

*Potuit fortasse minoris piscator quam piscis emi.*¹

Literature 19



A Sea God and a Wicked Enchantress and Of The Gracchi (2) How Caius Gracchus Followed Faithfully in his Brother's Steps

1 Greece

Read “*A Sea God and a Wicked Enchantress*” You will find it on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive in Volume 3, Classics, “Legends of Greece and Rome” by G. H. Kupfer, no. 30. the picture above is the Strait of Messina, the stretch of water between Sicily and the mainland of Italy, the traditional location of Scylla, the rock in the story.

2 Rome

Stories from Roman History Retold by Lena Dalkeith (1906)

'What will Caius Gracchus do?' the patricians asked uneasily, after the murder of the elder Gracchus. 'What have we to fear from him? Is he too the people's friend, and if so how can we prevent him from being made tribune?'

That Caius Gracchus was the people's friend his enemies found out very soon. He was as noble and as good as his brother but more fiery and high-spirited, and he had the gift of splendid speech.

The first time the citizens heard him speak they felt as if they could listen for ever, such a golden voice was his, so beautiful were the words he used, so noble and free the gestures he made.

The angry and jealous patricians tried their best to keep him out of Rome. They forbade him to leave the army, which was then in Sardinia. Caius, who had served more than his full time as a soldier, was so indignant at the order that he returned at once to the capital. Then the senate accused him of having disobeyed the order of the State, but Caius defended himself easily at the trial; the people pronounced him innocent, and directly afterwards, he offered himself as tribune – and was accepted, for the people loved him, both for his dead brother's sake and for his own.

¹ .You may perhaps buy the fisherman for less money than his fish. Juvenal. (When Juvenal wrote this huge sums of money were spent on luxurious dainties for Roman feasts.)

Now Caius had loved his brother dearly; he longed to avenge his death, and at first all the laws he made were for that purpose. But Cornelia, his mother, at last persuaded him to give up his vengeance, and afterwards he thought only of doing good to the people, like his brother before him.

He made a great many good and just laws, which took the power from the rich, and gave more freedom and comfort to the poor. He built granaries in which to store corn; he made beautiful, even, straight roads all over the country, so that the traffic might come and go without let or hindrance; he divided these roads into furlongs, each one-eighth of a mile in length, and put milestones up all along the way.

Wherever he went he was followed by a crowd of magistrates, architects, and labourers, eager to ask his advice about their work, and busy as he was, he had time to spare for all.

The people adored him, and though he never asked them, they made him tribune for the second time. The patricians hated and feared him, for his power was even greater than that of the senate, and they spent their days in plotting his ruin.

A strange way they chose for the destroying of his power. As time went on it was seen that Caius had a rival. This man, who did all he could to make the people love him, was also a tribune, Livius Drusus by name. If one day Caius founded a colony for the poor, the next day Drusus founded twelve. When Caius made the citizens pay a small rent for their land, Drusus took away the rent and gave it them for nothing. Caius passed a law which made the country Italians equal with the Roman citizens, whereupon Drusus passed another law which forbade the soldiers to be flogged for any fault whatsoever.

So it went on; and all that Caius did the senate found fault with, while Drusus received nothing but praise for his deeds. Then those ungrateful people began to forget what Caius had done for them; they began to put Drusus first and Caius last, for Drusus gave them all that they wanted, whether good things or bad, while Caius refused to do anything but what was for their good. And so they came to dislike him, these foolish, spoilt people. They did not know that Drusus was secretly working for the senate, and that all the freedom he gave them would be taken away again when Caius was overthrown.

So when the time came for the making of new tribunes Caius was not chosen, nor any of his friends. The Consul Opimius who hated him, now boldly declared that he was going to change some of the laws that Caius had made. There was to be a meeting held in the Capitol, and Caius was to be there.

As he left home his wife put her arms round him and begged him not to go.

'How do I know if you will ever come back again? Remember your brother! They will murder you as they did him, and fling your body into the Tiber,' she cried, and wept and clung to him.

Sadly Caius unloosed her arms, and silently joined his friends on their way to the Capitol. Outside the temple stood a lictor, an attendant of Opimius. This man insulted Caius; very likely he mocked at him for having lost the tribuneship. At any rate he made the friends of Caius so angry that they slew him on the spot. The people, crying 'Murder! Murder!' rushed to the Forum. Opimius, coming out of the temple where he had been sacrificing, caused the body to be carried through the streets, hoping thereby to rouse the anger of the citizens against Caius.

That night faithful friends kept watch over his house, fearing an attack. From dark until dawn

they watched, silent, grave, and thoughtful, as brave men are in times of danger.

The next morning Opimius ordered all the senators and knights to arm themselves, then he called for Caius and his friends to be brought before him to account for the death of his servant, and when they would not come, but fled with their followers to the temple of Diana on Mount Aventine, he declared them to be enemies of the people. To the man who should bring him the head of Caius he promised its weight in gold, and he offered a free pardon to all those who would desert their leader.

Sad to tell, a great many of the citizens accepted the offer, and left Caius to defend himself as best he could. The patricians attacked Mount Aventine. What hope was there for Caius with so few men to fight for him? He fled to the temple, and flinging himself on his knees before the statue of Diana prayed to the goddess to curse the Roman citizens with the curse of slavery, for they had shown themselves unworthy of freedom.

Then as the patricians burst into the building he and two faithful friends ran towards the Sublician Bridge. Their enemies followed. So that Caius might have time to cross in safety his two friends kept the bridge, and nobly they fought, and nobly they died.

On fled Caius. He reached the other side; he called for a horse, but no man would lend a hand to save him, and so in the sacred grove of the Furies he slew himself to escape the disgrace of being slain by his enemies.

It was not long before the citizens, cruelly oppressed by the patricians, began to repent them for having deserted their friend; but it was too late; they could not bring him to life again. All they could do was to raise a statue in honour of his memory and that of his brother Tiberius. And when Cornelia, their mother died some time afterwards, she too had her statue with these words engraved upon it: 'Cornelia, the Mother of the Gracchi.'

But she lived to be quite an old lady. She had many noble friends who loved to hear her tell the story of her brave sons. And she always ended the story by saying: 'The grandchildren of the great Scipio Africanus were my sons. They perished in the temples and the groves of the gods, and they deserved to fall in these holy spots, for they gave their lives for the noblest of ends – the happiness of the people.'

Two more adjectives for your notebook:

contentus, -a, -um (con-TENT-us) – satisfied, happy, content

Bible example:

*Nec his **contenta**, procidit ad pedes regis, flevitque et locuta ad eum oravit ut malitiam Aman Agagitae, et machinationes eius pessimas, quas excogitaverat contra Iudaeos, iuberet irritas fieri.*

Esther 8:3

This comes from the climax of the story of Esther when God enabled her to use her position as Queen to prevent a massacre of the Jews throughout the Empire of Ahasuerus. This is one of those verses which is quite different in the Vulgate to what we have in our more accurate English translations. On the last page I will give you Wycliffe's translation (he did not translate from the original Hebrew but from the Vulgate) so that you can see how it goes.

You know a few words here and can guess *pedes* (what you push pedals with), *machinationes* (same as in English if you remove the *e*), *pessimas* (a pessimist always thinks **bad** things will happen), *excogitaverat* (*ex* is “out” and the rest is a simple word for “cogitate”) and *contra* is “contrary.” The person who was *contenta* (or rather **not contenta** because of the negative word *nec*) was Esther. You must put an “H” in front of *Aman* to get his name in English. Change the *I* in

Iudaeos to a “J” to identify these people in English.

solus, -a, -um (SO-lus – alone, only)

The word “solitary” and the name of the game “solitaire” are related to this word.

Bible example:

remansit autem solus Noe et qui cum eo erant in arca

Genesis 7: 23b

A more helpful word order for English speakers is:

autem Noe solus remansit et qui erant cum eo in arca

Autem is a useful little word to add to your notebook. It means “but” or “however.” You can guess who *Noe* is and what he did (*remansit*). *Erant* is part of the verb to be which you will be meeting later. It means “were” and the subject is *qui* (remember to change the *qu* to “wh”) so we get “[those] who were” *cum eo*. You know *cum* and *eo* is “him” (i.e. *Noe*). *In arca* is easy – just remove the final *a*.

Wycliffe's translation of Esther 8:3. There are two versions because Wycliff's translation dates from before printing so there are some difference in the copies we have:

And Esther was not appeased with these things, and felled down to the feet of the king, and wept, and spake to him, and prayed, that he should command the malice of Haman of (the kindred of) Agag, and his worst casts, which he had thought out against the Jews, to be made void.

or

But Esther was not yet appeased with these things, and she fell down at the king's feet, and wept, and spoke to him, and begged him, that he would command that the malice of Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews, and his evil plans, that he had plotted against the Jews, be stopped.