

The Histories of Polybius

Book Six

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Greek Series  
Cambridge, Ontario 2002

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## Book Six

### Preface

1. I am aware that some will be at a loss to account for my interrupting the course of my narrative for the sake of entering upon the following disquisition on the Roman constitution. But I think that I have already in many passages made it fully evident that this particular branch of my work was one of the necessities imposed on me by the nature of my original design; and I pointed this out with special clearness in the preface which explained the scope of my history. I there stated that the feature of my work which was at once the best in itself, and the most instructive to the students of it, was that it would enable them to know and fully realise in what manner, and under what kind of constitution, it came about that nearly the whole world fell under the power of Rome in somewhat less than fifty-three years, — an event certainly without precedent. This being my settled purpose, I could see no more fitting period than the present for making a pause, and examining the truth of the remarks about to be made on this constitution. In private life if you wish to satisfy yourself as to the badness or goodness of particular persons, you would not, if you wish to get a genuine test, examine their conduct at a time of uneventful repose, but in the hour of brilliant success or conspicuous reverse. For the true test of a perfect man is the power of bearing with spirit and dignity violent changes of fortune. An examination of a constitution should be conducted in the same way: and therefore being unable to find in our day a more rapid or more signal change than that which has happened to Rome, I reserved my disquisition on its constitution for this place....

What is really educational and beneficial to students of history is the clear view of the causes of events, and the consequent power of choosing the better policy in a particular case. Now in every practical undertaking by a state we must regard as the most powerful agent for success or failure the form of its constitution; for from this as from a fountain-head all conceptions and plans of action not only proceed, but attain their consummation.<sup>1</sup> ...

<sup>1</sup> Some disconnected fragments which are usually placed at the end of the first chapter, and form the second chapter of this book, I have placed among the minor fragments at the end of these volumes.

3. Of the Greek republics, which have again and again risen to greatness and fallen into insignificance, it is not difficult to speak, whether we recount their past history or venture an opinion on their future. For to report what is already known is an easy task, nor is it hard to guess what is to come from our knowledge of what has been. But in regard to the Romans it is neither an easy matter to describe their present state, owing to the complexity of their constitution; nor to speak with confidence of their future, from our inadequate acquaintance with their peculiar institutions in the past whether affecting their public or their private life. It will require then no ordinary attention and study to get a clear and comprehensive conception of the distinctive features of this constitution.

Now, it is undoubtedly the case that most of those who profess to give us authoritative instruction on this subject distinguish three kinds of constitutions, which they designate *kingship*, *aristocracy*, *democracy*. But in my opinion the question might fairly be put to them, whether they name these as being the *only* ones, or as the *best*. In either case I think they are wrong. For it is plain that we must regard as the *best* constitution that which partakes of all these three elements. And this is no mere assertion, but has been proved by the example of Lycurgus, who was the first to construct a constitution—that of Sparta—on this principle. Nor can we admit that these are the *only* forms: for we have had before now examples of absolute and tyrannical forms of government, which, while differing as widely as possible from kingship, yet appear to have some points of resemblance to it; on which account all absolute rulers falsely assume and use, as far as they can, the title of king. Again there have been many instances of oligarchical governments having in appearance some analogy to aristocracies, which are, if I may say so, as different from them as it is possible to be. The same also holds good about democracy.

4. I will illustrate the truth of what I say. We cannot hold every absolute government to be a kingship, but only that which is accepted voluntarily, and is directed by an appeal to reason rather than to fear and force. Nor again is every oligarchy to be regarded as an aristocracy; the latter exists only where the power is wielded by the justest and wisest men selected on their merits. Similarly, it is not enough to constitute a democracy that the whole crowd of citizens should have the right to do whatever they wish or propose. But where reverence to the gods, succour of parents, respect to elders, obedience to laws, are traditional and habitual, in such communities, if the will of the majority prevail, we may speak of the form of government as a democracy. So then we enumerate six forms of government, — the three commonly spoken of which I have just mentioned, and three more allied forms, I mean *despotism*, *oligarchy* and *mob-rule*. The first of these arises without artificial

aid and in the natural order of events. Next to this, and produced from it by the aid of art and adjustment, comes *kingship*; which degenerating into the evil form allied to it, by which I mean tyranny, both are once more destroyed and aristocracy produced. Again the latter being in the course of nature perverted to *oligarchy*, and the people passionately avenging the unjust acts of their rulers, *democracy* comes into existence; which again by its violence and contempt of law becomes sheer *mob-rule*.<sup>2</sup> No clearer proof of the truth of what I say could be obtained than by a careful observation of the natural origin, genesis, and decadence of these several forms of government. For it is only by seeing distinctly how each of them is produced that a distinct view can also be obtained of its growth, zenith, and decadence, and the time, circumstance, and place in which each of these may be expected to recur. This method I have assumed to be especially applicable to the Roman constitution, because its origin and growth have from the first followed natural causes.

5. Now the natural laws which regulate the merging of one form of government into another are perhaps discussed with greater accuracy by Plato and some other philosophers. But their treatment, from its intricacy and exhaustiveness, is only within the capacity of a few. I will therefore endeavour to give a summary of the subject, just so far as I suppose it to fall within the scope of a practical history and the intelligence of ordinary people. For if my exposition appear in any way inadequate, owing to the general terms in which it is expressed, the details contained in what is immediately to follow will amply atone for what is left for the present unsolved.

What is the origin then of a constitution, and whence is it produced? Suppose that from floods, pestilences, failure of crops, or some such causes the race of man is reduced almost to extinction. Such things we are told have happened, and it is reasonable to think will happen again. Suppose accordingly all knowledge of social habits and arts to have been lost. Suppose that from the survivors, as from seeds, the race of man to have again multiplied. In that case I presume they would, like the animals, herd together; for it is but reasonable to suppose that bodily weakness would

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle's classification is kingship, aristocracy, πολιτεία, democracy, oligarchy, tyranny (*Pol.* 4, 2). This was derived from Plato (*Pol.* 302, C.) who arranges the six (besides the ideal polity) in pairs, kingship, tyranny, — aristocracy, oligarchy, — democracy, good and bad. Plato has no distinct name, except δημοκρατία παράνομος, for the bad democracy which Polybius calls ὄχλοκρατία, "mob-rule." Polybius's arrangement is this:

Kingship (arising from a natural despotism or monarchy) degenerates into Tyranny.  
 Aristocracy degenerates into Oligarchy.  
 Democracy degenerates into Mob-rule.

induce them to seek those of their own kind to herd with. And in that case too, as with the animals, he who was superior to the rest in strength of body or courage of soul would lead and rule them. For what we see happen in the case of animals that are without the faculty of reason, such as bulls, goats, and cocks, — among whom there can be no dispute that the strongest take the lead, -that we must regard as in the truest sense the teaching of nature. Originally then it is probable that the condition of life among men was this, — herding together like animals and following the strongest and bravest as leaders. The limit of this authority would be physical strength, and the name we should give it would be despotism. But as soon as the idea of family ties and social relation has arisen amongst such agglomerations of men, then is born also the idea of kingship, and then for the first time mankind conceives the notion of goodness and justice and their reverse.

6. The way in which such conceptions originate and come into existence is this. The intercourse of the sexes is an instinct of nature, and the result is the birth of children. Now, if any one of these children who have been brought up, when arrived at maturity, is ungrateful and makes no return to those by whom he was nurtured, but on the contrary presumes to injure them by word and deed, it is plain that he will probably offend and annoy such as are present, and have seen the care and trouble bestowed by the parents on the nurture and bringing up of their children. For seeing that men differ from the other animals in being the only creatures possessed of reasoning powers, it is clear that such a difference of conduct is not likely to escape their observation; but that they will remark it when it occurs, and express their displeasure on the spot: because they will have an eye to the future, and will reason on the likelihood of the same occurring to each of themselves. Again, if a man has been rescued or helped in an hour of danger, and, instead of showing gratitude to his preserver, seeks to do him harm, it is clearly probable that the rest will be displeased and offended with him, when they know it: sympathising with their neighbour and imagining themselves in his case. Hence arises a notion in every breast of the meaning and theory of duty, which is in fact the beginning and end of justice. Similarly, again, when any one man stands out as the champion of all in a time of danger, and braves with firm courage the onslaught of the most powerful wild beasts, it is probable that such a man would meet with marks of favour and pre-eminence from the common people; while he who acted in a contrary way would fall under their contempt and dislike. From this, once more, it is reasonable to suppose that there would arise in the minds of the multitude a theory of the disgraceful and the honourable, and of the difference between them; and that one should be sought and imitated for its advantages, the other shunned. When, therefore, the leading and most powerful man among

his people ever encourages such persons in accordance with the popular sentiment, and thereby assumes in the eyes of his subject the appearance of being the distributor to each man according to his deserts, they no longer obey him and support his rule from fear of violence, but rather from conviction of its utility, however old he may be, rallying round him with one heart and soul, and fighting against all who form designs against his government. In this way he becomes a *king* instead of a despot by imperceptible degrees, reason having ousted brute courage and bodily strength from their supremacy.

7. This then is the natural process of formation among mankind of the notion of goodness and justice, and their opposites; and this is the origin and genesis of genuine kingship: for people do not only keep up the government of such men personally, but for their descendants also for many generations; from the conviction that those who are born from and educated by men of this kind will have principles also like theirs. But if they subsequently become displeased with their descendants, they do not any longer decide their choice of rulers and kings by their physical strength or brute courage; but by the differences of their intellectual and reasoning faculties, from practical experience of the decisive importance of such a distinction. In old times, then, those who were once thus selected, and obtained this office, grew old in their royal functions, making magnificent strongholds and surrounding them with walls and extending their frontiers, partly for the security of their subjects, and partly to provide them with abundance of the necessaries of life; and while engaged in these works they were exempt from all vituperation or jealousy; because they did not make their distinctive dress, food, or drink, at all conspicuous, but lived very much like the rest, and joined in the everyday employments of the common people. But when their royal power became hereditary in their family, and they found every necessary for security ready to their hands, as well as more than was necessary for their personal support, then they gave the rein to their appetites; imagined that rulers must needs wear different clothes from those of subjects; have different and elaborate luxuries of the table; and must even seek sensual indulgence, however unlawful the source, without fear of denial. These things having given rise in the one case to jealousy and offence, in the other to outburst of hatred and passionate resentment, the kingship became a tyranny: the first step in disintegration was taken; and plots began to be formed against the government, which did not now proceed from the worst men but from the noblest, most high-minded, and most courageous, because these are the men who can least submit to the tyrannical acts of their rulers.

8. But as soon as the people got leaders, they cooperated with them against the dynasty for the reasons I have mentioned; and then kingship and despotism were alike entirely abolished, and aristocracy once more began to revive and start afresh. For in their immediate gratitude to those who had deposed the despots, the people employed them as leaders, and entrusted their interests to them; who, looking upon this charge at first as a great privilege, made the public advantage their chief concern, and conducted all kinds of business, public or private, with diligence and caution. But when the sons of these men received the same position of authority from their fathers, — having had no experience of misfortunes, and none at all of civil equality and freedom of speech, but having been bred up from the first under the shadow of their fathers' authority and lofty position, — some of them gave themselves up with passion to avarice and unscrupulous love of money, others to drinking and the boundless debaucheries which accompanies it, and others to the violation of women or the forcible appropriation of boys; and so they turned an aristocracy into an oligarchy. But it was not long before they roused in the minds of the people the same feelings as before; and their fall therefore was very like the disaster which befel the tyrants.

9. For no sooner had the knowledge of the jealousy and hatred existing in the citizens against them emboldened some one to oppose the government by word or deed, than he was sure to find the whole people ready and prepared to take his side. Having then got rid of these rulers by assassination or exile, they do not venture to set up a king again, being still in terror of the injustice to which this led before; nor dare they intrust the common interests again to more than one, considering the recent example of their misconduct: and therefore, as the only sound hope left them is that which depends upon themselves, they are driven to take refuge in that; and so changed the constitution from an oligarchy to a democracy, and took upon themselves the superintendence and charge of the state. And as long as any survive who have had experience of oligarchical supremacy and domination, they regard their present constitution as a blessing, and hold equality and freedom as of the utmost value. But as soon as a new generation has arisen, and the democracy has descended to their children's children, long association weakens their value for equality and freedom, and some seek to become more powerful than the ordinary citizens; and the most liable to this temptation are the rich. So when they begin to be fond of office, and find themselves unable to obtain it by their own unassisted efforts and their own merits, they ruin their estates, while enticing and corrupting the common people in every possible way. By which means when, in their senseless mania for reputation, they have made the populace ready and greedy to receive bribes, the virtue of democracy is destroyed, and it is transformed

into a government of violence and the strong hand. For the mob, habituated to feed at the expense of others, and to have its hopes of a livelihood in the property of its neighbours, as soon as it has got a leader sufficiently ambitious and daring, being excluded by poverty from the sweets of civil honours, produces a reign of mere violence. Then come tumultuous assemblies, massacres, banishments, redivisions of land; until, after losing all trace of civilisation, it has once more found a master and a despot.

This is the regular cycle of constitutional revolutions, and the natural order in which constitutions change, are transformed, and return again to their original stage. If a man have a clear grasp of these principles he may perhaps make a mistake as to the dates at which this or that will happen to a particular constitution; but he will rarely be entirely mistaken as to the stage of growth or decay at which it has arrived, or as to the point at which it will undergo some revolutionary change. However, it is in the case of the Roman constitution that this method of inquiry will most fully teach us its formation, its growth, and zenith, as well as the changes awaiting it in the future; for this, if any constitution ever did, owed, as I said just now, its original foundation and growth to natural causes, and to natural causes will owe its decay. My subsequent narrative will be the best illustration of what I say.

10. For the present I will make a brief reference to the legislation of Lycurgus: for such a discussion is not at all alien to my subject. That statesman was fully aware that all those changes which I have enumerated come about by an undeviating law of nature; and reflected that every form of government that was unmixed, and rested on one species of power, was unstable; because it was swiftly perverted into that particular form of evil peculiar to it and inherent in its nature. For just as rust is the natural dissolvent of iron, wood-worms and grubs to timber, by which they are destroyed without any external injury, but by that which is engendered in themselves; so in each constitution there is naturally engendered a particular vice inseparable from it: in kingship it is absolutism; in aristocracy it is oligarchy; in democracy lawless ferocity and violence; and to these vicious states all these forms of government are, as I have lately shown, inevitably transformed. Lycurgus, I say, saw all this, and accordingly combined together all the excellences and distinctive features of the best constitutions, that no part should become unduly predominant, and be perverted into its kindred vice; and that, each power being checked by the others, no one part should turn the scale or decisively out-balance the others; but that, by being accurately adjusted and in exact equilibrium, the whole might remain long steady like a ship sailing close to the wind. The royal power was prevented from growing insolent by fear of the people, which had also assigned to it an



adequate share in the constitution. The people in their turn were restrained from a bold contempt of the kings by fear of the Gerusia: the members of which, being selected on grounds of merit, were certain to throw their influence on the side of justice in every question that arose; and thus the party placed at a disadvantage by its conservative tendency was always strengthened and supported by the weight and influence of the Gerusia. The result of this combination has been that the Lacedaemonians retained their freedom for the longest period of any people with which we are acquainted.

Lycurgus however established his constitution without the discipline of adversity, because he was able to foresee by the light of reason the course which events naturally take and the source from which they come. But though the Romans have arrived at the same result in framing their commonwealth, they have not done so by means of abstract reasoning, but through many struggles and difficulties, and by continually adopting reforms from knowledge gained in disaster. The result has been a constitution like that of Lycurgus, and the best of any existing in my time. . . .

11. I have given an account of the constitution of Lycurgus; I will now endeavour to describe that of Rome at the period of their disastrous defeat at Cannae.

I am fully conscious that to those who actually live under this constitution I shall appear to give an inadequate account of it by the omission of certain details. Knowing accurately every portion of it from personal experience, and from having been bred up in its customs and laws from childhood, they will not be struck so much by the accuracy of the description, as annoyed by its omissions; nor will they believe that the historian has purposely omitted unimportant distinctions, but will attribute his silence upon the origin of existing institutions or other important facts to ignorance. What is told they depreciate as insignificant or beside the purpose; what is omitted they desiderate as vital to the question: their object being to appear to know more than the writers. But a good critic should not judge a writer by what he leaves unsaid, but from what he says: if he detects mis-statement in the latter, he may then feel certain that ignorance accounts for the former; but if what he says is accurate, his omissions ought to be attributed to deliberate judgment and not to ignorance. So much for those whose criticisms are prompted by personal ambition rather than by justice....

Another requisite for obtaining a judicious approval for an historical disquisition, is that it should be germane to the matter in hand; if this is not observed, though its style may be excellent and its matter irreproachable, it will seem out of place, and disgust rather than please....

As for the Roman constitution, it had three elements, each of them possessing sovereign powers: and their respective share of power in the

whole state had been regulated with such a scrupulous regard to equality and equilibrium, that no one could say for certain, not even a native, whether the constitution as a whole were an aristocracy or democracy or despotism. And no wonder: for if we confine our observation to the power of the Consuls we should be inclined to regard it as despotic; if on that of the Senate, as aristocratic; and if finally one looks at the power possessed by the people it would seem a clear case of a democracy. What the exact powers of these several parts were, and still, with slight modifications, are, I will now state.

12. The Consuls, before leading out the legions, remain in Rome and are supreme masters of the administration. All other magistrates, except the Tribunes, are under them and take their orders. They introduce foreign ambassadors to the Senate; bring matters requiring deliberation before it; and see to the execution of its decrees. If, again, there are any matters of state which require the authorisation of the people, it is their business to see to them, to summon the popular meetings, to bring the proposals before them, and to carry out the decrees of the majority. In the preparations for war also, and in a word in the entire administration of a campaign, they have all but absolute power. It is competent to them to impose on the allies such levies as they think good, to appoint the Military Tribunes, to make up the roll for soldiers and select those that are suitable. Besides they have absolute power of inflicting punishment on all who are under their command while on active service: and they have authority to expend as much of the public money as they choose, being accompanied by a quaestor who is entirely at their orders. A survey of these powers would in fact justify our describing the constitution as despotic, — a clear case of royal government. Nor will it affect the truth of my description, if any of the institutions I have described are changed in our time, or in that of our posterity: and the same remarks apply to what follows.

13. The Senate has first of all the control of the treasury, and regulates the receipts and disbursements alike. For the Quaestors cannot issue any public money for the various departments of the state without a decree of the Senate, except for the service of the Consuls. The Senate controls also what is by far the largest and most important expenditure, that, namely, which is made by the censors every lustrum for the repair or construction of public buildings; this money cannot be obtained by the censors except by the grant of the Senate. Similarly all crimes committed in Italy requiring a public investigation, such as treason, conspiracy, poisoning, or wilful murder, are in the hands of the Senate. Besides, if any individual or state among the Italian allies requires a controversy to be settled, a penalty to be assessed, help or protection to be afforded, — all this is the province of the Senate. Or again, outside Italy, if it is necessary to send an embassy to reconcile warring

communities, or to remind them of their duty, or sometimes to impose requisitions upon them, or to receive their submission, or finally to proclaim war against them, — this too is the business of the Senate. In like manner the reception to be given to foreign ambassadors in Rome, and the answers to be returned to them, are decided by the Senate. With such business the people have nothing to do. Consequently, if one were staying at Rome when the Consuls were not in town, one would imagine the constitution to be a complete aristocracy: and this has been the idea entertained by many Greeks, and by many kings as well, from the fact that nearly all the business they had with Rome was settled by the Senate.

14. After this one would naturally be inclined to ask what part is left for the people in the constitution, when the Senate has these various functions, especially the control of the receipts and expenditure of the exchequer; and when the Consuls, again, have absolute power over the details of military preparation, and an absolute authority in the field? There is, however, a part left the people, and it is a most important one. For the people is the sole fountain of honour and of punishment; and it is by these two things and these alone that dynasties and constitutions and, in a word, human society are held together: for where the distinction between them is not sharply drawn both in theory and practice, there no undertaking can be properly administered, — as indeed we might expect when good and bad are held in exactly the same honour. The people then are the only court to decide matters of life and death; and even in cases where the penalty is money, if the sum to be assessed is sufficiently serious, and especially when the accused have held the higher magistracies. And in regard to this arrangement there is one point deserving especial commendation and record. Men who are on trial for their lives at Rome, while sentence is in process of being voted, — if even only one of the tribes whose votes are needed to ratify the sentence has not voted, — have the privilege at Rome of openly departing and condemning themselves to a voluntary exile. Such men are safe at Naples or Praeneste or at Tibur, and at other towns with which this arrangement has been duly ratified on oath.

Again, it is the people who bestow offices on the deserving, which are the most honourable rewards of virtue. It has also the absolute power of passing or repealing laws; and, most important of all, it is the people who deliberate on the question of peace or war. And when provisional terms are made for alliance, suspension of hostilities, or treaties, it is the people who ratify them or the reverse.

These considerations again would lead one to say that the chief power in the state was the people's, and that the constitution was a democracy.

15. Such, then, is the distribution of power between the several parts of the state. I must now show how each of these several parts can, when they choose, oppose or support each other.

The Consul, then, when he has started on an expedition with the powers I have described, is to all appearance absolute in the administration of the business in hand; still he has need of the support both of people and Senate, and, without them, is quite unable to bring the matter to a successful conclusion. For it is plain that he must have supplies sent to his legions from time to time; but without a decree of the Senate they can be supplied neither with corn, nor clothes, nor pay, so that all the plans of a commander must be futile, if the Senate is resolved either to shrink from danger or hamper his plans. And again, whether a Consul shall bring any undertaking to a conclusion or no depends entirely upon the Senate: for it has absolute authority at the end of a year to send another Consul to supersede him, or to continue the existing one in his command. Again, even to the successes of the generals the Senate has the power to add distinction and glory, and on the other hand to obscure their merits and lower their credit. For these high achievements are brought in tangible form before the eyes of the citizens by what are called “triumphs.” But these triumphs the commanders cannot celebrate with proper pomp, or in some cases celebrate at all, unless the Senate concurs and grants the necessary money. As for the people, the Consuls are pre-eminently obliged to court their favour, however distant from home may be the field of their operations; for it is the people, as I have said before, that ratifies, or refuses to ratify, terms of peace and treaties; but most of all because when laying down their office they have to give an account<sup>3</sup> of their administration before it. Therefore in no case is it safe for the Consuls to neglect either the Senate or the good will of the people.

16. As for the Senate, which possesses the immense power I have described, in the first place it is obliged in public affairs to take the multitude into account, and respect the wishes of the people; and it cannot put into execution the penalty for offences against the republic, which are punishable with death, unless the people first ratify its decrees. Similarly even in matters which directly affect the senators, for instance, in the case of a law diminishing the Senate’s traditional authority, or depriving senators of certain dignities and offices, or even actually cutting down their property, even in such cases the people have the sole power of passing or rejecting the

<sup>3</sup> εἰθύνας. Polybius uses a word well known at Athens and other Greek states, but the audit of a Consul seems to have been one of money accounts only. At the expiration, however, of his office he took an oath in public that he had obeyed the laws, and if any prosecution were brought against him it would be tried before the people. See the case of Publius Claudius, 1, 52.

law. But most important of all is the fact that, if the Tribunes interpose their veto, the Senate not only are unable to pass a decree, but cannot even hold a meeting at all, whether formal or informal. Now, the Tribunes are always bound to carry out the decree of the people, and above all things to have regard to their wishes: therefore, for all these reasons the Senate stands in awe of the multitude, and cannot neglect the feelings of the people.

17. In like manner the people on its part is far from being independent of the Senate, and is bound to take its wishes into account both collectively and individually. For contracts, too numerous to count, are given out by the censors in all parts of Italy for the repairs or construction of public buildings; there is also the collection of revenue from many rivers, harbours, gardens, mines, and land- everything, in a word, that comes under the control of the Roman government: and in all these the people at large are engaged; so that there is scarcely a man, so to speak, who is not interested either as a contractor or as being employed in the works. For some purchase the contracts from the censors for themselves; and others go partners with them; while others again go security for these contractors, or actually pledge their property to the treasury for them. Now over all these transactions the Senate has absolute control. It can grant an extension of time; and in case of unforeseen accident can relieve the contractors from a portion of their obligation, or release them from it altogether, if they are absolutely unable to fulfil it. And there are many details in which the Senate can inflict great hardships, or, on the other hand, grant great indulgences to the contractors: for in every case the appeal is to it. But the most important point of all is that the judges are taken from its members in the majority of trials, whether public or private, in which the charges are heavy.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, all citizens are much at its mercy; and being alarmed at the uncertainty as to when they may need its aid, are cautious about resisting or actively opposing its will. And for a similar reason men do not rashly resist the wishes of the Consuls, because one and all may become subject to their absolute authority on a campaign.

18. The result of this power of the several estates for mutual help or harm is a union sufficiently firm for all emergencies, and a constitution than which it is impossible to find a better. For whenever any danger from without compels them to unite and work together, the strength which is

<sup>4</sup> This refers primarily to the *consilium* of the *quaesitor* in any special *quaestio*, which up to the time of the *lex judiciaria* of Gracchus, B. C. 122, was invariably composed of Senators. The same would apply to the *Quaestiones perpetuae*, only one of which existed in the time of Polybius, i. e., *de repetundis*, established in 149 B.C. by the *lex Calpurnia*. Other single judices in civil suits, though nominated by the Praetor, were, Polybius intimates, almost necessarily Senators in cases of importance.

developed by the State is so extraordinary, that everything required is unfailingly carried out by the eager rivalry shown by all classes to devote their whole minds to the need of the hour, and to secure that any determination come to should not fail for want of promptitude; while each individual works, privately and publicly alike, for the accomplishment of the business in hand. Accordingly, the peculiar constitution of the State makes it irresistible, and certain of obtaining whatever it determines to attempt. Nay, even when these external alarms are past, and the people are enjoying their good fortune and the fruits of their victories, and, as usually happens, growing corrupted by flattery and idleness, show a tendency to violence and arrogance, — it is in these circumstances, more than ever, that the constitution is seen to possess within itself the power of correcting abuses. For when any one of the three classes becomes puffed up, and manifests an inclination to be contentious and unduly encroaching, the mutual interdependency of all the three, and the possibility of the pretensions of any one being checked and thwarted by the others, must plainly check this tendency: and so the proper equilibrium is maintained by the impulsiveness of the one part being checked by its fear of the other. . . .

#### On the Roman Army

19. After electing the Consuls they proceed to elect military tribunes, — fourteen from those who had five years', and ten from those who had ten years', service. All citizens must serve ten years in the cavalry or twenty years in the infantry before the forty-sixth year of their age, except those rated below four hundred asses. The latter are employed in the navy; but if any great public necessity arises they are obliged to serve as infantry also for twenty campaigns: and no one can hold an office in the state until he has completed ten years of military service....

When the Consuls are about to enrol the army they give public notice of the day on which all Roman citizens of military age must appear. This is done every year. When the day has arrived, and the citizens fit for service are come to Rome and have assembled on the Capitoline, the fourteen junior tribunes divide themselves, in the order in which they were appointed by the people or by the Imperators, into four divisions, because the primary division of the forces thus raised is into four legions. The four tribunes first appointed are assigned to the legion called the 1st; the next three to the 2d; the next four to the 3d; and the three last to the 4th. Of the ten senior tribunes, the two first are assigned to the 1st legion; the next three to the 2d; the two next to the 3d; and the three last to the 4th.

20. This division and assignment of the tribunes having been settled in such a way that all four legions have an equal number of officers, the tribunes of the several legions take up a separate position and draw lots for the tribes one by one; and summon the tribe on whom it from time to time falls. From this tribe they select four young men as nearly like each other in age and physical strength as possible. These four are brought forward, and the tribunes of the first legion picks out one of them, those of the second another, those of the third another, and the fourth has to take the last. When the next four are selected the tribunes of the second legion have the first choice, and those of the first the last. With the next four the tribunes of the third legion have the first choice, those of the second the last; and so on in regular rotation: of which the result is that each legion gets men of much the same standard. But when they have selected the number prescribed, -which is four thousand two hundred infantry for each legion, or at times of special danger five thousand, — they next used to pass men for the cavalry, in old times after the four thousand two hundred infantry; but now they do it before them, the selection having been made by the censor on the basis of wealth; and they enrol three hundred for each legion.<sup>5</sup>

21. The roll having been completed in this manner, the tribunes belonging to the several legions muster their men; and selecting one of the whole body that they think most suitable for the purpose, they cause him to take an oath that he will obey his officers and do their orders to the best of his ability. And all the others come up and take the oath separately, merely affirming that they will do the same as the first man.

At the same time the Consuls send orders to the magistrates of the allied cities in Italy, from which they determine that allied troops are to serve: declaring the number required, and the day and place at which the men selected must appear. The cities then enrol their troops with much the same ceremonies as to selection and administration of the oath, and appoint a commander and a paymaster.<sup>6</sup>

The Military Tribunes at Rome, after the administering of the oath to their men, and giving out the day and place at which they are to appear without arms, for the present dismiss them. When they arrive on the appointed day, they first select the youngest and poorest to form the *Velites*, the next to them the *Hastati*, while those who are in the prime of life they

<sup>5</sup> Casaubon altered this to “two hundred.” In 3, 107, Polybius certainly states that the ordinary number of cavalry was 200, raised in cases of emergency to 300; and Liny, 22, 36, gives an instance. But both authors in many other passages mention 300 as the usual number, and any alteration of this passage would be unsafe.

<sup>6</sup> *Praefectus sociis* and *quaestor*. But this quaestor must be distinguished from the Roman quaestors.

select as *Principes*, and the oldest of all as *Triarii*. For in the Roman army these divisions, distinct not only as to their ages and nomenclature, but also as to the manner in which they are armed, exist in each legion. The division is made in such proportions that the senior men, called *Triarii*, should number six hundred, the *Principes* twelve hundred, the *Hastati* twelve hundred, and that all the rest as the youngest should be reckoned among the *Velites*. And if the whole number of the legion is more than four thousand, they vary the numbers of these divisions proportionally, except those of the *Triarii*, which is always the same.

22. The youngest soldiers or *Velites* are ordered to carry a sword, spears, and target (*parma*). The target is strongly made, and large enough to protect the man; being round, with a diameter of three feet. Each man also wears a headpiece without a crest (*galea*); which he sometimes covers with a piece of wolf's skin or something of that kind, for the sake both of protection and identification; that the officers of his company may be able to observe whether he shows courage or the reverse on confronting dangers. The spear of the velites has a wooden haft of about two cubits, and about a finger's breadth in thickness; its head is a span long, hammered fine, and sharpened to such an extent that it becomes bent the first time it strikes, and cannot be used by the enemy to hurl back; otherwise the weapon would be available for both sides alike.

The second rank, the *Hastati*, are ordered to have the complete panoply. This to a Roman means, first, a large shield (*scutum*), the surface of which is curved outwards, its breadth two and a half feet, its length four feet, — though there is also an extra sized shield in which these measures are increased by a palm's breadth. It consists of two layers of wood fastened together with bull's-hide glue; the outer surface of which is first covered with canvas, then with calf's skin, on the upper and lower edges it is bound with iron to resist the downward strokes of the sword, and the wear of resting upon the ground. Upon it also is fixed an iron boss (*umbo*), to resist the more formidable blows of stones and pikes, and of heavy missiles generally. With the shield they also carry a sword (*gladius*) hanging down by their right thigh, which is called a Spanish sword.<sup>7</sup> It has an excellent point, and can deal a formidable blow with either edge, because its blade is stout and unbending. In addition to these they have two *pila*, a brass helmet, and greaves (*ocreae*). Some of the *pila* are thick, some fine. Of the thicker, some are round with the diameter of a palm's length, others are a palm square. The fine *pila* are like moderate sized hunting spears, and they are carried along with the former sort. The wooden haft of them all is about

<sup>7</sup> For the Spanish sword see Fr. xxii.



three cubits long; and the iron head fixed to each half is barbed, and of the same length as the haft. They take extraordinary pains to attach the head to the haft firmly; they make the fastening of the one to the other so secure for use by binding it half way up the wood, and riveting it with a series of clasps, that the iron breaks sooner than this fastening comes loose, although its thickness at the socket and where it is fastened to the wood is a finger and a half's breadth. Besides these each man is decorated with a plume of feathers, with three purple or black feathers standing upright, about a cubit long. The effect of these being placed on the helmet, combined with the rest of the armour, is to give the man the appearance of being twice his real height, and to give him a noble aspect calculated to strike terror into the enemy. The common soldiers also receive a brass plate, a span square, which they put upon their breast and call a breastpiece (*pectorale*), and so complete their panoply. Those who are rated above a hundred thousand asses, instead of these breastpieces wear, with the rest of their armour, coats of mail (*loricae*). The Principes and Triarii are armed in the same way as the *Hastati*, except that instead of *pila* they carry long spears (*hastae*).

24. The *Principes*, *Hastati*, and *Triarii*, each elect ten centurions according to merit, and then a second ten each. All these sixty have the title of centurion alike, of whom the first man chosen is a member of the council of war. And they in their turn select a rear-rank officer each who is called *optio*. Next, in conjunction with the centurions, they divide the several orders (omitting the *Velites*) into ten companies each, and appoint to each company two centurions and two *optiones*; the *Velites* are divided equally among all the companies; these companies are called orders (*ordines*) or maniples (*manipuli*), or *vexilla*, and their officers are called centurions or *ordinum ductores*.<sup>8</sup> Each maniple selects two of their strongest and best born men as standard-bearers (*vexillarii*). And that each maniple should have two commanding officers is only reasonable; for it being impossible to know what a commander may be doing or what may happen to him, and necessities of war admitting of no parleying, they are anxious that the maniple may never be without a leader and commander. When the two centurions are both on the field, the first elected commands the right of the maniple, the second the left: if both are not there, the one who is commands the whole. And they wish the centurions not to be so much bold and adventurous, as men with a faculty for command, steady, and of a profound rather than a showy spirit; not prone to engage wantonly or be unnecessarily

<sup>8</sup> Polybius does not mention the subdivision of maniples into centuries, for which the word *ordines* is sometimes used. Livy, 8, 8; 42, 34.

forward in giving battle; but such as in the face of superior numbers and overwhelming pressure will die in defence of their post.

25. Similarly they divide the cavalry into ten squadrons (*turmae*), and from each they select three officers (*decuriones*), who each select a subaltern (*optio*). The decurio first elected commands the squadron, the other two have the rank of *decuriones*: a name indeed which applies to all alike. If the first *decurio* is not on the field, the second takes command of the squadron. The armour of the cavalry is very like that in Greece. In old times they did not wear the lorica, but fought in their tunics (*campestris*); the result of which was that they were prompt and nimble at dismounting and mounting again with despatch, but were in great danger at close quarters from the unprotected state of their bodies. And their lances too were useless in two ways: first because they were thin, and prevented their taking a good aim; and before they could get the head fixed in the enemy, the lances were so shaken by the mere motion of the horse that they generally broke. Secondly, because, having no spike at the butt end of their lance, they only had one stroke, namely that with the spear-head; and if the lance broke, what was left in their hands was entirely useless. Again they used to have shields of bull's hide, just like those round cakes, with a knob in the middle which are used at sacrifices, which were useless at close quarters because they were flexible rather than firm; and, when their leather shrunk and rotted from the rain, unserviceable as they were before, they then became entirely so. Wherefore, as experience showed them the uselessness of these, they lost no time in changing to the Greek fashion of arms: the advantages of which were, first, that men were able to deliver the first stroke of their lance-head with a good aim and effect, because the shaft from the nature of its construction was steady and not quivering; and, secondly, that they were able, by reversing the lance, to use the spike at the butt-end for a steady and effective blow. And the same may be said about the Greek shields: for, whether used to ward off a blow or to thrust against the enemy, they neither give nor bend. When the Romans learnt these facts about the Greek arms they were not long in copying them; for no nation has ever surpassed them in readiness to adopt new fashions from other people, and to imitate what they see is better in others than themselves.

26. Having made this distribution of their men and given orders for their being armed, as I have described, the military tribunes dismiss them to their homes. But when the day has arrived on which they were all bound by their oath to appear at the place named by the Consuls (for each Consul generally appoints a separate place for his own legions, each having assigned to him two legions and a moiety of the allies), all whose names were placed on the roll appear without fail: no excuse being accepted in the case of those

who have taken the oath, except a prohibitory omen or absolute impossibility. The allies muster along with the citizens, and are distributed and managed by the officers appointed by the Consuls, who have the title of Praefecti socii and are twelve in number. These officers select for the Consuls from the whole infantry and cavalry of the allies such as are most fitted for actual service, and these are called *extraordinarii* (which in Greek is *epilektoi*). The whole number of the infantry of the socii generally equals that of the legions, but the cavalry is treble that of the citizens. Of these they select a third of the cavalry, and a fifth of the infantry to serve as *extraordinarii*. The rest they divide into two parts, one of which is called the right, the other the left wing (*alae*).

These arrangements made, the military tribunes take over the citizens and allies and proceed to form a camp. Now the principle on which they construct their camps, no matter when or where, is the same; I think therefore that it will be in place here to try and make my readers understand, as far as words can do so, the Roman tactics in regard to the march (*agmen*), the camp (*castrorum metatio*), and the line of battle (*acies*). I cannot imagine any one so indifferent to things noble and great, as to refuse to take some little extra trouble to understand things like these; for if he has once heard them, he will be acquainted with one of those things genuinely worth observation and knowledge.

27. Their method of laying out a camp is as follows. The place for the camp having been selected, the spot in it best calculated to give a view of the whole, and most convenient for issuing orders, is appropriated for the general's tent (Praetorium).

Having placed a standard on the spot on which they intend to put the Praetorium, they measure off a square round this standard; in such a way that each of its sides is a hundred feet from the standard, and the area of the square is four plethra.<sup>9</sup> Along one side of this square — whichever aspect appears most convenient for watering and foraging — the legions are stationed as follows. I have said that there were six Tribuni in each legion, and that each Consul had two legions, — it follows that there are twelve Tribuni in a Consular army. Well, they pitch the tents of these Tribuni all in one straight line, parallel to the side of the square selected, at a distance of fifty feet from it (there is a place too selected for the horses, beasts of burden, and other baggage of the Tribuni); these tents face the outer side of the camp and away from the square described above, — a direction which will henceforth be called “the front” by me. The tents of the Tribuni stand at

<sup>9</sup> The plethrum = 10,000 square feet. The side of the square of the Praetorium, therefore, is 200 feet.

equal distances from each other, so that they extend along the whole breadth of the space occupied by the legions.

28. From the line described by the front of these tents they measure another distance of a hundred feet towards the front. At that distance another parallel straight line is drawn, and it is from this last that they begin arranging the quarters of the legions, which they do as follows:-they bisect the last mentioned straight line, and from that point draw another straight line at right angles to it; along this line, on either side of it facing each other, the cavalry of the two legions are quartered with a space of fifty feet between them, which space is exactly bisected by the line last mentioned. The manner of encamping the infantry is similar to that of the cavalry. The whole area of each space occupied by the maniples and squadrons is a square, and faces the *via*;<sup>10</sup> the length facing the *via* is one hundred feet, and they generally try to make the depth the same, except in the case of the *socii*; and when they are employing legions of an extra number, they increase the length and depth of these squares proportionally.

29. The spaces assigned to the cavalry are opposite the space between the two groups of tents belonging to the Tribuni of the two legions, at right angles to the line along which they stand, like a cross-road; and indeed the whole arrangement of the *viae* is like a system of cross-roads, running on either side of the blocks of tents, those of the cavalry on one side and those of the infantry on the other. The spaces assigned to the cavalry and the *Triarii* in each legion are back to back, with no *via* between them, but touching each other, looking opposite ways; and the depth of the spaces assigned to the *Triarii* is only half that assigned to other maniples, because their numbers are generally only half; but though the number of the men is different, the length of the space is always the same owing to the lesser depth. Next, parallel with these spaces, at a distance of fifty feet, they place the *Principes* facing the *Triarii*; and as they face the space between themselves and the *Triarii*, we have two more roads formed at right angles to the hundred-foot area in front of the tents of the Tribunes, and running down from it to the outer agger of the camp on the side opposite to that of the *Principia*, which we agreed to call the front of the camp. Behind the spaces for the *Triarii* and looking in the opposite direction, and touching each other, are the spaces for the *Hastati*. These several branches of the service (*Triarii*, *Principes*, *Hastati*), being each divided into ten maniples, the cross-roads between the blocks are all the same length and terminate in the front agger of the camp; towards which they cause the last maniples in the rows to face.

<sup>10</sup> That is the *via* separating it from the next block, or from the vallum.

30. Beyond the Hastati they again leave a space of fifty feet, and there, beginning from the same base (the Principia), and going in a parallel direction, and to the same distance as the other blocks, they place the cavalry of the allies facing the Hastati. Now the number of the allies, as I have stated above, is equal to that of the legions in regard to the infantry, though it falls below that if we omit the *extraordinarii*; but that of the cavalry is double, when the third part is deducted for service among the *extraordinarii*. Therefore in marking out the camp the spaces assigned to the latter are made proportionally deeper, so that their length remains the same as those occupied by the legions. Thus five viae are formed:<sup>11</sup> and back to back with these cavalry are the spaces for the infantry of the allies, the depth being proportionally increased according to their numbers;<sup>12</sup> and these maniples face the outer sides of the camp and the agger. In each maniple the first tent at either end is occupied by the centurions. Between the fifth and sixth squadrons of cavalry, and the fifth and sixth maniple of infantry, there is a space of fifty feet, so that another road is made across the camp at right angles to the others and parallel to the tents of the Tribuni, and this they call the *Via Quintana*, as it runs along the fifth squadrons and maniples.

31. The space behind the tents of the Tribuni is thus used. On one side of the square of the Praetorium is the market, on the other the office of the Quaestor and the supplies which he has charge of. Then behind the last tent of the Tribuni on either side, arranged at right angles to those tents, are the quarters of the cavalry picked out of the *extraordinarii*, as well as of some of those who are serving as volunteers from personal friendship to the Consuls. All these are arranged parallel to the side aggers, facing on the one side the Quaestorium, on the other the market-place. And, generally speaking, it falls to the lot of these men not only to be near the Consul in the camp, but to be wholly employed about the persons of the Consul and the Quaestor on the march and all other occasions. Back to back with these again, facing the agger, are placed the infantry who serve in the same way as these cavalry.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond these there is another empty space or road left, one hundred feet broad, parallel to the tents of the Tribuni, skirting the market-place, Praetorium, and Quaestorium, from agger to agger. On the further side of this road the rest of the *equites extraordinarii* are placed facing the market-place and Quaestorium: and between the quarters of these cavalry of the two

<sup>11</sup> That is, one between the two legions, and two between the blocks in each.

<sup>12</sup> That is to say — without the *extraordinarii* (1/5) — there are 2400 to get into 10 spaces instead of 3000 into 30.

<sup>13</sup> That is, who have been selected from the *pedites sociorum* to serve on the praetoria cohorts.

legions a passage is left of fifty feet, exactly opposite and at right angles to the square of the Praetorium, leading to the rearward agger.

Back to back with the *equites extraordinarii* are the infantry of the same, facing the agger at the rear of the whole camp. And the space left empty on either side of these, facing the agger on each side of the camp, is given up to foreigners and such allies as chance to come to the camp.

The result of these arrangements is that the whole camp is a square, with streets and other constructions regularly planned like a town. Between the line of the tents and the agger there is an empty space of two hundred feet on every side of the square, which is turned to a great variety of uses. To begin with, it is exceedingly convenient for the marching in and out of the legions. For each division descends into this space by the *via* which passes its own quarters, and so avoids crowding and hustling each other, as they would if they were all collected on one road. Again, all cattle brought into the camp, as well as booty of all sorts taken from the enemy, are deposited in this space and securely guarded during the night-watches. But the most important use of this space is that, in night assaults, it secures the tents from the danger of being set on fire, and keeps the soldiers out of the range of the enemy's missiles; or, if a few of them do carry so far, they are spent and cannot penetrate the tents.

32. The number then of foot-soldiers and cavalry being given (at the rate, that is to say, of four thousand or of five thousand for each legion), and the length, depth, and number of the maniples being likewise known, as well as the breadth of the passages and roads, it becomes possible to calculate the area occupied by the camp and the length of the aggers. If on any occasion the number of allies, either those originally enrolled or those who joined subsequently, exceeds their due proportion, the difficulty is provided for in this way. To the overplus of allies who joined subsequent to the enrolment of the army are assigned the spaces on either side of the Praetorium, the market- place and Quaestorium being proportionally contracted. For the extra numbers of allies who joined originally an extra line of tents (forming thus another *via*) is put up parallel with the other tents of the *socii*, facing the agger on either side of the camp. But if all four legions and both Consuls are in the same camp, all we have to do is to imagine a second army, arranged back to back to the one already placed, in exactly the same spaces as the former, but side by side with it at the part where the picked men from the *extraordinarii* are stationed facing the rearward agger. In this case the shape of the camp becomes an oblong, the area double, and the length of the entire agger half as much again. This is the arrangement when both Consuls are within the same agger; but if they occupy two separate camps, the above

arrangements hold good, except that the market-place is placed half way between the two camps.

33. The camp having thus been laid out, the Tribuni next administer an oath to all in it separately, whether free or slave, that they will steal nothing within the agger, and in case they find anything will bring it to the Tribuni. They next select for their several duties the maniples of the Principes and Hastati in each legion. Two are told off to guard the space in front of the quarters of the Tribuni. For in this space, which is called the Principia, most of the Romans in the camp transact all the business of the day; and are therefore very particular about its being kept well watered and properly swept. Of the other eighteen maniples, three are assigned to each of the six Tribuni, that being the respective numbers in each legion; and of these three maniples each takes its turn of duty in waiting upon the Tribune. The services they render him are such as these: they pitch his tent for him when a place is selected for encampment, and level the ground all round it; and if any extra precaution is required for the protection of his baggage, it is their duty to see to it. They also supply him with two relays of guards. A guard consists of four men, two of whom act as sentries in front of his tent, and two on the rear of it near the horses. Seeing that each Tribune has three maniples, and each maniple has a hundred men, without counting Triarii and Velites who are not liable for this service, the duty is a light one, coming round to each maniple only once in three days; while by this arrangement ample provision is made for the convenience as well as the dignity of the Tribuni. The maniples of Triarii are exempted from this personal service to the Tribuni, but they each supply a watch of four men to the squadron of cavalry nearest them. These watches have to keep a general look out; but their chief duty is to keep an eye upon the horses, to prevent their hurting themselves by getting entangled in their tethers, and so becoming unfit for use; or from getting loose, and making a confusion and disturbance in the camp by running against other horses. Finally, all the maniples take turns to mount guard for a day each at the Consul's tent, to protect him from plots, and maintain the dignity of his office.

34. As to the construction of the foss and vallum,<sup>14</sup> two sides fall to the lot of the socii, each division taking that side along which it is quartered; the other two are left to the Romans, one to each legion. Each side is divided into portions according to the number of maniples, and the centurions stand by and superintend the work of each maniple; while two of the Tribunes

<sup>14</sup> Polybius always calls this the *χάραξ* or *χαράκωμα*. But the Romans had two words, *agger* the embankment, and *vallum* the palisading on the top of it. Either word, however, is often used to represent the whole structure.

superintend the construction of the whole side and see that it is adequate. In the same way the Tribunes superintend all other operations in the camp. They divide themselves in twos, and each pair is on duty for two months out of six; they draw lots for their turns, and the pair on whom the lot falls takes the superintendence of all active operations. The prefects of the *socii* divide their duty in the same way. At daybreak the officers of the cavalry and the centurions muster at the tents of the Tribunes, while the Tribunes go to that of the Consul. He gives the necessary orders to the Tribunes, they to the cavalry officers and centurions, and these last pass them on to the rank and file as occasion may demand.

To secure the passing round of the watchword for the night the following course is followed. One man is selected from the tenth maniple, which, in the case both of cavalry and infantry, is quartered at the ends of the road between the tents; this man is relieved from guard-duty and appears each day about sunset at the tent of the Tribune on duty, takes the *tessera* or wooden tablet on which the watchword is inscribed, and returns to his own maniple and delivers the wooden tablet and watchword in the presence of witnesses to the chief officer of the maniple next his own; he in the same way to the officer of the next, and so on, until it arrives at the first maniple stationed next the Tribunes. These men are obliged to deliver the tablet (*tessera*) to the Tribunes before dark. If they are all handed in, the Tribune knows that the watchword has been delivered to all, and has passed through all the ranks back to his hands: but if any one is missing, he at once investigates the matter; for he knows by the marks on the tablets from which division of the army the tablet has not appeared; and the man who is discovered to be responsible for its non-appearance is visited with condign punishment.

35. Next as to the keeping guard at night. The Consul's tent is guarded by the maniple on duty: those of the Tribuni and praefects of the cavalry by the pickets formed as described above from the several maniples. And in the same way each maniple and squadron posts guards of their own men. The other pickets are posted by the Consul. Generally speaking there are three pickets at the Quaestorium, and two at the tent of each of the legati or members of council. The vallum is lined by the *velites*, who are on guard all along it from day to day. That is their special duty; while they also guard all the entrances to the camp, telling off ten sentinels to take their turn at each of them. Of the men told off for duty at the several *stationes*, the man who in each maniple is to take the first watch is brought by the rear-rank man of his company to the Tribune at eventide. The latter hands over to them severally small wooden tablets (*tesseræ*), one for each watch, inscribed with small marks; on receiving which they go off to the places indicated.



The duty of going the rounds is intrusted to the cavalry. The first Praefect of cavalry in each legion, early in the morning, orders one of his rear-rank men to give notice before breakfast to four young men of his squadron who are to go the rounds. At evening this same man's duty is to give notice to the Praefect of the next squadron that it is his turn to provide for going the rounds until next morning. This officer thereupon takes measures similar to the preceding one until the next day; and so on throughout the cavalry squadrons. The four men thus selected by the rear-rank men from the first squadron, after drawing lots for the watch they are to take, proceed to the tent of the Tribune on duty, and receive from him a writing stating the order<sup>15</sup> and the number of the watches they are to visit. The four then take up their quarters for the night alongside of the first maniple of Triarii; for it is the duty of the centurion of this maniple to see that a bugle is blown at the beginning of every watch. When the time has arrived, the man to whose lot the first watch has fallen goes his rounds, taking some of his friends as witnesses. He walks through the posts assigned, which are not only those along the vallum and gates, but also the pickets set by the several maniples and squadrons. If he find the men of the first watch awake he takes from them their tessera; but if he find any one of them asleep or absent from his post, he calls those with him to witness the fact and passes on. The same process is repeated by those who go the rounds during the other watches. The charge of seeing that the bugle is blown at the beginning of each watch, so that the right man might visit the right pickets, is as I have said, laid upon the centurions of the first maniple of Triarii, each one taking the duty for a day.

Each of these men who have gone the rounds (*tessarii*) at daybreak conveys the tesserae to the Tribune on duty. If the whole number are given in they are dismissed without question; but if any of them brings a number less than that of the pickets, an investigation is made by means of the mark on the tessera, as to which picket he has omitted. Upon this being ascertained the centurion is summoned; he brings the men who were on duty, and they are confronted with the patrol. If the fault is with the men on guard, the patrol clears himself by producing the witnesses whom he took with him; for he cannot do so without. If nothing of that sort happened, the blame recoils upon the patrol.

37. Then the Tribunes at once hold a court-martial, and the man who is found guilty is punished by the *fustuarium*; the nature of which is this. The Tribune takes a cudgel and merely touches the condemned man; whereupon all the soldiers fall upon him with cudgels and stones. Generally speaking

<sup>15</sup> That is, whether in first, second, or other watch in the night.

men thus punished are killed on the spot; but if by any chance, after running the gauntlet, they manage to escape from the camp, they have no hope of ultimately surviving even so. They may not return to their own country, nor would any one venture to receive such an one into his house. Therefore those who have once fallen into this misfortune are utterly and finally ruined. The same fate awaits the praefect of the squadron, as well as his rear-rank man, if they fail to give the necessary order at the proper time, the latter to the patrols, and the former to the praefect of the next squadron. The result of the severity and inevitableness of this punishment is that in the Roman army the night watches are faultlessly kept. The common soldiers are amenable to the Tribunes; the Tribunes to the Consuls. The Tribune is competent to punish a soldier by inflicting a fine, distraining his goods, or ordering him to be flogged; so too the praefects in the case of the *socii*. The punishment of the *fustuarium* is assigned also to any one committing theft in the camp, or bearing false witness: as also to any one who in full manhood is detected in shameful immorality: or to any one who has been thrice punished for the same offence. All these things are punished as crimes. But such as the following are reckoned as cowardly and dishonourable in a soldier: -for a man to make a false report to the Tribunes of his valour in order to get reward; or for men who have been told off to an ambushade to quit the place assigned them from fear; and also for a man to throw away any of his arms from fear, on the actual field of battle. Consequently it sometimes happens that men confront certain death at their stations, because, from their fear of the punishment awaiting them at home, they refuse to quit their post: while others, who have lost shield or spear or any other arm on the field, throw themselves upon the foe, in hopes of recovering what they have lost, or of escaping by death from certain disgrace and the insults of their relations.<sup>16</sup>

38. But if it ever happens that a number of men are involved in these same acts: if, for instance, some entire maniples have quitted their ground in the presence of the enemy, it is deemed impossible to subject all to the *fustuarium* or to military execution; but a solution of the difficulty has been found at once adequate to the maintenance of discipline and calculated to strike terror. The Tribune assembles the legion, calls the defaulters to the front, and, after administering a sharp rebuke, selects five or eight or twenty out of them by lot, so that those selected should be about a tenth of those who have been guilty of the act of cowardice. These selected are punished with the *fustuarium* without mercy; the rest are put on rations of barley instead of wheat, and are ordered to take up their quarters outside the *vallum* and the protection of the camp. As all are equally in danger of having the lot

<sup>16</sup> See the story of Cato's son, Plutarch, *Cato Maj.* 20.

fall on them, and as all alike who escape that, are made a conspicuous example of by having their rations of barley, the best possible means are thus taken to inspire fear for the future, and to correct the mischief which has actually occurred.

39. A very excellent plan also is adopted for inducing young soldiers to brave danger. When an engagement has taken place and any of them have showed conspicuous gallantry, the Consul summons an assembly of the legion, puts forward those whom he considers to have distinguished themselves in any way, and first compliments each of them individually on his gallantry, and mentions any other distinction he may have earned in the course of his life, and then presents them with gifts: to the man who has wounded an enemy, a spear; to the man who has killed one and stripped his armour, a cup, if he be in the infantry, horse-trappings if in the cavalry: though originally the only present made was a spear. This does not take place in the event of their having wounded or stripped any of the enemy in a set engagement or the storming of a town; but in skirmishes or other occasions of that sort, in which, without there being any positive necessity for them to expose themselves singly to danger, they have done so voluntarily and deliberately. In the capture of a town those who are first to mount the walls are presented with a gold crown. So too those who have covered and saved any citizens or allies are distinguished by the Consul with certain presents; and those whom they have preserved present them voluntarily with a crown, or if not, they are compelled to do so by the Tribunes. The man thus preserved, too, reverences his preserver throughout his life as a father, and is bound to act towards him as a father in every respect. By such incentives those who stay at home are stirred up to a noble rivalry and emulation in confronting danger, no less than those who actually hear and see what takes place. For the recipients of such rewards not only enjoy great glory among their comrades in the army, and an immediate reputation at home, but after their return they are marked men in all solemn festivals; for they alone, who have been thus distinguished by the Consuls for bravery, are allowed to wear robes of honour on those occasions: and moreover they place the spoils they have taken in the most conspicuous places in their houses, as visible tokens and proofs of their valour. No wonder that a people, whose rewards and punishments are allotted with such care and received with such feelings, should be brilliantly successful in war.

The pay of the foot soldier is  $5\frac{1}{3}$  asses a day; of the centurion  $10\frac{2}{3}$ ; of the cavalry 16. The infantry receive a ration of wheat equal to about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of an Attic medimnus a month, and the cavalry 7 medimni of barley, and 2 of wheat; of the allies the infantry receive the same, the cavalry  $1\frac{1}{3}$  medimnus of wheat, and 5 of barley. This is a free gift to the allies; but in

the cases of the Romans, the Quaestor stops out of their pay the price of their corn and clothes, or any additional arms they may require at a fixed rate.

40. The following is their manner of moving camp. At the first bugle the men all strike their tents and collect their baggage; but no soldier may strike his tent, or set it up either, till the same is done to that of the Tribuni and the Consul. At the second bugle they load the beasts of burden with their baggage: at the third the first maniples must advance and set the whole camp in motion. Generally speaking, the men appointed to make this start are the *extraordinarii*: next comes the right wing of the *socii*; and behind them their beasts of burden. These are followed by the first legion with its own baggage immediately on its rear; then comes the second legion, followed by its own beasts of burden, and the baggage of those *socii* who have to bring up the rear of the march, that is to say, the left wing of the *socii*. The cavalry sometimes ride on the rear of their respective divisions, sometimes on either side of the beasts of burden, to keep them together and secure them. If an attack is expected on the rear, the *extraordinarii* themselves occupy the rear instead of the van. Of the two legions and wings each takes the lead in the march on alternate days, that by this interchange of position all may have an equal share in the advantage of being first at the water and forage. The order of march, however, is different at times of unusual danger, if they have open ground enough. For in that case they advance in three parallel columns, consisting of the *Hastati*, *Principes*, and *Triarii*: the beasts of burden belonging to the maniples in the van are placed in front of all, those belonging to the second behind the leading maniples, and those belonging to the third behind the second maniples, thus having the baggage and the maniples in alternate lines. With this order of march, on an alarm being given, the columns face to the right or left according to the quarter on which the enemy appears, and get clear of the baggage. So that in a short space of time, and by one movement, the whole of the hoplites are in line of battle — except that sometimes it is necessary to half-wheel the *Hastati* also — and the baggage and the rest of the army are in their proper place for safety, namely, in the rear of the line of combatants.

41. When the army on the march is approaching the place of encampment, a Tribune, and those of the centurions who have been from time to time selected for that duty, are sent forward to survey the place of encampment. Having done this they proceed first of all to fix upon the place for the Consul's tent (as I have described above), and to determine on which side of the Praetorium to quarter the legions. Having decided these points they measure out the Praetorium, then they draw the straight line along which the tents of the Tribunes are to be pitched, and then the line parallel to this, beyond which the quarters of the legions are to begin. In the same way

they draw the lines on the other sides of the Praetorium in accordance with the plan which I have already detailed at length. This does not take long, nor is the marking out of the camp a matter of difficulty, because the dimensions are all regularly laid down, and are in accordance with precedent. Then they fix one flag in the ground where the Consul's tent is to stand, and another on the base of the square containing it, and a third on the line of the Tribunes' tents; the two latter are scarlet, that which marks the Consul's tent is white; the lines on the other sides of the Praetorium are marked sometimes with plain spears and sometimes by flags of other colours. After this they lay out the viae between the quarters, fixing spears at each via. Consequently when the legions in the course of their march have come near enough to get a clear view of the place of encampment, they can all make out exactly the whole plan of it, taking as their base the Consul's flag and calculating from that. Moreover as each soldier knows precisely on which via, and at what point of it, his quarters are to be, because all occupy the same position in the camp wherever it may be, it is exactly like a legion entering its own city; when breaking off at the gates each man makes straight for his own residence without hesitation, because he knows the direction and the quarter of the town in which home lies. It is precisely the same in a Roman camp.

42. It is because the first object of the Romans in the matter of encampment is facility, that they seem to me to differ diametrically from Greek military men in this respect. Greeks, in choosing a place for a camp, think primarily of security from the natural strength of the position: first, because they are averse from the toil of digging a foss, and, secondly, because they think that no artificial defences are comparable to those afforded by the nature of the ground. Accordingly, they not only have to vary the whole configuration of the camp to suit the nature of the ground, but to change the arrangement of details in all kinds of irregular ways; so that neither soldier nor company has a fixed place in it. The Romans, on the other hand, prefer to undergo the fatigue of digging, and of the other labours of circumvallation, for the sake of the facility in arrangement, and to secure a plan of encampment which shall be one and the same and familiar to all.

Such are the most important facts in regard to the legions and the method of encamping them. . . .

#### The Roman Republic Compared With Others

43. Nearly all historians have recorded as constitutions of eminent excellence those of Lacedaemonia, Crete, Mantinea, and Carthage. Some have also mentioned those of Athens and Thebes. The former I may allow to pass; but I am convinced that little need be said of the Athenian and Theban

constitutions: their growth was abnormal, the period of their zenith brief, and the changes they experienced unusually violent. Their glory was a sudden and fortuitous flash, so to speak; and while they still thought themselves prosperous, and likely to remain so, they found themselves involved in circumstances completely the reverse. The Thebans got their reputation for valour among the Greeks, by taking advantage of the senseless policy of the Lacedaemonians, and the hatred of the allies towards them, owing to the valour of one, or at most two, men who were wise enough to appreciate the situation. Since fortune quickly made it evident that it was not the peculiarity of their constitution, but the valour of their leaders, which gave the Thebans their success. For the great power of Thebes notoriously took its rise, attained its zenith, and fell to the ground with the lives of Epaminondas and Pelopidas. We must therefore conclude that it was not its constitution, but its men, that caused the high fortune which it then enjoyed.

44. A somewhat similar remark applies to the Athenian constitution also. For though it perhaps had more frequent interludes of excellence, yet its highest perfection was attained during the brilliant career of Themistocles; and having reached that point it quickly declined, owing to its essential instability. For the Athenian demus is always in the position of a ship without a commander. In such a ship, if fear of the enemy, or the occurrence of a storm induce the crew to be of one mind and to obey the helmsman, everything goes well; but if they recover from this fear, and begin to treat their officers with contempt, and to quarrel with each other because they are no longer all of one mind, — one party wishing to continue the voyage, and the other urging the steersman to bring the ship to anchor; some letting out the sheets, and others hauling them in, and ordering the sails to be furled, — their discord and quarrels make a sorry show to lookers on; and the position of affairs is full of risk to those on board engaged on the same voyage: and the result has often been that, after escaping the dangers of the widest seas, and the most violent storms, they wreck their ship in harbour and close to shore. And this is what has often happened to the Athenian constitution. For, after repelling, on various occasions, the greatest and most formidable dangers by the valour of its people and their leaders, there have been times when, in periods of secure tranquillity, it has gratuitously and recklessly encountered disaster.<sup>17</sup> Therefore I need say no more about either it, or the Theban constitution: in both of which a mob manages everything

<sup>17</sup> In seeking a constitution to compare with that of Rome, that of Athens is rejected (i) as not being a mixed one, (2) as not having been successful: successful, that is, in gaining or keeping an empire. He is speaking somewhat loosely. The power of Athens, of which Themistocles laid the foundation, was mainly consolidated by Pericles; so that Polybius includes much of the period of her rise with that of her decline.

on its own unfettered impulse — a mob in the one city distinguished for headlong outbursts of fiery temper, in the other trained in long habits of violence and ferocity.

45. Passing to the Cretan polity there are two points which deserve our consideration. The first is how such writers as Ephorus, Xenophon, Callisthenes and Plato<sup>18</sup> — who are the most learned of the ancients — could assert that it was like that of Sparta; and secondly how they came to assert that it was at all admirable. I can agree with neither assertion; and I will explain why I say so. And first as to its dissimilarity with the Spartan constitution. The peculiar merit of the latter is said to be its land laws, by which no one possesses more than another, but all citizens have an equal share in the public land.<sup>19</sup> The next distinctive feature regards the possession of money: for as it is utterly discredited among them, the jealous competition which arises from inequality of wealth is entirely removed from the city. A third peculiarity of the Lacedaemonian polity is that, of the officials by whose hands and with whose advice the whole government is conducted, the kings hold an hereditary office, while the members of the Gerusia are elected for life.

46. Among the Cretans the exact reverse of all these arrangements obtains. The laws allow them to possess as much land as they can get with no limitation whatever. Money is so highly valued among them, that its possession is not only thought to be necessary but in the highest degree creditable. And in fact greed and avarice are so native to the soil in Crete, that they are the only people in the world among whom no stigma attaches to any sort of gain whatever. Again all their offices are annual and on a democratical footing. I have therefore often felt at a loss to account for these writers speaking of the two constitutions, which are radically different, as though they were closely united and allied. But, besides overlooking these important differences, these writers have gone out of their way to comment at length on the legislation of Lycurgus: “He was the only legislator,” they say, “who saw the important points. For there being two things on which the safety of a commonwealth depends, -courage in the face of the enemy and concord at home, — by abolishing covetousness, he with it removed all motive for civil broil and contest: whence it has been brought about that the

<sup>18</sup> For what remains of the account of Ephorus see Strabo, 10, 4, 8-9. The reference to Plato is to the “Laws,” especially Book I. See also Aristotle, *Pol.* 2, 10, who points out the likeness and unlikeness between the Cretan and Lacedaemonian constitutions.

<sup>19</sup> This equality of land had gradually disappeared by the time of King Agis IV. (B.C. 243–239): so that, according to Plutarch [*Agis* 51], the number of landowners was reduced to 100. This process had been accelerated by the Rhetra of Epitadeus, allowing free bequest of land, Plutarch, *ib.* See Thirlwall, vol. viii. p. 132.

Lacedaemonians are the best governed and most united people in Greece.” Yet while giving utterance to these sentiments, and though they see that, in contrast to this, the Cretans by their ingrained avarice are engaged in countless public and private seditions, murders and civil wars, they yet regard these facts as not affecting their contention, but are bold enough to speak of the two constitutions as alike. Ephorus, indeed, putting aside names, employs expressions so precisely the same, when discoursing on the two constitutions, that, unless one noticed the proper names, there would be no means whatever of distinguishing which of the two he was describing.

47. In what the difference between them consists I have already stated. I will now address myself to showing that the Cretan constitution deserves neither praise nor imitation.

To my mind, then, there are two things fundamental to every state, in virtue of which its powers and constitution become desirable or objectionable. These are customs and laws. Of these the desirable are those which make men’s private lives holy and pure, and the public character of the state civilised and just. The objectionable are those whose effect is the reverse. As, then, when we see good customs and good laws prevailing among certain people, we confidently assume that, in consequence of them, the men and their civil constitution will be good also, so when we see private life full of covetousness, and public policy of injustice, plainly we have reason for asserting their laws, particular customs, and general constitution to be bad. Now, with few exceptions, you could find no habits prevailing in private life more steeped in treachery than those in Crete, and no public policy more inequitable. Holding, then, the Cretan constitution to be neither like the Spartan, nor worthy of choice or imitation, I reject it from the comparison which I have instituted.

Nor again would it be fair to introduce the Republic of Plato, which is also spoken of in high terms by some philosophers. For just as we refuse admission to the athletic contests to those actors or athletes who have not acquired a recognised position<sup>20</sup> or trained for them, so we ought not to admit this Platonic constitution to the contest for the prize of merit unless it can first point to some genuine and practical achievement. Up to this time the notion of bringing it into comparison with the constitutions of Sparta,

<sup>20</sup> The meaning of *nenenhme/nous*, which I here represent by “acquired a recognised position,” is at least doubtful. Casaubon translates it *qui in album non fuerint recepti*, referring to Sueton. Nero, 21. But nothing is elsewhere known of such an *album* for registering the names of recognised athletes. The passage is important as helping to explain how the number of those entering for the contests in the greater games was practically limited, and therefore how it happened that, for instance, the five contests of the Pentathlon did not often fall to different athletes so as to leave the victory uncertain.



Rome, and Carthage would be like putting up a statue to compare with living and breathing men. Even if such a statue were faultless in point of art, the comparison of the lifeless with the living would naturally leave an impression of imperfection and incongruity upon the minds of the spectators.

48. I shall therefore omit these, and proceed with my description of the Laconian constitution. Now it seems to me that for securing unity among the citizens, for safe-guarding the Laconian territory, and preserving the liberty of Sparta inviolate, the legislation and provisions of Lycurgus were so excellent, that I am forced to regard his wisdom as something superhuman. For the equality of landed possessions, the simplicity in their food, and the practice of taking it in common, which he established, were well calculated to secure morality in private life and to prevent civil broils in the State; as also their training in the endurance of labours and dangers to make men brave and noble minded: but when both these virtues, courage and high morality, are combined in one soul or in one state, vice will not readily spring from such a soil, nor will such men easily be overcome by their enemies. By constructing his constitution therefore in this spirit, and of these elements, he secured two blessings to the Spartans, -safety for their territory, and a lasting freedom for themselves long after he was gone. He appears however to have made no one provision whatever, particular or general, for the acquisition of the territory of their neighbours; or for the assertion of their supremacy; or, in a word, for any policy of aggrandisement at all. What he had still to do was to impose such a necessity, or create such a spirit among the citizens, that, as he had succeeded in making their individual lives independent and simple, the public character of the state should also become independent and moral. But the actual fact is, that, though he made them the most disinterested and sober-minded men in the world, as far as their own ways of life and their national institutions were concerned, he left them in regard to the rest of Greece ambitious, eager for supremacy, and encroaching in the highest degree.

49. For in the first place is it not notorious that they were nearly the first Greeks to cast a covetous eye upon the territory of their neighbours, and that accordingly they waged a war of subjugation on the Messenians? In the next place is it not related in all histories that in their dogged obstinacy they bound themselves with an oath never to desist from the siege of Messene until they had taken it? And lastly it is known to all that in their efforts for supremacy in Greece they submitted to do the bidding of those whom they had once conquered in war. For when the Persians invaded Greece, they conquered them, as champions of the liberty of the Greeks; yet when the invaders had retired and fled, they betrayed the cities of Greece into their hands by the peace of Antalcidas, for the sake of getting money to secure

their supremacy over the Greeks. It was then that the defect in their constitution was rendered apparent. For as long as their ambition was confined to governing their immediate neighbours, or even the Peloponnesians only, they were content with the resources and supplies provided by Laconia itself, having all material of war ready to hand, and being able without much expenditure of time to return home or convey provisions with them. But directly they took in hand to despatch naval expeditions, or to go on campaigns by land outside the Peloponnese, it was evident that neither their iron currency, nor their use of crops for payment in kind, would be able to supply them with what they lacked if they abided by the legislation of Lycurgus; for such undertakings required money universally current, and goods from foreign countries. Thus they were compelled to wait humbly at Persian doors, impose tribute on the islanders, and exact contributions from all the Greeks: knowing that, if they abided by the laws of Lycurgus, it was impossible to advance any claims upon any outside power at all, much less upon the supremacy in Greece.

50. My object, then, in this digression is to make it manifest by actual facts that, for guarding their own country with absolute safety, and for preserving their own freedom, the legislation of Lycurgus was entirely sufficient; and for those who are content with these objects we must concede that there neither exists, nor ever has existed, a constitution and civil order preferable to that of Sparta. But if any one is seeking aggrandisement, and believes that to be a leader and ruler and despot of numerous subjects, and to have all looking and turning to him, is a finer thing than that, — in this point of view we must acknowledge that the Spartan constitution is deficient, and that of Rome superior and better constituted for obtaining power. And this has been proved by actual facts. For when the Lacedaemonians strove to possess themselves of the supremacy in Greece, it was not long before they brought their own freedom itself into danger. Whereas the Romans, after obtaining supreme power over the Italians themselves, soon brought the whole world under their rule, — in which achievement the abundance and availability of their supplies largely contributed to their success.

51. Now the Carthaginian constitution seems to me originally to have been well contrived in these most distinctively important particulars. For they had kings,<sup>21</sup> and the Gerusia had the powers of an aristocracy, and the multitude were supreme in such things as affected them; and on the whole

<sup>21</sup> The Carthaginian Suffetes are always called βασιλεῖς by the Greek writers: see 3, 33, note; Herod. 7, 165; Diod. Sic. 14, 53. Aristotle [*Pol.* 2, 11], in contrasting the Spartan and Carthaginian constitutions, mentions with approval that, unlike the Spartan kings, those at Carthage were elected, and were not confined to a particular family.

the adjustment of its several parts was very like that of Rome and Sparta. But about the period of its entering on the Hannibalian war the political state of Carthage was on the decline,<sup>22</sup> that of Rome improving. For whereas there is in every body, or polity, or business a natural stage of growth, zenith, and decay; and whereas everything in them is at its best at the zenith; we may thereby judge of the difference between these two constitutions as they existed at that period. For exactly so far as the strength and prosperity of Carthage preceded that of Rome in point of time, by so much was Carthage then past its prime, while Rome was exactly at its zenith, as far as its political constitution was concerned. In Carthage therefore the influence of the people in the policy of the state had already risen to be supreme, while at Rome the Senate was at the height of its power: and so, as in the one measures were deliberated upon by the many, in the other by the best men, the policy of the Romans in all public undertakings proved the stronger; on which account, though they met with capital disasters, by force of prudent counsels they finally conquered the Carthaginians in the war.

52. If we look however at separate details, for instance at the provisions for carrying on a war, we shall find that whereas for a naval expedition the Carthaginians are the better trained and prepared, — as it is only natural with a people with whom it has been hereditary for many generations to practise this craft, and to follow the seaman's trade above all nations in the world, — yet, in regard to military service on land, the Romans train themselves to a much higher pitch than the Carthaginians. The former bestow their whole attention upon this department: whereas the Carthaginians wholly neglect their infantry, though they do take some slight interest in the cavalry. The reason of this is that they employ foreign mercenaries, the Romans native and citizen levies. It is in this point that the latter polity is preferable to the former. They have their hopes of freedom ever resting on the courage of mercenary troops: the Romans on the valour of their own citizens and the aid of their allies. The result is that even if the Romans have suffered a defeat at first, they renew the war with undiminished forces, which the Carthaginians cannot do. For, as the Romans are fighting for country and children, it is impossible for them to relax the fury of their struggle; but they persist with obstinate resolution until they have overcome their enemies. What has happened in regard to their navy is an instance in point. In skill the Romans are much behind the Carthaginians, as I have already said; yet the upshot of the whole naval war has been a decided triumph for the Romans, owing to the valour of their men. For although nautical science contributes largely to success in sea-fights, still it is the courage of the marines that turns the scale

<sup>22</sup> See Bosworth Smith, *Carthage and the Carthaginians*, p. 26 ff.

most decisively in favour of victory. The fact is that Italians as a nation are by nature superior to Phoenicians and Libyans both in physical strength and courage; but still their habits also do much to inspire the youth with enthusiasm for such exploits. One example will be sufficient of the pains taken by the Roman state to turn out men ready to endure anything to win a reputation in their country for valour.

53. Whenever one of their illustrious men dies, in the course of his funeral, the body with all its paraphernalia is carried into the forum to the Rostra, as a raised platform there is called, and sometimes is propped upright upon it so as to be conspicuous, or, more rarely, is laid upon it. Then with all the people standing round, his son, if he has left one of full age and he is there, or, failing him, one of his relations, mounts the Rostra and delivers a speech concerning the virtues of the deceased, and the successful exploits performed by him in his lifetime. By these means the people are reminded of what has been done, and made to see it with their own eyes, — not only such as were engaged in the actual transactions but those also who were not; — and their sympathies are so deeply moved, that the loss appears not to be confined to the actual mourners, but to be a public one affecting the whole people. After the burial and all the usual ceremonies have been performed, they place the likeness of the deceased in the most conspicuous spot in his house, surmounted by a wooden canopy or shrine. This likeness consists of a mask made to represent the deceased with extraordinary fidelity both in shape and colour. These likenesses they display at public sacrifices adorned with much care. And when any illustrious member of the family dies, they carry these masks to the funeral, putting them on men whom they thought as like the originals as possible in height and other personal peculiarities. And these substitutes assume clothes according to the rank of the person represented: if he was a consul or praetor, a toga with purple stripes; if a censor, whole purple;<sup>23</sup> if he had also celebrated a triumph or performed any exploit of that kind, a toga embroidered with gold. These representatives also ride themselves in chariots, while the fasces and axes, and all the other customary insignia of the particular offices, lead the way, according to the dignity of the rank in the state enjoyed by the deceased in his lifetime; and on arriving at the Rostra they all take their seats on ivory chairs in their order. There could not easily be a more inspiring spectacle than this for a young man of noble ambitions and virtuous aspirations. For can we conceive any one to be unmoved at the sight of all the likenesses collected together of

<sup>23</sup> This seems to be the only authority for assigning to the censors the toga *purpurea* instead of the *toga praetexta*: and, indeed, Athenaeus speaks of them as wearing the toga praetexta (peripo/rfuros), 14, 69. In Livy, 40, 45, they occupy *sellae curules*.

the men who have earned glory, all as it were living and breathing? Or what could be a more glorious spectacle?

54. Besides the speaker over the body about to be buried, after having finished the panegyric of this particular person, starts upon the others whose representatives are present, beginning with the most ancient, and recounts the successes and achievements of each. By this means the glorious memory of brave men is continually renewed; the fame of those who have performed any noble deed is never allowed to die; and the renown of those who have done good service to their country becomes a matter of common knowledge to the multitude, and part of the heritage of posterity. But the chief benefit of the ceremony is that it inspires young men to shrink from no exertion for the general welfare, in the hope of obtaining the glory which awaits the brave. And what I say is confirmed by this fact. Many Romans have volunteered to decide a whole battle by single combat; not a few have deliberately accepted certain death, some in time of war to secure the safety of the rest, some in time of peace to preserve the safety of the commonwealth. There have also been instances of men in office putting their own sons to death, in defiance of every custom and law, because they rated the interests of their country higher than those of natural ties even with their nearest and dearest. There are many stories of this kind, related of many men in Roman history; but one will be enough for our present purpose; and I will give the name as an instance to prove the truth of my words.

55. The story goes that Horatius Cocles, while fighting with two enemies at the head of the bridge over the Tiber, which is the entrance to the city on the north, seeing a large body of men advancing to support his enemies, and fearing that they would force their way into the city, turned round, and shouted to those behind him to hasten back to the other side and break down the bridge. They obeyed him: and whilst they were breaking the bridge, he remained at his post receiving numerous wounds, and checked the progress of the enemy: his opponents being panic stricken, not so much by his strength as by the audacity with which he held his ground. When the bridge had been broken down, the attack of the enemy was stopped; and Cocles then threw himself into the river with his armour on and deliberately sacrificed his life, because he valued the safety of his country and his own future reputation more highly than his present life, and the years of existence that remained to him.<sup>24</sup> Such is the enthusiasm and emulation for noble deeds that are engendered among the Romans by their customs.

56. Again the Roman customs and principles regarding money transactions are better than those of the Carthaginians. In the view of the

<sup>24</sup> Livy (2, 10) makes Cocles succeed in reaching the bank alive.

latter nothing is disgraceful that makes for gain; with the former nothing is more disgraceful than to receive bribes and to make profit by improper means. For they regard wealth obtained from unlawful transactions to be as much a subject of reproach, as a fair profit from the most unquestioned source is of commendation. A proof of the fact is this. The Carthaginians obtain office by open bribery, but among the Romans the penalty for it is death. With such a radical difference, therefore, between the rewards offered to virtue among the two peoples, it is natural that the ways adopted for obtaining them should be different also.

But the most important difference for the better which the Roman commonwealth appears to me to display is in their religious beliefs. For I conceive that what in other nations is looked upon as a reproach, I mean a scrupulous fear of the gods, is the very thing which keeps the Roman commonwealth together. To such an extraordinary height is this carried among them, both in private and public business, that nothing could exceed it. Many people might think this unaccountable; but in my opinion their object is to use it as a check upon the common people. If it were possible to form a state wholly of philosophers, such a custom would perhaps be unnecessary. But seeing that every multitude is fickle, and full of lawless desires, unreasoning anger, and violent passion, the only resource is to keep them in check by mysterious terrors and scenic effects of this sort. Wherefore, to my mind, the ancients were not acting without purpose or at random, when they brought in among the vulgar those opinions about the gods, and the belief in the punishments in Hades: much rather do I think that men nowadays are acting rashly and foolishly in rejecting them. This is the reason why, apart from anything else, Greek statesmen, if entrusted with a single talent, though protected by ten checking-clerks, as many seals, and twice as many witnesses, yet cannot be induced to keep faith: whereas among the Romans, in their magistracies and embassies, men have the handling of a great amount of money, and yet from pure respect to their oath keep their faith intact. And, again, in other nations it is a rare thing to find a man who keeps his hands out of the public purse, and is entirely pure in such matters: but among the Romans it is a rare thing to detect a man in the act of committing such a crime.<sup>25</sup> . . .

<sup>25</sup> But Polybius afterwards admits that a falling off in this respect had begun. See 18, 35; 32, 11.

## Recapitulation and Conclusion

57. That to all things, then, which exist there is ordained decay and change I think requires no further arguments to show: for the inexorable course of nature is sufficient to convince us of it.

But in all polities we observe two sources of decay existing from natural causes, the one external, the other internal and self-produced. The external admits of no certain or fixed definition, but the internal follows a definite order. What kind of polity, then, comes naturally first, and what second, I have already stated in such a way, that those who are capable of taking in the whole drift of my argument can henceforth draw their own conclusions as to the future of the Roman polity. For it is quite clear, in my opinion. When a commonwealth, after warding off many great dangers, has arrived at a high pitch of prosperity and undisputed power, it is evident that, by the lengthened continuance of great wealth within it, the manner of life of its citizens will become more extravagant; and that the rivalry for office, and in other spheres of activity, will become fiercer than it ought to be. And as this state of things goes on more and more, the desire of office and the shame of losing reputation, as well as the ostentation and extravagance of living, will prove the beginning of a deterioration. And of this change the people will be credited with being the authors, when they become convinced that they are being cheated by some from avarice, and are puffed up with flattery by others from love of office. For when that comes about, in their passionate resentment and acting under the dictates of anger, they will refuse to obey any longer, or to be content with having equal powers with their leaders, but will demand to have all or far the greatest themselves. And when that comes to pass the constitution will receive a new name, which sounds better than any other in the world, liberty or democracy; but, in fact, it will become that worst of all governments, mob-rule.

With this description of the formation, growth, zenith, and present state of the Roman polity, and having discussed also its difference, for better and worse, from other polities, I will now at length bring my essay on it to an end.

58. Resuming my history from the point at which I started on this digression I will briefly refer to one transaction, that I may give a practical illustration of the perfection and power of the Roman polity at that period, as though I were producing one of his works as a specimen of the skill of a good artist.

When Hannibal, after conquering the Romans in the battle at Cannae, got possession of the eight thousand who were guarding the Roman camp, he made them all prisoners of war, and granted them permission to send

messages to their relations that they might be ransomed and return home. They accordingly selected ten of their chief men, whom Hannibal allowed to depart after binding them with an oath to return. But one of them, just as he had got outside the palisade of the camp, saying that he had forgotten something, went back; and, having got what he had left behind, once more set out, under the belief that by means of this return he had kept his promise and discharged his oath. Upon the arrival of the envoys at Rome, imploring and beseeching the Senate not to grudge the captured troops their return home, but to allow them to rejoin their friends by paying three minae each for them, — for these were the terms, they said, granted by Hannibal, — and declaring that the men deserved redemption, for they had neither played the coward in the field, nor done anything unworthy of Rome, but had been left behind to guard the camp; and that, when all the rest had perished, they had yielded to absolute necessity in surrendering to Hannibal: though the Romans had been severely defeated in the battles, and though they were at the time deprived of, roughly speaking, all their allies, they neither yielded so far to misfortune as to disregard what was becoming to themselves, nor omitted to take into account any necessary consideration. They saw through Hannibal's purpose in thus acting, — which was at once to get a large supply of money, and at the same time to take away all enthusiasm from the troops opposed to him, by showing that even the conquered had a hope of getting safe home again. Therefore the Senate, far from acceding to the request, refused all pity even to their own relations, and disregarded the services to be expected from these men in the future: and thus frustrated Hannibal's calculations, and the hopes which he had founded on these prisoners, by refusing to ransom them; and at the same time established the rule for their own men, that they must either conquer or die on the field, as there was no other hope of safety for them if they were beaten. With this answer they dismissed the nine envoys who returned of their own accord; but the tenth — who had put the cunning trick in practice for discharging himself of his oath — they put in chains and delivered to the enemy. So that Hannibal was not so much rejoiced at his victory in the battle, as struck with astonishment at the unshaken firmness and lofty spirit displayed in the resolutions of these senators.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Livy, 22, 58–61.