

Rome EXTRA Readings – Part Two

Please Return to:
Mrs. Mary Mueller
4930 – 138th Circle
Apple Valley, MN 55124

Augustus

I

The first of the long line of Roman emperors was Octavius, called in history Augustus. He was the grandnephew of Julius Cæsar. Although he was scarcely twenty years old when Cæsar died, he was very ambitious. He often said that he should one day be at the head of the Roman Empire.

“I shall rule Rome like Cæsar,” he would say to his companions. “You may laugh at me now, but the time will come when I shall be master of the Romans.”

Shortly after Cæsar’s death Octavius began to take an active part in political affairs. At this time Mark Antony was in control of Rome and was managing everything to suit himself. He had been an intimate friend of Cæsar and commanded one of his armies. He obtained a great deal of power, but he was not liked very much either by the nobles or the plebeians. He was a bad ruler, and nobody trusted him.

Once Antony tried to prevent Octavius from being elected a tribune of the people. “I will be a tribune in spite of you,” Octavius said, and he set to work with all his energy to get the office. There was a severe struggle on election day, but the boy was successful.

After this Octavius hated Antony and planned in secret to bring about his downfall. And he succeeded in all he attempted to do. From a tribune he advanced steadily, step by step, to more important offices. At last he obtained command of an army and marched his soldiers to northern Italy, where a war was going on. While in this region he met Antony with his army. The two began to quarrel and at last came to blows. Then the army of Octavius fought the army of Antony, and the northern plains were reddened with the blood of the soldiers.

When the fighting had gone on for some time, Octavius sent to Antony and asked him to stop it. He pretended that he was very sorry he had begun to fight with Antony and asked for his friendship.

“Let us be friends and work together,” he said to Antony. “By joining our armies we shall be able to do some good.”

The fighting was then stopped, and the two generals had a meeting. They agreed to unite their armies, and to invite another Roman general, named Lepidus, who had a large army, to join them. Lepidus accepted the invitation and came to have a talk with Antony and Octavius. They agreed to a plan by which they themselves were to rule Rome together. This rule, or government, was called a triumvirate, and Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus were called triumvirs, a word which means three men.

II

After making all their arrangements, Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus started for Rome with their armies and took possession of the city. Then they began to kill those that they thought were their enemies. More than two thousand Romans were slain. They would have killed Brutus only that he was then in Greece, where he had gone after Cæsar’s death to raise an army to fight Antony and his friends. Antony and Octavius now went with an army to Greece to fight Brutus. Both armies met at Philippi, in Macedonia, and then there was a battle in which the army of Brutus was defeated. After the battle Brutus requested one of his slaves to kill him. The slave refused, but when Brutus still pressed him to do it, he held out his sword and Brutus killed himself by falling upon it.

It is told that some time before the battle of Philippi, as Brutus was sitting one night in his tent, a vision or spectre appeared to him and said, “I am thy evil genius, Brutus; we shall meet again at Philippi.” It is also said that the spectre again appeared to Brutus on the night before the battle of Philippi and told him that his death was at hand.

There was no one now to interfere with Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus, and they managed everything in Rome as they liked. They pretended all the time to have great respect for the Senate and the officers of government who had been elected by the people.

After a short time Antony went to some of the Eastern countries that were a part of the Roman Empire, and Lepidus went to Africa. Octavius was left in Rome to attend to its affairs. He then began to plan to get rid of Antony and Lepidus, so that he might rule Rome himself. With this object he raised a great army and determined to make war on his rivals.

Sextus Pompey, a son of Pompey the Great, was at this time in control of the island of Sicily. He was always making trouble for Octavius, and he was aided by Lepidus, who had come from Africa to Sicily with his army. One day Octavius sailed over the Mediterranean Sea to Sicily, with thousands of soldiers, destroyed the army of Sextus, and induced the army of Lepidus to leave him. Lepidus was then taken prisoner.

“Now to put an end to the power of Antony!” said Octavius to himself, when he returned to Rome from Sicily. So he went to the Senate and accused Antony of treason in Asia and Africa and asked that war be declared against him. The Senate declared war, and Octavius began to make great preparations for it.

Antony was in Egypt when he heard of the declaration of war. He laughed scornfully at the idea of Octavius being able to beat him. Then he gathered an army of more than a hundred thousand men and a fleet of several hundred warships, and set out to meet Octavius. He had with him Cleopatra, the beautiful queen of Egypt, whom he had married, and she had a fleet of her own, numbering sixty ships.

Octavius had about as many soldiers and ships as Antony. The two fleets met near a place called Actium, on the coast of Greece, and fought a battle.

For several hours the fight went on bravely, but neither side gained any great advantage. Suddenly Cleopatra sailed away with her fleet, and Antony quickly followed her with a few ships. Thus he deserted his men while they were fighting.

The sailors and soldiers of the deserted fleet kept on fighting for a short time and then surrendered to Octavius. A few days later a part of Antony's army, which was encamped on the shore near Actium, also surrendered.

Antony went back to Egypt with Cleopatra. His friends and supporters then left him, and his power was gone. Soon after, he stabbed himself, and so died. It is said that Cleopatra died from the bite of a poisonous serpent called an asp, which she placed on her arm on purpose to kill herself.

III

Octavius continued to fight in different parts of the Empire until he defeated every one who dared to oppose him. Then he went back to Rome with a great deal of glory and riches and let it be known at once that he intended to be the master of the government. Although he pretended to protect the rights of the people, he made himself consul and also assumed other high offices which greatly added to his power. Thousands of soldiers were at his call, and finally he became very much like a king.

The Senate asked him if he would wish to be appointed dictator for life, but he thought it wise to refuse this office. The Senate then gave him the name of Augustus, which meant that he was worthy of respect. The word augustus in the Latin language means sacred. He called himself emperor, and, as Emperor Cæsar Augustus, he ruled the Romans all the rest of his life, a period of about twenty-seven years. And when Augustus became emperor the Republic of Rome was no longer in existence.

What were known as the Prætorian Guards were organized by Augustus to protect himself and uphold his authority as emperor. These guards were about ten thousand in number, and they were composed of the most trusty soldiers of the Empire. Each soldier had high rank and large pay, and had to serve for many years. Whenever Augustus appeared in public he was attended by some of the Prætorian guards, and they looked very imposing with their handsome uniforms and glittering swords and spears.

Augustus made many good changes in the government. He very much improved the condition of the plebeians. His principal ministers were two able men named Agrippa and Mæcenas, who gave him very valuable assistance.

Whenever these wise men saw that the Romans were getting uneasy and beginning to grumble, they would advise the emperor to distribute corn or money to the poor, or to give the people grand exhibitions to amuse them. Augustus would follow the advice, and by so doing made himself very popular.

During his long reign Augustus had many splendid palaces, temples, and other buildings erected in Rome, and they made the city very beautiful. Augustus also founded cities in various parts of the empire. He encouraged literature and art and was himself an author. In his time the famous Roman

poets, Horace, Vergil, Varius, and Ovid lived, and also the great historian Livy, who wrote the history of Rome from the earliest period down to his own time. Vergil was the author of a celebrated poem called the *Æneid*, which tells of the wanderings and adventures of the Trojan hero *Æneas* mentioned on page 9 of this book.

It was in the reign of Augustus that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, a town of Palestine, or Judea, in Southwest Asia. Judea was then part of the Roman Empire.

Nero

I

On the death of Augustus in the year 14 A.D. his stepson Tiberius became emperor. He was a cruel tyrant. He put to death a great many people only because he thought they were his enemies. A Roman emperor could put to death any one he pleased. If he did not like a person, he would charge him with some crime and order his soldiers to kill him. Tiberius had many people killed in this way, but he was himself killed by the commander or general of the Prætorian Guard.

The next two emperors were Caligula and Claudius. They also were tyrants and put many people to death without just cause. It is said that Caligula once wished that all the Roman people together had but one head so that he might cut it off with one blow.

But the next emperor was a still greater tyrant. His name was Nero. He became emperor in the year 54 A.D. He was the son of a wicked woman named Agrippina. This woman married the Emperor Claudius and got him to appoint her son, Nero, his successor, instead of his own little son, Britannicus. Then she killed Claudius by poison, and Nero became emperor.

Nero was a tall, strong, good-looking, bright youth. He was fond of games, and could play well on several musical instruments. When he first became emperor he seemed to be affectionate and kind-hearted, and he did a number of good things. Once, when he was asked to sign a warrant for the execution of a man condemned to death, he exclaimed:

"I wish I had never learned to write, for then I shouldn't have to sign away men's lives!"

Then all the people around him cried:

"What a noble young man our emperor is! What a good heart he has!"

But in a very short time it was found that Nero was not at all kind or merciful, but that he was a cruel and wicked man.

His mother Agrippina expected that when her son was emperor she herself would be the real mistress and would rule the Roman Empire as she pleased. Nero was only a boy, she thought, and he would not want to take upon himself the cares and burdens of government.

And for a while Agrippina did rule Rome. She had a woman she hated put to death and she punished several other persons who had offended her. She made some of the richest Romans pay her large sums of money. But Nero soon put an end to his mother's power. One day he said to her:

"I, not you, am the ruler of the Empire. You have no right to take any power upon yourself and you must not do so again. Whenever you want anything done you must ask me to do it for you."

"Ask you?" cried Agrippina, in a rage. "How dare you talk this way to me who made you emperor? You the emperor! You are not the rightful emperor.

The true heir to the Empire is your stepbrother, young Britannicus, the son of Claudius!"

Then there was a fierce quarrel between Nero and his mother, and at last he turned her out of his palace and ordered her never to appear there again.

But what she had said alarmed him very much. He feared that Britannicus might be made emperor, and therefore he determined to get him out of the way as soon as possible.

At this time there was in Rome a dreadful woman named Locusta, who made poisons and sold them secretly to any one who wanted them. Nero went one night to this woman and said:

"Make me a strong poison—so strong that it will kill a person like a flash of lightning!"

Locusta made the poison and gave it to him. He tried it on a pig, and it killed the animal in a few moments.

"Ha!" said he, "this will do the work."

Now, Britannicus lived in the palace with his stepbrother and next day, when dinner was served, Nero put some of the poison into a cup of wine which he knew the boy was to drink. The moment Britannicus drank it, he fell to the floor dead. Then Nero said to the guests who were at the table:

"Do not be alarmed. It is nothing. My poor stepbrother always was subject to fits."

The attendants carried the body of Britannicus out of the room, and the dinner went on gayly.

II

A little while after he had poisoned his stepbrother, Nero made up his mind to get rid of his mother, also. He was afraid that as long as she lived he would not be safe as emperor. She might stir up the people against him any day. So he went to see her and pretended that he was sorry he had ill-treated her. He kissed and caressed her so affectionately that she was entirely deceived.

Then the cruel son made a plan to drown his mother. He had a ship so built that by pulling out certain bolts and pins it would suddenly fall to pieces and sink. He then hired a wicked captain and crew to do his bidding, and got his mother to take a sail in the ship down the Tiber.

Agrippina took a maid with her and went aboard. She was in a happy humor, because her son, as she thought, was so kind to her. When the ship came to a certain place in the river where the water was very deep, the sailors pulled out the bolts and pins. Then the ship began to fall apart and to sink.

The sailors sprang into the river to swim to the shore, and Agrippina and her maid jumped overboard. The maid was killed by a sailor, but Agrippina was picked up by the crew of a fishing boat.

Nero was greatly troubled when he learned of his mother's escape. He believed that now she would certainly try to have him removed from the throne. So he sent some men to kill her in her house, and they did so in a most cruel manner.

III

None of the emperors before Nero lived so grandly as he did. He had a splendid marble palace at Rome, containing immense quantities of beautiful furniture, gold and silver ornaments, and works of art of the finest kind. On the pleasant shores of the Mediterranean Sea he had several houses where he lived in the summer and autumn months. Wherever he went he had, as his court or companions, three or four hundred richly dressed men and women, with many slaves to wait upon them. They traveled in chariots covered with ivory and gold and drawn by beautiful horses.

Nero was famous for the splendid dinners he gave in his palace. The rarest and most costly food and wines were spread upon the tables in great plenty, and when the feasting was over troops of actors and dancers would give performances which lasted until late at night.

Sometimes, at these dinners, Nero would play on a harp or flute, and sometimes he would act portions of plays or recite poems which he himself had composed. He was a very clever musician and actor, and he wrote very good poetry.

One evening a fire broke out in Rome and raged furiously for a week. Half the city was burned, and hundreds of people lost their lives. Some of the Romans said that Nero had started the fire and had prevented it from being put out. Most of the six days during which the fire lasted he spent in a high tower, enjoying the sight. He played on his harp, sang merry songs, and recited verses about the burning of the ancient city of Troy.

After the fire was put out Nero said that it had been caused by the believers in the religion of Christ. At this time there was a very large number of Christians in Rome. But most of the Romans still worshiped their old pagan gods, and they hated and ill-treated the Christians.

When Nero declared that the Christians had caused the great fire, the people began to persecute them in a dreadful manner. Many of the Christians were hanged, some were covered with pitch and burned, and others were hunted to death by savage dogs. During the time of this persecution the Apostle Paul was beheaded and the Apostle Peter was crucified, as Christ had been crucified thirty-one years before.

After a short time Rome was rebuilt in a greater magnificence than before. Nero built for himself an immense and splendid palace on the famous Palatine Hill. This palace contained so many ornaments of gold that it was called the Golden House.

In governing the Empire Nero was very harsh and cruel. He often put innocent men and women, and even his own friends, to death. He killed his wife in a fit of passion. He did so many wicked things that at last the Romans got tired of having such a tyrant to rule them, and they formed a plot to dethrone him and make some one else their emperor.

But the plot came to nothing, because a slave who had heard of it went to Nero and told him all about it. The Prætorian Guards seized the leading plotters and put them to death. Nero then became more wicked than he had

been before. He even accused his old tutor Seneca, and the famous poet Lucan, of taking part in the plot against him, and he sent them an order to put themselves to death. Seneca was a very good man and a great writer. When he received the cruel order from Nero, he knew that if he did not obey it the tyrant would send some one to kill him, so he had the veins of his arms cut open and he died after much suffering. Lucan also obeyed the tyrant's order. While dying he repeated lines from one of his own poems.

IV

This wicked emperor reigned fourteen years. But at last there was a rebellion against him, and the soldiers elected Galba, the Roman governor of Spain, to be the new emperor.

Then Nero acted like a miserable coward. He was afraid to stay any longer in Rome, for most of the people hated him and favored Galba. So he mounted a horse and rode out of the city to the home of a trusty slave. But while he was there he received word that the Senate had condemned him to death and that horsemen had been sent out to capture him.

"Now dig a grave for me," he said to the slave, "and I will kill myself!"

At this moment the galloping of horses was heard.

"Hark! They are coming to kill you," cried the slave. "Use the dagger while it is time and save yourself from disgrace!"

With trembling hand Nero placed his dagger at his throat, but did not have the courage to use it. The slave then seized it and plunged it into the emperor's throat, and the wicked Nero fell dead.

Rome Begins to Weaken



The British Rebellion

When Julius Caesar and Caesar Augustus were in charge of the Roman empire, Rome was strong and prosperous. But bad emperors like Nero started to weaken Rome. Even worse, some of the countries that Rome had conquered began to resist Roman rule. They wanted to be free again.

The Celts who lived in Britain had never liked Roman rule. And the Romans had never managed to control all of the British islands. Some of the Celts obeyed Roman laws and paid taxes to the Romans. But others rebelled.

One of these disobedient Celtic tribes was particularly annoying to the Romans – because their leader was a woman! In ancient times, women weren't considered to be brave or strong. Men thought it was very embarrassing to be beaten by a woman.

But the leader of this Celtic tribe was no ordinary woman. She was a powerful warrior queen named Boadicea. A Roman writer named Cassius described Boadicea: she was very tall, taller than a man, and her voice was strong and powerful, loud enough to echo from mountain to mountain. She had fierce, piercing eyes, and long, thick, red-brown hair that hung down past her waist. She wore a billowing tartan cloak and a thick gold collar around her neck.



This occurred during the reign of Emperor Nero!

Boadicea refused to make her tribe part of the Roman empire. Instead, she led the Celts in raids on the Roman settlements. The Romans seemed powerless to stop them! They even raided the biggest Roman settlement in Britain – Londinium. Later, this Roman settlement became the city of London.

Soon, the Romans in Britain were terrified of Boadicea and her warriors. The Roman citizens who lived in the settlements started telling each other that they had seen strange things, signs that Rome was doomed to be defeated by the Celts. The statue of Victory fell face down without being pushed! A woman claimed that she had seen the sea turn as red as blood. Other people said that they saw a ghost town in ruins near Londinium. And a man insisted that he had heard strange shrieks and yells coming from an empty Roman theatre!

Did these strange things really happen? Probably not. But the stories show how nervous the Romans were about Boadicea.

Boadicea collected more and more Celtic warriors around her. Soon there were 100,000 British marching down on 10,000 Romans. That means that there was one Roman for every ten British fighters! Just before the final attack, Boadicea rode around and made a famous speech to all her warriors. "We British are accustomed to having women in command!" she shouted. "The gods will grant us revenge against the Roman invaders! I plan to win this battle – or die trying! Let the men live as slaves to the Romans if they want to – but I refuse to live in slavery!"

Then the Celts attacked. They rode into battle without any plan. They charged in at top speed, each soldier doing exactly what he wanted. But the Romans stayed together. They did what their general said. Even though they were outnumbered, they won!

The victory in Britain was only temporary, though. Soon the Romans were forced to leave Britain altogether. Today, in Britain, you can still see the ruins of Roman walls and roads. Those ruins are all that is left of the Roman settlements in Britain.

I

During the two years that followed the death of Nero, there were three emperors, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. They were generals of Roman armies, and were made emperors by their soldiers. But they reigned only a few months each, and they did nothing of importance.

Vitellius was a glutton. He took pleasure only in eating and drinking. He would often visit the houses of rich Romans without invitation and take breakfast with one, dinner with another, and supper with another. After breakfast he thought only about dinner; and when dinner was over he began to think of what he would have for supper.

The next emperor was Titus Flavius Vespasian, commonly called Vespasian. He also was an army general. When he was made emperor by his soldiers he was in Palestine. He had been sent there by Nero with an army to punish the Jews who had rebelled against Rome. As soon as he was declared emperor he returned to Italy and left his son Titus Flavius, called in history simply Titus, to carry on the war against the Jews.

Titus captured Jerusalem after a siege of six months, and his soldiers took possession of all the valuable things they could find. Then they burned the city to the ground. The famous temple was also destroyed, and thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Christ that not one stone of the building should be left upon another. When Titus returned to Rome he had a grand Triumph, and a beautiful arch was built in his honor. This arch is still in existence.

II

Vespasian died in 79 A.D., and then Titus became emperor. One of the remarkable things Titus did during his reign was to finish the Colosseum, which had been begun by his father.

The Colosseum was the largest theatre in the world. It had seats for over 80,000 people. It was first called the Flavian Amphitheatre, from the family name of the emperors who built it. Inside it had seats all round the ring, or arena, and as the word *amphi* means around, they called the great building an amphitheatre. In later times it got the name of Colosseum. The Greeks used the word *colossus* as a name for any very large statue, and because the Flavian Amphitheatre was so large it was called the Colosseum. In our own language we use the word *colossal* to describe anything of immense size.

In the Colosseum they had many kinds of amusements. When it was first opened the shows and games lasted for a hundred days, and 5,000 wild beasts were killed in the arena by gladiators. The arena was a vast space fenced round about with a strong wall, and around it were circular tiers or rows of seats, one behind the other, like steps of stairs. Sometimes the arena was turned into a lake by letting water flow into it from pipes. Then they put ships upon it and

had sham fights in imitation of a battle at sea. This sort of show was called *naumachia*, which means a fight with ships. It was first introduced into Rome by Julius Cæsar, who had a lake dug for the purpose in the Campus Martius.

The Colosseum is still in existence, but it is partly in ruins. From the picture, which shows it as it now is, we can form an idea of how grand a building it once was.

Besides finishing the Colosseum, the Emperor Titus also built splendid baths. They were called the Baths of Titus. The Romans were very fond of baths. Wealthy citizens used to bathe several times every day, and often they spent the greater part of the day at the baths, where there were finely furnished rooms.

It was in the reign of Titus that the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, in the south of Italy, were destroyed by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. A famous Roman author, Pliny the Younger, saw the eruption from a distance and wrote a description of it. He tells that a fiery cloud of cinders, stones, and ashes burst from the top of the mountain and rained down upon the country all round, destroying towns and villages and people. The ruins of Herculaneum were accidentally discovered by workmen in 1709, and the ruins of Pompeii were discovered some years later.

Titus was a very good emperor. He always did everything he could for the welfare and happiness of the people, and he was so much liked by everybody that he was called the "Delight of Mankind." It is said that one night he thought he had done nothing during that day for the good of any person, and that he cried out, "I have lost a day."



Christians in the Catacombs

The Romans punished runaway slaves, criminals, and Christians by making them fight wild animals. But what was wrong with being a Christian?

In the Roman empire, it was a crime to be a Christian! The Roman emperors kept control over their people by saying, "Obey us, because we are gods!" The emperors claimed to be descended from Jove, the king of the gods. Special feast days were held every year in honor of the emperors. At these celebrations, all Romans were supposed to worship the emperor and

promise to obey only him.

But Christians refused to do this. “We only worship our God!” they told other Romans. “We refuse to bow down to someone who is only a man! The emperor is not God. We will pray for him, but we will not worship him.”

The Roman emperors were furious. If the Christians disobeyed them, other Romans might be brave enough to do the same! So the emperors ordered Christians arrested and put in jail. Many Christians were put in prison. Others were forced to fight lions.

The Christians were frightened by this persecution. So they stopped holding their meetings in public. Instead, they dug underground passages beneath Rome and beneath other cities in the Roman empire. They held their religious meetings in these underground passages, in secret. The passages were called catacombs. Down in the catacombs, the Christians also buried their dead. The underground tunnels were dark and damp. Stones lined the floors. They were lit only by torches. Shadows lurked in every corner. But when the Christians were underground, they were safe.

This secrecy soon made people even more suspicious of the Christians! What were they doing down there, underground? Rumors started to fly around. Maybe the Christians were calling down floods and famine on the rest of the Roman empire! Maybe they were planning to overthrow the government! “We must wipe out this new and harmful religion,” one Roman senator wrote to another. “Otherwise, Romans will cease to worship the emperor.”

Of course, the Christians weren’t calling down famines or trying to overthrow the government. They were just meeting peacefully together to talk about Jesus and his teachings. They protested to the emperors that

they were doing nothing wrong.

But the Roman emperors kept right on throwing them in jail. Soon Christians were even afraid to say to people they didn’t know, “I am a Christian! Are you?” If they told the wrong person they were a Christian, they might end up in jail!

So they decided on a secret symbol. It looked like a fish. When a Christian met someone she didn’t know, she might draw a fish on a wall, or in the sand at her feet, or on the edge of a piece of paper. If the other person was a Christian, he would draw a fish too. Then both Christians knew that it was safe to talk to each other.

Today, you can still see the catacombs that the Christians dug below the cities of the Roman empire. Some of the catacombs have tombs of ancient Christians in them. Others have pictures that the Christians drew of Jesus. Archaeologists have found fish carved on the walls as well – secret messages that the Christians sent to each other!



The Emperor Is a Christian!

The Roman emperors kept on persecuting Christians until an emperor named Constantine came to the throne. Constantine was a fair man. He worshipped the Roman god Apollo, but he didn’t think it was right to put people in jail because of the god they worshipped. So he ordered all persecution to stop. No one was to arrest Christians for being Christians any more.

Constantine himself went on worshipping Apollo — until something strange happened to him. Different ancient writers tell us different stories about Constantine. Some say he had a dream. Others say he

had a vision. But whatever Constantine saw, everyone agrees about what happened next: The Emperor himself became a Christian!

So what did Constantine see?

One Roman writer tells this story about Constantine’s vision:

Constantine was marching towards the most important battle of his life. He had fought the enemy for months now – and had not been able to triumph. The coming battle was his last hope. Would he win? Would the Roman empire remain safe? Or would his soldiers be defeated, driven backwards by the enemy and forced to surrender? He would know tomorrow, when they met the enemy at the Milvian Bridge.

He looked behind him at his army. They had fought hard against invaders – and won. But now they were so tired they could barely drag themselves along. Their feet hurt; their heels were blistered in their shoes, and their armor was heavy on their shoulders.

Constantine glanced up at the gray, cloudy sky. On top of everything else, he thought, it was going to rain on them. They would be tired, discouraged, *and* soaking wet. They would have to set up camp in the pouring rain, and no one would sleep well before the next morning’s battle.

“Look,” the soldier beside him said. “The sun is coming out.”

Constantine squinted at the sky. It did look brighter. But –

“That’s not the sun,” he said. “What is it? It – it looks like a cross!”

Constantine and his soldiers stared with open mouths. Above them in the sky hovered a cross of light, growing larger and brighter by the moment. The golden

light from the cross fell across their weary faces until they were forced to blink and shield their eyes with their hands. The grass around them glittered with light!

Underneath the cross, fiery letters burned themselves across the sky. Constantine read them out, one by one: *By this sign you will be victor.*

“It is the cross of Christ!” Constantine gasped.

“What does it mean?” the soldiers asked.

“It means that we must fight for God,”

Constantine answered. “The God of the Christians!”

When they set up camp that night, Constantine sent out an order to his men. “Every soldier must have the sign of Christ on his shield!” he ordered. “Until that is done, we will not go into battle!”

So each soldier painted onto his shield the Greek letters standing for Christ’s name. When they went into battle, Constantine led the charge under a banner bearing the name of the Christian God. And Constantine’s army won the Battle of Milvian Bridge. Then he stood victorious on the bridge, Constantine raised his sword to the sky. “The God of the Christians gave me this victory!” he announced. “From now on, I will always fight under his banner. And I will only worship him!”

After he won this battle, Constantine became a Christian – claiming that the Christian God had helped him to beat the enemy. He made Sunday a holiday all over Rome, so that people could go to church. Soon, many more people in the Roman empire became Christians, following the example of their emperor.

After he became a Christian, Constantine decided that the new center of the Roman empire should no longer be in Rome. After all, Rome was an old city, beginning to be shabby and run-down. Constantine moved the capital of the empire to another city that he named after himself:

Constantinople. From now on, Constantinople – not Rome – would be the center of Roman power.

But that power would not last long!

Note to Parent: Nero ruled from (AD/CE) 58-64. Constantine ruled from (AD/CE) 312-337. The emperors between Nero and Constantine had varying policies towards Christianity, but Christians were rarely tolerated for long.

Chapter Forty-Two

The End of Rome



The Last Roman Emperor

What happened to the Roman Empire?

The Romans used to rule dozens of other countries. They were the most powerful people in the world.

But then the empire was divided, and the barbarians came. The Western Roman Empire grew weaker and weaker, and the Eastern Roman Empire refused to help the West out. As a matter of fact, the Eastern Roman Empire wasn’t even called “Rome” anymore. Instead, it became known as “the Byzantine Empire.”

The Western Roman Empire still existed. But barbarians took over most of its land. And although the Western Roman Empire still had an emperor, he didn’t live in Rome, because Rome had been destroyed. He lived in a small, swampy city, hiding from the barbarians.

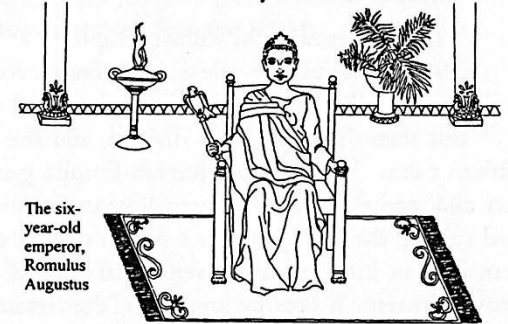
Finally one of the invaders, named Orestes, decided to drive the Roman Emperor out of hiding. He collected an army and marched towards the small, swampy city where the Emperor lived. When the Emperor heard that Orestes and his men were coming, he ran away. By the time Orestes arrived, the Emperor was long gone.

Orestes decided to make his son Emperor. There was only one problem – his son was six years old!

But that didn’t stop Orestes. He ordered all his men to obey the six-year-old Emperor. And he gave his

son a new name, Romulus Augustus. He called him Romulus, because an old legend said that a man named Romulus was the first king of Rome, long, long ago. And he called him Augustus after Caesar Augustus, Rome’s most famous emperor.

That was a big name for a little boy! And when the people who were left in the Western Roman Empire heard it, they laughed. “Romulus Augustus!” they said. “What a silly name for a child! We won’t call him Romulus – we’ll call him Momyllus!”



The six-year-old emperor, Romulus Augustus

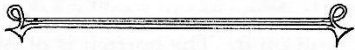
“Momyllus” meant “Little disgrace”! The Romans felt insulted, because they were expected to obey the child of a barbarian. But “Momyllus” didn’t get to be emperor very long. Another barbarian captured “Momyllus” and his father Orestes. “Momyllus,” now seven years old, was sent off to live in another city. He was given plenty of money to pay for food and clothes, but he wasn’t allowed to rule any more. His crown and scepter were taken to Constantinople.

And that was the end of the Western Roman Empire. It was full of barbarian kings, each one ruling his own little kingdom. The lands that used to belong to Rome now belonged to them.

The new settlers still used the wide, beautiful Roman roads. Rome’s huge buildings still stood – al-

though many were beginning to crumble away. Many people still spoke Latin, the language of the Romans. And the barbarians had begun to learn Roman ways and Roman customs. But the Roman Empire itself was gone forever.

Over in the Eastern Roman Empire, now called the “Byzantine Empire,” people mourned. Rome had been a great and beautiful city, but now it was in ruins. As long as an Emperor still ruled, there was hope that Rome might be great again. But now the last Roman Emperor – a little boy just your age – had lost his throne. Rome would never again rule the world.



The Gifts of Rome

The Roman emperor is gone; the ancient city of Rome was destroyed; the Roman Empire has disappeared. But the Romans gave us words and inventions that we use every single day. You’re using one of them right now! How many books do you have in your house? How often do you use a book?

The Romans were the first people to use books with pages. They figured out how to sew pages together along one side so that you can turn the pages and read both the front and back of each one. Before the Romans, people used scrolls – long, long pieces of paper or animal skin, that you had to unroll to read and roll back up whenever you were finished. Can you imagine reading a scroll in bed? Or in the car? Every time you read a book, you’re using a Roman invention.

The words you’re reading came from the Romans too. We use the Roman alphabet to write our words! Whenever you sing the alphabet song or write a word, you are using the letters that the Romans used.

323

Do you know the twelve months of the year? Most of those months have Roman names. January is named after the Roman god Janus. March is named after Mars, the god of war. June is named after Juno, the most important Roman goddess. July and August are both named after Roman heroes; July is named after Julius Caesar, the famous Roman general, and August is named after Augustus, Rome’s first emperor.

Do you like to go swimming in the summer? If so, thank the Romans! The Romans built big bathtubs, big enough for twenty or thirty people to wash in at once. These bathtubs were the first swimming pools!

If you look at a penny, you’ll see that it has the picture of a head on it. The portrait is of Abraham Lincoln, one of our greatest presidents. The Romans began the custom of putting the heads of great leaders on coins. They put pictures of their emperors on their coins. Today, we put pictures of our presidents on coins – copying the Romans!

Now look at a dime. On one side of the dime, you can see some tiny words: *E pluribus unum*. Those words are in Latin, the language that the ancient Romans spoke. They mean “Out of many, one.” This means that America has many different states in it, but all of the states are united together into one country. The Romans gave us these words to write on our coins.

We live on the Earth, but there are eight other planets in our solar system: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto.

All of our planets have Roman names! They are named after Roman gods and goddesses. Jupiter was the king of the gods. He was a big, important god, and Jupiter is a very big planet! Mars is named after the god of war; Mercury is named after the messenger of the gods, and Venus is named after the goddess of love and beauty.

324

Saturn is Jupiter’s father. Neptune is the god of the sea, and Uranus the god of the sky.

Finally, even our words come from Rome! The English language borrowed many, many words from Latin, the language of the Romans. Can you figure out what English words come from these Latin words.

The *frigidarium* was the room where Roman bathers jumped into very cold water. What word sounds like *frigidarium* and keeps things cold? The refrigerator!

A Roman child lived in a *familia* with his mother, father, sisters, and brothers. What is a *familia*? A family!

The Latin word for book was *liber*. What word sounds like *liber* and is a place where books are kept? A *library*!

In Latin, a ship is a *navis*. Do you know what word comes from *navis*? It means “many ships that sail together.” That’s right – *navy*!

Have you ever written “P.S.” at the end of a letter? If so, you’ve used Latin words. “P.S.” stands for the Latin words “post scriptum,” or “after the writing.” A “P.S.” goes *after* the main *writing* of the letter.

In Rome, a *floris* was a beautiful plant that smelled good. Can you think of a beautiful plant that smells good and sounds like *floris*? Our word *flower* comes from the Latin *floris*!

Even though the ancient Roman empire is gone, we use the words, inventions, and ideas of the Romans all the time. So, in a way, Rome will never completely disappear. The gifts that the Romans gave to us are still with us today.

Note to Parent: Romulus Augustus ruled 475-476.



325