OUR LITTLE ROMAN COUSIN OF LONG AGO

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by

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MARCUS

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CHAPTER I

GOING TO SCHOOL

"Come, Marcus; come Lucius; no more sleep this morning, or the cocks will be crowing before you are in school."

Marcus turned, and bounded quickly from his couch to the floor.

"I wish the cocks did not crow so early in the morning," yawned Lucius, sleepily.

"Come, come," said his mother, "a boy that is old enough to go to school, is old enough to waken early."

Lucius sat up quickly. The great regret of Lucius' life was that he had not been born on the same day as his brother Marcus, instead of six years afterward. Marcus could do so many fine things that he could not. But this year he had entered the school to which Marcus went, and he was very proud of the fact.

Slipping over the edge of the high couch upon which he had been sleeping, Lucius dropped to his feet with a thud. Marcus never used the stool—which stood beside

each high Roman bed—and Lucius did not intend to either, now that he was big enough to go to school.

The two boys were quickly dressed, for they had only to slip into their tunics, which were like extra long sweaters without sleeves.

They were soon in the atrium, or main living-room, of the home. There they found Glaucon, the tall Greek slave who always accompanied them upon the street.

"Be sure, Marcus, to stop at the little bakeshop and buy some cakes for your breakfast," said Gaia, their mother, as they started off.

It was still dark, and the boys carried lanterns to light them along the way.

All up and down the streets of Rome, bobbing, sputtering little lights showed that many other boys were on their way to school.

"Good, here is Tullius!" cried Marcus, as he met, at a corner, the boy friend whom he liked best of all.

Behind Tullius was Aulus, the slave, or pedagogue, who always accompanied him upon the streets, as Glaucon did Marcus.

The three boys went on together and the two slaves followed. When they reached the bakeshop the boys bought a light breakfast, to eat at school.

Glaucon and Aulus were glad to be together. Although

slaves, they were both educated men who had once been free citizens of Greece.

After a battle with the Greeks, Glaucon and Aulus were taken captive and brought to Rome. There they were sold in the slave market of the city.

Gaius, the father of Marcus and Lucius, paid a large sum of money for Glaucon, for he learned that he was an educated man, and a man of good character. Quintus, the father of Tullius, bought Aulus for the same reason.

Every Roman boy of good birth had a special slave who went with him to and from school, and to all public places of the city. If well educated, this slave also helped him with his lessons outside of school. For this reason he was called the boy's pedagogue.

The pedagogue held a very important place in a Roman household. Marcus and Lucius were fond of Glaucon, and Tullius was fond, too, of Aulus.

As the boys hurried along the streets with their lanterns, Marcus saw a big notice posted upon the wall of a house.

He held up his lantern to read.

"It is a notice of the chariot races that are to be held in the Circus Maximus," he said. "There will be six drivers, and each will drive four horses. It will be a fine race."

Tullius was now reading the notice, too. "One of the

drivers has won more than two thousand victories!" he exclaimed. "My, what a lot!"

"I wish I could see a chariot race," said Lucius. "You have seen more than one, haven't you, Marcus?"

"Yes," answered Marcus, "and you will see one some of these days, too."

"We had better hurry on," cried Tullius suddenly, "or we shall be late for school."

"And the master may flog us," said Lucius.

"But, even at that," said Marcus laughingly, "we do not have so hard a master as the school boys of Falerii."

"Is it a story, Marcus? Oh, do tell it to us," begged Lucius, for Marcus was a famous story-teller among the boys.

"Well," said Marcus, as they started on, "there was a great battle many, many years ago between the Romans and the Etruscans. The Romans had taken many towns belonging to the Etruscans, but the town of Falerii stood upon a high cliff with great ravines on each side.

"Camillus was the general in charge of the Roman army. His soldiers had gone into camp and were wondering day after day how they ever were to conquer a city built upon such a site as that.

"But one morning, while the officers were planning and the soldiers were talking, they saw a strange company

making its way down the cliff and straight to the door of Camillus' tent. The company was made up of a group of boys with one man apparently in charge of them.

"When Camillus came out to greet them, the man stated that he was a schoolmaster in Falerii, and that the boys were his pupils.

"'They are sons of the foremost men of the town,' he said, 'and I have come to deliver them into your hands. For you may be sure,' he added, 'that when their fathers learn what has become of these boys, they will surrender their city to you, rather than let their sons be carried away as slaves.'"

"Oh, what a horrible schoolmaster!" exclaimed Lucius.

"Yes," said Marcus, "he thought that he would be given a great prize for his act. But Camillus was a true Roman general, and he would not stoop to anything so low as that.

"'Here,' he cried, turning to a soldier who stood near, 'tie this traitor's hands behind his back, and give every boy a rod.' Then, turning to the frightened boys, he said, 'Take the rods and drive him back to your city, and tell your fathers that I do not fight with boys. If I cannot win bravely, I will not win at all.'

"The boys did as Camillus told them, and when the men of Falerii heard Camillus' message they said, 'We

are willing to surrender to so just a man as that.' And they became subjects of Rome."

"That is a fine story, Marcus," said Tullius. "I wish I had as good a memory as you. But here we are at school, and just in time, at that."

CHAPTER II

LESSONS

"Are you sure my tablet and stylus are in the box, Glaucon?" asked Marcus, as they reached the school.

"Yes," answered Glaucon, "and your reckoning stones, too," and he handed to Marcus the box which he had been carrying.

Tullius took his box from Aulus, and the three boys entered the open building which was their school.

This building, which was called a pergula, had only a roof resting upon pillars, with no side walls. The boys had no books, for this was nearly two thousand years ago, and a printed book had never been seen.

"I understand that Faustus, who lives next door, has complained of the noise of our school, and says that we waken him too early in the morning," said Tullius to Marcus.

"If he would keep earlier hours at night, he would not mind wakening early in the morning," replied Marcus with a laugh.

"But cock-crowing *is* pretty early in the morning," exclaimed Lucius with a shake of his head, as he set down the lantern which he had carried and tried to make its sputtering wick burn more brightly.

"If we lived in a northern city," said the master, who had heard Lucius' remark, "we should not need to rise so early, for then we could play or work all through the day. But here in Rome, where it is so hot that every one must rest through the middle of the day, we should not have time to learn much if we did not get to school before daylight."

Marcus and Tullius, who were thirteen, took their places with the older boys. Lucius, who was only seven, sat with the beginners, for this was the age at which the boys of Rome entered school.

There were no desks in the room. The teacher, or master, sat in a chair upon a raised platform. Each of the boys had a bench, with a stool for his feet so that his knees could be used for a desk.

After all were in their places, the master left his chair and, going from one pupil to another, wrote a maxim at the top of each boy's tablet.

The tablet was not a block of paper, for no one had heard of paper in those days. It was very much like a

slate, with a light wooden frame, but the part inside the frame was covered with smooth wax.

Writing was done by cutting letters in the wax surface with a stylus. The stylus was long and slender in shape, pointed at one end and flat at the other. The writing was done with the pointed end. When a mistake was made, or a lesson was to be erased, the wax was rubbed smooth with the flat end.

As they had no books, the boys studied both reading and writing from their tablets.

"Marcus, the son of Gaius, may read his maxim," called the master, when all the copies had been written.

Marcus arose and read, speaking distinctly and carefully.

"Very good," said the master. "Marcus will be able to speak before the Senate when he is a man."

Marcus flushed with pleasure, for no greater praise than this could be given him. He, like every Roman boy of good birth, hoped that some day he might occupy a seat in the Senate, and so he was careful to speak correctly and distinctly at all times.

After the reading lesson was finished, the pupils made many copies of the maxim upon their tablets. The form of the letters which these Roman boys used, so long ago,

was the same as our English letters, but the language used was Latin.

Before the lessons in reading and writing were finished, the sun arose, and the sputtering lights of the lanterns were put out.

Then came recess, and the boys played games, and ate the breakfasts that they had brought with them.

After recess the pupils took their reckoning stones from their boxes, ready for the lesson in arithmetic. This was a hard study for a Roman boy, because of the Roman numbers which were used.

You will see some of the Roman numbers at the beginning of the chapters of this book, and you probably know that V means five, X means ten, L means fifty, and C means one hundred. In order to write the number one hundred and twenty-four, instead of writing 124, Marcus had to write CXXIV. Now, if you will try to subtract thirty-seven—which is XXXVII—from CXXIV, you will begin to see why Roman arithmetic was such a hard study.

The pupils began the study of arithmetic by using the reckoning stones. These were smooth stones which were counted up to the number given by the master. This number was then divided by separating the stones

into groups; or it was added to by placing other stones with the number first given.

As the boys grew older, they learned to solve quite hard problems by mental arithmetic. They also had a curious way of using their fingers to help themselves when figuring.

"I am glad I do not have to study arithmetic with my fingers," said Lucius, on the way home from school. "I cannot understand that, at all. But it is great fun to count with the reckoning stones."

CHAPTER III

MARCUS' HOME

When Marcus came home from school, he did not toss his cap into a corner, and then have to hunt for it the next time he went out; but perhaps this was because he had no cap to toss. Roman boys always went bareheaded, although the sun was hot in Italy.

They generally wore shoes when upon the street, although their arms and legs were as bare as their heads.

The home of Gaius was a beautiful one, but from the street all the houses of Rome looked very much alike. The front doors all opened directly upon the street, and the yards or gardens were at the back of the houses, and were surrounded by high walls.

As Marcus and Lucius came in from school, they saw a very pretty sight. The atrium, or main living-room, was very large, and in the centre of the room there was a beautiful fountain. Beside this fountain sat their little sister Livia, playing with two of her favorite doves.

"How pretty she looks, Lucius!" said Marcus, and in a moment he had tossed her, doves and all, high in the air.

"Oh, I am so glad you are here!" cried Livia, hugging Marcus and Lucius in turn with her dimpled arms.

From the atrium, which was separated from the other rooms of the house only by pillars and curtains, the boys could look out into the garden. This also had a fountain, with graceful statues about it, and many sorts of beautiful flowers.

Gaia, their mother, was in the garden, and Lucius ran to her, picked a scarlet blossom on his way, and when she stooped to kiss him, tucked it lovingly in her hair.

"Where is Terentia?" asked Marcus, as he, too, came into the garden with Livia.

"I am coming," called Terentia, the sister who was between Marcus and Lucius in age. "Mother has been teaching me to spin the wool for weaving," she added, "and I have tried to make my thread as smooth and even as hers."

"And did you succeed?" asked Marcus.

"No, not yet," answered Terentia, "but I mean to keep on trying."

"That is the way to succeed," said a hearty voice behind them, and the children turned quickly, for it was the voice of Gaius, their father, who had come in unobserved.

"Isn't it almost time for dinner, Mother?" asked Lucius, looking at the shadow which the sun-dial cast, in the garden.

"Yes," said Gaia, "I think it will be ready very soon."

"That reminds me, children," said Gaius, "of a curious invention that I saw to-day in the home of Quintus. It was called a water-clock, and it marks the time, as the sun-dial does, but it is better, because the dial can only tell us the time when the sun is shining, while this water-clock tells the time on cloudy days, and also at night."

"What was it like, Father?" asked Marcus with interest.

"It consisted," replied Gaius, "of a vessel filled with water. A scale was marked upon the vessel, and the water dripped from a small opening, so that just a certain amount could escape each hour. The vessel is filled with water each morning, and by looking at the scale, at the level of the water, one can tell the hour of the day. Do you understand it, my son?"

"Yes," replied Marcus, "I think that I do. It seems quite simple, and yet it is curious, too. I must see it the next time I go to visit Tullius."

"I wish the slaves would hasten dinner," said Lucius impatiently, "for school makes me very hungry."

"You must learn to be patient, even though hungry," said Gaius, placing his hand upon Lucius' shoulder, "If

you do not, you will never make a good Roman citizen or soldier. Do you remember the story of Mucius?"

"No, Father," said Lucius, who was always ready for a story. "Please tell it to us."

"Caius Mucius," Gaius began, "was a young Roman of noble birth. Lars Porsena, a powerful enemy of Rome, was camped with his army outside the walls of the city, and he had been there so long that the citizens had no food left. But, hungry and weak as they were, the Romans were not ready to surrender, so Caius Mucius made his way into the enemy's camp, determined to kill the king. However, by some strange mistake, he killed the king's secretary instead.

"He was captured and brought before Lars Porsena, who condemned him to be killed. Then Caius Mucius drew himself up and exclaimed, 'There are three hundred more Roman youths ready to do what I have tried to do and failed! And, to show you that we do not fear any punishment, or any pain that you may condemn us to, I will suffer my right hand to be burned in your presence.'

"With that he extended his hand and held it in the flame that was burning upon an altar in the king's tent. His brave countenance showed no sign of suffering as he continued to hold his hand in the flame.

"Then Lars Porsena exclaimed, 'If all Romans are as

brave as this, and can endure hardship without flinching, as this man can, I would rather have them for friends than for enemies.' And he straightway offered the city terms of peace.

"After that Caius Mucius was known as Scaevola, which means the left-handed."

"Ah, he was brave!" exclaimed Lucius. "And he saved Rome by it, too, didn't he?" And he continued to look thoughtful as they all went in to dinner.

CHAPTER IV

AT DINNER

The Romans did not use chairs when at the table, but reclined upon couches. They rested upon the left arm, leaving the right hand free.

As soon as Gaius and his family had taken their places about the table, one of the slaves removed their sandals, for a Roman would not think of eating in a private house with sandals upon his feet.

When the dinner had been served, Gaia, turning to Lucius, asked, "And what did you do in school to-day?"

"Oh," replied Lucius, "I had such a nice way of learning my letters. The master gave me a set of letters cut from ivory, and, after I had learned their names, I made words from them, by laying them on my tablet. I played that each ivory letter was a boy, and it was much easier to remember their names that way.

"The master praised Marcus, to-day," he added, turning to his father.

"What did he say?" asked Gaius, and Marcus answered

with a flush of pleasure, "I read my maxim so well, that he said I should some day be able to address the Senate."

"That is praise, indeed," said his father, and then he added, "I think you have your mother to thank for that. Ever since you learned to talk, she has been careful about your speech, and your mother uses the purest Latin."

Gaia flushed with pleasure at her husband's praise, while Marcus replied, "I know that that is true."

"I hope" Gaius continued, "that you will gain as much by Glaucon's teaching, for he is a good Greek scholar and can teach you to speak Greek language as well as you speak the Latin. We are fortunate in having such a pedagogue as Glaucon."

"Glaucon is teaching me to speak in Greek, too," said Lucius eagerly, "and he says that I do very well."

"That is good," said Gaia, smiling approvingly at her younger boy.

"Father," said Lucius after a pause, "one of the boys in school was flogged to-day."

"What had he done?" asked Gaius.

"He wanted to go to an exhibition at the circus, and so he took cumin to make him look pale."

"Aha," said Gaius; "and so the master saw through his trick?"

"Yes," replied Lucius, laughingly, "and he gave him an exhibition of flogging, instead."

"He was smarting from it afterward," added Marcus, "and Glaucon told him not to mind; that flogging was what made good men and women."

"Glaucon is probably right," said Gaius. "The rod is needed when boys and girls choose to be unruly."

"Father," said Terentia, speaking for the first time, "I hear that girls attend some of the schools."

"Yes," replied her father, "it is true, but I think no good will come of it. The daughter's place is in the home, and I believe it is better for her to be educated there. A girl should know how to read and write, and keep simple accounts, as you are learning to do; but the most important lessons for her to learn are how to care for a household, how to spin and weave, and above all, how to hold the love and honor of her family.

"I know that my ideas are beginning, in some places, to be looked upon as old-fashioned," added Gaius, "but they were held by our ancestors, and they lived worthy and honorable lives."

"We had a new fashion set us at school to-day," said Marcus with a laugh. "Titus, the son of Faustus, was brought to school in a litter carried by six slaves."

"I am afraid," said Gaius severely, "that Faustus will