

Russell's Anthology of Latin Prose

Text 63: A successful retreat (Tacitus)

NOTES

Juan Coderch

# Russell's Anthology of Latin Prose

## Text 63: A successful retreat (Tacitus)

### NOTES

Juan Coderch

#### a) Source:

Annals 1. 65-68.

#### b) Background (synopsis quoted from Russell's book):

"In AD 15 Germanicus advanced into Germany and conducted a campaign against the Cherusci under their great leader Arminius, who had destroyed a Roman force under Quintilius Varus in AD 9. The dead of that disaster were now buried. In this passage Tacitus describes the dangers encountered by part of the army, under A. Caecina, on the return home."

#### c) Language comment:

The difficulty of this text lies in the use of very unusual vocabulary and the omission of verbal forms, the use of singulars where plurals would be expected, and especially the convoluted way the author expresses common concepts and actions.

#### d) Content:

The night prior to the battle, the Romans are rather demoralized, while the barbarians seem to be celebrating a sure victory to come. On the following day, a battle takes place, and after a disastrous start for the Romans, especially because of the marshy ground, finally they manage to reorganize themselves and, at the end of the day, the situation can be described as a "minor defeat". After a curious incident due to a horse, Caecina achieves making his soldiers see that their only hope for survival is to be victorious in the battle to take place on the following day, a battle which the barbarians are sure that they will win. The organization of the Romans takes the

barbarians by surprise in this second battle, which ends up with a Roman victory.

### e) Distribution of content:

(numbers refer to the lines in the printed edition)

- 1-8: Different states of emotion/morale in both camps.
- 8-23: The first battle.
- 23-28: Bad conditions for the Romans.
- 29-37: The incident of the horse.
- 38-48: The plans of the Romans.
- 49-54: The plans of the Germans.
- 54-66: The second battle.

### f) Notes for help:

- 1) "diversa" : neuter plural, and supply "fuit".
- 2) "subiecta, -orum": this adjective means "near", but in neuter plural it means "valleys, the low areas".
- "resulto" = "resound" (here).
- 4) "adiacerent": this subjunctive still depends on the former "cum".
- 6) "oblitus": from "oblino" = "to anoint, paint", nothing to do with "obliviscor".
- "emersum": curious use of this participle passive as if it were active, this verb is not deponent.
- 7) "visus est": the subject is the dreamer, the Roman general; four infinitives will depend on this verb.
- "obsecutus": supply "esse", and it's in nominative because it agrees with the subject; of course, it depends on "visus est".
- 8) "reppulisse": its subject is again the Roman general.
- 9) "deseruere" = "deseruerunt".
- "capto...campo": ablative absolute.
- 10) "umentia ultra" = "ultra umentia".
- "quamquam libero incursu": ablative absolute.
- 11) "haesere" = "haeserunt".
- 12-13) supply forms of "sum" in each sentence.
- 13) "sibi properus esse" = "to pay attention to yourself".
- 15) "vinctae", not "victae".
- 16) "ingero" = "to introduce, to cause" (here).

17) the neuter of the adjective "lubricus" has the meaning of "slippery place".  
"excussis": from "excutio", not from "excudo" (it would be "excusis").  
"excussis rectoribus": ablative absolute.  
17-18) "disicere/proterere": historic infinitives.  
18) "labor": supply "fuit".  
19) "ingruentia": from "ingruo", not from "ingruentia, -ae".  
"figi": passive infinitive.  
remember that "humus" is feminine.  
20) "suffodio" = "to wound" (here).  
"suffosso equo": ablative absolute.  
21) "ni" = "si non".  
"iuvit" = "iuvavit".  
22) "omissa caede": ablative absolute.  
"sectantium": it goes with "hostium".  
"sector" = "to ambition, to look for", nothing to do with "secto".  
"enisae": supply "sunt"; "enitor" = "to force your way".  
23) "aperta et solida (loca)".  
"finis (fuit)".  
24) "struendum (erat)"; "petendus (erat)"; "amissa (erat)".  
25) the antecedent of the relative would be "ea" = "those things".  
"egero" = "to take out".  
"caespes" = "cespes".  
there are two verbs "excido", in this case it is the one meaning "to dig"; the other one means "to fall down".  
29) "abruptis vinculis": ablative absolute.  
30) "consternatio (fuit)".  
31) "credentium": this genitive depends on "consternatio", and the former accusative + infinitive is what they believe.  
33) "comperto": ablative absolute, with an "eo" to be supplied, the acusative + infinitive following is what is "discovered", an explanation of the "eo".  
historic "cum".  
35) "militem": in singular, meaning "not even a single soldier".  
"quiret": from "queo".  
36) nice use of the neuter gerundive in an intransitive verb.  
37) the infinitive construction is the direct object of "docuerunt".  
38) "principia, -orum" = "headquarters".  
"contractos/iussos": the soldiers.  
39) "accipere": depends on "iussos".  
these genitives depend on "monet".  
from here, all this series of infinitive constructions are dependant on what the general

says, so supply "dicit".

40) "temperanda (esset)"; "manendum (esset)", and look at note for line 36.

41) "expugnandi...spe" = "expugnandi causa".

"mox" = "immediately after" (here).

42) "erumpendum (esse)", again line 36.

"perveniri": the same, only that this one is present infinitive.

44) "decus (et) gloriam".

end of the reported speech.

"(ea) quae domi cara (sunt) (et) ... honesta (sunt)", all of this being direct object of "memorat".

46) "orsus": from "ordior", not from "orior", so "having begun from".

Legatorum tribunorumque": these genitives depend on the long indirect object next line.

47) "fortissimo cuique bellatori" together.

"mox" = "immediately after" (here).; "mox pedes (sequentes)".

49) "inquier": here it's an adjective, not a substantive.

"Germanus": symbolic singular.

50) "agebat": here it's intransitive.

"egredi": direct object of "sinerent".

"(eos) egressos": direct object of "circumvenirent".

50-51) "Arminio...suadente": ablative absolute.

"sinerent/circumvenirent": subjunctives because they depend on the verb "suadere", they could have got an "ut" at the beginning.

52) "Inguiomero (suadente)": another ablative absolute, but with the participle not repeated.

"ut": completive, it's the proposal, this time we have the "ut".

52-54) infinitive sentences (all of them compounded with "fore" to be supplied) depending on a "dicit" also to be supplied.

54) "proruo" = "to throw ahead", but here it means "to fill".

"iniciunt crates" over the "fossas".

55) "prensant" = "prehensant".

"super": here it's an adverb.

"raro...defixo": long ablative absolute (in fact two).

"raro milite": the style of "Cicerone consule".

56) "haesere" = "haeserunt".

"(in) munimentis".

57) "concinuere" = "concinuerunt".

"exim" = "exinde".

58) "circumfunduntur": this verb, meaning "to pour around", when used with a reflexive pronoun or in passive with a dative in both cases means "to surround".

"non hic silvas (esse)".

59-60) "facile...semermos": direct object of "cogitanti", which goes with "hosti" (again a symbolic singular); at the same time, this giant dative is the indirect object of "offunduntur".

60) "semermos" = "semiermos".

"sonus tubarum (atque) fulgor armorum".

"offunduntur" = "to be inspired, to extend on front of" (here), its subjects being "sonus/fulgor".

60-61) these two comparatives should be swapped in order.

61) "inopina/maiora": neuter adjectives that go with "sonus/fulgor"; although both are masculine, the author has made the predicative be neuter plural.

"ut": comparative, matches with the "ita".

62) "avidii/incauti": both of them go with ablatives.

"post" = (here) "because of".

63) "deseruere" = "deseruerunt".

remember that "vulgus" is neuter.

65) "plus": this adverb here is subject of "fatigaret", together with "eadem egestas". verb in subjunctive because it's adversative.

"vim (atque) sanitatem (atque) copias".

"cuncta" probably goes with the three former accusatives, not with "victoria", unless it means "an absolute victory".

---