

THE CHILDREN'S PLUTARCH
TALES OF THE ROMANS



NUMA & THE NYMPH.

**THE CHILDREN'S
PLUTARCH
TALES OF THE ROMANS**

BY

F. J. GOULD

illustrated by Walter Crane

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INTRODUCTION

I DO not know why it is that among the Greeks and Romans who are so nearly fabulous as to be scarcely historical at all, Romulus should have a living hold upon the imagination, and Theseus should remain a very dim memory. The Lives of Plutarch begin with these founders of the Roman and the Grecian states, but if the balance tilts so heavily on the side of the Romans, it is dressed in favor of the Greeks in the next following lives of Lycurgus and Numa, and the next of Solon and Poplicola, and the fourth pair, Themistocles and Camillus. It is not until we come to Pericles and Fabius that the balance begins to be even again; and there the splendor of the Grecian's statesmanship eclipses the glory of the Roman patriot in the eyes of those who value civic genius above military virtue.

Of course in the long-run the Romans excel the Grecians in the number of their famous men, but the children ought to remember that the years of Rome were nearly ten times as many as those of Greece; and when their minds kindle with the thought of the Romans who were great from the earliest days of the city far down into the dark of the dying empire, they should be made to consider how glorious the fewer Greeks were in the few short centuries which compassed in time the rise and fall of their republics. As they read Mr. Gould's stories from Plutarch they should be reminded that both Greece and Rome were

republican after a brief time, when they were misruled by tyrants, until that long, long time when they sank again under the sway of kings and emperors; the long time which continues yet for most of the European states, but has ceased throughout the whole of America except in the democratic Dominion of Canada. Yet they should be taught that the Roman republic was always a state where even without kings the few ruled the many as they do in Spanish America now, while in the Grecian republics the whole people came nearer the likeness of our own people in their self-government. The freedom of both these states, they should also be taught, was based upon the bondage of men who might be killed or whipped and put to the cruelest shame at the pleasure of their masters because they had suddenly, while free, rich, learned citizens of their native countries, been taken in war, or stolen and sold by pirates. The children should be told that such an immortal sage as Plato was bought for a hundred dollars, and Epictetus, whose philosophy was the study of the good and wise Emperor Marcus Aurelius, was a slave with all the chances of a slave's misery. Not all of the Greeks and Romans were blind to the despair which underlay their highest and bravest hopes, and when Christianity came to them it brought liberty to their bondsmen long after they had lost their own free citizenship.

I believe that if the children realize this they will the more perfectly realize the nobleness and greatness of the Romans whose lives are told in this book. It will be well for them to understand that human nature is a mixed and contradictory thing, and that out of the

warring good and evil in it the good often triumphed. Socrates truly said that a slave could have no virtues, and yet the slave Epictetus taught in his book and in his life all the virtues. The young readers should also be made to see how, in every time, human nature has continued capable of the same results; and how very modern in the high things the civilized Greeks and Romans were, while in the low things they remained savage. It will be curious and instructive for them to note how, in the earliest and strongest of the Grecian states, one of the latest dreams of government had come true. The Sparta which the laws of Lycurgus created was a state in which the people were equal sharers in the rights and duties of all; none were rich or poor, except as the others were, and that each did everything for the common weal. But this was for the common weal in war, while the new dream of a perfect state is for the common weal in work, where there are neither rich nor poor in an equality of the peaceful ownership of the land and the tools and the fruits of labor by all, for all.

Another thing which I could wish the children to observe is how the wisest and best of the ancients were in the bonds of fear to signs and portents which men laugh at now. This was because their education was, at the best, philosophical, and dealt with conduct through the discussion of moral principles under gods who had none, while the modern education is scientific, and has enlarged the world to boundlessness through vaster knowledge and sympathy with every form of life. The Roman world, though it was the whole civilized world, was a small world, and it sank at

last under the fears and dangers that always encompassed it in the unknown beyond it.

But while it lasted for well a thousand years, what a glorious world it was, and what quenchless memories it has left! It makes one a boy again to think of Romulus and Remus and their wolf foster-mother and the undying city they founded; of the patriots, who drove out the race of kings; of Cincinnatus, who left his plough to serve his country and went back to it when his country was safe; of Regulus, whom the Carthaginians sent to counsel peace to the Romans, but who counselled war, and then held himself bound in honor to return to captivity and death in Carthage; of Virginius, who slew his child rather than let her live the slave of the tyrant; of the stern Brutus, who put his sons to death for treason; of that other Brutus, who joined in slaying his adoptive father, the mighty Cæsar, "because he was ambitious" of the rule of Rome; of the mighty Cæsar himself, with his splendid soldiership and statesmanship; of the warrior and orator Antony; of the stern patriot Cato; of the great Augustus; of the good emperors who made the best of their bad business of being absolute sovereigns.

But I hope that the boys of this present day will see these captains and patriots with clearer eyes than the boys of the past, and will perceive that if their deeds had been done for the help and not for the hurt of others, they would have been far truer and grander heroes. When they read of the last days of the Roman Republic and the first days of the Roman Empire, let them remember how it was that then the spirit of Christ came into the world to bring peace on earth and

good-will to men, and to teach the patriotism which is not bound by a city or a country, by a tribe or a nation, but devotes itself to the happiness of all mankind.

W. D. HOWELLS.

PREFACE

IT appeared to me that, by way of preliminary to lessons on justice, government, political progress, etc., it would be well to create in the child-nature a sympathy for some definite historic movement. With this sympathy as a basis, one could better build up conceptions of social justice, civic evolution, and international relations. I could think of no finer material for this purpose than the admirable biographies of Plutarch; though the national history, or the history of Western Europe generally, would doubtless serve the same end. Western history, however, derives its traditions from Greece and Rome, and it seemed to me an advantage to use a work which not only furnished simple instruction in the meaning of politics, but also held rank as a literary classic. My version is intended for children aged about ten to fourteen, after which period they should be encouraged to go direct to the wise, manly, and entertaining pages of Plutarch himself. The spirit of my selection from Plutarch's ample store is aptly represented in the beautiful drawings by Mr. Walter Crane.

F. J. GOULD.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE famous author, philosopher, and educator who is known to us as Plutarch—in Greek, Πλουτάρχος—was born at Chæronea, in Bœotia, about A.D. 46. The wealth of his parents enabled him to enjoy a thorough education at Athens, particularly in philosophy. After making various journeys, he lived for a long time in Rome, where he lectured upon philosophy and associated with people of distinction, and took an important part in the education of the future Emperor Hadrian. The Emperor Trajan gave him consular rank, and Hadrian appointed him Procurator of Greece. It was about A.D. 120 that he died in his native town of Chæronea, where he was archon and priest of the Pythian Apollo.

In addition to his most famous work, the *Parallel Lives*, known familiarly as *Plutarch's Lives*, he was the author of some eighty-three writings of various kinds. The *Lives*, which were probably prepared in Rome, but finished and published late in life at Chæronea, were intended to afford studies of character, and the vividness of the mental and moral portraiture has made them continue to be a living force. Historically they have supplied many deficiencies in knowledge of the times and persons treated in his great work.

THE TWINS

THE cattle were feeding on the pasture, but the master was not there. He was going toward the river, and he was carrying a burden in his arms. When he reached the edge of the stream he paused. The water ran toward the Mediterranean Sea, rough and noisy.

“I shall not put them straight into the water,” he said to himself; “I will leave them here, and perhaps the river will rise and carry them away.”

It did. As the flood crept round the wooden trough or cradle, it rocked and then floated. Inside the trough lay two lovely and chubby boy-babes—twins—princes. Their uncle had taken their father’s land and theirs, and had bidden the herdsman drown the twins.

The flood of the river Tiber carried the cradle to a green spot, where grew a wild fig-tree. The box lay on the grass, and when the flood went down it still stayed on land. And behold (or you will behold these things if you believe the ancient tale!), a big she-wolf came and gazed at the babes with her fierce and shifty eyes, and she seemed to think they were little cubs that needed her milk, and so she fed them. As they grew older, and were able to toddle about, and were too old for wolf’s milk, they got food from a friendly wood-

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pecker. I cannot say whether the woodpecker, with his long beak and tongue, brought the boys food such as he ate himself (that would be insects and grubs), or whether he was good enough to bring berries and other fruits. After a while, however, the herdsman took charge of the boys altogether, and saved the woodpecker any further trouble.

The twins became stout, tall, and strong young fellows, who minded cattle for the chieftain Amulius. One day a loud cry was heard.

“Our cattle have been stolen!”

“Who has taken them?”

“The herdsmen of the chieftain Numitor.”

“Follow us!” shouted the tall twins; “we will get them back again!”

A furious fight took place. The twins won. The cattle were brought back in triumph. Then the brothers knew that more war would follow. They joined company with runaway slaves and other people who had no settled homes. These people looked upon the twins—Romulus and Remus—as captains. But Remus was captured, and taken to the house of Numitor.

The herdsman went to Romulus and said:

“Your brother is in danger of death. He will perhaps be killed by his grandfather Numitor.”

“I never knew Numitor was our grandfather,” replied Romulus.

“Yet it is so. Your mother was his daughter. But Amulius took the power, and wanted to get rid of you

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two boys, and bade me leave you in the cradle on the river Tiber, where you would soon have been drowned. But it happened otherwise, and I brought you up after a wolf and a woodpecker had fed you.”

“I can hardly believe you.”

“Well, here is the box you and Remus sailed in. Take it at once to Numitor. Tell him who you are. Perhaps he will spare Remus’s life.”

Romulus ran straightway to the house of the chief, burst into the room where he was questioning poor Remus, showed the cradle, and told all the strange story. And Numitor, looking at the faces of the young men, saw a likeness to his daughter, and felt sure the tale was true. The two brothers went off with a band of armed men to punish their great-uncle Amulius. Before the little army walked several standard-bearers, carrying poles, on the tops of which were fastened bunches of grass and shrubs. An attack was made on the tyrant’s house, and Amulius was slain.

The two young chiefs—for such they now were—made up their minds to build a city of their own. They ploughed with a share or blade drawn by an ox, and ploughed a furrow in a sort of circle. This circle was the line on which the walls were built. But Remus never builded. He had told Romulus that the city ought to be built in another and safer spot.

“If you build here,” he said, “the enemy will easily enter—as easily as this.”

So saying, he jumped over the ploughed line in a mocking manner.

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In anger Romulus and his friends fell upon Remus and struck him, and he died. When his passion cooled, great was the sorrow of Romulus; but it was too late; his brother was dead. The city that was being built would now be called after the brother who was left alive—Rome.

On a hill near Rome you could see huts, in which dwelt the men who had joined Romulus, because they had nowhere else to go—slaves who had escaped from their lords, men who had slain neighbors and dreaded being punished by their tribe. After a time you could notice that the folk were divided into classes. First came Romulus the chieftain; he sat on a chair of state; his coat was of purple, and a purple cloak hung over his shoulders. As he walked through the new city, the lictors marched before him, bearing bundles of rods and thongs of leather. If Romulus ordered any man to be beaten, the lictors beat the offender with the rods. If he said “Bind that man prisoner,” they bound the person with the leather thongs or straps.

A hundred older men, called the Fathers, or Patricians (*Pat-ri-sh'-ans*), sat together in a council or senate.

The young men who were strong and quick were chosen for soldiers—on foot or horseback.

Certain men would watch birds flying, and if the birds flew in a particular manner they would say:

“It is not the right time to begin a war”—or whatever the purpose might be.

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If the birds flew in what they thought a better way, the watchers would say:

“The time is good. The war may begin,” or “The house may be built,” etc.

These men were called Augurs, and were a kind of priests. Thus we see the classes—the King, the Fathers, the Soldiers, the Priests. The rest were known as the People.

A great feast was held one day. Romulus sat on a throne, dressed in purple. The Romans had asked another tribe, called Sabines (*Sab-ins*), to come to the merry-making, and the Sabines had come, with many maidens, who were ready to dance with the young men of Rome. Suddenly Romulus stood up, and folded his cloak about him.

A shout arose. The Roman young men rushed among the Sabines, and each seized hold of a maiden, and dragged her away to the city, while the Sabine men were held back from interfering. I almost think the young ladies had been told beforehand what would be done, and perhaps they had agreed to be carried away. The story goes on to tell that the Roman young men married the Sabine young women. Romulus had made this plan for the capture, for he thought it was of little use to have a city with so few women in it. For without the women, how could there be true homes?

Wars went on between Romans and Sabines for some years. At last a day came when each side had fiercely attacked the other; each had fled; each had begun the fight again. A crowd of women ran in between

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the armies. Their hair was disordered; they uttered loud cries. Some carried their babies. Some knelt on the ground, and wept over the bodies of the dead. And one woman spoke for the rest:

“O men, do you wish to hurt us women still more? We were carried away from our fathers and brothers. And now what do we see? Our fathers and brothers are in deadly quarrel with our husbands. Whoever is killed is a lost friend to us. This war robs us of our husbands and our brothers and fathers. We beseech you to stop.”

And the Romans and Sabines heard the prayer of the women and made peace, and became one people. How happy it would be if all the tribes of the earth to-day did likewise! And you girls who read this page must help in the making of peace all over the world.

But one woman was not so noble. Before the peace-making of which I have just told you, the Sabines once laid siege to Rome, and a Roman woman named Tarpeia (*Tar-pee-a*) told the enemy she would open the gate to them by night, if they would give her the bracelets of gold which they wore on their left hands. They agreed. She opened the gate, the Sabines ran in. But they did not respect the traitor. The Sabine chief threw at her his bracelet and his shield (which was on his left arm). All the others did likewise, and the false woman sank under a heavy pile of shields and bracelets, and died. And, after all, the Sabines did not win.

Romulus ruled his city for a long time. One day, when he stood among the people in an assembly, the

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sky became dark, thunder rolled, and all was tempest. Then the sky cleared to brightness. But Romulus could nowhere be seen. People said the gods had taken him away. Of course, this is only a legend.

Not long after that, when the people were gathered together at the place where the senate sat, a senator walked in, and cried:

“O people, I have seen Romulus!”

“Tell us where and how?”

He then told the following story.

He had met Romulus, dressed in bright armor, on the road near the city.

“Why, O King, did you leave the people who loved you?”

“My good friend, I dwelt on earth and built a city, and did my work, and now the gods have called me to heaven. Farewell. Go and tell the Romans that by the exercise of temperance and courage they shall become the greatest people in the world.”

WHAT THE FOREST LADY SAID

UP the path among the trees climbed the King. On each side of him, and overhead, the trees spread a thick shade. There was scarce a sound in the mountain forest except the sigh of the wind and the murmur of the brook.

The King's name was Numa. He sat down on a boulder of rock, beside a big pool of water. From one point in the pool the stream ran out and splashed down the hill.

The water trembled. Numa watched it very closely. A lady, clad in forest green, rose up from the pool, and smiled at the King, and sat on one of the rocks. This was not the first time he had met her. Often he visited this spot, and sat talking with the nymph (*nimf*) of the forest.

“Well, Numa,” she said, “did you catch the two goblins?”

“Yes; I went to the fountain you told me of, and poured wine into it. When the two goblins came to drink—”

“What did they look like, Numa?”

WHAT THE FOREST LADY SAID

“One looked like a funny little old man of the woods, with a goat’s beard, and the other looked like a woodpecker. They drank of the water, and the wine got into their heads, and made them go to sleep. Then I crept up and caught them both, one in each hand.”

“Did they get away?”

“Not till they had told me the charm against thunder, and also the magic way to see into the future, and know what is about to happen.”

“What was the charm?”

“They said I was to mix up three strange things into a sort of paste—onions, hair, and the heads of sprats; and if I ate some of it, I should be shielded from the harm of lightning and thunder, and be able to tell the future.”

“Very good, Numa; and have the Pontiffs mended the bridge over the river Tiber?”

“Yes; they have set men to work, and had new beams of wood fixed in the bridge to make it strong against the rush of the water. And the Romans are not now afraid to cross the bridge.”

“Do the people obey the Pontiffs?”

“Yes; the other day the Pontiffs said the Romans were to hold a holiday, and do no work at all; and every workman in the city stopped his hammer, saw, and other tools. And when they said it was time to sow seed in the corn-fields the people did so.”

“That is right. And do the four Fire-Maidens attend to their duty?”

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“They do. I have had them dressed in white, as you told me, and they keep the fire burning on the altar day and night, so that the Roman folk may always feel safe. And whenever the Fire-Maidens pass through the streets of the city, the officers carry the bundles of rods in front of them. And last week one of them was being carried in her chair through the city, and there passed by a man who was to be put to death for evil-doing. We spared the man’s life because he had met the Vestal maiden.”

“That is what I told you to do. And have you built the house for the twenty Heralds?”

“Yes, Lady. If we have any quarrel with any tribe, we shall not think of going to war unless the Heralds give us leave.”

“Have you made the eleven shields?”

“I have had them made by a clever smith. He copied very carefully the one which fell from the sky, and which the gods sent us. They look so alike, you could not tell which was the gift of the gods and which are copied. Well, I have chosen twelve lively young men to wear them, and to perform the dance. What did you tell me they were to do?”

“This is the manner of the dancing, Numa. You know it can only be done in one particular month—”

“Yes, the month of March, in honor of the great Mars, the lord of war.”

“That is so, Numa. The twelve young men must wear purple jackets and shiny brass belts and brass helmets. They must carry short swords, and, as they

WHAT THE FOREST LADY SAID

leap along the street, they must keep time by beating the shields with short swords.”

“The show will please the Romans.”

“Yes, Numa, and it will cause them to remember that the city is strong, not by its walls, but by its brave men, who carry shield and sword for the defence of Rome, and are ready to lay down their lives for their brethren.”

“And now, Lady, I want to ask you how to stop the people from going on one another’s lands, because they often—”

“Not to-day, Numa. I have talked with you enough this time. It is good to talk. It is also good not to talk. And you must now go and see the forest-maiden who puts her finger on her lip. You will find her under yonder fig-tree.”

So Numa walked to the fig-tree, and sat under its shady boughs. A lady sat there with her finger on her lips, to show that no one must speak in her presence. She looked into the depths of the forest, as if she was very deeply thinking. Numa did as she did. He kept still, and thought of all the advice which the nymph of the pool had given him; and of the city of Rome; and of the Pontiffs, and the Heralds, and the Fire-Maidens, and the Leapers; and of the people in the many houses of the city, and of the best rules for keeping order, so that all men might be content and do their daily work in peace.

The woodpecker pecked at the trees, but Numa did not hear. And the squirrel jumped from bough to

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bough, but the sound it made did not reach Numa. At last the Lady of Silence rose up and went away, and the King of Rome also rose, and went down the hill and home to his royal house.

Again Numa went to the pleasant nook in the forest, and again he met the Lady of the Fountain.

“You asked me last time, Numa, how to stay the people from going on each other’s lands—from trespassing. Now I will tell you.”

“I thank you, nymph of the forest.”

“On the border-line between two farms or gardens a hole must be dug. In the hole let the folk pour the blood of an animal that has been slain for the gods. Sprinkle the hole with wine, and honey, and the seeds of plants, and sweet-smelling powders. Then let a big stone be dressed with ribbons and flowers. The stone must be placed in the hole so that it stands upright above the soil. Other stones are to be set at other points in the boundary.”

“We will obey your command, Lady.”

“And if, O Numa, any man tries to deceive his neighbor, and pulls up the landmark out of the earth, and moves it to another spot, so as to make his own plot of land larger, then a curse shall be uttered upon the man and upon his cattle.”

“Yes, he shall be cursed.”

“And whoso finds the man may slay him, and to kill the false person shall not be counted murder.”

“It is dreadful, but it shall be done.”

WHAT THE FOREST LADY SAID

“And every year, in the month of February, a feast shall be held. The neighbors on each side of the boundary shall come together, with their wives, their children, and their slaves, and shall lay flowers on the stones, and offer cakes to the god Terminus. It shall be a good thing for the folk to meet in peace, and pay respect to the landmarks, and bear in mind that no man ought to take his neighbor’s property.”

“There is another matter I wish to ask about. The Romans and the Sabines dwell in the same city, but are not always friends.”

“Do this, Numa. Tell all the shoemakers to live in the same part of the town, whether they are Romans or Sabines. They will have a company or society of their own, and meet in a hall to make rules for the trade of the shoemakers. And likewise shall the musicians do, and the tanners, the goldsmiths, the masons, the dyers, the brass-workers, the potters, and all the others.”

“I will do so. Besides this, Lady, I want to make a better reckoning of the days and months.”

“How many months are there in a year, Numa?”

“Ten.”

“Yes, but now you must have twelve. Up till now you began the year with March—the month of the Leapers; and the tenth month, or December, was the last.”

“That is so.”

“Well, Numa, tell the Romans to reckon this

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way: First month, January; second, February; third, March; fourth, April; fifth, May; sixth, June; then the seventh and eighth; ninth, September; tenth, October; eleventh, November; and last, December.”

“All this I will explain to the people of Rome.”

“And now, Numa, go again to the Lady of Silence, and think of what I have told you. Farewell.”

What I have related to you is only a myth or legend. Perhaps there never was such a man as King Numa, although tradition calls him the second King of Rome, 715–672 B.C., and certainly there never was such a nymph as Egeria, the Lady of the Fountain in the Forest. But for many, many years the Romans believed that Numa was a King of Rome in very early times, and that he had learned wisdom from a nymph by the fountain. It does, indeed, need wisdom to govern cities and countries, for men have strong wills and are hard to rule. You know that persons who study how to rule are called politicians, and the rulers are called statesmen. The Romans were a great and wise people in many ways, and we may learn lessons from the history of their city and republic. Statesmen learn their business by reading history, and by listening to the words of other sage men, and by altering old laws and customs that are not now useful, and making new ones. We should respect the names of good statesmen, such as Pericles, the Greek; Cæsar, the Roman; William the Silent, the Dutchman; Oliver Cromwell, the Englishman; George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

WHY THE ROMANS BORE PAIN

A ROMAN slave went into a dark room in search of something that was needed by his master. The room was a place for lumber. Pieces of old furniture stood here and there.

The slave was about to leave the chamber when he heard soft footsteps and voices that whispered. A group of young men, whom he could only just see in the dim light, entered the room, looking behind them as if to make sure that no eye saw them.

“No one will see us here,” said one of the young men.

The slave hid himself at the back of a large chest. He held his breath as he peeped at the men and watched their deeds.

“Have you brought the blood?” asked one voice. “It is here in a cup,” replied another.

“Are we all here?”

“We are—Titus, the son of Brutus; Tiberius, his brother; and the rest.”

“We are all ready to fight for Tarquin?”

“Yes, yes!”

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“He is our rightful king, and we want him back in Rome.”

“Yes.”

“The hard-hearted consul, Brutus, must be slain!”

“He must.”

“Even though he is father to our friends here— Titus and Tiberius?”

“Yes.”

“We will loyally stand by one another in this noble work for the sake of Rome.”

“We will.”

“Shall we all drink?”

“Yes.”

The slave behind the chest shook with horror. He saw the young men, one by one, sip the red liquor in the cup. By this sign they swore to be true to one another in the plot against the life of Brutus. This was about 510 B.C.

“We will write letters to Tarquin the King,” said one, as he wiped his lips. “We will tell him that we mean to kill Brutus and the other consul, and that soon we shall expect to see him in the city to rule over us once more as king.”

The letter was written on a scrap of sheepskin, and folded up.

WHY THE ROMANS BORE PAIN

“You, sir,” said one of the plotters to a person at his side, “are a friend of Tarquin. You will take him this letter.”

“I will do so. I am staying at the house of the Aquilii, and in a few hours I shall leave the city, and take this joyful message to my lord.”

“Let us go.”

They all went quietly away, like thieves escaping from a back door.

The slave came from his hiding-place, and said to himself:

“What shall I do? The consuls are in danger. How dare I tell the father, Brutus, that his sons think to kill him? It is dreadful. But if I do nothing our consuls will die, and the city will fall into the hands of the bad King Tarquin, whose conduct has caused the Romans to hate him.”

He made up his mind to go to Valerius, a very just and honest citizen, and to him he told all that he had heard and seen.

“Stay here in this room,” said Valerius, “till I send for you. I shall run to the house of the Aquilii, and see if the letter is there.”

To his wife he said: “Watch the door of the room. This slave must not stir from here till I return.”

He ran off with a crowd of his friends and slaves, all carrying weapons. They came to the house of the Aquilii, forced their way in, searched the place from top to bottom, and found the letter. Just then a

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noise was heard at the gate of the house. A number of the plotters had taken the alarm, and they had hurried to seize the terrible letter of death. It was too late. They were captured, and taken off to the meeting-place of the senate—an open space surrounded by pillars. It was called the "Forum." The two consuls were fetched from their homes. They took their seats in the forum. Near them stood the lictors, bearing each a bundle of rods, with an axe tied to the bundle. Many senators sat in the hall also, and a crowd of Romans gathered round. The sky overhead was calm and blue, but the hearts of the plotters were moved with fear.

The slave was brought forward. He told his tale. The letter was produced, and was read out aloud. It was clear that these young men were traitors to the city of Rome, and false to its liberty. The worst plotters were Titus and Tiberius, the sons of the consul who sat in the forum.

For a short time there was a deep silence. The consul who sat next to Brutus had tears in his eyes—to think that his friend Brutus should have such sons! What would Brutus do?

"He had better send his sons to a far country," whispered a man in the crowd; and those who stood about murmured: "Yes; that would be better than sending his own children to death."

Then Brutus looked sternly at his sons, and spoke:

"You, Titus, and you, Tiberius, why do you not make your defence against the charge?"

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No answer.

“You, Titus, and you, Tiberius, why do you not make your defence against the charge?”

No answer.

“You, Titus, and you, Tiberius, why do you not make your defence against the charge?”

To this third question, no answer.

Brutus turned to the officers.

“Lictors,” he said, “the rest of the business is left to you.”

Then the lictors laid hold of the youths, and stripped off their coats, and tied their hands behind them, and placed them on the ground, and flogged them with the rods.

Brutus said nothing. He looked neither to the right hand nor to the left.

At last the lictors took their axes, and cut off the heads of the sons of Brutus.

Then the father who had lost his sons rose up amid a great silence of the people, and went to his house.

“Oh,” cried some, “how cruel a man is Brutus, to condemn his own sons to death!”

“Nay,” said others, “he loved them all the time as his sons; but he is Consul of Rome, and it was his duty to defend Rome against her enemies.”

The rest of the traitors were put to death, and

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the freedom of the city was given to the slave. Henceforward he was a Roman citizen, and not a bondsman. He was the first slave in Rome to be enfranchised, or made free. The suffrage also was allowed to him; that is, he was able to vote at meetings, the same as other Romans.

Who can tell the pain that Brutus bore when he saw his own sons die? Why did he bear this pain? Because he loved justice more than he loved his own flesh and blood.

I will tell you of another Roman who lived at the same time, and who bore pain for the sake of the city of Rome, though it was pain of another kind.

Tarquin, the king, who is believed to have reigned from 534–510 B.C., had a friend named Porsenna, who was king of the Etruscan people. Porsenna laid siege to the city of Rome. The Romans were in deep distress. Food ran short, and the foes without the gates were strong.

One day King Porsenna sat in his camp with his nobles about him. They were talking of the best manner in which to attack the city. From the camp they could see the river Tiber, and the wooden bridge over the yellow stream, and the high walls of Rome, and the roof of the temple, and the hill of the Capitol.

A shout was heard. One of the king's officers had been struck down by a stranger with a sword. A scuffle took place. The stranger was seized, and brought before the king. The sword had been snatched from his hand.

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A small bronze altar stood near the king. On the top of the altar flickered a fire, in which the king was going to burn a sacrifice to the gods of the Etruscan people.

“Who are you?” asked the king of the stranger.

“I am a Roman.”

“What is your name?”

“Mutius.”

“Why did you kill my officer?”

“I thought it was you, sir. I meant to kill you.”

As he spoke Mutius held out his right hand and thrust it into the flames of the fire on the altar. The flesh of his hand was scorched, but he did not flinch. He gazed steadily into the face of the king.

“Take your hand away from the fire!” cried the king. “Brave man, here is your sword.”

Mutius took the sword in his left hand, and his right hand dropped at his side. He would never again have the proper use of his right hand.

“King,” he said, “you see we Romans do not fear pain when we do service to our city. For the sake of Rome we are ready to sacrifice our hands, our hearts, our lives. I am not the only one who is willing to suffer. There are in the city three hundred young men who have sworn to slay you if I did not succeed. At any moment any of them may fall upon you and rob the Etruscans of their king.”

The king admired the valor of Mutius and the

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spirit of the Roman people. He let him go free, and made peace with the city of Rome, and retired to his own country.

Brutus, for the sake of justice and of the city of Rome, bore pain in his heart and soul. Mutius, for the sake of Rome, bore pain in his body. Neither of them thought of his own comfort. Each of them lived for others.