

THE BOOK OF THE ANCIENT ROMANS



Dorothy Mills
Edited by Memoria Press



MEMORIA PRESS
www.MemoriaPress.com

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Edited by Memoria Press
ISBN 978-1-61538-113-5
First Edition © 2012 Memoria Press

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CONTENTS

Preface	3
The Book of the Ancient Romans.....	9
The Rome of Myth and Legend	11
Chapter One: <i>Land of Italy</i>	13
Chapter Two: <i>Early Peoples of Italy</i>	16
Chapter Three: <i>Founding of Rome</i>	20
Chapter Four: <i>Seven Kings of Rome</i>	26
1. Romulus	26
2. Numa Pompilius.....	35
3. Tullus Hostilius	41
4. Ancus Marcius	45
5. Lucius Tarquinius Priscus	48
6. Servius Tullius.....	52
7. Tarquinius Superbus	56
Chapter Five: <i>Roman Society in the Days of the Kings</i>	60
Rome, the Conqueror and Lawgiver	65
Part I: Rome, the Mistress of Italy.....	67
Chapter Six: <i>How Rome Conquered Italy</i>	67
1. Wars Against the Tarquins.....	68
2. Rome and the Volscians and Aequians	77
3. Rome and the Etruscans	83
4. The Invasion of the Gauls.....	87
5. The Latin War.....	96
6. The Samnite Wars.....	101
7. The War with Pyrrhus	106
Chapter Seven: <i>How Rome Ruled Italy</i>	110
1. How Rome Ruled Herself.....	110
2. How Rome Ruled Italy	118
Chapter Eight: <i>Character and Religion of the Early Romans</i> ..	122

Part II: Rome, the Mistress of the Mediterranean.....	130
Chapter Nine: <i>The Struggle Between Rome and Carthage</i>	130
1. Carthage.....	130
2. The First Punic War.....	134
3. The Second Punic War.....	140
4. The Destruction of Carthage.....	172
Chapter Ten: <i>Other Conquests in the Medit. World</i>	177
Chapter Eleven: <i>How Rome United the Medit. World</i>	185
Chapter Twelve: <i>The Century of Revolution</i>	188
1. Rome in 133 B.C.	188
2. The Reformers: the Gracchi	191
3. Military Rule	199
(a) Marius.....	199
(b) The Struggle between Marius and Sulla	211
(c) The Rule of Sulla	218
4. The Struggle Between Pompey and Caesar	224
Chapter Thirteen: <i>Julius Caesar</i>	243
1. Julius Caesar	243
2. The End of the Republic	259
 Part III: Rome, the Mistress of the World	 266
Chapter Fourteen: <i>Augustus and the Golden Age of Rome</i>	266
Chapter Fifteen: <i>Ancient Rome</i>	276
1. The City of Rome	276
2. The Roman House	287
3. Roman Dress.....	296
4. Roman Amusements.....	300
Chapter Sixteen: <i>Roman Education</i>	306
1. The Debt of Rome to Greece.....	306
2. The Roman Schoolboy.....	307
Chapter Seventeen: <i>The Life of the Ancient Roman</i>	318
1. The Roman Gentleman	318
2. The Roman Lady.....	325
3. The Slaves and the Working People of Rome.....	333

Chapter Eighteen: <i>The Writers of the Augustan Age</i>	339
Chapter Nineteen: <i>Rome Under the Caesars</i>	346
1. The Julian Line	346
(a) Tiberius	346
(b) Caligula	352
(c) Claudius	354
(d) Nero.....	360
2. The Flavian Line	366
(a) Vespasian	366
(b) Titus	369
(c) Domitian	374
Chapter Twenty: <i>Age of Trajan and the Antonines</i>	376
1. Nerva.....	376
2. Trajan	377
3. Hadrian	379
4. Antoninus Pius	382
5. Marcus Aurelius	383
Chapter Twenty-One: <i>Religion in the Roman Empire</i>	386
1. Decay of the Old Roman Religion.....	386
2. Stoics and Epicureans	387
3. The Mystery Religions.....	390
4. The Christian Church of the Roman Empire	392
(a) The First Centuries of Christianity	392
(b) The Early Church	396
Chapter Twenty-Two: <i>Civilization of the Roman Empire</i>	399
1. Rome, the Conqueror of the World: the Army	399
2. Rome, the Ruler of the World: Law and Unity.....	403
3. Rome, the Civilizer of the World	405
(a) Roman Architecture	405
(b) Language and Literature	406
(c) Roman Roads and Commerce	407

Part IV: The Decline and Fall of Rome	413
Chapter Twenty-Three: <i>The Decline of Rome</i>	413
1. The Soldier Emperors	413
2. Diocletian and the Division of the Empire	418
3. Constantine the Great	420
Chapter Twenty-Four: <i>The Fall of Rome</i>	423
1. The Barbarian Invaders	423
2. The Fall of Rome	429
Chapter Twenty-Five: <i>Preservation of the Ancient Heritage</i>	431

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Others, no doubt, from breathing bronze shall draw
 More softness, and a living face devise
 From marble, plead their causes at the law
 More deftly, trace the motions of the skies
 With learned rod, and tell the stars that rise.
 Thou, Roman, rule, and o'er the world proclaim
 The ways of peace. Be these thy victories,
 To spare the vanquished and the proud to tame.
 These are imperial arts, and worthy of thy name¹

IN THESE WORDS, Virgil, the great Roman poet, set forth what he believed to be the mission of Rome. He lived at a time when Rome had become a mighty empire. Looking back across the centuries, he could see how she had grown from only a small settlement to the ruler of the world.

She had conquered the world, and not only the Mediterranean world with its great civilizations, but lands far beyond the shores of that ancient sea, lands inhabited by men of strange speech and uncouth ways. In the thought of the poet, that had been the just step in her mission, to conquer; then, having conquered, she was to rule and crown the peace she had established in her empire with law and order. This mission she worthily fulfilled. We, looking back to the days of Virgil, can see that she accomplished yet a third great task, for, having conquered and then wisely ruled it, she civilized the world.

¹ *Aeneid*, VI.

The spirit of a nation expresses itself and its history is recorded in various ways: in the social relations of the people both with each other and with other nations (this is called its political history); in its language, which expresses itself in its literature; and in its building, which is its architecture.²

It is in the political history, the literature, and the architecture of Rome that we find the story of how she made her own that which came to her out of the East, and of how greatly she fulfilled her mission not only of conquering, but also of ruling and of civilizing the world.



The Goddess Rome

2 *The Book of the Ancient Greeks.*