



ROSTRA OF CÆSAR AND TEMPLE OF SATURN

Recent Discoveries in the Forum

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TO sharpen the mind for the investigation of the life and customs of the early Romans, so as to discern with what manner of men and of means, on hearth and battle-field, the power of Rome came to the birth and waxed mighty."

These words of Livy aptly define the duty of those privileged to turn the pages of the great book that lies open in the Roman Forum. Torn, soiled, and incomplete, the book yet offers precious knowledge to minds which approach it in reverence and ponder its half-articulate lessons. Livy, a son of the Venetian province, born at Padua fifty-eight years before the current era, was overawed by the immensity of the task of writing 700 and more years of the history of

Rome. A Venetian of Venice and steeped from childhood in the writings of Livy, I learned to admire, amidst the traces of the early life of my native city, the image of the institutions that prepared Roman grandeur. Good Faith and Justice, at once the constant symbols and the inner essence of the Venetian Republic, appeared to me as banners heading the march of the Italic founders of Roman civilization.

Of this civilization I was beginning, ten years since, to seek the records in the Roman Forum, but was then prevented by those who believed such research no business of mine. Six years later I found myself in a position to resume the work, which I have been enabled to continue without interruption until the present time. From the outset I was fully conscious that the remains then

visible in the Forum could be but tatters of pages torn from the last chapters of the great book of Roman history, and that many modern authorities had busied themselves with the often fortuitous externals of their subject, and with questions of mere nomenclature, while the real objects of research stood unrecognized before them or lay trodden an inch or two beneath their unconscious feet. When I inquired concerning the Sacred Way and asked what might have been its function in the minds of the men who reproduced it, no answer was forthcoming, and I perceived that some modern critics were content to exhibit as the Sacred Way of the Romans an ignoble traffic-scored mediæval roadway of roughly rounded stones running in front of that mighty Basilica of Maxentius dedicated to Constantine the Great. Hardly less superficial had been the treatment of the Sacra Regia—that monument to the philosophic and religious power of the race whence sprang the founders of Rome, a race whose trace and tradition remained in the Roman Patriciate—the Shrine of Vesta, the Rostra of Cæsar, and the Basilica Giulia. The Temple of Vesta, indeed, the typical hearth of the Roman state, I found a naked, formless ruin, pitilessly torn by recent excavators, whose work had conferred on science no benefit.

When in the autumn of 1898 opportunity offered to begin serious examination of the Forum, the problem that arose in my mind was less how to discover new archæological remains than how to evoke the genius of the place and to make its dry bones live. Proceeding as much by intuition as by reasoned hypothesis, a beginning was made on the Hieroon of Cæsar, an edifice built by Augustus on the spot where the corpse of the dictator, his father by adoption, had been cremated. The charred bones of Julius Cæsar were known to have been gathered by freedmen and carried at nightfall to the sepulchre of the Gens Julia in the Campus Martius. It was known also that upon the spot where the body was burned, near the Sacra Regia and opposite the Temple of Castor and Pollux, a column of yellow Numidian marble had been erected, with the inscription *Parenti Patriæ*, and an altar whereon Cæsar's

followers burned sacrifices to his Manes. These monuments were known to have been overturned by the rival party under Dolabella, nephew of Cicero; but Cæsar's veterans subsequently re-erected the altar on which Augustus sacrificed three hundred rebels as expiatory victims after the taking of Perugia. No trace of these monuments had, however, been discovered during previous excavations. After careful investigation I succeeded in discovering the concrete base of the altar in the front hemicycle of the Hieroon, in the position shown on the coins of Augustus, where Cæsar is represented as an augur standing inside the temple. The authenticity of the Hieroon was attested by the inscription on the lintel—*Divo Julio*. The nucleus of the altar, which still bears traces of the altar steps, afterwards carried away by despoilers, is, so to speak, the axis of the Roman Empire, which dates in reality from the death of Cæsar; and though Augustus became the executor of his will, it is to the statue of Julius—gazing down the Forum to the Capitol, with the augur's rod in its right hand—that we must look as to the inaugurator of a new political and monumental era for Rome. Suetonius mentions the grandiose schemes of reconstruction planned by Julius Cæsar, who combined the powers of Aedile with those of Pontifex Maximus. The Basilica Julia which closes in the southern side of the Forum still bears his name, although it was completed and afterwards rebuilt by Augustus, who, calling himself *Divi Julii Filius*, also reconstructed the Basilica Aemilia on the northern side. But the first monuments really dating from the lifetime of Julius Cæsar are those Rostra which he removed from the Comitium (where as tribune of the *plebs* they had stood, inquisitive and menacing, over against the patrician Curia), and reconstructed at the Capitoline end of the Forum between the Temple of Saturn and the Temple of Concord.

Why should Cæsar have moved these Rostra? Was their removal a prophetic synthesis of coming change, a preparation, inadvertent or conscious, for the realization of those alleged designs upon the Republic which cost him his life? And by what strange instinct was he led to re-erect the Rostra against the very

rock out of which the early founders of Rome had hewed that Altar of Vulcan which constitutes the most venerable monument of Rome, of Italy, and, maybe, of the Aryan world? The Vulcanal Rock still stands as it was hewn with axes and covered with rust-red plaster, a witness to the sanctity of that metal-smelting fire wherewith metallic civilization was inaugurated in the Tiber Valley by the same primitive Latin folk who guarded at Lavinium bars of iron and copper among their household gods. Conscious or unconscious instrument of Destiny, Cæsar returned to these sacred precincts, there to build as foundation for his Rostra the sober *tufo* arches, which not only constitute a standard for the study of Roman structures, but possess for historians an interest almost without parallel. Here, on the superstructure of the arches, Mark Antony pronounced his funeral oration over Cæsar's body and excited the populace to vendetta with the sight of that "bleeding piece of earth." Here were nailed the head and hands of Cicero as symbols

of vendetta achieved. Save for these Rostra, I have been unable to discover, upon the surface of the Roman Forum, any trace or vestige of Julius Cæsar's own work. Underground, however, following intuitively in the track of Cæsar, I succeeded in discovering a long gallery passing longitudinally beneath the centre of the Forum and intersected by two cross-galleries, which still retain marks of having been used to contain apparatus for stage-carpentry and scene-shifting in the gladiatorial games or spectacular displays given by Cæsar to the populace in the Forum before the construction of the amphitheatre. Another series of Cæsarean constructions was also brought to light in the ritual pits which mark the perimeter of the Forum. These pits, rectangular in shape, four Roman feet long by two broad, are placed at intervals of ten feet, and are bordered by blocks of *tufo* cut, some vertically and others obliquely, so as to make the pit slant southwards. They contained large numbers of terra-cotta chalice-shaped vases, probably used for libations to mo-



THE SPOT WHERE CÆSAR WAS CREMATED
Showing nucleus of the basement of the altar



FRESCO OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY, CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA ANTIQUA

ther earth in expiation of the offence of staining her with human blood. The Cæsarean pits, some two feet deep, reach to the old Republican level of the Forum in which former ritual pits, or trenches, had been cut. The Republican pits, however, had the same orientation as that of the *tufa* monuments destroyed at the beginning of the civil wars in the second century B.C., and found buried beneath the Black Stone believed to mark the traditional site of the tomb of Romulus. The Cæsarean pits, on the contrary, slant obliquely towards the south, a par-

ticular worthy of note in view of Caesar's action in shifting the axis of the Forum southwards by thirty degrees.

The problems raised by the discovery of these ritual pits, which were probably originated by the augurs as mementos of mysterious primitive rites, are naturally connected with the whole system of Roman religion, of which the most prominent monuments are the Sacra Regia, the Aedes Vestæ, and the Fons Juturnæ. Here the natural elements, *geniales*, or germs of things, were worshipped, together with the phenomena to which they

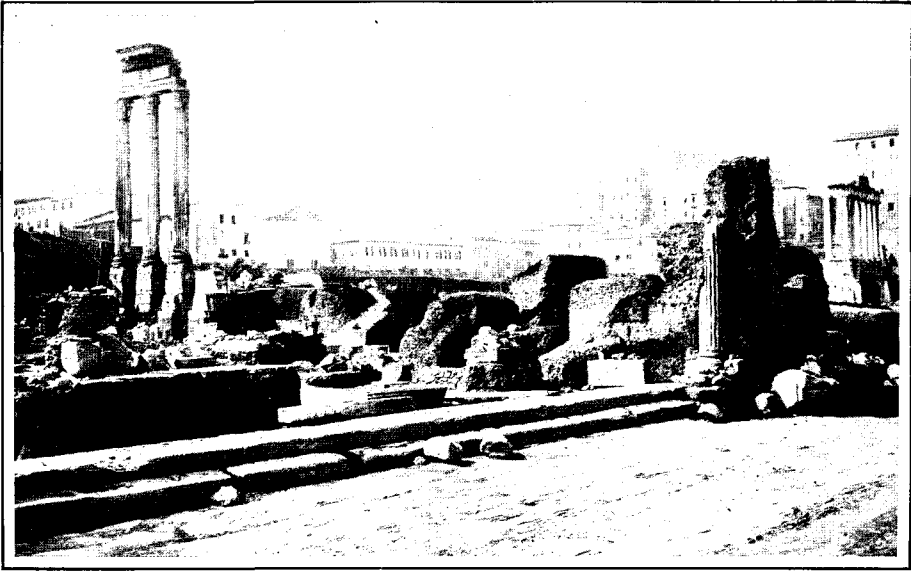
give rise. Such were Fire and Water whose use was by law forbidden to criminals—Fire with which brides were accompanied home, Water for purification after a funeral. In the Shrine of Vesta I was able to distinguish the circular form of the building, and, in the interior, to identify the trapezoidal cell that served probably as a depository for the ashes of the sacred fire which were carried once a year as ritual food for the earth to the Temple of Ops, spouse of Saturn. The ashes were those of burned oak, the sacred tree of the Aryans and typical accumulator of solar energy; and it would seem that in the worship of Vesta—a worship whose philosophic substratum rested upon the manifestations of natural forces—the ashes were deemed to contain strength for the nutrition of other oaks which, in an unbroken cycle transformation, would in their turn nourish the Sacred Fire.

Did space permit, much might be said of the details of the worship of Vesta as elucidated by the discoveries made in her temple and in the house of the vestals—the horned vessels, like those found in the Italic necropoli of Latium, the Sabine country, the Marches, the Venetian provinces, and in the territories drained by the Danube, the Save, and the Drave—in fact, all along the route travelled by the races whose civilization finally flourished under the sun of Greece and Italy; the contents of the sacred oven in the house of the vestals where *inter alia* corn was roasted for the preparation of that *mola salsa* used in the patrician marriage rite called *confarreatio*, the vestals being the custodians of race purity. Among the ashes of this oven, which seems to have been abandoned about 400 A.D., when Serena, niece of Theodosius, drove out the last aged vestal, I found a *liba* of charred paste, the form of which corresponds to the description of the cake representing a raft that was sacrificed to Janus, as to the divinity representative of the principle of human ideation. In the house of the vestals I believe further that I have identified the *penetralia*, or Holy of Holies, where were guarded the objects that reminded the Romans of the country of their origin and of their primitive customs—the documents of the Fides Publica, the supreme testa-

mentary institutions and the dispositions for divine arbitration by ordeal of fire and water.

Water, indeed, lay close at hand in the Springs of Juturna, a four-sided basin walled in with *tufo* bricks disposed in *opus reticulatum* and lined with marble in the time of Hadrian. This splendid basin I found under ten feet of human excrement, choked up with fragments of a marble group of Greek statuary dating from the fifth century B.C., and representing Castor and Pollux with their horses standing to guard the two springs, one on the east, the other on the west. Near the springs were found other statues symbolical of the purity of the water and of its healing power—Apollo, Aesculapius, a seated figure, perhaps Roma Salus, and a figure erect, perhaps Juturna. Shattered to fragments, probably by Christian desecrators, the Greek statuary was cast into the sacred fount, whose eastern spring was turned into a *latrina*, while the surrounding soil was, according to pagan ideas, contaminated by being used as a Christian cemetery. Close by the spring was found the shrine of Juturna, with its lintel bearing in bronze letters the inscription *Juturnai Sacrum*, an inscription repeated with the name of the Aedile upon the finely worked marble well-head of the first century placed before the shrine. The water of the springs, once sacred to the Nymph, now rises blue and clear, and, surrounded by laurels and jasmine, begins to regain something of its ancient poetry; and the modern mind easily comprehends the veneration in which the spring was held by the old Romans, who even took its water as the standard weight for their metrological system, which they placed, like the water itself, under the guardianship of Castor and Pollux, whose temple rose majestically a few paces distant.

Behind the temple of Castor and Pollux, behind the shrine of Juturna, at the foot of the Palatine Hill, I came upon a shrine of later date and quite other significance—the Basilica Palatina, containing the early Christian church known as Santa Maria Antiqua. The edifice consists of a hall thirty-two metres in length, once vaulted, an atrium, and an impluvium with three compartments, which were converted into a Christian church



THE SACRED WAY NEAR THE TEMPLE OF ANTONINUS AND FAUSTINA

about the beginning of the sixth century. The columns and walls of the church are covered with frescoes, mostly Byzantine, with Greek inscriptions; an apse was cut in the back wall of the central division, and on it was painted, among other figures, that of Pope Paul I. (757 A.D.). To the right of the apse there remain traces of four different layers of painting, superposed one upon the other. The whole constitutes the most important pictorial palimpsest yet discovered for the study of the early centuries of the Middle Ages. A volume would scarcely suffice for the adequate treatment of this monument, which has already attracted the painstaking attention of Christian archaeologists. Suffice it to say that some of the paintings, notably two angels, evidently of somewhat later date than the well-known "Madonna and Child" of the time of Theodoric at Ravenna, bear witness to the existence, in the art of the decaying empire, of a latent energy which, but for this discovery, might have been questioned or denied.

Santa Maria Antiqua remained in use until the ninth century, when damp, or perhaps damage done by masses of brickwork falling from the imperial palace above, caused it to be abandoned in favor of a new church, known as Santa Maria

Nova, which was built on the site of the Temple of Venus and Rome near the Upper Sacred Way.

The Sacred Way itself, symbol of corporate civil life, ran through the Forum as a river flows through a lake, resuming at the exit its initial course and name. It entered the Forum near the Sacra Regia, and emerged at the farther end, to mount up the Sacred Capitoline slope to the Arx and the temples, and formed as it were the spinal column of the Roman state. Its origin is still shrouded in mystery. Was it originally the only dry path from the fortified Palatine Hill through the marshy valley (afterwards the Forum) to the sacred Vulcanal Rock? The hypothesis seems tenable. Certainly the discovery of a prehistoric Necropolis near the foundation of the Basilica of Antoninus and Faustina points to the early existence of the Way, since the Romans are known to have buried their dead from time immemorial along the extra-urban roads—as was afterwards the case with the Appian Way and the Flaminian Way; and some noble families erected along the upper portion of the Sacred Way monumental tombs, which remained there until a comparatively late epoch. Starting from Porta Mugonia, the ancient entrance to the Palatine,



THE SEPULCHRE OF ROMULUS

One of the tombs embedded in the curious black clay ("Niger Lapis") of which prehistoric Latin vases were made

the Way passed downwards and entered the Forum under the triumphal arch of Fabius Maximus (121 B.C.), of which I have found some additional wedge-shaped blocks, but, hitherto, no trace of foundations. Opposite the Heroon of Romulus I found portions of an imperial building with pierced walls, which seems to show it to have been a guard-house,—an important particular, which would go to confirm the hypothesis that the entrance to the Forum stood here, the more so as in the immediate neighborhood of the guard-house, across the Way, I found a considerable portion of a prison. Ancient writers say little on this subject, and the only corroborative evidence is that Plato in his first Utopian city fixes a prison at the entrance of the *Agora*; and that the prisons of the Venetian Republic stood close by the entrance to Piazza San Marco. This portion of the Sacred Way, like that which descended by the Palatine slope from Porta Mugonia, still retains a great part of the beautifully laid polygonal blocks with which it was paved, and upon which signs of rust left by the sliding of car-wheels may still be detected. Some pieces of the ample kerbstone that flanked the Palatine slope have also been found in position. The Arch of Titus, which I believe to have stood originally upon the

extension of the axis of the Colosseum, seems to have been placed in its present position by Hadrian, who needed its original site for the Temple of Venus and Rome, and who was careless of diminishing the importance of the arch that commemorated the great victory of the Flavi. Behind the Arch of Titus I have begun to excavate one wall of the Temple of Jupiter Stator, built, says the legend, in fulfilment of a vow made to Jupiter by Romulus when beseeching help to enable the Romans to stand their ground against the Sabines. Here also I have begun the excavation of Porta Mugonia, probably the only entrance to the Palatine Hill during the early epoch when its circumference was marked by the waters of the Velabro. It may eventually prove possible to restore this entrance to the Palatine, so that visitors descending from its heights into the Forum may pass from the monuments of the earliest centuries of Roman life through those of the Republican and Imperial eras, and thence to the mediæval frescoes which adorn the Christian walls of Santa Maria Antiqua!

Mention has been made of the prehistoric necropolis discovered near the Sacred Way. The first tombs were found in the bed-clay of the Forum valley close by the foundations of the Temple of An-

toninus and Faustina some twelve feet below the imperial level of the Way, and others have since been discovered near the Heroon of Romulus. Hitherto four tombs only have been examined, two containing ashes of cremated bodies, while two are simple graves. The necropolis opens up questions concerning the race and religion of the dwellers on the Palatine which cannot be answered off-hand. The ashes of the cremated bodies were found in an urn placed inside a large vase, or *dolium*, which also contained other subsidiary vases resembling those of the prehistoric tombs on the Alban Hills. The *dolium* was covered in each case by a circular slab of *tufa*. One of the urns is a miniature reproduction of a hide-roofed or straw-thatched hut, not unlike those still used by the shepherds of the Campagna. The smaller vases inside the *dolium* contained vestiges of the offerings prepared for the Manes of the departed—ribs of a lamb, scales of fresh-water fish, and a kind of *polenta* or porridge. Incidentally the discovery of these tombs has helped to settle a debated point as to the material of which prehistoric Latin vases were made. Experiments with the clay in which the tombs were embedded have enabled me to reproduce these vases perfectly, and to show that they were made of simple volcanic earth polished with a bone instrument and baked either in an open fire or in a closed oven. According to the proportion of smoke allowed to surround the vase during the baking process, I obtained at will either the shiny, superficial black tint characteristic of Italic funereal vases, or the penetrating blackness characteristic of Etruscan *bucchero*. It remains carefully to complete the exploration of the necropolis in order to discover whether

and what connection exists between it and the primitive path which became the Sacred Way; to establish the ratio between the simple graves and the cremation tombs (since the diversity of burial rites may correspond to diversity of races standing to each other in the relationship of victors to vanquished, or of patrons to *clientes*); and to dispel, in part at least, the darkness shrouding the “age of Romulus,” the eighth century B.C., to which the Necropolis may with reasonable certainty be attributed.

Analysis of Roman funeral rites and of the archaic *formulae* therein preserved even as late as the Republican epoch, and inquiry into the origin of the objects which formed the essence of early Roman home life, are beginning to open vaster horizons to our view, and to disclose the religious idea of the Italic folk who founded Rome. Their pantheism afforded them the consolation of regarding the departed spirits of their dead as vital energies reabsorbed by the Spirit Universal—a Spirit all-pervading and everywhere operative in natural phenomena and in the efforts of new generations to come to the birth. Roman children burned offerings to the Lares, and, the gods propitious, summoned their parents to the evening meal; Roman brides placed a coin on the fire of the nuptial hearth; and Roman families laid aside their mourning whenever a child was born to the household. Much of the value of the recent work in the Forum consists in the light it throws on the inner nature of the great people who so long ruled the ancient world, and who in household, temple, and burying-ground had ever present a deep sense of the unbroken harmony and unity underlying the ceaseless transformations of the Universal Energy.





REAL LIFE

BY

E. S. MARTIN

I WAS speaking to Ferguson about the way he had degenerated since he came to New York. When I had known him in Slinterville he had been a person, but I had to confess to him that, in so far as I could judge from an observation which, to be sure, was superficial, he had come to be something no better than an incident. He did not deny it. It was true, he said, that he was hardly a person any more, but had become the attribute of an environment; but he maintained that his state was not so very bad so long as he recognized and accepted it for what it was, and did not delude himself with the notion that it was really life. "There is life," said Ferguson, "and there is work. There is a species of life of which work is an incident, and there is a species of work of which life is an incident. That phase of activity which we call living in New York is to be classed, so far as I am concerned, under this second head. Of course, considered as life, it is ridiculous; but considered as work, it has many agreeable alleviations."

"It is captivity," said I. "Life in any big city is captivity."

"You may call it that," said Ferguson. "A man who has to work for other men is more or less a captive while he is busy with his tasks, wherever it is that he puts his work in. To spend the day between plough-handles (if there are such things now) is captivity while it lasts, and a species of it to which a great many persons find more objections than to life in a big town. Life itself is captivity. We are captives because our spirits are shut up in bodies which have to be fed,

and which have no wings to fly with. The fact that our bodies happen to be in New York and not in Slinterville isn't so very significant."

I don't know that it is. It is what we think about and what we do that make the difference, rather than where we are, and there is no doubt that multitudes of people find thought and action satisfactory in New York. Yet there prevails a consciousness, wide-spread and regretful, that life in great cities is not quite real life. Some observers even go so far as to insist that it is incorrigibly artificial. It suits most of us in a general way, because we also are considerably artificial. We get used to our kind of factory life. We don't like to get up our own steam, but find it easier in the morning to throw in the clutch that connects our personal machine with a line of shafting that never ceases to turn. We need compulsion: we need to be driven; to be in such close relations with a progressive community that we have to do our daily stint if we are to keep our place. But back of this need lurks the persuasion that real life is a condition of fuller freedom than we know, whereof the impulses come more from within and are shaped by greater considerations than immediate daily needs, and the hope of living somewhat more to our taste for a few years before we die.

It is not a state of ease—this real life that we dream of—for we know that too much ease is no better for us than too much food or drink. It is not even a state of wealth, except that we are all prone to believe that if we had