

*Bonae valetudinis mater est frugalitas.*¹

Literature 24



The Giant who Loved a Sea-Nymph and Julius Caesar, Dictator: Dead

1 Greece

Read “*The Giant who loved a Sea-Nymph*” You will find it on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive in Volume 3, Classics, “Legends of Greece and Rome” by G. H. Kupfer, no. 35.

2 Rome

Stories from Roman History Retold by Lena Dalkeith (1906)

Upon that terrible day when Caesar came by his death, Mark Antony, his most faithful friend, was hindered from entering the senate by a conspirator, one Decimus Albinus. This man kept Antony talking outside the building. Suddenly Decimus stopped speaking, for he had heard sounds from within; there was no longer any need to deceive Antony; Julius Caesar was dead.

Ay, Caesar was dead! Those senators who were his friends, and who had been too shocked and surprised to lift a finger to save him, now rushed out from the building, pale and terrified, for they knew not whose turn would come next.

Antony too fled into hiding. He, of all Caesar's friends, had most cause to fear the daggers of the murderers, for they knew that he loved Caesar and would seek to avenge his death.

Soon the news spread throughout the whole city. The shops were shut; people ran hither and

¹Frugality is the mother of good health. Anon. The word order *Frugalitas est mater bonae valetudinis* will help you understand how this quotation works. What is the case, gender, and number of *bonae*? (Answer on last page)

thither, scarce knowing what they did, so great was their terror and dismay. The crowds lined the streets, watching the conspirators as they marched to the Forum, waving their blood-stained daggers and crying out that they had killed a tyrant and a king. But the citizens answered never a word to their cries and speeches. They could not yet believe that Caesar was really dead. Had they not seen him pass through the streets alive and well that very day? Had not some of them spoken with him, some touched his hand?

The Conspirators finding that all their speeches were received in heavy silence, took fright and fled to the Capitol for safety.

The next day Antony came out from his retreat to go to a meeting of the senate. As he went the people greeted him gladly, earnestly warning him to take care of his own life. Antony smiling, lifted his toga, and they saw that beneath it he wore a steel corslet.

The conspirators, not daring to leave the Capitol, sent Cicero, the great orator, to speak for them in the senate. It was then decided that peace should be made, and that Caesar should be given a public funeral with all the honours due to his rank and greatness. The body was to be brought to the Forum, and then Caesar's will was to be read to the people and the funeral speech made. After which the body was to be burned in a field outside the city wall, and the ashes laid in the tomb according to the usual custom.

Antony was very anxious indeed for the funeral to be public. As first consul he would have to make the speech. He knew the Roman people, and he had his own plans for arousing their anger against the murderers of his friend.

As the senate had decreed, so it was done. The body of Caesar was brought to the Forum, laid upon a golden shrine and covered with a cloth of purple and gold. Above it hung the very toga which the dead man had worn on the fatal day. Beside this there was a wax figure of Caesar himself, painted so as to show his twenty-three wounds.

Antony, clad in mourning robes, took his place on the rostra, beside the body; and in the silence began to read aloud Caesar's last will.

As he read, the people murmured angrily against the conspirators, for lo! this tyrant, this man who was said to have thought only of himself, had left to every Roman citizen the sum of three pounds; he had given also his own beautiful gardens to the people, and to most of the senators who had slain him he had left large sums of money.

To the people as they listened, it seemed as if no punishment could be great enough for those who had murdered so generous a man.

Having read the will, Antony began his speech. Never before and never again did he speak so well. Anger and sorrow for the loss of his dearest friend, and the manner of his death, gave him power. He reminded the people of all Caesar's glorious deeds in war, and they wept for their hero. He told them of all the great things the Dictator had done for Rome, and of all he would have done had he lived, and they groaned out their rage against his murderers. He spoke of Caesar's courage, of his justice, his mercy and kindness, his love for the people and for his country; then leaning on the body, he began to sing, like a priest to a god, a strange wild song of mourning, and at the same time the attendants lifted the wax figure on high, turning it now this way, now that, for all to see.

This sent the people into a fury of rage and grief. They shrieked, they groaned, they sobbed, they laughed, indeed they knew not what they did, so deeply were they stirred by the sound of that wild

voice.

Suddenly the song ceased, and Antony, before any one could tell what he was about, tore aside the cover of the shrine, and the citizens beheld great Caesar – dead.

If they were angry before, this sight brought their passion near to madness. They cursed his murderers; they cursed the senators; they vowed to take vengeance on all his enemies. They cried out that they themselves would bury Caesar, and there and then they broke up the rostra, and with its planks laid the foundation of the funeral pyre.

They rushed into the houses, and dragging out chairs, tables, benches, and all manner of household things, piled them high into one great heap. Men flung their tools and their weapons upon it, women their jewels and even their dresses, children their playthings, and on the very top they placed the golden shrine in which lay the body of Caesar.

When all was ready, two beautiful youths, girded with swords, and bearing flaming torches in their hands, set fire to the whole. Higher rose the flames and higher, and while they roared and hissed, the furious citizens ran through the streets of the city seeking the conspirators to slay them; but not one was to be found: they had all wisely fled at the first sign of danger.

Little by little, as the fire died down, the people grew calmer, and after some days of mourning they began to go about their work again as if nothing had happened.

Brutus and Cassius, who still dreamed of a day when Rome should be republic again, gathered together an army determined to fight to the last for the cause of liberty, but they were defeated by Antony and Octavius, the great-nephew of Caesar and his heir, and to escape surrendering to the enemy they slew themselves.

Brutus did his best, but neither by slaying Caesar nor by any other means could the Republic be made strong again. The people had become too weak, too fond of pleasure and ease ever to rule themselves again, and they allowed Octavius to finish what Caesar had begun – the making of the empire. He changed his name and became the first of the emperors: the Emperor Augustus Caesar.

Under his rule the empire prospered, but after him came the cruel Tiberius, Claudius, Caligula, and Nero, the most terrible tyrant of them all, and after them many and many another who made slaves of the people, and spoilt the soldiers, until at last Rome lost all power, either as a nation or as an empire.

Answer:

In the quotation that heads this exercise the word *bonae* is genitive singular feminine - “**of** good health.”