

*Aut inveniam viam aut faciam.*¹

Literature 15



The Golden Fleece (1) and Hannibal (2)

1 Greece

Read “*The Golden Fleece (1)*” You will find it on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive in Volume 3, Classics, “Legends of Greece and Rome” by G. H. Kupfer, no. 26.

2 Rome

Hannibal 2

Stories from Roman History Retold by Lena Dalkeith (1906)

The patrician general, Fabius Maximus, was the man chosen by the frightened citizens to be Dictator of Rome and leader of the army, when they heard that Hannibal had made himself master of Etruria as well as of Cisalpine Gaul.

Above everything Fabius loved his country, and his one great desire was to save it from the Carthaginians, who were taking city after city, burning, robbing, murdering, leaving misery behind them wherever they went.

Fabius was sad when he thought of this and of the two brave armies that had already been slaughtered by Hannibal, and he prayed earnestly to the gods to grant him their favour and give him victory over the enemy. Then he set out at the head of the army, his mind quite made up as to the way he should fight against Hannibal. A canny, cautious way it was, and because of it he was sometimes called 'the Lingerer.' Wherever Hannibal and his army went, Fabius followed with his: if

¹ I shall either find a way or make one. Attributed to Hannibal when told he could not take elephants over the Alps.

the Carthaginians camped, Fabius did the same, if they marched, so did he, yet he would never let his army be drawn into a pitched battle, but always kept them a little distance away from the enemy.

His soldiers fretted sorely at this, for they loved to fight. His generals and captains were angrier still, thinking of the glory which would be theirs if Hannibal were defeated. Lucius Minucius, the general of horse and next in rank after Fabius, was the angriest of them all. Many bitter things he said to the army about their Dictator, calling him an 'old woman,' and mocking at him whenever the chance was given him, until at last the soldiers came to despise Fabius, and longed to have Lucius for their leader.

The general of horse grew prouder and more insolent every day. It was the custom of Fabius to encamp on the hillside and in high places, so that the army might be out of reach of the enemy's horse. Lucius said that this was done to let the Roman soldiers see how many towns Hannibal had burned to the ground. Then he would ask the Dictator's friends if Fabius wished to hide from his enemy behind a screen of fog and cloud: these and many other things he said, accusing his leader of cowardice.

Fabius, when he was told of it, answered:

'It is true that I fear Hannibal, but for my country's sake, not for my own, and it is no shame for a brave man to fear for his country and to act as he thinks best for its defence. The only way we can hope to vanquish Hannibal is by tiring him out, by keeping him always on the watch for an attack which may or may not come. The only way is for us to bide our time. With every town that he captures he loses more men, and here he cannot find soldiers to fight in 'their place, for this part of the country keeps faithful to Rome. Thus his army is growing less and less, and one day, if we are patient, we shall give battle and win, for no general, however great, can conquer without men and money.'

Then his friends begged him to fight once at least, for the people in Rome, hearing no good news, were growing discontented and angry. To this Fabius calmly answered:

'I should indeed be the coward they think me if I put the whole army in peril – nay, endangered Rome itself – because I fear their mockery and scorn. This is the only way, and however much I am hated and despised I will keep to it as long as I am Dictator of Rome.'

After this something happened which made the soldiers and the Roman citizens, when they heard, even more discontented with Fabius. Hannibal, clearer-sighted than the Romans, understood very well that it was not fear that made the Dictator avoid a pitched battle. He guessed the clever plan, and did his best to spoil it. Although his army was the smaller, his men were better trained and more skilful than the Romans, and he himself was a far greater general than Fabius, so being sure of victory he was very anxious to fight.

Therefore he marched into the Campania, thinking that when Fabius saw all that most beautiful part of the country laid waste by fire and sword, he would no longer refuse his soldiers their will to fight. But the guides, instead of leading him the right way, brought him by mistake into a valley out of which there was no opening save through the passes in the hills.

Fabius, who as usual had followed the enemy closely, took care to have each pass guarded by the Roman legions. Thus Hannibal was caught like a rat in a trap, or so it seemed. Was he caught, the great Hannibal – really caught at last? Even his own troops thought so, and confusion and terror reigned in the camp until Hannibal himself calmed the tumult, telling the men to have no fear, but to wait quietly till dark.

When night time came he caused great lighted torches to be bound to the horns of two thousand oxen, and had the beasts driven up the hill-side.

The Romans saw lights moving over the hill through the darkness, and thinking that the enemy were trying to escape that way, rushed to prevent them. This left the pass clear; Hannibal marched quickly and safely through it, and was once more free to work his will upon the country.

Fabius was bitterly reproached for letting the enemy escape, and the people firmly believed that they had made a mistake in appointing him Dictator.

'Fabius has done nothing yet to show himself worthy of the great trust we put in him,' they said, and Fabius bore the injustice patiently, for he knew that if he had not conquered Hannibal he had at least kept him in check.

About this time he had to go to Rome to offer up sacrifices to the gods. Lucius Minucius, who was left in charge of the army, disobeyed orders. While Hannibal with most of his army was away from the camp, having gone in search of food, Lucius attacked those who were left, and by good fortune won a slight victory without losing many of his men in the tussle.

This, when it became known, made him the idol of the people, and had they dared, they would have taken the command from Fabius and given it to Lucius.

Fabius, when the news was brought to him cried:

'Alas! this will make him rasher than ever! At any rate he shall be punished when I return for having disobeyed orders.'

The people, fearing for their hero, thereupon made Lucius Dictator as well, giving him equal power with Fabius. Thus there were two Dictators, and when Fabius joined the troops again the army was divided into two camps – one obeying Fabius, the other Lucius.

As you will guess, Lucius at once caused the red robe to be hung over his tent, which was a sign to the soldiers to prepare for battle. Hannibal was delighted; he had been waiting anxiously for this. The battle took place. Lucius, who was more courageous than wise, was defeated.

Towards the end of the day, Fabius, who was watching the battle from a hill near by, turned to his men and cried:

'Soldiers, if you love your country follow me now. Lucius Minucius is a brave man and a gallant soldier, and he deserves to be helped. So long as there was a chance of victory we were bound to stay here, but now in misfortune we can lend him our aid.'

Whereupon he led his army to the rescue, caused Hannibal to retire, and saved Lucius and his soldiers from being wholly slaughtered. Thus again Hannibal was victorious, yet the generous Fabius said never a word of blame or reproach to his rash comrade.

Lucius showed that he too could be generous and great-hearted. Before the whole united Roman army he begged Fabius to forgive him, and turning to his soldiers, he bade them behold their leader, gave up his title of Dictator, and until the end of that campaign obeyed Fabius cheerfully and uncomplainingly, like the good soldier he really was. And the Roman citizens, hearing of the matter, from that time forth began to give Fabius the trust and respect that his patient courage deserved.

Here are two more first conjugation verbs for your notebook:

servare to save, to keep

This is related to our word “conserve.”

Bible example:

qui non diligit me sermones meos non servat John 14:24

Non you already know. *Me* is “me.” You might guess *sermones*: what is a sermon made of?²

Diligit is hard because we think of diligent. It actually means “he loves” so *non diligit* is “he does not love, or (more like Latin) in older English “he loves not.” Short Latin words that begin *qu* are often translated by English words beginning “wh.”

spectare to look at, to watch

What English words are related to this Latin word? Answers on the next page.

Bible example:

Quid autem spectas festucam, quae est in oculo fratris tui; trabem vero, quae est in oculo tuo, non animadvertis? Matthew 7:3

Chant the verb though to find out who is doing the looking at. You know *est*, *in oculo* and *non*. *Vero* is a useful word to put in your indexed notebook: it means “in fact.” “Animadvert” is actually a word in English although not often used now. It means “to notice” usually in a critical sense, i.e. to notice or comment on something bad. The *qu* words are English words beginning “wh” again. *Autem* is another very useful word to put in your vocabulary book. It means “however, or “but.” I don't think you will use the nouns *festucam* or *trabem* very often in Latin but I think you might have guessed the whole text already by now even without looking up the reference!

Answers: I came up with “spectator,” “spectacular” and “spectacle(s).”