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ROMULUS

I

MANY, many years ago in the pleasant land of Italy, there was a little city called Alba. It stood on the sunny side of a mountain, near the River Tiber and not far from the Mediterranean Sea. In this city and around the mountain lived a brave, intelligent people known as Latins. Several other tribes inhabited the adjacent mountains and plains.

The Latins were ruled by kings, and one of their kings in very early times was named Aeneas. He was a famous Trojan chief who had come over the seas to Italy and settled there with his family and friends after Troy was destroyed by the Greeks.

A great many years after the death of Aeneas, one of his descendants, named Procas, was king of Alba. He ruled wisely and well for a long time, and his rather small kingdom on the mountainside, with its wheat fields and vineyards, was very prosperous. Procas had two sons, one named Numitor and the other Amulius. As Numitor was the elder, he was heir to his father's throne. But when King Procas died, Amulius seized the kingdom by force and made himself king.

Then Numitor, with his two children, a boy and a girl, left the king's palace at Alba and went to reside on a farm a short distance away.

II

AMULIUS was now king, but he did not feel quite happy. He was much troubled about Numitor's son and daughter. The son, he thought, might some day claim the right to be king as heir of his father, or the daughter might marry and have a son who could become king as grandchild of Numitor.

To prevent either of these things from happening, Amulius had Numitor's son secretly put to death, and he appointed the daughter, Sylvia, to be a priestess, or an attendant, in the temple of the goddess Vesta. Only young girls were appointed attendants in this temple, and they had to take a vow that they would not marry for thirty years. They were called Vestal Virgins, and it was their duty to keep a fire burning continually on the altar of the goddess. This was called the Sacred Fire, and it was believed that if it went out, some great disaster would happen to the city.

Amulius now thought there was nothing to hinder him from being king of Alba. But one day the god Mars came down to the city from his palace on a high mountaintop and saw Sylvia as she went out of the temple to get water at a well. He fell deeply in love with her. She also fell in love with the god, for he had the appearance of a handsome young man. They were married secretly. In time Sylvia had beautiful twin boys. When

Amulius heard of this he gave orders that Sylvia should be put to death for breaking her vow and that the two infants should be thrown into the Tiber. These wicked orders were carried out, for no one dared to disobey the king.

Fortunately, however, the babes had been placed in a stout basket which floated along the Tiber until it was carried by the waters to the foot of a hill called Palatine Hill. Here the huge roots of a wild fig tree upset the basket, and the little ones were thrown out upon the river bank.

At this moment a great she-wolf came strolling down the hill to drink at the river's edge. She heard the feeble cries of the infants and went to the place where they lay helpless on the wet sands. She touched them gently with her rough paws, turned them over, and licked their faces and plump bodies. Perhaps she thought they were some of her own cubs, for she carried the babes up the hill to her cave under a large rock. There she fed them as she fed her own cubs and seemed pleased to have them near her. It is said that a woodpecker flew in and out of the cave many times a day bringing berries for the boys to eat.

One morning as Faustulus, the herdsman of King Amulius, was going over Palatine Hill looking for cattle that had gone astray, he saw the boys playing with the wolf at the mouth of her cave. He frightened the wolf away and took the boys to his home. His wife pitied the little foundlings and cared for them as though they were her own children.

The herdsman named them Romulus and Remus. They grew up to be strong, brave, and kind boys. Until they were twenty years old they lived with the herdsman, helped him in his work, and roamed over the hills, lighthearted and free.

During all these years Numitor lived on his farm, and his brother, Amulius, remained king of Alba. Numitor did not know that his two grandsons had been saved from a watery grave and were living so near to him.

But one day Remus had a quarrel with some of the herdsmen of Numitor, and they took him prisoner. They then brought him before Numitor, who was much impressed with the noble appearance of the youth and asked him who he was.

Remus told all he knew about himself and Romulus, how they had been found at the cave of the she-wolf and had been reared by the king's herdsman. Just then Faustulus and Romulus came searching for Remus and were full of joy when they found that no harm had come to him. Numitor questioned the herdsman about the twins and, after hearing his story, was convinced that Romulus and Remus were Sylvia's boys who had been strangely saved from the wrath of their cruel uncle.

He was very happy at finding his grandsons, and he thanked the herdsman for his good care of them. Romulus and Remus were also very happy at finding a grandfather and at the sudden change of their fortune. When they were told about Amulius and his wicked deeds, they resolved to punish him for the murder of their mother. So, with a few followers, they rushed to the palace at Alba and entered the king's chamber.

"Behold! We are Sylvia's sons whom you thought you had killed," they shouted to Amulius as he started in alarm at their entrance. "You killed our mother, and you shall die for it."

Before Amulius could utter a word, they sprang on him with drawn swords and cut his head off. Then they brought Numitor to

the palace, and the people welcomed him as the rightful king of Alba.

III

AFTER a little time the two brothers thought they would build a city on Palatine Hill, where the she-wolf had nursed them. So they went to the hill and selected a site. Then they began to talk of a name for their city.

"I will be king and give the new city my name," said Romulus.

"No!" cried Remus. "I will be the king and name the city after myself. I have just as much right as you have."

So the brothers argued for a while, but at last they agreed on a way to settle the matter.

At midnight Romulus was to stand on Palatine Hill, and Remus was to stand on another hill a short distance off. Then they were to ask the gods to show them a sign of favor in the sky, and the first who should see anything very remarkable was to name the new city and be its king.

So they went to watch, but nothing appeared until sunrise of the second day when Remus saw six great vultures flying across the sky from north to south. He ran swiftly to Palatine Hill and told Romulus of what he had seen. But just then twelve vultures, one after another, flew high over the head of Romulus in an almost unbroken line.

Then Romulus claimed that he had the favor of the gods as more birds had appeared to him, but Remus claimed that the gods favored him as the birds had appeared to him first. Romulus asked the opinion of some of his friends, and they all agreed that he was right in his claim. He paid no further attention to Remus but began to lay out the new city. He gave it the name of Roma, or Rome, after himself. With a plow he marked out the space on

Palatine Hill and along the banks of the Tiber, and he built a low wall around it to protect the city from invaders.

One day while the work was going on, Remus came by in a very bitter mood. He was still angry with Romulus. He laughed scornfully at the little wall and said to his brother, "Shall such a defense as this keep your city? It may prevent children from getting in, but not men, for men can jump over it."

Remus then put his hands on the wall and sprang over it to show that his words were true. Romulus, in a sudden outburst of rage, struck Remus on the head with a spade and instantly killed him, crying out, "So perish anyone who shall hereafter attempt to leap over my wall!"

Then Romulus continued his work. While he was building his wall he also built some houses. The first houses were nothing more than wood huts covered with mud and straw, but in the course of time the Romans had houses of stone, and they built fine temples, theaters, streets, and squares. Eventually Rome became the greatest and grandest city in the whole world.

IV

ROMULUS founded Rome in the year 753 B.C. After he had built his city, he had some difficulty in getting people to live in it. He had only a few followers and was not able to obtain any more. He decided, therefore, to make Rome a place of refuge, to which people who had found trouble in other countries might come for safety.

When those who had committed crimes in other places and had to flee to escape punishment found out that Romulus would give them a refuge, they came in large numbers to his city. People also came who had been driven from home by enemies or had run away for



Remus struck down by Romulus.

one reason or another. It was not long until Rome was full of men from many different tribes and countries. Thus the Roman nation began, and for years it steadily grew and prospered.

But the Romans were much troubled about one thing: many of them had no wives. The women of the neighboring tribes would not marry them because the Romans had a bad name. Romulus was very anxious that his people should have good wives, but how they should get them greatly puzzled him for a long time. At last he hit upon a plan and began at once to carry it out.

He sent messengers to the neighboring cities to announce that on a certain day a great festival in honor of the god Jupiter would be held on the plain in front of Rome. There were to be games, combats, horse

racing, and other sports. The people were invited to attend the festival and also to take part in the contests for the prizes.

When the festival day came, a multitude of men and women from far and near assembled before the walls of Rome. Hundreds of pretty girls were there in fine dresses, many from the Sabine tribe, a tribe of warriors that lived on a mountain near Rome.

During the festival Romulus blew a loud blast upon a horn. Then, quick as a flash, the Romans seized the girls and bore them off to Rome.

The Sabines were greatly enraged at this, and their king, Titus Tatius, raised a large army and at once began a war against the Romans. The war went on for three years, but the Sabines were so strong that Romulus could not defeat them in the field. He therefore withdrew his army into the

city. King Tatius, determined to take Rome or perish in the attempt, quickly marched after him.

Now Romulus had erected a strong fortress on a hill near the Palatine to keep invaders from Rome. The hill was called the Capitoline Hill, and the fortress was commanded by a brave Roman captain who had a daughter named Tarpeia.

When the Sabines reached this fortress, they could go no further. They marched up and down seeking for a spot where they might force an entrance, but they could find none. There was a small barred gate in the fortress, and through this gate Tarpeia came out to get water. King Tatius saw her, and he at once stepped forward and said, "Fair maiden, open the gate and let us in. If you do, you shall have for your reward anything you ask."

Tarpeia was gazing with admiration at the bracelets of gold which the Sabines wore on their arms.

"I will open the gate," said she, "if you will give me some of those things which your soldiers wear upon their arms."

King Tatius agreed, and Tarpeia opened the gate. As the Sabines strode past the silly maiden, each threw at her not his bracelet but his shield.

The shield then used was round or oblong and made of either bronze, wickerwork, or ox hide covered with metal plates. It had two handles at the back, and the soldier held it with his left hand and arm so that he could move it up or down to save his head or breast from blows.

Tarpeia stood in amazement as the heavy shields began to pile up around her. One struck her, and then another and another, until at last she fell to the ground and was crushed to death.

When the soldiers saw that Tarpeia was dead, they took up the shields they

had thrown at her. Then they hurled her body from the top of a great rock that was near the gate she had opened. The rock was afterwards known as the Tarpeian Rock, and for hundreds of years the punishment for traitors in Rome was to be thrown from it.

As soon as they passed the fortress, the Sabines ran down the Capitoline Hill to make an attack on Rome. But Romulus and his band of warriors bravely came out of the city to drive back the enemy. The two forces met in the valley, and a fierce battle began.

But while they were fighting, a crowd of excited women came running from the city. They were the Sabine women whom the Romans had carried off. Some of them had their infants in their arms, and they rushed between the lines of soldiers and begged that the fight should stop.

"Do not fight anymore for us," they said to their fathers and brothers. "We love the Romans we have married. They have been good to us, and we do not wish to leave them."

Of course this settled the matter. Romulus had a talk with King Tatius, and they agreed not to fight any longer. They also agreed that the two nations should be as one, so they joined their governments and their armies, and each of the kings had equal power.

Soon afterwards King Tatius died, and Romulus ruled alone for nearly forty years. He was a wise and just king and did a great deal of good for his people. He established a body called the Senate to help him in important affairs of government. It was called the Senate from *senex*, the Latin word for *old man* (Latin was the language of the Romans). The Senate was formed of the chiefs, or old men, of the earliest settlers in Rome. The descendants of those

settlers were called *patricians*, or fathers, from the Latin word *pater*, meaning *father*. They were the nobles, or upper class, in Rome. The ordinary citizens were called *plebeians* from *plebs*, the Latin word for *common people*.

Romulus took care to train up the young Romans to be good soldiers. Outside the city, along the bank of the Tiber, there was a great plain which in later times was called Campus Martius, or Field of Mars, where the Roman soldiers drilled. They were taught how to use the spear, the javelin, the sword, and the shield. They trained in running, jumping, wrestling, swimming, and carrying heavy loads. Thus the young men were made fit to bear the hardships of war and to fight and win battles for their country.

It is related that in his old age, Romulus suddenly disappeared from the earth. He called his people together on a great field one day, and while he was speaking to them a violent storm came on. The rain

fell in torrents, and the lightning and thunder were so terrible that the people fled to their homes.

When the storm was over, the people went back to the field, but Romulus was nowhere to be found. Then it was said that his father, the god Mars, had taken him up to the clouds in a golden chariot.

The next morning at early dawn, a Roman citizen named Julius saw a figure descending from the heavens. It had the appearance of Romulus, and it approached Julius and said, "Go and tell my people that it is the will of the gods that Rome shall be the greatest city of the world. Let them be brave and warlike, and no human power shall be able to conquer them."

The Romans then worshiped Romulus as a god. They worshiped him under the name Quirinus, which was one of the names of the god Mars, and they built a temple to him on a hill which was then called the Quirinal Hill.

