



# PEEPS AT MANY LANDS ANCIENT ROME

J A M E S   B A I K I E



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PEEPS at Many Lands  
Ancient Rome

*by*

**James Baikie**





A ROMAN STANDARD BEARER

# Contents

1.	The City of Cities	1
2.	Stories of the City's Childhood	7
3.	A Fight For Freedom	19
4.	The Roman Army	26
5.	Rome's Battle-Fleet	42
6.	A Visit to Rome in A.D. 71—the Journey	52
7.	The Town House and the City	62
8.	The Triumph	78
9.	The Games—the Circus Maximus	88
10.	The Games—the Colosseum	99
11.	The Secret of Rome's Greatness	113



# I

## THE CITY OF CITIES

ABOUT midway down its western face, or its shin, the long boot-leg of Italy is crossed by a comparatively small but swiftly flowing river, which rises in the central mountain range of the land, the Apennines, or Abruzzi, and, after wandering among the hills awhile, flows for twenty-five miles across the plain before it reaches the Western Mediterranean, or Tyrrhene Sea, as it used to be called. The plain, with the hill slopes of the Apennines to the east and south of the river, was peopled by several races of the one stock, which went by the names of Umbrians, Sabines, Samnites, and Latins. The Umbrians, Sabines, and Samnites were mainly hill-folk, while the Latins occupied the plain between the mountains and the sea, south of the river. North of the plain and river were the cities of a race called the Etruscans, who did not belong to Italy to begin with, but had wandered into the country so far back in time that nobody knows when they came; and south of the Latin plain came the cities of Campania, which were founded by colonists from Greece, so that all this part of Italy came to be called Magna Graecia.

Thus the Latins and their neighbours, the Umbrians, Sabines, and Samnites, were hemmed in between two foreign races, and the Latins especially, dwelling in the plain, were in danger from the Etruscans, who were a restless and warlike race. One splendid natural fortress presented itself to them in the extinct volcano known as the Alban Mount, which rises to a height of about 3,000 feet in the middle of the Latin plain, a few miles southwest of the river; and the first important city of the Latins, Alba Longa, rose on this mountain-side. But soon the need was felt of having a stronghold on the river-bank to prevent the Etruscans from crossing, and a band of adventurers was sent out from Alba Longa to find a suitable place for such an outpost and to occupy it.

At a point about twenty miles by water from the river's mouth, the pioneers found a group of small hills—seven as they counted, though only three of them were of any importance—rising from the river-bank to a height of about 160 feet. In the middle of the river lay a small island, which, if unoccupied, would help an enemy to cross, but, if occupied, would make crossing almost impossible. It was the best spot for their purpose that the colonists could find; and here they began to rear the rough walls and towers and houses of Alba Longa's outpost against the Etruscans. To the little fortress-town they gave, for what reason we do not know, though various stories were invented to account for it, the name of "Roma."

Little did those early Latin wanderers know how great a thing they had begun, or how vast a force they had set in motion. They thought, I suppose, that they

were merely taking a prudent step to protect their native Alba Longa from the northern enemy. But ere long Alba Longa itself was eclipsed by the growing strength of the new stronghold by the river-bank, and the daughter became head of the household, while her mother sank into insignificance and finally vanished. Bit by bit the growing power of Roma asserted itself over all the other cities of the Latins, till they had become her subject-allies. Two hundred and forty years after the first stones of the little outpost were laid on the hill by the river, she had defeated the attempts of the Etruscans and of her own kindred to interfere with her government, and stood out as evidently the coming power of the land. In another two and a half centuries, in spite of one great overthrow from a barbarian host of Gauls, desperate and unceasing struggles with her own kinsfolk from the hills, and a terrible wrestle with the great Greek soldier of fortune, Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, she stood forth mistress of Italy.

Then came a great struggle, lasting for almost one hundred and twenty years, between Rome and the great commercial city, Carthage, which had been rising on the African side of the Mediterranean. That deadly contest determined whether the Empire of the world was to rest in Roman hands or in the hands of an Oriental race, for the Carthaginians were of Phoenician stock, kinsfolk to the Jews. When it ceased, with the utter destruction of Carthage, one hundred and forty-six years before the coming of Christ, Rome, though weary after her long struggle, was manifest mistress of the world as men knew it then. In another century she had carried her eagles on

the east almost to the Caucasus, and on the northwest was looking across from France to our own far islands, already marked for conquest.

Her ancient form of government worn out, she took a fresh lease of life under a new one, and her early emperors carried her sway still farther out into the wilds of Europe, bringing civilization and law wherever the eagles flew. And when at last the Empire fell to pieces of its own weight and weariness, she had taught the nations not a little of the knowledge by which she herself had conquered and ruled, so that they were able to take up for themselves the work that fell from her failing hands. Even then her destiny was not accomplished. A new and still greater power, a power over the spirits of men instead of over their bodies, came to enthrone itself in the old colony of long-dead Alba Longa, and for centuries the head of the Christian faith ruled from his Roman palace over all the civilized world, with more absolute sway than Consul or Emperor ever knew. And though that sway be shrunken and diminished now, yet still one-half of Christendom looks to Rome with reverence and trust for spiritual guidance, and the great city by the Tiber still draws the hearts and the imaginations of all men to itself with the wonderful power of its great past.

Such great things have come of that little colony that Alba Longa sent forth in the dawn of history to guard the hills by the little island of the Tiber. No other city has ever had such a history. Babylon may have lasted longer, but Babylon's Empire was only a fraction of the Empire of Rome, and though we owe much to the learning

of the wise men of the East, we owe more to the great law-givers and statesmen of Rome. London has a far vaster population than Rome ever knew, but London is a mushroom city compared with the grey old queen by the Tiber, and owes, besides, her birth to Rome.

There are just two towns that can rival the great imperial city in her claim to sway the hearts of men. Little towns they are, both of them, in little countries, but it may be a question whether the world has not owed more to Jerusalem and Athens than ever it has to Rome. Yet, even if it be so, the City of the Seven Hills has still its own secure place and claim upon our interest, and without its story the history of the world would be robbed of half its colour and romance. So let us glance, in the chapters of this little book, at the old stories of how the little colony of Alba Longa grew from its feeble infancy to its sturdy manhood, and at the surer histories that tell us of the heroism and steadfastness by which, once grown, it conquered the world, and try to learn a little of what life was like in Rome in the great days of old.

Will you remember, when we come in the next chapter to tell some of the ancient legends of how the city was founded and grew, that we are not to think of these old stories as serious history in the same sense as the story of the long war with Carthage or the conquests of Julius Caesar? They are romances, poetical versions of events, which were composed either by the Romans themselves or by Greek scholars for them, to account for those early beginnings of which they really knew nothing certainly. They stand on much the same level as our own stories of

the coming of Brutus of Troy to these islands, and have perhaps even less fact behind them than all the wonderful fancies with which poets have embroidered our traditions of King Arthur and his knights. But they have their own interest and their own value all the same, for it was on these romantic stories, and such as these, that the patriotism of the Romans in the great conquering days of Rome's history was nourished.

## II

### STORIES OF THE CITY'S CHILDHOOD

Remembering, then, what I have told you of the Romantic character of the earliest stories of Rome, let us hear what the Romans used to believe, or, at all events, used to relate, about the founding of their city. It came to pass, the old romancers tell us, that when the Wooden Horse had made the Greeks masters of Troy, and all the gallant defenders of the famous city of Priam were being slain, there were two, Aeneas and Antenor, who escaped their fury.

Antenor and his companions fled from Troy, and after many wanderings and strange haps they settled in the coast-lands between the Alps and the sea, at the northernmost corner of the Adriatic—the same country which the great Republic of Venice afterwards held. Aeneas, who was said to be the son of the great goddess Aphrodite, whom the Romans knew as Venus, wandered first to Macedonia, then to Sicily, and finally landed on the western coast of Italy. He and his men, weary and hungry, with no possessions but their ships and their weapons, but war-hardened and daring, were no very pleasant visitors to any land; and so King Latinus, who

ruled over the country where they had come ashore, gathered his men and came down to the coast to stop by force the plundering of these wanderers from the sea. But when the two little companies (you can scarcely call them armies) faced one another, and were only waiting the signal for the fight, King Latinus, old and wise, came out before his line and called for a conference with the leader of the sea-rovers. Aeneas stepped forward, a manifest prince among men, both in arms and bearing, and when he had told how he and his men came to Italy with no ill intent, but as homeless wanderers seeking to found a new city for themselves, King Latinus and his men, instead of fighting, welcomed them. An alliance was made between Aeneas and the King, who was glad to gain so many valiant and well-armed fighters to his kingdom. Lavinia, the daughter of Latinus, was married to the Trojan Prince, and the new town which the rovers founded was called Lavinium in honour of the Princess. In a while a little son was born to Aeneas and Lavinia, who was called Ascanius, but some say that Ascanius was Aeneas's son by an earlier marriage, and had accompanied his father in the flight from Troy.

Now before Aeneas came to Italy, the Princess Lavinia had been promised in marriage to Turnus, chief of the Rutuli, and when he heard how his promised bride had been given to another, Turnus was very wroth. He gathered his army and made war upon Latinus and his new friends, and in the battle which followed, though the allies were victorious, old Latinus was slain, and Aeneas took command in his stead. But Turnus was not yet done with,

for he besought the help of the Etruscans and returned with a great army to avenge his wrongs. Then indeed there was a great and fierce battle, and in the midst of it, when Aeneas and his men were beginning to break the enemy's line, and to drive their foes before them, there came down for a space cloud and thick darkness upon the battlefield, and when the darkness had passed the Prince Aeneas also had passed away from among mortal men. And, though no man saw his going, yet his victorious men knew well that he had gone to dwell with the immortal gods, and to be made like unto them. Therefore they called him no more Aeneas, but Jupiter, as being one with him who is the Father of gods and men; and they decreed that men should reverence and worship his memory.

Now for a time after the passing of Aeneas, his wife, the Princess Lavinia, ruled in Lavinium until the boy Ascanius should grow to manhood. But in the fullness of the time, when Ascanius came to age and strength, he would not rule in his mother's city, whose bounds were full to overflowing, but left Lavinium to her rule, and went forth and founded a new city, Alba Longa, in the midst of the Latin plain, on the slopes of the great Alban Mount, which once had been a burning mountain, but the gods had quenched its fires. There in his new city Ascanius ruled, and his sons and his sons' sons after him, for many a year. And it fell out that one of these, called Tiberinus, was drowned in the crossing of the river Albula, which runs across the Latin plain; and so it

is that the name of that river was changed, and is called after him Tiber even unto this day.

At length to one of the Kings of Alba Longa, called Proca, there were born two sons, Numitor the elder and Amulius the younger; and the throne should have fallen to Numitor, according to ancient custom. But Amulius, the younger son, was a fierce and wicked man, and when his father died he drove his brother from the throne and seized it for himself; and lest there should be anyone left to thrust him from his ill-gotten seat, he slew the sons of Numitor and made their one sister, Rhea Silvia, become one of the priestesses of Vesta, who may never be given in marriage, that so none might be left to Numitor to claim what had been wrongfully taken from him.

But so it fell out that the great god Mars, whom the Greeks call Ares, saw and loved Rhea Silvia, and took her for his bride, in spite of the vestal vow, and there were born to her twin sons, Romulus and Remus. Then indeed Amulius trembled between wrath and fear, and he cast Rhea Silvia into prison, and ordered the twin boys to be thrown into the Tiber. It was the time when Tiber overflows his banks, and the cradle with the boys was not swept into the main current of the river, but was stranded in shallow flood water, not far from the hut of a shepherd named Faustulus. And so it was that while the cradle with the babies lay stranded, there came down a she-wolf to the river to drink, and seeing the boys, and knowing, with the wisdom that the gods have given to the beasts, that they were hungry, she nursed them, and gave them of her milk, and watched over them. And

Faustulus, coming by and seeing this strange chance, took the boys into his care, and gave them to his wife Larentia to bring up. So the boys grew and waxed strong on the meat of the very man who had wished to slay them; for Faustulus was the shepherd of King Amulius.

Now it happened that when the boys were grown to manhood, Remus was captured by brigands and taken before King Amulius on a false charge of having raided the lands which still belonged to his deposed grandfather Numitor; and Amulius handed him over to Numitor for trial and punishment, not knowing who he was. But Numitor, struck by the young man's noble bearing, made inquest into his origin, and found that this youth was indeed his grandson. Meanwhile, Romulus had gathered a troop of his friends to rescue his brother, and in the struggle which followed, the false King Amulius was slain, and the aged Numitor was restored to his throne. Yet Romulus and Remus chose not to dwell with their grandfather in Alba Longa, but to found a city for themselves.

For the site of their new abode they chose the group of hills by the Tiber where Rome now stands; and, as they were twins, and neither could claim the right to rule over the other, they elected to let the gods decide by omen which should be lord of the city that was to be. Romulus therefore, with his friends, took his post on the Palatine hill, and Remus, with his, upon the Aventine, there to wait for the decision of heaven. Now it was so, that to Remus, thus waiting upon the Aventine, there appeared first a flight of six vultures, whereupon he concluded that

the gods had chosen him as ruler, and sent his messengers to his brother to acquaint him with the event. But before the messengers arrived, Romulus spied a flight of twelve vultures; and thus a new dispute arose, Remus contending that he, who had first seen the vultures, was chosen, and Romulus that the gods, who had sent him the greater number, had made choice of him. And some say that in the heat of contention Romulus struck and slew Remus his brother, but others that, Romulus having begun to build the wall of the new city, Remus in scorn leaped over it; whereupon his brother, in anger at his contempt, slew him, crying, "So shall it be henceforth with everyone who shall leap over my walls." So the new city was founded in strife and bloodshed, and Romulus was left as its sole ruler.

Yet though the young King had built his fortress on the Palatine hill great and strong, the very width of its circuit made the handful of men who had gathered within the new walls look paltry. Therefore Romulus reared a place of refuge on the neighbouring Capitoline hill. An Asylum it was called, and there was proclaimed free entrance into it for everyone—stranger, slave, robber, or wanderer—who was dissatisfied with his present way of life. So it came about that everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was discontented, or in debt, runaway slaves, and criminals fleeing from justice, all gathered themselves to the Asylum on the Capitoline Mount, and Romulus added this motley band of broken men to the population of his new city, and reigned as King over them.

But as yet there were none but men within the walls, and, if the city were to endure, they must have wives. Yet when Romulus appealed to the tribes around—the Sabines, and the people of Caenina, Antemnae, and Crustumerium—to allow their daughters to be given in wedlock to his men, he was met with scornful refusals, and was told that the only way to gain wives for his companions was to open a second asylum for women of like character to the men who had come to the first. So the King, repulsed when he sought his end by fair means, resolved to gain it by deceit. Proclaiming a great festival in honour of the god Consus, he invited all the peoples of the tribes and cities around to come and view the sacred games which were to be held in the new city. Then all the Sabines, curious to see what manner of city this abode of rogues might be, flocked to the games with their sons and daughters, gaily dressed and bearing no weapons, for that the occasion was a peaceful one.

So when the sports had gone on for a while, and the attention of all was fixed on the arena, Romulus gave a signal, and bands of his men, armed and resolute, broke in upon the company from all sides, and carried off all the fairest damsels they could lay hands on. So the men of Rome were furnished with wives, and the Sabine maidens, after bewailing for a time their sudden fate, became accustomed to their new home and settled down in peaceable marriage with those who had stolen them. But the Sabine men, and the men of Caenina, Antemnae, and Crustumerium were not so lightly content to sit still under the slight that had been put upon them. Unarmed

as they had been at the games, they were unable to resist; but ere long they gathered their strength together and marched to exact vengeance. The first attempts of the three nearest towns failed, because they were too hasty and enraged to agree together upon the plan of their warfare, but rushed singly, in blind fury, upon their enemy, and were beaten one by one. But the Sabines were more cautious, and their enmity, more wisely guided, came near to being the ending of the new city ere its course was well begun.

For the men of the Sabine tribes gathered together into one great army under their King, Titus Tatius, and they marched into the Roman land and laid siege first to the Capitol, the Asylum of Romulus. Now in command of the Capitol Romulus had set a good man and true, Spurius Tarpeius; but his daughter Tarpeia was false-hearted, and was devoured by pride and a desire for gold and for personal adornments. She looked from the battlements upon Tatius and his men as they gathered beneath the hill, and marked the golden bracelets which each man wore upon his left arm, and her false heart coveted them, both for their price and their beauty. Now so it fell out that to her it was assigned to go forth from the fortress to draw water from a sacred spring without the walls to pour before the gods, and, because her going was an act of worship, the Sabines allowed her to pass. Yet Tatius drew near and spoke to her, and in the greed of her heart she pledged herself to open to the Sabine army the gate of the citadel, if each man would give to her "what he wore upon his left arm."

So when the night came, Tatius and his men stole silently up to the gate, and the false Tarpeia opened it to them. And as Tatius passed her, he called to his men not to forget to give her what they wore upon their left arms; and, so saying, in scorn of the treachery by which he profited, he threw not only his bracelet, but his heavy shield upon the traitress; and each man, as he followed, did the like, till Tarpeia was crushed to death beneath the bucklers, and got nothing of her treachery but shame and mortal pain. And the rock on the Capitoline hill where Tarpeia died is called the Tarpeian rock even unto this day, and when a Roman has proved traitor to his city, he is taken to its summit and cast down therefrom, that he may die where Rome's first betrayer perished.

Now the Capitol was in the hands of Tatius and his men, and a great battle began on the low ground between the Sabines and Romulus and his men from the Palatine. Both sides fought stoutly, and what might have been the end none may know save the immortal gods, for in the midst of the strife the Sabine women, whose capture had caused all the contention, ran between the two hosts and besought them to make peace, since it could be no cure for the wrong they had suffered that the fathers they had left, or the husbands to whom they were now wedded, should be slain; for so they must be left either orphans or widows. And to them the warriors on both sides gave heed, and peace was made, and alliance between Sabine and Roman, and Romulus and Tatius were made joint Kings over the united peoples. But after a time Tatius was slain in a quarrel, and Romulus was left to reign

alone; and so all things seemed to turn to the advantage and to the greatness of the new city.

Now when Romulus was sole King over Roman and Sabine, he reigned for a season in great power; but though he was ever successful in war, he grew arrogant and selfish in time of peace, and oppressed the people, so that many were his enemies in secret. But he formed for himself a bodyguard of three hundred chosen young men whom he named Celeres, because of their swiftness to do his errands, and paid no heed to the murmurs of his subjects, but thought only of his own ease and pride. It so fell out that when he had reigned for forty years he held a great review of his army in the plain by the city which is called the Field of Mars, and all the people were gathered together to the spectacle. Then suddenly cloud and thick darkness came down upon the land, and the gods sent lightning and thunder and hail, so that no man might see his neighbour for a season, and none could hear the words that another spake, and the whole assemblage was in great fear and doubt as to what this sudden portent might signify. And when the clouds and the darkness had passed, and the sun shone out once more, lo! the throne where Romulus had sat was void, neither did any man henceforward see the King alive on earth.

So the minds of men were troubled, for though their King had of late been a proud oppressor, yet they could not forget that he had made the city great and strong. And some said that his enemies among those nobles of the city who were called senators had seized on the King in the darkness and torn him limb from limb, and hidden

the fragments of his body under their cloaks; and other some that the gods had caught him up by a whirlwind into heaven, as they had caught Aeneas. But after a time one of the senators named Proculus Julius, a man held in high regard, came into the assembly of the citizens and spake on this wise to them: "Citizens, at break of dawn to-day, the Father of the city suddenly descended from heaven and appeared to me. Whilst, thrilled with awe, I stood rapt before him in deepest reverence, praying that I might be pardoned for gazing upon him, 'Go,' said he, 'tell the Romans that it is the will of heaven that my Rome should be the head of all the world. Let them henceforth cultivate the arts of war, and let them know assuredly, and hand down the knowledge to posterity, that no human might can withstand the arms of Rome.'" In this fashion the troubled minds of the Roman citizens were soothed, and Romulus, thus snatched from them, was henceforth adored as the god Quirinus, and a great festival, called the Quirinalia, was held each year in his honour.

Now whether Proculus Julius were merely a deceiver, who told his story to turn away suspicion from the murderers of Romulus, or whether he really believed that he had seen and heard that which he declared to the citizens, may not be lightly determined. Only this one thing do we know assuredly, that the promise made by heaven through him, if indeed heaven spake by his lips, has been fulfilled in such fashion that no man may gainsay it.

### III

## A FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

After Romulus had gone from among men, there followed him, as rulers upon the throne of Rome, six other kings. Some of them were good men and true, and some were rather warlike and tyrannous than good; but under them all the city grew and waxed mighty, till all the neighbouring land owned its dominion. Now the last of these kings, Lucius Tarquinius by name, called also "Superbus," or "The Proud," because of his arrogance, was not of Roman but of Etruscan descent; for his ancestors had been but simple Etruscan squires before his grandsire Tarquinius Priscus came to Rome and climbed to the throne. Tarquin the Proud was a good soldier and a strong ruler, but he had not learned to rule his own house, and his sons were wild and wicked men, who denied themselves nothing that their eyes coveted or their hearts desired. And, in especial, one of them, Sextus Tarquin, wrought foul wrong to Lucretia, wife of a noble Roman named Collatinus, while her husband was fighting for Rome at the siege of Ardea.

Then Lucretia summoned her husband and his friends from the camp at Ardea, and when she had told them

the story of the bitter wrong that Sextus Tarquin had wrought, she struck a knife into her heart, and so died before them all, preferring death to a dishonoured life. Then Collatinus, and Brutus his friend, who was near of kin to the King, and all that had heard the dreadful story of Lucretia, took oath to submit no longer to the tyranny and cruelty of the Tarquins; and so, stirring up the whole city by the recital of the wrongs of Lucretia, and the sight of her dead body, they raised revolt and declared Tarquin the Proud deposed. And when the King came in haste from the camp to quell the revolt, he found the gates shut against him, and behind him the army which he had left, stirred up by Brutus, joined the rebellion and drove out the younger Tarquins. So the King and his whole evil brood were forced to flee from Rome, and they betook themselves for help to the Etruscans, from whom they were sprung. But the evil Sextus, fleeing to the town of Gabii, which he counted his own domain, was there brought to his deserved end, in revenge for all the rapines and murders which he had wrought.

So the whole race of kings—nay, also the very idea of kingship—was cast out from Rome, as hateful and not to be endured; and the great city became a republic, governed by a council of three hundred of its greatest and wisest men, who were called the Senate, while the chief officers of the State, who governed in place of the King, were two men chosen from among the honourable men of the city, and called Consuls. They held office only for a year, that so no man might ever become too mighty