

The Cavalry General

Xenophon



ON THE CAVALRY GENERAL

The first duty is to sacrifice to the gods and pray them to grant you the thoughts, words and deeds likely to render your command most pleasing to the gods and to bring yourself, your friends and your city the fullest measure of affection and glory and advantage.

Having gained the goodwill of the gods, you have then to recruit a sufficient number of mounted men that you may bring the number up to the total required by the law, and also may prevent any decrease in the cavalry establishment. Unless additional recruits are enrolled in the force, the number will constantly dwindle, for some men are bound to retire through old age and others to drop off for various reasons.

While the ranks are filling up, you must see that the horses get enough food to stand hard work, since horses unfit for their work can neither overtake nor escape. You must see that they are docile, because disobedient animals assist the enemy more than their own side.

And horses that kick when mounted must be got rid of, for such brutes often do more mischief than the enemy. You must also look after their feet, so that they can be ridden on rough ground, for you know that wherever galloping is painful to them, they are useless.

Having made sure that the horses are in good condition, the next business is to train the men. First they must learn to mount from the spring, since many before now have owed their lives to that. Secondly, they must practise riding over all sorts of ground, since any kind of country may become the area of war.

As soon as they have acquired a firm seat, your next task is to take steps that as many as possible shall be able to throw the javelin when mounted and shall become efficient in all the details of horsemanship. After that both horses and men must be armed, so that, while they are themselves thoroughly protected against wounds, they may have the means of inflicting the greatest loss on the enemy.

Then you must contrive to make the men obedient: otherwise neither good horses nor a firm seat nor fine armour are of any use. For ensuring efficiency in all these matters the cavalry commander, as a matter of course, is the principal authority.

But, at the same time, the state thinks it difficult for the cavalry commander to carry out all these duties single-handed; therefore, it also elects colonels of regiments to assist him; and it has charged the Council with the duty of taking a share in the management of the cavalry. I think it well, then, that you should encourage the colonels to be as eager as yourself for the efficiency of the cavalry, and should have suitable spokesmen in the Council, that their speeches may alarm the men — they will do better under the influence of fear — and may also appease the wrath of the Council, in case it shows indignation at the wrong time.

Here, then, you have brief notes on the matters that demand your attention. I will now try to explain how these duties may best be carried out in detail. As for the men, you must obviously raise them as required by the law, from among those who are most highly qualified by wealth and bodily vigour, either by obtaining an order of the court or by the use of persuasion.

The cases that should be brought before the court, I think, are those of men who otherwise might be suspected of having bribed you not to apply for a judgment. For the smaller men will at once have a ground for escaping, unless you first compel the most highly qualified to serve.

I think, too, that, by dwelling on the brilliancy of horsemanship, you might fire some of the young men with ambition to serve in the cavalry, and that you might overcome the opposition of their guardians by informing them that they will be required to keep horses by someone, if not by you, on account of their wealth; whereas, if their

boys join up during your command, you will put an end to their extravagance in buying expensive horses, and see that they soon make good riders. And you must try to suit your actions to your words.

As for the existing cavalry, I think that the Council should give notice that in future double the amount of exercise will be required, and that any horse unable to keep up will be rejected. This warning would put the screw on the men and make them feed their horses better and take more care of them.

I think it would be well, too, if notice were given that vicious horses would be rejected. Under the stimulus of this threat men would break in such animals more thoroughly and would be more careful in buying horses.

Again, it would be well to give notice that horses found kicking at exercise will be rejected. For it is impossible even to keep such animals in line; in a charge against an enemy they are bound to lag behind, and the consequence is, that through the bad behaviour of his horse, the man himself becomes useless.

For getting horses' feet into the best condition, if anyone has an easier and cheaper method than mine, by all means adopt it. If not, I hold — and I speak from experience — that the right way is to throw down some stones from the road, averaging about a pound in weight, and to curry the horse on these and to make him stand on them whenever he goes out of the stable. For the horse will constantly use his feet on the stones when he is cleaned and when he is worried by flies. Try it, and you will find your horses' feet round, and will believe in the rest of my rules.

Assuming that the horses are in good condition, I will explain how to make the men themselves thoroughly efficient. We would persuade the young recruits to learn for themselves how to mount from the spring; but if you provide an instructor, you will receive well-merited praise. The way to help the older men is to accustom them to get a leg-up in the Persian fashion.

To ensure that the men have a firm seat, whatever the nature of the ground, it is, perhaps, too much trouble to have them out frequently when there is no war going on; but you should call the men together, and recommend them to practise turning off the roads and galloping over all sorts of ground when they are riding to quarters or any other place. For this does as much good as taking them out, and it is less tedious.

It is useful to remind them that the state supports an expenditure of nearly forty talents a year in order that she may not have to look about for cavalry in the event of war, but may have it ready for immediate use. For with this thought in their minds the men are likely to take more pains with their horsemanship, so that when war breaks out they may not have to fight untrained for the state, for glory and for life.

It is well also to give notice to the men that you intend to take them out yourself some day, and lead them over country of all kinds. And during the manoeuvres that precede the sham fight it is proper to take them out to a different piece of country at different times: this is better for both men and horses.

As for throwing the javelin on horseback, I think that the greatest number will practise that if you add a warning to the colonels that they will be required to ride to javelin exercise themselves at the head of the marksmen of the regiment. Thus, in all probability, everyone of them will be eager to turn out as many marksmen as possible for the service of the state.

Towards the proper arming of the men, I think that the greatest amount of assistance will be obtained from the colonels, if they are persuaded that from the point of view of the state the brilliance of the regiment is a far more glorious ornament to them than the brightness of their own accoutrements only.

It is likely that they will not be hard to persuade in such matters, considering that honour and glory were the attractions that the colonelcy held out to them, and they can arm the men in accordance with the regulations laid down in the law without incurring expense themselves, afterwards compelling the men to spend their pay on their arms, as the law ordains.

To make the men who are under your command obedient, it is important to impress on them by word of mouth the many advantages of obedience to authority, and no less important to see that good discipline brings gain and insubordination loss in every respect.

The best way of inducing every colonel to take pride in commanding a well equipped regiment, I think, is to arm your company of couriers as well as you can, to demand of them constant practice in the use of the javelin, and to instruct them in it after making yourself proficient.

And if you could offer prizes to the regiments for skill in all the feats that the public expects the cavalry to perform at the spectacles, I think this would appeal strongly to the spirit of emulation in every Athenian. For evidence of this I may refer to the choruses, in which many labours and heavy expenses are the price paid for trifling rewards. Only you must find judges whose suffrage will shed lustre on a victory.

When your men are well trained in all these points, they must, of course, understand some plan of formation, that in which they will show to greatest advantage in the sacred processions and at manoeuvres, fight, if need be, with the greatest courage, and move along roads and cross rivers with perfect ease in unbroken order. So I will now try to explain the formation that I think will

give the best results in these various circumstances.

Now the state has divided the cavalry into ten separate regiments. I hold that within these you should, to begin with, appoint file-leaders after consulting each of the colonels, choosing sturdy men, who are bent on winning fame by some brilliant deed. These should form the front rank.

Next you should choose an equal number of the oldest and most sensible to form the rear rank. To use an illustration, steel has most power to cut through steel when its edge is keen and its back reliable.

To fill the ranks between the front and rear, the file-leaders should choose the men to form the second line, and these in turn the men to form the third, and so on throughout. In this way every man will naturally have complete confidence in the man behind him.

You must be very careful to appoint a competent man as leader in the rear. For if he is a good man, his cheers will always hearten the ranks in front of him in case it becomes necessary to charge; or, should the moment come to retreat, his prudent leadership will, in all probability, do much for the safety of his regiment.

An even number of file-leaders has this advantage over an odd, that it is possible to divide the regiment into a larger number of equal parts. The reasons why I like this formation are these. In the first place, all the men in the front rank are officers; and the obligation to distinguish themselves appeals more strongly to men when they are officers than when they are privates. Secondly, when anything has to be done, the word of command is much more effective if it is passed to officers rather than to privates.

Let us assume that this formation has been adopted: every file-leader must know his position in the line of march by word passed along by the colonel, just as every colonel is informed by the commander of his proper place in the charge. For when these instructions are given there will be much better order than if the men hamper one another like a crowd leaving the theatre.

And in the event of a frontal attack, the men in the van are far more willing to fight when they know that this is their station; so is the rear-rank in the event of a surprise attack in the rear, when the men there understand that it is disgraceful to leave their post.

But if no order is kept there is confusion whenever the roads are narrow or rivers are being crossed; and when an action is fought no one voluntarily takes his post in the fighting line. All these preliminaries must be thoroughly mastered by all the cavalry, if they are to give their leader unflinching support.

Now we come to duties that the cavalry commander must perform himself. First, he must sacrifice to propitiate the gods on behalf of the cavalry; secondly, he must make the processions during the festivals worth seeing; further, he must conduct all the other obligatory displays before the people with as much splendour as possible, that is to say, the reviews in the Academy, in the Lyceum, at Phalerum, and in the Hippodrome. These again are only brief notes; and I will now explain exactly how the details of these various functions may be carried out with most splendour.

As for the processions, I think they would be most acceptable both to the gods and to the spectators if they included a gala ride in the market place. The starting point would be the Herms; and the cavalry would ride round saluting the gods at their shrines and statues. So at the Great Dionysia the dance of the choruses forms part of the homage offered to the Twelve and to other gods. When the circuit is completed and the cavalcade is again near the Herms, the next thing to do, I think, is to gallop at top speed by regiments as far as the Eleusinium.

I will add a word on the position in which the lances should be held to prevent crossing. Every man should point his lance between his horse's ears, if the weapons are to look fearsome, stand out distinctly, and at the same time to convey the impression of numbers.

The gallop finished and the goal reached, the right plan is to ride back to the temples by the same route, but at a slow pace: thus every effect that can be obtained from a horse with a man on his back will be included in the display, to the satisfaction of gods and men alike.

I know that our cavalymen are not accustomed to these movements: but I am sure that they are desirable and beautiful, and will delight the spectators. I am aware, too, that the cavalry have exhibited other novel feats of skill in days when the cavalry commanders had sufficient influence to get their wishes carried out.

During the parade at the Lyceum, before the javelin-throwing, the right way is to ride in two divisions in line of battle, each division consisting of five regiments with its commander at the head and the colonels; and the line should be so extended that the whole breadth of the course will be covered.

As soon as they reach the highest point looking down on the Theatre opposite, I think it would clearly be useful if you displayed your men's ability to gallop downhill in fairly large companies.

To be sure, I know well enough that, if they feel confident of their ability to gallop, they will welcome the opportunity of showing off their skill: but you must see that they are not short of practice, or the enemy will compel them to do it against their will.

The formation that would add most to the beauty of the exercises at the inspections has already been explained. Provided his horse is strong enough, the leader should ride round with the file that is on the outside every time. He will be galloping all the time himself, and the file whose turn it is to be on the outside with him will also be galloping. Thus the eyes of the Council will always be on the galloping file, and the horses will get a breathing space, resting by turns.

When the Hippodrome is the scene of the display, the right plan would be that the men should first be drawn up on a front broad enough to fill the Hippodrome with horses and drive out the people standing there.

In the sham fight when the regiments pursue and fly from one another at the gallop in two squadrons of five regiments, each side led by its commander, the regiments should ride through one another. How formidable they will look when they charge front to front; how imposing when, after sweeping across the Hippodrome, they stand facing one another again; how splendid, when the trumpet sounds and they charge once more at a quicker pace!

After the halt, the trumpet should sound once more, and they should charge yet a third time at top speed; and when they have crossed, they should all range themselves in battle line preparatory to being dismissed, and ride up to the Council, just as you are accustomed to do.

I think that these manoeuvres would look more like war and would have the charm of novelty. It is unworthy of his high rank that a cavalry commander should gallop at a slower pace than the colonels, and ride in the

same way as they do.

When the ride is to take place in the Academy on the hard ground, I have the following recommendations to make. To avoid being thrown the riders should throw the body back in charging, and collect their horses when wheeling, to keep them from falling. In the straight, however, they should gallop. The Council will thus watch a safe as well as a beautiful performance.

During a march the cavalry commander must always think ahead, in order that he may rest the horses' backs and relieve the men by walking, giving moderate spells of alternate riding and marching. You can't misjudge what is a moderate spell, since every man is himself the measure that will show you when they are getting tired.

But when it is uncertain whether you will encounter an enemy on your way to any place, you must give the regiments a rest in turn. For it would be a bad job if all the men were dismounted when the enemy is close at hand.

If you are riding along narrow roads, the order must be given to form column; but when you find yourself on broad roads, the order must be given to every regiment to extend front. When you reach open ground, all the regiments must be in line of battle. Incidentally these changes of order are good for practice, and help the men to get over the ground more pleasantly by varying the march with cavalry manoeuvres.

When riding on difficult ground away from roads, whether in hostile or friendly country, it is very useful to have some of the aides-de-camp in advance of each regiment, that they may find a way round into the open in case they come across pathless woodland, and show the men what line they should follow, so that whole companies may not go astray.

If your route lies in dangerous country, a prudent commander will have a second advanced guard ahead of his scouts for reconnaissance purposes. For it is useful both for attack and defence to discover an enemy as far off as possible. It is useful also to halt at the passage of a river, that the rear guard may not wear out their horses in chasing their leader. These rules, no doubt, are familiar to nearly everybody; but few will take the trouble to observe them.

A cavalry commander should be at pains even in time of peace to acquaint himself with hostile and friendly country alike. In case he is without personal experience, he should at least consult the men in the force who have the best

knowledge of various localities. For the leader who knows the roads has a great advantage over one who does not. In making plans against the enemy, too, a knowledge of the district makes a great difference.

You must also have taken steps to enlist the services of spies before the outbreak of war. Some of these should be citizens of neutral states, and some merchants, since all states invariably welcome the importer of merchandise. Sham deserters, too, have their use on occasions.

Still, you must never neglect to post guards through reliance on spies; on the contrary, your precautions must at all times be as complete as when you have information that the enemy is approaching. For even if the spies are entirely reliable, it is difficult to report at the critical moment, since many things happen in war to hinder them.

The advance of cavalry is less likely to be detected by the enemy if orders are not given by a herald or in writing beforehand, but passed along. Accordingly, for this purpose, too, that the order to advance may be given by word of mouth, it is well to post fileleaders, and half file-leaders behind them, so that each may pass the word to as few men as possible. Thus, too, the half file-leaders will wheel and extend the line without confusion, whenever there is occasion to do so.

When it is necessary to keep a look out, I am all in favour of the plan of having hidden outposts and guards. For these serve at once as guards to protect your friends and snares to trap the enemy.

And the men, being unseen, are more secure themselves and at the same time more formidable to the enemy. For the enemy, conscious that there are outposts somewhere, but ignorant of their whereabouts and their strength, feels nervous and is forced to suspect every possible position; whereas visible outposts show them where danger lies and where all is safe.

Besides, if you conceal your outposts, you will have the chance of luring the enemy into an ambush by placing a few guards in the open to screen the hidden men. Occasionally, too, a cunning trap may be laid by posting a second body of exposed guards behind the men in hiding; for this plan may prove as deceptive to the enemy as the one just referred to.

A prudent commander will never take risks unnecessarily, except when it is clear beforehand that he will have the advantage of the enemy. To play into

the enemy's hand may fairly be considered treachery to one's allies rather than courage.

Another sound principle is to go for any position where the enemy is weak, even if it is a long way off, since hard work is less dangerous than a struggle against superior forces.

But if the enemy places himself somewhere between yourself and fortresses friendly to you, then it is proper to attack him, even if he is greatly superior, on that side where your presence is unsuspected, or on both flanks at once, for when one part of your force is retiring, a charge on the opposite flank will flurry the enemy and rescue your friends.

It is an old maxim that, in attempting to discover what the enemy is about, it is well to employ spies. But the best plan of all, in my opinion, is for the commander himself to watch the enemy from some safe coign of vantage, if possible, and take notice of his mistakes.

And when anything can be filched by cunning, you should send likely men to steal it; and when anything may be seized you should despatch troops to seize it. If the enemy is marching on some objective and a part of his force weaker than your own separates from the main body or straggles carelessly, the chance must not be missed; the hunter, however, must always be stronger than the hunted.

You can see the point of this if you consider. Even wild creatures less intelligent than man, such as hawks, will grab unguarded plunder and get away into a place of safety before they can be caught: wolves, again, prey on anything left unprotected and steal things lying in holes and corners; and if a dog does pursue and overtake him,

the wolf, if stronger than the dog, attacks him; or if weaker, snatches away the prize and makes off. Moreover, when a pack of wolves feels no fear of a convoy, they arrange themselves so that some shall drive off the convoy, and others seize the plunder; and thus they get their food.

Well, if wild beasts show such sagacity, surely any man may be expected to show more wisdom than creatures that are themselves taken by the skill of man.

Every horseman should know at what distance a horse can overtake a man on foot, and how much start a slow horse needs to escape from a fast one. A cavalry commander should also be able to judge of the ground where infantry has an advantage over cavalry and where cavalry has an advantage over infantry.

He must also have sufficient ingenuity to make a small company of horse look large, and conversely, to make a large one look small; to seem to be absent when present, and present when absent; to know how to deceive, not merely how to steal the enemy's possessions, but also how to conceal his own force and fall on the enemy unexpectedly.

Another neat ruse is to create a scare among the enemy when your own position is precarious, so that he may not attack, and to put him in good heart, when it is strong, so that he may make an attempt. Thus you are least likely to come to harm yourself and most likely to catch the enemy tripping.

That I may not seem to demand impossibilities, I will add a solution of the problems that seem most puzzling. Success in an attempt to pursue or retreat depends on experience of horses and their powers. But how are you to get this experience? By watching the friendly encounters of the sham fights and noticing what condition the horses are in after the pursuits and flights.

When your object is to make the number of your cavalry look large, first take it for an axiom, if possible, not to attempt the ruse when you are near the enemy: for distance gives safety and increases the illusion. Secondly you must know that horses look many when crowded, owing to the animal's size, but are easily counted when scattered.

Another way of exaggerating the apparent strength of your force is to arm the grooms with lances or even imitation lances, and put them between the cavalymen, whether you display the cavalry at the halt or wheel it into line. Thus the bulk of the company is bound to look denser and more massive.

On the other hand, if your object is to make a large number look small, then, assuming that your ground affords cover, you can obviously conceal your cavalry by having part in the open and part hidden. If, however, the whole of the ground is exposed, you must form the files into rows and wheel, leaving a gap between each two rows; and the men in each file who are next the enemy must hold their lances upright, while the rest keep theirs low down out

of sight.

The means to employ for scaring the enemy are false ambuscades, false reliefs and false information. An enemy's confidence is greatest when he is told that the other side is in difficulties and is preoccupied.

But given these instructions, a man must himself invent a ruse to meet every emergency as it occurs. For there is really nothing more profitable in war than deception.

Even children are successful deceivers when they play "Guess the number"; they will hold up a counter or two and make believe that they have got a fist-full, and seem to hold up few when they are holding many; so surely men can play similar tricks when they are intent on deceiving in earnest.

And on thinking over the successes gained in war you will find that most of them, and these the greatest, have been won with the aid of deception. For these reasons either you should not essay to command, or you should pray to heaven that your equipment may include this qualification, and you should contrive on your own part to possess it.

For those near the sea two effective ruses are, to strike on land while fitting out ships, and to attack by sea while ostensibly planning a land attack.

Another duty of a cavalry commander is to demonstrate to the city the weakness of cavalry destitute of infantry as compared with cavalry that has infantry attached to it. Further, having got his infantry, a cavalry commander should make use of it. A mounted man being much higher than a man on foot, infantry may be hidden away not only among the cavalry but in the rear as well.

For the practical application of these devices and any others you may contrive for the undoing of your foes by force or craft, I counsel you to work with God, so that, the gods being propitious, fortune too may favour you.

Another ruse that proves highly effective at times is to feign excess of caution and reluctance to take risks. For this pretence often lures the enemy into making a more fatal blunder through want of caution. Or once come to be thought venturesome, and you can give the enemy trouble by merely sitting still and pretending that you are on the point of doing something.

However, no man can mould anything to his mind unless the stuff in which he proposes to work lies ready to obey the artist's will. No more can you make anything of men, unless, by God's help, they are ready to regard their commander with friendly feelings and to think him wiser than themselves in the conduct of operations against the enemy.

Now the feeling of loyalty will naturally be fostered when the commander is kind to his men, and obviously takes care that they have victuals, and that they are safe in retreat and well protected when at rest.

In the garrisons he must show an interest in fodder, tents, water, firewood, and all other supplies: he must show that he thinks ahead and keeps his eyes open for the sake of his men. And when he is doing well the chief's best policy is to give them a share in his good things.

To put it shortly, a commander is least likely to incur the contempt of his men if he shows himself more capable than they of doing whatever he requires of them.

He must therefore practise every detail of horsemanship — mounting and the rest, — that they may see their commander able to take a ditch without a spill, clear a wall, leap down from a bank and throw a javelin skilfully. For all these feats are so many stepping stones to their respect.

If they know him also to be a master of tactics and able to put them in the way of getting the better of the enemy; and if besides, they are certain that he will never lead them against an enemy recklessly or without the gods' approval or in defiance of the sacrifices, all these conditions increase the men's readiness to obey their commander.

Every commander, then, should have intelligence. The Athenian cavalry commander, however, should excel greatly both in the observance of his duty to the gods and in the qualities of a warrior, seeing that he has on his borders rivals in the shape of cavalry as numerous as his and large forces of infantry.

And if he attempts to invade the enemy's country without the other armed forces of the state, he will have to take his chance with the cavalry only against both arms. Or if the enemy invades Athenian territory, in the first place, he will certainly not fail to bring with him other cavalry besides his own and infantry in addition, whose numbers he reckons to be more than a match for all the Athenians put together.

Now provided that the whole of the city's levies turn out against such a host in defence of their country, the prospects are good. For our cavalymen, God helping, will be the better, if proper care is taken of them, and our heavy infantry will not be inferior in numbers, and I may add, they will be in as good condition and will show the keener spirit, if only, with God's help, they are trained on the right lines. And, remember, the Athenians are quite as proud of their ancestry as the Boeotians.

But if the city falls back on her navy, and is content to keep her walls intact, as in the days when the Lacedaemonians invaded us with all the Greeks to help them, and if she expects her cavalry to protect all that lies outside the walls, and to take its chance unaided against her foes, — why then, I suppose, we need first the strong arm of the gods to aid us, and in the second place it is essential that our cavalry commander should be masterly. For much sagacity is called for in coping with a greatly superior force, and abundance of courage when the call comes.

I take it, he must also be able to stand hard work. For if he should elect to take his chance against the army confronting him — an army that not even the whole state is prepared to stand up to — it is evident that he would be entirely at the mercy of the stronger and incapable of doing anything.

But should he guard whatever lies outside the walls with a force that will be just sufficient to keep an eye on the enemy and to remove into safety from as great a distance as possible property that needs saving, — and a large force is not necessary for this: a small force can keep a look-out as well as a large one, and when it comes to guarding and removing the property of friends, men who have no confidence in themselves or their horses will meet the case, because Fear, it seems, is a

formidable member of a guard — well, it may perhaps be a sound plan to draw on these men for his guards. But if he imagines that the number remaining over and above the guard constitutes an army, he will find it too small; for it will be utterly inadequate to risk a conflict in the open. Let him use these men as raiders, and he will probably have a force quite sufficient for this purpose.

His business, it seems to me, is to watch for any blunder on the enemy's part without showing himself, keeping men constantly on the alert and ready

to strike.

It happens that, the greater is the number of soldiers, the more they are apt to blunder. Either they scatter deliberately in search of provisions, or they are so careless of order on the march that some get too far ahead, while others lag too far behind.

So he must not let such blunders go unpunished, or the whole country will be occupied; only he must take good care to retire the moment he has struck, without giving time for the main supports to arrive on the scene.

An army on the march often comes to roads where large numbers have no advantage over small. In crossing rivers, again, a man with his wits about him may dog the enemy's steps without danger and regulate according to his will the number of the enemy that he chooses to attack.

Sometimes it is proper to tackle the enemy while his troops are at breakfast or supper or when they are turning out of bed. For at all these moments soldiers are without arms, infantry for a shorter and cavalry for a longer time.

Pickets and outposts, however, should be the mark of incessant plots, these being invariably weak in numbers and sometimes remote from their main force.

But when the enemy has learned to take due precautions against such attacks, it is proper, with God's help, to enter his country stealthily after ascertaining his strength at various points and the position of his outposts. For no booty that you can capture is so fine as a patrol.

Besides, patrols are easily deceived, for they pursue a handful of men at sight, believing that to be their special duty. You must see, however, that your line of retreat does not lead you straight into the enemy's supports.

It is clear, however, that no troops will be able to inflict loss on a much stronger army with impunity, unless they are so superior in the practical application of horsemanship to war that they show like experts contending with amateurs.

This superiority can be attained first and foremost if your marauding bands are so thoroughly drilled in riding that they can stand the hard work of a campaign. For both horses and men that are carelessly trained in this respect

will naturally be like women struggling with men.

On the contrary, those that are taught and accustomed to jump ditches, leap walls, spring up banks, leap down from heights without a spill, and gallop down steep places, will be as superior to the men and horses that lack this training as birds to beasts. Moreover, those that have their feet well hardened will differ on rough ground from the tender-footed as widely as the sound from the lame. And those that are familiar with the locality, compared with those to whom it is unfamiliar, will differ in the advance and retreat as much as men with eyes differ from the blind.

It should also be realised that horses, to be well fettled, must be well fed and thoroughly exercised, so as to do their work without suffering from heaves. And since bits and saddle-cloths are fastened with straps, a cavalry leader must never be short of them, for at a trifling expense he will make men in difficulties efficient.

In case anyone feels that his troubles will be endless if his duty requires him to practise horsemanship in this way, let him reflect that men in training for gymnastic contests face troubles far more numerous and exacting than the most strenuous votaries of horsemanship.

For most gymnastic exercises are carried out with sweat and drudgery, but nearly all equestrian exercises are pleasant work. For if it is true that any man would like to fly, no action of man bears a closer resemblance to flying.

And, remember, it is far more glorious to win a victory in war than in a boxing match, because, whereas the state as well as the victor has a considerable share in this glory, for a victory in war the gods generally crown states with happiness as well. For my part, therefore, I know not why any art should be more assiduously cultivated than the arts of war.

It should be noticed that a long apprenticeship to toil enables sea-pirates to live at the expense of much stronger folk. On land, too, pillage, though not for those who reap what they have sown, is the natural resource of men who are deprived of food. For either men must work or they must eat the fruits of other men's labour: else it is a problem how to live and to obtain peace.

If you charge a superior force, you must remember never to leave behind you ground difficult for horses. For a fall in retreat and a fall in pursuit are very different things.

I want to add a word of warning against another error. Some men, when they suppose themselves to be stronger than the enemy whom they are going to attack, take an utterly inadequate force with them. The consequence is that they are apt to incur the loss they expected to inflict. Or, when they know themselves to be weaker than the enemy, they use all their available strength in the attack.

The right procedure, in my opinion, is just the opposite: when the commander expects to win, he should not hesitate to use the whole of his strength: for an overwhelming victory never yet was followed by remorse.

But when he tries conclusions with a much stronger force, knowing beforehand that he is bound to retreat when he has done his best, I hold that it is far better in such a case to throw a small part of his strength into the attack than the whole of it; only horses and men alike should be his very best. For such a force will be able to achieve something and to retreat with less risk.

But when he has thrown the whole of his strength into an attack on a stronger force, and wants to retire, the men on the slowest mounts are bound to be taken prisoners; others to be thrown through lack of horsemanship; and others to be cut off owing to inequalities in the ground, since it is hard to find a wide expanse of country entirely to your liking.

Moreover, owing to their numbers they will collide and hinder and hurt one another frequently. But good horses and men will contrive to escape, especially if you manage to scare the pursuers by using your reserves.

Sham ambuscades, too, are helpful for this purpose. It is also useful to discover on what quarter your friends may suddenly reveal themselves in a safe position and make the pursuit slower.

Then again it is obvious that in point of endurance and speed the advantage is much more likely to rest with a small than with a large force. I do not mean that mere paucity of numbers will increase the men's powers of endurance and add to their speed; but it is easier to find few men than many who will take proper care of their horses and will practise the art of horsemanship intelligently on their own account.

Should it happen at any time that the cavalry forces engaged are about equal, I think it would be a good plan to split each regiment into two divisions, putting one under the command of the colonel, and the other under

the best man available.

The latter would follow in the rear of the colonel's division for a time; but presently, when the adversary is near, he would wheel on receiving the order and charge. This plan, I think, would make the blow delivered by the regiment more stunning and more difficult to parry.

Both divisions should have an infantry contingent; and if the infantry, hidden away behind the cavalry, came out suddenly and went for the enemy, I think they would prove an important factor in making the victory more decisive; for I have noticed that a surprise cheers men up if it is pleasant, but stuns them if it is alarming.

Anyone will recognise the truth of this who reflects that, however great their advantage in numbers, men are dazed when they fall into an ambush, and that two hostile armies confronting each other are scared out of their wits for the first few days.

There is no difficulty in adopting these tactics; but only a good cavalry commander can find men who will show intelligence, reliability and courage in wheeling to charge the enemy.

For the commander must be capable both by his words and action of making the men under him realize that it is good to obey, to back up their leader, and to charge home; of firing them with a desire to win commendation; and of enabling them to carry out their intentions with persistence.

Suppose now that the cavalry are busy in the no-man's-land that separates two battle lines drawn up face to face or two strategic positions, wheeling, pursuing and retreating. After such manoeuvres both sides usually start off at a slow pace, but gallop at full speed in the unoccupied ground.

But if a commander first feints in this manner, and then after wheeling, pursues and retreats at the gallop he will be able to inflict the greatest loss on the enemy, and will probably come through with the least harm, by pursuing at the gallop so long as he is near his own defence, and retreating at the gallop from the enemy's defences.

If, moreover, he can secretly leave behind him four or five of the best horses and men in each division, they will be at a great advantage in falling on the enemy as he is turning to renew the charge.

To read these suggestions a few times is enough; but it is always necessary for the commander to hit on the right thing at the right moment, to think of the present situation and to carry out what is expedient in view of it. To write out all that he ought to do is no more possible than to know everything that is going to happen.

The most important of all my hints, I think, is this: Whatever you decide to be best, see that it gets done. Whether you are a farmer, a skipper or a commander, sound decisions bear no fruit unless you see to it that, with heaven's help, they are duly carried out.

Further, I am of opinion that the full complement of a thousand cavalry would be raised much more quickly and in a manner much less burdensome to the citizens if they established a force of two hundred foreign cavalry. For I believe that the presence of these men would improve the discipline of the whole force and would foster rivalry in the display of efficiency.

I know that the fame of the Lacedaemonian horse dates from the introduction of foreign cavalry: and in the other states everywhere I notice that the foreign contingents enjoy a high reputation; for need helps to produce great eagerness.

To defray the cost of their horses, I believe that money would be forthcoming from those who strongly object to serve in the cavalry — since even men actually enrolled are willing to pay in order to get out of the service — from rich men who are physically unfit, and also, I think, from orphans possessed of large estates.

I believe also that some of the resident aliens would be proud to be enrolled in the cavalry. For I notice that, whenever the citizens give them a share in any other honourable duty, some are willing enough to take pride in doing the part assigned to them.

I fancy, too, that infantry attached to the cavalry will be most effective if it consists of persons who are very bitter against the enemy. All these things are feasible provided the gods give their consent.

If anyone is surprised at my frequent repetition of the exhortation to work with God, I can assure him that his surprise will diminish, if he is often in peril, and if he considers that in time of war foemen plot and counterplot, but seldom know what will come of their plots.

Therefore there is none other that can give counsel in such a case but the gods. They know all things, and warn whomsoever they will in sacrifices, in omens, in voices, and in dreams. And we may suppose that they are more ready to counsel those who not only ask what they ought to do in the hour of need, but also serve the gods in the days of their prosperity with all their might.