



The Story of Rome

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LONG, long years ago, Troy, one of the great cities in Asia Minor, was taken by the Greeks.

Many mighty Trojans had defended their city well, and among them all none had fought more bravely than the prince Æneas.

But when Æneas saw that the Greeks had set fire to the city, he fled, carrying, it is said, his father on his shoulders, and grasping by the hand his son Ascanius.

Moreover, so precious to him was the sacred image of the goddess Pallas, that he saved it from the burning city.

The gods, pleased with his reverence, helped him in his flight by building a ship. So when Æneas reached the sea he at once embarked in it, with his followers and their wives, and sailed away to seek for a new land in which to build a new city.

As the Trojans sailed they saw a bright star shining above them. Day and night the star was always to be seen, showing the seafarers the direction in which to steer.

At length the Trojans reached the western shore of Italy, and here, at a town called Latium, they disembarked.

The women were weary of the sea, and no sooner had they landed than they began to wonder how they could persuade their husbands to journey no farther, but to settle in the pleasant country which they had reached.

Among these women was a lady of noble birth, who was wise as she was good.

Roma, for that was the lady's name, proposed that they should burn the ship in which they had sailed. Then it would be impossible for their husbands to go any farther in search of a new home.

The other women agreed to Roma's daring plan, and with mingled hope and fear the ship was set on fire.

When the men saw the flames devouring the vessel they were troubled, but when they found out how it had been set on fire, they were angry.

Yet, as anger could not give them back their ship, and as Italy was a pleasant land, the men did as the women wished. They settled near a hill called Mount Palatine, and there they built a city.

Some old stories tell that the city was called Rome after Roma, the noble lady who had first thought of setting the ship on fire.

But other stories say that the country in which Æneas landed belonged to a king named Latinus, who welcomed the Trojan, and gave him ground on which to build. Æneas married Lavinia, the daughter of the king, and called the city which he built after her Lavinium.

Soon after this, King Latinus was killed in battle, and then for three years Æneas ruled well and wisely not only over his own Trojan followers, but also over the subjects of his royal father-in-law. His people he now called Latins, in memory of King Latinus.

When the three years were passed, war broke out against the Etruscans, who were at that time the most powerful tribe in Italy.

One day a terrible storm overtook the armies on the battlefield; so dark grew the clouds that the soldiers could not see each other.

When at length the sky cleared Æneas had disappeared, and was seen no more on earth.

'The gods have taken him away,' said the Latins. So they built an altar, and henceforth worshipped their king as the god Jupiter.

Ascanius, who had escaped from Troy with his father, now ruled in Lavinium. But he soon found that the city was not large enough for all his people; so, leaving Lavinium, he built a new city, and called it Alba Longa, or the Long White City.

Alba Longa stood in the midst of the Alban hills, not far from the site on which Rome itself was soon to be

built..

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