

Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* (Βιβλιοθήκη ιστορική) fragments from book 36.

1. In Rome [104], at about the same time that Marius defeated the Libyan kings Bocchus and Jugurtha in a great battle and slew many tens of thousands of Libyans, and, later, took thence and held captive Jugurtha himself (after he had been seized by Bocchus who thereby won pardon from the Romans for the offences that had brought him into war with them), at the time, furthermore, that the Romans, at war with the Cimbri, were disheartened, having met with very serious reverses in Gaul, at about this time, I repeat, men arrived in Rome from Sicily bearing news of an uprising of slaves, their numbers running into many tens of thousands. With the advent of this fresh news the whole Roman state found itself in a crisis, inasmuch as nearly sixty thousand allied troops had perished in the war in Gaul against the Cimbri and there were no legionary forces available to send out.

2. Even before the new uprising of the slaves in Sicily there had occurred in Italy a number of short lived and minor revolts, as though the supernatural was indicating in advance the magnitude of the impending Sicilian rebellion. The first was at Nuceria, where thirty slaves formed a conspiracy and were promptly punished; the second at Capua, where two hundred rose in insurrection and were promptly put down. The third was surprising in character. There was a certain Titus Minucius, a Roman knight and the son of a very wealthy father. This man fell in love with a servant girl of outstanding beauty who belonged to another. Having lain with her and fallen unbelievably in love, he purchased her freedom for seven Attic talents (his infatuation being so compelling, and the girl's master having consented to the sale only reluctantly), and fixed a time by which he was to pay off the debt, for his father's abundant means obtained him credit. When the appointed day came and he was unable to pay, he set a new deadline of thirty days. When this day too was at hand and the sellers put in a claim for payment, while he, though his passion was in full tide, was no better able than before to carry out his bargain, he then embarked on an enterprise that passes all comprehension: he made designs on the life of those who were dunning him, and arrogated to himself autocratic powers. He bought up five hundred suits of armour, and contracting for a delay in payment, which he was granted, he secretly conveyed them to a certain field and stirred up his own slaves, four hundred in number, to rise in revolt. Then, having assumed the diadem and a purple cloak, together with lictors and the other appurtenances of office, and having with the co-operation of the slaves proclaimed himself king, he flogged and beheaded the persons who were demanding payment for the girl. Arming his slaves, he marched on the neighbouring farmsteads and gave arms to those who eagerly joined his revolt, but slew anyone who opposed him. Soon he had more than seven hundred soldiers, and having enrolled them by centuries he constructed a palisade and welcomed all who revolted. When word of the uprising was reported at Rome the senate took prudent measures and remedied the situation. Of the praetors then in the city they appointed one, Lucius Lucullus, to apprehend the fugitives. That very day he selected six hundred soldiers in Rome itself, and by the time he reached Capua had mustered four thousand infantry and four hundred cavalry. Vettius, on learning that Lucullus was on his way, occupied a strong hill with an army that now totalled more than thirty-five hundred men. The forces engaged, and at first the fugitives had the advantage, since they were fighting from higher ground; but later Lucullus, by suborning Apollonius, the general of Vettius, and guaranteeing him in the name of the state immunity from punishment, persuaded him to turn traitor against his fellow rebels. Since he was now cooperating with the Romans and turning his forces against Vettius, the latter, fearing the punishment that would await him if he were captured, slew himself, and was presently joined in death by all who had taken part in the insurrection, save only the traitor Apollonius. Now these

events, forming as it were a prelude, preceded the major revolt in Sicily, which began in the following manner.

2a. There were many new uprisings of slaves, the first at Nuceria, where thirty slaves formed a conspiracy and were promptly punished, and the second at Capua, where two hundred slaves rose in insurrection and also were promptly punished. A third revolt was extraordinary and quite out of the usual pattern. There was a certain Titus Vettius, a Roman knight, whose father was a person of great wealth. Being a very young man, he was attracted by a servant girl of outstanding beauty who belonged to another. Having lain with her, and even lived with her for a certain length of time, he fell marvellously in love and into a state bordering, in fact, on madness. Wishing because of his affection for her to purchase the girl's freedom, he at first encountered her master's opposition, but later, having won his consent by the magnitude of the offer, he purchased her for seven Attic talents, and agreed to pay the purchase price at a stipulated time. His father's wealth obtaining him credit for the sum, he carried the girl off, and hiding away at one of his father's country estates sated his private lusts. When the stipulated time for the debt came round he was visited by men sent to demand payment. He put off the settlement till thirty days later, and when he was still unable to furnish the money, but was now a very slave to love, he embarked on an enterprise that passes all comprehension. Indeed, the extreme severity of his affliction and the embarrassment that accompanied his failure to pay promptly caused his mind to turn to childish and utterly foolish calculations. Faced by impending separation from his mistress, he formed a desperate plot against those who were demanding payment. . . .

3. In the course of Marius' campaign against the Cimbri the senate granted Marius permission to summon military aid from the nations situated beyond the seas. Accordingly Marius sent to Nicomedes, the king of Bithynia, requesting assistance. The king replied that the majority of the Bithynians had been seized by tax farmers and were now in slavery in the Roman provinces. The senate then issued a decree that no citizen of an allied state should be held in slavery in a Roman province, and that the praetors should provide for their liberation. In compliance with the decree Licinius Nerva, who was at this time governor of Sicily, appointed hearings and set free a number of slaves, with the result that in a few days more than eight hundred persons obtained their freedom, and all who were in slavery throughout the island were agog with hopes of freedom. The notables, however, assembled in haste and entreated the praetor to desist from this course. Whether he was won over by their bribes or weakly succumbed in his desire to favour them, in any case he ceased to show interest in these tribunals, and when men approached him to obtain freedom he rebuked them and ordered them to return to their masters. The slaves, banding together, departed from Syracuse, and taking refuge in the sanctuary of the Palici canvassed the question of revolution. From this point on the audacity of the slaves was made manifest in many places, but the first to make a bid for freedom were the thirty slaves of two very wealthy brothers in the region of Halicyae, led by a man named Varius. They first murdered their own masters by night as they lay sleeping, then proceeded to the neighbouring villas and summoned the slaves to freedom. In this one night more than a hundred and twenty gathered together. Seizing a position that was naturally strong, they strengthened it even further, having received in the meantime an increment of eighty armed slaves. Licinius Nerva, the governor of the province, marched against them in haste, but though he placed them under siege his efforts were in vain. When he saw that their fortress could not be taken by force, he set his hopes on treason. As the instrument for his purpose he had one Gaius Titinius, surnamed Gadaeus, whom he won over with promises of immunity. This man had been condemned to death two years before, but had escaped punishment, and living as a brigand had murdered many of the free men of the region, while

abstaining from harm to any of the slaves. Now, taking with him a sufficient body of loyal slaves, he approached the fortress of the rebels, as though intending to join them in the war against the Romans. Welcomed with open arms as a friend, he was even chosen, because of his valour, to be general, whereupon he betrayed the fortress. Of the rebels some were cut down in battle, and others, fearing the punishment that would follow on their capture, cast themselves down from the heights. Thus was the first uprising of the fugitives quelled.

4. After the soldiers had disbanded and returned to their usual abodes, word was brought that eighty slaves had risen in rebellion and murdered Publius Clonius, who had been a Roman knight, and, further, that they were now engaged in gathering a large band. The praetor, distracted by the advice of others and by the fact that most of his forces had been disbanded, failed to act promptly and so provided the rebels an opportunity to make their position more secure. He set out with the soldiers that were available, and after crossing the river Alba [Allava?] passed by the rebels who were quartered on Mount Caprianus and reached the city of Heracleia. By spreading the report that the praetor was a coward, since he had not attacked them, they aroused a large number of slaves to revolt, and with an influx of many recruits, who were equipped for battle in such fashion as was possible, within the first seven days they had more than eight hundred men under arms, and soon thereafter numbered not less than two thousand. When the praetor learned at Heracleia of their growing numbers he appointed Marcus Titinius as commander, giving him a force of six hundred men from the garrison at Enna. Titinius launched an attack on the rebels, but since they held the advantage both in numbers and by reason of the difficult terrain, he and his men were routed, many of them being killed, while the rest threw down their arms and barely made good their escape by flight. The rebels, having gained both a victory and so many arms all at once, maintained their efforts all the more boldly, and all slaves everywhere were now keyed up to revolt. Since there were many who revolted each day, their numbers received a sudden and marvellous increase, and in a few days there were more than six thousand. Thereupon they held an assembly, and when the question was laid before them first of all chose as their king a man named Salvius, who was reputed to be skilled in divination and was a flute-player of frenetic music at performances for women. When he became king he avoided the cities, regarding them as the source of sloth and self-indulgence, and dividing the rebels into three groups, over whom he set a like number of commanders, he ordered them to scour the country and then assemble in full force at a stated time and place. Having provided themselves by their raids with an abundance of horses and other beasts, they soon had more than two thousand cavalry and no fewer than twenty thousand infantry, and were by now making a good showing in military exercises. So, descending suddenly on the strong city of Morgantina, they subjected it to vigorous and constant assaults. The praetor, with about ten thousand Italian and Sicilian troops, set out to bring aid to the city, marching by night; discovering on his arrival that the rebels were occupied with the siege, he attacked their camp, and finding that it was guarded by a mere handful of men, but was filled with captive women and other booty of all sorts, he captured the place with ease. After plundering the camp he moved on Morgantina. The rebels made a sudden counterattack and, since they held a commanding position and struck with might and main, at once gained the ascendant, and the praetor's forces were routed. When the king of the rebels made proclamation that no one who threw down his arms should be killed, the majority dropped them and ran. Having outwitted the enemy in this manner, Salvius recovered his camp, and by his resounding victory got possession of many arms. Not more than six hundred of the Italians and Sicilians perished in the battle, thanks to the king's humane proclamation, but about four thousand were taken prisoner. Having doubled his forces, since there were many who

flocked to him as a result of his success, Salvius was now undisputed master of the open country, and again attempted to take Morgantina by siege. By proclamation he offered the slaves in the city their freedom, but when their masters countered with a like offer if they would join in the defence of the city, they chose rather the side of their masters, and by stout resistance repelled the siege. Later, however, the praetor, by rescinding their emancipation, caused the majority of them to desert to the rebels.

5. In the territory of Segesta and Lilybaeum, and of the other neighbouring cities, the fever of insurrection was also raging among the masses of slaves. Here the leader was a certain Athenion, a man of outstanding courage, a Cilician by birth. He was the bailiff of two very wealthy brothers, and having great skill in astrology he won over first the slaves who were under him, some two hundred, and then those in the vicinity, so that in five days he had gathered together more than a thousand men. When he was chosen as king and had put on the diadem, he adopted an attitude just the opposite to that of all the other rebels: he did not admit all who revolted, but making the best ones soldiers, he required the rest to remain at their former labours and to busy themselves each with his domestic affairs and his appointed task; thus Athenion was enabled to provide food in abundance for his soldiers. He pretended, moreover, that the gods forecasted for him, by the stars, that he would be king of all Sicily; consequently, he must needs conserve the land and all its cattle and crops, as being his own property. Finally, when he had assembled a force of more than ten thousand men, he ventured to lay siege to Lilybaeum, an impregnable city. Having failed to achieve anything, he departed thence, saying that this was by order of the gods, and that if they persisted in the siege they would meet with misfortune. While he was yet making ready to withdraw from the city, ships arrived in the harbour bringing a contingent of Mauretanian auxiliaries, who had been sent to reinforce the city of Lilybaeum and had as their commander a man named Gomon. He and his men made an unexpected attack by night on Athenion's forces as they were on the march, and after felling many and wounding quite a few others returned to the city. As a result the rebels marvelled at his prediction of the event by reading the stars.

6. Turmoil and a very Iliad of woes possessed all Sicily. Not only slaves but also impoverished freemen were guilty of every sort of rapine and lawlessness, and ruthlessly murdered anyone they met, slave or free, so that no one should report their frenzied conduct. As a result all city-dwellers considered what was within the city walls scarcely their own, and whatever was outside as lost to them and subject only to the lawless rule of force. And many besides were the strange deeds perpetrated in Sicily, and many were the perpetrators.

11. Not only did the multitude of slaves who had plunged into revolt ravage the country, but even those freemen who possessed no holdings on the land resorted to rapine and lawlessness. Those without means, impelled alike by poverty and lawlessness, streamed out into the country in swarms, drove off the herds of cattle, plundered the crops stored in the barns, and murdered without more ado all who fell in their way, slave or free alike, so that no one should be able to carry back news of their frantic and lawless conduct. Since no Roman officials were dispensing justice and anarchy prevailed, there was irresponsible licence, and men everywhere were wreaking havoc far and wide. Hence every region was filled with violence and rapine, which ran riot and enjoyed full licence to pillage the property of the well-to-do. Men who afore time had stood first in their cities in reputation and wealth, now through this unexpected turn of fortune were not only losing their property by violence at the hands of the fugitives, but were forced to put up with insolent treatment even from the free born. Consequently they all considered

whatever was within the gates scarcely their own, and whatever was without the walls as lost to them and subject only to the lawless rule of force. In general there was turmoil in the cities, and a confounding of all justice under law. For the rebels, supreme in the open country, made the land impassable to travellers, since they were implacable in their hatred for their masters and never got enough of their unexpected good fortune. Meanwhile the slaves in the cities, who were contracting the infection and were poised for revolt, were a source of great fear to their masters.

[Translation by Francis R. Walton, 1967]