

# Livy on the Founding of Rome

**Section on the Founding of Rome From Livy's History of Rome (1904), translated by John Henry Freese, Alfred John Church, and William Jackson Brodribb**

## Founding of Rome Sections of Livy Book I

### *Aeneas Leaves Troy*

To begin with, it is generally admitted that, after the [taking of Troy](#), while all the other Trojans were treated with severity, in the case of two, [Aeneas](#) and [Antenor](#), the Greeks forbore to exercise the full rights of war, both on account of an ancient tie of hospitality, and because they had persistently recommended peace and the restoration of [Helen](#): and then Antenor, after various vicissitudes, reached the inmost bay of the Adriatic Sea, accompanied by a body of the Eneti, who had been driven from Paphlagonia by civil disturbance, and were in search both of a place of settlement and a leader, their chief Pylamenes having perished at Troy; and that the Eneti and Trojans, having driven out the Euganei, who dwelt between the sea and the Alps, occupied these districts. In fact, the place where they first landed is called Troy, and from this it is named the Trojan canton. The nation as a whole is called Veneti. It is also agreed that Aeneas, an exile from home owing to a like misfortune, but conducted by the fates to the founding of a greater empire, came first to Macedonia, that he was then driven ashore at Sicily in his quest for a settlement, and sailing thence directed his course to the territory of Laurentum. This spot also bears the name of Troy. When the Trojans, having disembarked there, were driving off booty from the country, as was only natural, seeing that they had nothing left but their arms and ships after their almost boundless wandering, [Latinus](#) the king and the Aborigines, who then occupied these districts, assembled in arms from the city and country to repel the violence of the new-comers. In regard to what followed there is a twofold tradition. Some say that Latinus, having been defeated in battle, first made peace and then concluded an alliance with Aeneas; others, that when the armies had taken up their position in order of battle, before the trumpets sounded, Latinus advanced to the front, and invited the leader of the strangers to a conference. He then inquired what manner of men they were, whence they had come, for what reasons they had left their home, and in quest of what they had landed on Laurentine territory. After he heard that the host were Trojans, their chief Aeneas, the son of [Anchises](#) and Venus, and that, exiled from home, their country having been destroyed by fire, they were seeking a settlement and a site for building a city, struck with admiration both at the noble character of the nation and the hero, and at their spirit, ready alike for peace or war, he ratified the pledge of future friendship by clasping hands. Thereupon a treaty was concluded between the chiefs, and mutual greetings passed between the armies: Aeneas was hospitably entertained at the house of Latinus; there Latinus, in the presence of his household gods, cemented the public league by a family one, by giving Aeneas his daughter in marriage. This event fully confirmed the Trojans in the hope of at length terminating their wanderings by a lasting and permanent settlement. They built a town, which Aeneas called Lavinium after the name of his wife. Shortly afterward

also, a son was the issue of the recently concluded marriage, to whom his parents gave the name of Ascanius.

### ***Aeneas Fights Turnus***

Aborigines and Trojans were soon afterward the joint objects of a hostile attack. Turnus, king of the Rutulians, to whom Lavinia had been affianced before the arrival of Aeneas, indignant that a stranger had been preferred to himself, had made war on Aeneas and Latinus together. Neither army came out of the struggle with satisfaction. The Rutulians were vanquished: the victorious Aborigines and Trojans lost their leader Latinus. Thereupon Turnus and the Rutulians, mistrustful of their strength, had recourse to the prosperous and powerful Etruscans, and their king Mezentius, whose seat of government was at Caere, at that time a flourishing town. Even from the outset he had viewed with dissatisfaction the founding of a new city, and, as at that time he considered that the Trojan power was increasing far more than was altogether consistent with the safety of the neighbouring peoples, he readily joined his forces in alliance with the Rutulians. Aeneas, to gain the good-will of the Aborigines in face of a war so serious and alarming, and in order that they might all be not only under the same laws but might also bear the same name, called both nations Latins. In fact, subsequently, the Aborigines were not behind the Trojans in zeal and loyalty toward their king Aeneas. Accordingly, in full reliance on this state of mind of the two nations, who were daily becoming more and more united, and in spite of the fact that Etruria was so powerful, that at this time it had filled with the fame of its renown not only the land but the sea also, throughout the whole length of Italy from the Alps to the Sicilian Strait, Aeneas led out his forces into the field, although he might have repelled their attack by means of his fortifications. Thereupon a battle was fought, in which victory rested with the Latins, but for Aeneas it was even the last of his acts on earth. He, by whatever name laws human and divine demand he should be called, was buried on the banks of the river Numicus: they call him Jupiter Indiges.

### ***Ascanius Founds Alba Longa***

Ascanius, the son of Aeneas, was not yet old enough to rule; the government, however, remained unassailed for him till he reached the age of maturity. In the interim, under the regency of a woman -- so great was Lavinia's capacity -- the Latin state and the boy's kingdom, inherited from his father and grandfather, was secured for him. I will not discuss the question -- for who can state as certain a matter of such antiquity? -- whether it was this Ascanius, or one older than he, born of Creusa, before the fall of Troy, and subsequently the companion of his father's flight, the same whom, under the name of Iulus, the Julian family represents to be the founder of its name. Be that as it may, this Ascanius, wherever born and of whatever mother -- it is at any rate agreed that his father was Aeneas -- seeing that Lavinium was over-populated, left that city, now a flourishing and wealthy one, considering those times, to his mother or stepmother, and built himself a new one at the foot of the Alban mount, which, from its situation, being built all along the ridge of a hill, was called Alba Longa.

### ***Amulius Drives Out His Brother Numitor***

There was an interval of about thirty years between the founding of Lavinium and the transplanting of the colony to Alba Longa. Yet its power had increased to such a degree, especially owing to the defeat of the Etruscans, that not even on the death of Aeneas, nor

subsequently between the period of the regency of Lavinia, and the first beginnings of the young prince's reign, did either Mezentius, the Etruscans, or any other neighbouring peoples venture to take up arms against it. Peace had been concluded on the following terms, that the river Albula, which is now called Tiber, should be the boundary of Latin and Etruscan territory. After him Silvius, son of Ascanius, born by some accident in the woods, became king. He was the father of Aeneas Silvius, who afterward begot Latinus Silvius. By him several colonies were transplanted, which were called Prisci Latini. From this time all the princes, who ruled at Alba, bore the surname of Silvius. From Latinus sprung Alba; from Alba, Atys; from Atys, Capys; from Capys, Capetus; from Capetus, Tiberinus, who, having been drowned while crossing the river Albula, gave it the name by which it was generally known among those of later times. He was succeeded by Agrippa, son of Tiberinus; after Agrippa, Romulus Silvius, having received the government from his father, became king. He was killed by a thunderbolt, and handed on the kingdom to Aventinus, who, owing to his being buried on that hill, which now forms part of the city of Rome, gave it its name. After him reigned Proca, who begot Numitor and Amulius. To Numitor, who was the eldest son, he bequeathed the ancient kingdom of the Silvian family. Force, however, prevailed more than a father's wish or the respect due to seniority. Amulius drove out his brother and seized the kingdom: he added crime to crime, murdered his brother's male issue, and, under pretence of doing honour to his brother's daughter, Rea Silvia, having chosen her a Vestal Virgin,<sup>[2]</sup> deprived her of all hopes of issue by the obligation of perpetual virginity.

### ***The Conception, Birth, and Upbringing of Mars' Sons***

My opinion, however, is that the origin of so great a city and an empire next in power to that of the gods was due to the fates. The Vestal Rea was ravished by force, and having brought forth twins, declared Mars to be the father of her illegitimate offspring, either because she really imagined it to be the case, or because it was less discreditable to have committed such an offence with a god.<sup>[3]</sup> But neither gods nor men protected either her or her offspring from the king's cruelty. The priestess was bound and cast into prison; the king ordered the children to be thrown into the flowing river. By some chance which Providence seemed to direct, the Tiber, having over flown its banks, thereby forming stagnant pools, could not be approached at the regular course of its channel; notwithstanding it gave the bearers of the children hope that they could be drowned in its water however calm. Accordingly, as if they had executed the king's orders, they exposed the boys in the nearest land-pool, where now stands the ficus Ruminalis, which they say was called Romularis.<sup>[4]</sup> At that time the country in those parts was a desolate wilderness. The story goes, that when the shallow water, subsiding, had left the floating trough, in which the children had been exposed, on dry ground, a thirsty she-wolf from the mountains around directed her course toward the cries of the infants, and held down her teats to them with such gentleness, that the keeper of the king's herd found her licking the boys with her tongue. They say that his name was Faustulus; and that they were carried by him to his homestead and given to his wife Larentia to be brought up. Some are of the opinion that Larentia was called Lupa among the shepherds from her being a common prostitute, and hence an opening was afforded for the marvellous story. The children, thus born and thus brought up, as soon as they reached the age of youth, did not lead a life of inactivity at home or amid the flocks, but, in the chase, scoured the forests. Having thus gained strength, both in body and spirit, they now were not only able to withstand wild beasts, but attacked robbers laden with booty, and divided the

spoils with the shepherds, in whose company, as the number of their young associates increased daily, they carried on business and pleasure.

### ***Lupercalia***

Even in these early times it is said that the festival of the Lupercal, as now celebrated, was solemnized on the Palatine Hill, which was first called Pallantium, from Pallanteum, a city of Arcadia, and afterward Mount Palatius. There Evander, who, belonging to the above tribe of the Arcadians, had for many years before occupied these districts, is said to have appointed the observance of a solemn festival, introduced from Arcadia, in which naked youths ran about doing honour in wanton sport to Pan Lycaeus, who was afterward called Inuus by the Romans. When they were engaged in this festival, as its periodical solemnization was well known, a band of robbers, enraged at the loss of some booty, lay in wait for them, and took Remus prisoner, Romulus having vigorously defended himself: the captive Remus they delivered up to King Amulius, and even went so far as to bring accusations against him. They made it the principal charge that having made incursions into Numitor's lands, and, having assembled a band of young men, they had driven off their booty after the manner of enemies. Accordingly, Remus was delivered up to Numitor for punishment. Now from the very first Faustulus had entertained hopes that the boys who were being brought up by him, were of royal blood: for he both knew that the children had been exposed by the king's orders, and that the time, at which he had taken them up, coincided exactly with that period: but he had been unwilling to disclose the matter, as yet not ripe for discovery, till either a fitting opportunity or the necessity for it should arise. Necessity came first. Accordingly, urged by fear, he disclosed the whole affair to Romulus. By accident also, Numitor, while he had Remus in custody, having heard that the brothers were twins, by comparing their age and their natural disposition entirely free from servility, felt his mind struck by the recollection of his grandchildren, and by frequent inquiries came to the conclusion he had already formed, so that he was not far from openly acknowledging Remus. Accordingly a plot was concerted against the king on all sides. Romulus, not accompanied by a body of young men -- for he was not equal to open violence -- but having commanded the shepherds to come to the palace by different roads at a fixed time, made an attack upon the king, while Remus, having got together another party from Numitor's house, came to his assistance; and so they slew the king.

### ***Numitor Reigns in Alba Longa***

Numitor, at the beginning of the fray, giving out that enemies had invaded the city and attacked the palace, after he had drawn off the Alban youth to the citadel to secure it with an armed garrison, when he saw the young men, after they had compassed the king's death, advancing toward him to offer congratulations, immediately summoned a meeting of the people, and recounted his brother's unnatural behaviour toward him, the extraction of his grandchildren, the manner of their birth, bringing up, and recognition, and went on to inform them of the king's death, and that he was responsible for it. The young princes advanced through the midst of the assembly with their band in orderly array, and, after they had saluted their grandfather as king, a succeeding shout of approbation, issuing from the whole multitude, ratified for him the name and authority of sovereign. The government of Alba being thus intrusted to Numitor, Romulus and Remus were seized with the desire of building a city on the spot where they had been exposed and brought up. Indeed, the number of Alban and Latin inhabitants was too great for the city; the shepherds also were included among that population, and all these readily inspired

hopes that Alba and Lavinium would be insignificant in comparison with that city, which was intended to be built. But desire of rule, the bane of their grandfather, interrupted these designs, and thence arose a shameful quarrel from a sufficiently amicable beginning. For as they were twins, and consequently the respect for seniority could not settle the point, they agreed to leave it to the gods, under whose protection the place was, to choose by augury which of them should give a name to the new city, and govern it when built. Romulus chose the [Palatine](#) and Remus the [Aventine](#), as points of observation for taking the auguries.

### ***The Fratricide***

It is said that an omen came to Remus first, six vultures; and when, after the omen had been declared, twice that number presented themselves to Romulus, each was hailed king by his own party, the former claiming sovereign power on the ground of priority of time, the latter on account of the number of birds. Thereupon, having met and exchanged angry words, from the strife of angry feelings they turned to bloodshed: there Remus fell from a blow received in the crowd. A more common account is that Remus, in derision of his brother, leaped over the newly-erected walls, and was thereupon slain by Romulus in a fit of passion, who, mocking him, added words to this effect: "So perish every one hereafter, who shall leap over my walls." Thus Romulus obtained possession of supreme power for himself alone. The city, when built, was called after the name of its founder.<sup>[5]</sup> He first proceeded to fortify the Palatine Hill, on which he himself had been brought up. He offered sacrifices to Hercules, according to the Grecian rite, as they had been instituted by Evander; to the other gods, according to the Alban rite. There is a tradition that Hercules, having slain Geryon, drove off his oxen, which were of surpassing beauty,<sup>[6]</sup> to that spot: and that he lay down in a grassy spot on the banks of the river Tiber, where he had swam across, driving the cattle before him, to refresh them with rest and luxuriant pasture, being also himself fatigued with journeying. There, when sleep had overpowered him, heavy as he was with food and wine, a shepherd who dwelt in the neighbourhood, by name **Cacus**, priding himself on his strength, and charmed with the beauty of the cattle, desired to carry them off as booty; but because, if he had driven the herd in front of him to the cave, their tracks must have conducted their owner thither in his search, he dragged the most beautiful of them by their tails backward into a cave. Hercules, aroused from sleep at dawn, having looked over his herd and observed that some of their number were missing, went straight to the nearest cave, to see whether perchance their tracks led thither. When he saw that they were all turned away from it and led in no other direction, troubled and not knowing what to make up his mind to do, he commenced to drive off his herd from so dangerous a spot. Thereupon some of the cows that were driven away, lowed, as they usually do, when they missed those that were left; and the lowings of those that were shut in being heard in answer from the cave, caused Hercules to turn round. And when Cacus attempted to prevent him by force as he was advancing toward the cave, he was struck with a club and slain, while vainly calling upon the shepherds to assist him. At that time Evander, who was an exile from the [Peloponnesus](#), governed the country more by his personal ascendancy than by absolute sway. He was a man held in reverence on account of the wonderful art of writing, an entirely new discovery to men ignorant of accomplishments,<sup>[7]</sup> and still more revered on account of the supposed divinity of his mother Carmenta, whom those peoples had marvelled at as a prophetess before the arrival of the Sybil in Italy. This Evander, roused by the assembling of the shepherds as they hastily crowded round the stranger, who was charged with open murder, after he heard an account of the deed and the cause of it,

gazing upon the personal appearance and mien of the hero, considerably more dignified and majestic than that of a man, asked who he was. As soon as he heard the name of the hero, and that of his father and native country, "Hail!" said he, "Hercules, son of Jupiter! my mother, truthful interpreter of the will of the gods, has declared to me that thou art destined to increase the number of the heavenly beings, and that on this spot an altar shall be dedicated to thee, which in after ages a people most mighty on earth shall call Greatest, and honour in accordance with rites instituted by thee." Hercules, having given him his right hand, declared that he accepted the prophetic intimation, and would fulfil the predictions of the fates, by building and dedicating an altar. Thereon then for the first time sacrifice was offered to Hercules with a choice heifer taken from the herd, the Potitii and Pinarii [*aside: this is the family Steven Saylor concentrates on in his "Roma" novels*], the most distinguished families who then inhabited those parts, being invited to serve at the feast. It so happened that the Potitii presented themselves in due time and the entrails were set before them: but the Pinarii did not arrive until the entrails had been eaten up, to share the remainder of the feast. From that time it became a settled institution, that, as long as the Pinarian family existed, they should not eat of the entrails of the sacrificial victims. The Potitii, fully instructed by Evander, discharged the duties of chief priests of this sacred function for many generations, until their whole race became extinct, in consequence of this office, the solemn prerogative of their family, being delegated to public slaves. These were the only religious rites that Romulus at that time adopted from those of foreign countries, being even then an advocate of immortality won by merit, to which the destiny marked out for him was conducting him.

### ***Romulus Reigns in Rome***

The duties of religion having been thus duly completed, the people were summoned to a public meeting: and, as they could not be united and incorporated into one body by any other means save legal ordinances, Romulus gave them a code of laws: and, judging that these would only be respected by a nation of rustics, if he dignified himself with the insignia of royalty, he clothed himself with greater majesty -- above all, by taking twelve lictors to attend him, but also in regard to his other appointments. Some are of opinion that he was influenced in his choice of that number by that of the birds which had foretold that sovereign power should be his when the auguries were taken. I myself am not indisposed to follow the opinion of those, who are inclined to believe that it was from the neighbouring Etruscans -- from whom the curule chair and purple-bordered toga were borrowed -- that the apparitors of this class, as well as the number itself, were introduced: and that the Etruscans employed such a number because, as their king was elected from twelve states in common, each state assigned him one lictor.

### ***Augmenting the Population of Rome***

In the meantime, the city was enlarged by taking in various plots of ground for the erection of buildings, while they built rather in the hope of an increased population in the future, than in view of the actual number of the inhabitants of the city at that time. Next, that the size of the city might not be without efficiency, in order to increase the population, following the ancient policy of founders of cities, who, by bringing together to their side a mean and ignoble multitude, were in the habit of falsely asserting that an offspring was born to them from the earth, he opened as a sanctuary the place which, now inclosed, is known as the "two groves," and which people come upon when descending from the Capitol. Thither, a crowd of all classes from the neighbouring

peoples, without distinction, whether freemen or slaves, eager for change, flocked for refuge, and therein lay the foundation of the city's strength, corresponding to the commencement of its enlargement. Having now no reason to be dissatisfied with his strength, he next instituted a standing council to direct that strength. He created one hundred senators, either because that number was sufficient, or because there were only one hundred who could be so elected. Anyhow they were called fathers[8], by way of respect, and their descendants patricians.

### ***Neighboring States Fear and Loathe the Romans***

By this time the Roman state was so powerful, that it was a match for any of the neighbouring states in war: but owing to the scarcity of women its greatness was not likely to outlast the existing generation, seeing that the Romans had no hope of issue at home, and they did not intermarry with their neighbours. So then, by the advice of the senators, Romulus sent around ambassadors to the neighbouring states, to solicit an alliance and the right of intermarriage for his new subjects, saying, that cities, like everything else, rose from the humblest beginnings: next, that those which the gods and their own merits assisted, gained for themselves great power and high renown: that he knew full well that the gods had aided the first beginnings of Rome and that merit on their part would not be wanting: therefore, as men, let them not be reluctant to mix their blood and stock with men. The embassy nowhere obtained a favourable hearing: but, although the neighbouring peoples treated it with such contempt, yet at the same time they dreaded the growth of such a mighty power in their midst to the danger of themselves and of their posterity. In most cases when they were dismissed they were asked the question, whether they had opened a sanctuary for women also: for that in that way only could they obtain suitable matches.

### ***The Rape of the Sabines***

The Roman youths were bitterly indignant at this, and the matter began unmistakably to point to open violence. Romulus in order to provide a fitting opportunity and place for this, dissembling his resentment, with this purpose in view, instituted games to be solemnized every year in honour of Neptunus Equester, which he called Consualia. He then ordered the show to be proclaimed among the neighbouring peoples; and the Romans prepared to solemnize it with all the pomp with which they were then acquainted or were able to exhibit, in order to make the spectacle famous, and an object of expectation. Great numbers assembled, being also desirous of seeing the new city, especially all the nearest peoples, the Caeninenses, Crustumini, and Antemnates: the entire Sabine population attended with their wives and children. They were hospitably invited to the different houses: and, when they saw the position of the city, its fortified walls, and how crowded with houses it was, they were astonished that the power of Rome had increased so rapidly. When the time of the show arrived, and their eyes and minds alike were intent upon it, then, according to preconcerted arrangement, a disturbance was made, and, at a given signal, the Roman youths rushed in different directions to carry off the unmarried women. A great number were carried off at hap-hazard, by those into whose hands they severally fell: some of the common people, to whom the task had been assigned, conveyed to their homes certain women of surpassing beauty, who were destined for the leading senators. They say that one, far distinguished beyond the rest in form and beauty, was carried off by the party of a certain Talassius, and that, when several people wanted to know to whom they were carrying her, a cry was raised from time to time, to prevent her being molested, that she was being

carried to Talassius: and that from this the word was used in connection with marriages. The festival being disturbed by the alarm thus caused, the sorrowing parents of the maidens retired, complaining of the violated compact of hospitality, and invoking the god, to whose solemn festival and games they had come, having been deceived by the pretence of religion and good faith. Nor did the maidens entertain better hopes for themselves, or feel less indignation. Romulus, however, went about in person and pointed out that what had happened was due to the pride of their fathers, in that they had refused the privilege of intermarriage to their neighbours; but that, notwithstanding, they would be lawfully wedded, and enjoy a share of all their possessions and civil rights, and -- a thing dearer than all else to the human race -- the society of their common children: only let them calm their angry feelings, and bestow their affections on those on whom fortune had bestowed their bodies. Esteem (said he) often arose subsequent to wrong: and they would find them better husbands for the reason that each of them would endeavour, to the utmost of his power, after having discharged, as far as his part was concerned, the duty of a husband, to quiet the longing for country and parents. To this the blandishments of the husbands were added, who excused what had been done on the plea of passion and love, a form of entreaty that works most successfully upon the feelings of women.

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By this time the minds of the maidens were considerably soothed, but their parents, especially by putting on the garb of mourning, and by their tears and complaints, stirred up the neighbouring states. Nor did they confine their feelings of indignation to their own home only, but they flocked from all quarters to Titus Tatius, king of the Sabines, and embassies crowded thither, because the name of Tatius was held in the greatest esteem in those quarters. The Caeninenses, Crustumini, and Antemnates were the people who were chiefly affected by the outrage. As Tatius and the Sabines appeared to them to be acting in too dilatory a manner, these three peoples by mutual agreement among themselves made preparations for war unaided. However, not even the Crustumini and Antemnates bestirred themselves with sufficient activity to satisfy the hot-headedness and anger of the Caeninenses: accordingly the people of Caenina, unaided, themselves attacked the Roman territory. But Romulus with his army met them while they were ravaging the country in straggling parties, and in a trifling engagement convinced them that anger unaccompanied by strength is fruitless. He routed their army and put it to flight, followed in pursuit of it when routed, cut down their king in battle and stripped him of his armour, and, having slain the enemy's leader, took the city at the first assault. Then, having led back his victorious army, being a man both distinguished for his achievements, and one equally skilful at putting them in the most favourable light, he ascended the Capitol, carrying suspended on a portable frame, cleverly contrived for that purpose, the spoils of the enemy's general, whom he had slain: there, having laid them down at the foot of an oak held sacred by the shepherds, at the same time that he presented the offering, he marked out the boundaries for a temple of Jupiter, and bestowed a surname on the god. "Jupiter Feretrius," said he, "I, King Romulus, victorious over my foes, offer to thee these royal arms, and dedicate to thee a temple within those quarters, which I have just now marked out in my mind, to be a resting-place for the spolia opima, which posterity, following my example, shall bring hither on slaying the kings or generals of the enemy." This is the origin of that temple, the first that was ever consecrated at Rome. It was afterward the will of the gods that neither the utterances of the founder of the temple, in which he solemnly declared that his posterity would bring such spoils thither, should be spoken in vain, and that the honour of the offering should not be rendered common owing to

the number of those who enjoyed it. In the course of so many years and so many wars the spolia opima were only twice gained: so rare has been the successful attainment of this honour.

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While the Romans were thus engaged in those parts, the army of the Antemnates made a hostile attack upon the Roman territories, seizing the opportunity when they were left unguarded. Against these in like manner a Roman legion was led out in haste and surprised them while straggling in the country. Thus the enemy were routed at the first shout and charge: their town was taken: Romulus, amid his rejoicings at this double victory, was entreated by his wife Hersilia, in consequence of the importunities of the captured women, to pardon their fathers and admit them to the privileges of citizenship; that the commonwealth could thus be knit together by reconciliation. The request was readily granted. After that he set out against the Crustumini, who were beginning hostilities: in their case, as their courage had been damped by the disasters of others, the struggle was less keen. Colonies were sent to both places: more, however, were found to give in their names for Crustuminum, because of the fertility of the soil. Great numbers also migrated from thence to Rome, chiefly of the parents and relatives of the women who had been carried off.

### ***War With the Sabines***

The last war broke out on the part of the Sabines, and this was by far the most formidable: for nothing was done under the influence of anger or covetousness, nor did they give indications of hostilities before they had actually begun them. Cunning also was combined with prudence. Spurius Tarpeius was in command of the Roman citadel: his maiden daughter, who at the time had gone by chance outside the walls to fetch water for sacrifice, was bribed by Tatius, to admit some armed soldiers into the citadel. After they were admitted, they crushed her to death by heaping their arms upon her: either that the citadel might rather appear to have been taken by storm, or for the sake of setting forth a warning, that faith should never on any occasion be kept with a betrayer. The following addition is made to the story: that, as the Sabines usually wore golden bracelets of great weight on their left arm and rings of great beauty set with precious stones, she bargained with them for what they had on their left hands; and that therefore shields were heaped upon her instead of presents of gold. Some say that, in accordance with the agreement that they should deliver up what was on their left hands, she expressly demanded their shields, and that, as she seemed to be acting treacherously, she herself was slain by the reward she had chosen for herself.

Be that as it may, the Sabines held the citadel, and on the next day, when the Roman army, drawn up in order of battle, had occupied all the valley between the Palatine and Capitoline Hills, they did not descend from thence into the plain until the Romans, stimulated by resentment and the desire of recovering the citadel, advanced up hill to meet them. The chiefs on both sides encouraged the fight, on the side of the Sabines Mettius Curtius, on the side of the Romans Hostius Hostilius. The latter, in the front of the battle, on unfavourable ground, supported the fortunes of the Romans by his courage and boldness. When Hostius fell, the Roman line immediately gave way, and, being routed, was driven as far as the old gate of the Palatium. Romulus himself also, carried away by the crowd of fugitives, cried, uplifting his arms to heaven: "O Jupiter, it was at the bidding of thy omens, that here on the Palatine I laid the first foundations for the city. The citadel, purchased by crime, is now in possession of the Sabines: thence they are advancing hither in arms, having passed the valley between. But do thou, O

father of gods and men, keep back the enemy from hence at least, dispel the terror of the Romans, and check their disgraceful flight. On this spot I vow to build a temple to thee as Jupiter Stator, to be a monument to posterity that the city has been preserved by thy ready aid." Having offered up these prayers, as if he had felt that they had been heard, he cried: "From this position, O Romans, Jupiter, greatest and best, bids you halt and renew the fight." The Romans halted as if ordered by a voice from heaven. Romulus himself hastened to the front. Mettius Curtius, on the side of the Sabines, had rushed down from the citadel at the head of his troops and driven the Romans in disordered array over the whole space of ground where the Forum now is. He had almost reached the gate of the Palatium, crying out: "We have conquered our perfidious friends, our cowardly foes: now they know that fighting with men is a very different thing from ravishing maidens." Upon him, as he uttered these boasts, Romulus made an attack with a band of his bravest youths. Mettius then happened to be fighting on horseback: on that account his repulse was easier. When he was driven back, the Romans followed in pursuit: and the remainder of the Roman army, fired by the bravery of the king, routed the Sabines. Mettius, his horse taking fright at the noise of his pursuers, rode headlong into a morass: this circumstance drew off the attention of the Sabines also at the danger of so high a personage. He indeed, his own party beckoning and calling to him, gaining heart from the encouraging shouts of many of his friends, made good his escape. The Romans and Sabines renewed the battle in the valley between the two hills: but the advantage rested with the Romans.

At this crisis the Sabine women, from the outrage on whom the war had arisen, with dishevelled hair and torn garments, the timidity natural to women being overcome by the sense of their calamities, were emboldened to fling themselves into the midst of the flying weapons, and, rushing across, to part the incensed combatants and assuage their wrath: imploring their fathers on the one hand and their husbands on the other, as fathers-in-law and sons-in-law, not to besprinkle themselves with impious blood, nor to fix the stain of murder on their offspring, the one side on their grandchildren, the other on their children. "If," said they, "you are dissatisfied with the relationship between you, and with our marriage, turn your resentment against us; it is we who are the cause of war, of wounds and bloodshed to our husbands and parents: it will be better for us to perish than to live widowed or orphans without one or other of you." This incident affected both the people and the leaders; silence and sudden quiet followed; the leaders thereupon came forward to conclude a treaty; and not only concluded a peace, but formed one state out of two. They united the kingly power, but transferred the entire sovereignty to Rome. Rome having thus been made a double state, that some benefit at least might be conferred on the Sabines, they were called Quirites from Cures. To serve as a memorial of that battle, they called the place -- where Curtius, after having emerged from the deep morass, set his horse in shallow water -- the [Lacus Curtius](#).<sup>[11]</sup>

### ***Divisions of the Romans***

This welcome peace, following suddenly on so melancholy a war, endeared the Sabine women still more to their husbands and parents, and above all to Romulus himself. Accordingly, when dividing the people into thirty curiae, he called the curiae after their names. While the number of the women were undoubtedly considerably greater than this, it is not recorded whether they were chosen for their age, their own rank or that of their husbands, or by lot, to give names to the curiae. At the same time also three centuries of knights were enrolled: the Ramnenses were so called from Romulus, the Titienses from Titus Tatius: in regard to the Luceres, the meaning of

the name and its origin is uncertain.<sup>[12]</sup> From that time forward the two kings enjoyed the regal power not only in common, but also in perfect harmony.

### **Footnotes**

[Footnote 1: Books I-III are based upon the translation by John Henry Freese, but in many places have been revised or retranslated by Duffield Osborne.]

[Footnote 2: The king was originally the high priest, his office more sacerdotal than military: as such he would have the selection and appointment of the Vestal Virgins, the priestesses of Vesta, the hearth-goddess. Their chief duty was to keep the sacred fire burning ("the fire that burns for aye"), and to guard the relics in the Temple of Vesta. If convicted of unchastity they were buried alive.]

[Footnote 3: Surely there is no lack of "historical criticism" here and on a subject where a Roman writer might be pardoned for some credulity.]

[Footnote 4: Livy ignores the more accepted and prettier tradition that this event took place where the sacred fig-tree originally stood, and that later it was miraculously transplanted to the comitium by Attius Navius, the famous augur, "That it might stand in the midst of the meetings of the Romans"]

[Footnote 5: According to Varro, Rome was founded B.C. 753; according to Cato, B.C. 751. Livy here derives Roma from Romulus, but this is rejected by modern etymologists; according to Mommsen the word means "stream-town," from its position on the Tiber.]

[Footnote 6: The remarkable beauty of the white or mouse-coloured cattle of central Italy gives a touch of realism to this story.]

[Footnote 7: The introduction of the art of writing among the Romans was ascribed to Evander. The Roman alphabet was derived from the Greek, through the Grecian (Chalcidian) colony at Cumae.]

[Footnote 8: The title patres originally signified the heads of families, and was in early times used of the patrician senate, as selected from these. When later, plebeians were admitted into the senate, the members of the senate were all called patres, while patricians, as opposed to plebeians, enjoyed certain distinctions and privileges.]

[Footnote 9: This story of the rape of the Sabines belongs to the class of what are called "etiological" myths -- i. e., stories invented to account for a rite or custom, or to explain local names or characteristics. The custom prevailed among Greeks and Romans of the bridegroom pretending to carry off the bride from her home by force. Such a custom still exists among the nomad tribes of Asia Minor. The rape of the Sabine women was invented to account for this custom.]

[Footnote 10: The spolia opima (grand spoils) -- a term used to denote the arms taken by one general from another -- were only gained twice afterward during the history of the republic; in B.C. 437, when A. Cornelius Cossus slew Lars Tolumnius of Veii; and in B.C. 222, when the consul M. Claudius Marcellus slew Viridomarus, chief of the Insubrian Gauls.]

[Footnote 11: The place afterward retained its name, even when filled up and dry. Livy (Book VII) gives a different reason for the name: that it was so called from one Marcus Curtius having sprung, armed, and on horseback, several hundred years ago (B.C. 362), into a gulf that suddenly opened in the forum; it being imagined that it would not close until an offering was

made of what was most valuable in the state -- i. e., a warrior armed and on horseback. According to Varro, it was a locus fulguritus (i. e., struck by lightning), which was inclosed by a consul named Curtius.]

[Footnote 12: Supposed to be derived from "Lucumo," the name or, according to more accepted commentators, title of an Etruscan chief who came to help Romulus.]