

### *Hard bargaining at the slave market, what do you get...*

Down at the Forum... Every town in the Empire has a Forum. Past the temples with their rows of columns, a plaza with statues to this-or-that deity paid for by local grandees, wall-plaques recounting past local history, now take a side street. The street is lined with shops

There are the *smart* shops that sell fool's gold for the real thing, the tavern with wine, taken with hot water, and around the corner is a small open square with a raised, wooden stage along one wall. Beneath the stage, from the gloom, you see the detritus of cast-off clothing; a leather belt, one sandal...and so forth...torn, shoved, pushed, discarded against an up-right post supporting the stage. Where is the original clothing wearer?

+ + +

Rome started as a settlement on marshy ground surrounded by seven hills. A river meandered through the lowland past the hills. Out of this un-promising geographical setting, the Romans came to dominate the Italian Peninsula through relentless expansionism. **Sicily** was Rome's first overseas colony

Yes, Roman engineers-built roads, bridges, and aqueducts to transport water for crops and people, but the economy remained agrarian. To sustain the existing social-economic structure required labour, and the best source of labour was the slave. As time went on, the demand for slaves grew. The **Licinio-Sextian rogations** of 367 BCE were designed to redress the growing problem of Roman aristocratic landowners versus costs for plebeian small-holders. One involuntary effect of high costs was the displacement of the free labourer

Great slave-marts, such as **Side** and **Delos**, were able to handle hundreds of slaves in a single day. With the fall of **Carthage** and **Corinth**, even greater numbers of persons were available as slaves to meet the demand of wealthy Romans. If not the Roman army, then the **publicani** the **tax-collectors**, roamed lucrative areas such as **Asia Minor** to kidnap. Names of slaves, such as; **Ephesius**, **Lydus**, **Syra**, **Thessala** tell from whence populations were taken

+ + +

The slaves are brought in and stand in a line on the raised stage. A sign is hung from each neck. The sign proclaims the qualities of the person (why you should purchase this man or woman as opposed to another). The **mango**, the **dealer** or to be vulgar, the **slave-monger** has written on the sign, '*Nubian, very strong, doesn't eat much, not a troublemaker*'; '*Gaul, baker, able to work, blind in one eye*' or '*Greek, speaks several languages, teacher of philosophy, recites verse at banquets*'

The assembled crowd doesn't believe what is written on the signs, '*Virgin, daughter of Dacian prince, good bed-warmer*' gets attention. The **mango** rips the loin cloth off a tall, blond, young male. He is a barbarian. From where...the **Rhine**, the **Danube**, the **Dacia**...?

None on the stage betray their emotions. Rebellion or anger will be rewarded with multiple blows to the head-and-shoulders

+ + +

The **mango** knows his product or better phrased; he knows what his customers prefer. The slave market varies its product for special market days: muscular slaves for hard labour; another day, young boys for work at banquets, or a special day reserved for dwarves or persons possessed of physical peculiarities

The crowd is watchful. The naked barbarian is still wearing apparel, a **headband**. Someone shouts, '*Take the band off!*' The crowd want to know if either **fug** or **fur** is branded on his forehead. There is a brand, *not fur* for **thief**, but **fug** for **fugitivus**. You purchase the barbarian, you affix an inscribed collar around his neck: **tene me ne fugiam, fugio, Hold onto me so I won't be able to escape, I'm running away**

+ + +

Slaves are found throughout the Roman Empire. Those sent to work on a large agrarian estate are referred to as **familia rustica**. The wealthy owner may already have a thousand or more slaves toiling under the harsh authority of a *former* slave. While those sent to work in an urban setting, **familia urbana** may actually have the *slim* chance of manumission

A slave working in an urban sweatshop, his lot is slightly less onerous than his country counterpart whose condition is described as **ergastulum**, a **lifetime prison**. A farm animal is an **instrumentum semivocalis**, while a slave is an **instrumentum vocalis**. The difference is speech!

There is a third group of slaves who work for the emperor, referred to as the **familia Caesaris**. They have a basic education and know how to read and write. They are found throughout the state's public administration and finances

+ + +

All slaves share the *same* fate of toil, endless toil