

The Defeat of the Latins

Source: Livy 8.6.15, 8.11, 8.14. Translated by William Masfen Roberts. In *The History of Rome*. London: J.M. Dent, 1912.

Livy tells of the problems faced by the Romans in fighting the Latins, their ethnic kin, as well as the difficulties administering a settlement after the war. The Latins, alarmed by Roman expansionism, waged war on Rome a final time in 341 and were defeated in 340; the settlement described here took place in 338.

The council of war also decided that if ever any war had been conducted with the strict enforcement of orders, on this occasion certainly, military discipline should be brought back to the ancient standard. Their anxiety was increased by the fact that it was against the Latins that they had to fight, a people resembling them in language, manners, arms, and especially in their military organization. They had been colleagues and comrades, as soldiers, centurions, and tribunes, often stationed together in the same posts and side by side in the same maniples. That this might not prove a source of error and confusion, orders were given that no one was to leave his post to fight with the enemy....

In some authors I find it stated that it was only after the battle was over that the Samnites who had been waiting to see the result came to support the Romans. Assistance was also coming to the Latins from Lanuvium whilst time was being wasted in deliberation, but whilst they were starting and a part of their column was already on the march, news came of the defeat of the Latins. They faced about and re-entered their city, and it is stated that Milonius, their praetor, remarked that for that very short march they would have to pay a heavy price to Rome.

Those of the Latins who survived the battle retreated by many different routes, and gradually assembled in the city of Vescia. Here the leaders met to discuss the situation, and Numisius assured them that both armies had really experienced the same fortune and an equal amount of bloodshed; the Romans enjoyed no more than the name of victory, in every other respect they were as good as defeated. The headquarters of both consuls were polluted with blood; the one had murdered his son, the other had devoted himself to death; their whole army was massacred, their hastati and principes killed; the companies both in front of and behind the standards had suffered enormous losses; the triarii in the end saved the situation.

The Latin troops, it was true, were equally cut up, but Latium and the Volsci could supply reinforcements more quickly than Rome. If, therefore, they approved, he would at once call out the fighting men from the Latin and Volscian peoples and march back with an army to Capua, and would take the Romans unawares; a battle was the last thing they were expecting. He dispatched misleading letters throughout

Latium and the Volscian country, those who had not been engaged in the battle being the more ready to believe what he said, and a hastily levied body of militia, drawn from all quarters, was got together.

This army was met by the consul at Trifanum, a place between Sinuessa and Menturnae. Without waiting even to choose the sites for their camps, the two armies piled their baggage, fought and finished the war, for the Latins were so utterly worsted that when the consul with his victorious army was preparing to ravage their territory, they made a complete surrender and the Campanians followed their example. Latium and Capua were deprived of their territory.

The Latin territory, including that of Privernum, together with the Falernian, which had belonged to the Campanians as far as the Voltturnus, was distributed amongst the Roman plebs. They received two jugera a head in the Latin territory, their allotment being made up by three-quarters of a jugerum in the Privernate district; in the Falernian district they received three entire jugera, the additional quarter being allowed owing to the distance. The Laurentes, amongst the Latins and the aristocracy of the Campanians, were not thus penalized because they had not revolted. An order was made for the treaty with the Laurentes to be renewed, and it has since been renewed annually on the tenth day after the Latin Festival. The Roman franchise was conferred on the aristocracy of Campania, and a brazen tablet recording the fact was fastened up in Rome in the temple of Castor, and the people of Campania were ordered to pay them each—they numbered 1600 in all—the sum of 450 denarii annually....

The leaders of the senate applauded the way in which the consul had introduced the motion, but as the circumstances differed in different cases they thought that each case ought to be decided upon its merits, and with the view of facilitating discussion they requested the consul to put the name of each place separately. Lanuvium received the full citizenship and the restitution of her sacred things, with the proviso that the temple and grove of Juno Sospita should belong in common to the Roman people and the citizens living at Lanuvium. Aricium, Nomentum, and Pedum obtained the same political rights as Lanuvium. Tusculum retained the citizenship which it had had before, and the responsibility for the part it took in the war was removed from the State as a whole and fastened on a few individuals.

The Veliternians, who had been Roman citizens from old times, were in consequence of their numerous revolts severely dealt with; their walls were thrown down, their senate deported and ordered to live on the other side of the Tiber; if any of them were caught on this side of the river, he was to be fined 1000 ases, and the man who caught him was not to release him from confinement till the money was paid.

Colonists were sent on to the land they had possessed, and their numbers made Velitrae look as populous as formerly. Antium also was assigned to a fresh body of colonists, but the Antiates were permitted to enroll themselves as colonists if they chose; their warships were taken away, and they were forbidden to possess any more; they were admitted to citizenship.

Tibur and Praeneste had their domains confiscated, not owing to the part which they, in common with the rest of Latium, had taken in the war, but because, jealous of the Roman power, they had joined arms with the barbarous nation of the

Gauls.¹ The rest of the Latin cities were deprived of the rights of intermarriage, free trade, and common councils with each other. Capua, as a reward for the refusal of its aristocracy to join the Latins, were allowed to enjoy the private rights of Roman citizens, as were also Fundi and Formiae, because they had always allowed a free passage through their territory. It was decided that Cumae and Suessula should enjoy the same rights as Capua. Some of the ships of Antium were taken into the Roman docks, others were burnt and their beaks (rostra) were fastened on the front of a raised gallery which was constructed at the end of the Forum, and which from this circumstance was called the Rostra.

¹ After the Gauls' sack of Rome in 390.