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A FEW miles inland from Italy's western shores, in a region approached by way of a winding river valley, there is to be found a group of low-lying hills which rise invitingly above the surrounding plain. Seemingly, however, these deposits of tufa and ash (for that is what they are) did not attract human occupants until three or four thousand years ago—it is thought because of the long-continued eruptive tendencies of the nearby volcanoes which formed the hills in the first place.

But as time went on, the elevated ridge thus brought into being claimed the attention of settlers in search of a stronghold which was reasonably safe from surprise attack, and first one and then another of its heights was occupied. The newly arrived residents were family groups whose homes were wattle-and-daub huts, and we may picture their primitive dwellings as standing in the midst of small plots of ground, screened from one another by clumps of trees.

At first the individual communities remained aloof, each confined to its chosen hilltop and separated from its neighbours by a stretch of intervening marshland. This swampy area for long
served as a common burial-ground, as we know from the many graves which recent excavation has brought to light there. But evidence has also been found to suggest that shortly after 600 B.C. the ancient cemetery was drained of its surplus moisture, thus allowing the several villages to join together.

This unification may be regarded as marking the beginnings of Rome, and of the subsequent developments which changed a small township into a flourishing city of a million inhabitants, famous as the home of the acknowledged ruler not only of all Italy but of the civilized world, into whose treasury there poured the wealth of three continents.

To the conquered peoples of neighbouring lands who were called upon to provide this unending stream of tribute, it must have seemed that the bondage of themselves and their successors was destined to endure for evermore. And yet, so unpredictable is the course of human events, by the beginning of the fifth century A.D. the power of the central authority had waned to such an extent that untamed barbarians from beyond the frontiers had overrun many of the outlying provinces, and had thus paved the way for the sack of the city of Rome itself.

The ensuing Dark Ages enveloped Europe for the next thousand years. But with the dawn of the fifteenth century a succession of Renaissance scholars began the task of piecing together the story of the rise and fall of the one-time capital of the world.

Some idea of the size and majesty of the ancient city was immediately to be gained from its still-
standing ruins (then much more numerous than now), though these structures, the remnants of hundreds of years of depredation and neglect, were few enough and for the most part sadly wanting in extent.

Also available for study were many of the writings of contemporary Greek and Roman historians, whose accounts have been supplemented in more recent times by the results of archaeological research. But before concerning ourselves with the (on occasion conflicting) evidence provided by these and other sources of information, it will be instructive to consider the geography of the region.

As a glance at a map shows, Italy is a long and narrow peninsula bearing an unmistakable resemblance to a top-boot, its heel pointing in the direction of Greece and its toe stubbing the nearby island of Sicily. With an over all length of 700 miles, the land varies in width from 100 to 200 miles and has a total area of some 100,000 square miles.

No fewer than four inner seas wash its shores—the Ligurian, to the north of Corsica; the Tyrrhenian, in the neighbourhood of Sardinia and Sicily; the Ionian, at the southern extremity; and the Adriatic, along the east coast. Moreover, not only is Italy thus enclosed on three sides by water, but at its northern end it is cut off from France, Switzerland, and Austria by the lofty heights of the snow-covered Alps.

There is good reason to believe that, in times not very remote geologically, Italy formed a link between Europe and Africa, from which adjacent continent the stepping-stone of Sicily is today
separated by less than a hundred miles. But even with the disappearance of a part of this ancient land-bridge the isolation of Italy remains more apparent than real.

Thanks to its disproportionately long coastline, it is readily accessible from the sea, while the mountains in the north, though they seemingly offer a formidable obstacle, nevertheless contain a number of negotiable passes. Of these, the lowest (the Brenner) is no more than 4,500 feet above sea level, while at either end of the great Alpine barrier relatively easy approach routes are also to be found.

Much of the peninsula itself is elevated and rugged, some four-fifths of its total area consisting of hills and mountains. Dominant among the last-named, of which the Gran Sasso (9,560 feet) marks the highest point, are the Apennines. This extensive range, often referred to as the backbone of Italy, first curves across country from coast to coast and then runs the length of the land, dividing it into four more or less distinct zones.

Beginning at the western end of the Alps, the Apennines extend almost due east to the Adriatic, hemming in a large and fertile plain across which runs the River Po (Padus). In Roman times, the area thus isolated was known as Cisalpine Gaul—as that part of Gaul (France) which lay on this, i.e. the Roman, side of the Alps. Politically, that is to say, the Po valley was for long not regarded as forming part of Italy at all.

By pursuing a course which runs close to the Adriatic seaboard, the Apennines then give rise to the second of the four great geographical divisions, in the shape of a long and rather bleak coastal
strip. By contrast, the corresponding region to the west of the mountains is in the form of a rich and somewhat wider plain, divided by rocky offshoots into the fertile districts of Tuscany (also known as Etruria), Latium, and Campania.

And finally, on nearing the foot of Italy, the Apennines branch in two directions, the lesser range losing itself in the hills of the heel province of Apulia, the other extending right down to the toe region. The southern tip of the land, thus shielded, has from time immemorial provided a warm and pleasant district wherein natural harbours abound. Similar facilities for shipping extend along the west coast to a point just beyond Naples, but elsewhere ports are scarce.
Because of the narrowness of the peninsula, navigable waterways extending inland are almost entirely lacking, and the rivers and streams of Italy, though numerous, tend to be turbulent and of such small volume that many of them dry up during the summer months. A noteworthy exception is the aforementioned River Po, 420 miles long and draining an area of some 30,000 square miles. This mighty waterway is fed by tributaries from both Alpine and Apennine sources, those associated with the last named contributing large amounts of sediment to the parent stream. In the course of centuries, much of this silt has been deposited at the river mouth, causing the sea to recede gradually from the once coastal, but now inland, towns of Adria and Ravenna.

For the rest, few of the rivers of Italy are of any great size or particular significance, though mention must be made of the Adige (this stream also runs into the Adriatic by way of the Po valley), and the Arno and the Tiber, which flow seawards across the western plains of Etruria and Latium respectively. Of these, the Tiber is, of course, famous as the river on whose banks Rome stands.

In the city’s early days, the swiftness of the current notwithstanding, small craft plied upstream from the river’s mouth to the settlement. But in later years much of the traffic destined for Rome from overseas was unloaded at Puteoli (the modern Pozzuoli) near Naples—whence, however, the cargo had to be conveyed overland for a distance of more than a hundred miles. It was in an attempt to avoid this long porterage that the Tiber’s course was subsequently improved, and a harbour, Ostia, built at
its mouth. But for many centuries now, this additional port of ancient Rome has been silted up.

The climate of Italy, which varies considerably with altitude and latitude, is governed by the circumstance that the land is mountainous and that it extends from north to south. The Po valley, for instance, is so situated that not only is it freely exposed to icy winds from the Alps but it is also cut off by the Apennines from a warm airstream which comes from Africa. In consequence, this northern region endures a climate akin to that of continental Europe, characterized by hot summers and bitterly cold winters.

Thanks to the winds from Africa, however, other parts of Italy experience mild winters, while their summertime is hot and dry. So marked is the contrast, indeed, that while there may be frost on the heights of the northern Apennines throughout the year, the western coastal plain a few miles away enjoys a sub-tropical climate in which orange and fig trees flourish!

These and other exotic forms of plant life have been cultivated since their introduction in ancient times. But even as recently, botanically speaking, as 3,000 years ago, the vegetation of Italy was very different from what it is today. Then, the Alps and the Apennines were clothed in dense forests of conifers and (on the lower slopes) of oak, beech, and chestnut trees, while in other parts of the peninsula there existed an abundance of laurel, myrtle, broom, juniper, and other growths, vast areas of which have since been entirely cleared.

Elsewhere, the activities of Nature herself have combined with the handiwork of Man to alter
completely the character of the countryside. The lower reaches of the Po valley, for example, now all but fully reclaimed for agricultural and related purposes, were once subject to periodic flooding and constituted a vast inundation where poplars and willows thrived, a marshy region fringed by forests wherein extensive herds of oxen and pigs ran wild.

Throughout much of Italy, the result of Man’s destruction of the haunts of the creatures of scrub-land and forest, not to mention his unrelenting pursuit of the creatures themselves, is to be seen today in the mournful fact that the larger animals which once freely roamed the country are now all but extinct. It is true that a few wolves remain, but bears are relatively scarce, while the once numerous stags and deer have sought a last refuge on the island of Sardinia. These remnans, in company with the goat-like chamois, now restricted to the slopes of the Alps, are virtually the only surviving wild animals of any size.

But while, down through the centuries, human activity has profoundly modified the flora and fauna of the land, the particular environment upon which he happened to stumble also had its effect upon Man himself, for once one of the four main areas of settlement had been reached the presence of the Apennines tended to discourage movement farther afield.

As a result, the early inhabitants of the eastern coastal district for long remained in a state of backwardness compared with the peoples who occupied the more favoured western plains. Again, as we shall see, the existence of good natural har-
bours at the southern extremity of the peninsula led in due course to the appearance of representatives of more advanced civilizations from overseas, and inevitably the arrival of these visitors greatly influenced the outlook and development of the natives with whom they came into contact.

Where did these intruders from across the water come from? The four inner seas which wash the shores of Italy are merely small and individually named areas of a much greater sea, a million or more square miles in extent. This immense body of water, the Mediterranean, is so called because it is almost completely surrounded by land (Latin, *medius*, middle, *terra*, earth). Essentially, it consists of three interconnected basins, extending from east to west.
Of these, the eastern basin is bordered by Greece, Asia Minor (Turkey), Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, and contains the large islands of Crete and Cyprus. In it, too, are to be found innumerable small islands, many of which are associated with yet another local sea in the neighbourhood of Greece and Turkey. Known as the Aegean, this stretch of water gives access to one of the Mediterranean’s two outlets.

This eastern exit is located where Europe and Asia are separated by a narrow channel, three to four miles in width, called the Dardanelles, after the nearby ancient city of Dardanus. To the ancient Greeks, however, the strait was known as the Hellespont, i.e. the Sea of Helle, so named after a daughter of the legendary Athamas, who was drowned there.

The entrance was for long guarded by the famed citadel of Troy, beyond which the channel winds for nearly fifty miles until it opens out into the small inland Sea of Marmora, at the far end of which the land masses close in once more to form an even narrower gap. This is the Bosphorus, eighteen miles in length, which gives access to a large expanse of landlocked water, the Black Sea.

From the east, the central area of the Mediterranean is reached by sailing either between Crete and Libya on the African side, or between Crete and Greece on the European side, where the waters of the Ionian Sea mingle with those of the Adriatic, bordered by Albania, Yugoslavia, and Italy. Similarly, the adjoining western basin of the Mediterranean is also entered by one or other of two alternative routes—by way of the wide channel
which lies between Sicily and Cape Bon in Tunisia, an entrance guarded by the islands of Malta and Pantelleria, or by venturing through the Straits of Messina, two to eight miles wide, which separate Sicily from the toe of Italy.

On its European side, the western basin consists in part of the Ligurian and Tyrrhenian Seas, in the vicinity of which are the islands of Sardinia, Corsica, and those of the Balearic group. The bordering lands are Italy, France, and Spain, opposite which are the coasts of Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, the most northerly point of which is Ceuta. Here, the African mainland approaches to within eight miles of the tip of Spain.

Unlike the Dardanelles, this western outlet leads to the immensity of the Atlantic Ocean, by way of a gap flanked by two massive promontories. Apart from a colony of apes, the heights on the European side appear to have remained uninhabited until as recently as A.D. 711, in which year invading Moors took possession and named the headland Jebel-Tariq (Mountain of Tariq) after their leader. By later intruders (the British) the name Jebel-Tariq was soon corrupted to Gibraltar.

As for the names Europe, Asia, and Africa which are now given to the three enclosing continents, these terms were originally restricted to the shores of the eastern basin—shores which, in common with the inland sea's other coastal regions, were effectively cut off from their inland regions by mountain and desert barriers. The entire area thus formed a self-contained unit enjoying what in general terms is now referred to as a Mediterranean climate.
From passing references in accounts which have come down to us, it is evident that there has been little change in the prevailing weather conditions during the past 2,000 years, and it may safely be assumed that in the days of the Romans, as at the present time, the prevailing warmth was such that the evaporation losses sustained by the sea were far greater than the fresh-water replenishments which reached it by way of rainfall and rivers.

Of these feeders, the only outstanding contributor is the Nile, though the flow of this mighty waterway has been much reduced in modern times because of the retention of ever-increasing amounts of its water for irrigation. The Mediterranean thus remains at a lower level than the Black Sea and the Atlantic, and from them there is a continuous inflow to make good what would otherwise become a growing deficiency.

The steady stream of water which pours in through the Straits of Gibraltar is clearly seen as a surface current, a phenomenon which led ancient mariners to conclude that, were it not for the presence of the two great mountains standing on either side of the gap, the contents of the great ocean beyond would long ago have rushed in and overwhelmed the whole region.

No doubt the fear of such a possibility would have been lessened somewhat if it had been known that at each of the two openings a contrary flow of water also occurs. At all events, it has since been shown that, thanks to the high rate of evaporation, the waters of the Mediterranean are appreciably saltier than those of the Black Sea or the Atlantic, whose lighter contents pour in at surface level,
while at the same time a smaller volume of the heavier Mediterranean water seeps away in an opposite direction.

The situation, however, was not always thus, for the present Mediterranean area is merely the relic of a much more extensive body of water which geologists refer to as the Tethys, or Mid-World, Sea. This took the form of a great trough-like ocean, known technically as a geo-syncline—a term applied to those parts of the earth’s surface which are subsiding on a regional scale and upon which marine sediments are accumulating. As such, the Tethys Sea extended across what is now southern Europe to Indonesia and beyond, and came into existence several hundred million years ago, long before Man himself arrived on the scene.

Prior to Man’s appearance, there occurred a series of tremendous earth movements which brought about the uplifting of portions of the floor of Tethys to form the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Himalayas, and other great mountain chains. On a much reduced scale, these upheavals have continued down to the present day; and convincing evidence of the instability of the region’s crust is provided by the frequent earth tremors which still afflict it, and by the continued activity of volcanoes such as Mounts Vesuvius and Etna. Coastal areas, moreover, remain subject to considerable vertical movements, as has been shown by the submergence and subsequent re-emergence of the Roman temple of Serapis, near Naples.

There is evidence that at a comparatively late stage in its formation the Mediterranean consisted of a series of lakes, interrupted by land connections
which extended from Spain (Gibraltar) and Italy (via Sicily) to Africa, and from Turkey in Europe to Turkey in Asia (across the Dardanelles). Presumably, the subsequent disappearance of these land bridges and the flooding of the region were brought about by a combination of land subsidence and rising ocean levels.

Certainly it is not without significance that in geologically recent times the world has seen profound climatic changes, in the course of which ice sheets began to develop over northern Europe and elsewhere. Four such major glaciations are known to have occurred, the ice periodically advancing and then melting back, its last retreat beginning some 15,000 years ago.

There was then entailed the gradual liquefaction of vast quantities of snow and ice, as a result of which the waters of the oceans began to show a steady rise of about three feet every century, an increase which continued for more than 10,000 years; fortunately for us, the process came to an abrupt halt some 5,000 years ago. A simple calculation suffices to show that since the last Ice Age came to an end, ocean levels must have risen by some 300 feet—more than enough to bring about the separation of the British Isles from Europe, and to breach the low-lying neck of land which once straddled the Straits of Gibraltar.

At all events, in some such cataclysmic fashion, the Mediterranean assumed the outlines which it has since maintained, a form in which the central and commanding position occupied by the Italian peninsula will be noted.
THE PRECISE time and place of the emergence of the first man-like creature are not known. But to the archaeologist, what distinguishes this forerunner of Homo sapiens from all other forms of terrestrial life, including his close anthropoidal relatives, is his ability to adapt materials to his own use—and skeletal remains accompanied by crude implements fashioned out of stone, dating back for considerably more than 500,000 years, have been unearthed in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanganyika. On the strength of this and other evidence, it is widely held that early man in all probability evolved in Quaternary times, i.e. within the past million years.

The Quaternary, or fourth of the great epochs into which the geologist divides his account of the shaping of the world, is not only the most recent of these divisions, but it is also much the shortest. The Tertiary period which came immediately before it was at least sixty times as long, while the preceding Mesozoic and Palaeozoic eras amount, in sum, to the stupendous total of 3,000,000,000 years, in the course of which the first signs of life appeared as single-celled marine growths in the warm, primordial (original) seas.
Man is thus a comparative newcomer on earth, and archaeologically the path of his subsequent progress is signposted by the use of a trio of well-known materials for the making of weapons and tools, the successive employment of which marks the Ages of Stone, Bronze, and Iron. Of these, the Stone Age accounts for more than nine-tenths of the period of evolution from near ape to modern man, a transformation which, there is some reason to suppose, may well have had its beginnings in Asia or Africa.

However this may be, there are indications that early man crossed over from Africa to Europe, making use of then existing land routes to reach Italy from Tunisia and, indirectly, by way of Spain and France, all of which lands he occupied widely, if somewhat thinly. His home was a cave, or some primitive shelter, and it is known that he hunted animals for food, that he clothed himself in their skins, and that he made use of fire. These limited attainments have been designated Palaeolithic (Old Stone), in order to distinguish them from the more advanced cultures of the Mesolithic (Middle Stone) and Neolithic (New Stone) Ages which followed.

It was with the melting of the last ice sheet that the Palaeolithic Age gradually made way for the Mesolithic, a transition period which, in the course of the next several thousand years, led to the far-reaching developments of the Neolithic Age, so called because it was marked by the use of polished, instead of flaked, stone tools. This advance, which took place in different parts of the world at different times, was accompanied by animal-herding and the
growing of food, and also by pottery-making, important innovations which tended to promote a more settled and secure way of life.

Throughout the Mediterranean region, these accomplishments gave rise to a race of Stone Age folk whose invariable practice it was to bury their dead. Many of these early graves have since been discovered and their contents examined. They show the occupants to have been a short-limbed people, possessed of skulls whose diameter was longer from front to back than it was from side to side. In other words, they were dolichocephalic or long-headed, a feature which serves to distinguish them from their Asiatic neighbours, the Mongolian round-heads.

In Europe, the Bronze Age did not begin until about 2000 B.C., whereas in parts of Asia and Africa metal tools (at first made of copper, to which tin was later added to produce bronze) replaced implements of stone some 1,500 years before this. In the Nile valley, a pictorial (hieroglyphic) form of writing was also invented; and, thanks to these and other advances, the ancient Egyptians rapidly achieved a highly civilized state at a time when most other Mediterranean peoples were still following a much more primitive way of life. Of decisive importance to the progress of this development was the unification (about 3200 B.C.) of the two rival kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt under Menes, the first of a long line of dynastic rulers who later came to be known as Pharaohs.

At first, no doubt, the spread of this higher culture to other lands was restricted by the geographic
isolation of its place of birth. Upstream, to the south, there existed a bar to progress in the shape of cataracts and swamps. On either side, to the west and to the east, were to be found the inhospitable wastelands of the Libyan and the Nubian Deserts, while to the north lay the marshlands of the Delta, and beyond the Delta the Mediterranean, whose coastal regions, if they happened to be situated on opposing shores, were made remote from one another by the intervening water.

Once the inhabitants of the Nile valley learned how to build and sail ships, however, the great inland sea immediately assumed the role of a connecting link, the importance of which can hardly be exaggerated. To instance an extreme case: what would otherwise have entailed a coastal march of some 30,000 miles from Tunisia to the toe of Italy was at once reduced to a voyage of about 100 miles!

As distinct from crude rafts and dug-outs, the first boats made of planks have been attributed to the Egyptians of more than 5,000 years ago, an invention to which they soon added that of the sail. Primarily, their craft were designed for use on the Nile, but in due course the river was followed down to the sea, where Egyptian mariners began a tentative exploration of the coastal regions in the neighbourhood of its mouth.

Eastwards from the Delta, these sailors eventually reached the heavily wooded area of what is now the republic of Lebanon. And here, perhaps as early as 3000 B.C., they founded the harbour town of Gebal (modern Jebail, and the Byblos of the Greeks). With this port, whose citizens were later
to achieve renown as carpenters and shipwrights, an important trade developed, the Egyptian vessels bringing in papyrus fibres for the manufacture of writing material (a product for which Gebal also became famous) and returning home laden with much-needed timber for boat-building and other purposes.

That Egyptian seafarers were not slow to extend their voyages of exploration to more distant parts of the Mediterranean is shown by the fact that, even in pre-dynastic times, their multi-oared vessels reached the Aegean Sea, where their arrival assisted the rise of a flourishing Bronze Age civilization on the island of Crete. The Cretans, at all events, began to make use of a hieroglyphic form of writing akin to that of their visitors, and
were seemingly inspired by them to build a powerful navy.

These developments were centred at Knossos, where an elaborate palace building, covering an area of about five acres, was surrounded by a city of some 100,000 inhabitants. The excavation of the ruins of the royal quarters of this ancient community was begun by Sir Arthur Evans at the beginning of the present century, when he brought to light the existence of a veritable maze of halls, rooms, and connecting corridors, in places several storeys high.

Not the least astonishing of his discoveries was the finding of living quarters with bathrooms (furnished with earthenware tubs and what appeared to be a hot-water supply) served by an extensive drainage system and flushing arrangements not unlike those of the modern water-closet!

Their possession of a powerful fleet enabled the Cretans to dominate for some time the eastern Mediterranean, including the shores of what was to become the Greek mainland. Some idea of the extent of their voyaging may be gained from the fact that the remains of their distinctive pottery have been found as far afield as Sicily and Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Syria.

Because of ever-increasing attacks upon their island home, which culminated in its occupation by enemy forces and the destruction of Knossos, Cretans were prominent among hordes of sea-born migrants from the Aegean region who sought refuge in Egypt about 1200 B.C. They were, however, repulsed by Rameses III, and settled on
an inviting coastal plain to the north-east of the Delta instead. This area, subsequently known as Philistia (from which the name Palestine stems) later came to be governed and defended by a political association of five leading city-states—the league (Pentapolis) of the independent kingdoms of Ascalon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza.

The Philistines were fortunate in that they were acquainted with the use of the new wonder metal, iron. This knowledge enabled them to fashion weapons greatly superior to those of their enemies, notable among whom were the Israelites, recently escaped from bondage in Egypt and also intent upon settling in the vicinity, the long-promised Land of Canaan. Of the subsequent clashes between the two peoples, many references are to be found in the Old Testament.

As a result of these intrusions, some of the inhabitants of Canaan were absorbed by the newcomers, while others found themselves confined to the small, mountain-encircled coastal strip of the Lebanon. For the greater part of the preceding 2,000 years, this area had remained an Egyptian sphere of interest and, thus protected, many harbour towns in addition to Gebal had grown up and throve there. And now, with the influence of the Pharaohs on the wane, most of these settlements survived as an association of independent city-states, ruled by local princes and kings. The stretch of the Mediterranean seaboard thus occupied came to be known as Phoenicia.

The Phoenicians, then, were a Semitic people with Canaanite affiliations, and it has been suggested that they achieved renown as mariners and
traders because they quickly outgrew the limited agricultural resources of their small domain, and were thus compelled to harvest the sea as well as the land.

So it was as boat-builders and fishermen, no doubt, that they chanced upon the discovery that a handsome purple dye could be extracted from a local shellfish. Thereafter, encouraged by a growing demand for this and other products (wine, oil, paper, glass, and metalware), they became manufacturers and traders, gradually establishing a highly profitable commercial empire which extended to all parts of the Mediterranean and beyond.

By all accounts, it was the Phoenicians, rather than the Egyptians, who were the first to venture through the Straits of Gibraltar and into the great unknown, there to brave the enormous waves of the Atlantic and to marvel at the inexplicable phenomenon of the tides. The exact extent of their voyaging remains a matter of conjecture, but there is reason to suppose that they reached Brittany and, perhaps, also the Scilly Isles and Cornwall in their search for tin.

However this may be, they undoubtedly sailed along the Atlantic coast of Spain, where they established (or took over) such settlements as those of Tartessus and Gadir (the Gades of the Romans and the Cadiz of today).

Foremost among the Phoenician communities which sponsored these far-reaching trading activities were the harbour towns of Tyre and Sidon, of which the last-named, the Saida of today, was the older of the two.

Like other Phoenician cities, Sidon’s long
history was a stormy one, particularly after the start of the eighth century B.C., when first Assyrian, then Babylonian, and later Persian invaders appeared, demanding tribute and threatening dire reprisals if payment were not forthcoming. In 350 B.C., during an abortive uprising against the Persian King Artaxerxes III, the town was almost completely destroyed by a blaze in which some 40,000 Sidonians perished.

Long before the occurrence of this disaster, however, the wealth and influence of nearby Tyre had been steadily increasing until, from about 1000 B.C. onwards, its fame overshadowed that of the mother city. It had a reputation for impregnability which was not shattered until its over-confident defenders made the mistake of refusing to treat with Alexander the Great. That outstanding military genius summed up the situation at a glance and spent seven months building a causeway to the island. Then he took the defiant citadel by storm and, as a token of his displeasure, executed 8,000 of its leading citizens and sold 30,000 others into slavery.

Prior to this decimation of its inhabitants, however, the city's power and influence had gradually declined, the leadership of its vast trading empire having passed in the meantime to an overseas community beyond the reach of the warlike intruders from Western Asia and Europe. For just as the Sidonians, in their heyday, had established trading posts along the coast of North Africa, so Tyrian colonists had later founded yet another settlement in this region, an event which took place during the reign of King Pygmalion (820–774 B.C.). The site
chosen was a narrow peninsula some fifteen miles north-west of the already existing Phoenician colony of Utica, between an extensive lake and what is now the Gulf of Tunis. Across the neck of the peninsula triple walls were erected, and facing the sea two harbours were excavated, one commercial, the other military.

The site was well chosen; and from 600 B.C. onwards, after two centuries of growth and consolidation, there followed a period of expansion during which earlier Phoenician settlements in the western Mediterranean were taken over, among them those on nearby Sicily—territorial acquisitions which enabled the newcomers to dominate the entire region.

Their headquarters, meanwhile, had been named Kart Hadash (New City). But by the native inhabitants of the Italian mainland, who as time went on were to become increasingly resentful of the presence of this powerful African stronghold, it was known as Carthage.
ITALY AND THE ARYANS

WE HAVE seen how, within the confines of the Mediterranean area, the use of bronze began in Egypt as early as 3500 B.C., giving rise to an advanced culture which gradually spread from west to east. In Italy, however, the Stone Age was destined to endure for another 1,500 years, throughout which period the continued presence there of Neolithic Man is attested by the remains of his village communities.

In these primitive settlements, the dwelling places were in the form of round huts, made of wattle and daub and furnished with a vent in the roof, beneath which was a depression in the floor, designed to catch any rain which entered—distinctive features later to be preserved in the traditional Roman atrium and impluvium.

Remnants of these Stone Age people survived until historic times in remote parts of Italy, such as the Alpine district of Liguria, which has since given its name to their culture (the Ligurian) throughout the peninsula. Elsewhere, it is represented by that of the Ilienses of Sardinia and the Sicani of Sicily.

It was during an ensuing Chalcolithic (Copper-Stone) period, in which stone tools were beginning
to be replaced by imported copper implements, that the start of the Bronze Age in Italy was heralded by the arrival of foreign immigrants. They began crossing the Alps in the year 2000 B.C. or thereabouts, bringing with them not only a knowledge of bronze but an unusual form of settlement built on piles (Palafitte).

Sardinian bronze figures

The remains of similar elevated constructions found in the shallows of Swiss lakes suggest that the intruders may have come from that direction. At all events, they at first confined themselves to identical locations in northern Italy; and even when, as time went on, they ventured on to dry land in the Po valley, they continued to build in the same distinctive manner, protecting their clusters of raised dwellings by a wide moat connected with a source of running water.

In the course of many years of occupation, household rubbish of all kinds dropped through
cracks in the floors of these huts, forming layers of refuse of ever-increasing thickness on the ground beneath. And long after the buildings themselves had vanished, this household rubbish, by a process of natural decay, remained as an extensive compost heap. In modern times, the fertilizing value of the contents was discovered by local peasants, whose name for these rich deposits of black earth (terra mara) was given by later investigators of these ancient sites to the land-based pile-dwelling communities they represented: the Terramara people.

These newcomers also differed from their Neolithic predecessors by their custom of burning, instead of burying, their dead, and by the fact that their speech displayed what have come to be termed Indo-European characteristics. This linguistic feature is now recognized to be one of great significance, for although students of the science of language have long recognized the existence of several thousand different tongues, many of these speech forms are related and so fall into one or other of a comparatively small number of family groups, among them that labelled Indo-European.

This composite name was inspired by the surprising discovery that the chief languages of Europe (including English) share a common origin with Sanskrit, the ancient literary language of India!

But apart from serving the immediate purpose of acknowledging this unexpected relationship, the term Indo-European has since been shown to be somewhat misleading, in that certain European tongues (among them Finnish and Hungarian)
and a number of Indian languages (such as the Dravidian) unquestionably belong to other linguistic groups. And more confusing still, there are some Indo-European forms of speech (e.g. Old Persian) which are encountered outside the geographical boundaries to which their family name suggests they might reasonably be expected to be confined.

Nevertheless, the question of what language is, or was, spoken by a particular group of people is potentially of the utmost importance to the archaeologist, as it must reflect something of their history, and may enable him to discover the place of origin of its users, and to trace their movements.

The Indo-European family of languages provides an instructive example of this, many verbal trails pointing to the one-time existence of a compact tribal group inhabiting an area extending from what is now Lithuania to the vast plains of southern Russia. Between four and five thousand years ago, for reasons unknown, but which may have been connected with a growing pressure of population, or with a succession of crop failures, or perhaps with mere wanderlust, this community began to break up, its members moving across Europe and Asia in a widespread dispersal which, among other things, brought the use of bronze to Italy.

But while the arrival of the bearers of the Palafitte culture may be regarded as marking the start of a new era among the inhabitants of the peninsula, the course of subsequent events is now recognized to be a great deal more complicated than was at one time supposed. And the theory
that, from about 1500 B.C. onwards, there was a steady influx of Terramara people into southern Italy from the Po valley, though it can be sustained on purely linguistic grounds, has not been confirmed by the findings of recent archaeological research.

For one thing, the excavation of Terramara sites, which has consistently brought to light numerous bronze swords and other weapons, not to mention a distinctive black, glossy pottery, has shown these items to be confined to the north of the country. For another, in central Italy, the remains of the many Bronze Age villages and their associated cemeteries which have been uncovered
afford evidence that the rite of inhumation (burial) was practised, perhaps as a Neolithic survival. This non-Terramara culture has been distinguished by the name of Apennine.

Again, there is evidence to suggest that it was the appearance of another wave of Aryan invaders from beyond the Alps, who reached Italy about 1000 B.C. armed with a knowledge of how to work iron, which was of decisive importance in bringing about the spread of Indo-European culture, and which led to the eventual emergence of the numerous tribal groups whose names we later encounter in the works of Roman historians—the Latini and the Sabini, the Umbrians and the Marsi, the Vestini and the Aebrics, the Samnites and the Hernici, the Peligni and the Marrucini, the Lucani and the Frentini.

In company with their Terramara kinsfolk who had preceded them, these harbingers of the Italian Iron Age also cremated their dead, placing the ashes in urns which were then buried in the ground. Their cemeteries have accordingly been given the name of urnfields, while the culture which gave rise to them is called Villanovan, in commemoration of the finding of a large settlement and its necropolis at Villanova, near Bologna, in 1853—the first of many similar discoveries which have since been made throughout the peninsula.

This Aryanization of Italy was in due course assisted by the arrival of yet more settlers, this time from overseas, some of whom, e.g. the Iapyges who occupied Apulia, came apparently by way of the Adriatic, but notably by colonists who sailed across the Ionian Sea and so reached the
southern tip of the peninsula and the shores of Sicily. Although, to the then resident Villanovans, these new arrivals came as strangers from an unknown land, they were in fact the descendants of related tribal groups which had taken part in the great Indo-European dispersal, whose wanderings had taken them, not over the Alps, but through the Balkans and into Greece.

Here, they soon became established, the Arcadians settling in the central Peloponnese and the Achaeans occupying Mycenae. And here, too, they came into contact with the advanced culture of the Cretans, to whom at times they appear to have been subject, and from whom they received and adapted to their own tongue a linear script which the islanders had in turn evolved from the hieroglyphic writing bequeathed to them by the Egyptians.

Unlike their Bronze Age compatriots in Italy, who had evinced little or no interest in the sea, the Greeks were early induced to become sailors by the mountainous nature of their new homeland and by the sight of the widely scattered islands which dotted the Aegean, pointers which not only made navigation easy but which themselves invited investigation. No doubt after they had acquired some knowledge of seamanship from their Cretan overlords, the Achaeans in particular became notorious for their piratical activities, their exploratory raids taking them all over the eastern Mediterranean.

One of the most notable of their exploits was the part they played in the war against the Trojans (c. 1200 B.C.), whose citadel the members of a Greek
confederacy attacked and destroyed, traditionally after a siege which lasted ten years. Thereafter, the entrance to the Hellespont was left unguarded and Greek sailors were free to venture through the narrow strait and into the Black Sea beyond. Their name for this inland body of water was the Euxine (Hospitable) Sea, an ironic reference to its bleak and inhospitable character.

That Italy and Sicily were also visited by the Achaeans is suggested by the fact that these lands so often feature in Greek folklore. The poet Homer recounts how Odysseus (Latin Ulixes, erroneously written Ulysses) and his companions were blown off course while sailing home after the siege of Troy, and eventually found themselves negotiating a narrow strait, guarded on one side by Scylla, a six-headed monster, and on the other by Charybdis, a treacherous whirlpool. It was in this dangerous vicinity, too, that the voyagers encountered the fearsome Cyclops, a race of one-eyed cannibalistic giants, and the Sirens, the bewitching sweetness of whose songs lured unwary seafarers to their doom.

Wisely enough, the precise geographical location of these wonders (which are clearly not of this world) was left undefined by Homer. But in later years, no doubt as a result of the sensational stories which returning mariners told of a distant land where the mountains belched smoke and flame, and where the sea raced back and forth through a cleft in the rocks in the neighbourhood of a large island, these tales became localized in Italy and Sicily, and in the intervening Straits of Messina.

Accounts no less wondrous also grew up around
Crete, the Greek chroniclers telling how at Knossos a man-eating creature which was half-bull, half-human, was incarcerated in a labyrinth. To help feed the animal, the city of Athens was required to send a regular tribute of seven youths and seven maidens. But among the third group of intended victims went Theseus, son of the Athenian king, who contrived to enter the maze armed with a sword (with which he killed the monster) and a ball of thread (which, paid out as he went, enabled him to find his way back).

Whatever the merits of this improbable story, it at any rate tends to confirm that in the early days the Greeks were a subject people. But by 1250 B.C. the overlordship of the Cretans was at an end and their island citadel was in the destructive hands of invaders from Mycenae. This triumph, however, was of relatively short duration, for in the course of the next hundred years the warlike Achaeans were overwhelmed in turn by their no less aggressive kinsmen, the iron-possessing Dorians, whose greatly superior weapons ensured them victory over their Bronze Age opponents.

One outcome of this bitter struggle was that the Greeks, now represented by the untutored Dorians, relapsed into a state of illiteracy which seemingly lasted for the next three centuries. And Greek writing, when it reappeared, did so not in a Cretan but in a Semitic guise.

Their teachers were visiting traders from Phoenicia, whose forebears, after experimenting with a variety of scripts, evolved a series of phonetic characters which they named aleph (ox), beth (house), and so on. It was these signs and their
accompanying sounds which the Greeks borrowed and adapted to their own use as the now familiar alpha, beta (hence alphabet), gamma, delta ...

The coming of the Dorians also led to a mass migration of the defeated and the dispossessed, many of whom crossed over into Asia Minor and its adjacent islands, there to found such Greek colonies as Miletus, Ephesus, Phocaea, and Halicarnassus. Nor did the process stop here, for these overseas settlements eventually begat others. Thus Miletus colonized Abydos on the Euxine Sea and (with the permission of a friendly Pharaoh) Naucratis on the Nile, while Thera founded Cyrene in North Africa.

In the course of this widespread and, for the most part, peaceful penetration, Greek settlers inevitably made their way to the legendary land of Italy, where they first obtained a foothold on the small island of Pithecusae (Ischia), off the coast of Campania. And it was in this vicinity that the mainland outpost of Cumae was established in 757 B.C.

Other settlements soon appeared, among them Croton, Sybaris, and Tarentum on the Ionian coast, Rhegium in the toe of the peninsula, and Catania, Zancle, and Naxos on nearby Sicily. And before long, so numerous did these areas of Greek colonization in the neighbourhood of southern Italy become, the region received the name of Magna Graecia (Greater Greece).

The value of the cultural contribution thus received by the peoples of Italy cannot be over-estimated, even though, in the years which followed, the Greeks, far too busy disputing among themselves, failed to extend their political influence
beyond the original areas of settlement. Not only did these gifted, if quarrelsome, colonists introduce the cultivation of the vine and the olive, but they brought with them advanced attainments in the realms of philosophy, sculpture, and architecture, not to mention a knowledge of the art of writing.

Elsewhere, meanwhile, their exploration of the Mediterranean had continued, and during the seventh century B.C., before the growing power of Carthage was strong enough to prevent it, the Greeks reached the Atlantic. They called the two mountains flanking the Straits of Gibraltar after Heracles (the Hercules of the Romans), a legendary hero who undertook the completion of twelve difficult tasks for Eurystheus, King of Tiryns. It was while carrying out the tenth of these assignments—the capture of some oxen belonging to Geryon, a three-headed monster who dwelt in the far west—that the adventurer was supposed to have demonstrated his great strength by splitting a mountain into two, thus giving rise to the Pillars of Hercules which guard the ocean outlet.

The first Greek vessel to pass through the Straits, however, seems to have done so unintentionally. This was in 638 B.C., when the merchant ship of one Colaeus of Samos, having reached the island of Platea off the Libyan coast, was blown far out to sea by a tremendous storm. By the time the tempest had subsided, the ship’s occupants found themselves off the Atlantic coast of Spain, in the vicinity of the rich Phoenician trading-centre of Tartessus.

It may well be that it was the news of this discovery which prompted the Phocaeans of Asia
Minor to entrench themselves at Massalia, a settlement better known by its French name of Marseilles. Other Greek colonies in the western Mediterranean soon followed, one of them at Alalia, on Corsica. And when, some years later, the Phocaean homeland was overrun by Persian invaders, it was to this island offshoot that the refugees ultimately set sail.

At this, two other interested parties decided that the time had come to call a halt to Greek expansion in the area, and a treaty promising mutual assistance was concluded between them. One of the signatories was a maritime people who were in occupation of the coastal plain on the Italian mainland opposite Corsica. The other participants were the Carthaginians, the recognition of whose claims to Sardinia was one of the conditions of the pact.

So it came about that the luckless Phocaean convoy was brought to battle as it approached Alalia, where it was met by a hostile fleet of warships twice as numerous as its own. From the desperate struggle which ensued, more than one ancient historian has recorded that it was the Greeks who emerged triumphant.

But however this may be, the victory was dearly won, for the Phocaeans lost two-thirds of their sea power and the survivors had to abandon their plans and seek asylum elsewhere. Worse, their compatriots who had earlier settled on Corsica were forced to evacuate the island, which was promptly occupied by the allies of the Carthaginians.

Who were these allies? According to the testimony of classical writers, they referred to themselves as Rasna or Rasenna. But by the Greeks they
were called Tyrrhenoi, while to their Latin neighbours on the mainland they were known as the Tusci or Etrusci (Etruscans). And the question of their nationality and their place of origin has been a matter of conjecture and dispute for the past two thousand years.
ENTER THE ETRUSCANS

According to the Greek historian, Herodotus of Halicarnassus, who wrote about the middle of the fifth century B.C., the original homeland of the Etruscans was the kingdom of Lydia, in Asia Minor. It appears that during the reign of a certain King Atys, the land was stricken by a severe famine, which at first the populace strove to ignore. Then, as the shortage of food grew more and more acute, they invented dice and other games in an attempt to distract attention from their ever-present hunger. But when, after a period of eighteen years, the distress of the people still continued, a drastic remedy was decided upon.

The king divided his subjects into two groups, and drew lots to decide which group was to leave the country and which was to remain. He himself considered it his duty to stay behind; but in charge of the migrants he placed his son Tyrrhenos, who first led his party to Smyrna, where ships were built. Having thus equipped themselves for their journey in search of a new home, they embarked with all their possessions and sailed along the coasts of many strange lands until they came to the shores of western Italy. Here, they settled in the
land of the Umbrians, to the north of the Tiber; and no longer regarding themselves as Lydians, henceforth took the name of Tyrrhenoi, after their leader.

That similar accounts were given in later years by other classical writers unfortunately does nothing to substantiate the story, as it is clear that all they have done is to follow Herodotus. But about the middle of the first century B.C. another Greek from Halicarnassus, Dionysius by name, offered a contradiction. He claimed to have unearthed an early historical work by a Lydian author called Xanthus, which contained no mention of any mass departure from the country under
Tyrrenenos or anyone else. Dionysius also maintained that the Lydians and the Etruscans worshipped different gods, and that they did not speak the same language.

This question of language, as is now realized, is of crucial importance. Careful analysis has revealed that, basically, Etruscan is not an Indo-European tongue, a fact which disposes of Dionysius' suggestion that it was a native Italian dialect. At the same time, it adds greatly to the difficulties of would-be decipherers, for despite the most diligent enquiry it has not proved possible to assign Etruscan to any other recognized family group.

But if an understanding of the language has yet to be gained, the writing, tantalizingly enough, can easily be read, as the sound value of each of its characters is known. Nor is this in any way surprising, for with one or two exceptions these symbols were taken from the alphabet of the Greeks (Phoenician version).

However, nothing properly describable as Etruscan literature has survived, supposing that it once existed. The longest known text, containing about 500 different words, is inscribed on a dozen linen bandages which were taken from an Egyptian mummy of the Graeco-Roman period, and are now to be seen in the Zagreb Museum. For the rest, all that is available for study is a collection of 10,000 or so brief inscriptions in which the writing usually reads from right to left, though a few early examples follow what is known as a boustrophedon (ploughwise) arrangement, the lines of script
running alternately from right to left and from left to right.

Many of these short inscriptions are from tombs, and consist of phrases which are often repeated; and much ingenuity has been exercised by decipherers in ascertaining the meaning of words such as ril (age), tin (day), avil (year), puia (wife), and alpan (offering). As an example of how such elucidations are contrived, in one tomb a pair of ivory dice was found, inscribed with the words mach, zal, thu, huth, ci, and sa—obviously the names of the figures 1 to 6. But which name was representative of which number? A possible clue may be provided by the traditional distribution which follows the pattern 1 and 6, 2 and 5, 3 and 4.

The fact that their language proved to be unrelated to the speech of the resident Villanovan population of Italy strongly suggests that the Etruscans were not a native people. But in this event, by what route did they enter the country?

Two centuries ago, the well-known linguist, Carsten Niebuhr, announced that he had detected traces of Etruscan in the speech of peoples living in the eastern Alps, and in view of this discovery he advanced the theory that the intruders must have crossed these mountains when making their way to their new homeland. But what Niebuhr apparently overlooked was that Etruscan communities once existed to the north of the River Po and that their towns were periodically ravaged by bands of marauding Gauls. It was thus to be expected that some of the victims of these attacks would seek refuge among the inhabitants of the Rhaetian Alps.
The not very informative, and on occasion contradictory, accounts of the classical writers, coupled with the continued failure to find a relative of the Etruscan language, has meant that the historian, dependent as he is upon the existence of decipherable written records, has found himself unable to confirm or deny the Herodotus story, and it has remained for the archaeologist to provide convincing evidence in support of this thesis, at any rate in its essentials.

Although a detailed investigation of the remains of Etruscan cities was not undertaken until the eighteenth century, considerable interest had been aroused long before this by the chance discovery of ancient Tuscan tombs during ploughing activities, and by the occasional unearthing of striking bronze figures, a particularly fine example of which was found near Lake Trasimeno in 1566. Known as the Arringatore (the Orator), it depicts a toga-draped official with his right arm raised—evidently a portrait statue of some person of importance.

The first Etruscan site to receive the serious attention of the excavator was that of Volterra, where in 1739 the burial place of the famed Cecina family was discovered. Most of the town’s necropolis area, however, which, as was customary, lay outside the city walls, was found to have been destroyed by a series of landslides.

Investigations were then carried out among the ruins of other centres, where not a few of the tombs were found to have been looted in earlier times. Many others, on the other hand—among them the fancifully named Tomba del Duce at Vetulonia and the Warrior’s Tomb at Tarquinii (Corneto)—con-
tained an amazing assortment of items, including vessels of bronze, silver, and gold.

Thus, when the *Tomba Regolini-Galassi* was entered at Caere (Cerveteri), in it were discovered bronze shields, bundles of arrows, and two- and four-wheeled chariots, together with the well-preserved remains of their warrior owner, not to mention an amazingly rich collection of jewellery which had belonged to another occupant, a royal lady who had long since turned to dust. Among her valuable possessions were numerous bracelets and chains, silver cups and jugs, and engraved bowls. From an inscription on one of these items, it appeared that the lady’s name was Larthis.

Other tombs, in particular those to be seen at Tarquinii and Clusium (Chiusi), are renowned for the frescoes which cover their walls—pictures which vividly portray the love of the Etruscans for horse riding and chariot racing. Also apparent is a keen interest in wrestling and boxing, and a fondness for music, a favourite instrument being a double pipe of the Phrygian type, though trumpets and horns are likewise much in evidence.

Needless to add, a careful examination of these tombs and their contents yielded information of great value in determining the date of the structures, and hence of the cities associated with them. One such indication was provided by the finding in a tomb at Tarquinii of an Egyptian vase bearing the name of the Pharaoh Bokenranef (the Greek Bocchorus), who is known to have reigned from 734 to 728 B.C. There is also reason to suppose that this imported vessel, made during the king’s occupancy of the throne, found its way to its final
resting-place not long after the death of the monarch whose name it bears.

Again, at Vetulonia and elsewhere, in the company of what were evidently earlier Villanovan burials, there were found elaborate tomb structures containing objects of foreign manufacture (e.g. Egyptian scarabs) not previously encountered. Moreover, what proved to be the three oldest of the Etruscan townships—Vetulonia, Tarquinii, and Caere—were all to be found in the vicinity of the west coast, a circumstance which pointed to their being the first settlements founded by newcomers from overseas. And that these voyagers had come from the Orient was suggested by their early art (in later examples, Greek influences are much in evidence), and by their resort to divination and augury, practices denoting close Chaldean (Neo-Babylonian) associations.

These and other highly significant findings, such as the discovery of an Etruscan cemetery on the Aegean island of Lemnos, all combine to suggest that Herodotus was right when he asserted that the Etruscans came from Asia Minor. Whether or not their original home was the ancient kingdom of Lydia is relatively unimportant, and the fact that he contrived to get his dates wrong of little consequence.

The Greek historian gave the thirteenth century B.C. as the time of the departure of Tyrrhenos and his followers, whereas all the archaeological evidence indicates that between 900 and 800 B.C. would be nearer the mark. It would thus appear that the Etruscans reached Italy after the advent of the Villanovans, but before the arrival of the Greeks.
ENTER THE ETRUSCANS

Nor is it necessary to postulate a famine in order to account for the migration. A more likely explanation is that these Asian intruders were attracted to Tuscany by its rich deposits of copper and by the abundance of iron ore to be found on the adjacent island of Elba. It seems probable, too, that they arrived in small groups over a period of years, and that their higher culture and greater knowledge enabled them to establish an aristocracy of conquest over the native inhabitants, who were quickly made into serfs.

Tuscany was a land of primeval forest, mostly oak and chestnut, when the newcomers landed and made their way inland, looking for likely places to settle. The founders of Vetulonia and Tarquinii followed the Bruna and Marta rivers a few miles upstream before they happened upon a suitable site, while Caere was established nearer to the coast and only twenty miles or so to the north of the Tiber mouth.

It was usual for Etruscan towns to occupy a commanding position and to be fortified by enclosing walls of dressed stone, within which dwellings and other buildings were laid out in a regular plan. Two main roadways intersected at right angles to form a central cross, and these and other principal streets were paved and drained, the timber houses which lined them consisting of one- and two-storeyed apartments built round a central courtyard.

When a new town was laid out, special ceremonies, designed to invoke the protection of the high gods, were enacted as an additional safeguard against enemy attack, in the course of which the
line of the boundary walls was marked out by ploughing an encircling furrow, the so-called "spiritual fence" or pomerium. The intricacies of this complex rite have been described in some detail by the Greek writer Plutarch, who explains how, when a place was reached where it was proposed to make an entrance into the city, the plough was lifted over the intended opening, as the walls alone were regarded as sacred.

The lack of documentary evidence makes difficult an adequate account of the religious beliefs and practices of the Etruscans; but among a veritable host of lesser divinities, nine particularly powerful personages, all capable of hurling thunderbolts at the slightest provocation, seem to have been recognized. Their leader was Tinia; and two other members of the group were the goddesses Uni and Menrva, a trio destined to become familiar to the Romans as Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva.

The Etruscans appear to have been fearful of the future and much preoccupied with the thought of death—a fate which, though its inevitability was recognized, they strove to defer by acts of sacrifice and supplication. The priesthood, whose members undertook to intercede with the unseen powers on behalf of their customers, thus occupied an important and influential position in the community; and, among other things, their activities involved them in the precarious duty of making predictions about the course of coming events.

To this end, omens were observed, lightning flashes were carefully watched, the flight of birds noted, and the livers of sacrificed animals minutely studied. And although the niceties of these and
The Flute Player, a painting from the Tomb of the Triclinium, Tarquinia, c. 470 B.C. (Photo: M. Pallottino’s “The Art of the Etruscans”, by kind permission of Thames & Hudson Ltd., London.)
Arringatore (The Orator), an Etruscan bronze figure found near Lake Trasimeno. (Photo: The Mansell Collection.)
Latin warriors, carrying the body of a companion, as depicted on the Praenestine cista (bronze toilet-box). (Photo: The British Museum.)
other procedures are now but imperfectly known and understood, some idea of their involved and complicated nature may be gained from a bronze replica of an animal liver which was unearthed at Piacenza. Its upper surface is divided into no fewer than forty sections, each inscribed with the name of some associated deity.

The coastal towns of Tuscany were eventually joined by others situated farther inland, and together they formed a loose confederacy of city-states (populi), bound together by religious and political ties. Traditionally, the leading communities numbered twelve, although their identity remains uncertain. However, in addition to the three oldest coastal towns, the group almost certainly included such important centres as Volterra, Arretium, Vulci, Clusium, and Populonia, of which the last-named, though now merely a minor seaside resort, was once a city of iron furnaces and metal manufacture, thanks to its nearness to the offshore island of Elba.

Each of these communities, at any rate in the early days, was governed by a local priest-king (lucumone) who, in keeping with his exalted rank, wore robes of purple and travelled in an ivory chariot, preceded by retainers carrying a bundle of rods in which was inserted an axe, a symbolic reminder of the royal power to punish unruly citizens by thrashing or even by death. Later, the monarchical system was abandoned in favour of a constitutional republic. But, although this change brought with it the election of magistrates, effective control seems to have remained in the hands of an hereditary and all-powerful aristocracy.
Expansion beyond the confines of Etruria proper began about 650 B.C. when, finding themselves possessed of ample material resources backed by a strong army and navy, the Etruscans set out to extend their hold over Italy. From Nepi, Veii, and Cerveteri they crossed the Tiber and occupied the plain of Latium. These forces then went on to invade Campania; and when strong Greek resistance eventually brought them to a halt, they established a number of outposts, among them the important border town of Capua.

Other of their troops, meanwhile, made their way over the Apennines to the north of Florence, and reached and occupied the Po valley. In this region, another confederation of city-states appears to have come into being, the members of which presumably included Ravenna, Spina, Melpum, and Hadria, under the leadership of the town of Mantua.

By the end of the sixth century B.C., when their power was at its height, the influence of the Etruscans extended from the foothills of the Alps to as far south as the Bay of Naples, an area which included some of the richest regions of the peninsula. Moreover, their ships controlled the adjacent seas, and to this day their one-time monopoly is commemorated by the names Tyrrhenian (Greek) or Tuscan (Latin) Sea given to western coastal waters, and by the name Adriatic Sea, derived from the colony of Hadria.

But the very success of the Etruscans seems to have led to their undoing, for their conquests enabled them to lead a life of luxury and ease which left them with little to do except quarrel
Italy—Etruscan, Carthaginian, and Hellenic (Greek) spheres of influence
among themselves. And, as events were soon to show, although they had succeeded in overrunning much of Italy, their hold was far from secure.

The decline began soon after 500 B.C. when the Greeks in the south started successfully to challenge Etruscan mastery of the Tyrrenian Sea. Various acts of piracy culminated in a naval battle off the Campanian coast in 474 B.C., in which the Etruscan fleet was annihilated by the forces of Aristodemus of Cumae in alliance with those of Hieron I of Syracuse.

This reverse at sea was accompanied by even more serious defeats on land. The inhabitants of Latium rose in revolt, and warlike mountain tribes (Umbrians, Samnites) descended in force from the heights of the Apennines to occupy Campania, a movement which resulted in the loss of Capua. And scarcely had these damaging blows been dealt to the Etruscans beyond the Tiber than their colonies in the north were assailed by hordes of invading Gauls who, from the beginning of the fourth century, swarmed over the Alps and took possession of the Po valley.

Thereafter, the inhabitants of Etruria itself, threatened on all sides and awaiting the final assault, may well have wondered from which direction the final blow would fall. By a strange and ironic twist of fate, the answer was destined to come from the former Etruscan stronghold of Rome, whose citizens were in the process of gathering strength to do battle with Latins, Greeks, Gauls, and Etruscans alike.
THE BEGINNINGS OF ROME

The location of ancient Rome, some fifteen miles inland from the Tiber estuary, was to prove highly advantageous to its inhabitants for a number of reasons. For one thing, the city lay about half-way between the northern and southern extremities of the Italian peninsula, and so formed a natural centre of communication. For another, although it was situated reasonably near to the sea for trading and other purposes, the settlement was sufficiently far away from the coast to avoid attracting the attention of passing pirates. And thirdly, thanks to an elevated position it not only commanded the adjacent river valley but also a mid-stream island and a ford which offered the last convenient crossing-place of the waterway in its lower reaches.

Traditionally, the hills which originally marked the actual site of the city were seven in number, viz. the Quirinal, the Viminal, the Esquiline, the Caelian, the Capitoline, the Palatine, and the Aventine. But the first four of these were really no more than ridges which extended from a continuous stretch of high ground, in between which and the river were situated three eminences which stood apart from the adjacent heights.
Of this trio, the Capitoline, though completely detached, was small in extent and not likely to invite immediate occupation, while the slopes of the Aventine were gradual on all sides except that facing the river, a position not readily defended. But the Palatine, some twenty-five acres in extent, was effectively cut off from its surroundings by an encircling wall of high cliffs, the only natural approach to its summit being by way of a narrow bridge of land (called the Velia) which connected it with the Esquiline.

The Palatine, then, would be the obvious choice of settlers in search of a site which offered the maximum of security from enemy attack. But when was the summit of this natural stronghold first occupied, and by whom? In the absence of contemporary records, later accounts given by the Romans of the founding of their city, and of its early history, inevitably placed undue reliance upon oral traditions which, in turn, owed much to the fertility of the imagination; and in the light of modern enquiry, the evidence offered by the ancients appears only as a confused mixture of possible fact and undoubted fiction.

Among other things, these very largely Greek-inspired legends tell of immigration into Latium from overseas at the time of the fall of Troy—of how the fugitive Aeneas and his son Ascanius, in seeking to escape the hostility of the goddess Juno, eventually made their way to the mouth of the Tiber. The ruler of the territory at this time was King Latius, whose daughter Lavinia the Trojan leader married, and in whose honour he built a new town, which he named after his bride.
When Aeneas died, Ascanius left to found Alba Longa (modern Castel Gandolfo) at the foot of the nearby Alban Hills. And here, in the course of the next three centuries, he was succeeded by twelve other monarchs, the last of whom, King Amulius, had seized the throne from his elder brother, Numitor.

To guard against the possible appearance of other rival claimants, Amulius took steps to prevent the marriage of Numitor’s daughter, Rhea Silvia. But his intention was foiled when no less a personage than the god Mars became enamoured of the lady, who, in due time, presented her lover with twin sons. These boys were named Romulus and Remus.

Not to be outdone, the scheming Amulius then kidnapped his brother’s grandchildren, placed them in a trough, and cast it adrift on the swiftly moving waters of the Tiber. But the current washed the twins ashore at the foot of the Palatine, where they were found and fed by a she-wolf, who carried them to the nearby cave of Lupercal.

Later, the shepherd Faustulus and his wife brought up the two youngsters, who when they were old enough returned to Alba Longa and, after slaying the treacherous Amulius, restored Numitor to his throne. With a number of followers, they then took their leave, intending to build a new city of their own.

The brothers went to the scene of their rescue by the she-wolf; and in order to decide which of them the high gods had singled out for the task ahead, sought a sign from aloft. By all accounts, the first to receive an indication was Remus.
Sculptured representation of Romulus and Remus above a map of Rome
Standing on the Aventine, he glimpsed half-a-dozen vultures—a most favourable omen. But almost immediately afterwards Romulus, who was stationed on the Palatine, saw twice that number, whereupon each claimed the leadership, the one on the grounds of priority, the other on the score of numerical superiority. In the dispute which followed, the unfortunate Remus met his death, and Romulus (after whom the city of Rome is named) went on to fulfil his destiny. The year, by more or less general consent, was 753 B.C.

Romulus is said to have reigned as king of Rome for the next thirty-eight years, during which he made the city a haven for fugitives and outcasts, thereby adding greatly to the numbers of the male population. As a result, there arose a grave shortage of women in the community, a want which the followers of Romulus reportedly satisfied by carrying off the wives and daughters of a neighbouring Sabine tribe which was camped on the Quirinal. Titius Tatius, the leader of the group, was afterwards engaged in a long and bitter struggle with the Romans because of this outrage, though the two peoples were eventually united.

We are told that the next ruler of Rome was the priest-king Numa Pompilius, a Sabine according to his name, who is credited with having devised the calendar used by the members of the combined settlement. He was succeeded by Tullus Hostilius, a warrior noted for his successful repulse of an attack from Alba Longa. According to one account, he marched against this rival stronghold and destroyed it, though another version of the affair describes how it was agreed that a fight
between three champions from either side should decide the issue, in which personal combat the Horatii (Roman knights) duly triumphed over the Curiatii (Alban knights).

Tullus Hostilius was followed by Ancus Marcius, who is said to have added to the Roman domain by extending its boundaries down-river to the coast—the beginning of the port of Ostia. Then came three more monarchs, respectively Tarquinius Priscus, Servius Tullus, and Tarquinius Superbus, the last-named a tyrannical ruler who made the very name of king (*rex*) so hated that in 509 B.C. his subjects rebelled against him. And with his expulsion the regal period of Rome was brought to an end and a republic set up.

Such is the gist of the traditional account; and as will at once be apparent, many of the events of the narrative range in content from the highly improbable to the downright impossible. Particularly extravagant, for example, is the supposed arrival of Greek or Trojan settlers in Latium at the time of the Trojan War; and in the absence of trustworthy literary sources, we must once again rely upon the archaeological evidence.

Reliable information about the beginnings of Rome has now been accumulating steadily for more than a century. Some exploratory digging was undertaken in the Forum area at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but it was not until 1870 that the first important discoveries relating to prehistoric Rome were made on the Palatine and the Esquiline, since when there have been many other significant finds on these and adjacent sites.

Weapons dating from the first half of the second
millennium B.C. have reportedly been unearthed on the Esquiline, while on two ridges of the Palatine (the Palatium and the Cermalus) the lowest occupation level contained the remains of pottery recognizable as belonging to the early Iron Age, and revealed evidence of the one-time existence of wattle-and-daub huts. The huts themselves had, of course, long since vanished, but their foundations showed them to have been rectangular in shape,

![Hut urn](image)

and to have been about 13 feet 6 inches by 11 feet 9 inches. Interestingly enough, many of the funerary urns of the period are in hut form, and these clay models have provided detailed information about the appearance of the missing dwellings.

These and related finds suggest that about 1000 B.C. the Palatine was occupied by Villanovan folk who practised cremation burials (in which the corpse was first burnt or cremated) and used a nearby stretch of marshland (the Forum Romanum to be)
as an urnfield. They were a Latin-speaking people, and there is no reason to suppose that their way of life differed from that of other related tribal groups resident in the vicinity. It is even possible that they came from Alba Longa, as the foundation legend which grew up in later years maintains.

The Quirinal and Esquiline hills, meanwhile, were occupied by peoples whose graves show that they disposed of their dead without first burning them. From the fact that some of the later interments in the Latin cemetery are also inhumation burials it would appear that during the eighth century B.C. several of the settlements combined to form a League of the Seven Hills, whose members shared a common graveyard and a religious festival known as the Septimontium.

Confusingly enough, the Seven Hills in question were restricted to the several summits and spurs of the Palatine, Esquiline, and the Caelian, together with the Velia, and with the eventual fusion of the villages stationed on these heights (an amalgamation which involved draining the intervening marshland and its abandonment as a cemetery) Rome emerged as the City of the Four Regions. It was so named after the four regiones into which it was subsequently divided; and, in addition to the 450 or so acres enclosed by its ring wall, the citizens of this growing and populous city-state occupied a considerable area of the surrounding countryside.

The basically agricultural nature of the community is reflected in a belief in a host of unseen spirits and powers which governed the everyday lives of its members, namely, Lares, which guarded the boundaries of the land; Penates, protectors of the
home; Vesta, who kept the hearth fires aglow; Mars, who brought the plants to life in the spring; and Jupiter, the all-powerful god of the skies, whose anger manifested itself as thunder and lightning. There was also a medley of other divine attendants, from Janus, the god of opening (doors, gates, entrances), whose two-faced head enabled him to keep watch in more than one direction simultaneously, to Cloacine, the spirit of purification, otherwise identifiable as the patron deity of drains.

In later times, several of these deities changed their function (Mars, for example, achieved renown as the god of war), while others made way for foreign importations—Castor and Pollux came from the Latin city of Tusculum; Minerva was brought in from Falerii, in Etruria; and in due course a multitude of strange deities arrived from Greece and the Orient. But despite these innovations, all true Romans retained a special regard for Lares and Penates, the revered gods of the household who long continued to play an important part in family life.

Apart from slaves, which at this early date were few in number, the citizens of Rome were members of a free community. Originally, the population was supposed to have belonged to one or other of three tribes—the Ramnes (followers of Romulus), the Tities (Sabines), and the Luceres (Etruscans)—and the members of these groups were sub-divided into clans (curiae), which in turn were made up of gentes, or family groups. An elder (pater) was recognized as the head of each gens, and the patres of the leading gentes formed the Senatus (Senate, or Council of Elders).
As time went on, two distinct classes of citizen emerged, representative of the haves and the have-nots: the patricians and the plebeians (plebs). Carsten Niebuhr sought to explain the distinction by suggesting that the plebs (who were originally excluded from military service) were the descendants of a local population which had been conquered by the Latins.

But perhaps an explanation more likely than this theory of racial difference is to be found in the view that members of the patrician nobility were simply the heirs of those more able and energetic members of the community who, down through the years, gradually increased the numbers of their cattle and the extent of their land holdings, so establishing a position of wealth and privilege for themselves and their successors.

That a monarchical form of government sooner or later came into being has been confirmed by the identification of the word “rex” on an ancient stone pillar (known as the lapis niger) which was discovered beneath the pavement of the Forum in recent times. Seemingly, however, the office of king was elective, not hereditary, and the ruler no doubt found it expedient to pay heed to the views of the Senate and to have at least some regard for the wishes of the Comitia Curiata, the popular assembly of the clans whose privilege it was to confer upon a newly elected monarch his imperium (authority to command).

The identities of the early kings are not known with any certainty, and the traditional listing can be regarded as acceptable only in part, if at all. Romulus, as the alleged offspring of the god Mars,
is clearly no more than a fictional figure, as is his Sabine contemporary Titius Tatius; while the monarchs Numa Pompilius, Tullius Hostilius, and Ancus Marcius are also historically unreliable, though significance may attach to the fact that these names recur in a consul list relating to early republican times.

As for the last three rulers, whose reigns coincide with the period of Etruscan expansion into Latium,

![Etruscan funeral mask](image)

it would seem that with them somewhat firmer ground is reached. At all events, the foreign nationality of Tarquinius Priscus (616–578 B.C.), who may well have come from the town of Tarquinii itself, is suggested by his name, just as that of his successor, Servius Tullius (578–534 B.C.), proclaims him to have been a Latin, though, according to one theory, he was in reality an Etruscan hero called Masturna.
A more probable explanation is that Tullius was a Latin who was elected leader of his people during a break in alien rule, an overlordship which was renewed with the arrival of Tarquinius Superbus (534–510 B.C.). This last king, it would appear, was an Etruscan usurper who so provoked his subjects by the high-handedness of his actions that he was forcibly expelled. The people, moreover, vowed to be rid of the monarchy for evermore, and set up a republican form of government in its stead.

Even so, there is every indication that the Romans benefited greatly under the influence of the Etruscans, if only because the accomplishments of the intruders were considerably in advance of their own. Not only was a system of writing introduced which made use of the Etruscan version of the Greek alphabet, but in the religious sphere the practice of divination and the worship of the Jupiter-Juno-Minerva trio became established. Such symbols of temporal authority as the purple-bordered toga, the ivory chariot (sella curulis), and attendants (lictors) bearing bundles of rods and axes (fasces) also remained as Etruscan survivals.

It would appear, too, that new earthworks were constructed round the city, enclosing as much as 700 acres, within which protected area paved streets were laid out, temples were built (one to Jupiter on the Capitoline, another to Diana on the Aventine) and a main drainage system installed (the still-existing Cloaca Maxima). But these activities apart, material evidence of the Etruscan occupation of Rome is surprisingly scarce, from which, coupled with the fact that the invaders failed
to impose their language upon their subjects, it has been inferred that the conquerors were represented by a few leading families, and that the bulk of the population remained essentially Latin.

That the end of the regal period found Rome strong and prosperous there seems little reason to doubt. Local industries appear to have become firmly established, among them those of the dyer and the goldsmith, the tanner and the carpenter, the potter and the leather-worker. Foreign trade was also flourishing, as is evidenced by large importations of Greek pottery, in which transactions cattle or lumps of copper served as currency, together with commodities such as salt, timber, and slaves, which were likewise offered in exchange.

As for the boundaries of the city-state, the annexation of surrounding territories had continued until the original area over which jurisdiction was exercised had been increased tenfold to some 300 square miles. But even though this process of expansion had added greatly to the number of inhabitants as newly acquired populations were absorbed, there was as yet nothing to indicate that in the years ahead Rome was destined to subdue, one after another, the powerful adversaries by whom she was surrounded, until ultimately she was to become the acknowledged mistress not merely of all Italy but of the entire Mediterranean region.
EXPANSION AND WORLD CONQUEST

CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY surrounds the events which took place during the first century of the republican régime, but it seems clear that, from the onset, Rome faced determined opposition to any ideas she may have entertained about local leadership. Neighbouring towns of Latium were openly suspicious of her ambitions, and the year 500 B.C. (if a list preserved for posterity by Cato the Elder is to be relied upon) found eight of them—Ardea, Aricia, Cora, Lanuvium (now Lanuvio), Lavinium, Pometia, Tibur (modern Tivoli), and Tusculum—politically united as members of the Latin League, an association from which the powerful City of the Seven Hills was pointedly excluded.

The position of Rome was thus one of isolation and some danger, for not only was she regarded with suspicion by her fellow Latin communities but she was surrounded by actively hostile peoples. To the south and east were located the troublesome Apennine tribes of the Volsci and the Aequi, while to the north lay Etruria and the Etruscans. On the other hand, Rome’s position in the midst of these enemies at least offered the advantage that, even if her foes sought to combine against her, she was
able to operate from a central base endowed with short lines of communication.

In the event, the first serious challenge to her newly gained independence appears to have come from the north, as part of an Etruscan attempt to reoccupy Latium. And despite long-cherished Roman accounts of how the invaders were repulsed by the heroic stand of Horatius Cocles and his two companions on the *pons sublicius* (the wooden bridge spanning the Tiber), it would seem that, for a short time at least, the city’s inhabitants once again experienced a state of servitude. Elsewhere in Latium, however, Tusculum and other neighbouring towns, assisted by Greek auxiliaries, so decisively defeated the Etruscans that even their hold on Rome could not be maintained.

This being the case, a subsequent attempt on the part of Rome to subdue members of the Latin League by force (Battle of Lake Regillus, 496 B.C.) would seem to display a certain lack of gratitude. Moreover, although the aggressors claimed a victory over their opponents, in fact they failed in their purpose, for the rift between themselves and the Latins remained. Worse, this constant strife provoked attacks from adjacent mountain tribes (Aequi and Volsci)—incursions which, however, were instrumental in persuading members of the League of the wisdom of coming to terms with Rome. In 493 B.C. a treaty was signed by the two parties, promising friendship and mutual assistance in case of need.

In this manner, the threat offered by the hill tribes was contained, though it was not until after much fighting that it was finally removed. Meanwhile,
apparently without much help from her allies, Rome sought to banish another threat to her existence, arising from the fact that the Etruscans, in their last retreat, had retained a hold on Fidenae, a town which controlled the upper Tiber.

Fidenae was garrisoned from the nearby Etruscan city of Veii, and after it had been captured the Romans made preparations for what was to prove to be a decisive assault upon Veii itself. The task was no easy one, for the enemy citadel was perched high on a steep rock and was protected on three sides by a moat. Not surprisingly, the attack soon developed into a prolonged siege, said (with little probability) to have been maintained for ten years.

Inexplicably enough, other Etruscan towns, with one or two exceptions, refused all appeals for help, and the Romans eventually stormed their way into the fortress, though the picturesque story of how the besiegers entered by way of an underground tunnel was not confirmed by a careful examination of the site which was carried out in 1935.

With the destruction of Veii and the annexation of her territory, it seems that Rome's claims to leadership among the Latins was not without some justification. But this great victory was soon overshadowed by a disastrous turn of events in the course of which the city of Rome was itself besieged, captured, looted, and burned to the ground—all in a matter of months! Those responsible for this humiliating defeat were the Celts, wild and nomadic intruders from across the Alps, whom the Romans knew as Gauls.

The evidence of language shows that the Celts
Rome before the Gallic invasion
were an Aryan people whose affinities with the ancestors of the Latins must at one time have been close. But after 1000 B.C. the two groups lost touch—the Celts, under the pressure of Teutonic migrations, subsequently spreading throughout France and the British Isles, where they are now represented by Bretons, Welsh, Irish, Gaelic, and Manx inhabitants.

About 400 B.C., the Insubres, the Boii, the Senones, and other Celtic tribes began to stream across the Alps and into the Po valley, where they quickly overwhelmed the resident Etruscans. A Senonian chieftain named Brennus then marched into Etruria itself with a large following and threatened the town of Clusium (Chiusi), less than a hundred miles from Rome.

The Romans, no less concerned than the Etruscans, instructed their envoys to warn Brennus off, with the result that he later swept down on Rome, completely routed the army sent to stop him (Battle of Allia River, 390 B.C.) and without further difficulty occupied the entire city, with the exception of the heights of the Capitoline.

In this last outpost the defenders, who had been warned of the approach of the enemy by the sacred geese of the goddess Juno (or so the story goes), were able to hold out for seven months, until eventually famine forced them to ask for terms. Happily, the invaders were more interested in plunder than they were intent upon conquest, and allowed themselves to be bought off. But they left much of the settlement in ashes, as layers of burned debris brought to light by excavations on the Palatine and elsewhere bear witness.
To the stricken Romans it must have seemed that their future prospects were as unpromising as their present fortunes were low, a view which was evidently shared by their enemies and their allies alike, all of whom lost no time in seeking to take advantage of the situation—the hill tribes by renewing their depredations, the southern Etruscans by regaining their freedom, and the Latin League by ending its treaty.

Nevertheless, such was the spirit of her citizens that after little more than twenty years Rome found herself sufficiently recovered not only to mount a series of actions against more Gaulish intruders but simultaneously to recapture her lost Etrurian possessions, to suppress the Volsci once again, and to compel the reluctant cities of Latium to renew their agreement on less favourable terms than before.

In all probability, this rapid and astonishing recovery was assisted by military reforms which took place about this time. The Roman army was essentially a citizen body known as a *legio* (levy), each legion consisting of a force of several thousand. The unit was the *centuria* of a hundred men; and prior to the disaster on the banks of the Allia the method of fighting had been based on that employed by the Etruscans and the Greeks, in which use was made of a compact formation known as a phalanx. In this arrangement, some 3,000 warriors, armed with long thrusting spears and facing the enemy in a line six ranks deep, would advance in a solid mass, their flanks protected by less heavily armed contingents. A small troop of cavalry was also in attendance.

But as the Romans learned to their cost, such a
formation lacked mobility, especially in mountainous country, and was ill-designed to cope with the rush tactics adopted by the hordes of undisciplined Gauls. Moreover, as they also discovered, once their tightly packed ranks had been broken, a soldier armed with a spear was no match for a determined antagonist wielding a sword.

To remedy these deficiencies, flexibility of manoeuvre was achieved by means of the so-called manipular system, in which the legion was divided into companies (still, however, referred to as centuries) of sixty men each (2 centuries = 120 men = 1 maniple). The maniples were named after the handful of straw which, fastened to a pole, served as a standard, though in later years each company was given a number and the bundle of straw was replaced by a silver eagle (aquila).

In battle, the maniples were drawn up in three lines, one behind the other, and the main body of the infantry was armed with a heavy javelin (pilum) and a sword. Any gaps caused by casualties in the front-line maniples were made good from the ranks of the second line which, if the need arose, could in turn be reinforced from the third division stationed in the rear.

More than a century and a half before the introduction of these reforms, there is reason to believe that Rome had made a treaty with Carthage whereby her exclusive interests in Latium were recognized in return for an undertaking on her part to stay out of Africa; and now, in 348 B.C., there was a reaffirmation of the understanding between the two states. Yet another acknowledgment of Rome’s growing prestige came five years later,
when her assistance was sought by the Oscans, a Samnite hill tribe which had occupied the plain of Campania in the wake of the retreating Etruscans. The new occupants were now being attacked by marauding kinsmen from their old mountain home, and after answering their call for help Rome made evident her interest in the area by leaving behind a garrison in the town of Capua.

Thoroughly alarmed at the growing military strength and the arbitrary actions of their associate, the members of the Latin League now insisted upon their being given an equal say in the direction of affairs, a demand which was answered by a declaration of war. From the conflict thus provoked Rome emerged the victor, the League was dissolved, and the whole of Latium came under her sway.

Thereafter, the process of territorial acquisition by force of arms and the retention of these spoils of war by colonization was methodically and resolutely pursued, a policy which was greatly assisted by the construction of a network of roads, radiating from Rome in all directions. One of the first of these highways, the Via Appia, extending to Capua, was begun in 312 B.C., and it was soon followed by others, among them the Via Flaminia and the Via Valeria.

By 290 B.C., after a series of conflicts (the Samnite Wars), in the course of which Gauls, Etruscans, and the hill tribes combined unavailingly against her, Rome’s authority extended over the greater part of the peninsula and her armies were advancing towards the Greek-colonial cities of Thurii, Croton, and Locri in the toe of the land.
The capture of these towns brought the Romans into conflict with the Greeks of Tarentum, who enlisted the aid of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus. He arrived from Greece with twenty elephants and an army of 25,000 men, and won a hard-fought victory at Heraclea. Even so, and despite the fact that the Samnites and other tribes now moved to join him, Rome stubbornly declined his peace offers, and in the following year (279 B.C.) Pyrrhus won again at Asculum, but at such tremendous cost that he was heard to exclaim that another such triumph and his cause would be lost (hence the expression "a Pyrrhic victory").

Pyrrhus then went to Sicily, but finding his peace overtures still rejected, he crossed back to Italy, where he was defeated at Beneventum. He then made his way home, leaving his adversary in control of the whole of the peninsula except the northernmost regions, which were occupied by the Ligurians in the west and by the Gauls in the east. Rome thus emerged as a power to be reckoned with, a fact which the Greek ruler of Egypt, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, recognized by an exchange of envoys.

Conflict between Rome and Carthage was now inevitable, if only because of the question of Sicily, where for several centuries Carthaginians and Greeks had been disputing for possession of the whole island. With the departure of Pyrrhus, the Carthaginians at last managed to complete their occupation with the exception of the small kingdom of Syracuse and the town of Messana (Messina), where some Campanian mercenaries, who called themselves the Mamertines (Children of Mars),
were holding out against the troops of Hiero II of Syracuse.

The defenders of Messana sent appeals for help to Romans and Carthaginians alike, with the result that in a very short time the forces of the two would-be rescuers were fighting one another. Thus began the First Punic (Carthaginian) War, in the course of which, although the Romans occupied Syracuse and compelled Hiero to become their ally, the Carthaginians made use of their command of the sea to blockade the island and interrupt the arrival of Roman reinforcements.

At this time, neither the Romans nor the Greeks possessed warships which could match those of their adversary, but by good fortune a stranded enemy vessel fell into Roman hands, and was used as a model for the building of a fleet of even larger and more powerful ships. Once these vessels were available, it became possible to carry the war to Carthage itself, though the troops which landed on the African coast, after gaining an initial victory, suffered a serious reverse.

In the war at sea the Romans also achieved success at first, despite the loss of many ships through storms and a lack of navigational experience, until in 249 B.C. what remained of their fleet was defeated at Drepana. It was on the eve of this disastrous encounter that the Roman commander, the consul Claudius Pulcher, on being informed that the sacred chickens he carried refused to eat (a most unfavourable omen), testily exclaimed, "Then they shall drink", and ordered the offending birds to be thrown overboard!

Eight years later, after building a replacement
fleet, the Romans returned to Drepana and completely destroyed the enemy’s naval forces. Carthage
then obtained peace by agreeing to withdraw from Sicily and by promising to make a monetary pay-
ment of 3,200 talents. Rome also claimed and occupied Sardinia and Corsica.

After an uneasy twenty-year interlude, trouble again flared up over Carthaginian activities in
Spain, where a viceroy named Hannibal took it upon himself to flout treaty obligations by attacking
Greek settlements under Roman protection. After this deliberate act of defiance, he boldly
marched across France and over the Alps and into the Po valley, accompanied by elephants and an
army of some 26,000 men (218 B.C.). And for the next seventeen years he terrorized the entire
peninsula, defeating or eluding one Roman army after another as he first crossed the Apennines,
then betook himself to the Adriatic and so reached Apulia. From there he went to Capua, gathering
support from Samnites and others as he went.

Under their leader Marcellus, the Romans, who refused all offers to come to terms with the in-
vader, were at last able to check his activities at Nola, whence he was forced to return to Apulia.
At the same time, by the interposition of a fleet in the Adriatic, Philip V of Macedon was dissuaded
from sending aid to the Carthaginians. The Romans also carried the war into Spain, where
New Carthage (modern Carthagenia) was captured, and threatened Carthage itself by landing troops
in Africa. At this, Hannibal was ordered home, where in 202 B.C. his army was routed at the battle
of Zama. The subsequent surrender, among other
things, entailed the loss of Spain, which Rome acquired.

Again there was peace between the two rivals, a lull broken for Rome by further conflicts with Philip of Macedon and his ally, Antiochus III of Syria, both of whom were defeated, as was Philip’s successor Perseus. Then, in 151 B.C., once more showing a wilful disregard for solemn undertakings, Carthage launched an attack against Rome’s ally Massinissa, king of eastern Numidia. But the attempt failed, whereupon apologetic regrets were at once tendered to all concerned.

But this time the Romans were in no mood for excuses, and they despatched yet another army to Africa. The Carthaginians, who had already decided to offer no resistance, unwisely delivered up their arms before enquiring as to the terms of the surrender. These were that they must abandon their age-old city and settle inland, more than ten miles from the coast.

To a people who depended for their prosperity upon the sea, this was worse than a death sentence, and they accordingly prepared to resist with whatever last-minute defences they could improvise. And, in the attack which followed, the entire population of the doomed city was either killed or enslaved and its buildings razed to the ground. It is said that the conflagration raged for seventeen days, after which the smouldering debris was ploughed into the ground as a ritualistic indication that as a place of human habitation Carthage had ceased to exist (146 B.C.).

And so, with the annihilation of her chief enemy, Rome gained the undisputed mastery of the
Mediterranean, for she was now able to exert her authority over all the surrounding lands, including the ancient kingdom of Egypt. Thus, in the lifetime of the republic, a matter of some four and a half centuries, Rome, from being a small settlement on the banks of the Tiber, became the centre of the civilized world and its acknowledged ruler.

What brought about this astonishing transformation? Geographical position undoubtedly played an important part, and so did national character and military prowess. But even more decisive was the political cleverness of Rome’s leaders, evidence of which is to be seen in the readiness with which they were prepared to concede to others many of the privileges of citizenship which they claimed for themselves—their policy, that is to say, being one of conquest and conciliation.
WHILE THE Romans were engaged in fighting the series of wars which won for them the leadership, first of all Latium, then of the whole of Italy, and eventually of the entire Mediterranean region, a political struggle no less prolonged and intense was taking place within their own ranks.

This internal conflict was waged on two fronts. On the one, the mass of the people strove to secure protection from, and to achieve equality with, the members of the small but influential patrician clique who ruled over them. And on the other, those in authority, while they combined to resist all attempts to undermine their privileged position, ended by fighting among themselves as they plotted and schemed to further their individual ambitions. And as we shall see, it was these rival aspirations which ultimately brought about the downfall of the Republic.

Seemingly, the people had long been possessed of an organization of their own, the concilium plebis, officered by aediles (custodians of the proletarian archives housed in the temple of Ceres on the Aventine) and tribunes (upholders of plebeian rights). In 471 B.C., however, many of the functions
of the *concilium plebis* were taken over by a new body, the *comitia tributa*, though resolutions passed by this gathering continued to be binding upon plebeians alone.

And yet, in principle, the power of the people was supposedly supreme, as from time immemorial the bestowal of the *imperium* had rested with the popular assembly of the clans. This delegation of their authority was, of course, a recognition of the fact that the citizen-body as a whole was incapable of carrying out the functions of government, a task which, in the days of the monarchy, the people assigned to the king, who in the ordinary course of events continued to occupy the throne until his death.

Under the Republic, the king was replaced by two magistrates—consuls (colleagues) as they came to be known—each of whom could veto the proposals of his companion, were he so disposed. This was an arrangement intended to ensure that, henceforth, no one man could set himself up as sole ruler, though in times of grave national danger there was provision for the temporary establishment (limited to a period of not more than six months) of just such a dictatorship.

The consular office was the highest the state had to offer, election to it the greatest honour to which a Roman could aspire. And in the early days the two magistrates assumed all the duties of their royal predecessors except one—that of high priest (*pontifex maximus*). For the rest, their manifold activities ranged from administering the law to commanding the armed forces in the field, and so great was their authority that even in times of peace
Augustus in armour. The relief on the breastplate shows the chariot of the sun god being driven beneath the god of the heavens. (Photo: W. Zschietzschmann's “Hellas und Rom”, by kind permission of Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, Tubingen.)
(Above) Roman tavern in Diana Street, Ostia. (Below) Public conveniences, the Forum Thermae, Ostia. (Photos: W. Zschietzschmann’s “Hellas und Rom”, by kind permission of Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, Tubingen.)
(Above) The Colosseum, Rome, as it is today. (Photo: The Mansell Collection). (Below) The Amphitheatre, Pompeii. (Photo: Ente Provinciale per il Turismo, Naples.)
Roman house (Casa del cinghiale) at Pompeii. (Photo: Ente Provinciale per il Turismo, Naples.)
they held the power of life and death over lesser citizens.

Eventually, however, the burdens of government became so great that it became necessary to elect assistant magistrates to relieve the consuls of some of their responsibilities. Three such posts (in order of seniority) were those of praetorship, aedileship, and quaestorship. The praetors were concerned with the administration of justice, the aediles with such tasks as the preservation of public order, the provision of food and water supplies, and the maintenance of temples and other buildings, while the quaestors were placed in charge of the treasury and the state archives.

Another important office was that of censor; and although this post was at first considered junior to that of the magistracies, in the course of time the censorship came to be looked upon as a fitting climax to the consulship. The very considerable power and influence of the censor arose from his two main preoccupations, one of which concerned finance (tax collection and public expenditure) and the other public behaviour. This latter duty entailed far more than the mere keeping of a register of citizens, for it was the censor who pronounced upon a man's fitness to remain in office; and it is on record that one unfortunate senator was degraded for conduct so unseemly as that of kissing his wife in the presence of their daughter!

But although, in theory, the two chief magistrates exercised an overriding and absolute control, the real direction of state affairs was, in fact, in the hands of the Senate. It is true that, on the face of it, this Council of Elders (300 strong) continued to
act in a purely advisory capacity. But whereas in the days of the monarchy the throne had been occupied for life, thus enabling the king to obtain a firm and knowledgeable grasp of each and every situation as it developed, this was not so in the case of the consuls. Their term of office was limited to one year only, a circumstance which made it inevitable that they should rely heavily upon their fellow patricians for advice.

Hence the Republic, as it was first constituted, was essentially an aristocracy controlled by the nobles for their own benefit, inasmuch as the patricians reserved for themselves the exclusive right to membership of the Senate. Under the new régime, indeed, ordinary citizens soon discovered that life tended to become increasingly hard. The expulsion of the Tarquins had brought about a serious interruption in overseas trade, much of which seems to have reached Rome by way of the Etruscan town of Caere, while outlying farming communities were constantly being harried by the Volsci and the Aequi.

Under these trying conditions, even some of the wealthy landowners found it necessary to practise economies, while many smallholders faced ruin and were not infrequently reduced to serfdom. All too often, the failure or destruction of his crops forced some luckless peasant to pledge his person against payment of a debt.

The plebeians thus became increasingly dependent for their livelihood upon the owners of large estates, a state of affairs which precluded the employed from voting against the interests of their employers. As a result, the continued domination
of the *comitia curiata* by the patricians was assured, a situation which remained unchanged when the so-called Servian Reform introduced a new form of popular assembly. This, the *comitia centuriata* (gathering of the centuries), was the outcome of an early military measure which, though traditionally attributed to the monarch Servius Tullius, in all probability dates from about the middle of the fifth century B.C. (i.e. from Republican times).

The reform came about because it was found necessary to increase the strength of the fighting forces, a need which was met by calling upon the plebs to serve in the army. For recruiting purposes, the available population was divided into five classes, based on the possession of land and cattle. The classes, in turn, were made up of a certain number of companies of a hundred men each, and voting in the assembly was by these centuries, not by individuals. Matters were so contrived, however, that the patricians and their supporters constituted the majority of the companies, so that control remained in their hands.

There was thus considerable and continuing cause for dissatisfaction among the plebs, and in the long and bitter struggle to better their lot they were not slow to take advantage of the state’s newly found need for them as soldiers. As they at once realized, this placed a weapon in their hands which could be turned against their oppressors: an opportunity to withhold their services.

Reportedly, a large body of the discontented went to the Sacred Mount (probably the Aventine) and refused to join in an impending battle. In the face of this emergency the patricians were forced
Rome in the days of the early Republic
to make concessions, including the acceptance of a
demand for a written code of laws, that the people
might no longer be subject to arbitrary arrest and
punishment. Envoys were accordingly sent to
Greece to make a study of the laws of that en-
lightened land, the outcome of which visit was the
formulation of the famous *XII Tabulae* (Twelve
Tables), cut on tablets of bronze and exhibited for
all to see in the Forum.

A gradual extension of the contents of the
Twelve Tables was assisted by the proclamation
which a new magistrate had the right to make on
election. In thus giving notice of the rules and
regulations which he intended to enforce during his
period of office, he might, or might not, incor-
porate some or all of the enactments of his prede-
cessor. And with the growth of empire, a similar
practice was followed by provincial governors, with
the result that there gradually came into being an
internationally accepted legal code.

At home, meanwhile, no sooner had the Twelve
Tables been displayed than the plebs again went to
the Aventine because of the high-handed action of
a magistrate called Appius Claudius, who used his
authority to claim as his slave the daughter of a
citizen named Virginius. To save the girl from such
a fate, the father stabbed her to death, and the
uproar which followed was quelled only by the
suicide (some reports say the execution) of Claudius
and by the election for the year 448 B.C. of two
consuls of moderate tendencies, the patricians
Valerius and Horatius.

These magistrates, in order to pacify the out-
raging populace, passed a series of laws which did
much to strengthen the plebeian position. One of the most far-reaching of these conciliatory measures guaranteed the safety of the persons of the tribunes, those officers of the people whose unenviable duty it was to intervene with the authorities on behalf of citizens who found themselves at variance with the law.

Other concessions quickly followed. In 445 B.C. an old grievance, the prohibition of marriage between patricians and plebs, was at last removed, while in the next year a long-standing demand that the consulate should cease to be reserved exclusively for patricians was met in part by the experimental replacement of the two senior magistrates by half-a-dozen military tribunes (not to be confused with the people’s tribunes), who might be drawn from either class.

This expedient, which was in any case made desirable by the unending wars in which Rome found herself engaged at this period, served for a time to still the rumbles of popular discontent. But with the sack of the city by the Gauls, the plight of the people once again became desperate. The invasion brought ruin and starvation to many of the small farmers, whose sufferings were aggravated by the knowledge that the loss of their cherished holdings served to increase the estates of the wealthy landowners. Yet a sympathetic patrician who sought to aid some of the oppressed citizens by settling their debts was executed on a charge of aspiring to a tyranny!

In 367 B.C., after years of agitation and violence, two tribunes eventually secured the acceptance of a series of relief measures. These were designed to
ameliorate the position of debtors (who were to be allowed to deduct from the total sum they owed the amount of the interest they had already paid) and to bring under control the tenure of public land. Whereas, in the past, much of the territory wrested from Rome's enemies had been monopolized by wealthy proprietors to the exclusion of small-holders, henceforth no man, however rich, might rent more than 500 iugera (1 iugum = ⁹⁄₁₀ acre), or about 300 acres of such pasturage.

These Licinio-Sextian Laws, so named after their authors, also ended the bestowal of the imperium upon military tribunes, and restored instead the dual consulship, with the important proviso that one of the two chief magistrates might be a pleb. After this, the remaining restrictions on the appointment of representatives of the people to the offices of state were soon removed, the last of them (relating to the religious colleges) in 300 B.C.

On the face of it, the ordinary citizens had won a resounding victory. But in fact, as soon became all too clear, they had achieved little enough. For although the members of the old aristocracy remained socially aloof from the plebeian senators and their families, politically they were clever enough to combine with the outsiders to form a new nobility based on office, whose ranks soon became as tightly closed as ever before. A continuance of senatorial rule was thus assured.

No doubt to this end, though purportedly in the public interest, the comitia centuriata was afterwards reorganized. But though its members were now grouped into seniors (men over the age of forty-six) and juniors, the arrangement was such
that the assembly retained a strongly conservative bias. And subsequently a check on the election of young and impetuous candidates (who might entertain wild and unacceptable ideas) was imposed by the introduction of age limits, applicable to the various magisterial offices.

Thus quaestorship was not open to an applicant until he had attained his twenty-eighth year, whereafter he might aspire to aedileship at the age of thirty-one, to praetorship at thirty-four, and to consulship at thirty-seven, by which time it was reckoned he would be safe enough. As for the voters, enough of them could be bought, if not by free corn and entertainment (concerning which more anon), then by out-and-out bribery, to ensure that the choice of the people coincided with that of those in power.

The presence in Rome of a large and ever-growing mob of idle and bribe-seeking citizens
became an acute political issue in 133 B.C., when the tribune, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, sought to solve the problem by making effective the provisions of the Licinio-Sextian Laws relating to the tenure of public land, which had long before fallen into abeyance. But his proposal to restore land to the landless encountered the implacable hostility of all but a few of the more enlightened among the wealthy property-owners, and Tiberius and several hundred of his followers were subsequently set upon and murdered in the Forum during an election. The Senate then ordered the execution of other known supporters of the scheme, on the grounds that they were enemies of the Republic.

However, there were occasions when even the powerful Senate failed to get its own way. In 107 B.C., a legionary commander by the name of Gaius Marius obtained leave of absence from some fighting then going on in Africa, and returned to Rome as a candidate in the forthcoming elections. The fact that Marius was a self-made man did not commend him to the ruling clique, but despite official opposition he nevertheless secured the consulship, and with it the command of the war in Africa.

A hostile Senate then declined to grant him an army, whereupon the resourceful Marius announced that the customary property qualifications would be waived, and called for volunteers from Rome's impoverished population, which numbered many retired veterans. Marius also took the opportunity to make a tactical reorganization when grouping his men. Instead of retaining the manipulator system, he divided the legion into ten

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cohorts, each consisting of three maniples, a re-arrangement which produced a fighting force of greater flexibility. But even more far-reaching in its consequences was the unorthodox method of recruitment, as this brought into being a non-conscription army of professional soldiers, whose loyalty belonged not to the state but to their commander.

The dangers of this innovation became evident during the next fifty years, in the course of which members of the Senate, overwhelmed by a succession of alarming and disastrous events at home and abroad—the Cimbri invasion from across the Alps, the threatened secession of indispensable allies, continued revolts overseas, civil war in Rome itself, an uprising among the slaves, out-breaks of piracy in the eastern Mediterranean—ultimately found themselves faced by an ambitious army commander who was not at all minded to do their bidding. The name of this man, who at the time was stationed in Cisalpine Gaul at the head of a large body of seasoned troops, was Julius Caesar.

In 49 B.C. the Senate called upon him to disband his forces and threatened dire consequences if he failed to do so. Caesar's response to this ultimatum was to march one of his legions across the Rubicon, a brook south of Ravenna which marked the limit of his province. Here was an unmistakable challenge, and in taking this irrevocable step the adventurer may well have exclaimed "Alea iacta est" ("The die is cast").

With Rome itself endangered, most of the Senate prudently fled to Greece, there to await
events. Nor did the outcome long remain in doubt. In a series of swift moves, Caesar met and defeated those who questioned his authority on all three continents, visiting Spain, Greece, Egypt, Syria and other parts of the Mediterranean in turn, until, with all visible opposition quelled, he returned to Rome in triumph, his position that of an absolute ruler.

In this capacity, he introduced a series of reforms, among them a deliberate weakening of the Senate by greatly increasing the number of its members, which now reached the unprecedented total of 900, and these measures convinced a group of influential citizens that only the death of Caesar could save the Republic. Prominent among them were Marcus Junius Brutus, a relative named Decimus Brutus, and Gaius Cassius Longinus, and in a combined assault they stabbed their victim to death on the Ides (15th) of March in 44 B.C.

Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony), Caesar's right-hand man, then made a bid for power, one of his first moves being to seize his late commander's vast treasure. Lawfully, this now belonged to Caesar's eighteen-year-old great-nephew Gaius Octavius, who had been named by Caesar as his heir. But when Octavius came to Rome to claim his inheritance, Antony refused to hand it over. Then, ignoring the young Octavius, he made preparations to settle accounts with the conspirators who, aided by the Senate, were hastily mobilizing armies against him in the provinces of Syria, Macedonia, and Cisalpine Gaul.

But while Antony marched north against Decimus Brutus, Octavius borrowed money and
gathered an army of his own; whereafter, by first lending his support to the Senate, and then joining forces with Antony against Marcus Brutus and Cassius, he was able to bide his time until the moment arrived for him to turn on his associate, whom he defeated at sea (Battle of Actium) in 31 B.C. Antony fled to Egypt where, pursued by Octavius, he committed suicide in the following year.

Though Octavius was now undisputed master of the situation, he was not unmindful of the fate of his uncle, and at a Senate meeting held in 27 B.C. he astounded his listeners by offering to relinquish his dictatorial powers. But the prospect of a return to a situation in which rival and ambitious provincial governors would be free to fight among themselves, with Rome as the prize, was unthinkable. Henceforth, it was decided, one man alone should be in control of the armed forces of the state.

Octavius bowed to the wishes of the Senate members, who promptly conferred upon him, as supreme leader, the name of Augustus, a title hitherto reserved for the high gods alone, and a sign that the days of the Republic were over.
THE IMPERIAL CITY

ALTHOUGH, AFTER the destruction of Rome by the Gauls in 390 B.C., the city itself was built haphazardly and in great haste, care was taken to give it added protection by the construction of new ramparts of dressed stone. And during the erection of this so-called Servian Wall (ascribed by tradition to the period of the early kings, but archaeologically assigned, from the vestiges which still remain, to the fourth century B.C.) the area of the enclosure was extended to take in the Aventine, whereby the encirclement of the Seven Hills was at last achieved.

The life of the city continued to centre round the Forum, subsequently called the Forum Romanum in order to distinguish it from the later Imperial Fora. One of the chief functions it served was that of market place, but here too, in addition to the stalls of greengrocers and other traders, were to be found the Meeting House (curia) of the Senate, and also the comitium, where representatives of the people held their discussions.

The Forum was crossed by the Via Sacra (Sacred Way), which led to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, while to the south rose the heights of the Palatine, on which stood the homes of some of
the wealthy patrician families. The dwellings of the less affluent but much more numerous members of the community lay to the north, on the lower slopes and valleys of the Quirinal, Viminal, and Esquiline hills.

The city's new line of fortifications apart, little use was made of stone during the rebuilding operations, the material most in demand being wood. At this time, the majority of the people were still housed in primitive huts with a vent-hole in the roof—hence the name *atrium*, literally "the apartment blackened by smoke", which continued to be bestowed upon the central portion of the more elaborate living quarters of later years.

It was contact with the Greeks which produced a revolutionary change in the outlines of the *domus* (town house) of well-to-do citizens. Extra rooms were added to the *atrium* so as to form a central garden-court or peristyle, and this open area, often surrounded by columns, was planted with trees and shrubs. Thereafter, the atrium gradually became little more than a reception hall for visitors, the family occupying the adjacent rooms. Originally, this extra accommodation was restricted to the ground floor, but in time it gave rise to one or more upper storeys which were reached by way of an outside staircase.

As time went on, too, increasing use was made of stone and other more durable materials in the erection of temples, basilicas, theatres, bridges, palaces, and tombs—magnificent structures which displayed a wealth of novel architectural forms. Although many of these innovations, both as regards material and design, were inspired by
foreign ideas, not a few of them were the product of native research and ingenuity.

Tufa, a local rock of volcanic origin, came more and more to be used until, its poor weathering qualities having become evident, it was abandoned during the third century B.C. in favour of a similar but harder material called peperino. This was quarried in the Alban Hills, and was much in demand until it lost pride of place to travertine, a hard limestone from Tibur.

The use of baked clay bricks was also introduced, while for decorative purposes many varieties of coloured marble eventually reached Rome from all parts of the Mediterranean—Africano (red veins on black) from Chios; Verde Antico (yellowish green) from Thessaly; Pavonazzetto (dove pink) from Smyrna; and many another.

But undoubtedly the most revolutionary building material of all, a local invention which came into use in the first century B.C., was a hydraulic cement of great strength. It was made by mixing lime with pulvis puteolanus (pozzolana), a sandy volcanic earth obtained (as its name suggests) from Puteoli. The widespread use of this concrete, which offered the very great advantage that it could be cast into any desired shape on the spot, led to many novel constructions and gave rise to some of the most outstanding examples of Roman architecture.

Rome's gradual transformation during the third and second centuries B.C. from a sizable market town into a metropolitan city was attended by many problems, ranging from such questions as the feeding and housing of an ever-growing population
to that of maintaining public order. As early as 312 B.C. the increasing inadequacy of the water supply had prompted the censor Appius Claudius (of Appian Way fame) to instigate the construction of the *Aqua Appia*, the first of Rome’s many aqueducts, of which there were eventually more than a dozen in all.

The water was brought to the city from neighbouring hills, sometimes over distances of more than fifty miles, conveyed in channels carried over intervening valleys on stone or brick arches, some of which were placed in tiers to heights of more than a hundred feet. Part of the *Aqua Claudia*, the handiwork of the Emperors Caligula and Claudius, ran through a tunnel for a distance of several miles. In the absence of explosives, such passages were made by the tedious process of first heating the rock face and then splashing it with liquid, thus causing it to crumble and split.

Apart from domestic needs, immense quantities of water were required for the numerous fountains and for the great bathing establishments which became a feature of the city in the days of the Emperors, by which time, it has been estimated, the daily consumption amounted to no less than 350,000,000 gallons. When it reached the city, the water was stored in cisterns, whence it was conveyed to users through underground pipes.

The problem of housing was less satisfactorily solved, at any rate in so far as the vast majority of the inhabitants were concerned. The very rich, of course, had little difficulty in obtaining privacy and comfort. They acquired extensive sites on the Palatine and elsewhere, where they erected luxur-
ious stone-built mansions and staffed them with hundreds of servants.

Even so, by modern standards, the furniture and furnishings of these dwellings were somewhat scanty. Carpets were unknown, and so were table-cloths. The bed (*lectus*) served also as a couch upon which its owner reclined while eating, reading, or writing: chairs, as opposed to the *sella* or folding stool (which was carried about), were but little used. For the rest, apart from some works of art, the contents consisted of little more than essentials such as linen, plate, and lamps. The value placed on certain of these establishments was nevertheless prodigious; thus the destruction of the house of one Scaurus is said to have involved its owner in a loss not far short of £1,000,000!

The high degree of luxury attained by some of the leaders of society in Republican times was more than upheld by the Emperors, who likewise favoured the Palatine as a site for their palaces. Although the remains of the residences built by Augustus and his immediate successors are insufficient to make possible an assessment of their architectural worth, there is sufficient to show that the basic plan of several of these royal mansions was similar, in that it consisted of four blocks of apartments placed round a peristyle, a pillared court or square.

The most sumptuous of all the palaces was that planned by the Emperor Nero after the disastrous fire of A.D. 64 had conveniently made available a sufficiently extensive site upon which to build (the blaze raged for nine days and destroyed most of the city). According to the descriptions which have come down to us, the premises stretched from the
Palatine to the Esquiline, and reflected a truly Oriental splendour. Gold and precious stones adorned the walls, while rooms and gardens were filled with sculptures and other works of art purloined from Greece. By all accounts, this *Domus Aurea* (Golden House) was a concept so wildly extravagant, even in an age noted for its extravagance, that it caused something of a public scandal.

And well it might. For while the favoured few were able to enjoy life in their pleasant and secluded surroundings, the great mass of the people existed in conditions of filth and overcrowding which all but defy description.

It had eventually become evident that the city’s ever-mounting population could continue to be accommodated within the confines of the Servian Wall only by building upwards, and as early as the third century B.C. three-storey apartment-houses were not uncommon. These tenement buildings, which were destined to rise to ever greater heights, were known as *insulae* ("islands"), a name derived from the fact that each building occupied an entire block, and was surrounded on all four sides by narrow streets.

Inevitably, these *insulae* were made of the cheapest possible materials (wood, bricks, rubble), so much so that they were liable to collapse to the ground without warning. Still worse, their matchwood construction made them veritable death-traps in the event of an outbreak of fire, unhappily a not infrequent occurrence. Because no heating or lighting was installed, for warmth in winter and light after dark the tenants had to face the hazard
of using portable stoves for the one and torches or candles for the other.

Apart from sunlight and fresh air (not to mention rain and cold) admitted by unglazed windows, the various apartments lacked even piped water-supplies above the ground floor, at which favoured level the rooms were often occupied by the owner of the building, or by his friends. But upstairs, entire families often found themselves crowded into a single room, where they existed in conditions of the utmost discomfort and squalor. It is thus small wonder that the occupants of these apartments (cenacula) looked upon them merely as dormitories, from which they poured into the surrounding alleyways the moment daylight came.

But outside, too, the state of affairs was no less appalling, for the contents of open drains poisoned the air and fouled the footpaths. Moreover, the city’s only wide thoroughfares were the Via Sacra and the Via Nova—the one crossing, and the other skirting, the Forum. Here, there was actually sufficient room for two wagons to pass one another. But elsewhere there existed only a maze of winding byways, which provided no more than a single track for vehicles, or no track at all.

Towards the end of the Republic, the congestion in these narrow alleys became so great that all movement threatened to grind to a halt, and drastic action was at last forced upon the authorities, who restricted the daytime use of the streets to pedestrians, horse riders, and litter-bearers. One immediate result was that the pandemonium of the daylight hours continued throughout the hours of darkness, as hundreds of carts from the surrounding
countryside, heavily laden with produce, streamed into the city with supplies for the markets and shops.

Doubtless all this noise and confusion made considerably easier the task of those inhabitants of the underworld who used the night as a cloak for their criminal activities. Not only were private houses entered and robbed, but in the streets the lurking presence of countless thieves made it unsafe for a solitary traveller to be abroad after dark. Even if he escaped being set upon and murdered, he would almost certainly be accosted and stripped of anything of value he possessed. Conditions were such, so the writer Juvenal assures us, that no prudent man visited his friends for dinner without first having made his will.

Like others in authority before him, Augustus, when he came to power, made praiseworthy if not always effective attempts to remedy the situation. He formed a corps of law-enforcement officers, several thousand strong, whose duty it was to patrol the streets at night. Also in the interest of public safety, and in order to prevent the existing congestion becoming any worse, he placed a limit on the height of tenements, and set up the equivalent of a Ministry of Works, charged with the task of ensuring that the building regulations were observed.

To relieve the existing overcrowding, he demolished much of the (no longer needed) Servian Wall and allowed the city to spread out to almost twice its former extent. At the same time, for purposes of administration, he divided this enlarged area into fourteen regions. And in an effort to
combat the ever-present fire danger, he first placed several hundred ex-slaves at the disposal of the aediles, then assigned a group of special firefighters to each of the newly formed regions, and finally appointed a permanent fire chief to take charge of seven cohorts of 500 men each—one cohort to two regions.

But the problem of overcrowding remained, for the supply of additional housing accommodation could not keep pace with the growth of the population. And as it was manifestly impossible for every family to occupy a *domus*, it became increasingly the official policy not only to provide the people with essential services but also to help them to forget the miserable conditions under which so many of them were forced to live, by offering them a continuous round of lavish entertainment in theatre and circus.

Already several of the necessities of life—an adequate supply of fresh drinking water and free issues of oil and corn—had been provided at the expense of the state, and facilities hardly less indispensable were to be found in the city's many communal lavatories. These were magnificently-appointed buildings, wherein a score or more marble seats, openly arrayed in the form of a semi-circle or a rectangle, were stationed above a channel of running water.

Here, for a very modest charge, one could meet one's friends and chat about the weather, or discuss the fighting in Africa, or talk about the results of the consular elections. Seemingly no one, from the Emperor downwards, was in the least concerned about the lack of privacy, for even in the imperial
palaces we find the ornate seats of the royal equivalent of the forica (public conveniences) arranged cosily in threes.

Another popular meeting-place was at one or other of the great public baths, which from the time of Augustus onwards played an increasingly important part in the social life of the city. Earlier, a Roman by the name of Sergius Orata had devised a system for distributing hot air from the floors and walls of rooms, and his invention was incorporated in the palatial thermae (Greek thermos, hot) of the Imperial period.

The baths were enclosed structures, with the heating furnaces placed beneath a high platform. On this was built a series of rooms in which the temperature progressively increased from warm to hot, and from hot to very hot. In each of these the bather lingered for a while, until eventually he reached the cooling room with its piscina (swimming-pool).

Nor did the treatment end here, for in adjacent rooms the visitor could relax while his body was oiled and scraped, after which he could repair to a library for a quiet read, or watch various athletic sports (wrestling, jumping, boxing) in the spacious grounds. Some idea of the size of these establishments may be gained from the fact that the baths of the Emperor Caracalla (A.D. 211–217) could accommodate 1,600 people, while those of Diocletian (A.D. 284–305) had room for nearly twice as many.

But undoubtedly the most popular distraction which Rome had to offer was to be found in the state-organized games. These ludi (religious festivals) were of great antiquity, and the Circus
Maximus, located in the valley between the Palatine and the Aventine, dated back to the days of the kings. In the course of its long history, it was more than once enlarged, until eventually it could boast a seating capacity of 250,000 or more.

Originally, the entertainment took the form of military displays and chariot races, the only regular event being a one-day festival known as the *Ludi Romani*. But during the uncertain days of the Second Punic War, other festivals (e.g. the *Ludi Apollinares*) were introduced in an effort to increase public morale, and subsequently the duration of these holidays was considerably extended. A new feature, in the shape of a wild-beast hunt, also appeared, and this proved to be such an attraction that in time the lands bordering the Mediterranean were denuded of large game, as lions, tigers, rhinoceroses, elephants, and other animals were relentlessly pursued, captured, and carried off to be slaughtered in the arena.

It was the blood lust thus engendered among the audiences which led to the gladiatorial shows, a revival of the ancient Etruscan custom of arming prisoners of war and setting them to killing one another. And with the advent of professional combatants who were prepared to stake their reputations, not to mention their lives, on the outcome of a fight to the death, it was inevitable that there should arise a special building in which such spectacles could be staged to the best advantage: the Flavian Amphitheatre, better known as the Colosseum.

The site chosen for this building occupied part of the gardens of Nero’s Golden House, in the vicinity
of the Forum. The premises took the form of an ellipse, with a long axis of 616 feet, and its three storeys were pierced by a succession of arches, which served as entrances at ground level. A fourth storey, without arches, but complete with masts which could support a canvas roof, was added in the third century.

Internally, a wall, fifteen feet high, protected the front-row spectators from the wild animals in the ring. The seating, enough for 45,000 people and arranged in tiers, was divided into four main sections, approached by a series of stairways and corridors. The lowermost seats were reserved for persons of high rank, foremost among them being the Emperor, who occupied a place of honour at this level.

The building of this immense structure was begun in A.D. 72 under the Emperor Vespasian, and the inaugural ceremony was performed by his successor, Titus, eight years later. The opening festivities lasted for a hundred days, during which, in addition to the victims of gladiatorial combats, no fewer than 5,000 wild animals were massacred.

But appalling though these figures are, they were often surpassed in the years which followed. Light thrown on the victory celebrations of the Emperor Trajan by a recently discovered inscription indicates that between A.D. 106 and 114 some 12,000 gladiatorial combats were staged, each of which, in the normal course of events, could be expected to result in the death of at least one of the combatants.

Criminals were also despatched by throwing them, unarmed, to the beasts—an idea which
seems to have been inspired by Augustus, who had earlier condemned a notorious bandit to be torn to pieces by dropping him into a cage of ferocious animals. The arena, too, was the scene of theatrical performances of such realism that any physical suffering which the script called upon an actor to endure, even his execution, was not feigned but actually took place. During the performance of a play called the *Death of Hercules* the luckless victim who played the leading rôle actually ended up by being burned alive, all as part of the show.

Much of the shell of the Colosseum still stands, at once a monument to the genius of its builders, a reminder of the callous indifference to suffering displayed by its patrons, and a lasting tribute to the memory of those whose agonizing death-throes were made a matter of public entertainment within its towering walls.
CITIZENS AND SLAVES

ESTIMATIONS OF the size of the population of Rome when the city was at the height of its power vary greatly, and range from the 261,000 inhabitants of one scholar to the 4,000,000 of another. In all probability the correct figure lies somewhere in between.

One such intermediate assessment suggests that by the middle of the first century B.C. the number of Rome’s inhabitants had already passed the half-million mark, and that by the second century A.D. this figure had more than doubled. Evidence in support of this has been adduced by C. Carcopino, whose considered conclusions are based on a count of residences and occupants. He puts the number of domus establishments of the wealthy at about 1,797, each housing its owner, his wife and family, and a retinue of servants—say 50,000 persons in all. The number of insulae he reckons to have been 46,602, into which at least another 1,165,000 people were crammed, giving a total population of not less than 1,215,000.

Whatever their actual numbers, Rome’s residents were broadly divisible into two categories: those who were freeborn (ingenui) and those who were (or had been) slaves. Again, the freeborn might, as
citizens, be protected by the law; or as non-citizens, be merely subject to it. Moreover, while in Republican times all citizens had enjoyed equality before the law, this privilege was lost to the mass of the people in the later days of the Emperors, when a legal distinction arose between members of the upper classes (honestiores) and the proletariat (humiliores).

Transgressors among the last-named received exceedingly short shrift from the authorities, the slightest infringement of the regulations rendering them liable to severe penalties, even death in the arena. By comparison, the honestiores, if detected in serious wrong-doing, were treated with considerable leniency (banishment; loss of property), it being regarded as unseemly that members of the nobility should suffer a punishment which was in any way degrading. In short, it was very much a case of there being one law for the rich, and another for the poor.

Among the honestiores, an upper (Senatorial) and a lower (Equestrian) order was recognized, and the social system as a whole can be likened to a pyramid, in that it provided ample accommodation at its base for the under-privileged, but afforded less and less room for those of wealth and influence as the summit was approached.

At the apex of the social structure was, of course, the Emperor, and where he led, members of the nobility dutifully followed. In early life, Octavian wore a beard, but on aspiring to the hand of his future wife Livia he sought to assist his suit by dispensing with this facial adornment, so that it was a clean-shaven Augustus who later sat upon the imperial throne.
Succeeding Emperors also had resort to the razor, notwithstanding that it was no more than a blunt piece of iron which was used as a scraper. The story is that it was to avoid the pain and scars associated with the use of this fearsome instrument of torture that the Emperor Hadrian decreed that beards would again be worn—to the immense relief of his long-suffering nobles.

Curiously enough, although there were fashionable styles of dress among the Romans, the basic items of wearing apparel (the tunic and the toga, in the case of men) remained unchanged down through the centuries. Laid out flat, the shape of the toga approximated that of a semicircle, the straight edge of which was from eight to nine feet in length. When draped about the human figure, this ancient national costume was at once a badge of citizenship and an indication of political rank.

Although the toga was donned by ordinary citizens on festive occasions, it was clearly unsuitable for everyday use by the working man, whose normal costume was simply a tunic. This was a short-sleeved, shirt-like garment, so girt about the person that its front edge reached to a little below the knee.

But among the aristocratic members of the community, the toga, worn over the tunic, was the recognized out-of-doors attire of the educated man. Made of wool, it normally exhibited its natural colour, though magistrates and other dignitaries were entitled to wear the coveted *toga praetexta*, which bore a distinguishing stripe of purple.

The toga of the Emperor was entirely of purple, and in this, as in all other matters, its wearer was
a law unto himself. Although, from the onset of his reign, Augustus had prudently let it be known that he preferred the inoffensive title of princeps, or chief citizen, in this capacity he nevertheless retained a firm hold on the major offices of state, among them those of consul, censor, and high priest. He was also careful to don the mantle of tribuneship, thereby transferring to his own person the sacrosanctity traditionally associated with that office, and at the same time assuming the rôle of champion of the people.

Thus, although outwardly the old republican constitution was preserved, in fact the wishes of the comitia and the Senate became increasingly subordinate to those of the Emperor. Of these two bodies, the decline in the powers of the Senate was the more gradual; and in the early days of the Imperial period the members of this influential gathering were still not to be flouted with impunity, as the Emperor Nero learned to his cost. Too late, he found himself simultaneously deprived of the support of the army and declared a public enemy by the Senate, whereupon he escaped his otherwise inevitable execution by suicide.

With the Emperor at their head, members of the highly exclusive Senatorial Order occupied the very peak of the social scale. As the descendants of an old-established aristocracy which, for political reasons, had been forbidden to engage in trade, their immense wealth existed mainly in the form of extensive land-holdings. Many of the great estates (latifundia) had been built up at the time of the Second Punic War, when thousands of yeomen
farmers had been compelled to leave their land and serve in the army.

The period of Hannibal’s invasion of Italy also saw the rise of the Equestrian Order, the *Equites* (horsemen)—Knights, as they have somewhat misleadingly been called. Originally cavaliers in the Roman army, and hence, as those able to furnish a horse, persons of some substance, the *Equites* emerged as a capitalist group whose fortunes resulted from commercial operations.

As early as 300 B.C. Rome’s steadily expanding interests had made evident a need for coined money, which was already circulating in Greece and was said to have been invented by the Lydians. The earliest Roman examples were of cast metal, exceedingly heavy and inconvenient to handle. They bore the head of Janus on one side and the prow of a ship on the other, and so gave rise to the familiar expression *caput aut navem* (heads or tails). The monetary unit was the copper *as* (plural *asses*). It was worth about 1d. and it originally had a weight of 1 lb., though successive devaluations ultimately reduced this to half an ounce or so.

Roman coins depicting (*left*) head of the Emperor Domitian (Titus Flavius Domitanus) and (*right*) the Circus Maximus
About the time of the Second Punic War, the as was replaced by the sestertius as the unit of reckoning. This was made of silver and at first had a value of two and a half, but later of four, asses. The denarius (ten-piece), originally worth ten (subsequently sixteen) asses, was likewise made of silver. Gold was also minted, and the pictorial and other details stamped on Roman coins have proved to be a valuable source of information about some of the leading personalities of the times. What is held to be the only authentic portrait of Julius Caesar is to be found on coins produced during his lifetime, a likeness which differs greatly from the familiar sculptures of the dictator, most of which were made long after his death.

Despised by the landed gentry and excluded from high governmental office, the Equites were content to influence the affairs of state in other ways, notably by means of the control which, acting as bankers, they exercised through the publicani, agents to whom the authorities farmed out such tasks as the collecting of taxes and the provisioning of the army.

No doubt these financiers occasionally came to grief as a result of some miscalculation or other—a so-called Knight whose capital resources fell below 400,000 sesterces (the equivalent of some £5,000) forfeited his status. On the other hand, not a few of their number amassed fortunes which exceeded by far the property qualification of a member of the Senatorial Order (1,000,000 sesterces). Moreover, that the Equites were not wholly lacking in social aspirations is shown by the existence of various hierarchies—vir egregius
Battle scene from the Trajan Column, Rome. (Photo: The Mansell Collection.)
(Above) People of Rome. The gravestone of the freedman Philomusus, shown with his wife and daughter. (Photo: The British Museum.) (Below) Inscription on the base of Trajan's column, Rome. In the hands of the Romans, the Greek alphabet emerged as a collection of symbols of surpassing clarity and beauty. (Photo: The Victoria and Albert Museum.)
Marcus Aurelius entering Rome in triumph. (Photo: The Mansell Collection).
(distinguished man) for a lowly procurator; *vir perfectissimus* (very perfect man) as applied to a prefect; and the like.

In contrast to the affluence of Senators and Knights, most of Rome’s inhabitants—the “tunic-clad populace”, as the contemporary historian Tacitus disdainfully refers to them—lived on a day-to-day basis. Some eeked out a precarious existence as hawkers, or were in business on their own account as shopkeepers, whose activities ranged from those of *pigmentarii* (druggists) to *rosarii* (florists). Yet others were artisans and tradesmen, working either for themselves or as employees, who followed such diverse occupations as *pastillarii* (pastrycooks) and *vestarii* (roblemakers), *structores* (masons) and *sutores* (shoemakers), *tinctores* (dyers), and *fontani* (washermen).

Not a few members of the populace, in search of an easier way of obtaining enough to eat, contrived to attach themselves to some distinguished personage or other, and as members of his following were maintained by him, wholly or in part. There were also those who were jobless, either from choice or because of circumstances beyond their control, among them yeomen farmers who, driven from their smallholdings as a result of wars or changing economic circumstances (which favoured the large estates), had drifted into the capital, there to swell the ranks of the *plebs urbana* —the city mob.

Thanks to senatorial neglect and indifference, the drift from the land had continued until there had come into being a large army of idle and impoverished citizens, who looked to the authorities
to keep them fed and amused. Excluding slaves, who were not eligible to receive the customary dole of oil and corn, it has been estimated that eventually not far short of half the inhabitants of Rome were existing on public charity.

So it came about that there grew up a pleasure-loving populace which was more than content to leave all work to others and to accept the bribes of free food and entertainment that were offered by vote-seeking politicians, with the lamentable result, as the discerning Juvenal recorded at the time, that “the people that once bestowed commands, consulships, legions and all else, now meddles no more and longs eagerly for just two things, *panem et circenses*” (bread and circuses).

The ever-increasing use which had been made of slave labour from the third century B.C. onwards contributed not a little to this situation. Thanks to Rome’s phenomenal successes on the field of battle, the authorities found themselves with hundreds of thousands of prisoners-of-war on their hands. Apart from those captives whose fate it was to be sent to toil in the mines, or to meet a quicker death in the arena, the markets were flooded with slaves for sale, many of them at less than £10 a head.

Wealthy Romans were thus able to purchase these unfortunates by the hundred (some of the Emperors acquired thousands), retaining those possessed of some measure of education for secretarial and domestic duties, and consigning the less civilized among them to work as labourers on the family estates.

In the bad old days, a slave had no rights whatever. He and all that he possessed belonged to his
master, who might treat him with consideration, or beat him to death, as he pleased. No matter how harsh and unjust his treatment, the victim had no redress, for the state did not concern itself with his welfare. His position was that of a chattel, not a person.

But since it became the custom, as a matter of prestige, for the town residences of the well-to-do to be amply staffed, the servants of such households were not overworked. On the other hand, the condition of rural slaves was pitiable in the extreme. At night, they were herded into semi-underground barracks (ergastula) and were often chained together, while throughout the day their work was as incessant as it was hard. Their expectation of life has been put at about twenty-one years, and a much-favoured epitaph—"I was not, I was. I am not, I care not"—would seem to indicate that the sufferers looked upon an early death as a happy release.

Some idea of their treatment is to be learned from Cato's *De Agri Cultura* (On Agriculture), a manual on farm management addressed to absentee landlords. Written about 160 B.C., it advocates that a slave should be treated like any other beast of burden, and warns that the welfare of an ox is likely to demand more attention, as this animal is not so well able to look after itself! And elsewhere, the author seriously debates whether it is more economical to prolong the useful life of a slave by allowing him some respite from his heavy labours, or to work him to death and then buy a replacement.

In these sombre circumstances, it is hardly to be
wondered at that from time to time the victims rose *en masse* against their oppressors. The first serious trouble occurred in Sicily in 135 B.C. when the servile population revolted under a Syrian named Eunus. He and his associates quickly gained the support of other captives, and in a very short time the island was at the mercy of an armed and desperate horde many thousands strong. It was three years before order was restored.

Sicily was the scene of another prolonged outbreak thirty years later, which once again was put down only with great difficulty and at the cost, it is said, of 100,000 lives. But still the warnings went unheeded until in 73 B.C. an even more serious affray began, this time on the mainland.

The trouble started when a number of gladiators, among them a Thracian by the name of Spartacus, broke out of their barracks at Capua and raised the standard of revolt on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius. Soon they were joined by thousands of fellow runaways, and after beating off the troops hastily sent against them they began to terrorize the countryside.

In the course of these widespread depredations, they traversed the length of Italy; and since many members of the band hailed from Gaul and Germany, their leader planned to lead them across the Alps to freedom. Spartacus, who had received his military training in the auxiliary forces of the Roman army, can have entertained no illusions about the ultimate outcome of their escapade, were it to be unduly prolonged. But in the end he was overruled, for the early success of the rebels had been too easily gained, and when Picenum was
reached and the way of escape lay open they took the fateful decision to turn back and continue their plundering.

The authorities, by this time fully aroused, appointed the praetor Marcus Licinius Crassus to deal with the situation, and gave him command of six legions. Spartacus was eventually cornered in Apulia and, after a series of indecisive engagements, was finally defeated and killed, together with many of his followers. Of the survivors, 6,000 were crucified on posts set up along the entire length of the Appian Way, as a salutary warning to other would-be rebels.

But the Romans, too, learned a lesson from the incident. At least a quarter of the population of Italy were slaves (in Rome the proportion was nearer one-half) and henceforth there was a tendency among the more thoughtful landowners to treat their charges less like animals and more like human beings, and to offer the hope of reward rather than the fear of punishment as an inducement to hard work. Other proprietors decided that servile labour was dear at any price, and replaced their slaves by free tenants (coloni) who obtained the use of the land and stock in return for the payment of rent.

As for the city slaves, in the matter of dress they continued to be indistinguishable from other men, as a wondering visitor to the capital had occasion to remark. There was, however, an ominous reason for this lack of distinction between citizen and slave, for it was held to be in the public interest. A move to oblige slaves to wear a distinctive garb had been defeated in the Senate for the significant
reason that it would enable the servile population to see how few in numbers its oppressors were!

But even in pre-Spartacus days, not all captives found themselves harshly treated, while in Imperial times various enactments by Augustus and his successors did much to improve their lot. Thus, the aged and the infirm were catered for under an edict issued by the Emperor Claudius, who also forbade owners to throw their charges to the lions, at any rate merely for the fun of it.

Nor were slaves without hope of eventually ending their bondage, for it had long been realized that the holding out of such a prospect would encourage docility and good behaviour. Given an appreciative master, a thrifty slave, by saving what little pocket-money (peculium) he was given or was permitted to earn, was often able to purchase his freedom while he was still young enough to enjoy it. Alternatively, he might be manumitted, given his release, either to mark some family occasion or in accordance with the terms of his late owner’s will.

As a freedman, it is true, a former slave was not a full citizen. But any son born to him was exempt from all restrictions, and when the lad grew up he could regard himself as no less a Roman than the next man. As for the freedmen, they developed into a powerful middle class whose members, though for long excluded from high office, nevertheless managed to secure positions of responsibility and trust. This was particularly the case under the Emperor Claudius, who employed one freedman, Narcissus, to attend to the imperial correspondence; another, Pallas, to act as financial secretary; and a third, Callistus, to handle petitions. These
men made the most of their opportunities, and all three amassed great fortunes.

But in enriching themselves, they unavoidably roused the envy and hostility of others, and later emperors deemed it inadvisable to place too much reliance upon the services of ex-slaves—a decision influenced, no doubt, by protests from disgruntled members of the Senate. But when that august body sought to legislate against the political and social ambitions of the freedmen, the proposal was quickly abandoned. For in the course of the discussion the disconcerting discovery was made that, thanks to an unrestricted policy of manumission and intermarriage, most Knights and not a few Senators were themselves the descendants of former slaves.

By the year A.D. 100, the probability is that some nine-tenths of the inhabitants of the capital were non-Italians of slave origin, and the steady deterioration of native stock which accompanied this carefree intermingling of many races must be placed high on the list of causes of the decline and eventual collapse of the once invincible Empire.
10

THE DOMAIN OF THE EMPERMORS

By the time of Julius Caesar’s assassination the Republic had possessed itself of all the islands of the Mediterranean and had extended its rule to considerable areas of the encircling coasts, including those of Spain, France, and Greece, in Europe; Syria, Cilicia, Lydia, and Bithynia in Western Asia; and parts of Cyrenaica and Numidia in Africa. In addition, the unoccupied regions of Asia Minor, together with Palestine and the kingdom of Egypt, came under the heading of protected states.

When Augustus attained supreme power, having in the process deprived the Egyptians of what remained of their independence, he thus found himself at the head of an empire of upwards of 100,000,000 inhabitants, the majority of whom were subject peoples residing in the newly acquired territories at home and overseas. The control of these provinces Augustus divided between himself and the Senate, under an arrangement which ensured that he, as the leader of the armed forces, assumed responsibility for those as yet unpacified districts where the maintenance of law and order required the presence of troops. As for the rich and inviting province of Aegyptus, this he retained
as a sort of private estate, to which even Senators were denied access without special permission, and the revenues from which were diverted to a special imperial treasury.

Augustus wisely abandoned Caesar’s ambitious plans for other extensive foreign conquests in favour of a programme of consolidation. But although he realized that the Empire was nearing the point where the cost of further expansion would exceed any possible gain, he was nevertheless not blind to the military advantages which a judicious advancing of certain of the existing frontiers offered.

As to this, although in the east he was content merely to annex parts of Asia Minor (notably Galatia) and to show no more than a nominal interest in Armenia (which region was long to remain a matter of dispute between Rome and Parthia), in Northern Africa a coastal strip extending from the mouth of the Nile to Carthage and beyond was taken over, leaving only the Mauretanian seaboard, with its harbours extending from Igilgili (Jigeli) to Tingis (Tangier), for subsequent occupation, while in Europe the frontier was extended to the Danube, thereby securing Dalmatia and other territories bordering the Adriatic. Considerable advances were also made in Germany, but although the Romans succeeded in reaching the Elbe these gains could not be held and the invaders were eventually forced to fall back to the Rhine.

After the death of Augustus in A.D. 14, Roman encirclement of the Mediterranean (though not of the Black Sea) was completed by the end of the century with the taking over of Thrace, Mauretania,
and the remainder of Asia Minor. It was during this period, too, that a conquest somewhat farther afield was heralded by the invasion of Britain, undertaken in the year 43 by Aulus Plautius on behalf of the Emperor Claudius.

The process continued throughout the reign of Trajan (98–117) who made extensive territorial additions to the Empire as a result of his wars in Dacia (Rumania), north of the Danube. He also forcibly acquired the so-called province of Arabia from the Nabataean Arabs, and then began a long-delayed settlement of accounts with the Parthians, in the course of which he annexed Armenia and established the new provinces of Assyria and Mesopotamia. With these gains to the east of the Euphrates, the Empire reached its greatest extent—some 2,000,000 square miles.

The success of Rome's foreign campaigns was assisted in no small measure by her control of the Mediterranean and its many strategically placed harbours, from Narbo (Narbonne) in Gaul and Cirta (Constantine) in North Africa to Smyrna in Asia Minor and Alexandria in Egypt. But even more important militarily was the network of roads which crossed the Empire from end to end.

Built by the army for the purpose of facilitating the movement of troops, messengers, and supplies, these all-weather highways were scientifically constructed and consisted of four or more layers of material which were often topped by a paved surface. The popular notion that these roads always followed a course which was uninterruptedly straight is, however, a mistaken one. It arises from the fact that individual stretches were built in this
manner, and that when they alter direction they do so not by curves but by angles. The change of direction, moreover, often occurs on a hill-top, so that all the traveller sees is one straight section of the route behind him, and another straight ahead.

Throughout the Empire, evidence of the concern of the conqueror to arrange for the provision of adequate supplies of fresh water, and to cater for the many and varied wants of urban inhabitants, is to be found within the boundaries of many an ancient city, where the remains of its crumbling aqueducts terminate amidst the ruins of theatres, temples, market places, and bathing establishments.

Not a few provincial towns and cities had, of course, been important centres of human habitation long before the Romans appeared on the scene. But others, like the extensive collection of ruins in Algeria now known by the name of Timgad, were founded by the Romans themselves. It was the Emperor Trajan who ordered the building of Timgad, on the lower slopes of the Aures Mountains in the vicinity of a fortified post guarding the road between Theveste and Lambaesis. Here, in the short period of seventeen years, there arose the city which the Romans called Thamugus. It was traversed by two main streets, the Cardo Maximus (running north and south) and the Decumanus Maximus (extending from east to west), and contained many splendid public buildings, including a library containing 23,000 volumes provided by a public benefactor and a theatre with a capacity of some 40,000 spectators.
As for these and other evidences of their civilization, the greatest quality of the Romans, according to the Greek historian Arrian (who served as governor of Cappadocia under Trajan’s successor Hadrian), was their gift for selecting the best of everything and making it their own, a view which modern assessments of their achievements fully support. Assisted by an outstanding organizing ability, the Roman genius was assimilative rather than creative, its main function not so much to originate as to adapt and improve.

This is clearly to be seen in Roman architecture, which owes much to the Etruscans, with their fondness for the arch, the vault, and the dome. In their buildings, too, the Romans made ready use of the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian architectural orders evolved by the Greeks—each order consisting of an upright column, complete with base and head, and an entablature, or supported part. But to these three orders the borrowers added two of their own—the Tuscan (a simplified version of the Doric), and the Composite (in which the head combines features of both Ionic and Corinthian capitals).

Similarly, as noted earlier, the Roman alphabet was received from the Greeks by way of the Etruscans, who made use of twenty-six letters. Of these, the Romans utilized twenty-one—ABCDEFG ZHIKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ. Later, the seventh symbol (Z, with the sound of G or K) was replaced by G. The Greek letters Y and Z were then adopted, and placed at the end of the alphabet, the classical version of which thus contained twenty-three letters. The subsequent expansion of V into U and W (double U), and the differentiation of I and J
were comparatively late developments which took place in the tenth and fourteenth centuries respectively.

As refined and enriched by the Romans, the alphabet emerged as a collection of symbols of surpassing clarity and beauty, exemplified by the lettering on a monument erected during the early years of the Empire—the Trajan Column. The six lines of this famous inscription occupy a marble panel set on top of a pedestal, and a close study of its incised characters suggests that both pen and brush influenced their superb design.

Certain of the letters of the alphabet were also used to denote numbers—I for 1, V for 5, X for 10, L for 50, C for 100, M for 1,000—the arrangement being that any symbol followed by one of equal or less value is equal to their sum. Thus VI = 5 + 1 = 6; XX = 10 + 10 = 20; and so on. Conversely, any symbol preceded by one of less value is equal to their difference, so that XL = 50 − 10 = 40; IX = 10 − 1 = 9. And by a combination of these operations, XIX = 10 + 10 − 1 = 19.

The system is still retained to a limited extent, but normally we now make use of an alternative method which was invented by the Hindus and introduced into Europe by the Arabs. These so-called Arabic numerals offer the very considerable advantage of positional notation whereby, thanks to the use of a symbol for zero, it becomes possible to distinguish between 11, 101, and 1,001. How greatly this simplifies written calculations at once becomes apparent when we attempt to multiply LXXV by XXVIII!

In the realm of literature, too, the Romans at
first openly modelled their work on that of the Greeks. Indeed, Livius Andronicus, the first Latin author, actually was a Greek who had been brought to Rome as a prisoner from Tarentum in 272 B.C., and who subsequently translated Homer’s *Odyssey* and other Greek works into the language of his captors.

The early Roman writers who followed this lead tended to produce slavish imitations of the Greek masterpieces, even to the extent of using what was to them a foreign tongue, until the advent of Marcus Porcius Cato of Tusculum (234–149 B.C.) marked the beginnings of Latin prose. Cato strenuously opposed the ever-increasing Hellenistic influence of his day, for which he expressed his distaste by writing in his mother tongue. His sole surviving work is his notorious *De Agri Cultura*, to which reference has already been made.

Other notable contributors, both Greek and Roman, were Polybius of Megalopolis, who was brought to Italy from Greece as a hostage, where he penned a general history of the Mediterranean region; Gaius Julius Caesar, whose writings provided a valuable insight into his military campaigns; Gaius Sallustius Crispus (Sallust) of Amiternum, an historian noted for his scepticism and terseness of expression; and Marcus Tullius Cicero of Arpinum, in whose verbal eloquence and philosophic writings Latin prose reached its peak.

With Cicero (106–43 B.C.) there dawned what has come to be known as the Golden Age of Roman literature. It lasted throughout the reign of Augustus, the magnitude of whose achievements served as an inspiration to such outstanding
figures as Publius Vergilius Maro (Virgil; 70–19 B.C.), the leading poet of his time and renowned as the author of *The Eclogues*, *The Georgics*, and *The Aeneid*; his close friend Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Horace; 65–8 B.C.), the son of an ex-slave, whose superb lyrics are to be found at their best in his four books of *Odes*; Publius Ovidus Naso (Ovid; 43 B.C.–A.D. 18) of Sulmo, in the Apennines, whose literary indiscretions led to his being banished to Tomi (Constanza) on the Black Sea, and whose fame rests on his poems *The Metamorphoses* and *The Fasti*; and Titus Livius (Livy; 59 B.C.–A.D. 17) of Patavium (Padua), greatest of the annalists and the author of a stupendous *History of Rome* (*Ab Urbe Condita*, “From the Founding of the City”) in no fewer than 142 books, of which about one-quarter survive.

Needless to add, the works of these and other authors of the Golden Augustan Age provide us with invaluable accounts of the events, social customs, and beliefs of the times. So do the writings of the more numerous but less gifted exponents of the succeeding Silver Age—the historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus; the satirist Decimus Iunius Juvenalis (Juvenal); the educationalist Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (Quintilian); the epigrammatist Marcus Valerius Martialis (Martial); the philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca; the novelist Gaius Petronius Arbiter (Petronius); and many others.

The end of the Silver Age (which extended from the death of Augustus to the accession of Hadrian in A.D. 117) coincided with that moment in history when the Empire, having reached its greatest
extent, began gradually to contract. After the almost immediate abandonment of the new provinces established by Trajan across the Euphrates, the time came when the barbarians began to infiltrate across the frontiers and to occupy first one outlying region and then another.

These encroachments were assisted by internal squabbles which ultimately split the domain of the Emperors into two. Rome then continued to rule in the West, while Constantinople (ancient Byzantium) became the seat of government in the East. Thus divided, it was the western portion of the Empire which was the first to succumb.

Serious inroads by the Goths and other Germanic tribes were made about the middle of the third century, when the Franks (i.e. those “free” of the Romans) crossed the Rhine, and their compatriots, the Alemanni (whence the name Allemands by which the Germans are known to the French to this day) broke through to Milan. In the face of this threat, other cities which found themselves endangered began to build fortifications as a precaution against surprise raids, and in 271 the Emperor Aurelianus ordered work to be started on the still partly existing walls of Rome which are named after him. He also repulsed the Alemanni, exerted his authority over Gaul (which had declared its independence), and suppressed an attempted rising in Syria, thereby earning for himself the resounding title of Restitutor orbis (rebuilder of the world).

The restoration, however, was only temporary, for the enemy pressure continued to mount on all sides—in Africa, there was a revolt in Egypt; in
Asia, the Persians invaded Roman-occupied Mesopotamia; and in Europe, German incursions continued. Of these last intruders, an eastern group, among them the Burgundians, the Heruli, and the Goths, made their way to the shores of the Black Sea, from where the Visigoths (West Goths) later moved across the Danube and ravaged the Balkans.

Those nomadic Mongols, the Huns, also prepared to take part in the kill, while the Burgundians and the Vandals, by overrunning France and Spain, forced the evacuation of Britain, whose Romanized inhabitants were left to face the waves of Caledonians (Picts) which swept down from the north, as well as an inrush of Germanic tribes from the Continent. Prominent among these invaders from across the Channel were the Saxons, who quickly established a permanent foothold at the mouth of the Thames.

The first of Rome’s enemies to attack the western capital was Alaric, leader of the Visigoths, who reached and sacked the long-threatened city in 410. With the death of Alaric, his followers occupied France, dispossessing the Vandals, who crossed from Spain into Africa and established a kingdom there.

Next came Attila, who entered Italy with his horde of Huns in 452, but, after marching on Rome, apparently allowed himself to be bought off. No sooner was this respite gained, however, than the city was once more besieged, taken, and pillaged, this time by Genseric and his Vandals. And twenty years later, the last Emperor of the West (known, ironically enough, as Romulus Augustus) was deposed by Odoacer of the Heruli, who was
overthrown in turn when Theodoric intervened and set up an Ostrogoth (East Goth) kingdom.

So it came about that in the West, the civilization of the Romans was buried beneath the ruins of their once-glorious Empire, much of the territory of which was now in the hands of those untutored multitudes whose presence in Europe from the beginning of the fifth century onwards gave rise to that period of intellectual stagnation known as the Dark and Middle Ages. But with the Renaissance, there was a renewal of interest in arts and letters, and with it a growing appreciation of the world’s indebtedness to Rome.

A gladiator's helmet

Outstanding among her many contributions to posterity was an elaborate administrative system and its associated legal code. As developed from the original Twelve Tables by generations of jurists, Roman law emerged as a supra-national creation, applicable to all the peoples of the multi-racial Empire, which has since been hailed as one of the greatest achievements of the human mind.
It began, understandably enough, by being applicable only to Roman citizens (*ius civile*), but by various devices (e.g. *ius gentium*) was extended so that it could be applied with impartiality to Romans and Gauls, Greeks and Egyptians, Syrians and Numidians. As ultimately expressed in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* of the Emperor Justinian, sixth-century ruler of the surviving Eastern Empire, Roman law was eventually restored to the West by students of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

But this is not to suggest that the profound influence which Roman Law has had upon modern Europe was achieved solely by way of a deliberate revival brought about by the Renaissance. As is now fully realized, the results of scholarly and archaeological research afford but one of two distinct avenues (the artificial and the natural) whereby the legacy of Rome has contrived to reach us. For no matter how unappreciative of their surroundings the untutored multitudes who fell heir to the crumbling Empire may have been, subconsciously at least they must have absorbed and been influenced by much of what they saw and heard.

This is pre-eminently the case in the matter of language, in that the mother tongues of the peoples who are today resident in Italy, Rumania, France, Portugal, and Spain are directly descended from the vulgar Latin spoken by the various Romanized racial groups who went their several ways when the power of the central authority waned. The essentials of Classical Latin, meanwhile, were kept alive by scholarly devotion, and to this day the language of ancient Rome finds a limited use in theological, legal, and other learned circles.
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