

what he knew, until either a suitable opportunity occurred or circumstances compelled him. Now the truth could no longer be concealed, so in his alarm he told Romulus the whole story; Numitor, too, when he had Remus in custody and was told that the brothers were twins, was set thinking about his grandsons; the young men's age and character, so different from the lowly born, confirmed his suspicions; and further inquiries led him to the same conclusion, until he was on the point of acknowledging Remus. The net was closing in, and Romulus acted. He was not strong enough for open hostilities, so he instructed a number of the herdsmen to meet at the king's house by different routes at a preordained time; this was done, and with the help of Remus, at the head of another body of men, the king was surprised and killed. Before the first blows were struck, Numitor gave it out that an enemy had broken into the town and attacked the palace; he then drew off all the men of military age to garrison the inner fortress, and, as soon as he saw Romulus and Remus, their purpose accomplished, coming to congratulate him, he summoned a meeting of the people and laid the facts before it: Amulius's crime against himself, the birth of his grandsons, and the circumstances attending it, how they were brought up and ultimately recognized, and, finally, the murder of the king for which he himself assumed responsibility. The two brothers marched through the crowd at the head of their men and saluted their grandfather as king, and by a shout of unanimous consent his royal title was confirmed.

Romulus and Remus, after the control of Alba had passed to Numitor in the way I have described, were suddenly seized by an urge to found a new settlement on the spot where they had been left to drown as infants and had been subsequently brought up. There was, in point of fact, already an excess of population at Alba, what with the Albans themselves, the Latins, and the addition of the herdsmen: enough, indeed, to justify the hope that Alba and Lavinium would one day be small places compared with the proposed new settlement. Unhappily the brothers' plans for the future were marred by the same source which had divided their grandfather and Amulius — jealousy and ambition. A disgraceful quarrel arose from a matter in itself trivial. As the brothers were twins and all question of seniority

was thereby precluded, they determined to ask the tutelary gods of the countryside to declare by augury which of them should govern the new town once it was founded, and give his name to it. For this purpose Romulus took the Palatine hill and Remus the Aventine as their respective stations from which to observe the auspices. Remus, the story goes, was the first to receive a sign — six vultures; and no sooner was this made known to the people than double the number of birds appeared to Romulus. The followers of each promptly saluted their master as king, one side basing its claim upon priority, the other upon number. Angry words ensued, followed all too soon by blows, and in the course of the affray Remus was killed. There is another story, a commoner one, according to which Remus, by way of jeering at his brother, jumped over the half-built walls of the new settlement, whereupon Romulus killed him in a fit of rage, adding the threat, 'So perish whoever else shall overleap my battlements.'

This, then, was how Romulus obtained the sole power. The newly built city was called by its founder's name.

Romulus's first act was to fortify the Palatine, the scene of his own upbringing. He offered sacrifice to the gods, using the Alban forms except in the case of Hercules, where he followed the Greek ritual as instituted by Evander. According to the old tale, Hercules after killing Geryon came into these parts driving his oxen. The oxen were exceedingly beautiful, and close to the Tiber, at the spot where he had swum across with them, he came upon a grassy meadow; here, weary with walking, he lay down to rest and allowed the beasts to refresh themselves with the rich pasture. Being drowsy with food and drink he fell asleep, and, while he slept, a shepherd of that region, a fierce giant named Cacus, saw the oxen and was instantly taken by their beauty. Purposing to steal them, he was aware that, if he drove them in the ordinary way into his cave, their tracks could not fail to guide their master thither as soon as he began his search; so choosing the finest from the herd he dragged them backwards by their tails and hid them in his cavern. Hercules awoke at dawn, and casting his eye over the herd noticed that some of the animals were missing. He went at once to the nearest cave on the chance that there were tracks leading into it, but found that they all led outwards, apparently to

nowhere. It was very odd; so full of vague misgivings he started driving the remainder of his herd away from this eerie spot. Some of the beasts, naturally enough, missed their companions and began to low, and there came an answering low from the cave. Hercules turned. He walked towards the cave, and Cacus, when he saw him coming, tried to keep him off. But all in vain; Hercules struck him with his club, and the robber, vainly calling upon his friends for help, fell dead.

In those days Evander held sway over that part of the country. He was an exile from the Peloponnese and his position depended less upon sovereign power than upon personal influence; he was revered for his invention of letters – a strange and wonderful thing to the rude uncultivated men amongst whom he dwelt – and, still more, on account of his mother Carmenta, who was supposed to be divine and before the coming of the Sibyl into Italy had been revered by the people of those parts as a prophetess.

On the occasion of which I am writing Evander could not but observe the shepherds who were excitedly mobbing the unknown killer. He joined them, and upon being informed of the crime and its cause, directed his gaze upon the stranger. Seeing him to be of more than human stature and of a preternatural dignity of bearing, he asked him who he was, and, hearing his name and parentage and country, cried: 'Hercules, son of Jupiter, I bid you welcome. You are the subject of my mother's prophecy; for she, a true prophet, declared that you would increase the number of the Gods, and that here an altar would be dedicated to you, and the nation destined to be the mightiest in the world would one day name it Greatest of Altars and serve it with your own proper rites.'

Hercules gave him his hand and replied that he accepted the inspired words and would himself assist the course of destiny by building and consecrating an altar. A splendid beast was chosen from the herd, and on the new altar sacrifice, for the first time, was offered to Hercules; the rite itself, and the subsequent feast, being administered by members of the two most distinguished local families, the Potitii and Pinarii.

It so happened that the Pinarii were late for the feast. The Potitii

were there in time, and were served in consequence with the entrails of the victim; the Pinarii came in only for the remainder. From this circumstance the custom became established that no member of the Pinarian family, throughout its history, was ever served with his portion of entrails at a sacrifice to Hercules. The Potitii were taught by Evander, and furnished the priests of this cult for many generations, until the solemn duty they had so long performed was delegated to public slaves and the family became extinct. This was the only foreign religious rite adopted by Romulus; by so doing he showed, even then, his respect for that immortality which is the prize of valour. His own destiny was already leading him to the same reward.

Having performed with proper ceremony his religious duties, he summoned his subjects and gave them laws, without which the creation of a unified body politic would not have been possible. In his view the rabble over whom he ruled could be induced to respect the law only if he himself adopted certain visible signs of power; he proceeded, therefore, to increase the dignity and impressiveness of his position by various devices, of which the most important was the creation of the twelve lictors to attend his person. Some have fancied that he made the lictors twelve in number because the vultures, in the augury, had been twelve; personally, however, I incline to follow the opinion which finds for this an Etruscan origin. We know that the State Chair – the 'curule' chair – and the purple-bordered toga came to us from Etruria; and it is probable that the idea of attendants, as well as, in this case, of their number, came across the border from Etruria too. The number twelve was due to the fact that the twelve Etruscan communities united to elect a king, and each contributed one lictor.

Meanwhile Rome was growing. More and more ground was coming within the circuit of its walls. Indeed, the rapid expansion of the enclosed area was out of proportion to the actual population, and evidently indicated an eye to the future. In antiquity the founder of a new settlement, in order to increase its population, would as a matter of course shark up a lot of homeless and destitute folk and pretend that they were 'born of earth' to be his progeny; Romulus now followed a similar course: to help fill his big new town, he threw