Between 73 and 71 B.C., large areas of the Italian peninsula south of Rome were thrown into a state of upheaval by the sudden outbreak of the third great slave war. This war was sparked by an incident involving the escape of a group of slave gladiators from their training school at Capua, the city that was the de facto capital of the wealthy region of Campania. A gladiator named Spartacus led the rebel slaves. Although their initial forays were limited to the region around Mount Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples, the revolt seems to have rapidly acquired a large number of adherents. The initial Roman response was slow and involved only what were in effect police or national guard units dispatched from Rome or recruited locally in emergency drafts. After the defeat of several of these forces, the Roman Senate and people began to take the rebellion more seriously and to assign high-level military commands to deal with the uprising.

The war lasted for two years and ended only after legionary armies were placed under the command of Marcus Licinius Crassus. These forces, which had full battle capability and the training needed to deploy elaborate siege and containment works, were finally able to defeat the slaves and to kill their leader, Spartacus. Pompey the Great mopped up some dispersed and isolated groups of rebel slaves after the final battle. Reverberations of the war, however, continued for a decade after the final defeat of Spartacus. Small guerrilla-like bands of peasants and slaves were still being repressed by Roman forces in southern Italy in the late 60s B.C.
Plutarch is most famous for his Parallel Lives, or the long series of biographies in which he compares the lives of some famous Greeks and Romans. Here he compares the Roman general Marcus Licinius Crassus with the fifth-century B.C. Athenian general Nicias. Plutarch is one of the most important sources for the Spartacus slave war, though not for Spartacus himself. As a slave, gladiator, and rebel, Spartacus would not have met Plutarch's criteria for a model citizen. Instead, we get a glimpse of the slave leader in Plutarch's portrait of Marcus Licinius Crassus, the Roman commander of the legions in Italy during the last year of the war.

The revolt of the gladiators and the destruction of Italy that most people call the Spartacus war had its origin in the following cause. At Capua a man named Lentulus Batiatus was a trainer and entrepreneur of gladiators, most of whom were Gauls and Thracians. These men were compelled to engage in gladiatorial combats, not for any crimes they had committed but because of the unjust behavior of their owners. Two hundred of them planned to make an escape, but information concerning their plan was betrayed. Those who were forewarned that their plan had been divulged still persisted in their attempt. Seventy-two of them made good their escape, grabbing kitchen knives and cooking skewers on their way out [of the gladiatorial school]. On the road outside the school, these men happened to encounter some wagons that were loaded with weapons destined for gladiators in another city. They seized the weapons and armed themselves with them. Then, after they had taken possession of a strong point, they chose three leaders. The most important of these was Spartacus.

Spartacus was a Thracian, born among a pastoral nomadic people.¹ He not only possessed great spirit and bodily strength, but he was

¹Konrat Ziegler, editor of one of the standard modern texts, has argued that the original Greek text should read tou Maidikou genous (rather than tou nomadikou genous, as translated here), a reference to the specific ethnic origin of Spartacus: that he was “from the [Thracian] people called the Maidi.”
more intelligent and nobler than his fate, and he was more Greek than his [Thracian] background might indicate. People tell the following story about him when he was brought to Rome to be sold as a slave. While he was sleeping, a snake coiled up around his head. Spartacus’s wife, a woman who came from the same tribe as Spartacus, was a prophetess who was possessed by ecstatic frenzies that were part of the worship of the god Dionysus. She declared that this was the sign of a tremendous and fearsome power that would bring him to an unfortunate end. She was living with him at the time and ran away with him when he escaped.

In their first actions, the gladiators drove off those who were coming out of the city of Capua and seized from them many weapons that were more suitable for warfare. They happily made the exchange, throwing away their gladiatorial armaments, which they viewed as dishonorable and barbaric. Next, a Roman commander, the praetor Clodius [Gaius Claudius Glaber], was sent from Rome with three thousand soldiers. He laid siege to the gladiators on the mountain they now occupied. Clodius placed a guard post on the one narrow and difficult access road that led up the mountain. All the other parts of the mountain were formed of smooth and steep precipices, and the top of it was heavily overgrown with wild vines. The slaves cut off the useful parts of these climbing plants and wove ladders out of them. These were strong and long enough so that when they were fastened at the top of the cliffs, they reached down as far as the level plain at the foot of the mountain. All the men, except one of them, descended safely by these devices. This one man stayed behind with the weapons. When the others had reached the bottom, he dropped the arms down. Only when all of them had been thrown down did he save himself, last of all. The Romans were wholly unaware of these developments. Consequently, the slaves were able to surround them and to shock the Romans with a surprise attack. When the Romans fled, the slaves seized their camp. At this point, many of the herdsmen and shepherds from the surrounding regions—hard-bodied and swift-footed men—came to join the slaves. The slaves armed some of these men; they used others as scouts and light-armed troops.

Next, the praetor Publius Varinius was sent out in command of the Roman forces against the slaves. His subordinate officer, a man named Furius, who had two thousand men with him, engaged the

2The manuscripts are unclear: eutyches can be read instead of atyches (which is translated here), in which case the translation would have precisely the opposite sense: “a tremendous and fearsome power that would bring him good fortune.”
slaves and was defeated by them. Spartacus closely followed Varinius’s adjutant and co-commander [Lucius] Cossinius, who had also been dispatched with a large force, and observed his movements. Spartacus came within a hair’s breadth of capturing Cossinius at Salinae when the Roman commander was bathing. Indeed, it was with great difficulty that Cossinius managed to escape. Spartacus immediately seized his supplies and began harrying him closely. With hard pursuit and much slaughter, Spartacus captured the Roman general’s camp. Cossinius himself died in the encounter. But it was by defeating the praetor Varinius in many other battles and, finally, by capturing his lictors and even the Roman commander’s own horse, that Spartacus became a figure of fame and fear. Even so, he carefully considered the most probable course of events. Thinking it unlikely that he would be able to defeat the Roman forces, Spartacus instead led his army toward the Alps. Once they crossed the mountains, he thought that it would be the best, indeed the necessary, course of action for the men to disperse to their own homelands, some to Thrace and others to Gaul. But his men, who now had confidence in their great number and had grander ideas in their heads, did not obey him. Rather, they began to pillage Italy far and wide.

At this point, it was no longer the unworthiness and shame of the slave rebellion that so vexed the Senate. Rather, it was because of fear and the danger of the situation that they dispatched both consuls together to the war, much as they would send consuls to a regular war of the greatest difficulty and magnitude. Of the two commanders, [Lucius] Gellius [Publicola] made a sudden surprise attack on a force of Germans who, because of their insolent arrogance, had separated themselves from Spartacus’s main forces. He slaughtered the lot of them. But when [Gnaeus Cornelius] Lentulus, the other consul, surrounded Spartacus with his large battlefield forces, Spartacus suddenly rushed at them and engaged them in battle. He defeated Lentulus’s legates and captured all of their supplies. Just as Spartacus was driving toward the Alps, however, [Gaius] Cassius [Longinus], the governor of Cisalpine Gaul, who had many thousands of soldiers under his command, blocked his way. In the battle that took place, Cassius was defeated, with the loss of many men. Indeed, he made his own escape only with difficulty.

When the Senate learned of these events, it angrily ordered the consuls to cease operations and chose Crassus as the general to be put

\[^3\]Literally, “a myriad,” or exactly ten thousand.
in charge of the war. Many Roman noblemen joined Crassus in the conduct of the war, both because of his great reputation and because of their personal friendship with him. To receive the brunt of Spartacus's attack, Crassus stationed his forces on the borders of Picenum. In the meantime, he sent his legate Mummius with two legions on a long, roundabout route to encircle Spartacus from the rear. He ordered Mummius to follow the enemy closely, but not to join battle with them or even to skirmish with them. When the first good opportunity presented itself, however, Mummius eagerly rushed into battle and was defeated. Many of his men were killed, and many others dropped their weapons and ran from the field of battle to save themselves. Later, when Crassus received Mummius, he gave him a rough going-over. And when he rearmed Mummius's soldiers, Crassus demanded formal promises from them that they would not "lose" their weapons. What is more, Crassus selected five hundred of the soldiers who had been the first to run from the field of battle, especially those who had displayed open cowardice, and divided them into fifty groups of ten each. He then executed one man who had been selected by lot from each group. He thereby revived an ancestral punishment of soldiers that had not been used for a long time. It is a shameful type of death in its mode of execution: Many terrible things are done during the imposition of the penalty, while all the other soldiers are forced to look on as spectators.

After he had punished the men in this way, Crassus led them against the enemy. But Spartacus went up through the hinterland of Lucania toward the sea. When he came to the Strait [of Messana], he happened to meet with some Cilician pirates and so decided that he would try to seize Sicily. Spartacus hoped that by landing two thousand men on the island, he would rekindle the fires of the slave war there, a conflagration that had been put out only a short time before and needed just a little more fuel to burst into flames again. Although the Cilicians made an agreement with Spartacus and accepted his gifts, they deceived him and sailed away. So once again Spartacus marched inland away from the sea and quartered his army on the peninsula of Rhegium. When Crassus moved up with his forces and saw the course of action that was suggested by the natural lay of the terrain, he decided to build a wall across the peninsula. At the same time, this enterprise would keep his soldiers from sloth and supplies from the enemy.

*Probably a mistake. Instead, Plutarch probably meant the region around Picentia, south of Rome.*
The project was an immense one. Contrary to all expectations, Crassus finished it and brought it to completion within a brief time. He ran a ditch from sea to sea, across the narrow neck of land, for a length of three hundred stades. In width and in depth, the defensive ditch had the same measurement of fifteen feet. Above the ditch, he constructed a wall that was astonishing in its height and strength. At first, Spartacus showed no concern for the project, and even showed contempt for it. But when his supplies began to run out and he wished to move off the peninsula, he recognized the impediment formed by the wall and realized that he could receive nothing unless it was from within the peninsula itself. So, on a windy and snowy night in winter, he had a small part of the trench filled in with earth, wood, and tree branches and thus was able to get a third of his army across.

Crassus was now afraid that a sudden impulse would strike Spartacus to make a march on Rome. But he took heart when he saw that, because of a difference of opinion, some of Spartacus's men had separated from his main force and had made a camp by themselves alongside a lake in Lucania. There are stories about this lake, whose waters, they say, turn sweet for a time and then return to being bitter and undrinkable. Crassus attacked these men and drove them away from the lake, but he was not able to complete their slaughter or to engage in a hot pursuit of their remnants because of the sudden appearance of Spartacus, who put a stop to their flight.

Crassus had written earlier to the Senate that it was necessary to summon [Lucius Licinius] Lucullus from Thrace and Pompey from Spain. But now he changed his mind and was in a hurry to bring the war to a conclusion before these men arrived, knowing full well that the reputation of success would belong to the one who came last and who brought help to end the war, not to himself. He therefore decided to make an attack on the slaves, first on those led by Gaius Gannicus and Castus, who had separated from Spartacus and were making their own army camps. He dispatched 6,000 men to occupy a high ridge of land and ordered them to try to hide themselves. The men did their best to elude discovery by covering their helmets, but two women who were making ritual sacrifices on behalf of the enemy spotted them. They would have found themselves in serious danger had not Crassus quickly appeared and engaged the slaves in a fight that was to be the hardest of all the battles he ever fought. He killed 12,300 of the enemy in the battle. He later discovered that only two of them had

^three hundred stades: about thirty-five miles.
wounds in their backs. All the others had stood their ground in the line of battle and had died fighting the Romans.

After he had been defeated in this battle, Spartacus made his way upland into the mountains of Petelia. He was pursued by [Lucius] Quintus [also Quintius or Quinctius] one of the officers serving under Crassus, and by the quaestor [Gnaeus Tremelius] Scrofa. When Spartacus suddenly turned on them, there was panic among the Roman soldiers, who turned and ran from the field of battle. Somehow they were able to drag the quaestor, who had been wounded, from danger and save his life. This success destroyed Spartacus's army. It was the point at which a band of mere fugitive slaves came to think too highly of themselves. They no longer considered it honorable to engage in tactics that required perpetual retreat and flight. Consequently, the men no longer obeyed their leaders.

As soon as they were back on the road and in full armament, they confronted their officers and forced them to lead the army back again through Lucania against the Romans—the very thing Crassus wanted them to do. For the advance of Pompey and his army had already been reported, and there were some people (indeed, not a few of them) who were beginning to assign the victory to him. Crassus, therefore, advanced quickly to force a battle in order to bring the war to an end. He labored hard for this purpose, and after establishing his camps close to the enemy, he began to dig a defensive trench. The slaves jumped into this trench and began to fight with the men who were digging it. Then, as more and more men from either side jumped into the fray to help their fellow soldiers, Spartacus recognized that his hand was being forced and arranged his whole army in battle formation. When his horse was brought to him, Spartacus drew his sword and shouted that if he won the battle, he would have many fine horses that belonged to the enemy, but if he lost, he would have no need of a horse. With that, he killed the animal (see Figure 8). Then, driving through weapons and the wounded, Spartacus rushed at Crassus. He never reached the Roman, although he killed two centurions, who fell with him. In the end, when all of those around him had abandoned him, Spartacus stood alone. Surrounded by a great many of the enemy, he was cut down while defending himself.

Although Crassus had experienced good fortune, had displayed the best skills of a field commander, and had exposed himself to great physical danger, the fame of this success ultimately escaped him and fell instead to Pompey. The reason was that the five thousand slaves who were fleeing from the field of the battle ran into Pompey's oncoming
forces and were slaughtered. In consequence, Pompey was able to write a formal report to the Senate that although Crassus had conquered the fugitive slaves in the open, he [Pompey] had extinguished the war to its very roots. So it was Pompey who celebrated a marvelous triumph for his [earlier] victories over Sertorius in Spain [in 73 B.C.]. Crassus, on the other hand, did not even attempt to ask for a great triumph for himself. Indeed, it seemed ignoble for him to celebrate even the lesser triumph . . . that the Romans call an ovatio for a war fought against slaves.

SOURCE: Plutarch, Life of Crassus, 8–11.

63

PLUTARCH

Pompey the Great’s Involvement in the Repression of Spartacus

Second Century A.D.

Plutarch recounts the events of Pompey’s life after he defeated the Roman rebel Sertorius in Spain in 73 B.C.

After these events, Pompey remained in Spain for as long as it was necessary to settle the great troubles there and to bring an end to the embers [of rebellion] that were still smoldering in that place. He then brought his army back to Italy, where he learned that the slave war had just reached its height. For this very reason, the commander in the war, Crassus, hurried, perhaps even at considerable risk, to force a confrontation with the enemy. He met with great success, killing 12,300 of the enemy. But even with this favorable result, fate somehow managed to throw success Pompey’s way, since 5,000 of the slaves who were fleeing from the battle ran into his oncoming forces. He killed all of them. Pompey then wrote to the Senate that although Crassus had defeated the gladiators in a battle, he [Pompey] had extinguished the war to its very roots.

As for myself, I cannot praise Crassus for pressing forward in his actions against Spartacus more quickly than safety would dictate, even if, in his desire to acquire honor, he was afraid that Pompey, who had just arrived with his forces, would steal his fame, just as Mummius stole the glory for the capture of the city of Corinth from Metellus.


Plutarch is reporting on the virtues displayed by Marcus Porcius Cato the Younger (later called Uticensis) during the war against Spartacus. He compares his achievements with those of his glorious ancestor, his great-grandfather Cato the Elder, author of the treatise on managing slave farms (see document 3).

When the slave war that they called the Spartacus war broke out, in which [Lucius] Gellius [Publicola] was the Roman commander, Cato wanted to share in the combat because of his brother [Caepio, a tribune in the army]. Cato did not have as much opportunity to display his eagerness for combat or to exercise his virtues as he wished, since the war was not one that was well commanded. Despite the effeminacy and laxity of those who fought in the war, however, Cato was able to display the virtues of order, self-control, and courage in every
situation that he faced, and he showed that he was in no respect less a man than the elder Cato.


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66

Appian

The Spartacus Slave War

Second Century A.D.

The second-century Greek historian Appian begins his account by recounting the events of 73 B.C., following Pompey’s defeat of Sertorius in Spain and his return to Italy.

At about this same time, at the city of Capua in Italy, gladiators were being trained to fight in spectacles. Spartacus, a Thracian whom the Romans had imprisoned and then sold to be trained as a gladiator, had once fought as a soldier for the Roman army. He persuaded about seventy of the enslaved men to risk a break for freedom rather than to allow themselves to be put on display for the entertainment of others. Using force to overcome their guards, the men made their escape. The fugitives armed themselves with wooden clubs and daggers that they seized from travelers on the roads nearby, and then rushed to take refuge on Mount Vesuvius. Many fugitive slaves and even some free men from the surrounding countryside came to this place to join Spartacus. They began to stage bandit raids on nearby settlements. Spartacus had his fellow gladiators Oenomaus and Crixus as his two subordinate commanders. Since Spartacus divided the profits of his raiding into equal shares, he soon attracted a very large number of followers.

The first man the Romans sent out against Spartacus was Varinius Glaber, and then, after him, they dispatched Publius Valerius.⁶ These

⁶Appian is confused, and not for the first time. The praetor sent out was Gaius Claudius Glaber. Appian has conflated his name with that of another praetor, Publius Varinius; Publius Valerius, otherwise unattested, is perhaps Appian’s way of referring to Publius Varinius.
men did not command the regular citizen army of legions, but rather whatever forces they could hastily conscript on the spot, since the Romans did not yet consider this a real war but rather the raids and the predations of bandits. When they attacked Spartacus, however, they were defeated. Spartacus even captured Varinius's own horse right from under him. The commander of the Romans was that close to being taken prisoner by a gladiator.

After this debacle, many more men came to join Spartacus, and his army soon numbered seventy thousand. He had regular weapons forged for them, and he began to collect basic supplies for an army. Meanwhile, in the city of Rome, the Romans dispatched the two consuls with two legions under their command. Of these two armies, one defeated Crixus, who was in command of thirty thousand men, in the Garganus Mountains. Two-thirds of Crixus's army perished along with Crixus himself. Spartacus, by contrast, exerted great efforts to make his way through the Apennine mountains to the Alps and then to the land of the Gauls on the other side of the Alps. One of the consuls got to the place before him and prevented his escape, while the other consul harried the rearguard of Spartacus's army. Spartacus turned on them one after the other, however, and defeated each Roman army in turn, with the result that the Romans were forced to flee from the field of battle in great confusion and uproar.

As an offering to the dead, Spartacus sacrificed 300 Roman prisoners on behalf of Crixus. With the 120,000 men under his command, he began a march on Rome. So that traveling would be as light as possible, he torched all unnecessary supplies, killed all prisoners of war, and slaughtered all pack animals. Many deserters from the Roman army came to him, but he accepted none of them. The consuls made a stand against him in a place in the land of Picenum. Another great armed struggle took place here, and the Romans were defeated again. Spartacus changed his mind about an attack on Rome. He decided that he was not ready for an all-out battle and that his whole army was not yet properly armed for regular warfare. Moreover, so far no city had come over to his side, but only slaves, deserters, and the flotsam and jetsam of humanity. He therefore decided to occupy the mountains around Thurii instead. Indeed, he even captured the city of Thurii itself.

7For this number, as for most of those that follow, Appian is counting in large, general numerical units of myriads, or ten thousands, and is therefore not giving exact figures.
Spartacus did not permit merchants to import gold and silver, and he forbade his own men to acquire any. For the most part, he purchased iron and copper and did not censure those who imported these metals. For this reason, the slaves had large quantities of basic materials and were well supplied and able to stage frequent raids. When they next entered into hand-to-hand combat with the Romans, they defeated the Romans again and returned to their base heavily laden with booty.

This was now the third year of a war that had become particularly fearful for the Romans, although at the beginning they had treated it as a laughing matter and a contemptible thing, since it involved only gladiators. When it came time to hold the selection of new commands for the praetors, a morbid fear seized all the men, and not one of them would proffer his name for the position. Finally, [Marcus] Licinius Crassus, a man renowned among the Romans for his birth and wealth, was appointed to the command and marched forth with six freshly recruited legions. When Crassus arrived in the campaign theater, he added the two legions of the consuls to his own. Since the men in the old units had been defeated so often in combat with Spartacus, Crassus selected every tenth man from the consular legions by lot and had him executed. Some say that Crassus himself went with his new army into battle and was defeated, and that it was only then that he selected every tenth man from the entire army by lot. If the latter story is true, it means that four thousand men were involved, and that even the very large number of men whom he had to execute did not deter Crassus. Whatever Crassus actually did, he made himself more fearful than the enemy to his own men. He soon defeated a force of ten thousand of Spartacus’s men who had made a camp by themselves, destroying two-thirds of them. He then marched with great confidence against Spartacus himself. Crassus defeated Spartacus and pursued him with lightning speed to the seacoast, where Spartacus was preparing to sail to Sicily. Thus trapping Spartacus, Crassus cut a trench, constructed a defensive wall, and erected sharp stake works along its entire line.

On the day when Spartacus tried to force a breakout and make a dash for Samnite territory, Crassus killed about six thousand of Spartacus’s supporters in the early morning and another similar number toward the twilight hours. Only three men from the Roman army died and seven were wounded, so great was the change in the soldiers’ eagerness for victory because of their recent punishment. Spartacus, who was awaiting the arrival of additional cavalry, remained where he
was and no longer ventured into battle with his whole army. Rather, he staged sudden, small-scale attacks on his besiegers at selected points, here and there, hitting them suddenly and sharply. He had his men throw bundles of branches into the trench and set them on fire, which made the going very difficult for those who were engaged in this task. He crucified a Roman prisoner in this middle ground as a visual demonstration to his own men of what would happen to them if they did not win. When the Romans in the city [of Rome] learned of Crassus's siege tactics, they thought it unworthy that this war against the gladiators should be prolonged much longer. As an additional force, they enlisted the army of Pompey, who had just arrived back from Spain. The Romans had come to accept that dealing with Spartacus would be a very difficult and substantial undertaking.

When he heard of this measure, Crassus strove in every possible way to force a confrontation with Spartacus, in order to prevent the glory of winning the war from falling to Pompey. Thinking that he might take advantage of Pompey’s arrival, Spartacus offered to negotiate an agreement with Crassus. When his proposal was disdainfully rejected, Spartacus decided to make one last desperate attempt. Since his cavalry had now arrived, he made a charge directly through the line of Crassus’s wall and ditch with his entire army. Spartacus then marched quickly in the direction of Brundisium, with Crassus in hot pursuit. But when he learned that [Lucius Licinius] Lucullus, who had just returned victorious from his war against Mithradates, was disembarking his army at Brundisium, Spartacus fell into total despair. With no other choice before him, Spartacus wheeled around his still large and substantial army to force a direct confrontation with Crassus.

Since so many tens of thousands of desperate men were involved, the result was a protracted battle of epic proportions. Spartacus took a spear wound in his thigh. Collapsing on one knee, he held his shield up in front of him and fought off those who were attacking him, until he and the large number of men around him were finally surrounded and cut down. The rest of his army was thrown into disarray and confusion and was slaughtered in huge numbers. The killing was on such a scale that it was not possible to count the dead. The Romans lost about a thousand men. The body of Spartacus was never found. When the survivors among Spartacus’s men, who were still a large number, fled from the battle, they went up into the mountains, where they were pursued by Crassus’s forces. Splitting themselves into four groups, they continued to fight until all of them had perished—all, that is, except six thousand of them, who were taken prisoner and
crucified along the whole length of the highway that ran from Capua to Rome.⁸

Crassus accomplished this feat within six months. The result was the sudden emergence of a bitter competition for honor between Pompey and him.

⁸Presumably, the Appian Way. The distance was about 125 miles, so there would have been one body of a crucified slave raised on a cross every 35 to 40 yards along the entire distance of the road.


67

APPIAN

King Mithradates of Pontus and Spartacus

Second Century A.D.

In this passage, Appian is speaking of King Mithradates, who, during his war against the Romans, was trying to entice the Gauls into an attack on Italy in 64 B.C.

He knew that almost all of Italy had recently revolted from the Romans because of the hatred the Italians had for them, that the Italians had fought a protracted war against the Romans, and that they had sided with the gladiator Spartacus against the Romans, even though he was a wholly disreputable person.

Of the historians who preserved extended accounts of the war, Sallust must be deemed the most important, in part because he was the closest in time to the events themselves. The fragments of Sallust’s history that are translated here are arranged according to the edition by the German scholar Bertold Maurenbrecher. For a different order, and meaning, see Patrick McGushin, Sallust: The Histories, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1992). Not all of the fragments are translated here, since many of them are too brief to be of much use and their placement in the temporal sequence of events is too questionable.

Spartacus, the leader of the gladiators, was one of the seventy-four men who escaped from the gladiatorial school and waged a major war against the Roman people....

...He [Spartacus] was a man of immense bodily strength and spirit.

...[Spartacus and his men] reached the foot of the mountain [probably Vesuvius].

...if they were to meet resistance, they would rather die by steel than perish by hunger....

...Cossinius was washing himself in the spring belonging to a villa nearby.

[The manuscript of the following fragment is too fragmented to note all the breaks in detail here. Only the major breaks are noted.]

...and they fired [the tips of their wooden spears?] so that in addition to having the appearance necessary for war, they would be no less dangerous than if they were made of iron. While the fugitive slaves were busy with these tasks, [Publius] Varinius sent his quaestor Gaius Thoranius [Toranius] to Rome so that the people there might be able to get a truthful report about how matters actually stood from someone who had witnessed them. Some of his soldiers were ill because of
the bad autumn weather, and none of those soldiers who had been defeated in the last battle, and who had run away, had returned to their units despite the harsh orders issued by Varinius that they were to do so. The rest of the soldiers—in an act that was the height of disgraceful behavior—were simply refusing to do their duty. With four thousand of the soldiers who were still willing to follow orders [or, who were volunteers?], Varinius established his camp—which was well defended with a wall, trench, and large-scale fortification—close to the camp of the rebellious slaves.

Since they had used up their own food supplies, all the fugitive slaves silently departed from their camp at about the second hour of the night watch. To avoid a surprise attack from the Romans while they were away raiding the countryside, the rebels, according to regular army practice, usually appointed night watchmen and guards and assigned the other usual duties. This time they left behind only a trumpet signaler in the camp. Then they propped up fresh corpses on stakes at the gates of the camp, so that those who saw them from afar would be led to believe that night guards had been stationed. They lit many fires in their camp so that by causing fear to... Varinius’s [men?], they might flee... and... [the manuscript is defective] themselves went off on out-of-the-way tracks.... [the manuscript is defective]

When it was well after dawn, Varinius noticed the absence of the insults usually shouted by the slaves and the showers of stones with which the fugitives used to pelt his camp, and, in addition, the lack of noise and shouting from the enemy that used to strike him from all directions. He therefore ordered his cavalry to the top of a knoll that overlooked the surrounding countryside to discover the whereabouts of the fugitive slaves and to hurry to follow their tracks. Although he believed that the slaves were by now far away, he still put his men into a defensive formation, fearing an ambush, and doubled the strength of his forces with new recruits.... [the manuscript is defective]

Some days later, contrary to their usual behavior, our soldiers became more confident, and their tongues began to wag boastfully. For this reason, and not having learned from his own earlier experiences, Varinius rashly led his new and inexperienced soldiers, along with his other troops who were already demoralized by the defeats previously suffered by others, at a quick march against the camp of the fugitive slaves. Now they marched in silence and with much less extravagant boasting than when they had earlier pressed for combat. At this same time, the slaves were quarreling among themselves and
were close to internal breakdown. Crixus and his people, who were Gauls and Germans, wanted to march directly against the enemy, in order to force an armed confrontation. Spartacus, on the other hand, advised a different course. . . . [the manuscript is defective]

. . . they happened on peasant farmers from Abella who were keeping watch over their fields. . . .

[The manuscript of the following fragment is too fragmented to note all the defects in detail. Only the major breaks are noted.]

. . . [It seemed?] to others and to him [Spartacus] . . . that they should not [wander around aimlessly lest?] . . . they be hemmed in on all sides and slaughtered to the last man. . . . Therefore, it was necessary to leave the place as quickly as possible. A few of the slaves, who were prudent men and who had free and noble minds . . . praised [his advice?] and held that they ought to do what Spartacus was suggesting. Some slaves were stupid and foolishly had confidence in the large numbers who were flooding in to join their movement and in their own ferocity, while others shamefully forgot all about [returning to?] their homelands. But the vast majority of the fugitives, because of their servile nature, thought of nothing but blood and booty. . . .

. . . [Spartacus's] plan . . . seemed to be the best one. Then he persuaded them to move down into the lowland plains, which were rich in cattle, where they would be able to increase their number with select men of high quality before the arrival of Varinius with his newly refreshed army. A good guide was quickly found from among the prisoners taken from the Picentini. Spartacus made his way stealthily through the Eburian Hills [Eboli Mountains] and reached Nares in Lucania. At daybreak, he arrived at Forum Annii, without having been discovered by the local farmers. Contrary to the orders of their general, the fugitive slaves immediately began to rape young girls and married women, while others . . .

. . . [cut down] those who tried to resist them and who were trying to escape, inflicting wounds on them in a depraved manner, when their backs were turned, and left in their trail the torn bodies of half-dead persons. Others threw firebrands onto the roofs of houses. Many slaves in the town were by nature sympathetic allies and uncovered things that their masters had hidden away or dragged out the masters

9Nares Lucanae (literally, the Lucanian Nostrils), a narrow pass that connected southern Campania with northern Lucania (see Map 4 on page 7).
themselves from their hiding places. Nothing was either too sacred or too wicked to be spared the rage of these barbarians and their servile characters. Spartacus himself was powerless to stop them, even though he repeatedly entreated them to stop and even attempted by sending on ahead swift... [a] messenger... to an end.... But the slaves [were] intent on their cruel slaughter,... and after having stayed there for that day and the following night, and having doubled the number of fugitive slaves, he broke camp at dawn and established his position in a wide plain, where he watched the local farmers leaving their houses for work—it was the time of year when the autumn harvests were ripening in the fields.

When broad daylight came, the inhabitants realized from their neighbors, who were on the run, that the fugitive slaves were approaching, and so they fled with all of their possessions.... [the manuscript is defective]

There was one man in the rural region of Lucania by the name of Publipor [Publius's Boy, a slave name], who was knowledgeable about the place....

... No place in the region would be safe for them, unless they had occupied it in force....

... They stripped [the dead] of their arms and their horses....

... these men [those coming to join Spartacus's forces on Vesuvius] were very knowledgeable about the region and were used to making woven baskets from branches for their farmwork. Because of their lack of real shields, they used this same knowledge to make small circular shields for themselves like those used by cavalrymen.

At the same time, [Gnaeus Cornelius] Lentulus ordered his men to form a double battle line on a commanding height of land and defended it, but with heavy losses to his own forces....

Those men who had been selected by lot, he had taken out and beaten to death....

... all of Italy is attenuated into the extremities formed by the two peninsulas of Bruttium and Sallentinum....

... and that part of Italy that stretches out in the direction of Sicily is entered by a corridor that is not wider than thirty-five miles....

When hollow jars were placed beneath the planks, they were lashed together with vine tendrils or pieces of leather hide....

... when the rafts became entangled, they impeded the arrival of help....

Gaius Verres strengthened the fortifications on the shores [of Sicily] closest to Italy....
A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR IN 73 B.C.

... they were now in the forest of Sila....
... they began to argue among themselves and not to plan together....
... in the meantime, just before daybreak, two Gallic women, avoiding contact with the group, climbed up into the mountains to spend their menstrual periods there.¹⁰...
... he [Spartacus] was finally killed, not easily nor unavenged....

¹⁰This must be the same incident alluded to by Plutarch "...two women who were making ritual sacrifices on behalf of the enemy spotted them" (see page 135). Either Plutarch misunderstood the original Latin or deliberately bowdlerized the text.


All of the documents that follow are minor sources for the history of the Spartacus slave war.

69

LIVY

A Brief Account of the Beginning of the War in 73 B.C.
First Century B.C.

Seventy-four gladiators escaped from the school of Lentulus [Batiatus] at Capua, and, collecting a large number of ordinary slaves as well as those kept in slave barracks, they began to wage a war under their leaders, Crixus and Spartacus. They defeated the legate Claudius Pulcher and the praetor Publius Varenus¹¹ in battle.

¹¹The commanders were Gaius Claudius Glaber as praetor and then Publius Varinius.

SOURCE: Livy, Summaries, 95.
The praetor Quintus Arrius killed Crixus, the general of the fugitive slaves, along with twenty thousand of his men. The consul Gnaeus [Cornelius] Lentulus fought unsuccessfully against Spartacus. The consul Lucius Gellius [Publicola] and the praetor Quintus Arrius were defeated in battle by this same Spartacus. . . . The proconsul Gaius Cassius [Longinus] and the praetor Gnaeus Manlius also fought against Spartacus, but with no success. The conduct of the war was therefore assigned to the praetor Marcus [Licinius] Crassus.

**SOURCE:** Livy, *Summaries*, 96.

The praetor Marcus Crassus first fought a successful engagement with that part of the fugitive slaves made up of Gauls and Germans. He killed thirty-five thousand of the enemy, along with their leaders Castus and Gannicus. He then defeated Spartacus, killing Spartacus along with sixty thousand of his men.

**SOURCE:** Livy, *Summaries*, 97.
In the 679th year from the founding of the city of Rome, the year in which [Marcus Terentius Varro] Lucullus and [Gaius] Cassius [Longinus] were consuls [73 B.C.], sixty-four slaves escaped from Gnaeus Lentulus's school for gladiators at Capua. Led by the Gauls Crixus and Oenomaus and by the Thracian Spartacus, the fugitives moved immediately to occupy Mount Vesuvius. From there, they rushed out and captured the army camp of the praetor Clodius [Claudius Glaber], who had surrounded them and placed them under siege. Once they had put him to flight, they carried off everything as plunder. Passing by Consentia and Metapontum, the slaves soon attracted a large armed following. It is reported that Crixus had a huge gathering of ten thousand men under his command and that Spartacus led a force three times that large. These were now the two leaders, since Oenomaus had been killed in an earlier battle.

Wherever they went, the slaves indiscriminately mixed slaughter, arson, theft, and rape. At the funeral rites of a woman whom they had taken prisoner and who had committed suicide because of her anguish over the violation of her sexual honor, they staged gladiatorial games, using four hundred prisoners they had taken. Those who had once been the spectacle were now to be the spectators: It was as gladiatorial entrepreneurs rather than as military commanders that they staged these games.

After this, the consuls [Lucius] Gellius [Publicola] and [Gnaeus Cornelius] Lentulus [Clodianus] [72 B.C.] were dispatched with armies to fight the rebellious slaves. Gellius defeated Crixus in battle, although Crixus put up a savage resistance. Lentulus was defeated by Spartacus and ran from the field of battle. The armies of both consuls were merged, but in vain, since they suffered another severe defeat and ran from the field of battle. Then the proconsul Gaius Cassius

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12 Consentia and Metapontum: the modern-day cities of Cosenza and Metaponto.
[Longinus] was likewise defeated in the fighting and killed by Spartacus. Terror spread through the city of Rome, just as it had in the time when Hannibal had threatened its gates.

The senate immediately dispatched Marcus [Licinius] Crassus in the command of the consular legions and with new reinforcements. Crassus then engaged the fugitive slaves in battle. He killed 6,000 of them and took only 900 prisoners. Before advancing to attack the forces commanded by Spartacus, who was setting up his camp close to the head of the Silarus River, Crassus destroyed Spartacus's Gallic and German auxiliaries, killing 30,000 men along with their commanders. Only last of all did Crassus strike Spartacus himself, who was advancing to engage him with his battle lines ready and who had the largest number of the fugitive slaves with him. It is reported that 60,000 men were killed and 6,000 were taken prisoner, and that 3,000 Roman citizens were taken back. Still others, who had survived the battle and who were wandering about the countryside, were gradually eliminated by means of a thorough hunt for them made by a large number of our army commanders.

[At the end of the fifth book of his history, Orosius compares the significance of the great wars of the late Roman Republic—those against Jugurtha, Mithradates, and Sertorius—with the Spartacus slave war.]

When the war in Spain against Sertorius had not yet been brought to an end, and indeed Sertorius himself was still alive, this war against the fugitive slaves—or rather, to describe it more accurately, this war against the gladiators—was the cause of terrible horrors. It was not a mere spectacle reserved for the sight of a few but was the cause of universal fear. Just because it is called a war against fugitive slaves should not mislead: The war should not be considered a mean and worthless thing just because of its name. During its course, individual consuls were frequently defeated badly, and sometimes both consuls who joined their armies into a single force—in vain—were defeated. And very many Roman nobles were killed. As for the fugitive slaves themselves, the number of them who were slaughtered in the war surpassed 100,000.

13 mean: worthy of little regard.

Source: Orosius, History against the Pagans, 5.24.1–8, 18–19.
VELLEIUS PATERCULUS
*A Brief Synopsis of the Spartacus War*
*First Century A.D.*

While the war against Sertorius was being fought in Spain, sixty-four runaway slaves under the leadership of Spartacus escaped from a gladiatorial school at Capua. Seizing weapons from Capua, they first made their way to Mount Vesuvius. Then, as their number grew with each passing day, they inflicted serious and widespread damage on Italy. Their number increased to such an extent that when they entered the final battle, they had 241,000 men with which to oppose the Roman army. The glory for the victory was reaped by Marcus [Licinius] Crassus, who then, by the consensus of all, became the leading man in the state.

*The number in the manuscript is corrupt.*


FLORUS
*A Detailed Synopsis of the Spartacus War*
*Second Century A.D.*

In the first sentence, Florus is referring to his earlier account of the two slave wars on the island of Sicily (see documents 46 and 54). This is the "shame of slaves in arms" to which he is referring.

One is able to endure even the shame of slaves in arms. For although slaves are persons who have been made subject to punishment in every possible way by some stroke of misfortune, they are still a type of human being, albeit an inferior type, and they are capable of being initiated into the benefits of the freedom that we enjoy. But I do not
know what to call the war that was incited under the leadership of Spartacus. For when slaves served as soldiers and gladiators were their army commanders—the former the lowest sort of men, and the latter the worst—they simply added mockery to the disaster itself.

Spartacus, Crixus, and Oenomaus escaped from the gladiatorial training school of Lentulus [Batiatus] with thirty or more men who shared their misfortune, and rushed out of the town of Capua. Calling for slaves to flock to their standards, they soon collected more than ten thousand men. Not satisfied with having made their escape, they also wished to avenge themselves. The first place that attracted them, as if it were an altar of the goddess Venus,\textsuperscript{15} was Mount Vesuvius. When they were placed under siege there by Clodius [Claudius] Glaber, the slaves let themselves down through a crevice in the mountain by means of ropes woven from wild vine tendrils and made their way to its very foot. Then, by way of a hidden egress, they launched a surprise attack on the unsuspecting Roman general and captured his camp. Next they captured other Roman army camps, including that of Varenus [Varinius] and then that of Thoranius [Toranius]. They rampaged over the whole of Campania. Not satisfied with destroying rural villas and villages, they devastated the towns of Nola, Nuceria, Thurii, and Metapontum, inflicting a terrible slaughter on them in the process.

With the daily arrival of new recruits, they were finally able to form themselves into a regular army. They made rough shields for themselves out of vine branches covered with animal hides, and swords and spears by melting down and recasting their [leg] irons from the slave barracks. And so that they should lack nothing required by a real army, they put together a cavalry force by taming wild horses that they happened to come across, and they took to their own leader the insignia and ceremonial bundles of rods and axes that they had captured from the Roman commanders. These were not refused by the man who had begun his life as a regularly paid soldier in Thrace, was next an army deserter, then a bandit, and finally—a tribute to his bodily strength—a gladiator. He celebrated the deaths of his generals who had died in battle with funerary rituals usually reserved for regular army commanders. He ordered prisoners of war that his armies had captured to fight one another around the funeral pyres, hoping to demonstrate, I suppose, that he could expiate all his past shame by transforming himself into an exhibitor of gladiatorial contests. After this, he launched attacks

\textsuperscript{15}Perhaps the best suggestion for the Latin text, which is corrupt at this point. "Altars of Venus" were known as places of asylum for escaped slaves.
on full consular armies and obliterated the army of Lentulus in the Apennine mountains and the army camp of Gaius Crassus near Mutina. Elated by these victories, he actually considered—which is shameful enough for us—an attack on the city of Rome itself.

Finally, the combined resources of our empire rose up against this heavy-armored gladiator, and [Marcus] Licinius Crassus preserved our Roman honor. When the slaves had been defeated and driven from the field of battle by Crassus, the enemy (it shames me actually to call them this) took refuge in the remotest parts of Italy. Hemmed into a corner of Bruttium, they prepared to make their escape to Sicily. Since they did not have ships to take them, they tried to cross the swift-moving waters of the strait between the mainland and the island by using rafts made of wooden beams and barrels lashed together with thin vine tendrils, but in vain. In a final effort, they attempted a breakout and met with a death worthy of real men. As was appropriate for men commanded by a gladiator, they fought to the very end with no release from their fate.16 Spartacus himself died fighting bravely at the front of his men, just like a true general.

16A gladiator who had fought a good fight was, as a reward, let off, or excused, by the judges of the contest to fight another day. This did not happen here.


75

ATHENAEUS

A Brief Synopsis of the Spartacus War

Second Century A.D.

The gladiator Spartacus, who became a fugitive from the Italian city of Capua about the time of the wars with Mithradates, incited a very large number of slaves to revolt. He himself was a slave, a Thracian by origin. The slaves overran the whole of Italy for a long time. Large numbers of slaves hurried to join him every day. If he had not been killed in the battle that he fought against [Marcus] Licinius Crassus, he would have caused no ordinary threat to my fellow citizens, just as Eunus did in Sicily.

In a lost work by Varro, a Roman agricultural writer of the first century B.C., there was a reference to Spartacus.

Although he was an innocent man, Spartacus was condemned to a gladiatorial school\(^\text{17}\) [or to the professional life of a gladiator?].

\(^{17}\)The words *ad gladiatorium* (to the gladiatorial school) are a conjecture by the historian Niebuhr.


Spartacus the barbarian, having been done a favor by someone, showed himself to be grateful to the man. For even among barbarians, human nature is self-taught to return an equal favor to those who bestow benefits on us.

Spartacus was able get across the trench that Crassus had excavated to hem him in by filling it during the night with the bodies of prisoners and cattle that he had killed and by crossing over on top of them.

When he was besieged on Mount Vesuvius, this same Spartacus had chainlike ladders made from wild vines on that side where the mountain is most rugged and therefore was unguarded. Letting himself down by these, he not only escaped the siege but also terrorized Clodius [Claudius Glaber] from a different and unexpected direction, with the result that a number of cohorts [see glossary] of Roman soldiers retreated before seventy-four gladiators.

When he was besieged by the proconsul Publius Varinius, this same Spartacus stood up the corpses of dead men on stakes that were fixed at intervals in front of his camp gate and outfitted the bodies with clothing and weapons so that to men looking at them from afar, they would have the appearance of real camp guards. He also lit night fires throughout his own camp. With this sham spectacle, Spartacus was able to fool the enemy and to lead his own troops out of the camp in the dead of night.

Spartacus and his troops had shields made from wild vines, which were then covered with hides.

Near the town of Camalatrum, in the war of the fugitive slaves, [Marcus] Licinius Crassus planned to lead his troops out against Catus and Gannicus, the leaders of the Gauls. He dispatched twelve cohorts under his legates Gaius Pomptinius and Quintus Marcius Rufus to circle around behind the mountain. When the battle had already begun, these men suddenly rushed down from the enemy's rear with a terrifying shout and so shattered them that they fled from the field of battle pell-mell in all directions and never stood to make a fight.

In the war fought against the fugitive slaves, Crassus constructed defensive stockades around two of his own camps that were located right next to that of the enemy near Cantenna. He then moved his troops during the night, leaving his headquarters in the larger camp to deceive the enemy. He led out all of his troops and stationed them
along the foothills of the mountain highland of Cantenna. Then, splitting his cavalry into two parts, he ordered Lucius Quintius to confront the forces of Spartacus—to create troubles and delays for him with one unit, and, with the other, to draw into battle the Gauls and Germans, who were in the bands of slaves commanded by Castus and Gannicus. By pretending to retreat, he was to lure them to the place where Crassus would have his battle line drawn up. When the barbarians pursued Quintius’s forces, his cavalry retreated to the wings. The Roman battle line was suddenly revealed and charged the enemy with a loud shout. Livy reports that thirty-five thousand men, along with their leaders, were killed in this battle. Five Roman eagles and twenty-six battle standards were recaptured, along with huge amounts of booty, including five bundles of ceremonial rods and axes.

18 *Roman eagles*: The image of an eagle mounted on top of a pole was the standard symbol of the Roman legion. To have one of these captured by the enemy was a great disgrace.

**SOURCE:** Frontinus, *Strategemata*, 1.5.20–22, 1.7.6, 2.4.7, 2.5.34.

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**CICERO**

*Roman Governor Verres Faces the Threat Posed by Spartacus*

*First Century B.C.*

The young orator Cicero, who prosecuted Gaius Verres, the Roman governor of Sicily, on charges of extorting money and goods from his provincial subjects, is attempting here to blacken Verres’ reputation. He does this by calling into question Verres’ governorship of Sicily in the years 73–71 B.C., precisely when the Spartacus slave war was raging on the mainland of southern Italy, directly opposite the island. Given the previous Sicilian slave wars, there was a reasonable fear that the slaves in Sicily might rebel again. Verres seems to have taken the appropriately savage repressive measures needed to keep the island under control (successfully, from the Roman point of view). But Cicero belittles this achievement, significantly managing never to mention Spartacus by name in his attack on Verres’ administration.
What are you saying? That Sicily was freed from a war of fugitive slaves by your brave actions? A deed deserving of great praise and an honorable oration—but for what war? We have always accepted the fact that after the war that Manius Aquillius brought to an end, there were no more slave wars in Sicily. But, you say, there was one in Italy. I agree. And it was a great and violent war. But surely you’re not trying to claim some share of the praise that came from it? Surely you don’t imagine that you’re going to share the glory of that victory with Marcus [Licinius] Crassus or Gnaeus Pompeius [Pompey the Great]? Yes, I suppose that your arrogance is of a scale that you would actually dare to say something of that sort. You would have us believe that you were able to prevent bands of fugitive slaves from crossing over from Italy into Sicily? Where? When? From what direction? Did they attempt their landing with rafts or real ships? I’ve never heard anything of this sort. But I have heard that the energetic actions and planning of Marcus Crassus, that bravest of men, prevented the fugitive slaves from lashing rafts together, with the result that they were not able to cross over to Messana. Indeed, if there had been any guard posts positioned in Sicily against their attack, there would not have been such a great effort to prevent them from making the attempt. But even if there was a war in Italy so close to Sicily, nevertheless there was no war in Sicily itself. What’s the surprise? For when there was a slave war in Sicily, which is separated from Italy by the same distance, none of it penetrated across into Italy. Why [are you] suggesting to us the closeness of the lands to each other at this place? To impute that there was easy access for our enemies or that there was a danger of the infection spreading through imitation of the war? Without the advantage of ships, however, any chance of entry into Sicily for such men was not just temporarily blocked but so completely closed off that you would have to say that it would have been easier for them to get to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean than to Cape Peloris [on the northeastern tip of Sicily].

Source: Cicero, Against Verres, 2.5.5–6.
What then? Were there no slave rebellions in Sicily when Verres was governor, and were no conspiracies of slaves formed? Certainly nothing that was reported to the Senate and the Roman people—nothing which that man wrote in any official communication sent to Rome. Nonetheless, I suspect that servile uprisings did begin to be formed in several places in Sicily. I am led to suspect this not so much from any specific events themselves as from the deeds and decrees of that man [Verres] when he was governor. And remember that I am not moved by any hostile intent. I am simply bringing to your attention and putting on record those matters that Verres himself will try to establish later [in this trial] and that you jurors, therefore, have not yet heard.

In the region of Triocala [Triokala], the same city the fugitive slaves occupied in an earlier time, the slaves owned by a Sicilian named Leonidas were suspected of forming a conspiracy. The matter was reported to that man. And, as is indeed right and proper, by his order the men who had been named were immediately arrested and taken to Lilybaeum. The matter was reported to their master, a trial was held, and the men were found guilty. What then? What do you think happened next? Perhaps you might expect outright theft or plunder? No—you don’t always have to look for the same thing in all situations involving that man. After all, what chance is there for theft in the midst of a war scare? And if there was any opportunity for him to acquire a gain in this matter, it was passed by. Verres was able to extort some money from Leonidas, when he ordered the man to present himself. A sort of deal was struck—which for that man wouldn’t have been anything new—that they wouldn’t hear the case. There was, however, another way: The men who had been convicted could be acquitted! But what basis was there for plunder, when the slaves had already been found guilty? They had to be taken to their execution. Those who were in the governor’s judicial council were witness to the facts, the court records were witness, the resplendent city of Lilybaeum was witness, as was the honest and powerful local organization.
of Roman citizens. Nothing could be done. The slaves had to be led to execution. And so they were bound to the stake.

Even now, gentlemen of the jury, I see that you are looking at me expectantly, asking yourselves what happened next—a reasonable expectation since that man never did anything without at least some profit and rake-off for himself. So what sort of thing could be pulled off? Dream up whatever you think likely under the circumstances—as wicked a crime as you can imagine. I tell you, I'll surpass every one of your imaginings. These men—condemned for the crime of conspiracy, led off to their punishment, and tied to the stake—were suddenly, before the eyes of thousands of spectators, set free and returned to their master at Triocala.

What can you say to this—you raving madman—unless it is that which I do not ask: the whole purpose of this sordid and underhanded act that is in no doubt. Although the answer is clear, the question at least ought to be asked: How much money did you accept, and in what way did you receive it? I leave all of this to you, and will spare you the worry of giving an answer. For I have no fear that anyone will believe that you attempted to perpetrate a crime for free—a crime for which no one but you would have accepted money to commit. I'm not going to say any more about your modes of thieving and plundering. What I really want to do is to question your glorious reputation as a military commander.

What do you say, you wonderful guardian and defender of our province? When you put these slaves on trial, your finding was that they were guilty of an intent to seize arms and to raise a war in Sicily, and so you issued a sentence that was in agreement with the opinion of your judicial council. But when the condemned men had been handed over for punishment, according to the tradition of our ancestors, you dared to snatch them from the very midst of death and set them free. Why did you do this? So that the crosses you had set up for the condemned slaves should perhaps be kept there and set aside for innocent Roman citizens? Only cities that have lost everything and that are completely desperate are accustomed to take the lethal final step of restoring condemned men to freedom, freeing men who are bound in chains, calling back exiles, and canceling judgments made by the courts.... But what happened in this case is hardly believable. The men set free here were slaves who were suddenly dismissed from the very scene of their punishment by the very man who had found them guilty—and these were slaves who had been condemned on the charge of committing a crime that threatened the lives and limbs of all free persons.
What a resplendent commander! One who ought to be compared not with Manius Aquillius, that man of exceeding bravery, but with a Paullus, a Scipio, a Marius!\(^\text{19}\) How much foresight he showed in the hour of fear and danger faced by the province! When he saw that the minds of the slaves in Sicily were teetering on the edge of rebellion because of the slave war in Italy, not one of them dared to move because he had instilled such a dreadful fear into them! He ordered them to be arrested. Who would not be riven with fear? He put their masters on trial. What is more fearful for a slave? He announces what he seems to have done. He actually appears to have extinguished the fire that was beginning to spread with the suffering and deaths of only a few victims. What happens next? Whips and flaming torches and the other tools necessary for the extreme punishment of the condemned and as a deterrent for the others: the instruments of torture and the cross. But these men were freed from all these punishments. Who can doubt that he instilled in the minds of the slaves a terminal fear when they saw a governor so easygoing that the lives of slaves who had been condemned to death for the crime of conspiracy were redeemed—either from Verres himself or from the executioner who was acting as his intermediary?

What? You mean to say that you didn’t do exactly this same thing in the case of Aristodamus from Apollonia? What? And also in that of Leon from Imachara? What then? Did your suspicions of slave unrest and even the threat of servile war lead you to a more diligent care for your province, or rather to find a new avenue for wicked profits for yourself? Eumenides, a noble and honorable man from the city of Hali­cyae, and a man of considerable wealth, had a slave farm manager who was arrested at your instigation. You then accepted 60,000 sesterces from Eumenides, the man’s owner. How this was done was confirmed recently by Eumenides when he gave evidence under oath. But that’s nothing. You extorted 600,000 sesterces from the eques Gaius Matrinius during his absence from Sicily while he was away at Rome, alleging that you had discovered that his slave farm managers and shepherds were forming a conspiracy. Lucius Flavius, who was the agent for Gaius Matrinius’s business affairs and who counted out the money to you, gave testimony to this effect. So did Matrinius himself. And so did that most distinguished man, Gnaeus Lentulus, the censor.

\(^{19}\)Lucius Aemilius Paullus, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, and Gaius Marius were brilliant army commanders who had won great victories over some of Rome's formidable foreign enemies—the Macedonians, Carthaginians, and Germans.
who for the sake of the esteem in which he held Matrinius, wrote a letter to you and had others write letters to you about the same matter.

What then? What about Apollonius, the son of Diocles, from the city of Panormus—who is also known by the Latin surname Geminus—how can we pass over his case? What other matter, indeed, is better known, the subject of more outrage, and more manifest throughout Sicily? When Verres came to Panormus, he ordered Apollonius to be summoned and hailed before his tribunal at the crowded and busy assizes he was holding in the city. Men began to gossip with each other: "I'm surprised that Apollonius, a rich man, has remained untouched so long by that man." "He's certainly thought up something." "A rich man is not suddenly going to be summoned by Verres without a reason." There was a great sense of anticipation among these men about what was going to happen, when Apollonius himself ran up out of breath, accompanied by his younger son, since his elderly father had been bedridden for a long time.

In his formal charge, the governor named the slave who, he said, was Apollonius's master herdsman. Verres charged that this man was forming a conspiracy to incite the slaves owned by Apollonius to rebellion. But there was no such slave at all among Apollonius's slaves. Verres nonetheless ordered the man to be produced at once. Apollonius swore that he owned no such slave by that name. Verres then ordered Apollonius to be taken forcibly from his tribunal and to be thrown into prison. As he was being rushed away, the poor man cried out that he had done nothing wrong, that he had committed no crime, that all of his money was tied up on account and he had no liquid cash. It was when Apollonius shouted aloud these statements before the crowded assembly, in a manner in which anyone would be able to understand that he would not pay out any money, that he was manhandled with such severity. It was right at this juncture, I would like to emphasize, when he was shouting out loudly about the money, that he was thrown into chains.

Witness the hard determination of our governor! A governor who is being defended not just as any ordinary governor, but one who is being lauded as a supreme military commander. When a slave war was threatening, he freed condemned slaves from the same punishment that he then inflicted on innocent masters. Apollonius, a very wealthy man, who would lose his massive fortune if runaway slaves began a war in Sicily, is indicted on the charge of fomenting a slave war and is thrown into

\[\text{assize: a place where the Roman stopped on his tour of the province to hold court.}\]
chains. And the slaves, whom Verres himself, in agreement with his judicial council, had found guilty on the charge of inciting a slave war, now, without seeking any advice from his council, were freed from all punishment on nothing but his own whim. . . . I shall not defend the case against Apollonius, my friend and guest host, and would not presume to rescind your judgment against him. And I will not be provoked into saying anything about this man’s frugality, virtue, and diligence. I’m going to pass over the fact, which I’ve already mentioned, that his wealth consists of slaves, cattle, villas, and money on loan.

SOURCE: Cicero, Against Verres, 2.5.9–20.

81

AULUS GELLIUS

Marcus Crassus Celebrates His Victory over Spartacus

Second Century A.D.

The reason for awarding an ovatio, rather than a triumph, is either because a war was not proclaimed according to the proper rituals; because it was not fought with a real enemy; because the enemy had a humble and unworthy name, as in the case of slaves or pirates; or because the enemy’s surrender was too quick and the victory was, as they say, “bloodless” and “without dust.”

. . . so Marcus [Licinius] Crassus, when he had brought the war with the slaves to an end and had returned to Rome to celebrate an ovatio, disdainfully rejected the myrtle crown [of an ovatio] and used his influence to have a decree of the Senate passed that he was to be crowned with laurel, not with myrtle.21

21A general who celebrated a full-scale triumph rather than the lesser ovatio wore a crown of laurel leaves. Myrtle, which was used for the ovatio, was regarded as inferior.

After his praetorship [61 B.C.], Octavius\(^{22}\) had the province of Macedonia assigned to him by lot. On the way out to govern his province, he destroyed the fugitive slaves who were remnants of the forces that had once fought for Spartacus and for Catiline, and who now were occupying the countryside around Thurii. This task was assigned to Octavius by the Senate as an additional special command. . . .

When he was an infant, Augustus was given the nickname “Thurinus” [the man from Thurii], either in remembrance of his ancestral parentage from the region or because, more recently, shortly after Augustus was born [63 B.C.], his father, Octavius, had conducted successful military operations against fugitive slaves in the region.

\(^{22}\)Gaius Octavius, father of Augustus, the first Roman emperor.