CHAPTER II

BEFORE 79

When Pompeii was founded we do not know. It is more than likely that a site so well adapted for a city was occupied at an early date. The oldest building, the Doric temple in the Forum Triangulare, is of the style of the sixth century B.C.; we are safe in assuming that the city was then already in existence.\(^1\) The founders were Oscans. They belonged to a widely scattered branch of the Italic stock, whose language, closely related with the Latin, has been imperfectly recovered from a considerable number of inscriptions, so imperfectly that in each of the longer inscriptions there still remain words the meaning of which is obscure or doubtful. From this language the name of the city came; for *pompe* in Oscan meant ‘five.’ The word does not, however, appear in its simple form; we have only the adjective derived from it, *pompaiaen*, ‘Pompeian.’ If we are right in assuming that the name appeared in Oscan, as it does in Latin, in the plural form, it was probably applied first to a gens, or clan, and thence to the city; the Latin equivalent of Pompeii would be Quintii. Pompeii was thus the city of the clan of the Pompeys, as Tarquinii was the city of the Tarquins, and Veii the city of the Veian clan. The name Pompeius was common in Pompeii down to the destruction of the city, and in other Campanian towns, notably Puteoli, to much later times.

In order to follow the course of events at Pompeii, it will be necessary to pass briefly in review the main points in the history of Campania. The Campanian Oscans, sprung from a rude and hardy race, became civilized from contact with the Greeks, who at an early period had settled in Cumae, in Dicaearchia, afterward Puteoli, and in Parthenope, later Naples; and the coast climate had an enervating effect upon them. When toward the end of the fifth century B.C. the Samnites, kinsmen of the Oscans, left their rugged mountain homes in the interior and pressed down toward the coast, the Oscans were unable to cope with them. In 424 B.C. the Samnites stormed and took Capua, in 420, Cumae; and Pompeii likewise fell into their hands. But they were no more successful than the Oscans had been in resisting the influence of Greek culture. How strong this influence was may be seen in the remains at Pompeii. The architecture of the period was Greek; Greek divinities were honored, as Apollo and Zeus Milichius; and the standard measures of the *mensa ponderaria* were inscribed with Greek names.

In less than a hundred years new strife arose between the more cultured Samnites of the plain and their rough and warlike kinsmen in the mountains. But Rome took a part in the struggle, and in the Samnite Wars (343–290 B.C.) brought both the men of the mountains and the men of the plain under her dominion. Although the sovereignty of Rome took the form of a perpetual alliance, the cities in reality lost their independence. The complete subjugation and Romanizing of Campania, however, did not come till the time of the Social War (90–88 B.C.) and the supremacy of Sulla; the Samnites staked all on the success of the popular party, and lost.

In the narrative of these events Pompeii is not often mentioned. At the time of the Second Samnite War, in the year 310 B.C., we read that a Roman fleet under Publius Cornelius landed at the mouth of the Sarno, and that a pillaging expedition followed the course of the river as far as Nuceria; but the country folk fell on the marauders as they were returning, and forced them to give up their booty. We have no definite information regarding the attitude of the Pompeians after the battle of Cannae (216 B.C.); probably they joined the side of Hannibal, who, however, was defeated by Marcus Marcellus near Nola in the following year, and was obliged to leave Campania to the Romans.

\(^1\) It seems strange that traces of other buildings of the same period have not been discovered; but, on the other hand, it is far from probable that the temple was first erected, and that the city afterward grew up around it, for in that case the temple must have been placed farther west, on the highest point of the elevation, overlooking the sea.
The sequel came in the year 80, when a colony of Roman veterans was settled in Pompeii under the leadership of Publius Sulla, a nephew of the Dictator. Cicero later made a speech in behalf of this Sulla, defending him against the charge that he had taken part in the conspiracy of Catiline and had tried to induce the old residents of Pompeii to join in the plot. From this speech we learn that Sulla's reorganization of the city was accomplished with so great regard for the interests of the Pompeians, that they ever after held him in grateful remembrance. We learn, also, that soon after the founding of the colony disputes arose between the old residents and the colonists, about the public walks (ambulatio") and matters connected with the voting; the arrangements for voting had probably been so made as to throw the decision always into the hands of the colonists. The controversy was referred to the patrons of the colony, and settled by them. From this time on, the life of Pompeii seems not to have differed from that of the other small cities of Italy.

As the harbor of Pompeii was on the Sarno, which flowed at some distance from the city, there must have been a small settlement at the landing place. To this probably belonged a group of buildings, partly excavated in 1880-81, lying just across the Sarno canal (canale del Bottaro), about a third of a mile from the Stabian Gate. Here were found many skeletons, and with them a quantity of gold jewellery, which was afterward placed in the Museum at Naples. The most reasonable explanation of the discovery is, that the harbor was here, and that these persons, gathering up their valuables, fled from Pompeii at the time of the eruption either in order to escape by sea or to take refuge in Stabiae. Flight in either case was cut off. If ships were in the harbor, they must soon have been filled with the volcanic deposits; if there was a bridge across the river it was probably thrown down by the earthquake.

A second suburb sprang up near the sea, in connection with the salt works (salarium) of the city. Our knowledge of the inhabitants, the Salines, is derived from several inscriptions painted upon walls, in which they recommend candidates for the municipal offices, and from an inscription scratched upon the plaster of a column in which a fuller by the name of Crescens sends them a greeting: Cresc[...]+[Saline]n[sibos salutem]. From another inscription we learn that they had an assembly, convenit, possibly judicial in its functions; for in connection with a date, it speaks of a fine of twenty sesterces, which would amount to about 3½ shillings, or 85 cents: VII K. dec. Salinum in convenitu multa HS XX, 'Fine of twenty sesterces; assembly at Saline, November 25.' Still another inscription speaks of attending such a meeting on November 19: XIII K. dec. in conventu veni.

The suburb most frequently mentioned was at first called Pagus Felix Suburbanus, but after the time of Augustus, Pagus Augustus Felix Suburbanus. Its location is unknown. As it evidently took the name of Felix from the Dictator Sulla, who used this epithet as a surname, we may assume that its origin dates from the establishment of the Roman colony; it may have been founded to provide a place for those inhabitants of Pompeii who had been forced to leave their homes in order to make room for the colonists. The existence of a fourth suburb is inferred from two painted inscriptions in which candidates for office are recommended by the Campanians; this name would naturally be applied to the inhabitants of a Pagus Campanus, who, perhaps, had originally come from Capua.

Of the government of Pompeii in the earliest times, before the Samnite conquest, nothing is known. The names of various magistrates in the Samnite period, however, particularly the period of alliance with Rome (290-90 B.C.), are learned from inscriptions. Mention is made of a chief administrative officer
(mediss, mediss tovtis); of quaestors, who, probably, like the quaestors in Rome, were charged with the financial administration and let the contracts for public buildings; and of aediles, to whom, no doubt, was intrusted the care of streets and buildings, together with the policing of the markets. The Latin names of the last two officials suggest that their offices were introduced after 290. There was also an assembly called kumbennion, with which we may compare the Latin conventus; but whether it was an assembly of the people or a city council cannot now be determined.

After the establishment of the Roman colony, Pompeii was named Colonia Cornelia Veneria Pompeianorum, from the gentile name of the Dictator Sulla (Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix) and from the goddess to whom he paid special honor, who now, as Venus Pompeiana, became the tutelary divinity of the city. This goddess is represented in wall paintings. In that from which our illustration is taken (Fig. 4), she appears in a blue mantle studded with golden stars, and wears a crown set with green stones. Her left hand, which holds a sceptre, rests upon a rudder; in her right is a twig of olive. A Cupid stands upon a pedestal beside her, holding up a mirror.

From this time the highest official body, as in Roman colonies everywhere, was the city council, composed of decurions. The administration was placed in the hands of two pairs of officials, the duumvirs with judiciary authority, duumviri iuicando, and two aediles, who were responsible for the care of buildings and streets and the oversight of the markets. When the duumvirs and the aediles joined in official acts they were known as the Board of Four, quattuorviri. Down to the time of the Empire it appears that the aediles were not desig-
the emperor had received the vote; in the last two cases, the prefect was undoubtedly appointed by the emperor. Thus, in the years 34 and 40 A.D., the Emperor Caligula was duumvir of Pompeii; but the duties of the office were discharged by a prefect. A law passed in Rome toward the end of the Republic on the motion of a certain Petronius contained provisions regarding the appointment of prefects; one chosen in accordance with them was called praefectus ex lege Petronia, 'prefect according to the law of Petronius.'

There were also in Pompeii priests supported by the city, but only a few of them are mentioned in the inscriptions. References are found to augurs and pontifices, to a priest of Mars, and to priests (flamen, succedos) of Augustus while he was still living; Nero had a priest even before he ascended the throne. Mention is made of priestesses, too, a priestess of Ceres and Venus, priestesses of Ceres, and others, the divinities of whom are not named.

The suburbs could scarcely have had a separate administration; they remained within the jurisdiction of the magistrates of the city. In the case of the Pagus Augustus Felix mention is made of a magister, 'director,' ministri, 'attendants,' and pagani, 'pagus officials'; but apparently these were all appointed for religious functions only, in connection with the worship of the emperor. The magister and the pagani, in part at least, were freedmen; the four ministri, first appointed in 7 B.C., were slaves.

Apart from commerce, an important source of income for the Pompeians lay in the fertility of the soil. In antiquity, as now, grapes were cultivated extensively on the ridge projecting from the foot of Vesuvius toward the south. The evidence afforded by the great number of wine jars, amphorae (Fig. 5), that have been brought to light would warrant this conclusion; and lately wine presses also have been discovered near Boscoreale, above Pompeii. Pliny makes mention of the Pompeian wine, but remarks that indulgence in it brings a headache that will last till noon of the following day. The olive too was cultivated, but only to a limited extent; this we infer from the small capacity of the press and other appliances for making oil found in the same villa in which the wine presses were discovered. At the present time the making of oil is not carried on about Pompeii. In the plain below the city vegetables were raised, as at the present day; the cabbage and onions of Pompeii were highly prized.

The working up of the products of the fisheries formed an important industry. The fish sauces which so tickled the palate of ancient epicures, garum, liquamen, and muria, were produced here of the finest quality. The making of them seems to have been practically a monopoly in the hands of a certain Umbricius Scaurus; a great number of earthen jars have been found with the mark of his ownership (p. 506).

The Pompeians turned to account, also, the volcanic products of Vesuvius. Pumice stone was an article of export. From the lava millstones were made for both grain mills and oil mills, which were apparently already in extensive use in the time of Cato the Elder; he twice mentions the oil mills of Pompeii. In Pompeii itself the millstones of the oldest period are of lava from Vesuvius; later it was found that the lava of Rocca Monfina was better adapted for the purpose, and millstones of that material were preferred. Small hand-mills of the lava from Vesuvius were in use at Pompeii down to 79; but the larger millstones of this material found in the bakeries had been put one side. In shape and finish the mills of local make were superior to the more carelessly worked stones from Rocca Monfina; the preference for the latter was due to the fact that they contained numerous crystals of leucite, which broke off as the mill wore away, and so kept the grinding surfaces always rough. Millstones from Rocca Monfina may be seen at different places in Rome, as in the Museum of the Baths of Diocletian.
To the sources of revenue which contributed to the prosperity of Pompeii we may add the presence of wealthy Romans, who, attracted by the delightful climate, built country seats in the vicinity. Among them was Cicero, who often speaks of his Pompeian villa (Pompeianum). That the imperial family also had a villa here is inferred from a curious accident. We read that Drusus, the young son of the Emperor Claudius, a few days after his betrothal to the daughter of Sejanus, was choked to death at Pompeii by a pear which he had thrown up into the air and caught in his mouth. These country seats, no doubt, lay on the high ground back of Pompeii, toward Vesuvius; they probably faced the sea. But the identification of a villa excavated in the last century, and then filled up again, as the villa of Cicero, is wholly without foundation.

Salve lucrum, ‘Welcome, Gain!’ Such is the inscription which a Pompeian placed in the mosaic floor of his house. Lucrum gaudium, ‘Gain is pure joy,’ we read on the threshold of another house. A thrifty Pompeian certainly did not lack opportunity to acquire wealth.

How large a population Pompeii possessed at the time of the destruction of the city it is impossible to determine. A pains-taking examination of all the houses excavated would afford data for an approximate estimate; but the results thus far obtained by those who have given attention to the subject are unsatisfactory. Fiorelli assigned to Pompeii twelve thousand inhabitants, Nissen twenty thousand. Undoubtedly the second estimate is nearer the truth than the first; according to all indication the population may very likely have exceeded twenty thousand.

This population was by no means homogeneous. The original Oscan stock had not yet lost its identity; inscriptions in the Oscan dialect are found scratched on the plaster of walls decorated in the style prevalent after the earthquake of the year 62. From the time when the Roman colony was founded no doubt additions continued to be made to the population from various parts of Italy. The Greek element was particularly strong. This is proved by the number of Greek names in the accounts of Caecilius Jucundus, for example, and by the Greek inscriptions that have been found on walls and on amphorae. The Greeks may have come from the neighboring towns; most of them were probably freedmen. In a seaport we should expect to find also Greeks from trans-marine cities; and, in fact, an Alexandrian appears in one of the receipts of Jucundus. There were Orientals, too, as we shall see when we come to the temple of Isis.

Thus far there has come to hand no trustworthy evidence for the presence of Christians at Pompeii; but traces of Jewish influence are not lacking. The words Sodom, Gomora, are scratched in large letters on the wall of a house in Region IX (IX. i. 26). They must have been written by a Jew, or possibly a Christian; they seem like a prophecy of the fate of the city.

Another interesting bit of evidence is a wall painting, which appears to have as its subject the Judgment of Solomon (Fig. 6). On a tribunal at the right sits the king with two advisers; the pavilion is well guarded with soldiers. In front of the tribunal a soldier is about to cut a child in two with a cleaver. Two women are represented, one of whom stands at the block and is already taking hold of the half of the child assigned to her, while the other casts herself on her knees as a suppliant before the judges. It is not certain that the reference here is to Solomon; such tales pass from one country to another, and a somewhat similar story is told of the Egyptian king Bocchoris. The balance of probability is in favor of the view that we have here the Jewish version of the story, because this is consistent with other facts that point to the existence of a Jewish colony at Pompeii.
The names Maria and Martha appear in wall inscriptions. The assertion that Maria here is not the Hebrew name, but the feminine form of the Roman name Marius, is far astray. It appears in a list of female slaves who were working in a weaver’s establishment, Vitalis, Florentina, Amaryllis, Januaria, Heraclia, Maria, Lalage, Damalis, Doris. The Marian family was represented at Pompeii, but the Roman name Maria could not have been given to a slave. That we have here a Jewish name seems certain since the discovery of the name Martha.

In inscriptions upon wine jars we find mention of a certain M. Valerius Abinnerichus, a name which is certainly Jewish or Syrian; but whether Abinnerich was a dealer, or the owner of the estate on which the wine was produced, cannot be determined. In this connection it is worth while to note that vessels have been found with the inscribed labels, gar[um] cast[um] or cast[imoniale], and mur[ia] cast[a]. As we learn from Pliny (N. H. XXXI. viii. 95), these fish sauces, prepared for fast days, were used especially by the Jews.

Some have thought that the word Christians can be read in an inscription written with charcoal, and have fancied that they found a reference to the persecution of the Christians under Nero. But charcoal inscriptions, which will last for centuries when covered with earth, soon become illegible if exposed to the air; such an inscription, traced on a wall at the time of the persecutions under Nero, must have disappeared long before the destruction of the city. The inscription in question was indistinct when discovered, and has since entirely faded; the reading is quite uncertain. If it were proved that the word “Christians” appeared in it, we should be warranted only in the inference that Christians were known at Pompeii, not that they lived and worshipped there. According to Tertullian (Apol. 40) there were no Christians in Campania before 79.