north of Rome.





*Horatius Swimming To Shore*

These Etruscans, a thick-set race with long, black hair, seem to have had an eastern origin. We do not yet know much about them, as they have left no literature and we cannot yet understand their inscriptions. They seem to have been descendants of Lydians or even Hittites who had emigrated to the far west. At any rate they had a higher standard of civilisation than the native tribes of Italy, and we can assume that under their rule early Rome made great progress.

The legends tell us how the last king of Rome, Tarquin the Proud, by his harshness and arrogance goaded the Romans into rebellion, and they drove him out. Of course, he made determined efforts to get back, helped by his friends and kinsmen among the Etruscan chiefs. You must have heard of at least one story concerning that struggle, how Horatius and his two friends defended the wooden bridge over the Tiber, the only one in those days, against the royalist invaders suddenly pouring down from the Janiculan hill. In "Lays of Ancient Rome" (by Macaulay) the heroic spirit of those early days of the republic is wonderfully revived. You remember how the bridge began to collapse with Horatius still on it, for the Romans had feverishly cut through its supports at their end, and how with a prayer he jumped into the river and swam, fully armed, to the bank, so that "even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer."

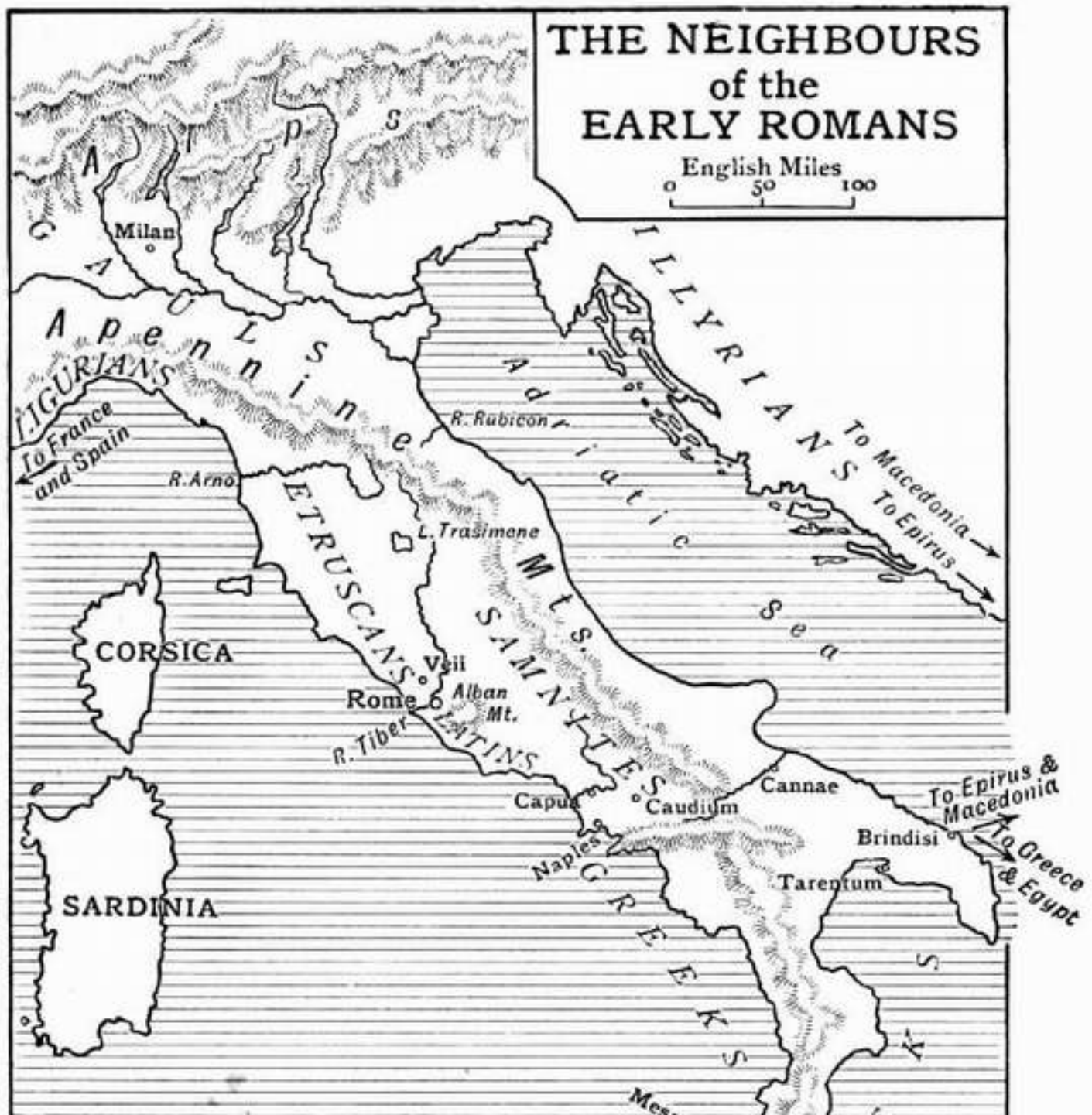
Before we go any further with the history of Rome, a problem must be stated, and in the rest of the chapter you must look for different parts of the answer, which is not a simple one. The problem is this— why did the Romans become first, masters of Italy, then lords of nearly the whole of the world known in their days? They began as one of many Italian city-states, and not a specially well-situated or enterprising one at that. At the period when our story begins, no one would have dreamt that the small town on the Tiber, about fifteen miles from its mouth, was destined to be mistress of the world. The Etruscans in their strong towns were masters of a large, rich province immediately to the north of them. The largest of these towns, Veii, was only twelve miles from Rome. And to the south lay Capua, also founded by Etruscans, a large and flourishing city in the fertile province of Campania.

In the early days, the Capuans, living their easy and luxurious lives, must have despised the Romans, who were content with simple living and drudgery.

In the north of Italy, in what we to-day call Piedmont and Lombardy, lived large numbers of Gauls, tall, mostly fair, and warlike people, an important branch of the Celtic race which in the Bronze and Early Iron Age occupied a good deal of north-western Europe. Even to-day in north Italy you will frequently come across fair, blue-eyed Italians. Fierce fighting took place between the Romans and the Gauls before the war-loving northern hordes submitted. The Romans never regarded the northern plain as really Italian. To them it was a continuation of the country we call France. Italy began officially not at the Alps but at the first part of the Apennine range that slants across the peninsula from the Gulf of Genoa to the Adriatic. The great river basin between the Alps and the Apennines they called "Gaul on our side of the Alps." On the shores of what we call the French and Italian Rivas and in the limestone hills behind, as well as in Corsica, lived very fierce tribes known as Ligurians.

All along the south coast of Italy, from Naples to Tarentum (p.117), and in the east of Sicily, there were Greek cities. They were mostly content to live as Hellenes and take little notice of Italian affairs. But we shall hear of Tarentum and Syracuse again. In western Sicily, here and there in Sardinia, and on the nearest parts of the African coast, were the cities of the Phoenicians, by far the most important being Carthage. Returning to Rome after our tour round Italy, we must note that a long stretch of mountain country to the southeast was occupied by the Samnites, a race as proud, hardy and well-disciplined as the Romans themselves.

We have given this complete list of the neighbours of early Rome in order to state the first part of our problem (p.192) in greater detail. In doing so, we have forecast a good deal of the earlier history of Rome, because all these neighbours were in turn defeated and subdued.





*Map - The Neighbours of the Early Romans*

Not that the Romans set out with the idea of conquering the whole of Italy. It was done partly in self-defence, partly in response to requests for help made to them by allies. Some of the reasons for the success of the Romans we can set down here. The first may be given briefly as Discipline, enforced by harsh punishment, but also arising from a strong instinct in Roman character. In contrast with the Greeks, who insisted on their rights, the Romans thought first of their duties. According to Roman ideas the Greeks asked too many questions. It was enough for a Roman that his father, his magistrate, or his officer had given an order. To carry out that order, however unfair or unpleasant, was all the "Virtue" or "Justice" a true Roman need trouble his head about.

This instinct for obedience probably arose from the custom that gave every Roman father absolute power over his sons, even when they were grown up, married, and fathers themselves. In theory a Roman father could put his son to death for serious disobedience, and sometimes this terrible privilege was exercised. There was at various times bitter class-feeling in Rome between the aristocrats (patricians) and the ordinary population (plebeians), but it was not allowed to wreck the State, the instinct for unity being too strong.

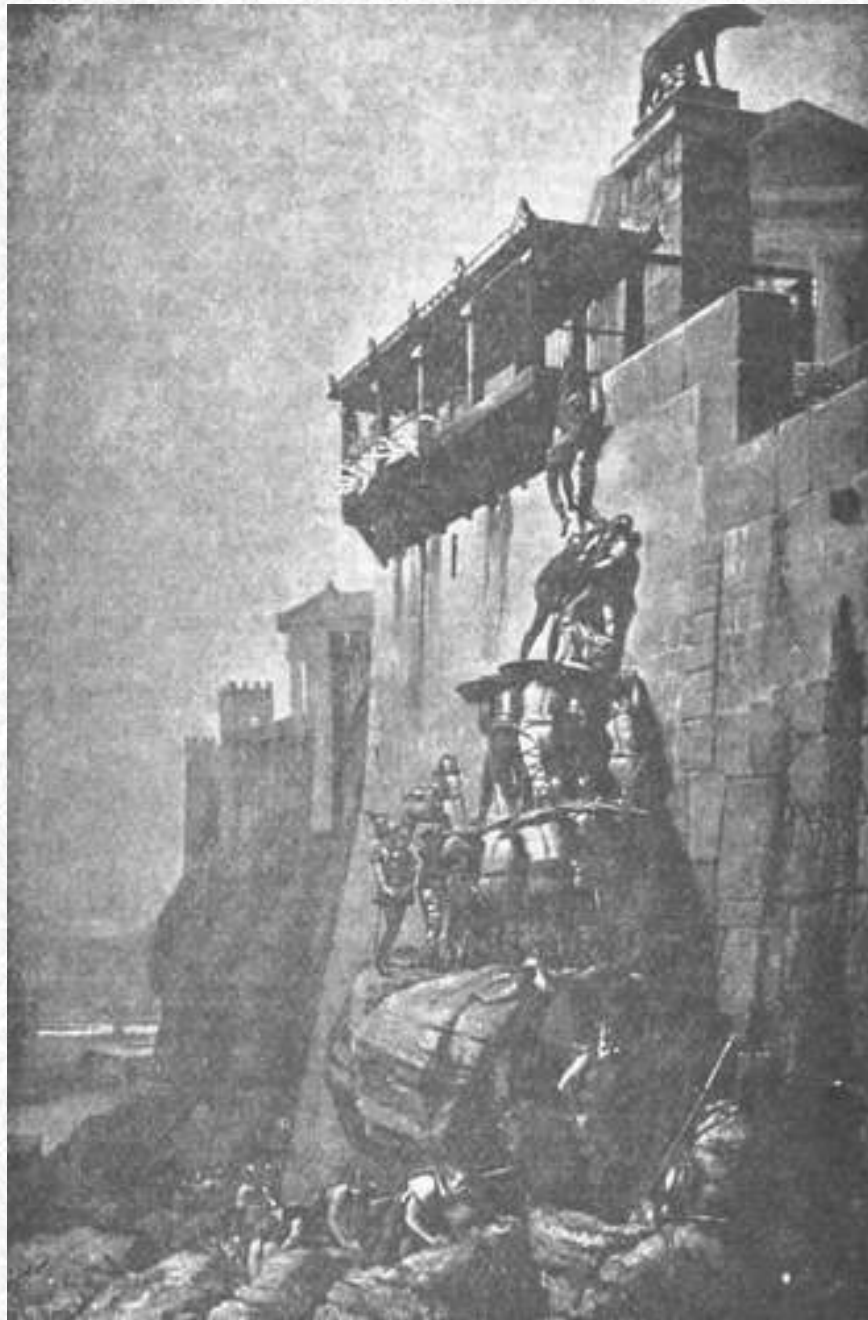
Another reason was the intense pride of the Romans and their boundless confidence in themselves. "Rome is bound to win in the end," they always thought. And because they felt sure of that, in the end they always did win.

A different sort of reason was their skill as civil engineers, backed as it was by the Roman readiness for hard physical toil in any climate. They considered no task beyond their powers. If a lake had to be drained, a road taken over mountain or marsh, a wide, swift river bridged, the tools and gear were sent for, or were made on the spot, and in anything from a few days to a few years the task was done. If a city had to be starved into surrender, the Romans thought nothing of building ten or even twenty miles of elaborate trenches and ramparts round it. Once the ring was complete an enemy's chance of getting in or out of that city was a very poor one. The Romans were not fond of the sea, and were not what we should call good sailors. But if the need arose, they could turn a forest into a navy in a few weeks, and crush Gallic tribes used to sailing the Channel and the Bay of Biscay, or the Carthaginians of north Africa, with all their five hundred years' experience of the Phoenician galley.

We need not go into great detail about the wars which made a Latin tribe, living between the Tiber, the Alban hills and the sea, masters of Italy, But you may like to hear some of the stories connected with these wars. Under pressure from tribes beyond the Alps the Gauls of north Italy swept down into Etruria. A friendly city appealed to the Romans for help, and the latter sent ambassadors who very foolishly joined in a battle against the Gauls. These, enraged, advanced on Rome and utterly defeated a Roman army by the river Allia, a tributary of the Tiber, only six miles from Rome. The anniversary of that defeat was always regarded as an unlucky day by the superstitious Romans. There was a panic flight of most of the inhabitants from the lower part of the city. A small force of the bravest men undertook to defend the citadel and the temples on the Capitol hill. Some of the old men also stayed behind in the city.

Too old to fight, they meant to sacrifice their lives for Rome some other way. The Gauls celebrated their victory with revels, and it was some time later that they entered Rome, advancing slowly and cautiously, uneasy at the strange silence of the deserted city. Soon they came across the old men, each sitting on a chair of ivory, clad in his state robes, as motionless as a statue. Then a Gaul stroked the white beard of one of the elders, perhaps to see if he was really alive. The old man at once struck him with his staff, whereupon he and the others were killed. They died willingly, believing their deaths would appease the anger of the gods at the sin of the Roman ambassadors. The Gauls then burned the city and attacked the Capitol.





*The Gauls And The Geese On The Capitol - Notice the statue of the Wolf and the Twins.*

For months they failed to take it. Once they found a secret way up the rocks and climbed up at night. Not a sentry heard them, not a dog barked. But there was a flock of geese in the Capitol, kept in the temple of Juno. They did hear the Gauls, and all cackled their hardest till one of the sleepy guards awoke, only just in time. But at last the garrison was starved out, and the Gauls had to be bribed with gold to go away (390 B.C.). There were later raids, but in these the Gauls were defeated, their swarms of cavalry and blood-curdling battle-cries now causing less terror. In time the Romans felt strong enough to send armies to north Italy, and after several wars the Gauls, checked by a line of fortress-towns, accepted Roman rule.

About fifty years later came the first of a series of wars with the Samnites. These hardy mountaineers constantly raided the rich plains of Campania, and when Capua itself was threatened, it appealed to Rome. The Samnites readily accepted the challenge, and proved themselves the most dangerous rivals the



Romans ever had. The most famous incident in these wars is the Roman surrender at the Caudine Forks. A Roman army, in a hurry to help allies on the far side of the Samnite country, rushed headlong into a trap almost as soon as they had crossed the Samnite border. They had to go through one mountain pass, across a little plain encircled by steep hills, then into a second pass. When they reached the entrance to the second pass, they found it completely blocked and guarded by Samnites. They hurried back to the first pass, and found that while they were crossing and re-crossing the plain, the Samnites had been busy there too. It was hopeless to try to climb up the rocks elsewhere. There was nothing for it but to surrender.

The Roman general agreed to the terms demanded by the Samnites to end the war, but before his men were released, they had to pass under the yoke, i.e. their arms and all their clothing but one garment were taken from them, and amid jeers and blows they had to slip through the space formed by a horizontal spear lashed half-way down two upright ones. Now although the consuls (magistrate-generals) as well as all other officers had sworn to get the treaty passed by the Senate (see p. 202), when they returned to Rome they did nothing of the kind, and it is this part of their conduct which is beyond argument dishonourable and unRoman. The Senate refused to recognise the treaty and at their own request sent all the officers back as prisoners to the Samnites. The latter refused to have them unless, of course, all the men who had surrendered at the Forks were returned as prisoners too (321 B.C.).

It was not till 290 B.C. that the wars came to an end, the Samnites still remaining independent, though they had to give up their leader who had trapped the Romans at Caudium, and he was put to death. They remained bad neighbours, ready to help any enemies of Rome. More than two hundred years later they took advantage of Rome's desperate troubles to get revenge. At that time the Romans were fighting fiercely among themselves, while their best commander was away in the east, fighting the most dangerous king the Romans ever had to deal with. At the very gates of Rome, the army which had been brought back from the east utterly defeated the Samnites. Their land was laid waste, the inhabitants killed or sold as slaves, and Roman colonists took their place.

The power of the Etruscans was greatly weakened by the raids of the Gauls. But the strongest of their massive cities still defied the Romans whenever a chance occurred. One by one, however, they fell victims to obstinate Roman sieges. By about 300 B.C. all the Etruscans were in varying degrees subjects of Rome.

Rome's chance to obtain control of southern Italy occurred through a quarrel with the leading Greeks of Tarentum, who were inclined to be impudent busybodies. The other Greek towns had long looked up to the Tarentines as their leaders. But in 282 B.C., harassed as often before by raids of southern Italian tribes, some of them appealed to Rome for help, and admitted Roman garrisons. Of course the Tarentines were furious. Now the Romans some time before had agreed never to send their ships into the great square bay in the foot of Italy on which Tarentum lies. Through some mistake a small Roman fleet strayed in and was fiercely attacked by the Tarentines. When the Romans sent a deputation to settle the quarrel, the mob jeered at its leader's attempts to speak Greek, and threw mud at his toga. "Laugh now," he said sternly, "but you will weep when you wash this toga with your blood." A ten years' war followed, in which the Tarentines were helped by Pyrrhus, the ambitious young prince of Epirus, the large province to the northwest of Greece that comes within fifty miles of the heel of Italy. He was anxious to win renown as "the Alexander of the West." He copied the methods of his famous kinsman, and at first his phalanx

(p.144) and his war-elephants badly frightened the Romans. But though he claimed his first battle with them as a victory, his own losses were so heavy that he said to his staff, "Another such victory and I shall be ruined." Hence our phrase "a Pyrrhic victory." He tried his luck in Sicily, but the Carthaginians (p.193) severely harassed him. On his return to Italy the Romans defeated him so heavily that he was glad to leave. Soon after this Tarentum surrendered (272 B.C.) and the Greek cities accepted the Romans as their overlords.

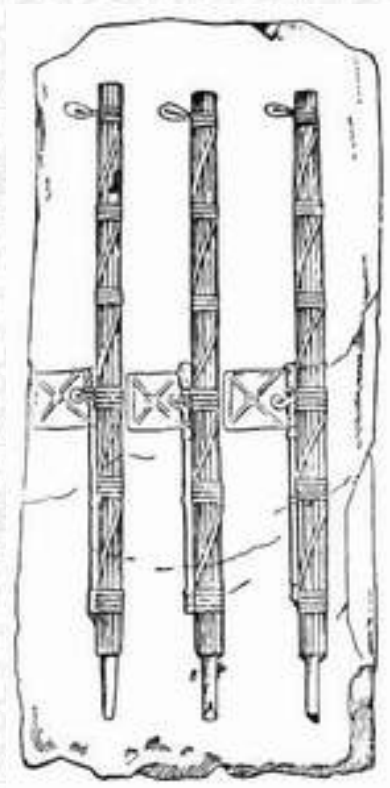
The struggle with the Ligurians was a very slow and tedious business. Long after they had been driven from the coast, along which ran the main road to France and Spain, these savage, wiry little men in their hill-forts defied the Romans for centuries. But the Romans, learning by painful experience, adapted their fighting methods to mountain warfare, and by sheer grim persistence wore down the Ligurians at last.

By establishing numerous colonies of Roman citizens, giving many of their nearer subjects, especially the Latins, some of the privileges of Roman citizens, and allowing the more distant ones to govern themselves, as long as they paid taxes and supplied soldiers when required, the city by the Tiber bridges made its rule tolerable to most Italians most of the time. A city-state now for the first time governed a large country.

## **B. S.P.Q.R.**

You may have noticed the above four letters in pictures of ancient Rome and wondered what they meant. They stand for the Latin words SENATVS POPVLVS QVE ROMANVS (the V's are pronounced as U's.). That means the Roman Senate and People, and it sums up the government of Rome in the days when it was a republic. It is high time we got some idea of how this government worked.

When kingship was abolished, the wide powers of the king were divided among a number of elected magistrates, whose authority was bestowed on them by the whole citizen-body. The chief officers of the republic were the two consuls, presidents in peace and also commanders-in-chief during war. Of course this was not at all a convenient arrangement, but in the early days of the republic, the Romans seem to have been very much afraid of the possibility of a "tyrant." It was arranged that either consul should issue orders for a month, and while he was the senior he was attended by the twelve lictors, a sort of police guard. Each lictor carried a bundle of rods, and while the consuls were generals, an axe, fastened together with a red leather strap. These were known as the fasces, and were a warning to all of the consul's power to flog and behead, a punishment regularly inflicted on traitors of any kind. The consuls held office for one year only at a time, but they could be re-elected after a number of years, and there were Romans who could boast that they had been consul three times.



*Fasces - Notice the axes.*

In any very serious crisis of war or politics the senior consul could appoint a supreme emergency magistrate called the dictator. Even the consuls had to obey him, and his lictors, unlike those of the consuls, carried axes in the City. The dictator was appointed for six months only, and he was expected to resign earlier.

The most important regular magistrates after the consuls were the praetors, also annually elected. They were what we should call Chief Justices. The third group of high officials was the aediles, whom we may describe as the Chief Constables of Rome. Every ambitious Roman hoped to be, in turn, aedile, praetor, consul, and so to pass through what was known as "the Course of Honours." These magistrates on state occasions sat on handsome ivory chairs and their togas had a broad purple stripe round the edge.

In the early days of the struggle for power between the patricians and plebeians (p.195), the latter had elected magistrates of their own, called tribunes, to protect them. But even when the quarrel was over, these ten Tribunes of the Common People were still elected and kept their very wide powers. In theory they could imprison any magistrate but a dictator, and in practice they did exercise their right to veto public business of any kind. This extraordinary privilege became doubly important when they were allowed to listen to debates in the Senate.

The mention of the latter very dignified body of Roman aristocrats reminds us that we are still waiting for an explanation of the letters at the head of the section. The word "Senate" itself, connected with "senex," the Latin word for "an old man," tells us that there was in Rome, as in many city-states, a large committee of "elders" who, if they could do nothing more, debated matters of state and gave advice to the governing

power. In the days of the kings, Roman senators were chosen from noble families by the kings.

The Senate remained when monarchy ended. The consuls took its advice, as the kings had done, especially as it became the custom for every high official, if he had carried out his duties without disgrace, to be made a senator for life, when his year of office was over.

Soon the Senators came to be the real governing body of Rome. They were supposed only to advise the consuls, but they could make things very awkward if their "advice" was not taken. A resolution of the Senate came to have as much legal force as a full law agreed to by all the citizens. If a magistrate did not consult them about any important matter, or ignored their wishes, they could hold him up by a resolution, by stopping his expenses or by getting just one of the Tribunes of the Common People to use his veto. The Senate controlled Rome's dealings with foreigners and none but a senator could be an ambassador. In addition to this control of the government, the Senate's power extended to the law courts. As Rome became richer and more powerful, fresh courts became necessary. But instead of making new, permanent law courts, the Senate set up from time to time what they called a Committee of Inquiry, which became just as powerful and permanent as a High Court, but was under the senators and not the magistrates.

After all this you will naturally ask how much power was left for the assemblies of the People, the official partners of the Senate in the supreme authority of Rome. The answer is quite simple. Very little, except the power to elect the chief officials, to declare peace or war, and to vote on such laws as the Senate put before them. So that while the great trumpets blew less and less often at sunrise from the Capitol and the city walls to call out the People to an assembly, the Senate met more and more often. On the platform at one end of the Senate House sat the chief magistrates on their ivory chairs, the lesser officials on their red leather folding stools, and the tribunes all together on a bench. On important questions the senators "divided" into "Ayes" and "Noes" as in our own Parliament.

In the early days of the republic the patricians had tried to keep power of every kind entirely in their hands. It is quite likely that the common people were worse off under them than they had been under the kings. Not only were they kept out of the magistracies and not allowed to learn anything about the laws and the numerous sacred ceremonies on which all Roman public affairs depended, but they were very harshly treated whenever they fell badly into debt, which seems to have happened often. Many poor men were made slaves in this way, and the law even allowed a man's creditors to cut him in pieces, if they could satisfy their greed in no other way.

In the first century of the republic (500—400 B.C.), there was a sharp struggle between the classes, with very little bloodshed, however. The patricians clung to their privileges with true Roman stubbornness, but in the end the plebeians won practically equal rights. Sometimes they threatened to leave Rome altogether and found a city nearby on their own. They actually did leave twice for a short time, and the patricians, with no army to defend Rome, were distinctly frightened. Sometimes the plebeians rallied round a popular leader till he looked like becoming a "tyrant." The patricians hated and feared this threat of what they called a "king" as much as the other method of protest. The fact that there was never actually a "tyranny" at Rome is worth thinking about. A better way out of the quarrel was when broad-minded men on either side agreed upon necessary changes. It took about two hundred and fifty years before all citizens were



equal, that is, in theory at any rate. Wealth and social influence still gave certain families in practice frequent control of the government. But as Rome grew more prosperous, and after the two classes were allowed to intermarry, the old quarrels about privilege of birth, debts, and the price of corn came to an end.

It has just been pointed out that sacred ceremonies played a great part in public life among the Romans, even more so than among the Greeks. The Romans worshipped similar gods and goddesses to those of the Greeks (p.165) with even vaguer ideas about these deities. Like all the ancients, they slaughtered animals as part of their worship. They drove hard bargains with their gods, very carefully worded, like contracts made by lawyers.



*Temple Of Apollo. Pompeii - Pompeii, in Campania, was covered with a thick layer of ashes as a result of the eruption of Vesuvius (in the background) in 79 A.D. From the excavations there we have learned much about Roman life. It was practically a suburb of Naples.*

But one branch of their religion, which caused them to look for "omens" before beginning any sort of public business, seems particularly strange to our ideas. Anxious to find out whether the gods approved of whatever the magistrates or the generals were going to do, they looked for omens in various ways. They sacrificed animals and examined their internal organs. If anything unusual was found, that was a bad sign. They watched the flight of birds across the sky; and paid special attention to thunder and lightning, for in this way Jupiter Best and Greatest, whose temple on the Capitol was the holiest building in Rome, obviously expressed his opinion. They kept sacred chickens and solemnly watched how they fed. If they ignored the grain and ran about chirping, that was bad. But if they gobbled it up so greedily that seeds fell from their beaks, the gods approved.

There is a story of an impatient Roman admiral who, when he was very anxious to begin an important battle, was warned that the chickens would not eat. "I'll see to it that they drink, at any rate!" he roared, and threw the holy chickens, coop and all, overboard. Needless to say, he lost the battle. Sometimes a bad omen could be very inconvenient, and so lies and sly tricks were permitted. It seems strange that such absurd antics, arising from the lowest ideas of the Babylonians (p.48), passed on by the Etruscans, should have been taken seriously by a nation which finally ruled most of the known world. After Jupiter, the Romans most revered Vesta, goddess of Hearth and Home. In her temple burned an eternal fire which was never allowed to go out. Her nuns were known as the Vestal Virgins, girls from the noblest families were proud to join them. The official priests and priestesses of Rome were held in great respect. They took a prominent part in public life and sometimes influenced politics.

### **C. "See to it, Romans, every head is bowed, But spare the conquered when you've crushed the proud."**

The best work that the Romans did in their earlier history was to win central Italy by hard fighting and fair dealing. This section will tell how the Romans won the first part of their world-empire. Perhaps their success was essential for the better government of the world later on. But we cannot always admire their methods. More than once they showed themselves cruel, treacherous and selfish.

Their hardest struggle was against the great trading republic of Carthage, situated on a fine harbour on the north coast of Africa, a day's sail from western Sicily. It was said to have been founded by Phoenicians from Sidon, and it had become the greatest centre of commerce in the western Mediterranean. The neighbouring parts of north Africa, as well as western Sicily, were subject to it, and it had depots in Sardinia, Corsica, the Balearic Isles and south-eastern Spain. In these waters the Carthaginians enforced a monopoly of trade, and their galleys promptly rammed any strangers "poaching" there. The fertile land near Carthage was carefully farmed and divided up into large estates, where great landowners and merchant-princes had their magnificent villas bowered in palms. But for its main wealth and power Carthage relied on its docks, markets and workshops, its merchant navy and the squadrons of quinqueremes which protected it.

Its government resembled that of Rome. There were two "Justices" like the consuls, and a council like the Senate. But they were controlled by a few very rich and powerful merchant-princes. Their rule was based entirely on money and the force it could buy. They kept large gangs of slaves, extorted all they could from their subjects, and hired soldiers of any nation to keep both in order. They were cunning and energetic, and had the confidence which centuries of power bestow.

On the Sicilian side of what we call the straits of Messina lies the old town of that name. A body of Italian hired soldiers seized the town and terrorized the district as pirates and brigands. The Greeks of Syracuse naturally attacked them, and the brigands appealed both to Rome and Carthage, and by their treachery to both caused (264 B.C.) a fierce struggle between the two republics which was only decided after three exhausting wars, and ended with the disappearance of the city of Carthage.

Syracuse joined the Romans, and between them they soon won over most of Sicily. But the strong navy of

the Carthaginians had to be reckoned with. Thanks to that, they could hold out in the harbours of west Sicily and also cut off the Romans in Sicily from Italy. The Romans set to work and built scores of quinqueremes and triremes. They were helped by the Greeks of south Italy, who had agreed to supply ships and sailors just as Italian subjects had to supply soldiers. But the Romans feared the seamanship of their rivals. This they countered by a quite simple invention. They made a drawbridge thirty-six feet long and wide enough for two soldiers abreast to run along. On the underside of this they planted a massive spike, slightly curved. They fixed a short, stout mast in the prow of each of their battleships and fastened the drawbridge to it so that the bottom pivoted freely round the bottom of the mast while the top, with the spike pointing outwards, was slung to the top of the mast and could easily be dropped. Somebody noticed the resemblance of the drawbridge to a giant crow squatting on the deck. When the enemy came close enough the "crow" was dropped and the spike buried itself in his deck. Then the Romans swarmed across and seamanship ceased to matter.

Although the Carthaginians seem to have been quite baffled by the "crow," the war dragged on for years. Hundreds of battleships were built and lost by both sides in battles and storms. At last the Carthaginians were completely exhausted, and peace was made in 241 B.C. The Romans levied a heavy fine and took all Sicily except the territory of Syracuse. A few other towns were left independent, but most of the island was treated as conquered territory. There was no attempt to try to make it an extension of Italy by granting part-citizenship. The Romans imitated the Carthaginians in their selfish abuse of power. They imposed heavy taxes on Sicily and confiscated most of the land.

Greedy Roman landlords rented it, and working the land hard with gangs of slaves, a by-product of the war, exhausted the soil, but soon became rich. The Sicilian farmer who lost his land was, of course, ruined quickly. The Italian peasant-farmer was ruined more slowly but almost as thoroughly, since quantities of cheap, slave-produced corn were henceforth imported from Sicily into Italy. Roman officials sent out to Sicily saw to it that their stay in the island should be a profitable one. The collection of taxes was left to business companies who handed over a lump sum to the government and then collected what they could from the tax-payers. You may be sure that the companies, with soldiers to back them, did not lose on the deal. Then there were Roman money-lenders, willing to oblige the farmer or tax-payer with ready cash, at a high rate of interest.

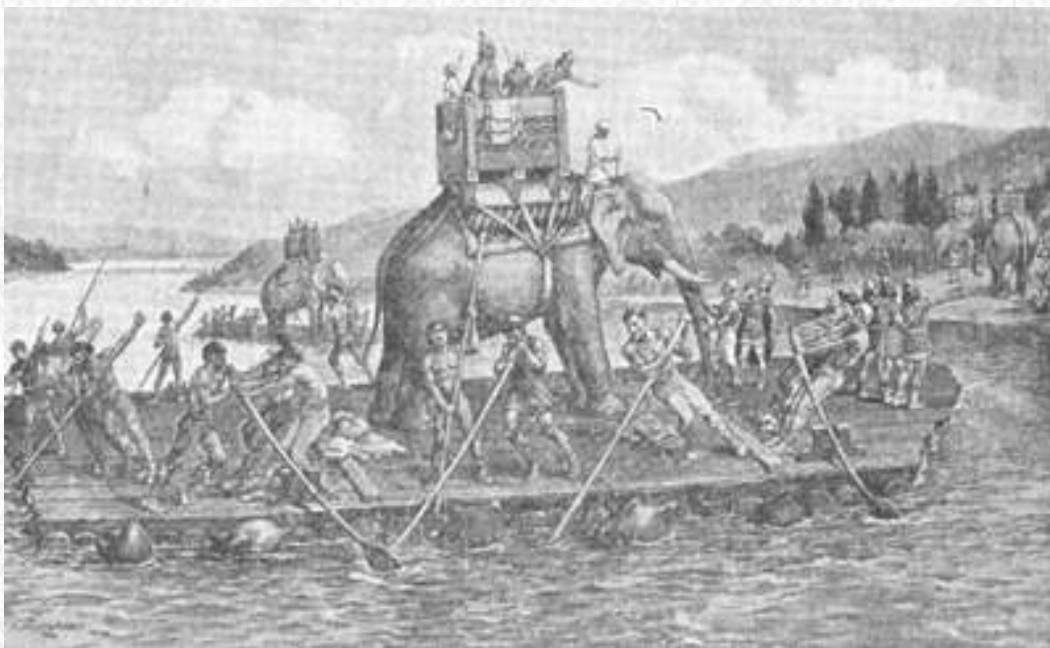
All this sounds rather gloomy, but that is the sort of thing that went on in all the "provinces" of the Roman empire in its early stages. It will help you to understand why the Romans were so ready to go to war at this period and why their empire spread so quickly. The prospect of looting and enslaving the world simply intoxicated them. No doubt any other men in any age would not have been proof against such temptation. Not long after the first war with the Carthaginians, the Romans seized Corsica and Sardinia, helped by subjects of Carthage who had revolted. And soon after, they finally crushed the Gauls of north Italy (p.193) and captured their capital city, Milan.

After putting down a terrible rebellion of north African tribes, joined by their own mercenaries who had not been paid for a long time, the Carthaginians tried to make up for their losses by extending their rule in southern Spain. They opened up gold and silver mines there and won the tribesmen over to support them. Their governor in Spain, Hamilcar, was the general who had put down the African revolt and before that,

during the war, had given the Romans great trouble in western Sicily. Both he and his son-in-law were killed in Spain, but the three sons of Hamilcar had been trained to carry on the work. The cleverest of these, Hannibal, had been brought up with the army in Spain, and when he was only a young boy his father had made him take a solemn oath of eternal hatred to Rome. When he became governor in turn, at the age of twenty-six, he soon extended the Carthaginian empire northwards to the river Ebro. Now the Romans had recently made an agreement with the Carthaginians that the latter should not pass that river. For the Romans already had their eyes on northeast Spain for themselves. But to make things even more awkward for Hannibal they had made a treaty with a town a good way south of the Ebro, which they were hardly entitled to do. This town, Saguntum, Hannibal attacked and captured. He took no notice of the Romans' protest, so they complained to Carthage. There the authorities could not make up their minds. The Spanish empire had been very much a family affair, and the government were not greatly interested in it. But Hannibal was popular with the poorer Carthaginians. When the Roman ambassador asked the Justices sternly whether they wanted peace or war, they asked him to choose. He said, "Then I give you war."

Hannibal had already made his plans. He meant to invade Italy and break the rule of the Romans there. He felt sure that the Gauls, only just conquered, would join him, and probably the Samnites and others in the heart of Italy would revolt. The Roman navy was too strong for him to cross by sea, and he would not take the coast road from Spain into Italy as that was sure to be strongly guarded, and the Greeks of Marseilles were friendly with the Romans. Hannibal always planned to give his enemies an unpleasant surprise. In the spring of 218 B.C. he left New Carthage, his headquarters in Spain, and marching near the east coast, passed Saguntum, the Ebro, and the Pyrenees. Then, thrusting his way through the tribes of south-east Gaul, he crossed the Rhone.

The Roman consul, who was having some trouble with Gauls in north-west Italy, now hurried via Marseilles up the Rhone, but found he was three days too late. So he sent his army on to Spain to watch Hannibal's brother, Hasdrubal, who had been left behind with a large army, while the consul himself returned to north Italy to see what happened next. Meanwhile, Hannibal had to go a long way up the Rhone before he found a convenient tributary valley leading to the Alps, which he crossed in late autumn.





*Hannibal Crossing The Rhone*

It was getting cold, and mountain tribes delayed them with ambushes. The march to the top of the pass took nine days. It was worse still coming down on the Italian side, which is steeper. The tracks were slippery with ice and snow, and there were thousands of loaded mules and horses to be brought down, as well as elephants. The Carthaginians had to build a new track of their own, sweeping in great zigzags down the mountain side. That meant shattering masses of rock. This they did by lighting fires under them, and when they were hot, pouring water, and even wine, over them.

The fifty thousand infantry and nine thousand cavalry with which he had entered Gaul had now shrunk to twenty thousand and six thousand. The Romans at this time could call on seven hundred thousand citizens and allies for their infantry, and seventy thousand for cavalry. Of course there were large Carthaginian armies in Spain and Africa that Hannibal could send for, but there would always be the question of how they could reach him. It had not been possible for Hannibal to bring siege engines over the Alps, so that he could not do much against the numerous Roman fortress-towns. Then there was the problem of his food supply. We can see that Hannibal's prospects were not very bright unless he could cause a serious revolt against the Romans.

After a short rest in the sunny, fertile plain, Hannibal made his way south across the great river-system of north Italy, easily evading the consul's clumsy attempts to stop him. Joined by a good many unreliable Gauls, he made a painful crossing of the Apennines in order to get away from the line of Roman barrier-forts (p.198). It was early spring, and icy blasts lifted them clean off their feet. When that was over they floundered along the marshes of the upper Arno valley through rain and sleet. On the shore of Trasimene, a great, lonely lake in the hills, they trapped and cut to pieces a large Roman army, the consul too being killed (217 B.C.). Hannibal was now on the high road to Rome and he advanced within sixty miles of it. But the strength of the Roman fortresses and his failure to cause a revolt made him cautious. He swerved away to the east coast. There he obtained stores and fresh horses, trained his Gauls, got into touch with Carthage and otherwise prepared for a smashing victory against the Romans which should be decisive enough to cause a general revolt against them.

Meanwhile a dictator (p.202) had been appointed: Fabius, from whose cautious methods the adjective "Fabian" is derived. He would not risk a battle with Hannibal, but followed him doggedly and cut off his supplies. By this time many Romans were clamouring for a big attack on Hannibal and a quick end to the war. When the dictator's time was up, fresh consuls were elected, and they led a large army to finish off Hannibal. The result was a terrible disaster at Cannae, in the south-east of Italy, where the Roman army was completely surrounded and wiped out (216 B.C.).

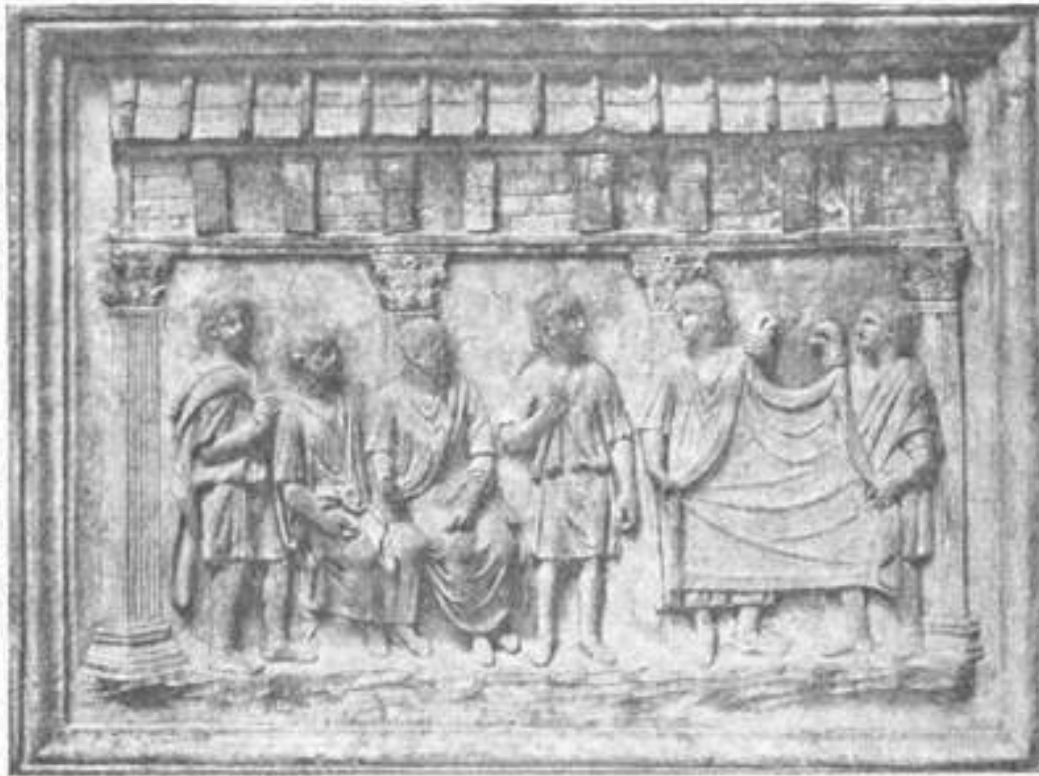
This victory did bring Hannibal within the next few years some of the results he expected. The Samnites and tribes of south Italy, Tarentum, Syracuse and even Capua joined him. The latter city became his headquarters for a time. But the inner ring of Rome's allies remained loyal. The Romans grimly refused to discuss peace. They got together another army, made up of the survivors of Cannae, boys, men in prison for debt, even slaves bought from their owners. They armed them with any sort of weapon they could find

anywhere. They risked ignoring Hannibal till the revolts were crushed, one after another. Though he brought his army within three miles of Rome and rode up to its gates, he could do nothing more, being unable to besiege it. He retired to south Italy and sent for his brother and the army in Spain, but they were taken by surprise and defeated in north Italy. The first that Hannibal knew of it was when his brother's head was thrown into his camp (207 B.C.). The Romans now felt strong enough to invade Africa, and Hannibal had to leave Italy to defend Carthage. The commander of the Romans was a member of a brilliant family, the Scipios, who had far greater intelligence and better education than most Romans. He completely surprised Hannibal by his rapid, clever manoeuvres and thus, by a trap similar to those of Hannibal himself, ended the war (202 B.C.) by the battle of Zama, south of Carthage.

The Carthaginians had to give up Spain and all the islands of the Mediterranean which they held, all their war-elephants and all their galleys but ten. Five hundred battleships were burned in the harbour. They had to pay a million pounds at once and a heavy sum every year for fifty years. And they had to promise on no account to make war on an ally of Rome.

Hannibal fled to the East and stirred up trouble for the Romans wherever he could, while they, flushed with victory, readily accepted every challenge. In two wars they conquered Macedon, which had supported Hannibal during his invasion of Italy. Illyria and Epirus were annexed for their support of Macedon. Another Scipio, brother of the conqueror of Zama, defeated the king of Syria, who had conquered most of Asia Minor (190 B.C.). This king had harboured Hannibal and interfered with the Greeks, whom the Romans, as the successors of the Macedonians, regarded as allies of Rome. The greatest of the Carthaginians, weary of being hounded by the Romans from one court to another, poisoned himself. The Egyptians, who had been saved from the Syrians by the Roman victory, put themselves under Rome's protection (168 B.C.). Dissatisfied with the help that the league of cities of southern Greece had given them against Macedon, the Romans collected a thousand of the leading citizens and kept them in Italy for seventeen years. When they were released they stirred up violent hatred of the Romans, and a war followed in which Corinth took a leading part. In 146 B.C. when its wealth and art treasures had been looted, Corinth was utterly blotted off the face of the earth, its people killed or enslaved.

The same year saw Carthage similarly treated. It had recovered in time from Zama and regained some of its old prosperity. This was too much for the greed and envy of certain Romans, and one of them, Marcus Cato, who had visited Carthage and who, by the way, was regarded as a model of antique Roman virtue, ended every speech he made in the Senate with the words, "Moreover, Carthage must be destroyed." Before long he had persuaded the Senate. The Numidians, western neighbours of Carthage, with sly encouragement from Rome, constantly annoyed the Carthaginians, who, by the treaty of 201 B.C. (p. 213), could not retaliate. They complained to the Romans, who sided with the Numidians every time. At last Carthage was goaded into fighting the Numidians. Of course the Romans promptly accused the Carthaginians of violating the treaty, but promised to take no further action if the Carthaginians gave up to them three hundred children of their noblest families. No sooner was this done, than the Romans prepared to attack Carthage.



*A Roman Tailor's Shop*

*The standing central figure shows the girt-up tunic as worn by all the working population of Rome.*

The city resisted for four years with wonderful determination and heroism. Women cut off their hair and made ropes of it for catapults. It was another Scipio, adopted grandson of the conqueror of Zama, who finally stormed the city. Only one-twelfth of its population was left. Fire ravaged the city for seventeen days and Scipio burst into tears as he watched. The same Scipio had to be asked to finish another war. After the Romans had occupied what had been the Carthaginian empire in Spain, they pushed on to overcome the fierce tribes of the north and west and made a very poor show there. Even a Roman historian admits that the long wars in Further Spain were "a grim and humiliating struggle." The last stand of the western Spaniards was made in Numantia, and in 133 B.C. it suffered the fate of Corinth and Carthage.

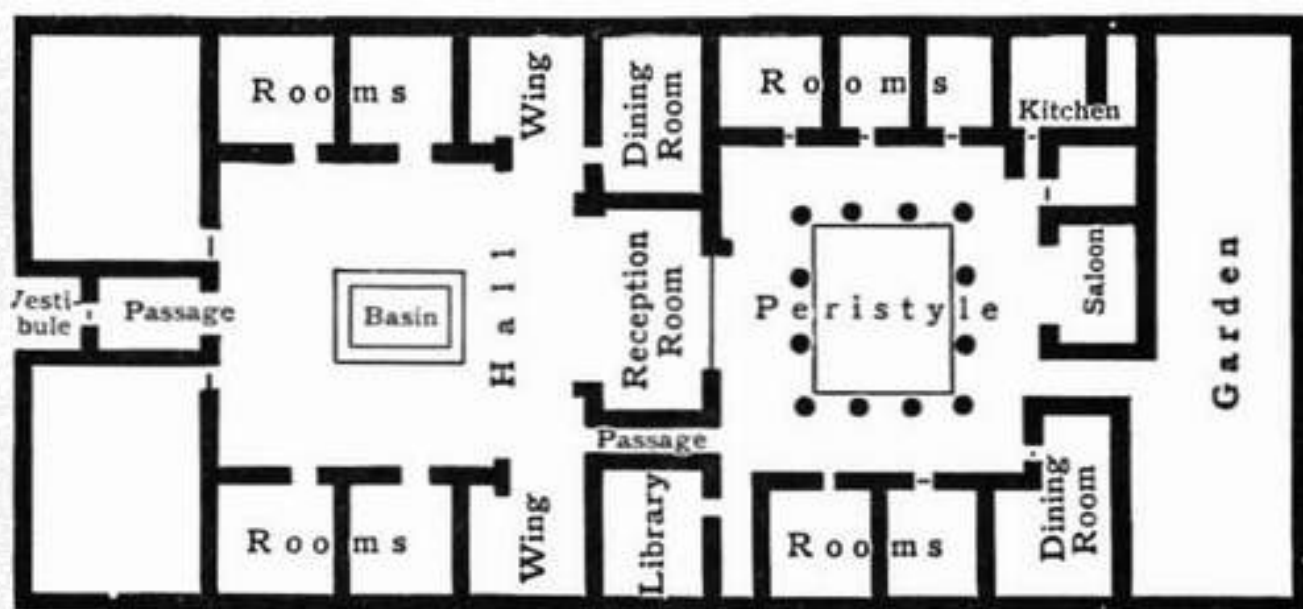
**D. "Ill fares the land, to hastening woe a prey, Where wealth accumulates and men decay."**

The conquests you have read about in the last section, while leaving the Romans masters, in effect, if not in name, of all the lands round the Mediterranean, produced very important effects on Rome itself and on Italy—some of them terribly bad effects. First of all the very appearance of Rome began to change. Roman officials in the East admired the handsome buildings of the Macedonian period (p. 153), and on their return encouraged public building worthy of the world's capital city. Round the Forum, in the old days simply a market square with little stalls, dignified offices for public and private business arose. The great improvements in housing (p. 154) were also reproduced in Rome. The old-fashioned Roman house consisted mainly of a large square room. There was a square hole in the roof for light and to let the smoke out, and a square tank in the floor beneath it to catch the rain water. The windows were simply small holes

in the walls. Everyone ate and slept in this room, the atrium, which at the best might have one or two recesses, but hardly ever had small rooms opening off it. It contained one shrine for the Family Spirit, Lar (marked by a painting of a snake), and another, by the hearth, for the gods of the Household, the Penates. Busts or masks of famous ancestors had a position of honour.

But the house of a wealthy Roman built about 100 B.C. and after was a vast improvement on this.

The atrium, now reached through a porch and short passage, became what we should call a reception-hall and lounge. Around it there were now separate bedrooms and a study. There was also a large addition to the house, beyond the atrium. This was a pleasant courtyard surrounded by a colonnade, with flower-beds, a fountain and tables for outdoor refreshments. From this courtyard, the peristyle, other rooms could be reached, the dining-room, more bedrooms and the kitchen. Apart from the greatly improved design of the house, the water supply and sanitation were much better, hot and cold baths could be taken in comfort, and there was a system of central heating by hot air passing through hollow tiles in the floors and walls.



*Plan Of A Large Roman House Of Later Times*

Such a house would contain statues, paintings, gold and silver plate, jewellery, tapestries and valuable furniture, mostly of Greek or Eastern origin or copied by Greek craftsmen. Very often they would actually be part of the plunder of some unlucky city. We hear of one Roman whose silverware weighed over four tons. Another brought back from Macedonia two hundred and fifty wagon-loads of statues and paintings. Another, who conquered just a corner of Greece, carried off five hundred bronze and marble statues. Money, valuables of every kind, and art treasures had been accumulating in Sicily, Africa and the lands of the eastern Mediterranean for five hundred years, and Roman looters made a wonderful haul.

An establishment like this would need a staff of slaves—a door-keeper, personal servants and a kitchen staff. If there were a secretary, a book-keeper, a tutor, a librarian or a doctor he was pretty sure to be a Greek.





*Peristyle Of A House In Pompeii*

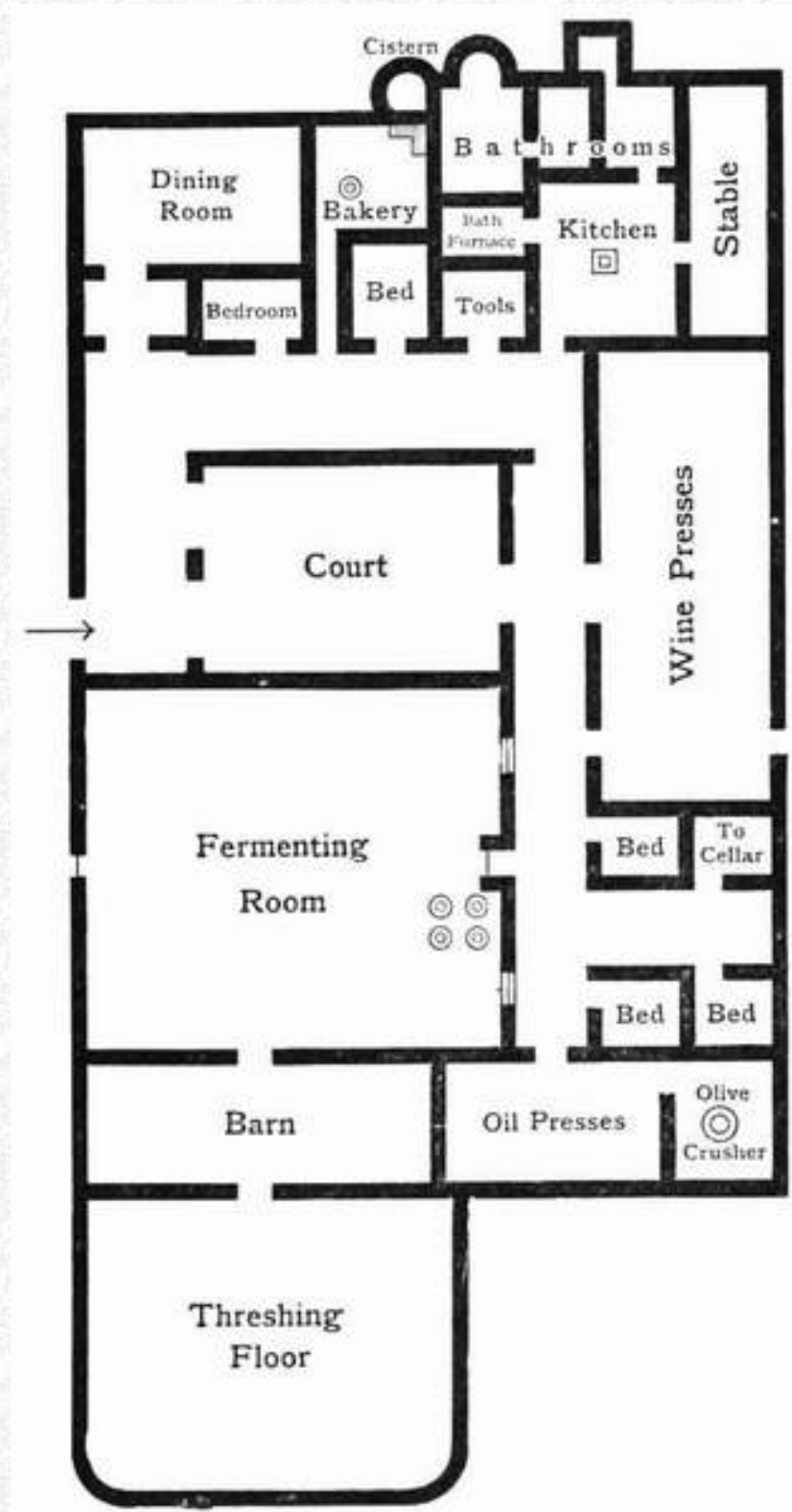
In fact, Roman civilisation from this period onwards depends on the services of intelligent and highly-trained Greeks, slaves or ex-slaves. They did most of the work nowadays performed by what we call professional men.

Another change in the appearance of Rome was due to the erection of many tall blocks of flats, "jerry-built" hovels which often collapsed and easily caught fire. Where had all the swarming inmates of these less luxurious homes come from? They were mostly unemployed who had drifted to Rome, and it was the effects of the wars which had robbed them of their livelihood. Under the old Roman and Italian system a man owned and farmed a plot of land which was his own. In the course of the war with Hannibal thousands of such farms were destroyed, or the owners had to serve in the army so long that their farms were ruined by neglect. Some had not the heart to begin again, and sold their farms for a trifle to some rich neighbour who was steadily buying up such property. A more determined man might borrow money, at heavy interest, and make a fresh start. But he was not likely to be successful.

His debt was a very heavy burden. Then he could not get a good price for his produce, when similar crops were being imported much more cheaply in great quantities from Sicily and Egypt. Even his rich neighbour was cutting prices. For the system of big estates worked by chain-gangs of slaves, which was usual in the conquered provinces, was being introduced into Italy. There was no demand for his services, even as a labourer, on such slave-worked estates, especially when, after the soil was exhausted, they became cattle-ranches where only a few herdsmen were employed. There was a grim sort of justice about all this. He, as a Roman soldier, had helped to enslave the other men. Now slave-labour deprived him of independence and livelihood. Both he and the slaves, of course, were the dupes of senators and business-

men. What could our poor Italian do?

He could join the army, not the old Roman army of citizen-farmers turned temporary soldiers, but a permanent professional force. The pay was poor, but there was always a chance of loot. But perhaps he had had quite enough of soldiering. So he tramped to Rome. What could he do there? If he had lived in a district which had been granted Roman citizenship, he could scrape some sort of a living without regular work. In the old days corn had sometimes been sold very cheaply to poor citizens in emergencies.



*Plan Of A Campanian Farmhouse - This was in the most prosperous and comfortable district of Italy.*

Rome had grown so rich by now that it could afford practically to give corn away. Sometimes wine and olive-oil were thus distributed. Then he could attach himself as a "client" or hanger-on of some rich man. In return for a ration of food he would have to call at the big house first thing in the morning and attend his patron wherever he went, applaud his speeches, protect him in a street-riot and help him in elections. If our Italian joined one of the political clubs in which masses of poor voters were organised, he might make a little out of bribes at elections and other shady political work.

For the great magistracies now were eagerly sought, not so much for the dignity they brought in Rome itself, but as a stepping-stone to the governorship of a province. It was the regular routine for consuls, praetors, etc., to be sent, usually for a year, to govern a province as soon as their year of office in Rome was over. To most governors their period abroad was the chance of a lifetime to make a fortune quickly. One of them complained that he really had to make three fortunes, one to pay his huge election expenses, one to bribe the jury (for he was likely to be prosecuted by the provincials for extortion when he returned to Rome), and one to retire on.

Too many governors seized any excuse they could to fight a frontier war, in the hope that the Senate would award them a "triumph" for their victories. This eagerly coveted honour consisted of a procession from outside Rome to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol, where the conqueror offered thanks. The senators and magistrates came to the city gate to greet him and headed the procession. Then came a train of wagons piled with the spoils, and models of the conquered cities, followed by the animals for sacrifice. After these trudged the prisoners of war, loaded with chains, perhaps the conquered general or prince himself, with his soldiers, and his ordinary subjects in their native costume. Close behind his victims came the hero of the day, the conqueror himself, clad in gorgeous robes and seated in a gilded chariot drawn by four white horses.



### *The "Triumph"*

In his left hand was the ivory sceptre of victory, in his right a branch of laurel, and on his brow a laurel wreath. Behind the chair stood a slave, holding a golden crown above the general's head, and whispering to him now and then, "Remember you are but a mortal." With the chariot came the victorious soldiers, singing songs now of praise, now of rude abuse. The latter, like the slave's reminder, were intended to ward off the jealousy of the gods. As the conqueror went up to the Capitol, his chief prisoners were taken to the dungeon at its foot and strangled there.

A very expensive way of winning popularity before an election was to give a "show." There might be a play or concert, but the main item was the contest of gladiators, one pair at a time, several pairs, or a general melee with one or possibly no survivor. Sometimes the gladiators fought wild beasts or the beasts had a melee of their own. The more bloodshed, pain and death there was, the more the brutal Romans enjoyed themselves.

But if the "work-shys" in the Roman mob were satisfied with "bread and shows," there were thousands of landless men in Rome and Italy who strongly resented their hopeless poverty. They knew that senators and capitalists were growing fabulously rich. Senators were by this time not allowed to trade, but they often did so through friends and agents. Apart from this they could buy and sell land, and made great profits this way. Then there was always the prospect of a governorship in a province. Wholesale trade, and easier ways of getting rich quickly, such as banking, usury, and numerous forms of speculation were conducted



by the social and political class next to the senators, known as the "knights." By this time they had no more connection with cavalry than our own knights have. For about a hundred years, say 150-50 B.C., these two classes were simply money-mad. They backed each other up in a selfish monopoly of power which they used in Rome, in Italy and in the provinces as a short cut to wealth. They set themselves with stony obstinacy to resist all demands for greater voting power for the poorer citizens of Rome, Roman rights for Italians, or better treatment for the provinces.

Democratic leaders arose among the Romans and Italians who, either because they genuinely sympathised with the poor or as a new method of winning influence, tried to wrest power from the Senate. This produced serious riots in Rome itself, and a series of civil wars in Italy. There were terrible revolts of slaves and gladiators. There was a twenty-five years war against Mithridates, king of Pontus (south of the Black Sea), who stirred up Greece and Asia Minor to revolt against the hateful tyranny of Roman officials, tax-gatherers and usurers. We can mention only the best-known men of this dreary age. In the earlier period Tiberius Gracchus and his younger brother Gaius, as Tribunes of the Common People (p. 202), tried to reform the land laws so that big estates would have to be cut down to provide small farms for poor citizens. They both died violent deaths in the midst of their schemes, which were fiercely opposed by the senators.

Later came the utterly savage war between Marius, a popular leader, and Sulla, the champion of the Senate. Sulla had to leave Italy to deal with Mithridates, but as soon as he had checked the king of Pontus he hurried back to Italy, crushed the democrats and the rebellious Samnites (p.199), and as dictator restored to the Senate its powers in full. On one important point the Senate had already given way. Scared by a revolt of Rome's closest allies, it had made all the free men of Central Italy Roman citizens in 89 B.C.

It will be simpler to tell the rest of the story as part of the career of the greatest and most successful of the democratic leaders.



*Gaius Julius Caesar - Wearing general's cloak.*

## **E. Gaius Julius Caesar**

When Sulla had crushed the army of the democrats, he wrote out a long list of the "proscribed," that is of men whom he declared outlaws, who could be killed at sight by any "gangster" who thought the reward of part of the victim's property worth the trouble of killing him. Sulla put on his list the name at the head of this section. It belonged to a bold young man closely connected with the democratic leaders by marriage and sympathy. Sulla had ordered him to divorce his wife, and Caesar had refused. Only at the earnest request of mutual friends had Sulla pardoned him. Caesar was eighteen years old at the time, and his friends pleaded for mercy because he was just a boy. "That boy," said Sulla, "will some day or other be the ruin of the aristocracy, for there are many Mariuses in him." After that escape Caesar wisely went away to Asia Minor to finish his education.

When things had blown over he returned to Rome, and, setting himself to win the favour of the common people, passed through "the Course of Honours" (p.202). He then made an agreement to divide political power in Rome with two ambitious colleagues hardly suitable for a democratic leader. One was Pompey, who had been one of Sulla's chief officers. The other was Crassus, a millionaire-speculator who wanted to make a name for himself in a different line. Their partnership worked well at first. They each wanted a good governorship for a number of years and they got it. Caesar was given Illyria, Cisalpine Gaul (north Italy) and Transalpine Gaul (France). Crassus was made governor of Syria and Palestine and given a large army to go and fight the Parthians, a race of mounted archers, who frequently raided Syria and Asia Minor from the western end of their empire, which came on to the upper Tigris and Euphrates. As the Romans drew enormous wealth from Asia Minor, the Parthians had to be dealt with. Pompey was made governor of the whole of Spain (and Portugal), but he preferred to send two deputies out there and stay in Rome

himself to see what happened.

But the three-cornered partnership did not last long. In 54 B.C. Julia, beloved daughter of Caesar and wife of Pompey, died, and the strongest link between the two men was snapped. Next year Crassus was killed. He had been in a hurry to win a great victory over the Parthians and crossing the Euphrates, led his army, mainly heavy-armed infantry as usual, straight across the desert. His Arab guides deserted and warned the Parthians. Soon there were hordes of light cavalry harassing the Romans, firing volleys of arrows into the massed legions from a distance, thanks to their special bows made of several plates, something like a carriage spring. Crassus himself was killed at a conference with the Parthian leaders, while his army was surrounded during a terrible retreat to Carrhae. It was the greatest disaster since Cannae, and as long as the Roman empire lasted, the Parthians or their successors were a thorn in its side.

Pompey and Caesar now faced each other as rivals, and soon as enemies. For out of jealousy of Caesar's triumphs in Gaul-across-the-Alps, Pompey grew more friendly with the Senate, which was watching Caesar suspiciously. Only the south-eastern part of what we call France was under Roman rule when Caesar became governor, the part we know as Provence, from the Latin "Provincia," the Province. By wonderful leadership, in eight years (58-51 B.C.) he conquered for ever a great and warlike nation. France later became the leading country in Europe because of his work. He drove back from Gaul hordes of Swiss and German invaders, and twice crossed the Channel into unknown Britain and there drove the fierce tribes before him. Our own written history begins with his account of our island, and you may have the pleasure of reading it yourselves in a year or two. All this was excellent training for his army, and as that army decided the history of Rome in the next few years, we ought to get to know something about it.

Caesar had only four legions with him in Gaul at first, and finally eight. A legion was a complete division of the army, comprising mainly heavy infantry with a small proportion of cavalry. At this time the infantry were Italians, the cavalry and archers usually foreigners. There were supposed to be five thousand infantry in each legion, but they were hardly ever at full strength, three thousand five hundred being usual. Each legion was divided into ten cohorts and each cohort again into five centuries. So each century, instead of containing a hundred men, had usually about seventy. Each legion had for its battle-standard a silver eagle perching with spread wings on the end of a pole. The cohorts too had their own standards with various badges and "honours" for the battles they had fought in.



*Roman Cohort Standard Bearer*

Lesser divisions had flags, Roman soldiers felt about these standards as British regiments feel about their "colours." In charge of each century was an important person called a centurion. He was an experienced professional soldier of long service, corresponding to sergeants with us. The centurions were the backbone of the army. The superior officers were usually young men of good birth, who regarded a few years in the army as a necessary part of their career.





*Roman Centurion*

The equipment of the Roman soldier was very similar to that of the Greek, except that it was iron, not bronze, and in cold climates shorts and scarves were worn. The helmet was less elaborate, the shield was usually oblong and larger, and the short, stabbing sword, modelled on that of Hannibal's Spanish infantry, was worn on the right.



*Roman Soldiers*

*The second and third figures on the right are legionaries (first class troops, with the rights of Roman citizens). The third figure has his kit arranged for marching. the other figures are auxiliaries (second class non-Italian troops). They have oval shields and no armour.*

The spear was heavy, its top third being metal. Spears were thrown to shake the enemy's line while approaching him, and then the sword did the rest at close quarters. When in the enemy's country, camps were very carefully fortified according to a strictly defined design, even if they were to last only a night. It was a very rare thing for the enemy to capture a Roman camp, and it was a sign of complete disaster.

When Caesar's term of extended governorship was nearly up, he tried to get permission to put up again for the consulship while still in Gaul. This was against the rules, but he dared not come back to Rome as a private citizen, for the Senate had their plans ready to get him condemned to death as a traitor. Not only was permission refused but the veto (p.202) of two tribunes who were on Caesar's side was ignored. These tribunes escaped from Rome with difficulty, and their news made Caesar come to a grave decision. The Senate, champions of law and order, could ignore the oldest laws when it suited their convenience. It had misruled Rome, Italy and the Empire long enough. It must go. Swiftly he led his legions back to north Italy. He was still in his own province there (p.226). But then he ordered them to cross the river Rubicon,

part of the official boundary of Italy (49 B.C.). That was a turning point in Roman history. The great Civil War began.

Pompey was at once made general for the Senate. He had had wide experience of fighting both in the east and the west, and expected an easy victory. But he was unpleasantly surprised to find how swiftly Caesar was marching down Italy, how the common people everywhere welcomed him, and how even his own veterans, when they sprang to arms again, joined Caesar. Pompey, the Senate and the government, rather hurriedly left Italy and established themselves on the opposite coast at Dyrrhachium. Caesar came to Rome, restored order, and without cutting the throats of the aristocrats who had not been able to get away (to their great surprise), went across to Spain to deal with Pompey's deputies. Having starved their armies into surrender and then disbanded them, he crossed to the Adriatic and attacked Dyrrhachium. He was driven off with heavy loss (the only serious defeat of his career), and as he dared not risk sailing back to Italy, since Pompey controlled the navy, there was nothing for it but to retreat into Greece. Flushed with success, Pompey and the senators hurried after him, just a little too recklessly. Near Pharsalus, in Thessaly, Caesar swung round and crushed them (48 B.C.). Pompey fled to Egypt and was murdered as soon as he landed. The Senate's commanders and allies all over the empire were defeated one after another.

Caesar returned to Rome in the summer of 46 B.C. He was too great a man to follow the evil custom of previous civil wars and massacre his surviving opponents. He wanted all the able men he could find, to help him to realise his vast schemes for a better world, and he was ready to forget which side they had fought on. If you think of the evils of the Senate's rule, described in the last section, you will see that Caesar tried to deal with all the serious problems it had caused. Full or part citizenship was given to all free men in north Italy and Sicily and in other parts of the empire where it was specially deserved. The chief value of this privilege now was that it gave greater protection against harsh officials. The powers of governors in the provinces were limited, and improvements made in taxation. To reduce unemployment, Caesar began great building schemes in Rome itself, as well as a huge aqueduct to bring in a good water supply, and a new road over the Apennines. Lakes and marshes were drained. Owners of ranches were compelled to employ a proportion of free men to look after their cattle.

Trade was encouraged in various ways and wise laws made to help those in debt and to control financiers. For those who were willing to make a fresh start outside Italy, colonies were planted in France and elsewhere, each settler receiving land enough for a farm. Two of the colonies were on the sites of Carthage and Corinth, and a canal was begun across the isthmus (p.135). What a different attitude of mind this shows from the ignorant envy of the senators who wiped out those splendid cities!

Caesar showed plainly what he thought of "the Roman Senate and People" who had so mismanaged things. His Senate was made up of his own supporters, and was limited to its original duty of giving advice when asked for. And having provided chances of earning an honest living, he showed he had no sympathy for the rabble of Rome by breaking up the political clubs (p.221) and giving the corn dole only to the deserving poor. Even so there were a hundred and fifty thousand still fed this way. Caesar was beyond all doubt one of the very greatest organisers in History. But he was also a learned man. He planned a central library for Rome which should contain all the best books in Greek and Latin. With the help of an astronomer from Alexandria, he reformed the calendar so that the number of days in the months became



practically as we know them to-day.

He was idolised by the common people of Italy. In recent years we have come to realise how a nation which has suffered can worship the man who gives it a vision of a brighter future. We can understand how his friends became reckless enough to offer him a golden crown at a great festival. But that offer, though it was refused, gave Caesar's enemies, whom he had pardoned and promoted, an excuse to lash themselves into a frenzy of republican virtue. Cassius and Brutus conspired with other senators and stabbed Caesar to death by Pompey's statue in the Senate House on the Ides (15th) of March, 44 B.C. When the vile deed was done, they raised their dripping daggers and cried "Liberty!" All they really wanted was licence to play the old game of plunder and oppression.

Brutus and Cassius soon discovered that they were very unpopular in Rome, so they fled to Greece, where they had more influence. Caesar's cause was taken up by his close friend and secretary, Marcus Antonius, and Caesar's nephew and heir, Octavianus. They pursued the conspirators and defeated them at Philippi in Macedon (42 B.C.), a town on the main road to the East, where later St. Paul first preached in Europe. After quarrelling between themselves, they agreed to share the government of the empire, Octavian taking the western half, and Antony, who now married Octavia, his colleague's sister, governing the eastern provinces. But Antony, who had previously been attracted by Queen Cleopatra, the last descendant of Alexander's cleverest general who had become king of Egypt (p.151), now fell madly in love with her and divorced Octavia.

This, and the fact that Antony was now treating proud Romans in the East as if he were an Oriental sultan dealing with slaves, gave Octavian an excuse for attacking him and Cleopatra. In 31 B.C. a great sea-fight took place off the promontory of Actium, on the west coast of Greece. Seeing Cleopatra's galley slip away, Antony hurried after her and lost the battle. Octavian pursued them to Egypt, and Antony, hearing a rumour that Cleopatra was dead, killed himself, though he saw her again before he died. The queen, having tried in vain to charm Octavian, also killed herself. When Octavian returned to Rome in 30 B.C. he was in effect, if not yet in title, the first Roman emperor.

## Exercises

1. Find out (a) the story of Coriolanus, (b) how Tarquin bought the Sibylline books, (c) the story of the treacherous schoolmaster of Falerii.
2. What is the derivation of: republic, plebiscite, suffrage, municipal, veto, civilian, auspices?
3. Do you believe a quinquereme means "a vessel with five banks of oars"?
4. What did the Romans mean by "our sea," "the lower sea," "the upper sea," "the Ocean"?



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