

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND BOOK,

BY THE ORIGINAL TRANSLATOR.

IN this second book of his Commonwealth, Cicero gives us a spirited and eloquent review of the history and successive developments of the Roman constitution. He bestows the warmest praises on its early kings, points out the great advantages which had resulted from its primitive monarchical system, and explains how that system had been gradually broken up. In order to prove the importance of reviving it, he gives a glowing picture of the evils and disasters that had befallen the Roman State in consequence of that overcharge of democratic folly and violence which had gradually gained an alarming preponderance, and describes, with a kind of prophetic sagacity, the fruit of his political experience, the subsequent revolutions of the Roman State, which such a state of things would necessarily bring about.

BOOK II.

I. [WHEN, therefore, he observed all his friends kindled with the desire of hearing him, Scipio thus opened the discussion. I will commence, said Scipio, with a sentiment of old Cato, whom, as you know, I singularly loved and exceedingly admired, and to whom, in compliance with the judgment of both my parents, and also by my own desire, I was entirely devoted during my youth; of whose discourse, indeed, I could never have enough, so much experience did he possess as a statesman respecting the republic which he had so long governed, both in peace and war, with so much success. There was also an admirable propriety in his style of conversation, in which wit was tempered with gravity; a wonderful aptitude for acquiring, and at the same time communicating, information; and his life was in perfect correspondence and unison with his language. He used to say that the government of Rome was superior to that of other states for this reason, because in nearly all of them there had been single individuals, each of whom had regulated their common-

wealth according to their own laws and their own ordinances. So Minos had done in Crete, and Lycurgus in Sparta; and in Athens, which experienced so many revolutions, first Theseus, then Draco, then Solon, then Clisthenes, afterward many others; and, lastly, when it was almost lifeless and quite prostrate, that great and wise man, Demetrius Phalereus, supported it. But our Roman constitution, on the contrary, did not spring from the genius of one individual, but from that of many; and it was established, not in the lifetime of one man, but in the course of several ages and centuries. For, added he, there never yet existed any genius so vast and comprehensive as to allow nothing at any time to escape its attention; and all the geniuses in the world united in a single mind could never, within the limits of a single life, exert a foresight sufficiently extensive to embrace and harmonize all, without the aid of experience and practice.

Thus, according to Cato's usual habit, I now ascend in my discourse to the "origin of the people," for I like to adopt the expression of Cato. I shall also more easily execute my proposed task if I thus exhibit to you our political constitution in its infancy, progress, and maturity, now so firm and fully established, than if, after the example of Socrates in the books of Plato, I were to delineate a mere imaginary republic.

II. When all had signified their approbation, Scipio resumed: What commencement of a political constitution can we conceive more brilliant, or more universally known, than the foundation of Rome by the hand of Romulus? And he was the son of Mars: for we may grant this much to the common report existing among men, especially as it is not merely ancient, but one also which has been wisely maintained by our ancestors, in order that those who have done great service to communities may enjoy the reputation of having received from the Gods, not only their genius, but their very birth.

It is related, then, that soon after the birth of Romulus and his brother Remus, Amulius, King of Alba, fearing that they might one day undermine his authority, ordered that they should be exposed on the banks of the Tiber; *and that in this situation the infant Romulus was suckled*

by a wild beast; that he was afterward educated by the shepherds, and brought up in the rough way of living and labors of the countrymen; and that he acquired, when he grew up, such superiority over the rest by the vigor of his body and the courage of his soul, that all the people who at that time inhabited the plains in the midst of which Rome now stands, tranquilly and willingly submitted to his government. And when he had made himself the chief of those bands, to come from fables to facts, he took Alba Longa, a powerful and strong city at that time, and slew its king, Amulius.

III. Having acquired this glory, he conceived the design (as they tell us) of founding a new city and establishing a new state. As respected the site of his new city, a point which requires the greatest foresight in him who would lay the foundation of a durable commonwealth, he chose the most convenient possible position. For he did not advance too near the sea, which he might easily have done with the forces under his command, either by entering the territory of the Rutuli and Aborigines, or by founding his citadel at the mouth of the Tiber, where many years after Ancus Martius established a colony. But Romulus, with admirable genius and foresight, observed and perceived that sites very near the sea are not the most favorable positions for cities which would attain a durable prosperity and dominion. And this, first, because maritime cities are always exposed, not only to many attacks, but to perils they cannot provide against. For the continued land gives notice, by many indications, not only of any regular approaches, but also of any sudden surprises of an enemy, and announces them beforehand by the mere sound. There is no adversary who, on an inland territory, can arrive so swiftly as to prevent our knowing not only his existence, but his character too, and where he comes from. But a maritime and naval enemy can fall upon a town on the sea-coast before any one suspects that he is about to come; and when he does come, nothing exterior indicates who he is, or whence he comes, or what he wishes; nor can it even be determined and distinguished on all occasions whether he is a friend or a foe.

IV. But maritime cities are likewise naturally exposed

to corrupt influences, and revolutions of manners. Their civilization is more or less adulterated by new languages and customs, and they import not only foreign merchandise, but foreign fashions, to such a degree that nothing can continue unalloyed in the national institutions. Those who inhabit these maritime towns do not remain in their native place, but are urged afar from their homes by winged hope and speculation. And even when they do not desert their country in person, still their minds are always expatiating and voyaging round the world.

Nor, indeed, was there any cause which more deeply undermined Corinth and Carthage, and at last overthrew them both, than this wandering and dispersion of their citizens, whom the passion of commerce and navigation had induced to abandon the cultivation of their lands and their attention to military pursuits.

The proximity of the sea likewise administers to maritime cities a multitude of pernicious incentives to luxury, which are either acquired by victory or imported by commerce; and the very agreeableness of their position nourishes many expensive and deceitful gratifications of the passions. And what I have spoken of Corinth may be applied, for aught I know, without incorrectness to the whole of Greece. For the Peloponnesus itself is almost wholly on the sea-coast; nor, besides the Phliasiens, are there any whose lands do not touch the sea; and beyond the Peloponnesus, the Ænians, the Dorians, and the Dolopes are the only inland people. Why should I speak of the Grecian islands, which, girded by the waves, seem all afloat, as it were, together with the institutions and manners of their cities? And these things, I have before noticed, do not respect ancient Greece only; for which of all those colonies which have been led from Greece into Asia, Thracia, Italy, Sicily, and Africa, with the single exception of Magnesia, is there that is not washed by the sea? Thus it seems as if a sort of Grecian coast had been annexed to territories of the barbarians. For among the barbarians themselves none were heretofore a maritime people, if we except the Carthaginians and Etruscans; one for the sake of commerce, the other of pillage. And this is one evident reason of the calamities and revolutions of Greece,

because she became infected with the vices which belong to maritime cities, which I just now briefly enumerated. But yet, notwithstanding these vices, they have one great advantage, and one which is of universal application, namely, that there is a great facility for new inhabitants flocking to them. And, again, that the inhabitants are enabled to export and send abroad the produce of their native lands to any nation they please, which offers them a market for their goods.

V. By what divine wisdom, then, could Romulus embrace all the benefits that could belong to maritime cities, and at the same time avoid the dangers to which they are exposed, except, as he did, by building his city on the bank of an inexhaustible river, whose equal current discharges itself into the sea by a vast mouth, so that the city could receive all it wanted from the sea, and discharge its superabundant commodities by the same channel? And in the same river a communication is found by which it not only receives from the sea all the productions necessary to the conveniences and elegances of life, but those also which are brought from the inland districts. So that Romulus seems to me to have divined and anticipated that this city would one day become the centre and abode of a powerful and opulent empire; for there is no other part of Italy in which a city could be situated so as to be able to maintain so wide a dominion with so much ease.

VI. As to the natural fortifications of Rome, who is so negligent and unobservant as not to have them depicted and deeply stamped on his memory? Such is the plan and direction of the walls, which, by the prudence of Romulus and his royal successors, are bounded on all sides by steep and rugged hills; and the only aperture between the Esquiline and Quirinal mountains is enclosed by a formidable rampart, and surrounded by an immense fosse. And as for our fortified citadel, it is so secured by a precipitous barrier and enclosure of rocks, that, even in that horrible attack and invasion of the Gauls, it remained impregnable and inviolable. Moreover, the site which he selected had also an abundance of fountains, and was healthy, though it was in the midst of a pestilential region; *for there are hills which at once create a current*

of fresh air, and fling an agreeable shade over the valleys.

VII. These things he effected with wonderful rapidity, and thus established the city, which, from his own name Romulus, he determined to call Rome. And in order to strengthen his new city, he conceived a design, singular enough, and even a little rude, yet worthy of a great man, and of a genius which discerned far away in futurity the means of strengthening his power and his people. The young Sabine females of honorable birth who had come to Rome, attracted by the public games and spectacles which Romulus then, for the first time, established as annual games in the circus, were suddenly carried off at the feast of Consus¹ by his orders, and were given in marriage to the men of the noblest families in Rome. And when, on this account, the Sabines had declared war against Rome, the issue of the battle being doubtful and undecided, Romulus made an alliance with Tatius, King of the Sabines, at the intercession of the matrons themselves who had been carried off. By this compact he admitted the Sabines into the city, gave them a participation in the religious ceremonies, and divided his power with their king.

VIII. But after the death of Tatius, the entire government was again vested in the hands of Romulus, although, besides making Tatius his own partner, he had also elected some of the chiefs of the Sabines into the royal council, who on account of their affectionate regard for the people were called *patres*, or fathers. He also divided the people into three tribes, called after the name of Tatius, and his own name, and that of Locumo, who had fallen as his ally in the Sabine war; and also into thirty curiæ, designated by the names of those Sabine virgins, who, after being carried off at the festivals, generously offered themselves as the mediators of peace and coalition.

But though these orders were established in the life of Tatius, yet, after his death, Romulus reigned with still greater power by the counsel and authority of the senate.

IX. In this respect he approved and adopted the principle which Lycurgus but little before had applied to the government of Lacedæmon; namely, that the monarchical

¹ A name of Neptune.

authority and the royal power operate best in the government of states when to this supreme authority is joined the influence of the noblest of the citizens.

Therefore, thus supported, and, as it were, propped up by this council or senate, Romulus conducted many wars with the neighboring nations in a most successful manner; and while he refused to take any portion of the booty to his own palace, he did not cease to enrich the citizens. He also cherished the greatest respect for that institution of hierarchical and ecclesiastical ordinances which we still retain to the great benefit of the Commonwealth; for in the very commencement of his government he founded the city with religious rites, and in the institution of all public establishments he was equally careful in attending to these sacred ceremonials, and associated with himself on these occasions priests that were selected from each of the tribes. He also enacted that the nobles should act as patrons and protectors to the inferior citizens, their natural clients and dependants, in their respective districts, a measure the utility of which I shall afterward notice.—The judicial punishments were mostly fines of sheep and oxen; for the property of the people at that time consisted in their fields and cattle, and this circumstance has given rise to the expressions which still designate real and personal wealth. Thus the people were kept in order rather by mulctations than by bodily inflictions.

X. After Romulus had thus reigned thirty-seven years, and established these two great supports of government, the hierarchy and the senate, having disappeared in a sudden eclipse of the sun, he was thought worthy of being added to the number of the Gods—an honor which no mortal man ever was able to attain to but by a glorious pre-eminence of virtue. And this circumstance was the more to be admired in the case of Romulus because most of the great men that have been deified were so exalted to celestial dignities by the people, in periods very little enlightened, when fiction was easy and ignorance went hand-in-hand with credulity. But with respect to Romulus, we know that he lived less than six centuries ago, at a time when science and literature were already advanced, and had got rid of many of the ancient errors that had

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