

BELLARIA CIV



Publius (Flavius) Vegetus Renatus (late 4th C AD)

Epitoma Rei Militaris (ii)

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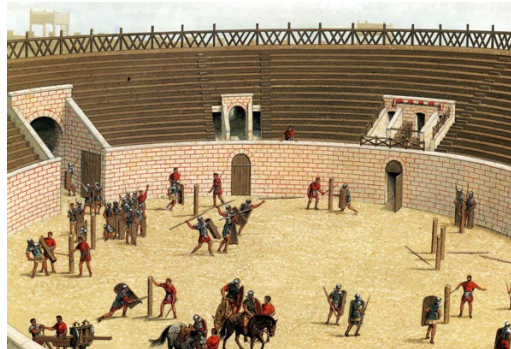
9. Recruits should be trained in the military step, in running and in jumping.



So, at the very start of the training recruits should be taught the military step: for nothing should be maintained more on the march or in battle, than that all soldiers should keep ranks as they move. The only way that this can be done is by learning through constant training to manoeuvre quickly and evenly. For a divided and disordered army experiences danger from the enemy which is always most serious. So at the military step 20 miles should be covered in five hours, at least in summer time. At the full step, which is faster, 24 miles should be covered in the same time. If you add anything to this, it now becomes running, for which a distance cannot be defined. But recruits should particularly be accustomed to running too, so as to charge the enemy with greater impetus, occupy favourable positions swiftly when need arises and seize them first when the enemy wish to do the same, to go out on scouting expeditions speedily, return more speedily, and overtake fugitives with greater ease.

primis ergo meditationum auspiciis tirones militarem edocendi sunt gradum. nihil enim magis in itinere uel in acie custodiendum est, quam ut omnes milites incedendi ordinem seruent. quod aliter non potest fieri, nisi assiduo exercitio ambulare celeriter et aequaliter discant. periculum enim ab hostibus semper grauissimum sustinet diuisus et inordinatus exercitus. militari ergo gradu XX milia passuum horis quinque dumtaxat aestiuis conficienda sunt. pleno autem gradu, qui citatior est, totidem horis XXIII milia peragenda sunt. quicquid addideris, iam cursus est, cuius spatium non potest definiri. sed et cursu praecipue adsuefaciendi sunt iuniores, ut maiore impetu in hostem procurrant, ut loca oportuna celeriter,

cum usus aduenerit, occupent uel aduersariis idem facere uolentibus praeoccupent, ut ad explorandum alacriter pergant, alacrius redeant, ut fugientium facilius terga comprehendant.



9. The soldier should also be trained at jumping, whereby ditches are vaulted and hurdles of a certain height surmounted, so that when obstacles of this kind are encountered he can cross them without effort. Furthermore, in the actual conflict and clash of arms the soldier coming on by a running jump makes the adversary's eyes flinch, frightens his mind and plants a blow before the other can properly prepare himself for evasive or offensive action. Of the training undertaken by Gneus Pompeius Magnus, Sallust records: 'He would compete with the speedy at jumping, with the swift at running, and with the strong at fencing.' For he could not otherwise have been a match for Sertorius, had he not prepared himself and his soldiers for war with frequent exercises.

ad saltum etiam, quo uel fossae transiliuntur uel inpediens aliqua altitudo superatur, exercendus est miles, ut, cum eiusmodi difficultates euenerint, possint sine labore transire. praeterea in ipso conflictu ac dimicatione telorum bellator cum cursu saltuque ueniens aduersarii praestingit oculos mentemque deterret priusque plagam infligit, quam ille ad cauendum uel ad resistendum certe se praeparet. de exercitio Gnei Pompei Magni Sallustius memorat 'cum alacribus saltu, cum uelocibus cursu, cum ualidis uecte certabat'. neque enim ille aliter potuisset par esse Sertorio, nisi seque et milites frequentibus exercitiis praeparasset ad proelia.

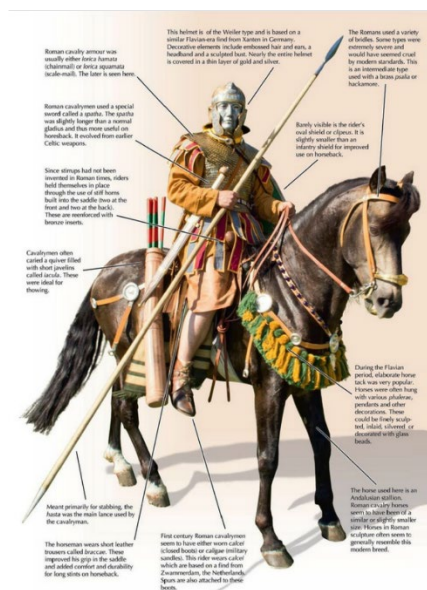
10. Recruits should be trained in the art of swimming.



Every recruit without exception should in the summer months learn the art of swimming, for rivers are not always crossed by bridges: and armies both when advancing and retreating are frequently forced to swim. Torrents often tend to flood after sudden falls of rain or snow, and ignorance of swimming incurs risk not only from the enemy but the water also. Therefore the ancient Romans, who were trained in the whole art of warfare through so many wars and continual crises, selected the Campus Martius next to the Tiber in which the youth might wash off sweat and dust after training in arms, and lose their fatigue from running in the exercise of swimming. It is highly advantageous to train not just infantry but cavalry and their horses and grooms, whom they call *gulearii*, to swim as well, lest anything should happen to them on account of their inability in the hour of need.

10. *natandi usum aestivis mensibus omnis aequaliter debet tiro condiscere. Non enim semper pontibus flumina transeuntur, sed et cedens et insequens natare cogitur frequenter exercitus. saepe repentinis imbribus uel niuibus solent exundare torrentes, et ignorantia non solum ab hoste, sed etiam ab ipsis aquis discrimen incurrit. ideoque Romani ueteres, quos tot bella et continuata pericula ad omnem rei militaris erudiuerant artem, campum Martium uicinum Tiberi delegerunt, in quo iuuentus post exercitium armorum sudorem pulueremque dilueret ac lassitudinem cursus natandi labore deponeret. non solum autem pedites sed et equites ipsosque equos uel lixas, quos galiarios uocant, ad natandum exercere per commodum est, ne quid imperitis, cum necessitas incumbit, eueniat.*

18. How recruits should be trained in mounting horses.



The vaulting of horses has always been rigorously demanded of both recruits and of soldiers with many years' service. It is clear that this exercise has survived to the

present day, albeit now with neglect. Wooden horses were set up under cover in winter, in summer on the training-field. Over them recruits were made to vault at first unarmed, until they had gained experience, then in arms. Such care was taken that they learned to jump on and off both from the right-hand side and from the left, even holding drawn swords and lance. This they likewise performed with constant practice naturally so as to be able to mount without delay in the stress of battle, having trained with such dedication in peace.

18. non tantum autem a tironibus, sed etiam ab stipendiosis militibus salitio equorum districte est semper exacta. quem usum usque ad hanc aetatem, licet iam cum dissimulatione, peruenisse manifestum est. equi lignei hieme sub tecto, aestate ponebantur in campo; supra hos iuniores primo inermes, dum consuetudo proficeret, deinde armati cogebantur ascendere. tantaque cura erat, ut non solum a dextris sed etiam a sinistris partibus et insilire et desilire condiscerent, euaginos etiam gladios uel contos tenentes. hoc item adsidua meditatione faciebant, scilicet ut in tumultu proelii sine mora ascenderent qui tam studiose exercebantur in pace.

21. On building camps.



The recruit should also learn how to build camps, for nothing is found so safe or so indispensable in war, since if a camp has been properly constructed, soldiers spend days and nights so secure behind the rampart-even if the enemy is besieging it-that they seem to carry a walled city about with them everywhere. But knowledge of this technique has altogether perished; for no one now for a long time has built a camp with lines of fosses and a stockade fixed above it. For this reason, as we know, many armies have frequently been harmed in day or night-attacks by barbarian cavalry. But it is not only when they bivouac without building a camp that they suffer this: when in battle they begin to retreat for some reason, they lack the fortification of

the camp to retire to and fall unavenged, like animals, and there is no end to the killing until the enemy's will to pursue flags.

21. *castrorum quoque munitionem debet tiro condiscere; nihil enim neque tam salutare neque tam necessarium inuenitur in bello; quippe, si recte constituta sunt castra, ita intra uallum securi milites dies noctesque peragunt, etiam si hostis obsideat, quasi muratam ciuitatem uideantur secum ubique portare. sed huius rei scientia prorsus intercidit; nemo enim iam diu ductis fossis praefixisque sudibus castra constituit. sic diurno uel nocturno superuentu equitum barbarorum multos exercitus scimus frequenter adflictos. non solum autem considentes sine castris ista patiuntur, sed cum in acie casu aliquo coeperint cedere, munimenta castrorum, quo se recipiant, non habent et more animalium inulti cadunt, nec prius moriundi finis fit, quam hostibus uoluntas defuerit persequendi.*

22. In what kind of places camps should be built.



Building a camp: Trajan's column.

Camps—especially when the enemy is near—should be built always in a safe place, where there are sufficient supplies of firewood, fodder and water, and if a long stay is in prospect choose a salubrious site. Care must be taken lest there be a nearby mountain or high ground which could be dangerous if captured by the enemy. Thought must be given that the site is not liable to flooding from torrents and the army to suffer harm in this event. The camp should be built according to the number of soldiers and baggage-train, lest too great a multitude be crammed in a small area, or a small force in too large a space be compelled to be spread out more than is appropriate.

castra autem, praesertim hoste uicino, tuto semper facienda sunt loco, ut lignorum et pabuli et aquae suppetat copia, et, si diutius conmorandum sit, loci salubritas

eligatur. cauendum etiam, ne mons sit uicinus aut collis altior, qui ab aduersariis captus possit officere. considerandum, ne torrentibus inundari consueuerit campus et hoc casu uim patiatur exercitus. pro numero autem militum uel impedimentorum munienda sunt castra, ne maior multitudo constipetur in paruis neue paucitas in latioribus ultra quam oportet cogatur extendi.

BOOK II

3. What caused the legions to become depleted.

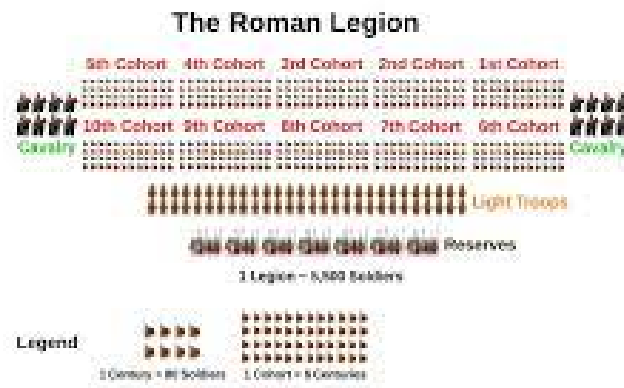
The name 'legion' survives in the army even today, but its strength of former times has been broken by neglect, since corruption usurped the rewards of valour and soldiers were promoted through influence when they used to be promoted for actual work. Secondly, when ordinary soldiers had completed their years of service and were duly discharged with testimonials, others were not substituted.

3. legionum nomen in exercitu permanet hodieque, sed per negligentiam superiorum temporum robur infractum est, cum uirtutis praemia occuparet ambitio et per gratiam promouerentur milites, qui promoueri consueuerunt per laborem. deinde contubernalibus completis stipendiis per testimoniales ex more dimissis non sunt alii substituti.

3. Also, inevitably some are weakened by disease and are discharged, others desert or die for various reasons; an army becomes depleted, however numerous, unless every year, or rather virtually every month, a host of recruits succeeds to the places of those who have left. There is also another reason why the legions have become attenuated: the labour of serving in them is great, the arms are heavier, the duties more frequent, the discipline more severe. To avoid this many flock to the *auxilia* to take the oaths of service, where the sweat is less and the rewards come sooner.

praeterea necesse est aliquantos morbo debilitari atque dimitti, aliquantos deserere uel diuersis casibus interire; ac, nisi annis singulis, immo singulis paene mensibus in recedentium locum iuniorum turba succedat, quamuis copiosus exhauritur exercitus. est et alia causa, cur adtenuatae sint legiones: magnus in illis labor est militandi, grauiora arma, plura munera, seuerior disciplina. quod uitantes plerique in auxiliis festinant militiae sacramenta praecipere, ubi et minor sudor et maturiora sunt praemia.

5. How the legion is formed.



So when recruits have been carefully selected who excel in mind and body, and after daily training for four or more months: a legion is formed by order and auspices of the invincible Emperor. The soldiers are marked with tattoos in the skin which will last and swear an oath, when they are enlisted on the rolls. That is why (the oaths) are called the 'sacraments' of military service. They swear by God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and by the Majesty of the Emperor which second to God is to be loved and worshipped by the human race.

diligenter igitur lectis iunioribus animis corporibusque praestantibus, additis etiam exercitiis cotidianis quattuor uel eo amplius mensuum, iussu auspiciisque inuictissimi principis legio formatur. nam uicturis in cute punctis milites scripti, cum matriculis inseruntur, iurare solent; et ideo militiae sacramenta dicuntur. iurant autem per Deum et Christum et sanctum Spiritum et per maiestatem imperatoris, quae secundum Deum generi humano diligenda est et colenda.

5. For since the Emperor has received the name of the 'August', faithful devotion should be given, unceasing homage paid him as if to a present and corporeal deity. For it is God whom a private citizen or a soldier serves, when he faithfully loves him who reigns by God's authority. The soldiers swear that they will strenuously do all that the Emperor may command, will never desert the service, nor refuse to die for the Roman State.

nam imperator cum Augusti nomen accepit, tamquam praesenti et corporali Deo fidelis est praestanda deuotio, inpendendus peruigil famulatus. Deo enim uel priuatus uel militans seruit, cum fideliter cum diligit qui Deo regnat auctore. iurant autem milites omnia se strenue facturos, quae praeceperit imperator, numquam deserturos militiam nec mortem recusaturos pro Romana republica.

9. The duties of the Prefect of the legions.

The individual commanding officer was the Prefect of the legion, who had the rank of 'Count of the First class'. In the absence of the legate, he retained as his 'vicar' supreme power.

proprius autem iudex erat praefectus legionis, habens comitiuae primi ordinis dignitatem, qui absente legato tamquam uicarius ipsius potestatem maximam retinebat.

9. The tribunes, centurions and the rest of the soldiers obeyed his commands.



Centurion

The *tessera* for the night-watches or the march was obtained from him. If a soldier committed some crime, he was sent by a tribune for punishment on the authority of the Prefect of the legion. The arms of all soldiers, likewise the horses, uniforms and pay and rations' were part of his responsibility. The enforcement of discipline, and the training both of infantry and legionary cavalry were looked after daily at his command. In his person he was just, conscientious and sober, and by means of constant labours he trained the legion entrusted to him in every act of loyal and attentive service, in the knowledge that the excellence of those under him redounded to the Prefect's praise.

tribuni uel centuriones ceterique milites eius praecepta seruabant. uigiliarum siue profectionis tessera ab eodem petebatur. si miles crimen aliquod admisisset, auctoritate praefecti legionis a tribuno deputabatur ad poenam. arma omnium militum, item equi uestes annona ad curam ipsius pertinebat. disciplinae seueritas, exercitatio non solum peditum sed etiam equitum legionariorum praecepto eius

cotidie curabatur. ipse autem iustus diligens sobrius legionem sibi creditam adsiduis operibus ad omnem deuotionem, ad omnem formabat industriam, sciens ad praefecti laudem subiectorum redundare uirtutem.

10. The duties of the Prefect of the camp.

There was also a Prefect of the camp, who while inferior in rank was still occupied with important concerns. He was responsible for the siting of the camp and the assessment of the rampart and fosse. The soldiers' tents or huts, along with all baggage, were taken care of under his command. Moreover sick soldiers, the doctors who tended them, and payments: belonged to his duties. He saw to it that there were never any shortages of wagons, pack-horses, or iron tools for sawing and felling timber, opening fosses, building a rampart or an aqueduct; likewise, of firewood, straw, battering-rams, stone-throwing machines, catapults and other kinds of torsion-engines. He was selected after lengthy and tested service as the most experienced of the men, to teach others correctly what he had himself done with merit.

erat etiam castrorum praefectus, licet inferior dignitate, occupatus tamen non mediocribus causis, ad quem castrorum positio, ualli et fossae aestimatio pertinebat. tabernacula uel casae militum cum impedimentis omnibus nutu ipsius curabantur. praeterea aegri contubernales et medici, a quibus curabantur, expensae etiam ad eius industriam pertinebant. uehicula sagmarum necnon etiam ferramenta, quibus materies secatur uel caeditur, quibusque aperiuntur fossae, contextitur uallum aquaeductus, item ligna uel stramina arietes onagri ballistae ceteraque genera tormentorum ne deessent aliquando, procurabat. is post longam probatamque militiam peritissimus omnium legebatur, ut recte doceret alios quod ipse cum laude fecisset.

11. The duties of the Prefect of engineers.



Moreover the legion has engineers, carpenters, masons, wagon-makers, blacksmiths, painters and other artificers, ready-prepared to construct buildings for a winter camp, or siege-engines, wooden towers and other devices for storming enemy cities or defending our own, to fabricate new arms, wagons and the other kinds of torsion-engines, or repair them when damaged. They used to have workshops, too, for shields, cuirasses and bows, in which arrows, missiles, helmets and arms of every type were made. For the main aim was to ensure that nothing which the army was thought to require should be lacking in camp, to the extent that they even had sapped who, after the fashion of the Bessi [a gold-mining tribe in Thrace], sank mines underground, and dug through the foundations of walls to emerge unexpectedly and capture hostile cities. The particular officer responsible for these matters was the Prefect of engineers.

habet praeterea legio fabros tignarios structores carpentarios ferrarios, pictores reliquosque artifices ad hibernorum aedificia fabricanda, ad machinas turres ligneas ceteraque, quibus uel expugnantur aduersariorum ciuitates uel defenduntur propriae, praeparatos, qui arma uehicula ceteraque genera tormentorum uel noua facerent uel quassata repararent. habebant etiam fabricas scutarias loricarias arcuarias, in quibus sagittae missibilia cassides omniaque armorum genera formabantur. haec enim erat cura praecipua, ut quicquid exercitui necessarium uidebatur numquam deesset in castris, usque eo, ut etiam cunicularios haberent, qui ad morem Bessorum ducto sub terris cuniculo murisque intra fundamenta perfossis inprovisi emergerent ad urbes hostium capiendas. horum iudex proprius erat praefectus fabrum.

19. As well as physical strength, skills in short-hand writing and computation are required of recruits.



Since there are several administrative departments in the legions which require literate soldiers, it is advisable that those approving recruits should test for tall stature, physical strength and alertness in everyone indeed, but in some the knowledge of short-hand writing, and expertise in calculation and reckoning is selected. For the administration of the entire legion, including special services, military services: and money, is recorded daily in the *Acts* with one might say greater exactitude than records of military and civil taxation are noted down in official files.

sed quoniam in legionibus plures scholae sunt, quae litteratos milites quaerunt, ab his, qui tirones probant, in omnibus quidem staturae magnitudinem, corporis robur, alacritatem animi conuenit explorari, sed in quibusdam notarum peritia, calculandi computandique usus eligitur. totius enim legionis ratio, siue obsequiorum siue militarium munerum siue pecuniae, cotidie adscribitur actis maiore prope diligentia, quam res annonaria uel ciuilibus polyptychis adnotatur.



Roman army pension document

19. Daily even in peacetime, soldiers take it in turns from all centuries and 10-man sections to do night-watch duties, sentry duty: and outpost-duties. The names of those who have done their turn are entered in lists so that no one is unjustly overburdened or given exemption. When anyone receives leave of absence and for how many days, it is noted down in lists. For in antiquity it was difficult to be given leave unless for very good approved reasons. Established soldiers were not seconded to any special services at all, nor were they employed for private business. It seemed incongruous that a soldier of the Emperor, maintained in uniform and pay and rations at public expense, should have time to serve private interests.

cotidianas etiam in pace uigilias, item excubitus siue agrarias de omnibus centuriis et contuberniis uicissim milites faciunt: ut ne quis contra iustitiam praegrauetur aut alicui praestetur immunitas, nomina eorum, qui uices suas fecerunt, breuibus inseruntur. quando quis commeatum acceperit uel quot dierum, adnotatur in breuibus. tunc enim difficile commeatus dabatur, nisi causis iustissimis adprobatis. nec aliquibus milites instituti deputabantur obsequiis, nec priuata eisdem negotia mandabantur; siquidem incongruum uideretur imperatoris militem, qui ueste et annona publica pascebatur, utilitatibus uacare priuatis.

BOOK III

Preface

... Therefore, he who desires peace, let him prepare for war. He who wants victory, let him train soldiers diligently. He who wishes a successful outcome, let him fight with strategy, not at random. No one dares challenge or harm one who he realizes will win if he fights.

igitur qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum; qui uictoriam cupit, milites inbuat diligenter; qui secundos optat euentus, dimicet arte, non casu. nemo prouocare, nemo audet offendere quem intellegit superiorem esse, si pugnet.

1. The proper size of an army

... 'Army' is the name for a host of legions, *auxilia* and cavalry gathered together for the purpose of waging war. Its proper size is discussed by military experts. For when one reads the examples of Xerxes, Darius; Mithradates and other kings who armed countless populations, it is clearly apparent that over-large armies have been overcome more by their own size than the bravery of the enemy. For a greater multitude is subject to more mishaps. On marches it is always slower because of its size; a longer column often suffers ambush even by small numbers; in broken country and at river-crossings it is often caught in a trap as a result of delays caused by the baggage-train.

exercitus dicitur tam legionum quam etiam auxiliorum nec non etiam equitum ad gerendum bellum multitudo collecta. huius modus a magistris quaeritur armorum. nam cum Xerxis et Darii et Mithridatis ceterorumque regum, qui innumerabiles armauerunt populos, exempla releguntur, euidenter apparet nimium copiosos exercitus magis propria multitudine quam hostium uirtute depressos. nam pluribus casibus subiacet amplior multitudo; in itineribus pro mole sua semper est tardior, in longiore autem agmine etiam a paucis superuentum adsolet pati; in locis autem asperis uel fluminibus transeundis propter impedimentorum moras saepe decipitur.

1. Also it is an enormous labour to collect fodder for large numbers of animals and horses. Difficulties again with the grain-supply, to be avoided on any expedition, afflict larger armies sooner. For however thoroughly rations may have been prepared, they run out more quickly, the more they are distributed to. Finally water itself sometimes hardly suffices for too large a number. And if for some reason the battle-line should turn tail, more casualties must inevitably occur to more men, and those who escape, once terrified, thereafter fear battle.

praeterea ingenti labore numerosis animalibus equisque pabula colliguntur. rei quoque frumentariae difficultas, quae in omni expeditione uitanda est, cito maiores fatigat exercitus. nam quantolibet studio praeparetur annona, tanto maturius deficit, quanto pluribus erogatur. aqua denique ipsa nimiae multitudini aliquando uix sufficit. quod si casu acies uerterint tergum, necesse est multos cadere de multis et illos, qui effugerint, ut semel territos postea formidare conflictum.

Next week: protecting supplies, the dangers facing an army on the march, judging when to fight.