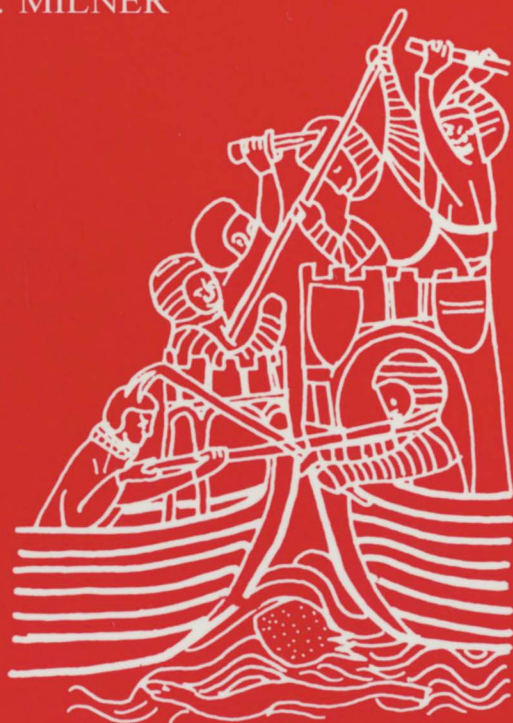


Second Revised Edition

Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science

Translated with notes and introduction by
N. P. MILNER



LIVERPOOL
UNIVERSITY
PRESS



39. In which months it is safe to sail.

The next question is to consider months and dates. For the violence and roughness of the sea do not pennit navigation all the year round, but some months are very suitable, some are doubtful, and the rest are impossible for fleets by a law of nature. When Pachon ¹ has run its course, that is, after the rising of the Pleiades, from six days before the Kalends of June (i.e. 27th May) until the rising of Arcturus, that is, eighteen days before the Kalends of October (i.e. 14th September), navigation is deemed safe, because thanks to the summer the roughness of the sea is lessened. After this date until three days before the Ides of November (i.e. 11th November) navigation is doubtful and more exposed to danger, as after the Ides of September (i.e. 13th September) rises Arcturus, a most violent star, and eight days before the Kalends of October (i.e. 24th September) occur fierce equinoctial stonns, and around the Nones of October (i.e. 7th October) the rainy Haedi, and five days before the Ides of the same (i.e. 11th October) Taurus. But from the month of November the winter setting of the Vergiliae (Pleiades) interrupts shipping with frequent storms. So from three days before the Ides of November (i.e. 1 Ith November) until six days before the Ides of March (i.e. 10th March) the seas are closed. The minimal daylight and long nights, dense cloud-cover, foggy air, and violence of winds doubled by rain and snow not only keep fleets from the sea but also traffic from making journeys by land. But after the birthday, so to speak, of navigation ² which is celebrated with annual games and public spectacles in many cities, it is still perilous to venture upon the sea right up to the Ides of May (i.e. 15th May) by reason of very many stars and the season of the year itself-not that the activities of merchants cease, but greater caution should be shown when an army takes to the sea in warships than when the enterprising are in a hurry for their private profits.

¹The word is garbled in the MSS, *pachnitae*, *phagnitae*, *phaenitae*; T. Mommsen, "Zu Vegetius", *Hermes* i (1866) 131, restored *Pachone*, the Egyptian month corresponding to 26th April-25th May. Why V. should cite an Egyptian month is unclear, but it may have been linked in his source to Isis Pelagia, for example (see below). For Pachon, cf. A.E. Samuel, *Greek and Roman Chronology*, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 1.7 (Munich 1972) 177. The true resolution of the corruption may be *Pachone itaque*; cf. IV.38 *a verno itaque solstitio, id est...* with *Pachone itaque decurso. id est...*

²*Navigium Jsidis* or *ploiaphesia*, a nautical festival held on 5th arch in honour of Isis Pelagia, cf. J. Rouge, *Recherches sur l'organisation du commerce maritime en Méditerranée* (Paris 1966) 33, *Apul. Met.* 11.8-17, *RE IX* (1916) 2084-2132 (Roeder), M.R. Salzman, *On Roman Time: the codex-calendar of 354 and the rhythms of urban life in late antiquity* (Univ. of California 1990) 173. V. is coy about naming the pagan goddess, whose festival continued to be celebrated even in the sixth century AD, cf. Joh. Lydus *de Mens.* 4.45.