

The Plot Against Paul

power, which may be turned to our use, special deliverances point to God's constant protection.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them then how we will.

—Shakespeare

There must have been something very noble and heroic in Paul's bearing; or his nephew would never have run the risk of being torn limb from limb for divulging the secret plot of the zealots, who had bound themselves by a solemn vow never to eat nor drink till they had forever silenced the tongue that gave them more cause to fear than all the legions of Felix's escort.—Meyer.

Mark how blindly men fulfil God's purposes. The two bitter antagonists, Jew and Roman, seem to themselves to be working in direct opposition, but God is using them both to carry out his design. Paul has to be got to Rome, and these two forces are combined, by a wisdom beyond their ken, to carry him thither. Two cogged wheels, turning in opposite directions, fit into each other, and grind out a resultant motion, different from either of their's. These soldiers and that mob were like two pawns on a chess-board, ignorant of the intentions of the hand which moves them.—Maclaren.

Light from the East

CENTURION—The Roman army originally consisted of eight legions, each containing about 6000 infantry, besides cavalry, light armed auxiliaries, and military engines. In later times the number of legions was increased to 132, but the infantry in each was reduced to 1500 men. The legion was divided into sixty centuries or companies, each consisting of from 50 to 100 men according to the size of the legion, and commanded by a centurion. These centurions were chosen by the tribunes of the legion, at first altogether on account of merit, but under the emperors through interest or personal friendship. Their pay was double that of the private soldier, but they were not, like the captain in the British army, eligible for promotion.

CHIEF CAPTAIN—The consuls and prætors appointed six prefects or military tribunes over each legion. They commanded it in turn when it was in service in one place, or they each took command of one of the six cohorts into which it might be divided for service in different places. They kept order in the camp, superintended the exercises, procured provisions, and inspected outposts and sentinels.

TEACHING HINTS AND HELPS

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the school.

For Bible Class Teachers

AN ANALYSIS

For the events which immediately preceded what is recorded in the lesson, see Connecting Links.

1. *The conspiracy or plot against Paul.* (a) It was formed by his implacable enemies, the Jews. Forty of them "bound themselves with a great curse," literally, "anathematized" themselves, invoked God's curse upon themselves, devoted themselves to destruction, if they failed to kill the apostle before they partook of food or drink. Such abominable oaths were common among the Jews at this period. Josephus tells of a conspiracy by ten men to kill Herod the Great, because he had introduced new customs

which displeased them. It was deemed a religious duty to assassinate apostates. It is not known whether the conspirators against Paul were Pharisees or Sadducees, or both united. They may have been Sicarii, desperadoes armed with short swords and other deadly weapons concealed in their garments. (b) The low state of morals is seen in the fact that the murderers openly disclosed their plot to the Sanhedrim and deliberately asked the aid of that civil and religious court in carrying it into execution. There appears to have been no opposition offered to the proposal by the court. It was to be enacted under the hypocritical pretence of desiring to do justice—"as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him," v. 15. To what depths of malicious cruelty men descend under the power of blind religious zeal and intolerance! This same Paul,