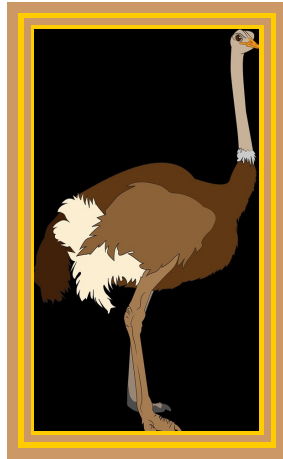


Adhibenda est in jocando moderatio.¹

Literature 16



The Golden Fleece (2) and How Paulus Aemilius Conquered Macedonia

1 Greece

Read “*The Golden Fleece (2)*” You will find it on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive in Volume 3, Classics, “Legends of Greece and Rome” by G. H. Kupfer, no. 27.

2 Rome

How Paulus Aemilius (c. 229 BC – 160 BC) Conquered Macedonia

Stories from Roman History Retold by Lena Dalkeith (1906)

For three years the Roman legions had fought in Macedonia and each year a different consul had commanded them, yet Macedonia remained unconquered.

'It is time,' said the senate, 'to send a man who can fight.'

'Send Paulus Aemilius,' cried the Roman citizens, and as they said, so it was done.

Paulus Aemilius was made consul, and as soon as possible given command over the army in Macedonia.

Paulus Aemilius, the son of that general who died at Cannae, was not young, but he was honoured above all the brave men in Rome (and there were many at that time) for his splendid honesty and his skill in war.

When at last he reached the Roman camp in Macedonia he found that there was a great deal to do before he could even think of giving battle. The consul before him had not been strict enough

¹ Let there be moderation in joking (i.e. never push a joke too far). Cicero.

with the soldiers; therefore they had grown discontented and impudent, and worse than all, careless of their duties.

Aemilius very speedily let them know that he was their master, and that they must obey him or else be severely punished. Among other things he forbade the sentinels to go on night duty with their shields, for the Roman shield was so large and long that a man might easily prop himself up against it and sleep standing. This the soldiers often did, even when they knew that the enemy was near and they might be attacked at any moment.

Aemilius had need of all his wit and his bravery in the coming war. His army was much smaller than that of his enemy. Perseus, the Macedonian king, had 40,000 foot and 4000 horse soldiers, and he might have commanded even more if he had not been such a mean man.

The Bastarnae, a fierce and warlike Gallic tribe, came, 20,000 strong, to offer their services, but these warriors wanted paying, and Perseus, rather than part with his precious gold (of which he had more than enough), sent them away again. His love of gold seems to have been even greater than his hatred of the Romans or his fear of them, for he was a coward as well as a miser.

Nevertheless, mean and cowardly as he was, Perseus commanded a magnificent army. His camp was pitched by the seaside at the foot of Mount Olympus, in a place impossible for the Romans to capture.

Aemilius first set about frightening the enemy from the stronghold. This was done by sending some of the troops under the command of young Scipio Nasica – Scipio with the long nose – by a steep and perilous road to attack the Macedonians in the heights.

Scipio succeeded so well that Perseus left the place in haste and marched to Pydna, where, after putting the troops in order of battle, he awaited the Romans.

He chose for the battlefield the plain outside the town of Pydna, because there the ground was smooth and even, and only on smooth, even ground was the Macedonian Phalanx of any use. The Phalanx was formed by a large square of foot-soldiers armed with long heavy pikes and large shields. Upon the order being given to advance, each soldier linked his shield with that of his neighbour, and at the same time thrust forward his pike, so that all along the line nothing could be seen but bristling pike and gleaming shield, and as long as the men kept together it was almost impossible for the enemy to break through the terrible Phalanx.

Across the plain two rivers flowed; they were not very deep, for it was the end of summer, but they were quite deep enough to give trouble to the Romans. Also, near by, there was a chain of little hills to which the more lightly armed soldiers could retreat and make ready for the next attack, so you see altogether Perseus had chosen his field of battle wisely.

By and by up came the Romans, marching steadily and in good order. Aemilius, when he saw the army of his enemy all in battle array, stood silent awhile in astonishment and some little dismay.

Scipio Nasica, made eager by his victory on the heights, asked to be allowed to attack on the instant. Aemilius smilingly shook his head.

'If I were as young as you are, my friend,' he said, 'I should certainly give battle at once. But I am old enough to know that were we to attack now it would mean defeat, for we are weary with marching, while our enemies are fresh and eager for the fight.'

So saying, he bade the first line of soldiers stand on guard, while the rest began quickly to dig the trenches of the camp, and very soon the whole army, having supped, lay down to sleep.

And then a strange thing happened. The full moon which shone high in the heavens began to disappear. Little by little her light went out in a most mysterious way, and ere long the earth was in thick darkness.

The Macedonians, now in their camp, lay awake shivering with fright, for they believed that this strange darkness was a sign of the anger of the gods, a sign of defeat, a sign of the coming death of their king. But the Romans slept peacefully and woke up calm and cheerful on the morning of the battle, for Aemilius had told them beforehand to fear nothing. The darkness was only an eclipse of the moon.

The fateful hour of battle came at last. Aemilius, as he watched the Phalanx advancing, was afraid in his heart, although like a brave man he hid his fear, and went up and down the ranks bareheaded and without a shield, cheering and encouraging his men.

First came the tall Thracians, terrible to behold with their black vests and glistening white shields: their iron-shod pikes shaking on their shoulders as they marched. After them followed the hired soldiers, and after these again the Macedonians themselves, splendidly clad in new purple vests, bearing arms that shone golden in the sun.

The Romans first attacked the terrible fronted Phalanx, but for all their bravery they could not break the line. Their swords were not long enough to reach the men who bore the long pikes.

Steadily, step by step, the enemy advanced, and as they did so the Romans retreated. They did not flee, but they were not anxious to face the pikes again. Aemilius rent his clothes and prayed the gods to help him.

Suddenly he saw that here and there the Phalanx was broken owing to the ground becoming more uneven. At once he sent little companies of men who fought their way through the broken spaces, and so made the division still wider. This turned the fortunes of the day, for the Phalanx once broken its soldiers were almost helpless, their heavy pikes being of little use at close quarters.

Perseus fled with the cavalry, leaving the brave men who had fought so well to their fate. All was over. Aemilius had conquered Macedonia in one little fortnight. All the gold which Perseus had so carefully hoarded was taken by his conquerors. Aemilius kept none for himself but gave it all to his country, and so great was the treasure that for more than a hundred years the citizens in Rome paid no taxes.

Perseus, coward to the last, tearfully surrendered, and was brought to Italy in triumph with his wife and children.

Aemilius lived some time after his conquest, loved and honoured by his country-men. When he died, his ashes (for the Romans always burned their dead) were carried to the tomb by some Macedonian nobles, who, being in Rome at the time, wished to do honour to the brave man who had conquered them.

His son, who fought also at the battle of Pydna, rose to be even a greater man. He was the second Scipio Africanus, the man who destroyed Carthage.

Vocabulary for your notebook:

praefectus, praefecti (PRY-fect-us, PRY-fect-ee) prefect, commander, chief

Bible example:

*Tunc rex Danielem in sublime extulit, et munera multa, et magna dedit ei: et constituit eum principem super omnes provincias Babylonis: et **praefectum** magistratum super cunctos sapientes Babylonis.* Daniel 2:48

You know quite a few of these words: *Tunc, rex, et,* and *in*. *Super* is related to “superior,” and means over, it is on the IGCSE word list so you can add it to your indexed notebook. You will guess *provincias Babylonis*. You know the word *sapientia* so you will guess who the *sapientes* are. The word “magistrate” is related to *magistratum* which is translated “governors” in our Bible.

socius, socii (SOCK-ee-us, SOCK-ee-ee) ally, friend, companion

Bible example:

*frater fui draconum et **socius** strutionum* Job 30:29.

This is poor Job's lament. You will meet *frater* later: it means “brother” and is related to the word “fraternal.” Can you guess what animal (*draconum*) he says he is brother to? The birds he says he is a friend of are ostriches in the Vulgate although our Bible calls them owls.