

but their money. Those of senatorial rank were the worst sufferers from this procedure; their numbers were reduced, and no new appointments made, in the hope, no doubt, that sheer numerical weakness might bring the order into contempt, and the surviving members be readier to acquiesce in political impotence. Tarquin was the first king to break the established tradition of consulting the Senate on all matters of public business, and to govern by the mere authority of himself and his household. In questions of war and peace he was his own sole master; he made and unmade treaties and alliances with whom he pleased without any reference whatever either to the commons or to the Senate. He made particular efforts to win the friendship of the Latins, in the hope that any power or influence he could obtain abroad might give him greater security at home. With this in view he went beyond mere official friendly relations with the Latin nobility, and married his daughter to Octavius Mamilius of Tusculum, by far the most distinguished bearer of the Latin name, and descended, we are told, from Ulysses and the goddess Circe. By this marriage he attached to his interest Mamilius's numerous relatives and friends.

His influence with the leaders of Latin society was soon very great, and this gave him confidence for his next move. Declaring that he had certain matters of common interest to discuss, he summoned them to a conference at the Grove of Ferentina. On the appointed day a great number of them assembled at dawn. Tarquin was late: he did, indeed, put in an appearance on the right day, but not much before sunset. All day, while the Latins were waiting for him, various subjects were discussed, and a certain Turnus Herdonius, of Aricia, had a deal to say in disparagement of the absent Tarquin.

'No wonder,' his arguments ran, 'that Rome has called Tarquin the Proud! (The name was already current, though as yet none dared more than to whisper it.) It could hardly be better justified than by his present behaviour, which is a deliberate insult to our country. We, the heads of the chief families of Latium, have been made to travel many miles to attend this meeting - and he who convened us does not even take the trouble to be present. Why - it's as plain as a pikestaff: he wants to see how much we will put up with, and then, if he finds us submissive enough, he will stamp on us. A blind man could see he covets the sovereignty of Latium. If his own people were right to entrust him with power - if indeed it *was* entrusted, and not stolen, rather, by a murderous thief - then we, you may say, should do no

Rape of Lucretia

Livy, *History of Rome*, trans. A. de Selincourt
(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), 149-60.

Now began the reign of Tarquinius Superbus - Tarquin the Proud. His conduct merited the name. In spite of the ties of kin, he refused Servius the rite of burial, saying, in brutal jest, that Romulus's body had not been buried either. He executed the leading senators who he thought had supported Servius. Well aware that his treachery and violence might form a precedent to his own disadvantage, he employed a bodyguard. His anxiety was justified; for he had usurped by force the throne to which he had no title whatever: the people had not elected him, the Senate had not sanctioned his accession. Without hope of his subjects' affection, he could rule only by fear; and to make himself feared as widely as possible he began the practice of trying capital causes without consultation and by his own sole authority. He was thus enabled to punish with death, exile, or confiscation of property not only such men as he happened to suspect or dislike, but also innocent people from whose conviction he had nothing to gain

less. Even so, I would remind you that he is a foreigner. But what are the facts? His own people are sick of him; they are weary of the continual sitting of throats, exiles, confiscations that are going on in Rome. And, if that is true of Rome, could we in Latium expect anything better? Take my advice, and go home – all of you. Do not trouble to keep your appointment here any more than *he* has.’

Turnus, who had acquired some influence in Latium as an inveterate trouble-maker, was in the full flow of his eloquence, when Tarquin’s unexpected arrival cut him short. The audience turned their backs on the orator to pay their respects to the king. There was silence, and Tarquin, advised to give some reason for being so late, said that he had been asked to settle a dispute between a father and son and that hoping to reconcile them he had been unavoidably delayed. ‘And as that little business,’ he added, ‘has left us no more time today I will wait till tomorrow to deal with the matters I proposed to discuss.’

The excuse was not good enough for the angry Turnus. ‘No dispute,’ he is said to have replied, ‘is more quickly settled than one between father and son: all one need say is, “obey your father – or take the consequences.”’

With this parting shot Turnus took himself off.

Tarquin was more disturbed by this incident than he himself allowed to appear, and promptly considered ways and means of getting rid of Turnus. It would be politic, he felt, to make the Latins as much afraid of him as the Romans were. He was not as yet in a position openly to order his execution, so he decided to attain his object by having him convicted on a trumped-up charge. For this purpose he managed to persuade certain political enemies of Turnus to bribe one of his slaves to allow a large number of weapons to be smuggled into his lodging. It was done within the course of the night; and very early on the following morning Tarquin sent for certain distinguished members of the Latin nobility and pretended to have received alarming news, adding that his late arrival on the previous day had turned out to be a piece of extraordinary good luck, and had saved them all. ‘Turnus,’ he went on, ‘is, I am told, planning to assassinate me and the leading men in all the towns of Latium. His aim is the monarchy. He would have acted yesterday at the conference, had it not been for the absence of his chief victim – myself. He was obliged to wait, and his consequent disappointment was the reason for the bitter language he used against me. I am convinced, if the information I have is true,

that when we assemble at dawn tomorrow he will be there to attack us. He will be well armed and strongly supported, for a great many weapons have, I learn, been conveyed to his inn. The truth or falsehood of this can be proved in a moment: come with me to his rooms, and we can see for ourselves.’

Several things contributed to make the story plausible: the reckless plot was typical of Turnus; then there was his speech at the conference, and, lastly, Tarquin’s late arrival, which seemed a reasonable explanation of the postponement of the massacre. Consequently they were all predisposed to believe it, though they still needed the evidence of the weapons before accepting the other charges.

When they reached the inn, Turnus was still asleep. He was awakened and surrounded by guards. Some loyal slaves who offered resistance were seized. Weapons were found hidden in every corner of the building. Further proof was not needed, and Turnus was arrested.

Amid great excitement the Latins were immediately called upon to meet. The weapons found in the inn were produced as evidence, and so strong was the feeling against Turnus that he was convicted out of hand, without even the chance of defending himself. He was bound underneath a hurdle weighted with stones and flung into the water – a form of punishment which was a new invention of Tarquin’s.

After the execution the Latins were again summoned to Tarquin’s presence. ‘Gentlemen,’ he said, ‘I congratulate you. Turnus was a traitor; he was caught in the act, and you have given him his just reward.’

‘Now I would remind you that an ancient treaty between Rome and Latium is still in existence, and that I could act upon it if I so wished. By that treaty the whole Alban community, together with all settlements founded by the Alban people, were brought by Tullus under the dominion of Rome. You Latins are of Alban descent and therefore bound by the terms of that treaty. However, it is my belief that everybody’s interest would be better served if the old treaty were brought up to date in such a way as to allow the peoples of Latium to share the prosperity of Rome, instead of being forced to dread a repetition of the miseries – the destruction of towns, the devastation of the countryside – which they suffered during the reigns of Ancus and my father.’

The Latins were quick to see the force of this, in spite of the fact

that the treaty was more favourable to the Roman interest than to their own. Moreover it was obvious that the most influential amongst them took Tarquin's view of the matter – not to mention that the recent fate of Turnus was evidence of what would happen to anyone who ventured to oppose him. The treaty was accordingly revised, and a proclamation was issued to the effect that the Latins of military age should present themselves, fully armed, on a day fixed for the purpose at the Grove of Ferentina. In accordance with the edict men from all the Latin communities duly assembled. Tarquin then proceeded to take certain precautions: seeing it was inadvisable to allow them independent command, with their own general officers and their own standards, he reorganized the army units, so that each company should consist of Roman and Latin troops in equal numbers, under the command of a Roman centurion.

However lawless and tyrannical Tarquin may have been as monarch in his own country, as a war leader he did fine work. Indeed, his fame as a soldier might have equalled that of his predecessors, had not his degeneracy in other things obscured its lustre. It was Tarquin who began the long, two-hundred years of war with the Volscians. From them he took by storm the town of Suessa Pometia, where the sale of captured material realized forty talents of silver. This sum he allocated to the building of the Temple of Jupiter, which he had conceived on a magnificent scale, worthy of the king of gods and men, of the might of Rome, and of the majesty of the place where it was to stand. He was next engaged in hostilities with the neighbouring town of Gabii. This time, progress was slower than he expected: his assault proved abortive; the subsequent siege operations failed, and he was forced to retire; so he finally had recourse to the un-Roman, and disgraceful, method of deceit and treachery.

Pretending to have abandoned hostilities in order to devote himself to laying the foundations of the temple of Jupiter and to various other improvements in the city, he arranged for Sextus, the youngest of his three sons, to go to Gabii in the assumed character of a fugitive from the intolerable cruelty of his father. On his arrival in the town Sextus began to pour out his complaints: Tarquin, he declared, had ceased to persecute strangers and was now turning his lust for dominion against his own family; he had too many children, and was heartily sick of them; his one desire was to leave no descendants, no heir to his throne, and before long was likely to repeat in his own home what he had

already done in the Senate, and leave it a desert and a solitude. 'I myself,' he continued, 'escaped with my life through the bristling weapons of my father's guard; and I knew that nowhere but in the homes of the tyrant's enemies should I be able to find safety. Make no mistake: the suspension of hostilities is a feint only; war still awaits you, and as soon as he thinks fit Tarquin will attack you unawares. You have no room in Gabii for suppliants? Very well then; I will try my luck through the whole of Latium; I will visit in turn Volscians, Aequians, Hernicans – seeking and seeking until I find some friend who knows how to protect a son from a father's impious savagery. Who knows but I may find, too, some spark of true manhood, some readiness to take up arms against the proudest of kings and the most insolent of peoples?'

The men of Gabii gave Sextus a friendly welcome, knowing as they did, that any show of indifference would provoke him to leave the town at once. In their view, they declared, there was no cause for surprise that Tarquin should be treating his children as brutally as he had treated first the Romans and then his allies – brutality was his nature, and for lack of other objects he would end by exercising it against himself. For their part, they were glad Sextus had come, and it would not be long before, with him to help them, the scene of battle would shift from the gates of Gabii to the walls of Rome.

Sextus was soon admitted to the councils of state, where he made it his business to express agreement on all matters of local politics which the men of Gabii might be expected to understand better than himself. On one issue, however – war with Rome – he took the lead. The advisability of this he urged repeatedly, pointing out that he was specially competent to do so because of his knowledge of the resources of both parties, and of his certainty that Tarquin, whose arrogance even his own children found insufferable, had brought upon himself the hatred of all his subjects.

Sextus's words gradually took effect, and the leading men in Gabii were soon in favour of reopening hostilities. Sextus himself meanwhile with small bodies of picked troops began a series of raids on Roman territory; everything he said or did was so nicely calculated to deceive, that confidence in him grew and grew, until he was finally appointed commander of the armed forces. War was declared; minor engagements took place, nearly always to the advantage of Gabii. Of what was really happening nobody had the smallest suspicion, and the

