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## ON THE NATIVE LEVIES RAISED BY THE ROMANS IN BRITAIN.

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As to the manner in which the Romans levied their auxiliary forces amongst all the subject nations of the Empire, we are left entirely without information; nor can any exact or well-defined knowledge be gathered from the writers of antiquity as to the numerical constitution of the various bodies into which they were formed—the cohort, the cuneus, the ala, the numerus, and the vexillation. Of the motley horde of barbarian irregulars brought by the Romans on to British soil, we can form a very good idea, and various authors have endeavoured to supply an accurate list of their names, as Brady, Horsley, Hodgson, Mr. Thompson Watkin, and Professor Hübner.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Monthly Meeting of the Institute, June 7th, 1883.

<sup>2</sup> Brady, in his *Complete History of England*, in the Savoy, 1685, a long since forgotten work in folio, gives (i, p. 71), for his time, a very fair account of the Roman military establishment in Britain. Horsley, in his *Britannia Romana*, published 150 years ago, is, of course, fuller and more accurate, as he could then draw, not only from the Notitia, but from various military rescripts and lapidary inscriptions as well. A list of the auxiliary forces of the Romans in Britain was next given by the Rev. J. Hodgson, in his *History of Northumberland*, Part II, vol. iii, p. 312; but a still more satisfactory list has recently been supplied by Mr. Thompson Watkin, in the *Proceedings* at the evening meetings of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, sessions 1872-3, to which a short supplement of six new corps was added by him in the *Transactions* of 1880. In 1881, Dr. Hübner of Berlin, to whom British Epigraphy is indebted for two noble volumes, pub-

lished in the xvth part of *Hermes*, a most important and learned article on the subject, entitled "Das Römische Heer in Britannia." In this long and erudite article, however, extending over thirty-two closely-printed pages in octavo, and literally bristling with authorities, Hübner does not furnish as many separate corps as Mr. T. Watkin, whose first article he had probably not seen, as I do not observe him quote it. In Roy's *Military Antiquities*, a superb volume in imperial folio printed in the last century by the London Society of Antiquaries, I find no definite information, the subject being merely mentioned. Sir James Turner, in his *Pallas Armata*, is equally silent, though the 11th Chapter of Book II is entitled "Of the Roman Allies and Auxiliaries, and the Mistakes of some Authors concerning them." I have also looked in vain in such works as Aylett Sammes's *Britannia Antiqua*, and in other similar works where the military equipment of the Britons is treated of at length. The subject of the native levies, which is one of extreme

The troops, however, recruited by the Romans amongst the native Britons, and sent, according to custom, upon foreign service, have not attracted equal attention; and I am aware of only two authors in this country who have attempted the interesting task of furnishing an adequate description of them, Camden and Mr. Sadler. The list drawn up by Camden, three hundred years ago, must necessarily be very inaccurate; and such as it is, neither Gibson nor Gough have thought fit to amend it.<sup>1</sup>

As, however, I must discuss it in the following paper, I will begin by transcribing it as it stands in his *Britannia*.<sup>2</sup>

Ala Britannica Milliaria.  
 Ala IIII Britonum in Aegypto.  
 Cohors Prima Aelia Britonum.  
 Cohors III Britonum.  
 Cohors VII Britonum.  
 Cohors XXVI Britonum in Armenia.  
 Britanniciani sub Magistro peditum.  
 Invicti juniores Britanniciani } inter auxilia Palatina.  
 Exculcatores jun. Britan. }  
 Britones cum Magistro Equitum Galliarum.  
 Invicti Juniores Britones intra Hispanias.  
 Britones Seniores in Illyrico.

In the *Journal* of the British Archæological Association, for September, 1870, there is an article by Mr. A. Sadler, of the existence of which I was not aware until after the publication in the *Journal* of the Institute of my recent article on the Continental Britons. Mr. Sadler's article is entitled "British Auxiliary Troops in the Roman Service," and I may summarise the native British levies admitted by him as follows:—

interest, is dismissed by Sammes, at p. 378, in a paragraph of five lines, without the mention of a single corps.

It is a circumstance ever to be regretted, that as the books of Livy, which treat of the invasions of Britain by Cæsar, have been lost, so we have to deplore the loss of those books of the *Annals* of Tacitus which would have recounted the first permanent occupation of Britain by the Romans. Thus it is only from scattered allusions of classic authors, and from the fragmentary inscriptions, which are now every day coming to light, that we can gather the number and names of the regions and their auxiliaries which made

up the very numerous Roman army in Britain. The *Notitia Dunitatum*, an official document showing the distribution of the civil officers and of the military forces of the divided Empire, is of service only for the period immediately preceding the time when it was drawn up, viz., the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian era.

<sup>1</sup> Of this list, I intend to show that only one body named by Camden, the first, consisted of troops raised in Britain: while we have proof of the existence of eight other native levies not mentioned by him.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Gibson, 1722, col. cvii.

Cohors I Britannica Milliaria Civium Romanorum.  
 Pedites Singulares Britannici.  
 Ala I Flavia Augusta Britannica Milliaria Civium Romanorum.  
 Ala II Britannica (probable).  
 Vexillatio Britannica.

Besides the above corps belonging to Britain proper, our author gives a long list of Britones, viz., a first, second, third, fourth, and sixth cohort; a fourth wing; a numerus Britonum from Rugby, another from Caledonia; Britones Secundani in Gaul; Invicti Juniores Britones in Spain; Britones Seniores in Illyria; and four bodies of Atecotti, or Scots. In justification of the above enumeration, our author says (p. 229), "The expression Cohors Britannica would, in accordance with Roman parlance, imply a cohort stationed in Britain; not a cohort of Britons. But in the instance of these British troops, the usual phraseology has been violated, and the auxiliary troops of this nation are constantly mentioned as cohors or ala Britannica. There can be no doubt that two distinct nations are understood by the term Britannica and Brittonum. The first are men raised in Britannia propria, *i.e.*, on this side of the Roman wall; the second, in Britannia Prima, or Inferior, *i.e.*, the northern provinces of England, parts of the lowlands of Scotland, also men from Britannia Secunda, or Superior, *i.e.*, Wales."

For a full treatment of this vexed question of the distinction between Brittones and Britanni, I must refer my readers to my article on the Continental Britons in a former number of this *Journal*.<sup>1</sup> For the present, it will be sufficient to observe that Hübner, a great authority, in his classified list of the auxiliary troops brought by the Romans into Britain, puts down the Brittones as coming from the province of Gaul;<sup>2</sup> while Mr. Rhys, Professor of Celtic at Oxford, in his work on *Celtic Britain*, forming the first volume of an excellent series entitled *Early Britain*, issued by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, fully endorses the conclusions of De Vit, to which I there gave expression. The subject, however, is an interesting one, and I hope to return to it in another paper.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. xl. p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Die cohorten der Brittonen .....

schemen gallischer Herkunft. Hermes, Part xvi, p. 552, note.

It will be observed that Camden omits altogether all mention of any cohort of Britannic foot-soldiers, while Mr. Sadler gives only one. For reasons, however, which seem irrefragable, at least three cohorts formed of the natives of the island must be admitted; while two more must be ascribed to the inhabitants of the island who enjoyed the rights of Roman citizenship. As regards the cohorts of British natives, Mr. Sadler acknowledges three separate titles left on record, but he attributes them to one and the same cohort. On this point, however, the testimony of Hübner in favour of three several cohorts is decisive: "Es gab überhaupt, so viel ich sehe, nur drei cohortes Britannorum." (*Hermes*, Part xvi, p. 552.)

One of the first cares of the Romans, after the conquest of any territory whatsoever, was to reduce it as much as possible to the form of a Roman province, and to subject it to its just proportion of tribute, as regards both the products of the country and men for military service. The able bodied among the newly conquered subjects were drafted into various corps, where they occupied in the Roman army the post of auxiliaries, at the flank of the trusted legions which were fed from the mother country.<sup>1</sup> When therefore little by little the island of Britain was conquered by Claudius, and made a Roman province, as is attested by Tacitus in his life of Agricola,<sup>2</sup> it was at the same time, as we may well believe, obliged to pay tribute, and to furnish its contingent of native soldiery. Indeed, Tacitus himself observes in particular that the inhabitants of Britain enrolled themselves willingly under the Roman colours, and were prompt in paying tribute, as long as they were well treated and not subjected to insult.<sup>3</sup> Not only the conquered natives, however, but even those who enjoyed the rights of Roman citizenship, though living in foreign parts, were obliged to serve in the auxiliary forces attached to the Roman legions. No sooner then did Aulus Plautius feel himself firmly

<sup>1</sup> The legions were Roman or Italian, but in course of time abuse soon altered their composition. Barbarian legionaries, who became more and more common as the Empire grew in extent, were a frequent cause of trouble to the later Emperors.

<sup>2</sup> *Redacta paulatim in formam provincie*

*proxima pars Britannice, addita insuper veteranorum colonia. (ch. xiv.)*

<sup>3</sup> *Ipsi Britanni delectum ac tributa et injuncta imperii munera impigre obeunt, si injurie absint; has ægre tolerant, jam domiti, ut pareant, nondum ut serviant. (ib. ch. xiii.)*

established in the island, than, as we may well suppose, did he address himself to the task of making amongst both natives and Roman-born the requisite levies. Such was the invariable custom under the iron rule of the ever-advancing power of Rome, and it was especially a matter of the highest importance to denude the conquered territory of every arm amongst the barbarians capable of lifting a weapon in its defence. The very fact of this first levy of the native Britons, the necessarily harsh and unsparing way in which in too many instances it would in the beginning have to be carried out, the cruel family separations it entailed, the marching away of the impressed gangs under strong military escort to the sea-board, whence the flower of British youth were wafted to distant lands, from which escape was impossible, and where they would be quickly trained and formed into organised bands, officered by none but Romans, and shoulder to shoulder with unknown races, and urged on by Roman legionaries, would have to fight, often in self defence, against an unknown enemy; all this legalised cruelty and suffering may perhaps in itself have been one of the chief causes of the rebellion of Caractacus.<sup>1</sup> At the latest would this levy take place under Ostorius Scapula, after the victory he obtained over the rebellious Britons, A.D. 50. Then it was, that he planted a colony of veterans at Colchester, with the double intent, as observed by Tacitus, to over-awe the turbulent natives, and to accustom those who had submitted or become allies, to the various burdens imposed upon them, by the searching and unbending laws of their inexorable masters: *Colonia Camalodunum valida veteranorum manu deducitur in agros captivos subsidium adversus rebelles et imbuendis sociis ad officia legum* (*Ann. xii, 32*).

To admit, then, during the whole period of the Roman occupation, only one cohort of native Britons, even though kept up to its full complement of over a thousand men, a cohort which before the end of the first century became composed exclusively of veterans and Roman citizens, is

<sup>1</sup> Compare the words of Caractacus before his last battle, where he appeals to the valour of his ancestors, *quorum virtute vacui a securibus et tributis, intemerata conjugum et liberorum corpora retinerant* (Tacitus, *Ann. xii, 34*), with those of the

British King Galgacus, before the battle of the Grampians "Our children and relatives are by the laws of nature the dearest of all things to us. These are torn away by levies to serve in foreign lands." (*Agricola, ch. 31.*)

manifestly a supposition unequal to the occasion. If we were to admit Mr. Sadler's calculation<sup>1</sup> we should have no Roman citizens at all enrolled originally as such in the auxiliary service. Now the number of Roman citizens then living in Britain must have been very great, for there existed already at the time of Claudius the two colonies of Colchester and London, and the municipium of Verulam. Great numbers of Roman citizens were brought into the country as civil officers connected with the revenue derived from the island, or with the administration of police; while numbers flocked from every part of the empire to settle down as merchants, planters and artificers. The numerous legionaries and their officers, together with the families of the civil functionaries, could not be provided with the necessaries and luxuries of life, without the presence of numerous trade agents in the island; neither could the splendid villas and public buildings, the baths, the theatres and the temples, which began to adorn the isle of Britain, be erected and embellished, without the aid and direction of Roman citizens from other lands. Amongst other professions that the medical was not un-represented, is evidenced by the Roman medicine stamps to be found in our museums.<sup>2</sup> These Roman citizens with their dependants and children would soon amount to a goodly number. No more than twenty years after the arrival of the first Roman governor in Britain, no fewer than seventy thousand citizens and allies perished, according to Tacitus (*Annals*, xiv, 33), during Boadicea's rebellion in London, Verulam and Colchester alone.<sup>3</sup> Instead then of admitting, that no Roman citizens living in Britain were enrolled until near the end of the first century, when, from the period of their first appearance at that date, we should have no further enrolments from the natives of Britain; most probably both

<sup>1</sup> The statement is made by Mr. Roach Smith, whose name would naturally carry great weight on all questions of Britanno-Roman antiquities. In his *Illustrations of Roman London*, page 32, he writes as follows: "The cohorts prima Britannica, which was in Dacia under Trajan, bore the additional distinction of *Cives Romani* shewing they had obtained the rights of Roman citizenship."

<sup>2</sup> Vide Davis in *Crania Britannica*, p. 172, and Kemble's *Saxons*, vol. ii, (in

the chapter *Towns sub init.*) Under date A.D. 61, Tacitus speaks of London, in a well known passage, as *Londinium cognomento quidem colonice non insigne, sed copia negotia torum et comteatum maxime celebre* (*Ann.* xiv, 33).

<sup>3</sup> We may note with Gibbon (vol. i, p. 22), that about forty years after the reduction of Asia, 80,000 Romans were massacred in one day by order of Mithridates. Some authors say that 150,000 Roman citizens were then butchered.

the native and citizen levies were, after a short interval, conducted contemporaneously, all enlistments in the auxiliary forces being for equal periods of twenty-five years while the time of service in the regular army varied from ten to twenty years. These different corps, bearing different titles, were no doubt replenished by fresh recruits according as the case required and as occasion offered, and were thus kept up to their original strength in accordance with the numerical designation signified by their respective titles.

Instead then of admitting one cohort of native Britons, which went first under the designation of Cohors I. Britannica, until after being composed first of somewhat over five hundred men, it was later on raised to be a *miliary* cohort of somewhat over a thousand men, and hence called Cohors I. Britannica miliaria, which same cohort was again transformed into a British cohort composed exclusively of Roman citizens, whence we find it called Cohors I. Britannica miliaria civium Romanorum; I think, on the following grounds, that not only three, but five different British cohorts must be admitted under the Roman occupation.

Our first record of a cohort of British auxiliaries is given in one of those tablets of bronze, called *tabulae honestae missionis*, specimens of which may be now seen in the British Museum in the room of Anglo-Roman Antiquities recently arranged by Mr. Franks,<sup>1</sup> and first opened to the public in April of the present year. By this rescript of the Emperor Titus, dated A.D. 80, the usual privileges bestowed after twenty-five years' service in the Roman army were granted to various bodies of troops at that time stationed in Pannonia, including the rights of Roman citizenship for themselves and their families, provided always they conformed in the matter of marriage to the stricter customs of their conquerors.<sup>2</sup> Judging from the

<sup>1</sup> The inner or second room as one enters from the main landing immediately after ascending the principal staircase.

<sup>2</sup> As an example, and for convenience of reference, I will give one military rescript in full. It is the first in which a British cohort is recorded. *Imp. Titus Caesar, Divi Vespasiani F., Vespasianus Augustus, pontifex maximus, tribunus*

*potestat. VIII, Imp. XV, pp. censor, Cos. VIII, iis, qui militaverunt equites et pedites in alis quatuor et cohortibus decem et tribus, I. Arvacorum, I. Civium Romanorum, II. Arvacorum Frontoniana, I. Alpinorum, I. Montanorum, I. Noricorum, I. Lepidiana, I. Augusta Ituracorum, I. Lucensium, I. Alpinorum, I. Brittanica, II. Asturum et Gallacorum, II. Hispanorum, III. Thracum, V. Breucorum, VIII.*

date of this diploma, the first British cohort herein mentioned must have been formed about A.D. 54, the last year of the life of Claudius, though possibly as early as A.D. 51. Usually the first cohort formed in a given nation consisted of a thousand men, and it was given the name of *milliary*; but when not, it was styled simply *cohors*, without any numerical designation, and consisted of something over five hundred men. This first British cohort, then, of which we have record, belongs to this latter class. We soon meet, however, with the record of a first *milliary* British cohort, for a *Cohors I. Britannica miliaria* is mentioned in a similar military diploma issued by Domitian, only five years after the former, viz., A.D. 85, so that this cohort must have been formed somewhere about A.D. 59, if not earlier. We have record of this cohort's having served both in Dacia<sup>1</sup> and Pannonia. If this latter cohort were identical with the former, which, having first been composed of five hundred men, was afterwards raised to a thousand, and thereupon styled *milliary*, this latter title would have been applicable to it only during the short period of five years that intervened between these two military rescripts, a supposition not borne out by the circumstances of the case. The existence, however, of these two cohorts, both designated primary, implies at least one second cohort, *Cohors II. Britannica*, composed at least of five hundred men, or else the Romans would not have departed from their established custom, and would have styled each of these bodies *cohors* simply, without the addition of *Prima*.

To these three exclusively native British cohorts we must now add those recruited amongst the Roman citizens

*Ractorum, quae sunt in Pannonia sub T. Atilio Rufo, quinis et vicenis pluribusve stipendiis emeritis, dimissis honesta missione. Item iis qui militant in alis duabus I. Civium Romanorum et II. Arvacorum et cohorte VIII. Ractorum, et sunt sub eodem, emeritis quinis et vicenis stipendiis, quorum nomina subscripta sunt, ipsis, liberis posterisque eorum, civitatem dedit et connubium cum uxoribus, quas tunc habuissent, cum est civitas iis data, aut si qui coelibes essent cum eis, quas postea duxissent, dumtaxat singuli singulas.*

*Idibus Junii L. Lamio Plautio Aeliano,*

*C. Murio Marcello Octaviano Publico Cluvio Rufo Cos.*

Arneth, Zwölf Römische militär—Diplome, Wien 1843, in 4to. p. 33. The above diploma of the Emperor Titus was dug up in fragments, on the 23 July, 1838, at Kloster-Neuburg near Vienna.

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon (i, p. 4) quotes Herodotus and Julian in the *Cæsars* for the statement that the Dacians were the most warlike of men, while to the strength and fierceness of barbarians they added a contempt of life derived from their belief in the immortality and transmigration of the soul.

in Britain, whether British born or not. In a diploma of Trajan, under date A.D. 110, we have mention of a Cohors I. Britannica miliaria civium Romanorum, which must have been enrolled at the latest A.D. 84. But from this cohort's being styled I. miliaria civium Romanorum, there is every reason to believe that there must have been another, enrolled later, of at least five hundred men, also entitled to the appellation of Roman citizens. To suppose the contrary would be in violation of the acknowledged custom by which they refrained from assigning any number to a cohort or to an ala if it was the only one formed of a given race. Thus are we authorized in supposing the existence during the first age of the Roman empire of at least five British cohorts of which the memory has only accidentally been preserved, and indeed only tardily, that is to say, within the last forty years, made known to us by the casual discovery of single, fragmentary and oftentimes mutilated inscriptions.

How utterly inadequate and inconsistent it would be to suppose that during the whole Roman occupation there was but one cohort styled Britannica will appear from a comparison of the number of cohorts raised by the Romans from amongst other subject nations.<sup>1</sup> Not to mention other auxiliary bodies of men, whether of horse or of foot, enrolled in regiments bearing names which became multiplied inordinately towards the end of the empire, and confining our attention to the original and more regular designation of cohort, we find record, sparse and incoherent as it sometimes is, of numerous levies from other tribes (and some of them but little known) enlisted in the service of their conquerors. For instance, there were in the Roman auxiliary army nine cohorts of Alemanni, five of Germans, twelve of Alpines, eight of Aquitanians, three of Arabians, seven of Batavians, eleven of a German race called Chamavi, the same number of Dalmatians, fourteen of Rhaetians, eighteen of Thracians, seven of Portuguese, twenty of Spaniards, and fourteen of Spanish Asturians. In some cases the names of the intermediate cohorts, between the first and the highest number, have been lost, while others every day are coming to light to fill up lacunæ and augment the total. But if

<sup>1</sup> Vegetius in a well known passage says expressly that the northern levies

were preferred by the Romans to those made in less temperate Zones.

the above enumeration, based upon each actual occurrence of a separate name for a cohort, be too ample, Latin epigraphy bears witness to at least a Cohors IX. *Alemannorum*, a Cohors XII. *Alpinorum*, a Cohors VIII. *Breucorum*, a Cohors VII. *Gallorum*, a Cohors X. *Hispanorum*, a Cohors VI. *Nerviorum*, a Cohors VI. *Pannoniorum*, a Cohors VI. *Pelignorum*, a Cohors V. *Petreorum*, a Cohors IIII. *Phrygum*, a Cohors VIII. *Raetorum*, a Cohors XIV. *Rauracorum*, a Cohors IX. *Thracum*, a Cohors IX. *Tzanorum*, a Cohors XIV. *Valeria Zabdenorum*, a Cohors IIII. *Vindellicorum*, and a Cohors III. *Paflagonum*. Nowhere, however, do we read of any nation furnishing anything like twenty-six cohorts, the numerical designations just given being the highest on record, with the exception of the cohorts of Roman volunteers, of whom we have a Cohors XXXII. *Voluntariorum Civium Romanorum*. When Lingard,<sup>1</sup> then, speaking of the British auxiliaries, asserts "What their number might be, is uncertain; but there exists evidence to show, that they amounted to at least six-and-twenty cohorts," he was evidently led into error by Camden, the origin of whose mistake, as it concerns the Brittones, I must defer to a subsequent paper.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the five regular British cohorts there is also mention made in the last-named diploma of Trajan, of a body of picked British foot-soldiers, called *Pedites singu-*

<sup>1</sup> History of England, ch. I. page 33, ed. 1837.

<sup>2</sup> A glance at De Vit's *ONOMASTICON sub voce* Cohors may give a clue as to how some of these numbers may have been attained, without the existence in all cases of the intermediate numerals in regular succession. For instance, the *Alpini* are thus enumerated:—

Cohors I. *Alpensium* ped.  
 Cohors I. *Alpinorum*.  
 Cohors I. *Alpinorum* equitata.  
 Cohors I. et I. *Alpinorum* (*h.e.* *peditata* et equitata. V. *ALPINUS* §. 5.)  
 Cohors I. *Alpinorum* peditata.  
 Cohors II. *Alpinorum*.  
 Cohors II. *Alpinorum* equitata.  
 Cohors III. *Alpinorum*.  
 Cohors III. *Alpinorum* pia fidelis.  
 Cohors III. *Alpinorum* Dardanorum.  
 Cohors IIII. *Alpinorum* vexillariorum equitata.  
 Cohors XII. *Alpinorum*.

Here we have twelve or thirteen cohorts of mountaineers, of what nation-

ality is not always certain, a number sufficiently authorised by the Cohors XII. A., though the actual numbers from V. to XI. inclusive, which may in the case of other tribes have been in use, do not in this instance seem to have been recorded, the distinctive designations given above having of themselves sufficed to denote each of the twelve several cohorts.

The same may be said of the *Commageni*, of whom we have the following list:—

Cohors I. *Commagenorum*.  
 Cohors I. *Flavia Commagenorum*.  
 Cohors II. *Commagenorum*.  
 Cohors II. *Flavia Commagenorum*.  
 Cohors III. *Commagenorum*.  
 Cohors VI. *Commagenorum*.

Of these Syrian auxiliaries, from a country near the Euphrates, which was first made into a Roman province by Vespasian, we have in like manner a sixth cohort without passing through the regular enumeration of a fourth and a fifth.

lares Britannici. Perhaps the very existence of this crack corps would point to a greater number than one British cohort, from which a selection could be made. The full title of this body, as appears from the Bulletin of the German Institute in Rome, for 1855, page 38, is *Cohors peditata singularium Britannicorum*. Whether these or any other cohort formed what is called *Cohors III Britannorum* or *Britanninorum*, of which there is mention in a diploma granted by M. Aurelius and L. Verus, A.D. 166, I cannot tell. Only once are the *cohortes Britannorum* expressly mentioned by Tacitus in the books preserved to us (*Hist. i.*, 70), and these probably belong to the Brittones. When then he states that three cohorts with a British wing of horse were sent by Vitellius from the Rhine, whence they were marched into Italy, where they joined arms with Vespasian, he means three British cohorts from Britain Proper: *venere tres cohortes cum ala Britannica (ib. iii. 41)*.<sup>1</sup> To the bodies of horse, however, raised in Britain proper it is now time to turn.

When Cæsar invaded Britain, he found that ancient people, like the Greeks in the Trojan war, ignorant of the use of cavalry, though very dexterous in the management of their chariots. Before the end of the first century, however, the British horse recruited by the Romans

<sup>1</sup> Only on one other occasion does Tacitus mention the *Cohortes Britannicæ*, when he has to mention a certain Sulpicius Florus who belonged to them. The seven cohorts of Brittones of which we have record were all recruited, and can be proved to have been contemporaneous with the army of insular Britons, as specified above, namely during the reign of Domitian A.D. 81-96. Though the official distinction, however, between the two designations dates from the time of Claudius, each people continued to pass under the name of Britanni, so that it is not surprising that when Tacitus wrote he should adopt the designation of *cohortes Britannorum* mentioned in the above diploma, although in a diploma of Trajan granted A.D. 107 the honourable dismissal for twenty-five years' service is granted to perhaps the same third cohort, this time correctly styled Brittones, a fact which places the formation of the corps A.D. 81 or 82.

<sup>2</sup> Sammes and some other authors speak not only of chariots, but of the exist-

ence of cavalry amongst the ancient Britons, no doubt on the authority of Cæsar (*de B. G. iv.*, 24, 26, 34) and Tacitus (*Agricola c.* 35 and 36). Had the Britons, however, had cavalry, Cæsar and Tacitus would scarcely have omitted to record the fact in more express terms than can be gathered from the above citations. Individual leaders may have appeared on horseback, but by way of exception, just as though in Homer, we read of no one at the time of Agamemnon riding on horseback, we do read of Diomed's being mounted when with Ulysses he made prize of the horses of Rhesus.

The existence of cavalry amongst the ancient Britons may, therefore be left a moot point, like that of the metal scythes said to have been attached to their chariot wheels. My venerated friend, Mr. Bloxam, tells me, that a similar uncertainty exists as to whether the ancient Britons in their conflict with the Romans made use of bows and arrows.

obtained a high degree of efficiency, and ranked among the most splendid regiments in the service. For whilst a wing of Indian horse (*ala Indiana*, whatever that may mean), a body of Syrian troopers, and many a squadron of Gallic, Spanish, Hungarian, Polish and Thracian cavalry, were, riders and their mounts, brought over into our little isle to crush revolt, keep up communications, and defend the western and northern frontiers; the natives themselves, equipped as Roman cavalry, were hurled in troops against the Parthians, the most dreaded foemen of the empire, on the far-off plains of Asia.

Camden, in his list, mentions an *Ala Britannica miliaria*, while Mr. Sadler admits, likewise, but one squadron of British horse, which bore various titles in succession, together with a *Britannic vexillation* attached to the thirtieth legion. A reference, however, to the authorities given in my article on the Existence of the Continental Britons will show that there were at least three wings of British horse, though whether the first wing of native Britons raised in the island was, after it had obtained the rights of Roman citizenship by twenty-five years' service, recruited from native Britons now become veterans (though this name of *veteran* does not appear in the inscriptions known), and thus continued in the service or began to form a veteran first wing of British Roman citizens, cannot, perhaps, now be ascertained. The fact, however, of there being no number attached to the only squadron of native British horse known to have been in existence, and of our having to admit a second *military* wing of British horse composed of Roman citizens, would make it more likely to infer, from the probable estimate we may form by a comparison with the number of levies of horse made by the Romans in other countries, that the recruiting of the natives simple, and of the citizens in the island, was conducted contemporaneously. Anyhow, the evidence in hand goes to shew that there were from very early times, (1) an *Ala Britannica*, five hundred strong, without number, and therefore the only one raised; (2) an *Ala Britannica miliaria*, apparently the same as the preceding, raised to a thousand men, whence it remained under the same commander as the first-mentioned; (3) an *Ala I Flavia Augustæ Britannica miliaria civium Romanorum*, formed under

Domitian, A.D. 88 or 89 ; (4) an Ala II Britannica miliaria civium Romanorum.

It may be mentioned, that judging from inscriptions alone, we have mention, on the inner side of a bronze inscription (generally the most authoritative) granted by Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, under date A.D. 167, of an Ala I Britannica miliaria civium Romanorum, a denomination which would lead us to suppose there were two *millicary* British squadrons of Roman citizens and two others bearing the title of Flavius Augustus. On the summary given on the outside of this diploma, however, instead of a First Ala, we read II BRITT ∞ CR. If the former were the authentic reading, we should have to reckon an Ala I Flavia Augusta Britannica miliaria civium Romanorum, an Ala II ditto, an Ala I Britannica miliaria civium Romanorum, and an Ala II ditto, or else suppose that the former two bodies had lost the title Flavia Augusta, a supposition which is not probable.

On another diploma, granted by Antoninus Pius A.D. 145 or 146 (for, if later, Marcus Aurelius would have been mentioned, as he was assumed by Antoninus as his colleague in the Empire A.D. 147), we have the double record of an Ala Britannica civium Romanorum (*v.* Corpus Inscript. Lat. III, Dipl. xlvii, xlii and xliii). Standing as it is, this latter inscription would give us another wing of British horse different from the preceding ; the mutilated state, however, of the metal, and the probable carelessness on the part of the engraver, warn us from drawing any conclusions from these two particular inscriptions.

As regards the vexillation of British horse quartered in the second century on the banks of the Rhine, the expansion is doubtful ; and it may be either vexillatio Britannica or Brittonum. In admitting this body, Mr. Sadler had, I presume, no other authority than the various tiles stamped with the abbreviations VEX. BRIT. which have been found in Germany, and which have been published by Brambach in his *Corpus Inscript. Rhen.* (c. xxvi, nn. 4, 128 o, and 139 h). A vexillation was used either for flanking a legion or for separate service ; and though not always composed of an equal number, may be set down, generally speaking, at a strength of 500 sabres.

Perhaps it will enable us to form some idea of the

probable amount of auxiliary cavalry furnished by Britain to the Romans, if I subjoin a list of the contingents of some other nations. There were at one time or another enlisted under the Roman colours, the following corps of 1000 or of 500 men each : eight squadrons of Egyptians, ten of Arabians, three of Asturians, perhaps ten of Thracians, eight of Franks, some seven or eight of Spaniards, seven of Phrygians and the same number of Sarmatians. It must however be observed that towards the end of the empire, the same regularity of enumeration as existed in earlier times was not strictly adhered to, in spite of the efforts made in the fourth century to bring back the auxiliary and regular forces to their former order, and to restore to the legions of Rome their lost prestige. It is not improbable, that at the time the *Notitia* was compiled, new numbers were given to military bodies without sufficient care being taken to bring up the already existing bodies to their former efficiency, so that in course of time (such was the confusion of administration then predominant) whole regiments disappeared from the ranks, a state of things which finds its parallel in modern times in the difference between a paper army, and one actually under arms, or on a war footing.

The only troops left in Camden's list, that come within the compass of the present paper, are his three bodies of Britannici mentioned by the *Notitia*. This official catalogue of the double empire informs us, (ch. v.) that amongst the thirty-two legions on active service in the various provinces on the outskirts of the western empire, there was one, the second, stationed in Britain. This legion is here called *Britannica*—*Legio Secunda Britannica sive Secundani*<sup>1</sup>—for the very reason that it was stationed in Britain ; just as the Roman legion stationed in Germany was called *Germanica*, and that in Gaul *Gallica*. The *Notitia* next informs us that amongst the *Numeri* told off for the defence of Britain, and to act as auxiliaries of the same legion, there was one called *Victores Juniores Britannici*. The question now arises, are these Britannici, as Camden and Sadler suppose, native British troops or not.

<sup>1</sup> These Secundani, if the name is not as Bocking supposes a later addition, are not the same as two other bodies of troops

stationed at that time in Britain, and called respectively *Primani Juniores* and *Secundani Juniores*.

The word *Britanniciani* is altogether new in the Roman army. In an inscription belonging perhaps to the first years of the fifth century, which records a revolt of the inhabitants of Bretagne, called *Armorici*, we have mention of a certain *Artorius* being despatched against them, who amongst his other titles had that of Prefect of the sixth legion, and of some cavalry bearing the name in question; PRAEF LEG VI VICTRICIS DVCI LEG *Cohort alarum* BRITANNICINIARVM ADVERSVS ARMORICANOS. According to De Vit, this cavalry was thus called, because drawn from the Roman military establishment in Britain, *Britannicianus* meaning not a native of Britain, but one belonging to, or connected with, Britain. For instance, in the inscription which records that a certain M. Secund. Silvanus, who carried his merchandise in ships across the German ocean into Holland, (*Reines. ch. i, n. 177*) was a *negotiator cretarius Britannicianus*, a British exporter of marl, this term means not a native Briton but a native of some other country *qui in Britannia cretifodinas excercebat*. Indeed his name and cognomen, Secundus Silvanus, show him to have been a true born Roman citizen, while the absence of the prenomens shows that he belonged to a late period, when this new kind of name derived from the adjective name of the province, such as *Britannicianus* and *Britannicinus* from *Britannicus*, began to gain currency.<sup>1</sup>

As for the name *Victores* we have both legions and cohorts called by Ammianus and others under this single name without addition. For instance the *Notitia* of the eastern empire numbers under the "honourable duke of Syria," a *Cohors Prima Victorum*. These *Victores*, thus simply styled, were discriminated from others, by the distinctive title of young and old; hence we have *Victores Juniores* numbered amongst the Palatine Cohorts, (*Not. Imp., oc. c. v.*) and shortly after (*c. vii*) amongst the troops that formed the Roman garrison in Spain, and the *Victores seniores* (*ib.*) recorded amongst the troops having fixed residence in Italy. It is evident from these names which were unknown in the military nomenclature of the first ages of the empire, that the bodies of troops designated by them, being no longer discriminated from

<sup>1</sup> De Vit ONOMASTICON s. h. v.; *Britanni* pp. 144-6.

one another by the name of the nation from which they were taken, must have been gathered together indifferently from cohorts of various nationalities; when, from want of regular communication and necessary reinforcement, the latter were falling to pieces. That this intermingling of nationalities sometimes took place even at an earlier date may be seen from what was done in a time of emergency by Probus (276-282), who, according to the author of his life, (ch. xiv,) took 16,000 recruits from Germany, whom he scattered in fifties and sixties amongst the various cohorts of the provinces.

These Victores—whether Juniores or Seniores—sometimes received a further distinctive title, and thus we come to the Victores Juniores Britannici, who being placed under the command of the count of Britain, (cum comite Britanniarum) received that name not because they were natives of Britain, (for in that case they would not have been stationed in Britain<sup>1</sup>) but because they belonged as auxiliaries to the second legion, itself styled Britannica, because it was in permanent garrison in Britain. In the very same way the soldiers of the Legio Germanica were called *Germanici*, and those of the Legio Pannonica *Pannonici*, as is affirmed amongst others by Bocking in his commentary on the eastern *Notitia*, page 225.<sup>2</sup>

What has been said of the Victores, the first of Camden's Britannici, may now be applied to the Invicti Seniores Britannici, and to the Exculcatores Juniores

<sup>1</sup> The danger of leaving British troops in Britain may be judged from the fact mentioned by historians, that in the reign of Constantius (A.D. 360), the Picts and Scots were in the habit of maintaining spies and emissaries in the Roman army of occupation, in order to tempt the fidelity of the garrisons and seduce the foreign auxiliaries to join them in the pursuit of plunder. Native British troops could be more easily tampered with, and would form more serviceable allies than strangers from Mauritania, Syria or the Danube. Theodosius had to bring over to Britain the flower of the Gallic army in order to defeat the barbarian marauders, and induce deserters to rejoin their standards (A.D. 367). At that time one pretender or another was ever bidding for the support of the Roman troops in Britain, and under Honorius the natives, left without a sufficient military

force to keep them in check, deposed the Roman magistrates and proclaimed their independence (A. D. 410).

"There were districts of South Britain," says Hughes in his *Horae Britannicæ* (vol. ii, p. 130), "that were ready enough to coalesce in any attempt to oppose the Roman power"..... Indeed, "it is difficult for us to conceive how so large a territory should so easily be laid waste and overrun [by the Picts and Scots], without the supposition that the great majority of the inhabitants were not well-affected to the Roman government; and if they were become a dispirited people that felt they had no country of their own to defend, we can easily account for their pusillanimity" (p. 131).

<sup>2</sup> Germanici a legione Germanica nomen habuerunt, ut ab Italica Italiciani, a Britannica Britannici, a Pannonica Pannonici, alique.

Britanniciani mentioned among the Palatine cohorts, or household troops, in the fifth chapter of the western *Notitia*. If not then stationed in Britain, they must have been formed of men living for some time in Britain or of their descendants, as of the children of the Roman legionaries stationed in Britain. If these Britanniciani were native Britons born, they would have had their proper native appellation like the other troops recorded amongst the Palatine auxiliaries mentioned in that same fifth chapter, the *Batavi*, the *Bructeri*, the *Ampsivarii*, the *Rhæti*, the *Sequani*, etc.

Native British soldiers enrolled by the Romans, and formed into regular bodies, no longer appear in the records of the fourth and fifth century; and indeed if we consider well the state of the island of Britain at that time, this circumstance will not appear surprising. The same cannot be said of the continental Britons, of whom we have proof that they furnished auxiliaries of both foot and horse to the Roman legions, during an uninterrupted period of four centuries. The use indeed of barbarian cohorts was maintained in the Roman empire till the beginning of the sixth century, as is shewn by a latin epigram referring to the patrician Liberius, sometime prefect of Gaul, who died in the reign of Justinian, and of whom it is said

Ausoniis populis gentiles rite cohortes  
Disposuit, sanxit fœdera, jura dedit.

To sum up then the native levies raised by the Romans in Britain, we can ascertain with certainty the existence of the following bodies:—

First Britanic cohort of 500 men.

First milliary Britanic cohort, 1000 strong.

Second Britanic cohort, 500 strong.

First milliary Britanic cohort of Roman citizens, 1000 strong.

Second Britanic cohort of Roman citizens, 500 or 1000 strong.

A body of picked British foot-soldiers, (*garde d'élite*) perhaps 500 strong.

Britanic milliary squadron, 1000 horse.

First Britanic milliary squadron, styled Flavian Augustan of Roman citizens, 1000 horse.

Second Britanic milliary squadron of Roman citizens, 1000 horse.

These various levies of horse and foot, consisting in all of some 8000 men, can be proved to have existed contemporaneously before the close of the first century.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to Vegetius *De re Militari*, ii, 6, the legionary cohort consisted, when milliary, of 1105 foot soldiers, and 132 armoured horsemen; and when *quingen-*

*aria*, of 555 foot soldiers, and 66 horse. Whether or not the auxiliary cohorts had the same strength is not known.

From the notices left us by classical authors, it would appear that the Romans made use of every art and blandishment that policy and experience could suggest to win over the native Britons from their state of barbarism and independence; and according to all accounts they succeeded only too well. No doubt in this determined scheme of the Roman rulers they were favoured in no ordinary degree by the insular position of this out-lying province, for Britain ever remained in more senses than one, true to the description given of it by Virgil, *penitus toto orbe divisus*, a "little world by itself." The student of history cannot but observe this seeming anomaly, which is as apparent as is the extraordinary importance of the part played by Britain during the last century of the Roman occupation, in the history of the world at large, a part altogether out of keeping with its size and population. But when Britain reacted so powerfully on the centre of Roman authority and on the fortunes of the empire, the native element in its armies had reached its lowest ebb. The native Britons in the island, whether for protection or through motives of indolence and pleasure, had flocked within the circuit of the Roman colonies and towns, where they came to enjoy the rights of Roman citizenship, or the *Jus Latium*, by which they obtained a certain amount of local government, so that as historians tell us the country was quite deserted. Here they enjoyed the baths and theatres and all the luxuries of social intercourse, and by imitating the pastimes and vices of their victors soon became effeminate and demoralised. As Romanised Britons they would be drafted in ordinary course into the various corps which, as we have seen, were formed at this period of the empire without regard to nationality. If enlisted in defence of their own country, they may, perhaps, have formed part of the equites Honoriani seniores, or of the Juniores Primani and Secundani, or of the various bodies of marines, both horse and foot, which are known to have done duty in Britain. Besides the *classarii Britannici*, there was a cohort of marines named after the emperor Hadrian, and a squadron of horse-marines who were Roman citizens, and a company of barge-men, *numerus Barcariorum*, perhaps 500 strong. Instead of cohorts formed exclusively of the wild and untrained Britons,

whom the Romans were glad to remove from their native homes, in the first ages of the empire, we now read of various bodies of Atacotti, or Scots, who were captured or induced to enlist, in the northern parts of Britain, and who thus took their place in the military annals of the period.<sup>1</sup> When the *Notitia* was compiled from the matriculae or registers existing about the end of the fourth century, six or seven thousand of these are recorded to have been under arms.

We shall now, perhaps, be in a position to test the truth of an assertion, which has been handed down from one historian to another, that when the tyrant Maximus prepared his expedition against the emperor Gratian, he enlisted seventy thousand Britons in his service, and with them embarked for Gaul.<sup>2</sup> This expedition was magnified by some authors into a first invasion of Armorica. Suffice it to say, that no trustworthy record remains of any such settlement of insular Britons in the future Bretagne. Gildas, who mentions the rebellion of Maximus, says nothing whatever of any British migration to Brittany. The British army brought by Maximus into Gaul, and which followed him afterwards into Italy, was, no doubt, the Roman army of occupation reinforced perhaps with a multitude of civil functionaries anxious to leave the country, of adventurers eager for foreign service, and perhaps of some natives. The flower of the army may have been the Roman youth born in Britain. That the native levies never reached the number of seventy thousand is apparent from all that has been hitherto said; the army of Roman soldiers, however, and their foreign auxiliaries, stationed in Britain, may oftentimes have

<sup>1</sup> As to the Caledonians whom Mr. Sadler thinks were in the Roman service, a reference to De Vit's *ONOMASTICON* will shew that the inscription, on which his supposition is based, is capable of a different interpretation. Under the word *Caletes* or *Caleti* he exhibits to us a people placed by Cæsar and Ptolemy in Belgic Gaul, and by Strabo at the mouth of the Seine. If inhabiting the modern Pays de Caux they would not be far from the Gallic Britanni, mentioned by Pliny, whose existence is fully admitted by Guest in his *Origines Celticae*, by Rhys in *Celtic Britain*, and Long in his *Early Geography*. As a tribe of that nation they would

correspond to the title signified by the inscription found at Ohringen in the modern kingdom of Würtemberg, and given by Brambach (n. 1563) thus:—

N·BR†·CAL

That the inscription cannot refer to the Caledonians is evident from the fact that though defeated several times by the Romans, these hardy warriors of the north were never subdued by them or laid under tribute. The Atacotti recruited by the Romans were inhabitants of the western lowlands of Scotland.

<sup>2</sup> Long, *Early Geography of Western Europe*, page 51.

reached that number. When Gildas describes the departure of the Romans from the island, he says there went forth from the island the armoured warrior, the military forces, the harsh and hated rulers, and a multitude of young men—*armatus miles, militares copiae, rectores immanes, et ingens juvenus* (*De excidio Brit.*, c. xiv); he makes no mention of native levies. If there were any natives liable to foreign service, they would already have been despatched out of the island. Perhaps the laments of the Saxon Chronicler, repeated by Camden and Horsley, have no other foundation than this misconception.

William of Malmesbury<sup>1</sup> is, however, surpassed by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who in his *British History* (ch. xiii, xiv) says that Maximian<sup>2</sup> with the aid of British soldiers took the city of Rennes, and defeated the Armoricans, whose country he peopled with a hundred thousand of the common people of Britain, while thirty thousand soldiers were appointed to defend them. The antagonism existing between the native Britons and their Roman masters is better set forth by Nennius in his *History of the Britons*, written in the ninth century, who says that the native Britons, after being ruled over by the Romans for 409 years, cast down their power, and refused to pay them tribute. *Hucusque regnaverunt Romani apud Brittones quadragentis et novem annis. Brittones autem dejecerunt regnum Romanorum, neque census dederunt illis, neque reges eorum acceperunt ut regnarent super eos, neque Romani ausi sunt ut venirent Britanniam ad regnandum amplius, quia duces illorum Brittones occiderant . . . . Tribus vicibus occisi sunt duces Romanorum a Britannis . . . . Brittones autem propter gravitatem imperii occidebant duces Romanorum, et auxilia postea petebant.* (Ed. Stevenson, p. 20, § 28, 30.)

<sup>1</sup> *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. Hardy, p. 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Mistaken by Nennius and others for Maximus.