

## PART III

### ROME

#### CHAPTER XXVIII

##### THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE

**350. The Place of Rome in History.** — We have seen that the Greeks were the first Europeans to become civilized. This fact is partly due to their nearness to the Orient. But they so improved upon everything borrowed from the East as to develop a civilization in many respects the most brilliant in the history of the world. Italy is more distant from the Orient, and for that reason was slower in emerging from barbarism. The Italians, or, as we generally say, the Romans, who came to be the rulers of the peninsula, received most of their improvements from the Greeks, as the Greeks had taken theirs from the Orient. Whatever the Romans borrowed from Greece they modified to suit their own conditions, thus creating a Roman civilization.

No other state fills so large a place in the history of the world as Rome. It was the achievement of this city to unite all the Mediterranean basin in a great empire under a single government and to make the nations of this region one in science, industry, and art, one in customs, thought, and sympathy, one in the Christian religion. This task was accomplished by able diplomacy, generalship, organization, and government. Roman genius is best shown, however, in the creation of a body of law, which for its completeness and excellence must be considered the greatest legislative work of the human race. It is true that after many centuries of development, the empire declined and finally fell into pieces; but from the fragments great modern states, as England, France, and Italy, have grown; and its civilization in a modified form has passed into mod-

ern life. In brief, history may be compared with a tree, whose roots are the Mediterranean countries of pre-Roman time, whose trunk is the Roman empire, and whose branches are the modern nations. It is clear, then, that a knowledge of Roman history is necessary to an understanding of all later time.

**351. Physical Features of Italy.** — Italy is mainly a peninsula, the central one of the three great peninsulas which branch off from the southern coast of Europe. It is long and narrow, and extends in a southeasterly direction. The northern border is formed by the lofty Alps, eternally covered with snow. On the east is the Adriatic Sea; on the west the Tuscan or Tyrrhenian Sea. Instead of clusters of islands, which we find in the neighborhood of Greece, there are near Italy three single islands, Sicily near the toe of the peninsula, often mentioned above as a part of Hellas, and Sardinia and Corsica, which lie close together to the west of central Italy. All these islands are connected with the history of Rome.

Examining Italy more closely, we find it composed of two principal parts, the mainland and the peninsula. (1) The mainland is in the north, and consists chiefly of the basin of the Po River, which lies between the Alps on the north and the Apennines on the south. This is by far the largest river of Italy. It flows in an easterly direction through a great alluvial plain, forming a remarkably fertile district. The mainland is usually called northern Italy. For convenience (2) the peninsula is often divided into central Italy, extending from the Apennines on the north to the neighborhood of Naples, and southern Italy, including the rest of the peninsula. There is no natural boundary, however, between the two sections last named.

We have spoken of the Apennines as forming the boundary between northern and central Italy. This is best seen on the map, p. 316. First they extend eastward along the coast of the mainland, then they verge to the southeast till they pass the centre of the peninsula. After that they continue throughout its length nearly parallel with the coasts. Though not so lofty as the Alps, the Apennines are very high, and the whole interior is rugged.

It is a noteworthy fact that this mountain range lies nearer to the eastern than to the western coast. This circumstance makes the





eastern slope shorter, the rivers smaller and less navigable, and the coast steeper and more devoid of harbors. The longer slopes on the west terminate in fertile coast plains. The rivers, too, are longer and larger, and a few of them are navigable. The principal river of the peninsula is the Tiber. It rises in the Apennines of central Italy, and its general course is southwest. There are several harbors, too, on the west coast. The principal one is the Bay of Naples. The Tiber River itself served as a harbor for small ships. In the south and southeast of the peninsula harbors are more frequent. Next to that of Naples, the most excellent is the bay on which the Greek colony of Tarentum stood.<sup>1</sup>

**352. Effects of Geographical Conditions on the History of Italy.** — It is necessary to examine the historical bearing of a few great facts regarding the situation and physical features of Italy; for the greatness of Rome did not depend on the city alone, but upon the whole Italian population. We notice that the Alps are passable only at certain points, and even there with difficulty; they cut Italy off from relations with the interior of the continent, and compelled her to associate with the other countries of the Mediterranean. This is one of the great facts in the history of the peninsula. Another is its accessibility. Noteworthy in this connection are its length and narrowness and its nearness to the Illyrian shore beyond the Adriatic. On the southwest it connects closely with Africa. Its nearness to other countries has always exposed it to invasion — from across the Adriatic, from Sicily and Africa, or by way of the Ionian Sea, from Greece. Even the Alps, though a hindrance to commerce, have often proved a weak barrier against enemies. From early times, accordingly, many came to Italy from various directions, either individually or in mass, as traders, immigrants, or conquerors. These strangers of diverse nationalities, mingling in friendship and war, stimulated one another to great activity. In fact, for centuries Italy formed the western frontier of civilization, drawing to itself the boldest and most enterprising people of the older world, and developing intensely the frontier qualities of courage, patience, hardihood, and practical intelligence. There were differences in language and customs between one part of the



country and another; and there grew up a multitude of small independent states, continually warring among themselves. In time, however, as life became more settled and refined, and a desire for peace developed, the people found the exposed position of their country a positive disadvantage. This circumstance led them to accept the supremacy of Rome, the strongest state in the peninsula and ablest to give protection. Thus the accessibility of the country helps explain its political unification — the first great work accomplished by Rome in the building up of her empire. The same geographical conditions explain another fact; even when united, the country was unsafe while neighboring nations remained free to assail it; and thus it was that motives of self-preservation led Rome, as the head of the peninsula, into her career of foreign conquest. The political unification of the Mediterranean world was the second great stage of empire-building accomplished by Rome.

The third and most important task achieved by Rome was in civilizing the empire, especially the western half; and in this work, too, she was favored by the form and situation of Italy. The western coast, as we have noticed, is better supplied than the eastern with harbors. It was partly for this reason that the Romans came into closer touch and sympathy with Spain, Gaul, and northwestern Africa than with Greece and the Orient. In some degree they impressed their character on the whole empire; but the fresh, vital peoples of the West were far more ready than the decaying East to adopt their customs, institutions, and ideas.

**353. Climate, Soil, and Products, and their Effects.** — A more intimate acquaintance with the physical geography of the country will yield other facts which bear on its history. Its extension through many degrees of latitude gives a great diversity of climate, increased further by the Apennines. In the south is a sub-tropical climate and vegetation, nearly like those of Africa; in the north, especially high up on the slopes of the mountains, we find the air and the products of central Europe. Everywhere the extremes of summer and winter are tempered by the neighboring sea. The sunny sky, the luxuriant vegetation, the great variety and abundance of useful products, — stone, copper, timber, fruit, and grains, — have supported a dense population, promoted its many-sided develop-

ment, and added to its comfort and happiness. Not simply the situation and form, but the climate, soil, and products as well, have influenced the history of the country.

**354. The Countries of Italy.** — We have seen that Italy is conveniently divided into northern, central, and southern. Northern Italy, the basin of the Po, contained three countries: Li-gu'ri-a on the west, Ve-ne'ti-a on the east, and Gallia between these two. When the Romans wished to distinguish this Gallia from the country of the same name beyond the Alps, they applied to it the adjective Cis-al-pi'na, meaning "this side the Alps." Central Italy comprised E-tru'ri-a, La'ti-um, and Cam-pa'ni-a on the Tyrrhenian coast; Um'bri-a, Pi-ce'num, and the Fren-ta'ni (a tribal name) on the Adriatic; and Sa-bi'na, the Marsian country, and Sam'ni-um in the mountainous interior. In southern Italy were A-pu'li-a, Ca-la'bri-a, and Brut'ti-um. Magna Graecia, explained above,<sup>1</sup> comprised the Greek colonies in the south of the peninsula. The countries of Italy here named were not states. Each was the abode of a people, who in most cases comprised several little states. One people was distinguished from another in a greater or less degree by race, dialect, and customs.

**355. The Italians.** — Naturally we think of all the inhabitants of Italy as Italians. Though this came to be true in the course of centuries, it was not so at the beginning. For a long time the peninsula as a whole had no name. For that early age the term Italians is restricted to the group of peoples who in the end were to gain control of the peninsula. The Italians, in this earlier and narrower sense of the word, spoke an Indo-European language, related to the Greek, Celtic, English, and other languages of the same group.<sup>2</sup> They came over the Alps or across the upper Adriatic into Italy as early at least as 2000 B.C. Then, moving gradually through the peninsula, the swarms of warriors, with their women and children and herds, drove before them or subdued the earlier inhabitants, and fought among themselves for the best lands. In this way they came to occupy most of central Italy. One horde, passing through the Sabine country, came down upon the coast plain on the left bank of the Tiber. The people formed by the mingling of these invaders

<sup>1</sup> § 127.

<sup>2</sup> § 9.

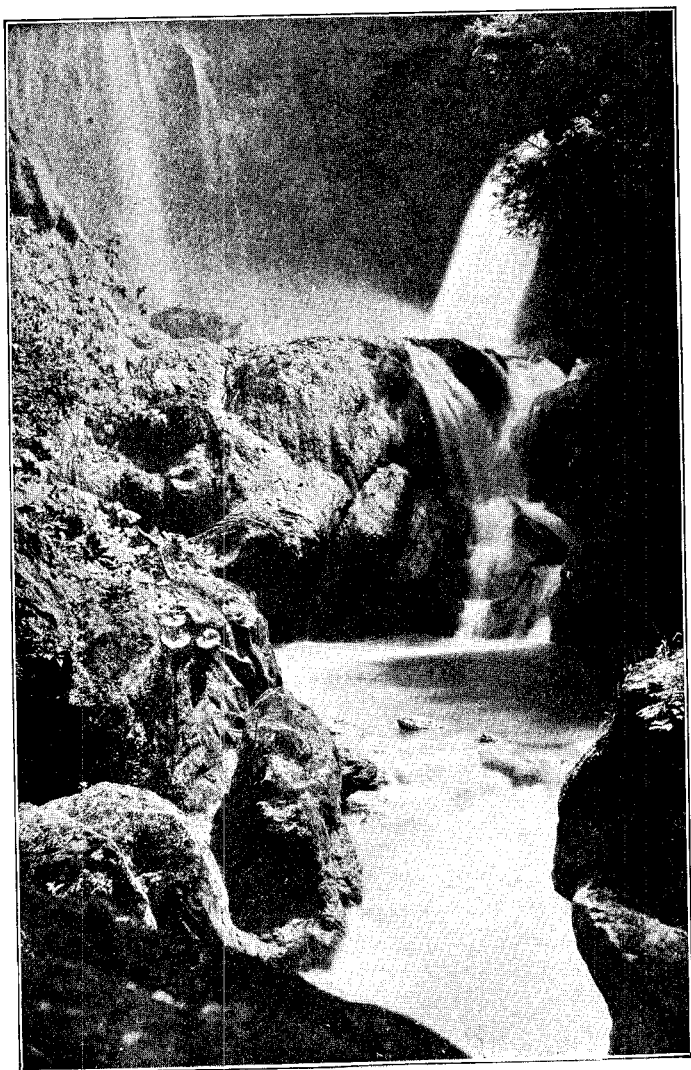
with the natives are known to history as the Latins, and their country is Latium. Their language contains many words adopted from the earlier inhabitants. Another branch of the same stock settled



in the country north of the Tiber, the Etruria of historical time. They did not limit themselves to Etruria, however, but occupied the breadth of the peninsula. They, too, mingled with the natives, and the race which sprang from this blending is called the Umbrians. Closely related to them — in a loose sense their colonists — were the







THE FALL OF THE ANIO  
(Tibur. From a photograph)

Sa-bel'li-ans or Oscans. Starting from the Sabine country and its neighborhood, they extended their settlements over the mountains and the eastern slopes of central Italy. The most important Sabellian country was Samnium.

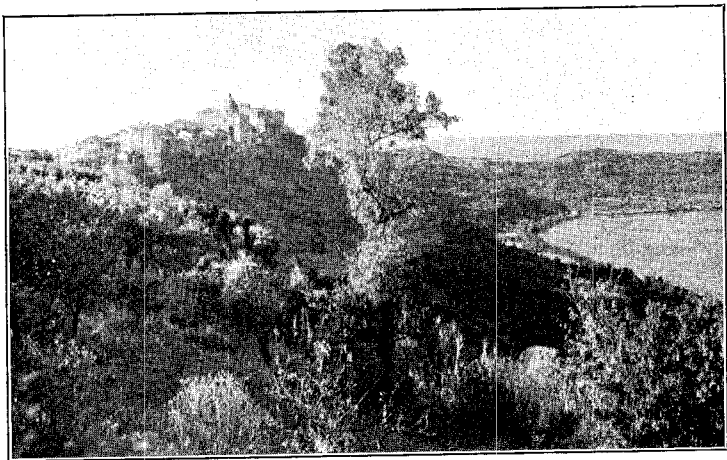
**356. The Mountaineers: Umbrians and Sabellians.** — After a time the country north and west of the Tiber was overrun by the Etruscans.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter the only Umbrians with whom we have to do were those of the interior. We must therefore regard both the Umbrians and the Sabellians as essentially mountaineers. These two branches of the Italic race differed little in language and customs. Both subsisted by hunting, herding cattle, and farming small patches of soil. They lived in villages and had no states like those of modern times, but each mountain valley was the abode of a tribe with its own independent government. The tribes were constantly at war with one another. Whereas the Umbrians lived a more settled and peaceful life, the Sabellians were restless and aggressive, and for that reason were for centuries a constant menace to the more civilized plain men along their western border.

**357. The Latins.** — The country most exposed to these attacks was Latium. It extended from the Tiber to the southeast, between the mountains and the sea, as far as Tar-ra-ci'na. On account of their fertile fields near the coast, the people of this country grew more wealthy and refined than their kinsmen in the interior. They soon outgrew the old tribal life and founded city-states, like those of Greece. Most of them were built on the spurs of the ranges which reach out from the interior into the plain. Prominent among them was Alba Longa,<sup>2</sup> high up on the Alban Mount, beside a lake which fills the crater of an extinct volcano. It was head of the Latin League. Here the cities of the union held an annual festival, in which they sacrificed an ox to Jupiter, their chief deity. A short distance northeast of Alba was Prae-nes'te, one of the best fortified and most powerful cities of early Latium. From Praeneste we may follow the mountain range northwestward to Tibur, another well-fortified city in a remarkably beautiful situation. Especially attractive is the fall of the Anio from a great height into a deep

<sup>1</sup> § 358.

<sup>2</sup> For the places in Latium, see map opp. p. 353.

wooded ravine. There were many other city-states of Latium, but the most important was Rome, on the left bank of the Tiber about fourteen miles from its mouth. The city was on a group of hills, whose situation may be studied on the map (p. 335). The central hill was the Pal'a-tine. This height was easily defended, as its slopes were very steep. The same is true of the Cap'i-to-line



A SHORE OF THE ALBAN LAKE  
(From a photograph)

Mount, nearly west of the Palatine, separated from it by a deep valley. As we pass from the Capitoline around the Palatine, keeping the latter to our right, we come successively to the Quir'i-nal Hill, the Vim'i-nal Hill, the Es'qui-line Mount, the Cae'li-an Mount, and the Av'en-tine Mount. It is worth noticing that the Palatine, Capitoline, Caelian, and Aventine are isolated heights, whereas the other three are tongues projecting from a broad tableland, which lies on the border of the city. The seven heights named above are spoken of as the "Seven Hills" of Rome.

The Romans of the historical age believed that their earliest settlement was on the Palatine, and that the other hills were gradually incorporated in the city.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> § 375.

**358. The Etruscans.** — Scholars who have recently devoted much time to the study of the Etruscans are becoming convinced that their ancestors once inhabited the northern islands of the Aegean Sea and the neighboring coast of Asia Minor. If this view is correct, it must have been partly the pressure of early Greek colonization<sup>1</sup> which forced many of them to seek new homes in Italy. They came by sea, a few at a time, beginning before 800 B.C. In their new home they mingled with the natives. The language and the superior civilization of the new-comers prevailed, but the Etruscan race of historical time was formed by the blending of these immigrants with the earlier Umbrian inhabitants of Etruria. Their country was rich in natural resources, — copper, marble, timber for building, and a fertile soil. The neighboring island of Elba supplied iron. In addition to this country, they acquired by conquest and



AN ETRUSCAN ARCH  
(Volaterrae, Etruria. From a photograph)

colonization the greater part of the Po valley and of Campania. With their warships they controlled the sea which washes the west coast of Italy, — named after them, Tyrrhenian.<sup>2</sup> For a time they were the most powerful and the most ambitious race in the peninsula. Though they have left abundant inscriptions, no one as yet has been able to read their language. Scholars are

<sup>1</sup> §§ 92-94.

<sup>2</sup> Tyrrhenian and Etruscan are equivalent in meaning; the former is from the Greek, the latter from the Latin.

inclined to believe that they were not Indo-Europeans. Part of their civilization they brought with them into Italy. Afterward they adopted from the Greek colonists the phalanx, the alphabet,



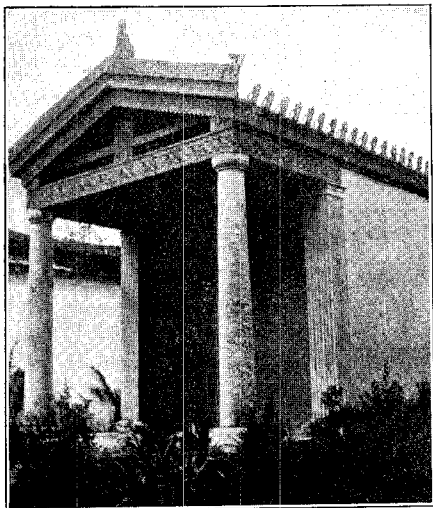
AN ETRUSCAN TOMB  
(Interior, showing wall-paintings; Tarquinii, Etruria)

various religious beliefs, and advanced ideas of architecture, sculpture, and painting. They made vases and sculptures of their own. They paved roads, dug canals for drainage and irrigation, and on



AN ETRUSCAN BANQUET  
(Wall-painting in a tomb, Tarquinii, Etruria)

lofty hills they built massive walls, strong towers, and arched gateways. The principle of the round arch they got from the Orient. Their religion centred about the system of divination which they had learned of the Babylonians.<sup>1</sup> By means of this religion the nobles upheld their own power in the government, and kept the working class obedient. Another prominent feature of their religion was belief in a future life, which led them to spend much wealth and skill in the building and decoration of tombs. In this respect they were like the Egyptians or like the Greeks of the Mycenaean age.<sup>2</sup> The tomb of an Etruscan noble was patterned after his dwelling; it often contained several rooms, and the walls were richly sculptured and painted with scenes from life. Much of the noble's wealth was buried with him for use and enjoyment by his soul.



AN ETRUSCAN TEMPLE

(Model, on the original scale, reconstructed from ruins at Falerii; Villa di Papa Giulio, Rome. From a photograph)

Many Etruscan immigrants came to Rome and the other cities of Latium. Wherever they went, their superior wealth, intelligence, and skill gave them the leadership in public affairs.<sup>3</sup> The Latins maintained their own language and their own national character against the influence of these clever immigrants, but received from them, or directly from Etruria through commercial intercourse, a great part of the Etruscan civilization. It is especially noteworthy that the Etruscans

<sup>1</sup> § 45. The Greeks, too, adopted the same system, but developed it in a different way; § 178.

<sup>2</sup> §§ 26 f., 90, 100.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the story of Tarquin the Elder: § 364



taught the Romans to interpret omens, to organize and equip their army, and to build sewers, walls, dwellings, temples, and cities.

**359. The Greeks.** — It was destined, however, that as teachers of the Italians the Etruscans should in the end be outrivalled by the more virile Greeks, who about the middle of the eighth century B.C. began to settle the shores of southern Italy and Sicily. Soon their thriving settlements nearly surrounded Sicily, and lined the Italian coast from Tarentum to Cumae. As these cities have been described in the chapter on Greek colonization,<sup>1</sup> it is unnecessary to mention them individually here. We should notice, however, that the Greeks of the West performed a most useful service in imparting a large share of their culture to Rome. Particularly the Romans received from them their alphabet, their military organization and equipment, higher and better religious ideas, the elements of all the fine and useful arts, and later the sciences and philosophy. Some of these gifts came directly, others through the Etruscans.

**360. Other Peoples of Italy.** — The other peoples of Italy were of minor importance. Among them were the Li-gu'ri-ans in the extreme northwest of the country. In remote prehistoric time they had inhabited a much wider area, but had been crowded back into the mountains by Etruscan and Gallic invaders. Opinion differs as to whether they were Indo-Europeans or the original inhabitants of Italy. They were a hardy race, who long maintained their freedom. In the northeast of Italy, about the head of the Adriatic Sea, lived the Ve-ne'ti-ans, who were an invading race from Illyria. The modern city of Venice retains their name. Closely related in origin and language were the I-a-pyg'i-ans or Mes-sa'pi-ans in and about the heel of the peninsula. Neither the Venetians nor the Iapygians have any special prominence in Roman history. More important were the Gauls who about the middle of the fifth century began to cross the Alps and to overrun the Po valley.<sup>2</sup> They were at the time tall, blond barbarians, brave in battle and greedy for plunder. Early in the following century a horde of these fierce warriors ravaged central Italy and sacked Rome.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ch. xi. § 126.

<sup>2</sup> Formerly it was held that the invasion began in the sixth century, but this date is now found to be too early.

<sup>3</sup> § 398.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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