

Polybius, *Histories* Book 6
The Roman Military System

VI. The Roman Military System

19 After electing the consuls, they appoint military tribunes, fourteen from those who have seen five years' service 2 and ten from those who have seen ten. As for the rest, a cavalry soldier must serve for ten years in all and an infantry soldier for sixteen years before reaching the age of forty-six, with the exception of those whose census is under four hundred drachmae, all of whom are employed in naval service. In case of pressing danger twenty years' service is demanded from the infantry. 3 No one is eligible for any political office before he has completed ten years' service. The consuls, when they are about to enroll soldiers, announce at a meeting of the popular assembly the day on which all Roman citizens of military age must present themselves, 4 and this they do annually. On the appointed day, when those liable to service arrive in Rome, and assemble on the Capitol, the junior tribunes divide themselves into four groups, as the popular assembly or the consuls determine, since the main and original division of their forces is into four legions. The four tribunes first nominated are appointed to the first legion, the next three to the second, the following four to the third, and the last three to the fourth. Of senior tribunes the first two are appointed to the first legion, the next three to the second, the next two to the third, and the three last to the fourth.

20 The division and appointment of the tribunes having thus been so made that each legion has the same number of officers, 2 those of each legion take their seats apart, and they draw lots for the tribes, and summon them singly in the order of the lottery. 3 From each tribe they first of all select four lads of more or less the same age and physique. 4 When these are brought forward the officers of the first legion have first choice, those of the second choice, those of the third p315third, and those of the fourth last. 5 Another batch of four is now brought forward, and this time the officers of the second legion have first choice and so on, those of the first choosing last. 6 A third batch having been brought forward the tribunes of the third legion choose first, and those of the second last. 7 By thus continuing to give each legion first choice in turn, each gets men of the same standard. 8 When they have chosen the number determined on — that is when the strength of each legion is brought up to four thousand two hundred, or in times of exceptional danger to five thousand — 9 the old system was to choose the cavalry after the four thousand two hundred infantry, but they now choose them first, the censor selecting them according to their wealth; and three hundred are assigned to each legion.

21 The enrolment having been completed in this manner, those of the tribunes on whom this duty falls collect the newly-enrolled soldiers, and picking out of the whole body a single man whom they think the most suitable make him take the oath that he will obey his officers and execute their orders as far as is in his power. 3 Then the others come forward and each in his turn takes his oath simply that he will do the same as the first man. 4 At the same time the consuls send their orders to the allied cities in Italy which they wish to contribute troops, stating the numbers required and the day and place at which the men selected must present themselves. 5 The magistrates, choosing the men and administering the oath in the manner above described, send them off, appointing a commander and a paymaster. 6 The tribunes in Rome, after administering the oath, fix for each legion a day and place at which the men are to present themselves without arms and then dismiss them. 7 When they come to the rendezvous, they choose the youngest and poorest to form the *velites*; the next to them are made *hastati*; those in the prime of life *principes*; and the oldest of all *triarii*, 8 these being the names among the Romans of the four classes in each legion distinct in age and equipment. 9 They divide them so that the senior men known as *triarii* number six hundred, the *principes* twelve hundred, the *hastati* twelve hundred, the rest, consisting of the youngest, being

Polybius, *Histories* Book 6
The Roman Military System

velites. If the legion consists of more than four thousand men, they divide accordingly, except as regards the *triarii*, the number of whom is always the same.

22 The youngest soldiers or *velites* are ordered to carry a sword, javelins, and a target (*parma*).
 2 The target is strongly made and sufficiently large to afford protection, being circular and measuring three feet in diameter. 3 They also wear a plain helmet, and sometimes cover it with a wolf's skin or something similar both to protect and to act as a distinguishing mark by which their officers can recognize them and judge if they fight pluckily or not. 4 The wooden shaft of the javelin measures about two cubits in length and is about a finger's breadth in thickness; its head is a span long hammered out to such a fine edge that it is necessarily bent by the first impact, and the enemy is unable to return it. If this were not so, the missile would be available for both sides.

23 The next in seniority called *hastati* are ordered to wear a complete panoply. 2 The Roman panoply consists firstly of a shield (*scutum*), the convex surface of which measures two and a half feet in width and four feet in length, the thickness at the rim being a palm's breadth. 3 It is made of two planks glued together, the outer surface being then covered first with canvas and then with calf-skin. 4 Its upper and lower rims are strengthened by an iron edging which protects it from descending blows and from injury when rested on the ground. It also has an iron boss (*umbo*) fixed to it which turns aside the most formidable blows of stones, pikes, and heavy missiles in general. 6 Besides the shield they also carry a sword, hanging on the right thigh and called a Spanish sword. 7 This is excellent for thrusting, and both of its edges cut effectually, as the blade is very strong and firm. 8 In addition they have two *pila*, a brass helmet, and greaves. 9 The *pila* are of two sorts — stout and fine. Of the stout ones some are round and a palm's length in diameter and others are a palm square. Fine *pila*, which they carry in addition to the stout ones, are like moderate-sized hunting-spears, 10 the length of the haft in all cases being about three cubits. Each is fitted with a barbed iron head of the same length as the haft. 11 This they attach so securely to the haft, carrying the attachment halfway up the latter and fixing it with numerous rivets, that in action the iron will break sooner than become detached, although its thickness at the bottom where it comes in contact with the wood is a finger's breadth and a half; such great care do they take about attaching it firmly. Finally they wear as an ornament a circle of feathers with three upright purple or black feathers about a cubit in height, the addition of which on the head surmounting their other arms is to make every man look twice his real height, and to give him a fine appearance, such as will strike terror into the enemy. 14 The common soldiers wear in addition a breastplate of brass a span square, which they place in front of the heart and call the heart-protector (*pectorale*), this completing their accoutrements; but those who are rated above ten thousand drachmas wear instead of this a coat of chain-mail (*lorica*). The *principes* and *triarii* are armed in the same manner except that instead of the *pila* the *triarii* carry long spears (*hastae*).

24 From each of the classes except the youngest they elect ten centurions according to merit, and then they elect a second ten. 2 All these are called centurions, and the first man elected has a seat in the military council. The centurions then appoint an equal number of rearguard officers (*optiones*). Next, in conjunction with the centurions, they divide each class into ten companies, except the *velites*, and assign to each company two centurions and two *optiones* from among the elected officers. The *velites* are divided equally among all the companies; these companies are called *ordines* or *manipuli* or *vexilla*, and their officers are called centurions or *ordinum ductores*. 6 Finally these officers appoint from the ranks two of the finest and bravest men to be standard-bearers (*vexillarii*) in each maniple. 7 It is natural that they should appoint two commanders for each maniple; for it being uncertain what may be the conduct of an officer or what may happen to him, and affairs of

Polybius, *Histories* Book 6
The Roman Military System

war not admitting of pretexts and excuses, they wish the maniple never to be without a leader and chief. When both centurions are on the spot, the first elected commands the right half of the maniple and the second the left, but if both are not present the one who is commands the whole. They wish the centurions not so much to be venturesome and daredevil as to be natural leaders, of a steady and sedate spirit. 9 They do not desire them so much to be men who will initiate attacks and open the battle, but men who will hold their ground when worsted and hard-pressed and be ready to die at their posts.

25 In like manner they divide the cavalry into ten squadrons (*turmae*) and from each they select three officers (*decuriones*), who themselves appoint three rear-rank officers (*optiones*). 2 The first commander chosen commands the whole squadron, and the two others have the rank of *decuriones*, all three bearing this title. If the first of them should not be present, the second takes command of the squadron. 3 The cavalry are now armed like that of Greece, but in old times they had no cuirasses but fought in light undergarments, the result of which was that they were able to dismount and mount again at once with great dexterity and facility, but were exposed to great danger in close combat, as they were nearly naked. 5 Their lances too were unserviceable in two respects. In the first place they made them so slender and pliant that it was impossible to take a steady aim, and before they could fix the head in anything, the shaking due to the mere motion of the horse caused most of them to break. 6 Next, as they did not fit the butt-ends with spikes, they could only deliver the first stroke with the point and after this if they broke they were of no further service. 7 Their buckler was made of ox-hide, somewhat similar in shape to the round bosse cakes used at sacrifices. They were not of any use for attacking, as they were not firm enough; and when the leather covering peeled off and rotted owing to the rain, unserviceable as they were before, they now became entirely so. 8 Since therefore their arms did not stand the test of experience, they soon took to making them in the Greek fashion, which ensures that the first stroke of the lance-head shall be both well aimed and telling, since the lance is so constructed as to be steady and strong, and also that it may continue to be effectively used by reversing it and striking with the spike at the butt end. 10 And the same applies to the Greek shields, which being of solid and firm texture do good service both in defense and attack. 11 The Romans, when they noticed this, soon learnt to copy the Greek arms; for this too is one of their virtues, that no people are so ready to adopt new fashions and imitate what they see is better in others.

26 The tribunes having thus organized the troops and ordered them to arm themselves in this manner, dismiss them to their homes. 2 When the day comes on which they have all sworn to attend at the place appointed by the consuls — 3 each consul as a rule appointing a separate rendezvous for his own troops, since each has received his share of the allies and two Roman legions — 4 none of those on the roll ever fail to appear, no excuse at all being admitted except adverse omens or absolute impossibility. 5 The allies having now assembled also at the same places as the Romans, their organization and command are undertaken by the officers appointed by the consuls known as *praefecti sociorum* and twelve in number. 6 They first of all select for the consuls for the whole force of allies assembled the horsemen and footmen most fitted for actual service, these being known as *extraordinarii*, that is "select." 7 The total number of allied infantry is usually equal to that of the Romans, while the cavalry are three times as many. 8 Of these they assign about a third of the cavalry and a fifth of the infantry to the picked corps; 9 the rest they divide into two bodies, one known as the right wing and the other as the left. 10 When these arrangements have been made, the tribunes take both the Romans and allies and pitch their camp, one simple plan of camp being adopted at all times and in all places. 11 I think, therefore, it will be in place here to attempt, as far as words can do so, to convey to my readers a notion of the disposition of the forces

Polybius, *Histories* Book 6
The Roman Military System

when on the march, when encamped, and when in action. 12 For who is so averse to all noble and excellent performance as not to be inclined to take a little extra trouble to understand matters like this, of which when he has once read he will be well informed about one of those things really worth studying and worth knowing?

27 The manner in which they form their camp is as follows. When the site for the camp has been chosen, the position in it giving the best general view and most suitable for issuing orders is assigned to the general's tent (*praetorium*). 2 Fixing an ensign on the spot where they are about to pitch it, they measure off round this ensign a square plot of ground each side of which is one hundred feet distant, so that the total area measure four plethora. 3 Along one side of this square in the direction which seems to give the greatest facilities for watering and foraging, the Roman p331legions are disposed as follows. 4 As I have said, there are six tribunes in each legion; and since each consul has always two Roman legions with him, it is evident that there are twelve tribunes in the army of each. 5 They place then the tents of these all in one line parallel to the side of the square selected and fifty feet distant from it, to give room for the horses, mules, and baggage of the tribunes. 6 These tents are pitched with their backs turned to the *praetorium* and facing the outer side of the camp, a direction of which I will always speak as "the front." 7 The tents of the tribunes are at an equal distance from each other, and at such a distance that they extend along the whole breadth of the space occupied by the legions.

28 They now measure a hundred feet from the front of all these tents, and starting from the line drawn at this distance parallel to the tents of the tribunes they begin to encamp the legions, managing matters as follows. 2 Bisecting the above line, they start from this spot and along a line drawn at right angles to the first, they encamp the cavalry of each legion facing each other and separated by a distance of fifty feet, the last-mentioned line being exactly half-way between them. 3 The manner of encamping the cavalry and the infantry is very similar, the whole space occupied by the maniples and squadrons being a square. 4 This square faces one of the streets or *viae* and is of a fixed length of one hundred feet, and they usually try to make the depth the same except in the case of the allies. 5 When they employ the larger legions they add proportionately to the length and depth.

29 The cavalry camp is thus something like a street running down from the middle of the tribunes' tents and at right angles to the line along which these tents are placed and to the space in front of them, the whole system of *viae* being in fact like a number of streets, as either companies of infantry or troops of horse are encamped facing each other all along each. Behind the cavalry, then, they place the *triarii* of both legions in a similar arrangement, a company next each troop, but with no space between, and facing in the contrary direction to the cavalry. 4 They make the depth of each company half its length, because as a rule the *triarii* number only half the strength of the other classes. 5 So that the maniples being often of unequal strength, the length of the encampments is always the same owing to the difference in depth. 6 Next at a distance of 50 feet on each side they place the *principes* facing the *triarii*, and as they are turned towards the intervening space, two more streets are formed, both starting from the same base as that of the cavalry, *i.e.* the hundred-foot space in front of the tribunes' tents, and both issuing on the side of the camp which is opposite to the tribunes' tents and which we decided to call the front of the whole. 8 After the *principes*, and again back to back against them, with no interval they encamp the *hastati*. 9 As each class by virtue of the original division consists of ten maniples, the streets are all equal in length, and they all break off on the front side of the camp in a straight line, the last maniples being here so placed as to face to the front.

Polybius, *Histories* Book 6
The Roman Military System

30 At a distance again of 50 feet from the *hastati*, and facing them, they encamp the allied cavalry, starting from the same line and ending on the same line. 2 As I stated above, the number of the allied infantry is the same as that of the Roman legions, but from these the *extraordinarii* must be deducted; while that of the cavalry is double after deducting the third who serve as *extraordinarii*. In forming the camp, therefore, they proportionately increase the depth of the space assigned to the allied cavalry, in the endeavor to make their camp equal in length to that of the Romans. 4 These five streets having been completed, they place the maniples of the allied infantry, increasing the depth in proportion to their numbers; with their faces turned away from the cavalry and facing the *agger* and both the outer sides of the camp. 5 In each maniple the first tent at either end is occupied by the centurions. In laying the whole camp out in this manner they always leave a space of 50 feet between the fifth troop and the sixth, and similarly with the companies of foot, 6 so that another passage traversing the whole camp is formed, at right angles to the streets, and parallel to the line of the tribunes' tents. This they called *quintana*, as it runs along the fifth troops and companies.

31 The spaces behind the tents of the tribunes to right and left of the *praetorium*, are used in the one case for the market and in the other for the office of the *quaestor* and the supplies of which he is in charge. 2 Behind the last tent of the tribunes on either side, and more or less at right angles to these tents, are the quarters of the cavalry picked out from the *extraordinarii*, and a certain number of volunteers serving to oblige the consuls. These are all encamped parallel to the two sides of the *agger*, and facing in the one case the quaestors' depot and in the other the market. 3 As a rule these troops are not only thus encamped near the consuls but on the march and on other occasions are in constant attendance on the consul and quaestor. 4 Back to back with them, and looking towards the *agger* are the select infantry who perform the same service as the cavalry just described. 5 Beyond these an empty space is left a hundred feet broad, parallel to the tents of the tribunes, and stretching along the whole face of the *agger* on the other side of the market, praetorium and quaestorium, 6 and on its further side the rest of the equites *extraordinarii* are encamped facing the market, praetorium and quaestorium. 7 In the middle of this cavalry camp and exactly opposite the praetorium a passage, 50 feet wide, is left leading to the rear side of the camp and running at right angles to the broad passage behind the *praetorium*. 8 Back to back with these cavalry and fronting the *agger* and the rearward face of the whole camp are placed the rest of the *pedites extraordinarii*. 9 Finally the spaces remaining empty to right and left next the *agger* on each side of the camp are assigned to foreign troops or to any allies who chance to come in. 10 The whole camp thus forms a square, and the way in which the streets are laid out and its general arrangement give it the appearance of a town. 11 The *agger* is on all sides at a distance of 200 feet from the tents, and this empty space is of important service in several respects. 12 To begin with it provides the proper facilities for marching the troops in and out, seeing that they all march out into this space by their own streets and thus do not come into one street in a mass and throw down or hustle each other. 13 Again it is here that they collect the cattle brought into camp and all booty taken from the enemy, and keep them safe during the night. 14 But most important thing of all is that in night attacks neither fire can reach them nor missiles except a very few, which are almost harmless owing to the distance and the space in front of the tents.

32 Given the numbers of cavalry and infantry, whether 4000 or 5000, in each legion, and given likewise the depth, length, and number of the troops and companies, the dimensions of the passages and open spaces and all other details, anyone who gives his mind to it can calculate the area and total circumference of the camp. 2 If there ever happen to be an extra number of allies,

Polybius, *Histories* Book 6
The Roman Military System

either of those originally forming part of the army or of others who have joined on a special occasion, accommodation is provided for the latter in the neighborhood of the *praetorium*, the market and *quaestorium* being reduced to the minimum size which meets pressing requirements, while for the former, if the excess is considerable, they add two streets, one at each side of the encampment of the Roman legions. 6 Whenever the two consuls with all their four legions are united in one camp, we have only to imagine two camps like the above placed in juxtaposition back to back, the junction being formed at the encampments of the *extraordinarii* infantry of each camp whom we described as being stationed facing the rearward *agger* of the camp. 7 The shape of the camp is now oblong, its area double what it was and its circumference half as much again. 8 Whenever both consuls encamp together they adopt this arrangement; but when the two encamp apart the only difference is that the market, *quaestorium*, and *praetorium* are placed between the two camps.

33 After forming the camp the tribunes meet and administer an oath, man by man, to all in the camp, whether freemen or slaves. 2 Each man swears to steal nothing from the camp and even if he finds anything to bring it to the tribunes. 3 They next issue their orders to the maniples of the *hastati* and *principes* of each legion, entrusting to two maniples the care of the ground in front of the tents of the tribunes; 4 for this ground is the general resort of the soldiers in the daytime, and so they see to its being swept and watered with great care. 5 Three of the remaining eighteen maniples are now assigned by lot to each tribune, this being the number of maniples of *principes* and *hastati* in each legion, and there being six tribunes. Each of these maniples in turn attends on the tribune, the services they render him being such as the following. 6 When they encamp they pitch his tent for him and level the ground round it; and it is their duty to fence round any of his baggage that may require protection. 7 They also supply two guards for him (a guard consists of four men), of which the one is stationed in front of the tent and the other behind it next p345the horses. 8 As each tribune has three maniples at his service, and there are more than a hundred men in each maniple, not counting the *triarii* and *velites* who are not liable to this service, the task is a light one, as each maniple has to serve only every third day; 9 and when the necessary comfort of the tribune is well attended to by this means, the dignity due to his rank is also amply maintained. 10 The maniples of *triarii* are exempt from this attendance on the tribune; but each maniple supplies a guard every day to the squadron of horse close behind it. 11 This guard, besides keeping a general look out, watches especially over the horses to prevent them from getting entangled in their tethers and suffering injuries that would incapacitate them, or from getting loose and causing confusion and disturbance in the camp by running against other horses. 12 Finally each maniple in its turn mounts guard round the consul's tent to protect him from plots and at the same time to add splendor to the dignity of his office.

34 As regards the entrenchment and stockading of the camp, the task falls upon the allies concerning those two sides along which their two wings are quartered, the other two sides being assigned to the Romans, one to each legion. 2 Each side having been divided into sections, one for each maniple, the centurions stand by and superintend the details, while two of the tribunes exercise a general supervision over the work on each side; 3 and it is these latter officers who superintend all other work connected with the camp. They divide themselves into pairs, and each pair is on duty in turn for two months out of six, supervising all field operations. 4 The prefects of the allies divide their duties on the same system. 5 Every day at dawn the cavalry officers and centurions attend at the tents of the tribunes, and the tribunes proceed to that of the consul. 6 He gives the necessary orders to the tribunes, and they pass them on to the cavalry officers and centurions, who convey them to the soldiers when the proper time comes. 7 The way in which they

Polybius, *Histories* Book 6
The Roman Military System

secure the passing round of the watchword for the night is as follows: 8 from the tenth maniple of each class of infantry and cavalry, the maniple which is encamped at the lower end of the street, a man is chosen who is relieved from guard duty, and he attends every day at sunset at the tent of the tribune, and receiving from him the watchword — that is a wooden tablet with the word inscribed on it — takes his leave, and on returning to his quarters passes on the watchword and tablet before witnesses to the commander of the next maniple, who in turn passes it to the one next him. All do the same until it reaches the first maniples, those encamped near the tents of the tribunes. These latter are obliged to deliver the tablet to the tribunes before dark. 11 So that if all those issued are returned, the tribune knows that the watchword has been given to all the maniples, and has passed through all on its way back to him. 12 If any one of them is missing, he makes inquiry at once, as he knows by the marks from what quarter the tablet has not returned, and whoever is responsible for the stoppage meets with the punishment he merits.

35 They manage the night guards thus: 2 The maniple on duty there guards the consul and his tent, while the tents of the tribunes and the troops of horse are guarded by the men appointed from each maniple in the manner I explained above. 3 Each separate body likewise appoints a guard of its own men for itself. 4 The remaining guards are appointed by the Consul; and there are generally three pickets at the *quaestorium* and two at the tents of each of the legates and members of the council. 5 The whole outer face of the camp is guard by the *velites*, who are posted every day along the *vallum* — this being the special duty assigned to them — and ten of them are on guard at each entrance. 6 Of those appointed to picket duty, the man in each maniple who is to take the first watch is brought to the tribune in the evening by one of the *optiones* of his company. 7 The tribune gives them all little tablets, one for each station, quite small, with a sign written on them and on receiving this they leave for the posts assigned to them. 8 The duty of going the rounds is entrusted to the cavalry. The first *praefect* of cavalry in each legion must give orders early in the morning to one of his *optiones* to send notice before breakfast to four lads of his own squadron who will be required to go the rounds. 9 The same man must also give notice in the evening to the *praefect* of the next squadron that he must make arrangements for going the rounds on the following day. 10 This *praefect*, on receiving the notice, must take precisely the same steps on the next day; and so on through all the squadrons. 11 The four men chosen by the *optiones* from the first squadron, after drawing lots for their respective watches, go to the tribune and get written orders from him stating what stations they are to visit and at what time. 12 After that all four of them go and station themselves next the first maniple of the *triarii*, for it is the duty of the centurion of this maniple to have a bugle sounded at the beginning of each watch.

36 When this time comes, the man to whom the first watch fell by lot makes his rounds accompanied by some friends as witnesses. 2 He visits the posts mentioned in his orders, not only those near the *vallum* and the gates, but the pickets also of the infantry maniples and cavalry squadrons. 3 If he finds the guards of the first watch awake he receives their tessera, but if he finds that anyone is asleep or has left his post, he calls those with him to witness the fact, and proceeds on his rounds. 4 Those who go the rounds in the succeeding watches act in a similar manner. 5 As I said, the charge of sounding a bugle at the beginning of each watch, so that those going the rounds may visit the different stations at the right time, falls on the centurions of the first maniple of the *triarii* in each legion, who take it by turns for a day. 6 Each of the men who have gone the rounds brings back the *tesseræ* at daybreak to the tribune. If they deliver them all they are suffered to depart without question; 7 but if one of them delivers fewer than the number of stations visited, they find out from examining the signs on the *tesseræ* which station is missing, 8 and on ascertaining this the tribune calls the centurion of the maniple and he brings before him the men

Polybius, *Histories* Book 6
The Roman Military System

who were on picket duty, and they are confronted with the patrol. 9 If the fault is that of the picket, the patrol makes matters clear at once by calling the men who had accompanied him, for he is bound to do this; but if nothing of the kind has happened, the fault rests on him.

37 A court-martial composed of all the tribunes at once meets to try him, and if he is found guilty he is punished by the bastinado (*fustuarium*). 2 This is inflicted as follows: The tribune takes a cudgel and just touches the condemned man with it, 3 after which all in the camp beat or stone him, in most cases dispatching him in the camp itself. 4 But even those who manage to escape are not saved thereby: impossible! for they are not allowed to return to their homes, and none of the family would dare to receive such a man in his house. So that those who have of course fallen into this misfortune are utterly ruined. 5 The same punishment is inflicted on the *optio* and on the *praefect* of the squadron, if they do not give the proper orders at the right time to the patrols and the *praefect* of the next squadron. 6 Thus, owing to the extreme severity and inevitableness of the penalty, the night watches of the Roman army are most scrupulously kept. 7 While the soldiers are subject to the tribune, the latter are subject to the consuls. 8 A tribune, and in the case of the allies a *praefect*, has the right of inflicting fines, of demanding sureties, and of punishing by flogging. 9 The bastinado is also inflicted on those who steal anything from the camp; on those who give false evidence; on young men who have abused their persons; and finally on anyone who has been punished thrice for the same fault. 10 Those are the offences which are punished as crimes, the following being treated as unmanly acts and disgraceful in a soldier — when a man boasts falsely to the tribune of his valor in the field in order to gain distinction; 11 when any men who have been placed in a covering force leave the station assigned to them from fear; likewise when anyone throws away from fear any of his arms in the actual battle. 12 Therefore the men in covering forces often face certain death, refusing to leave their ranks even when vastly outnumbered, owing to dread of the punishment they would meet with; 13 and again in the battle men who have lost a shield or sword or any other arm often throw themselves into the midst of the enemy, hoping either to recover the lost object or to escape by death from inevitable disgrace and the taunts of their relations.

38 If the same thing ever happens to large bodies, and if entire maniples desert their posts when exceedingly hard pressed, the officers refrain from inflicting the bastinado or the death penalty on all, but find a solution of the difficulty which is both salutary and terror-striking. 2 The tribune assembles the legion, and brings up those guilty of leaving the ranks, reproaches them sharply, and finally chooses by lots sometimes five, sometimes eight, sometimes twenty of the offenders, so adjusting the number thus chosen that they form as near as possible the tenth part of those guilty of cowardice. 3 Those on whom the lot falls are bastinadoed mercilessly in the manner above described; the rest receive rations of barley instead of wheat and are ordered to encamp outside the camp on an unprotected spot. 4 As therefore the danger and dread of drawing the fatal lot affects all equally, as it is uncertain on whom it will fall; and as the public disgrace of receiving barley rations falls on all alike, this practice is that best calculated both to inspire fear and to correct the mischief.

39 They also have an admirable method of encouraging the young soldiers to face danger. 2 After a battle in which some of them have distinguished themselves, the general calls an assembly of the troops, and bringing forward those whom he considers to have displayed conspicuous valor, first of all speaks in laudatory terms of the courageous deeds of each and of anything else in their previous conduct which deserves commendation, and afterwards distributes the following rewards. 3 To the man who has wounded an enemy, a spear; to him who has slain and stripped an enemy, a cup if he be in the infantry and horse trappings if in the cavalry, although the gift here was originally only a spear. 4 These gifts are not made to men who have wounded or stripped an enemy in a regular

Polybius, *Histories* Book 6
The Roman Military System

battle or at the storming of a city, but to those who during skirmishes or in similar circumstances, where there is no necessity for engaging in single combat, have voluntarily and deliberately thrown themselves into the danger. 5 To the first man to mount the wall at the assault on a city, he gives a crown of gold. 6 So also those who have shielded and saved any of the citizens or allies receive honorary gifts from the consul, and the men they saved crown their preservers, if not under their own free will under compulsion from the tribunes who judge the case. 7 The man thus preserved also reverences his preserver as a father all through his life, and must treat him in every way like a parent. 8 By such incentives they excite to emulation and rivalry in the field not only the men who are present and listen to their words, but those who remain at home also. 9 For the recipients of such gifts, quite apart from becoming famous in the army and famous too for the time at their homes, are especially distinguished in religious processions after their return, as no one is allowed to wear decorations except those on whom these honors for bravery have been conferred by the consul; 10 and in their houses they hand up the spoils they won in the most conspicuous places, looking upon them as tokens and evidences of their valor. 11 Considering all this attention given to the matter of punishments and rewards in the army and the importance attached to both, no wonder that the wars in which the Romans engage end so successfully and brilliantly. 12 As pay the foot-soldier receives two *obols* a day, a centurion twice as much, and a cavalry-soldier a drachma. 13 The allowance of corn to a foot-soldier is about two-thirds of an Attic *medimnus* a month, a cavalry-soldier receives seven *medimni* of barley and two of wheat. 14 Of the allies the infantry receive the same, the cavalry one and one-third *medimnus* of wheat and five of barley, these rations being a free gift to the allies; but in the case of the Romans the *quaestor* deducts from their pay the price fixed for their corn and clothes and any additional arm they require.

40 The following is their manner of breaking up camp. 2 Immediately upon the signal being given they take down the tents and every one packs up. No tent, however, may be either taken down or set up before those of the tribunes and consul. 3 On the second signal they load the pack animals, and on the third the leaders of the column must advance and set the whole camp in movement. 4 They usually place the *extraordinarii* at the head of the column. Next comes the right wing of the allies and behind them their pack animals. 5 The first Roman legion marches next with its baggage behind it and it is followed by the second legion, 6 which has behind it both its own pack animals and also the baggage of the allies who bring up the rear; for the left wing of the allies forms the extreme rear of the column on the march. 7 The cavalry sometimes marches in the rear of the respective bodies to which it belongs and sometimes on the flanks of the pack train, keeping the animals together and affording them protection. 8 When an attack is expected from the rear, the same order is maintained, but the allied *extraordinarii*, not any other portion of the allies, march in the rear instead of the van. 9 Of the two legions and wings each takes the front or rear position on alternate days, so that by this change of order all may equally share the advantage of a fresh water supply and fresh foraging ground. 10 They have also another kind of marching order at times of danger when they have open ground enough. 11 For in this case the *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii* form three parallel columns, the pack trains of the leading maniples being placed in front of all, those of the second maniples behind the leading maniples, those of the third behind the second and so on, with the baggage trains always interspersed between the bodies of troops. 12 With this order of march when the column is threatened, they face now to the left now to the right, and getting clear of the baggage confront the enemy from whatever side he appears. 13 So that very rapidly, and by one movement the infantry is placed in order of battle (except perhaps that the *hastati* may have to wheel round the others), 14 and the crowd of baggage animals and their attendants are in their proper place in the battle, being covered by the line of troops.

Polybius, *Histories* Book 6
The Roman Military System

41 When the army on the march is near the place of encampment, one of the tribunes and those centurions who are specially charged with this duty go out in advance, 2 and after surveying the whole ground on which the camp is to be formed, first of all determine from the considerations I mentioned above where the consul's tent should be placed and on which front of the space round this tent the legions should encamp. 3 When they have decided on this, they measure out first the area of the praetorium, next the straight line along which the tents of the tribunes are erected and next the line parallel to this, starting from which the troops form their encampment. 4 In the same way they draw lines on the other side of the *praetorium*, the arrangement of which I described above in detail and at some length. 5 All this is done in a very short time, as the marking out is a quite easy matter, all the distances being fixed and familiar; 6 and they now plant flags, one on the spot intended for the consul's tent, another on that side of it they have chosen for the camp, a third in the middle of the line on which the tribune's tents will stand, and a fourth on the other parallel line along which the legions will encamp. 7 These latter flags are crimson, but the consul's is white. On the ground on the other side of the praetorium they plant either simple spears or flags of other colours. 8 After this they go on to lay out the streets and plant spears in each street. 9 Consequently it is obvious that when the legions march up and get a good view of the site for the camp, all the parts of it are known at once to everyone, as they have only to reckon from the position of the consul's flag. 10 So that, as everyone knows exactly in which street and in what part of the street his tent will be, since all invariably occupy the same place in the camp, the encamping somewhat resembles the return of an army to its native city. 11 For then they break up at the gate and everyone goes straight on from there and reaches his own house without fail, as he knows both the quarter and the exact spot where his residence is situated. 12 It is very much the same thing in a Roman camp.

42 The Romans by thus studying convenience in this matter pursue, it seems to me, a course diametrically opposite to that usual among the Greeks. 2 The Greeks in encamping think it of primary importance to adapt the camp to the natural advantages of the ground, first because they shirk the labor of entrenching, and next because they think artificial defenses are not equal in value to the fortifications which nature provides unaided on the spot. 3 So that as regards the plan of the camp as a whole they are obliged to adopt all kinds of shapes to suit the nature of the ground, and they often have to shift the parts of the army to unsuitable situations, the consequence being that everyone is quite uncertain whereabouts in the camp his own place or the place of his corps is. 5 The Romans on the contrary prefer to submit to the fatigue of entrenching and other defensive work for the sake of the convenience of having a single type of camp which never varies and is familiar to all. 6 Such are the most important facts about the Roman armies and especially about the method of encampment. . . .