

Plut. Crass. 8-11

Text Übersetzung:

(Übersetzung Bernadotte Perrin)

The insurrection of the gladiators and their devastation of Italy, which is generally called the war of Spartacus, had its origin as follows. A certain Lentulus Batiatus had a school of gladiators at Capua, most of whom were Gauls and Thracians. Through no misconduct of theirs, but owing to the injustice of their owner, they were kept in close confinement and reserved for gladiatorial combats.

[2] Two hundred of these planned to make their escape, and when information was laid against them, those who got wind of it and succeeded in getting away, seventy-eight in number, seized cleavers and spits from some kitchen and sallied out. On the road they fell in with waggons conveying gladiators' weapons to another city; these they plundered and armed themselves. Then they took up a strong position and elected three leaders. The first of these was Spartacus, a Thracian of Nomadic stock, possessed not only of great courage and strength, but also in sagacity and culture superior to his fortune, and more Hellenic than Thracian. [3] It is said that when he was first brought to Rome to be sold, a serpent was seen coiled about his face as he slept, and his wife, who was of the same tribe as Spartacus, a prophetess, and subject to visitations of the Dionysiac frenzy, declared it the sign of a great and formidable power which would attend him to a fortunate issue. This woman shared in his escape and was then living with him.

[...] [Die Armee des Spartakus erringt mehrere Siege, darunter gegen beide konsularischen Heere und gegen den Statthalter der Gallia Cisalpina]

[10] On learning of this, the Senate angrily ordered the consuls to keep quiet, and chose Crassus to conduct the war, and many of the nobles were induced by his reputation and their friendship for him to serve under him. Crassus himself, accordingly, took position on the borders of Picenum. expecting to receive the attack of Spartacus, who was hastening thither; and he sent Mummius, his legate, with two legions, by a circuitous route, with orders to follow the enemy, but not to join battle nor even skirmish with them. [2] Mummius, however, at the first promising opportunity, gave battle and was defeated; many of his men were slain, and many of them threw away their arms and fled for their lives. Crassus gave Mummius himself a rough reception, and when he armed his soldiers anew, made them give pledges that they would keep their arms. Five hundred of them, moreover, who had shown the greatest cowardice and been first to fly, he divided into fifty decades, and put to death one from each decade, on whom the lot fell, thus reviving, after the lapse of many years, an ancient mode of punishing the soldiers. [3] For disgrace also attaches to this manner of death, and many horrible and repulsive features attend the punishment which the whole army witnesses. When he had thus disciplined his men, he led them against the enemy. But Spartacus avoided him, and retired through Lucania to the sea. At the Straits, he chanced upon some Cilician pirate craft, and determined to seize Sicily. By throwing two thousand men into the island, he thought to kindle anew the servile war there, which had not long been extinguished, and needed only a little additional fuel. [4] But the Cilicians, after coming to terms with him and receiving his gifts, deceived him and sailed away. So Spartacus marched back again from the sea and established his army in the peninsula of Rhegium. Crassus now came up, and observing that the nature of the place

suggested what must be done, be determined to build a wall across the isthmus, thereby at once keeping his soldiers from idleness,, and his enemies from provisions. [5] Now the task was a huge one and difficult, but he accomplished and finished it, contrary to all expectation, in a short time, running a ditch from sea to sea through the neck of land three hundred furlongs in length and fifteen feet in width and depth alike. Above the ditch he also built a wall of astonishing height and strength. [6] All this work Spartacus neglected and despised at first; but soon his provisions began to fail, and when he wanted to sally forth from the peninsula, he saw that he was walled in, and that there was nothing more to be had there. He therefore waited for a snowy night and a wintry storm, when he filled up a small portion of the ditch with earth and timber and the boughs of trees, and so threw a third part of his force across.

[11] Crassus was now in fear lest some impulse to march upon Rome should seize Spartacus, but took heart when he saw that many of the gladiator's men had seceded after a quarrel with him, and were encamped by themselves on a Lucanian lake. This lake, they say, changes from time to time in the character of its water, becoming sweet, and then again bitter and undrinkable. Upon this detachment Crassus fell, and drove them away from the lake, but he was robbed of the slaughter and pursuit of the fugitives by the sudden appearance of Spartacus, who checked their flight. [2] Before this Crassus had written to the senate that they must summon Lucullus from Thrace and Pompey from Spain, but he was sorry now that he had done so, and was eager to bring the war to an end before those generals came. He knew that the success would be ascribed to the one who came up with assistance, and not to himself. Accordingly, in the first place, he determined to attack those of the enemy who had seceded from the rest and were campaigning on their own account (they were commanded by Caius Canicius and Castus), and with this in view, sent out six thousand men to preoccupy a certain eminence, bidding them keep their attempt a secret. [3] And they did try to elude observation by covering up their helmets, but they were seen by two women who were sacrificing for the enemy, and would have been in peril of their lives had not Crassus quickly made his appearance and given battle, the most stubbornly contested of all; for although he slew twelve thousand three hundred men in it, he found only two who were wounded in the back. The rest all died standing in the ranks and fighting the Romans. [4] After the defeat of this detachment, Spartacus retired to the mountains of Petelia, followed closely by Quintus, one of the officers of Crassus, and by Scrophas, the quaestor, who hung upon the enemy rear. But when Spartacus faced about, there was a great rout of the Romans, and they barely managed to drag the quaestor, who had been wounded, away into safety. This success was the ruin of Spartacus, for it filled his slaves with over-confidence. [5] They would no longer consent to avoid battle, and would not even obey their leaders, but surrounded them as soon as they began to march, with arms in their hands, and forced them to lead back through Lucania against the Romans, the very thing which Crassus also most desired. For Pompey's approach was already announced, and there were not a few who publicly proclaimed that the victory in this war belonged to him; he had only to come and fight and put an

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end to the war. Crassus, therefore, pressed on to finish the struggle himself, and having encamped near the enemy, began to dig a trench. [6] Into this the slaves leaped and began to fight with those who were working there, and since fresh men from both sides kept coming up to help their comrades, Spartacus saw the necessity that was upon him, and drew up his whole army in order of battle. In the first place, when his horse was brought to him, he drew his sword, and saying that if he won the day he would have many fine horses of the enemy's, but if he lost it He did not want any, he slew his horse. Then pushing his way towards Crassus himself through many flying weapons and wounded men, he did not indeed reach him, but slew two centurions who fell upon him together. [7] Finally, after his companions had taken to flight, he stood alone, surrounded by a multitude of foes, and was still defending himself when he was cut down. But although Crassus had been fortunate, had shown most excellent generalship, and had exposed his person to danger, nevertheless, his success did not fail to enhance the reputation of Pompey. For the fugitives from the battle encountered that general and were cut to pieces, so that he could write to the senate that in open battle, indeed, Crassus had conquered the slaves, but that he himself had extirpated the war.