

# FOR EVERY BOY AND GIRL

## A ROMAN BOY'S BIRTHDAY.

By  
Bertha E. Bush.



It is doubtful if there was ever a prouder boy than Publius Septimius Antonius Geta on his eleventh birthday, when he drove to the racetrack in a gilded chariot with two magnificent black horses all his own. He had reason to be proud, for it is not the lot of many boys to have the march of a victorious army halted, that their birthdays may be celebrated with military games.

The fiery steeds pranced and curveted. The heavy, unsteady chariot, as clumsy as it was magnificent, rocked from side to side. A hundred hands were ready to take the reins should the emperor's young son give the nod; but, though his arms seemed almost pulled from their sockets and his footing shifted with the swaying chariot, he would not give up. Boys were expected to be hardy and fearless in those days. Young Geta had already been two years with his father in the army, sleeping uncomplainingly, if need be, on the bare ground, eating anything or nothing, seeing sights which our bravest men could hardly bear. He was a frank and friendly little fellow, whose greatest pride was to endure all the hardships that the Roman soldiers suffered. What wonder that the whole army loved him, and that the emperor, Septimius Severus, preferred him to his sullen older brother, Caracalla!

When the brilliant cortege reached the amphitheater where the games were to be held, Geta was placed in the seat of honor at the right hand of the emperor, and a happier face than his never looked down upon an assembled audience. At the left, with a brow as black with anger as Geta's was bright with happiness, sat the older son, Caracalla, whose heart was full of bitterness at this honor paid to his brother.

It was a little provincial town. The amphitheater did not begin to compare with the wonderful Colosseum at Rome. The citizens had made great effort to adorn it suitably for the emperor. The place reserved for his train was hung with the richest draperies the time produced, but it was not as far removed from the seats of the common people as was most fitting to the Roman ideas of etiquette. Caracalla scowled as he took his purple-draped seat; for the mass—the vulgar herd, as he called them contemptuously—were so near that he could have touched them with his hand.

Geta, with shining face, watched every movement of the wrestlers. Caracalla looked idly about with eyes of disdain. At last the climax seemed to have come. The whole amphitheater was silent in breathless interest; even Caracalla began to show some faint sign of attention. One combatant after another had been downed by one stalwart Roman soldier, who now challenged the world. Just at that moment a luckless slave child from a tier of seats above Caracalla's left hand leaned too far over, lost his balance and fell, and, clutching wildly at emptiness to save himself somehow, struck the emperor's hair full in the face.

Oh, what an angry Caracalla started up from the purple seat and, with scowls and fierce imprecations, ordered that the unlucky child who had unintentionally insulted him should at once be put to death! Pale and trembling, the little lad was dragged before the emperor and his sons, and the deadly swords of Caracalla's guard of soldiers were drawn from their sheaths.

It was the common punishment for such an offense. The emperor and his sons were sacred. No one touched them unbidden save at penalty of death. But the little lad who had unwittingly offended was so small and innocent! He scarcely comprehended it all, and was more shaken by the fall than by his impending doom, only realizing that some danger was near and everyone else was looking upon him in anger. But Geta's face alone was friendly and pitiful. The little slave boy slipped from the soldier's grasp and flung himself down at the feet of the emperor's younger son, clinging to his robe.

It would only have made his punishment more swift if it had been Caracalla's robe he seized, but Geta was made of tenderer as well as braver stuff. Reaching gently down, he caught the little praying hands into his own.

"Father," he said, "this is my birthday. I have a right to a boon. I ask for the life of this boy."

But the stern emperor's face wore no look of consent. The majesty of Rome had been insulted. What did the life of one slave boy matter among the millions subject to his sway? To him it seemed unfitting to his dignity that such a crime, even though unintentional, should go unpunished.

"It is impossible, my son," he said. "Ask it no more. Give up this request and I will order a whole gladiatorial show to please you. But that such an insult to an emperor's son should go unavenged! It is as impossible as that yonder Roman soldier in the arena should be overcome by one of these barbarian Thracians."

But Geta, with the small curly head of the slave child between his knees, looked anxiously to the arena. Any delay was to be welcomed.

"Wait, father; only wait till the games are finished," he begged. "Let the boy stay safe with me till the games are over. Then, if a Roman soldier is still the victor, I will give him up."

The emperor looked at his favorite son. It was hard to deny him. He made a sign to the soldiers who had dragged the child before him, and the swords were sheathed. Once more every eye was fixed upon the arena, and behold! Across it came stalking the tallest barbarian that Rome had ever seen, a giant rudely clothed in skins, who besought an opportunity to wrestle with the champion.

"My son," said the emperor—and though he spoke to Geta his eyes were fixed upon scowling Caracalla—"art thou ready to risk this cause on the strength of this Thracian giant?"

"Yes, oh, yes," cried Geta; and Caracalla, sure that no Roman soldier could be overcome by a barbarian, muttered a sullen assent.

Once more the trumpet sounded, and the long line of fresh combatants marched across the arena, and

bowed themselves before the emperor. High above the head and shoulders of the others towered the form of the Thracian giant Maximin, and even when he knelt he was as tall on his knees as the soldiers

standing about him.

"I challenge all beholders. Come and wrestle with the power of Rome and learn how she lays her enemies low," cried the champion. One after another advanced and received his fall, but Maximin stood leaning against a pillar with downcast eyes.

"He is afraid," sneered Caracalla.

Then the herald, at a word from the challenger, advanced and announced that all who feared might withdraw from the contest. Maximin walked carelessly forward to the champion; the jeering crowd saw him make a slight motion, and the Roman soldier lay stretched at his feet. Another and another came forward to revenge the fall of their brother soldiers and in turn met defeat. Seventeen times in quick succession the Thracian giant wrestled with a Roman soldier, and seventeen times was easily victorious.

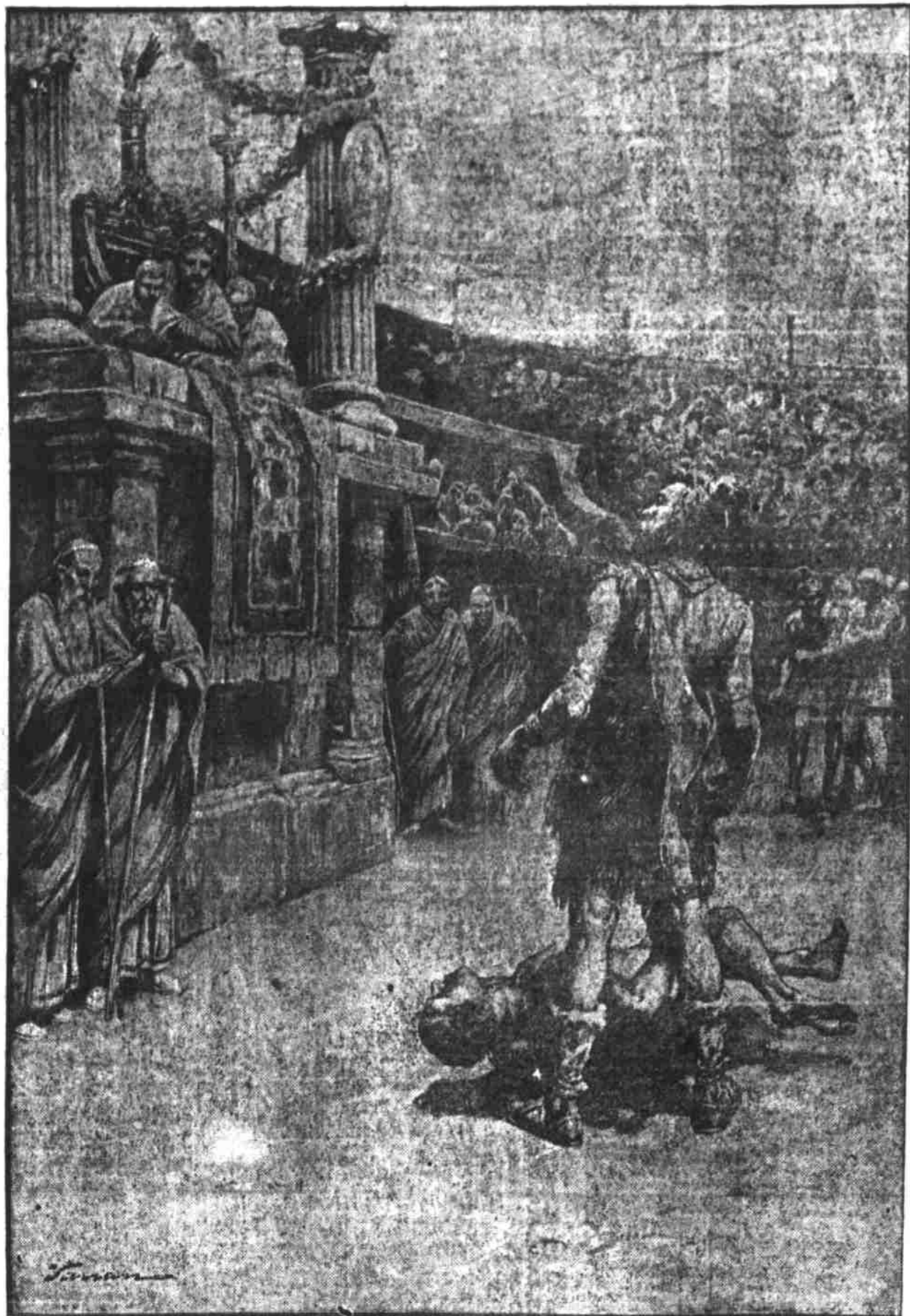
The life of the child at Geta's feet was saved. "This giant shall straightway go into my army," said the emperor; and the Thracian left the arena, himself a soldier of Rome.

When the games were over and the emperor and his sons driving away, they saw the barbarian, high over the heads of his companions, leaping and exulting. As soon as he caught sight of them, he ran up to the emperor's chariot.

The horses were not slackened, but for mile after mile the giant ran beside them, and though they galloped at their greatest speed, he lost not an inch.

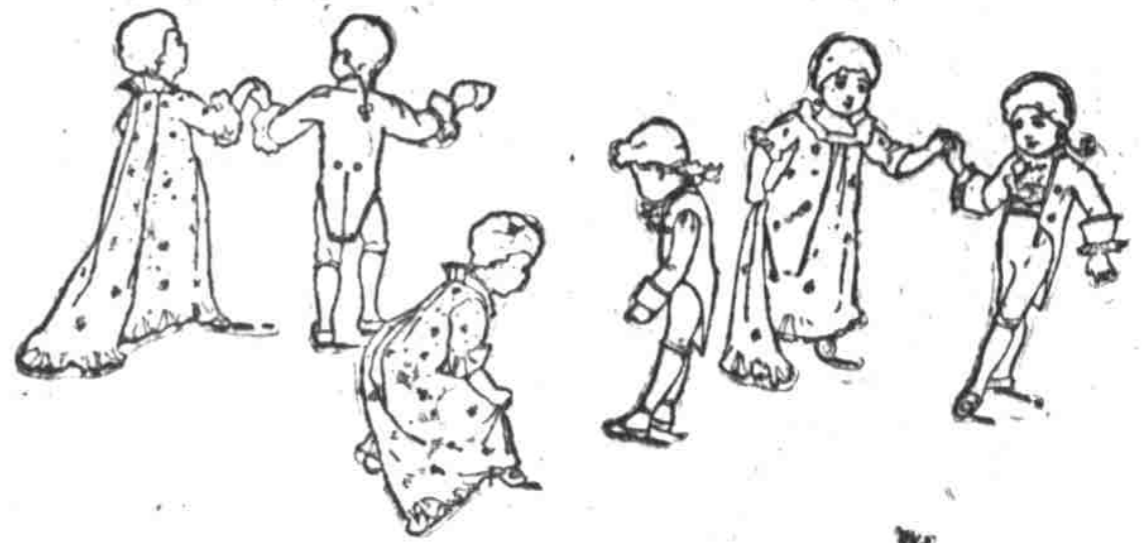
"Thracian," said the emperor, astonished, "art thou disposed to wrestle after thy race?"

"Most willingly, sir," answered the unwearied Maximin; and thereupon overthrew seven of the strongest



"THE JEERING CROWD SAW HIM MAKE A SLIGHT MOTION, AND THE ROMAN SOLDIER LAY STRETCHED AT HIS FEET."

### The Baby Model



soldiers in the army.

"I should not like to wrestle with him," laughed Geta. "Father, thou saidst a Roman soldier was never overcome by a barbarian."

"Hush, my son, hush," cried the emperor. "Is not this giant now a Roman soldier? Can he be overcome?"

Years afterward, when merry Geta had long been dead, this Thracian giant did overcome the power of Rome and became himself the emperor. But that is a story for which you will have to look in your history.

### IN A LIBRARY.

Abashed I stand, yet eager, like Aladdin awed before The cavern of enchantment, with darksome, magic door; For 'mid the cloistered shadows there wait on every side The portals of the mystic realms my word can open wide.

What need of sprite or genie? What use of lamp or ring? I have the word that opens, the wonder-charm I bring; I am my own magician, when, with my wand in hand, I come a seeking pilgrim into the bookman's land.

Why pause in doubtful longing? I need but choose the gate— I need but speak the magic word for which the hinges wait: The door will swing obedient and open me the way To Egypt or to Arden, to Chble or Cathay.

O covers of a wealth of books, O wizard hinged doors, What treasures do you lock from me, what wonder- realm is yours!

Nay, mine, all mine to conjure with, the simple A B C— The charm I learned, a little child, beside my mother's knee.

Abbie Farwell Brown.

### MR. SNAIL'S DOWNFALL

Robert W. Dutton.

SEATED at the table, the children were enjoying their luncheon, and Aunt Matilda was busily engaged in writing upon them, when one of them asked in a rather rude manner to be helped to something. Without seeming to notice the child's rudeness, the old woman, after quietly helping the little one, said: "Yo' know, chil'ren, dat it don't cost nuthin' to be purlite, but, at de same time, yo' is gwine to gain a lot mo' by bein' so in dis here world."

The little ones had ceased eating as the old woman spoke, wondering to which one of them her words were addressed. But she seemed to be speaking to all of them as she continued: "Purriteness makes mighty easy goin', no matter whar yo' is trabin', and de want of it is a load dat pulls yo' back mo' an' mo' de furder yo' go. Yo' know, de snail he flew high an' he flew fast till his impurriteness done stop him."

"Why, Aunt Matilda," exclaimed the children, in surprise, "the snail never could fly!"

"Mr. Snail flew once on a time, chil'ren," the old woman insisted; "an' he'd been a-flyin' yit, 'coordin' to Mr. Wizzle Wuzzle, but fur his impurriteness. He allow dat Mr. Snail in de olden time fly fast, an' dat Mr. Snail fly high, an' dat he was all I tells yo'. Howsomever, de lion, which is de king of de beastes, as he was den, give a feast one day. To dat feast King Lion 'vited all de beastes, all de birds, an' all de res' of de world. An', chil'ren, dey all come; fur, wile dey was den dat ain't likin' him, dey know dat when King Lion say 'Come,' he don't say, 'Come if yo' kin,' or 'Come if convenient,' an' so dey all come."

"Where did the lion give the feast?" interrupted one of the little ones.

"Dat I disremember, honey," replied the old woman, "but de feast was given, an' dey was all havin' as fine a time as yo' want to see, when Mr. Snail, who sot nex' to Mr. Fox at de table, findin' dat de soup want jes a pinch of salt, says to Mr. Fox, 'Pass dat salt dis way.' He never say, 'May I trouble yo' fur de salt?' or 'Be good 'nuff to pass de salt dis way,' or 'De salt, if yo' please.' No, indeed; he did n't nuthin' 't all like dat, epite de fact dat he was riz well as de best of 'em. He jes say, 'Pass dat salt dis way.' All dem dat hear him mighty s'prised to hear sech impurriteness, an' as Mr. Fox purlitle pass de salt to Mr. Snail, all look at King Lion to see what he gwine say or 'bout it."

"And did the lion do or say anything, Aunt Matilda?" chorused the children.

"King Lion did n't do anything, an' he did n't say anything, jes den," she resumed, "but when de feast was over, an' dey was all 'bout to leave de table, he say, lookin' down to whar Mr. Snail sot: 'Dar is n't anythin' dat I knows of so easy as bein' purlite, an' dar is n't any place whar de want of it looks so mean as at de table dan yo' own. I is sorry to say,' King Lion go on, lookin' mighty fierce toward Mr. Snail, 'dat one of yo' sittin' at dis here table done furgit all dis. Sech furgitfulness I can't 'ford to let go by widout noticin' of it, an', widout mentionin' any names, I is 'bliged to say dat after dis day de one I has in mind will be hidden frum de rest of yo', an' dat he 'll crawl 'long de face of de earth, 'stead of flyin'!"

"An' frum dat day to dis, chil'ren," said the old woman, impressively, "Mr. Snail done hid hisself in a shell, an' crawls 'long, 'bout de mos' spisedest creatur in all de world."

## GOING TO SCHOOL IN KANSAS



"NOW, JOHNNY, HURRY! YOU'RE LATE FOR SCHOOL, AND DON'T WASTE A MINUTE."



JOHNNY LUCKILY MEETS A CYCLONE.



WHICH IS GOING HIS WAY.



AND HE ARRIVES IN TIME.