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a cura di
MARCO BETTALLI ED ELENA FRANCHI



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L'“Erzspanngeschütz” dell'ingegnere tedesco Erwin Schramm (1856-1935): ricostruzione ipotetica del χαλκοτόνον (Chalkotonon, pezzo di artiglieria con molla di bronzo) di Filone Alessandrino. Vetrina con ricostruzioni di pezzi di artiglieria meccanica nel Museo del Castello di Saalburg in Assia (Germania). Particolare dalla Foto di SBA73 2007, su Flickr (Artilleria experimental romana a Saalburg). CC SA 2.0, Wikipedia Commons.

Lieutenant John Clarke: an eighteenth-century translator of Vegetius *

by MICHAEL KING MACDONA

Sometime between AD 383 and AD 450, Flavius Vegetius Renatus, generally believed to have been a high-ranking official in the later-Roman bureaucracy, submitted to his emperor a treatise arguing that the condition of the army of the day could be improved by reverting to the practices of the past. This work, now known by the alternative titles of *Epitoma rei militaris* or *De re militari*, is divided into four books dealing, respectively, with the recruitment and training of soldiers, the organization of the ancient Roman legion, field strategy and tactics, and siege and naval warfare. In some editions, the topics in Book 4 are separated, making five books in all. As a whole, Vegetius' treatise contains a wealth of practical advice for the commander of an army in the field and, as such, was to become the *vade mecum* for the medieval military leader. It has been described as 'the bible of warfare throughout the Middle Ages – the soldier's equivalent of the Rule of St. Benedict'.¹ It maintained its popularity through the Renaissance and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into the Age of Napoleon. During the time of the American Revolution, copies in the original Latin or in translation were to be found in the possession of British, American and French officers.²The

* This article was first published in *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research* 95 (2017), 119-140. Given its importance to studies of the influence of the classics on modern and contemporary military thought, it is republished here with the kind permission of the Author and the JSAHR.

- 1 Walter Goffart, 'The Date and Purpose of Vegetius' *De Re Militari*', *Traditio*, 33 (1977), pp. 275-306 at 275 = id. *Rome's Fall and After* (London, 1989), pp. 45-80 at 45.
- 2 Sandra L. Powers, 'Studying the Art of War: Military Books known to American Officers and their French Counterparts during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century', *The*

American Otho Holland Williams, who rose to the rank of brigadier-general in the Maryland Line of the Continental Army, made extensive notes from an English translation which, it may be inferred from the pattern of wear on the manuscript, he did not undertake as an academic exercise, destined to remain on the library shelf, but to provide himself with an aide-memoire to be carried on his campaigns.³

Vegetius' work was translated into all the major European languages, with translations into French being particularly numerous. By contrast, until comparatively recently the English reader has been ill-served. Between the invention of Gutenberg's printing press in the mid-fifteenth century and the 1990s, only two English translations were published: those of John Sadler in 1572 and of Lieutenant John Clarke in 1767.⁴ It was from John Clarke's translation that Otho Holland Williams made his notes.

John Sadler merits an entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*⁵ but little is generally known of John Clarke, other than his name and rank as they appear on the title page of his translation. His rank is given there as 'Lieutenant' but this is often expanded to 'Lieutenant of Marines'.⁶ As will be seen, this is factually correct but the reasons for the expansion almost certainly have their origins in the misapprehension that he is the John Clarke, 'First Lieutenant of Marines',

Journal of Military History, 70 (July 2006), pp. 781-814; Ira D. Gruber, *Books and the British Army in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

- 3 This manuscript is held in the Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection of the Society of the Cincinnati, Washington D.C. (Call No. MSS L1992.1.360.2 [Oversize]). I am grateful to Elizabeth Frenkel, Manager of Reader Services at the Society, for providing me with scans of it.
- 4 John Sadler (trans.), *The foure bookes of Flavius Vegetius Renatus, briefelye contayninge a plaine forme, and perfect knowledge of Martiall policye, feates of Chivalrie, and whatsoever pertayneth to warre* (London, 1572); John Clarke (trans.), *Military Institutions of Vegetius, in five books* (London, 1767); Leo F. Stelten (ed. & trans.), *Flavius Vegetius Renatus: Epitoma Rei Militaris* (New York, 1990); N. P. Milner (trans.), *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science* (Liverpool, 1993); *ibid.*, 2nd edn., 1996.
- 5 N. P. Milner, David Mateer, 'Sadler, John (b. 1512/13, d. in or after 1591)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24458>> [accessed 3 June 2016].
- 6 E.g., Powers, 'Studying the Art of War', p.813, where it is erroneously stated that this appears on the title page; more recently in Professor Everett L. Wheeler, review of *The De Re Militari of Vegetius: The Reception, Transmission and Legacy of a Roman Text in the Middle Ages*, (review no. 1293) <<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1293>> [accessed 1 September 2015].

who published an account of the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775.⁷ The first instance of this error known to the present writer occurs in a dictionary of literature published in 1859, in which both the translation of Vegetius and the account of Bunker Hill are attributed to ‘Clarke, John, Lieut. of Marines’.⁸ A similar attribution appears in the catalogues of the British Library and its predecessor, the Library of the British Museum, originating with the volume of the Supplement to the British Museum’s *Catalogue of Printed Books* covering ‘Chélarde – Cobwebs’, published in 1901, in which the translation of Vegetius, previously listed under ‘Vegetius Renatus (F.)’, re-appears under ‘Clarke (John) *Lieutenant of Marines*’. This has not necessarily gone unquestioned. William Abbatt, reprinting First Lieutenant Clarke’s *Impartial and Authentic Narrative* of Bunker Hill in 1909,⁹ comments in his Preface, ‘A translation of a military work – “Military Instructions [*sic*] of Vegetius,” 1767, from the Latin, is credited to “Lieutenant John Clarke of the Marines” and we may suppose the compiler of the British Museum catalogue had some reason for so crediting it’, which implies, perhaps, a less than whole-hearted acceptance of the attribution. At least one recent author has no such qualms; writing of warfare in the Age of the Enlightenment, he states, ‘There was much interest in the work of the late Roman authority Vegetius whose *Military Institutions* was translated and published in 1767 by John Clarke, a lieutenant of the marines, who later wrote a first-hand account of the battle of Bunker Hill.’¹⁰

Doubt is cast upon this confident assertion by the *Army List* for 1775, the year of Bunker Hill. Amongst the first lieutenants of Marines is found a John Clark, who may be taken to be the author of the *Narrative* of Bunker Hill, such variations in spelling not being uncommon in the *Army Lists*. However, at the end of the *List*, the publisher, John Millan, adds an advertisement for some of the books that he published, amongst which is ‘Vegetius’s Antient Art of War with Notes,

7 John Clarke, *An Impartial and Authentic Narrative of the Battle Fought on the 17th of June, 1775, between His Britannic Majesty’s Troops and the American Provincial Army, on Bunker’s Hill, near Charles Town, in New-England* (London, 1775).

8 S. Austin Allibone, *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature, and British and American Authors, Living and Deceased, from the Earliest Accounts to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (3 vols, Philadelphia, 1859), Vol. I, p. 390

9 William Abbatt (ed.), *The Magazine of History with Notes and Queries: Extra Number – No. 8* (New York, 1909), pp. 250-277.

10 Armstrong Starkey, *War in the Age of the Enlightenment, 1700-1789* (Westport, 2003), p. 60.

by Capt. Clarke.’ This is evidently John Clarke’s translation but, if there were any doubt, it is resolved by a similar advertisement in another of Millan’s publications that reads, ‘Vegetius’s Ancient Art of War, *translated* by Capt. Clarke’¹¹ (emphasis added). Similarly, the advertisement in the *Army List* for 1773 refers to ‘Vegetius’s antient Art of War, with Notes, by Capt. Clarke.’ Thus, when First Lieutenant Clarke published his account of Bunker Hill, John Clarke the translator had been a captain for at least two years.

The task, then, is to identify a John Clarke who was a lieutenant in 1767 but who had become a captain by 1773. The *Army List* for 1767 has six John Clarkes. One, a captain in the 46th Regiment of Foot, may be discounted immediately, as his captaincy dates from 1762. There is a lieutenant in the 59th Regiment of Foot, serving in America; two Marine lieutenants on half-pay, a first lieutenant in the 94th Company and a second lieutenant in the 42nd; and a quartermaster of the 60th Foot, also on half-pay. In addition, the half-pay list mentions an apothecary, formerly serving on the hospital staff in Germany. Returning to the 1773 *List*, one finds the lieutenant of the 59th, the quartermaster of the 60th and the apothecary still as they were but that the two marines have left the half-pay list. The captain in the 46th Foot no longer serving, there is only one captain named John Clarke in this *List*; he is in ‘A Corps of Foot serving in Africa’, his commission dating from 16 December 1771. The 1770 *List* has this officer serving in the same unit as lieutenant, his commission in that rank being dated 17 March 1769. This unit was also known as O’Hara’s Corps after its commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant Charles O’Hara, and Clarke’s entry into the Corps is gazetted as ‘*Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant O’Hara’s Corps . . . Lieutenant John Clarke, from Half-Pay, to be Lieutenant, vice John Archbold.*’¹² As there were no John Clarkes on the half-pay list other than those already mentioned, it follows that he must be one of the two marines. Which one is established by the *Army List* for 1771, in which a Second Lieutenant John Clarke appears on full pay, identifiable by the date of his commission – 30 March 1757 – as being the second lieutenant formerly on half-pay in the 42nd Company. This leaves the officer formerly on the Marine half-pay list as first lieutenant in the 94th Company as the John Clarke in O’Hara’s Corps and potentially the translator of Vegetius.

11 Thomas Simes, *The Military Guide for Young Officers*, (3rd edn., London, 1781).

12 *London Gazette*, No. 10932 (Tuesday April 18 – Saturday April 22, 1769).

For reasons that will become apparent, it is necessary to consider the subsequent career of this officer. O'Hara's Corps consisted of three companies and constituted the garrison of the province of Senegambia. It was created on or about 25 July 1766 by the amalgamation of three Independent Companies that had been raised on or about 2 August 1765 for service in Africa. These companies each comprised 70 officers and men – a captain, a lieutenant, an ensign, three sergeants, three corporals, two drums and 59 privates.¹³ The province itself was created in 1765 by combining the territories seized from the French following the capture of St Louis on the river Senegal in 1758 during the Seven Years War (with the exception of the island of Gorée ceded back to France by the Peace of Paris in 1763) with British possessions on the Gambia. It extended from Cape Blanco in the north to Cape Rouge in the south, a distance of some 575 miles. Charles O'Hara was its first governor.¹⁴

The west coast of Africa had long been known as 'the white man's grave' and the history of the African Corps (as it was also known) does nothing to dispel that reputation. It had the highest death rate amongst its officers of any unit in the eighteenth-century Regular army¹⁵ and the rank-and-file fared no better. In August 1767, O'Hara wrote to London reporting that a 'mortality' was raging with such violence amongst his troops that, of a complement of 300 men, scarcely 90 remained alive.¹⁶ Clarke owed his early progress within O'Hara's Corps to the death of fellow officers. He had joined the unit in March 1769 as a replacement for Lieutenant John Archbold who had been promoted captain following the death of Captain Francis McMillan and, although he would initially have been the most junior of the three lieutenants in the Corps, by the end of the year the two lieutenants above him, John Bridger and Charles Taylor, had died.¹⁷ Thus, within a year of joining the Corps, he had risen to be senior lieutenant. On 16 December 1771, he was promoted captain upon the death of Captain Philip Dixon but there-

13 J. A. Houlding, 'A Corps of Foot Serving in Africa', *JSAHR* 87 (2009), pp. 87-88.

14 For the general history of the province of Senegambia, see Eveline C. Martin, *The British West African Settlements, 1750-1821: A Study in Local Administration* (London, 1927), pp. 57-102, and J. M. Gray, *A History of The Gambia* (London, 1966), pp. 234-275.

15 Houlding, 'A Corps of Foot Serving in Africa', p. 88.

16 *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politicks, and Literature, for the Year 1767* (London, 1768), p. 125.

17 I am grateful to Dr J.A. Houlding for this information.

after his rate of progress slowed. He did not become senior captain until 1776 and that upon the retirement of the two captains above him.

O'Hara seems to have had a good deal of confidence in Clarke's abilities. When he was obliged to return to England on health grounds in 1774, he left Clarke in charge of the province¹⁸ and, in 1775, he sent him down to the Gambia to investigate a potential diplomatic incident occasioned by the high-handed actions of the lieutenant-governor, Matthias MacNamara, in seizing a French vessel and imprisoning its master and crew.¹⁹ O'Hara sent Clarke back to England with his report on this incident; he was not to return to the province for two years. O'Hara himself returned to England in November 1775, leaving Captain Joseph Wall in charge of his headquarters at Fort Lewis on the Senegal. Wall was junior to Clarke, a clear indication that Clarke was not in the province at that time.

The office of lieutenant-governor carried with it the expectation of succession to the governorship when it should fall vacant and Matthias MacNamara lost little time in consolidating his position. He initiated a series of complaints against O'Hara's conduct as governor and moved himself up to Fort Lewis, sending Wall to take his place at Fort James on the Gambia.

Relations between MacNamara and Wall soon deteriorated and, when Wall arrived unannounced at the former's quarters at Fort Lewis to challenge him about his treatment, MacNamara had him arrested for leaving his post without authority and held in close confinement for nine months, ostensibly to await court-martial. Wall later sued him for false imprisonment and MacNamara's actions were condemned by the judge, Lord Mansfield, who directed the jury that, independent of direct evidence of malice, the circumstances were sufficient for them to presume 'a bad malignant motive' in the defendant that would destroy any justification that he may originally have had. 'What apology', he asked, 'is there for denying him the use of the common air in a sultry climate, and shutting him up in a gloomy prison, where there was no possibility of bringing him to a trial for several months, there not being a sufficient number of officers to form a court-martial?'²⁰ The jury found

18 The National Archives (UK) (hereafter TNA), CO 267/16, O'Hara to Dartmouth, 10 February 1775.

19 Ibid., O'Hara to Dartmouth, 13 May 1775.

20 Quoted in *Sutton v. Johnstone*, *English Reports*, XCIX, 1215, at 1239.

for Wall and awarded him damages of £1,000 plus costs.²¹

The allegations against O'Hara were investigated by the Board of Trade and Plantations and found to be partially proved. However, action was recommended on an entirely separate charge, that finding obstructions in the way of carrying out his instructions he had failed to report the matter to the government. The recommendation was that he should be dismissed,²² although there is a suggestion that he was allowed to resign.²³ This does not seem to have had an overly adverse effect upon O'Hara's career. He went on to serve with distinction in America, where he had the invidious duty of deputizing for Lord Cornwallis in the surrender of the British forces at Yorktown, and in the war against Revolutionary France. He rose to the rank of full general and ended his career as the well-respected governor of Gibraltar, where he died in office in 1802.²⁴

With the removal of Charles O'Hara, a governor for Senegambia had to be found and, in mid-August 1776, the King made the necessary appointment.²⁵ This was reported in the press at the time²⁶ but not officially gazetted until 28 September.²⁷ It had become apparent that, whatever his expectations, Matthias MacNamara was not suitable for the post, and he was duly by-passed. The new governor was John Clarke.

It is sometimes stated that Clarke was the third governor of the province, after O'Hara and MacNamara,²⁸ but this is incorrect. Although MacNamara had, as lieutenant-governor, exercised the powers of governor after the departure of O'Hara in November 1775, he was never governor as such. The announcement

21 *Derby Mercury*, 10 – 17 December 1779.

22 See Martin, *British West African Settlements*, pp. 88-90.

23 *Caledonian Mercury*, 26 August 1776; *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1776* (4th edn., London, 1788), p. 219.

24 William D. Griffin, 'General Charles O'Hara', *The Irish Sword*, 10/40 (Summer, 1972), pp. 179-187.

25 'Journal, August 1776: Volume 83', in *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations, Volume 14, January 1776 – May 1782*, ed. K. H. Ledward (London, 1938), pp. 43-45 <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/jrnl-trade-plantations/vol14/pp43-45>> [accessed 22 September 2015].

26 *Caledonian Mercury*, 26 August 1776, quoting 'the London Papers, Aug. 22'; *The Gentleman's Magazine: For August, 1776*, p. 387.

27 *London Gazette*, No. 11704 (Tuesday September 24 – Saturday September 28, 1776).

28 E.g., Arnold Hughes & David Perfect, *Historical Dictionary of The Gambia* (4th edn., Lanham, Md., 2008), s.v. 'Senegambia, Province of'.

of Clarke's appointment in *The London Gazette* makes the position clear: 'The King has also been pleased to appoint John Clarke, Esq; to be Captain-General and Governor of the Province of Senegambia in Africa, in the Room of Charles O'Hara, Esq.' Following this appointment, Clarke was formally promoted to captain-commandant of the African Corps,²⁹ a rank subsequently to be held by the commanding officer of the Corps until it was disbanded on 29 March 1784.

When appointing Clarke as governor, the King had directed that the Board of Trade and Plantations should prepare and lay before the King in Council drafts of his commission and instructions, and the Board had resolved that these documents be prepared 'as soon as conveniently may be.'³⁰ Clarke's commission is dated 14 October 1776³¹ but his instructions took much longer to draw up and were not finalized until 22 January 1777.³² Clarke remained in England until this process was completed but, on 11 February, he attended before the Board of Trade and Plantations to take his leave and to receive final verbal instructions.³³ He arrived in Senegambia on 8 April 1777 and the extent of MacNamara's mismanagement of the province became immediately apparent. In a lengthy dispatch to the Board dated 26 July 1777, Clarke set out what he had found on his arrival and the steps he had taken to rectify the situation.³⁴ He wrote:

On my Arrival I found matters so circumstanced, that they could not have continued in the same Situation much longer without some fatal Consequence: Licentiousness and a fatal Relaxation of Discipline among the Soldiery – public Embezzlements openly encouraged – every necessary Institution, civil or military, neglected: – in Short, equal disorder in every Department, and the Natives themselves much altered for the worse by the bad Examples constantly before their Eyes.

Favouritism and nepotism were rife. A few days after his arrival, Clarke struck off over 20 offices created by MacNamara and nearly 100 daily rations issued by his orders. He noted that one of MacNamara's brothers alone held ten different

29 *London Gazette*, No. 11707 (Saturday October 5 – Tuesday October 8, 1776).

30 See fn. 25 above.

31 TNA, CO 268/2.

32 TNA, PC 1/11/35, Committee report on a Board of Trade representation about draft instructions for John Clarke, newly appointed Governor of Senegambia, 22 January 1777.

33 'Journal, February 1777: Volume 84', in Ledward, *Journals of the Board of Trade and Plantations*, pp. 67-77 <<http://british-history.ac.uk/jrnl-trade-plantations/vol14/pp67-77>> [accessed 22 September 2015].

34 TNA, CO 268/4, Clarke to [Germain], 26 July 1777.

employments in the province.

His first steps to remedy the evils that he found were to create a system of courts, a requirement of the constitution of the province that had been neglected by O'Hara throughout his governorship. He also set up an enquiry into MacNamara's allegations against Joseph Wall in the council of the province, which after a lengthy series of hearings, dismissed all charges.³⁵ Immediately upon the opening of the courts, a number of suits against MacNamara were commenced for 'Seizures of Property, Acts of Violence, Debts, &c.' and, about the same time, a series of charges against him were exhibited before the council upon the hearing of which 'a very extraordinary Scene of Fraud, Embezzlement & Perjury came to light.'³⁶ A charge of subornation of perjury was preferred against MacNamara and he was sent to England for trial.

On 12 September 1777, Clarke wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord George Germain, giving his assessment of the future and, more obliquely, the past of the province:

I cannot but think the situation of the Province retrievable notwithstanding the severe Shocks it has received within these two years past by the Misconduct of the Lieut: Governor . . .

It appears but reasonable to consider this Province still in a State of an infant Colony, tho' eleven or twelve years since its Erection into that form. How far it may be doubted, whether under such a defective & imperfect civil Establishment & other disadvantages, it has had a fair Chance I submit entirely to your Lordship's better Judgement.³⁷

Whether, with time and favourable circumstances, Clarke's ambitions for the province could have been realized must remain a matter for speculation. In the event, neither time nor circumstances were on his side. The war in America distracted attention from the requirements of Senegambia and communication with England was disrupted by the repeated interception of dispatches by the French. In October 1778, Germain wrote to Clarke that his latest dispatches had been captured and that none had been received since September the previous year.³⁸ In addition, Clarke's health was deteriorating under the burdens of his

35 See Gray, *History of The Gambia*, pp.255-260.

36 See fn. 34 above.

37 TNA, CO 268/4, Clarke to Germain, 12 September 1777.

38 TNA, CO 267/17, Germain to Clarke, 10 October 1778.

office. He expressed his frustration in a letter of 16 July 1778 to Robert Browne, the contractor for the Senegal garrisons, in which he complained of ‘excessive & constant fatigue’ due to his having to undertake all the business in the province himself without the support to which he was entitled under the constitution. He saw himself as ‘being responsible for everything without the means of carrying on my duty’ and confided that ‘I begin seriously to think of risking my character and reputation not much longer’.³⁹ Resignation, however, was an option that was to be denied him.

At the beginning of August 1778, a virulent disease struck the island of St Lewis and persisted until mid-September.⁴⁰ This and its subsequent complications took their toll of both the European and native populations but the effects fell disproportionately upon the Europeans, nearly two-thirds of whom died. Never numerous in the first place, by the end of January 1779 the total of white people had been reduced from 92 to 33⁴¹ and, when the French recaptured the island on 30 January, the garrison stood at a mere 20 men, eight of whom were sick in the hospital.⁴² John Peter Schotte, the Surgeon-in-Chief of the garrison named the disease ‘*synochus atrabiliosa*’⁴³ but his description of the symptoms identify it as yellow fever.⁴⁴ On 1 September 1778, Clarke’s promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel in Africa only was gazetted⁴⁵ but, if he had advance notice of his elevation, he did not have long to enjoy it. He contracted the disease, apparently one of the last to do so, and died on 18 September.⁴⁶ He was 42 years of age.

39 Quoted in TNA, CO 268/4, Letter of Robert Browne, 27 November 1778.

40 J. P. Schotte & Joseph Banks, ‘Journal of the weather at Senegambia, during the prevalence of a very fatal putrid disorder, with remarks on that country’, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 70 (1780), pp. 478-506 at 486-489 = J. P. Schotte, *A Treatise on the Synochus Atrabiliosa* (London, 1782), pp. 3-34 at 12-16; Schotte, *A Treatise on the Synochus Atrabiliosa*, p. 40.

41 Schotte, *A Treatise on the Synochus Atrabiliosa*, p. 40.

42 TNA, CO 267/18, Schotte to Germain, 29 March 1779.

43 Schotte, *A Treatise on the Synochus Atrabiliosa*, p. 72.

44 Yellow Fever Commission (West Africa), *Second Report* (London, 1914), pp.8-13; Henry Rose Carter, *Yellow Fever: An Epidemiological and Historical Study of Its Place of Origin* (Baltimore, 1931), pp. 257-261; Jari Vainio & Felicity Cutts, *Yellow fever* (Geneva, 1998), p. 16.

45 *London Gazette*, No. 11905 (Saturday August 29 – Tuesday September 1, 1778).

46 Schotte & Banks, ‘Journal of the weather at Senegambia’, p. 489 = Schotte, *A Treatise on the Synochus Atrabiliosa*, p. 15; TNA, CO 267/18, ‘A List of Officers, Soldiers &c. that died at Senegal 1778 with the dates of the days they died’. This List has been cited as authority

The reader may ask if there is evidence, other than the coincidences of name and rank, to identify this officer as the translator of Vegetius. Fortunately, there is. In 1791, a Mrs Clarke donated to Jesus College, Cambridge, a collection of books that had belonged to her son, John.⁴⁷ These are mostly on military matters, although works by some classical authors are included. Accompanying the collection is a hand-written catalogue of books in which the compiler had marked with an asterisk those that were in his possession. Each book in the collection is inscribed with John Clarke's name, signed or neatly printed, and also, with very few exceptions, with the date or at least the year of acquisition. There is a long-standing tradition in Jesus College that the owner of these books had been a Colonel John Clarke, governor of Senegambia.⁴⁸ Comparison of the signatures and handwriting in Clarke's original dispatches from Senegambia held in the United Kingdom National Archives⁴⁹ with the signatures in those books that have been signed and the handwriting in the catalogue and in annotations that appear in some of the books seems to confirm this. Nine years after Mrs Clarke's donation, a significant addition was made to the collection: the proof copy of Clarke's translation of Vegetius. This bears the inscription, 'Presented to the Library of Jesus College Camb: by Frances Clarke the Translators sister. 1800.' In 1802, the heraldic painter, Thomas Sharpe, prepared a genealogical roll for Anthony Clarke of the City of London, containing his family tree and that of his wife, Matilda Hill Clarke, née Macaree. This highly decorated piece was sold at Christie's on 12 November 2007 and is now in the possession of a private collector in the United States.⁵⁰ Examination of the roll reveals that Anthony Clarke was a

for John Clarke having died on 18 August 1778 (Martin, *British West African Settlements*, p.98; Gray, *History of The Gambia*, p. 267) and the date has entered the literature. Unfortunately, this is incorrect.

47 I am grateful to Mrs Chris Barker, Deputy Librarian at Jesus College, for allowing me access to this collection.

48 Charles Henry Cooper, *Memorials of Cambridge* (2 vols, Cambridge, 1860), Vol. I, p. 399; L. S. A. Herford, 'Military Lore in an Old College Library', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 279 (July – Dec. 1895), pp. 283-298 at 285; Frances Willmoth, *Arte of Warre: Military books from the collection of John Clarke (d. 1778)*, [p. 1] – catalogue to an exhibition of Clarke's books held in 1999 <http://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/library/directory/jesus_arte_of_warre.pdf> [accessed 30 September 2015].

49 TNA, CO 267/3.

50 I am particularly grateful to Jay S. Walker, the present owner of the roll, for providing me with images of it and to Dr Phillip Pirages for putting me in touch with him. This document

younger brother of John and Frances Clarke. John Clarke's entry in the family tree reads, 'John Clarke Esq^{re} eldest Son & Heir born 1736 Governor of Senegambia died & was buried there Sep. 1778.' However, in addition to the normal entries to be expected of a family tree, the roll includes four panels containing biographical details of prominent members of the two families. One of these relates to John Clarke. After reciting his lieutenancy in the Marines, his captaincy in the Army and his governorship of Senegambia, it continues, 'His various Works on Military Tacticks and his Translation of Vegetius will be lasting Monuments of his Genius as an Author'. The identification of Lieutenant John Clarke, the translator of Vegetius, as the Marine officer who became governor of Senegambia seems assured. The author of the account of the battle of Bunker Hill was court-martialled for drunkenness and other offences on 7 June 1775 and sentenced to be dismissed the service.⁵¹ He never attained the rank of captain.

John Clarke, the subject of this study, was born in Eastbourne, Sussex in the early part of 1736, probably in late-May, the first of the eleven children of the Reverend John Clarke and his wife Elizabeth, née Grestock. He was baptized in St Mary's Church, Eastbourne on 3 June 1736,⁵² not quite 22 years after his mother had been baptized in the same church.⁵³ According to Anthony Clarke's genealogical roll, his father had also been born in Eastbourne in 1713 but, if so, he was not baptized in St. Mary's. Little can be said of Clarke's father's side of the family, save that he had an uncle, James Clarke, who was also in the Church. His mother's side, however, was of some standing. His grandfather, Richard Grestock, was a Freeman of the City of London and of the Company of Feltmakers and had a substantial landholding in east Sussex. His grandmother, also Elizabeth Grestock, was the daughter of John Williams, late Bishop of Chichester and previously chaplain-in-ordinary to William III.⁵⁴ His mother's marriage settlement, execut-

has been invaluable to this study, not only for the information that it contains but also for the lines of enquiry that it opens up.

51 Allen French, 'John Clarke: Historian of Bunker Hill', *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Vol. 32: Transactions 1933-1937*, pp. 363-373. I am indebted to Dr Adam Parr for drawing this article to my attention.

52 *Eastbourne Baptisms. St. Mary's Parish Church, Eastbourne, Sussex. 1558-1837. Part 1: A to D* (Eastbourne, 1992), p. 47.

53 *Eastbourne Baptisms. St. Mary's Parish Church, Eastbourne, Sussex. 1558-1837. Part 2: E to K* (Eastbourne, 1992), p. 26.

54 J. S. Chamberlain, 'Williams, John (1633x6-1709)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Bio-*

ed by his then widowed grandmother by two deeds dated respectively 5 and 6 August 1735, comprised some 21 properties.⁵⁵

The family settled in Twickenham in Middlesex, where at least seven of the children were baptized in the Church of St Mary the Virgin. John Clarke senior seems to have been the curate in charge of the Twickenham Chapel in Montpelier Row, a chapel of ease for the Church of St Mary the Virgin, in the 1740s and 1750s⁵⁶ and ran a school, probably in nearby Isleworth, apparently in a property belonging to his mother-in-law. Despite the wealth of Elizabeth Clarke's parents and the generosity of her marriage settlement, there is evidence that the family had financial difficulties. In 1740, parts of the estate in the settlement were mortgaged and, in 1743, the same properties were re-mortgaged to a different mortgagee, the earlier mortgages being discharged. In 1765, the later mortgagee began foreclosure proceedings on the grounds that the interest on the loans had not been paid and, in 1766, John and Elizabeth Clarke surrendered the properties to a third party who paid off the mortgages. In 1773, they sold a further property to the same third party. After the deaths of their parents in 1791, the surviving children were to contend that these disposals were contrary to the terms of the marriage settlement.⁵⁷In her Will dated 26 March 1756,⁵⁸Elizabeth Grestock mentions certain sums of money that her daughter had had from her and instructs her executor not to require them to be repaid. The Will also provides evidence of other problems within the marriage. In it, Elizabeth Grestock refers to her son-in-law 'absenting himself from his family', whereupon she took over the management of his school. She does not say when this event took place but the Will makes it clear that she was still running the school at that time. Evidently there was a subsequent reconciliation as the couple's youngest daughter, Sophia, was born in 1759 but, nevertheless, it appears that they were living apart when John Clarke senior died on 13 February 1791. On 1 September 1791, Elizabeth Clarke execut-

graphy (Oxford, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29516>> [accessed 3 June 2016].

55 East Sussex Record Office, SAS/G34/118, Attested copy marriage settlement (lease and release).

56 R. S. Cobbett, *Memorials of Twickenham: Parochial and Topographical* (London, 1872), p. 143.

57 Details of these transactions are to be found in bundles of title deeds held in the East Sussex Records Office under references GIL/1/25/1-96 and GIL/1/25/97-115.

58 TNA, Prob 11/824/423, Will of Elizabeth Grestock, Widow of Heston, Middlesex.

ed a Deed of Appointment dealing with the properties in the marriage settlement in which she is described as being of Tooting in Surrey but previously of Bartlow in Cambridgeshire;⁵⁹ at the time of his death, her husband seems to have been living in Camberwell, where he was buried in St Giles Church on 19 February. In their Wills, both Elizabeth and Sophia Clarke gave legacies to the Reverend James Clarke and, from the favourable terms of the latter, it may be inferred that he had come forward to assist his sister-in-law when his brother proved wanting. All does not seem to have been well with this family and these circumstances may have had a bearing upon John Clarke junior's career, particularly his entry into the Marines and his taking of a commission in O'Hara's Corps, neither of which would seem to be natural choices for the educated son of a clergyman.

As to Clarke's education, there is not much that can be said. It evidently left him with a talent for languages. Of the 130 volumes examined by the present writer in the Old Library at Jesus College, Cambridge, 46 were in Latin (five more than in English), 28 in French, five in Italian and one in Spanish. Nine volumes were in Greek but, as all these were in editions that included Latin translations, it is not entirely clear how accomplished he was in that language. However, it has been noted that 'his Greek script appears attractive and fluent',⁶⁰ so it may be assumed that he was reasonably competent in Greek as well. This suggests that he had at least a grammar school education. Despite his mother's gift of his books to Jesus College, he did not attend that or any other Cambridge college. A John Clarke was admitted as a sizar to Trinity College Dublin on 15 June 1754⁶¹ and the editors of *Alumni Dublinenses* note that sizars were the sons of poor parents, frequently the clergy.⁶² However, nothing more is known of this student and the name is too common for it to be said with any degree of certainty that he is the same as the John Clarke whose life is under consideration here.

Why his mother should have given his books to Jesus College is also uncertain.

59 East Sussex Record Office, SAS/G34/119, Copy deed of appointment.

60 Adam Parr, 'John Clarke's *Military Institutions of Vegetius* and Joseph Amiot's *Art Militaire des Chinois*: translating classical military theory in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War' (Ph.D. thesis, University College London, 2016), p. 113. I am grateful to Dr Parr for letting me have a copy of his thesis.

61 George Dames Burtchaell & Thomas Ulich Sadleir, *Alumni Dublinenses* (Dublin, 1935), p. 153.

62 Ibid. p. ix.

It has been suggested that he was a relative of someone with college connections (perhaps of E. D. Clarke, the explorer and Professor of Minerology)⁶³but there does not seem to be direct evidence of any such relationship. The roots of her decision may lie in her sojourn at Bartlow. The adjoining parish, across the county border in Essex, is Hadstock, the two villages being only a couple of miles apart. Between 1786 and 1838, the rector of Hadstock was the Reverend John Addison Carr, described by her daughter Sophia in her Will as ‘our dear Friend’.⁶⁴John Addison Carr was a graduate of Jesus College (B.A. 1783, M.A. 1786).⁶⁵Perhaps, when she was seeking a suitable repository for her son’s books, Mrs Clarke sought the advice of her friends and Carr suggested that his old college might be interested.

With a sound education in Latin and probably Greek, it is tempting to think that there was, at some time, the idea that Clarke might follow his father, uncle and great-grandfather into the Church. If so, his brothers Anthony, George, Richard and Charles do not seem to have had a similar calling; Anthony became a stockbroker, George a surgeon, and Richard and Charles appear to have had commercial interests in the West and East Indies respectively. If such an ambition were entertained for John Clarke, it was brought to nothing when he was commissioned in the Marines as a Second Lieutenant on 14 January 1759. Before 1755, regiments of marines had been raised at the beginning of wars and disbanded at the end. In that year, the Corps of Marines was founded on a more permanent basis with an establishment of 50 companies (rising to 135 by the end of the Seven Years War) divided into three divisions, centred on the naval dockyards of Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham. Clarke was assigned to the 71st Company, Chatham Division.⁶⁶That he chose to enter the Marines may have been the result of parental disapproval of his military ambitions or the financial constraints upon the family. Unlike in the Army, commissions in the Marines were not purchased, so his entry into that branch of the service may have been because his father would not or could not purchase for him a commission in the Army.

63 Willmoth, *Arte of Warre*, [p. 1].

64 TNA, Prob 11/1325/156, Will of Sophia Clarke, Spinster of Upper Tooting, Surrey.

65 *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, NS 10 (July-December 1838), p. 336

66 TNA, ADM 192/1, A List of the General and Field Officers, Captains, and Subaltern Officers, of His Majesty’s Marine Forces, 5 July 1760.

Details of his service during the Seven Years War have so far eluded the writer. All that can be said at the moment is that he was promoted to First Lieutenant on 25 January 1761 and re-assigned to the 94th Company, also in the Chatham Division. He was reduced on to half-pay on 1 May 1763 at the end of the War.⁶⁷In the list of Marine officers for that year⁶⁸ annotated with assessments of the qualities of officers placed on half-pay, Clarke is stated to be ‘a very good young man’⁶⁹ and, in a similarly annotated list for 1764, he is assessed as ‘good’.⁷⁰It may be assumed that his war service had not been without distinction.

He seems to have begun acquiring books on military matters almost immediately after the War, albeit at first in a relatively modest manner. On 1 October 1763, he purchased a three volume work by Allain Mannesson Mallet⁷¹ and the following year acquired a further two French publications. His Vegetian studies appear to have started in 1765. On 6 April that year, he purchased the French translation of Vegetius published anonymously by Claude-Guillaume Bourdon de Sigrais in 1743, although his was a later edition.⁷²It is possible that he was aware of John Sadler’s translation at this time; in the preface to his own translation, he says that he has seen it and comments, ‘The Author has often mistaken the Original, and his Work has little Value but that of Antiquity.’⁷³It is tempting to think that his acquisition of the French translation sparked the realisation that the publication of an edition in English was long overdue. In any event, two days later, on 8 April 1765, he bought an edition in Latin⁷⁴ and a copy of Stewechius’ commentary on the text.⁷⁵His translation was published in early 1767; his Preface is dated January 1767 and the work was favourably reviewed in *The Monthly Review* for May that

67 TNA, ADM 118/236, A List of the General and Field Officers, Captains, and Subaltern Officers, of His Majesty’s Marine Forces, 1 July 1764.

68 TNA, ADM 118/234, A List of the General and Field Officers, Captains, and Subaltern Officers, of His Majesty’s Marine Forces, 1 May 1763. (With manuscript annotations.)

69 I am grateful to Duncan Sutton and Dr J.A. Houlding for alerting me to this reference.

70 See fn 67 above.

71 A. M. Mallet, *Les Travaux de Mars ou l’Art de la Guerre*, 3 vols. (The Hague, 1696).

72 [C. G. Bourdon de Sigrais], *Institutions Militaires de Végèce* (Paris, 1759).

73 Clarke, *Military Institutions of Vegetius*, Preface, p. xvii.

74 Petrus Scriverius (ed.), *Fl. Vegetius Renatus et alii Scriptores Antiqui de Re Militari* (Wesel, 1670).

75 Godescalcus Stewechius, *Commentarius ad Flavi Vegati Renati Libros de Re Militari* (Wesel, 1670).

year.⁷⁶The opening paragraph of this review makes amusing reading:

As the life of a military man is, in time of war, the most active, so in these piping times of peace, it affords most leisure for contemplation and study. But unhappily for themselves, our young heroes are too generally honoured with a sword and cockade before they have acquired sufficient rudiments of classical erudition to enable them to read the ancients, or to form a taste for polite literature. Hence they are naturally induced to have recourse to dissipation and sensual pleasures, and they remain totally ignorant even of the names of the authors who have written on the art of war. Lieutenant Clarke appears, from this performance, to be a gentleman of a different cast.

The review concludes, ‘In short, the whole is a neat performance, and such as might be expected from a gentleman, a soldier, and a scholar.’

Clarke’s interest in Vegetius did not cease with the publication of his translation. He acquired further copies in 1767 (on 1 July, after the appearance of his translation), 1771 and 1776 (an Italian translation), although the first two of these include works by other classical authors, so his attention may have been drawn more towards those. This cannot be said, however, of his purchase, in 1773, of Sadler’s translation. Despite his critical comments about it, he evidently could not resist the temptation of having a copy of his own.

It has been suggested that Clarke was a member of the circle of the poet, Thomas Gray. On 20 March 1770, Gray wrote to his friend, the Reverend Norton Nicholls, saying, ‘do not believe, that I am cold to M^r Cl:^s translation: on the contrary I long to see it’⁷⁷ and, more directly, on 4 April 1770, ‘Where is Capt: Clarke’s Translation?’⁷⁸The successive editors of Gray’s correspondence assume this to refer to John Clarke’s translation of Vegetius. This may be so although, if it is, Gray has mistaken Clarke’s rank at the time. However, Toynbee and Whibley go further and assert that Clarke was the ‘Mr. Clarke’ referred to in a letter from Gray to Nicholls of 28 June 1771 as having visited him the previous

⁷⁶ *The Monthly Review or Literary Journal*, 36 (1767), pp. 393-395.

⁷⁷ John Mitford (ed.), *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray and the Rev. Norton Nicholls* (London, 1843), p. 103; Duncan C. Tovey (ed.), *The Letters of Thomas Gray*, 3 vols. (London, 1912), Vol. III, pp. 267-268; Paget Toynbee & Leonard Whibley (eds.), *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1935; 2nd edn., 1971), Vol. III, p.1113.

⁷⁸ Mitford, *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, p.105; Tovey, *The Letters of Thomas Gray*, Vol. III, p.270; Toynbee & Whibley, *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, Vol. III, p. 1115.

day⁷⁹ and this has been taken up by Gray's biographers.⁸⁰This visit was a month before Gray's death and the editors quote a letter that this Mr Clarke wrote to another of the circle, the Reverend William Johnson Temple, in which he described how affected he had been by his visit. Letters from this Clarke to Temple, including that referring to the visit to Gray, are held in two collections at Yale University.⁸¹Examination of these letters reveals that they were written, not by John Clarke, but by Thomas Clarke who, at the time of his visit to Gray, was a lieutenant in the 3rd (or the Kings Own) Regiment of Dragoons and who, when Clarke's translation was published, was a cornet in the same regiment. He had been a contemporary of Temple's at Trinity Hall, Cambridge.

This officer has himself been confused with another Thomas Clarke who served in the Coldstream Guards.⁸²Thomas Clarke the Dragoon left the Army in 1779 with the rank of major and retired to his estate in Mellis, Suffolk. He died in 1806.⁸³Thomas Clarke of the 2nd Foot Guards remained in the Army, rose to the rank of full general and died on 26 October 1799, as Colonel of the 30th Regiment of Foot.⁸⁴

John Clarke's motive for amassing his collection of military books must remain a matter of surmise. It has been plausibly suggested that he believed that a professional soldier required an education in ancient and modern military theory and that that demanded the possession of an appropriate library.⁸⁵It may also be recalled, however, that the biographical note in Anthony Clarke's genealogical roll mentions his authorship of 'various Works on Military Tacticks'. If he saw for himself a career in writing on military topics, it is likely that he would have

79 Toynbee & Whibley, *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, Vol. III, p.1191, referring to their note to Letter 513 in which they state Clarke to be of a circle of Gray's friends.

80 R. W. Ketton-Cremer, *Thomas Gray: A Biography* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 265; Robert L. Mack, *Thomas Gray: A Life* (New Haven, 2000), p.678, where he is referred to as 'a lieutenant in the royal navy'.

81 I am grateful to the Beineke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and the Lewis Walpole Library for supplying me with scans of these letters.

82 J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses, Pt 2, Vol. 2* (Cambridge, 1944), p. 55; Thomas Crawford, *The Correspondence of James Boswell and William Johnson Temple, 1756-1795: Vol 1, 1756-1777* (Edinburgh, 1997), p. 89.

83 S. H. A. Hervey, *Biographical List of Boys Educated at King Edward VI Free Grammar School, Bury St. Edmunds. From 1550 to 1900* (Bury St. Edmunds, 1908), p. 74.

84 *The Gentleman's Magazine, November 1799*, p. 996.

85 Parr, 'John Clarke's *Military Institutions of Vegetius*', p. 189.

regarded an extensive library, upon which he could draw whenever occasion demanded, as an essential requirement for such an ambition. The two ideas are not incompatible.

The pattern of his acquisition of books does, however, have a bearing upon his military career after the publication of his translation. Analysis of the dates and years of purchase shows that approximately 65 per cent of his collection was acquired after his commissioning into O'Hara's Corps and that books were bought in every subsequent year apart from 1774, when he had charge of Senegambia in the absence of Charles O'Hara, and the years of his own governorship (other than two presumably purchased in the early weeks of 1777, before his departure for the province). The dates of purchase, where we have them, or the quantity of books bought in a particular year indicate that in any year he spent several weeks, if not months, out of the province. It is not clear what duties he was fulfilling during these periods of absence but one possibility is that he was engaged in recruiting. The rate of attrition of the garrison previously mentioned meant that there would have been a constant need for new recruits. Indeed, the need was such that the traditional methods of recruitment proved inadequate and the authorities had recourse to the expedient of enlisting convicted criminals and military delinquents whose sentences were remitted on condition that they served in Africa.⁸⁶ Perhaps part of Clarke's responsibilities lay in assessing the suitability of such potential recruits.

If the garrison of Senegambia was made up of a motley collection of conventionally recruited soldiers and reprieved criminals, the officers also were often of poor quality. In January 1779, Edward Morse, the Chief Justice of the province, wrote to Lord George Germain with suggestions for its regulation and improvement.⁸⁷ In it, he lamented that, 'it is well known that the African Corps has always been disregarded, few Gentlemen of Education have accepted Commissions in it.' Plainly, such a criticism could not be levelled at John Clarke but one is obliged to wonder why a man of his accomplishments might have wished to join such a unit in so inhospitable a part of the world. Certainty is impossible but it may be speculated that, if his father was financially unable to provide adequately for his

⁸⁶ Emma Christopher, *A Merciless Place: The Lost Story of Britain's Convict Disaster in Africa* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 88-89, 92-93.

⁸⁷ TNA, CO 267/18, Morse to Germain, 20 January 1779.

family, Clarke may have felt an obligation, as the eldest son, to accept any post that would enable him to help support his mother and siblings. Fortunately, he was not entirely deprived of intellectual company. It may have come as some relief to him to find, upon his arrival in the province as governor, that one of his officers was Ensign James Benson Tuthill. Tuthill had been commissioned in the African Corps on 16 August 1775 and was probably similarly educated. Clarke may have felt some affinity with him as Tuthill's father, Michael Hugh Tuthill, and his brother, Hugh Tuthill, were both clergymen and graduates of Trinity College Dublin.⁸⁸In his turn, Tuthill appointed Clarke as an alternative executor of his Will, should the first-named executor, his wife Grace (who was with him at Fort Lewis), die before arriving in Europe.⁸⁹Tuthill was himself a victim of the outbreak of yellow fever that claimed the life of Clarke and died on 27 August 1778.⁹⁰In his last weeks, Clarke dined exclusively with Dr Schotte, another educated man who originally wrote, and contemplated publishing, his treatise on the disease in Latin.⁹¹It was in 1848 that it was first suggested that yellow fever might be mosquito-borne but the connection was not conclusively proved until 1900.⁹²Schotte believed the disease to be contagious and feared that, as he was continually among the sick in the hospital and on the island, he may have conveyed it to Clarke on his clothing.⁹³He himself suffered a mild attack, which he believed that he caught from Clarke, having exposed himself too closely to Clarke's breath the day before he died. Clarke was speaking 'very inarticulately, and in a low tone' and Schotte was obliged to bring his face very close in order to understand what he was saying.⁹⁴Unfortunately, Clarke's last words are not recorded.

Of the officers whom he considered to be unsatisfactory, Morse singled out for especial mention Ensign George Fall, who took over command of Fort Lewis

88 Burtchaell & Sadleir, *Alumni Dublinenses*, p. 828.

89 TNA, PROB 11/1055/189, Will of James Benson Tuthill, of His Majesty's African Corps of Fort Louis Senegambia, Senegal.

90 TNA, CO 267/18, 'A List of Officers, Soldiers &c. that died at Senegal 1778 with the dates of the days they died'.

91 Schotte, *A Treatise on the Synochus Atrabiliosa*, p. 38.

92 Vainio & Cutts, *Yellow fever*, pp. 16-17.

93 Schotte & Banks, 'Journal of the weather at Senegambia', p. 489 = Schotte, *A Treatise on the Synochus Atrabiliosa*, p. 15.

94 Schotte, *A Treatise on the Synochus Atrabiliosa*, p. 156.

on the death of John Clarke. According to Morse, Fall had risen from the ranks, having originally been a private in the 17th Foot in Jamaica, and was ‘a very illiterate, Ignorant man’.⁹⁵Morse was probably in England when he made his recommendations and thus unaware of the situation in Senegambia at the time but his reservations about Fall seem to have been amply justified. Upon being notified of Clarke’s death, Lieutenant William Lacy, who commanded the garrison of Fort James on the Gambia and, as the senior officer in the province, acted as *de facto* governor, ordered Fall to hand over his command to Lieutenant Gilbert Stanton of the Artillery. Fall refused to comply and, despite further orders to the same effect, maintained his obduracy. There followed a complete breakdown of discipline. On 26 January 1779, when Fall left the fort for discussions with the mayor of the town, the guard locked him out and released two soldiers imprisoned by Fall for theft. For reasons that are unexplained, soldiers on the walls of the fort then fired on the natives outside. At this point, Lieutenant Stanton entered the fort and assumed the command but was powerless to prevent what ensued. The infuriated natives surrounded the fort and began firing upon it, obliging the garrison to man the walls and return fire. Stanton sent Dr Schotte to inform the natives that he was now in command of the fort and that, if they would cease their attacks, the soldiers would stop firing on them. The natives, however, were so infuriated as to be beyond listening to reason and Schotte barely escaped with his life. Further attacks were made during the night and, at one point, the natives forced entry into the fort and were driven off with grapeshot. There were casualties on both sides and, after attempts had been made on the following day to calm the situation, further internecine bloodshed was prevented by the timely arrival of the French, who recaptured the island with little difficulty.⁹⁶Fall’s insubordination can have played no small part in this debacle.

There is nothing to suggest that Clarke himself was anything other than a competent officer but one may suspect that he was appointed governor as much for his diplomatic and administrative skills as for his abilities as a soldier. Early in his governorship, as he reported in his dispatch of 26 July 1777, he established a *modus vivendi* with the then French governor of Gorée, M. Le Brasseur, ‘whom I know to possess a great desire of cultivating a friendly Correspondence with

95 TNA, CO 267/20, Morse to Townshend, 12 August 1782.

96 TNA, CO 267/18, Schotte to Germain, 29 March 1779.

Us',⁹⁷ going on to say, 'I have the pleasure to assure your Lordship that the greatest Harmony is reestablished [*sic*] between Us & the French, & indeed between all our Neighbours.' The efficient administration of the province, however, presented greater challenges.

When writing to London on 24 November 1778 to report the deaths at Senegal, including that of Clarke, Lieutenant Lacy gave a blunt assessment of the condition of the province, especially in relation to the problems associated with his command of Fort James.⁹⁸ The fort was poorly provisioned and Lacy had recently instructed the victualling agent for the garrison to purchase the cargo of a ship, the owner of which had died on the river, in order to supply his men. He commented, 'During the time the late Gov^r Clarke commanded not one single Article of any kind of merchandise was sent here'. This was not so much a criticism of Clarke, whom he had earlier described as 'our late worthy Governor', as a reflection of the inadequate arrangements made for the support of the province and the sheer impracticality of maintaining communications between two centres of command some 200 miles apart, with the then hostile French presence on Gorée intervening. Lacy had been in Senegambia for nearly four years, having previously served in the 36th Foot in Jamaica, and during that time had had command of Fort James on three occasions. He had, therefore, served under O'Hara, MacNamara and Clarke and 'never knew His Majesty's gracious Intention fulfilled with respect to the compliance of the Articles contained in the Senegambia Contract for maintaining his Subjects in this truly inhospitable Clime.' In the seven months since his latest arrival at the fort from Senegal, 'for the Maintenance of seventy persons per day, not including many other Casualties totally unprovided for, [I] have only received the Quantity of Provisions as set forth in the Agent Victualler's Return', to which he referred. The implication is that this provision was quite insufficient. He went on to observe that, 'The Island of Goree with what the French call its Dependencies lying directly between Senegal & Gambia are very great Obstructions.' It had been a major blunder to cede Gorée back to the French at the end of the Seven Years War and Clarke himself had commented in his dispatch of 12 September 1777⁹⁹ that 'Gorée by its natural situation is such a thorn in our

97 See fn. 34 above.

98 TNA, CO 268/4, Lacy to Germain, 24 November 1778.

99 See fn. 37 above.

side' and was of such consequence that 'in case of any future misunderstanding with France, the only way to save this Province would be to take Gorée immediately.' After Clarke's death, the sloop sent to collect Lacy and transport him from Gambia to Senegal had been taken by the French and no less than three different packets that he had attempted to send to Senegal overland had been intercepted. The list of deaths at Senegal, including that of Clarke two months previously, had only reached him a few days before the date of his writing to London, having apparently been dispatched on or shortly after 12 October 1778.

Similar deficiencies of supply evidently afflicted Fort Lewis. In his letter to Robert Browne previously cited,¹⁰⁰ Clarke wrote, 'We are in great want of cloathing and Necessaries & Goods for Duties. Recruitment also be had [*sic*], & large supply of Provisions soon or we shall be at the mercy of the Natives, & our neighbours of course. I have wrote to Lord Geo. Germain about all these things.' Such difficulties may well have been preying on Clarke's mind when he stated that he was minded not to risk his character and reputation much longer. He perhaps saw himself as in danger of being made a scapegoat for the failings of others or he may have been conscious that circumstances were preventing him from meeting the high standards that he had set himself. The letter written to him by Lord Germain in October 1778, in which it was stated that merchants who had arrived safely with the Senegal fleet had reported favourably on the trade of the province and its condition generally,¹⁰¹ was sent too late to bring him any comfort.

What seems beyond doubt is that Clarke was a conscientious and hard-working administrator who put his sense of duty before his own welfare. In his letter to Browne, he stated, 'All public business has been conducted since my arrival with all possible economy and fidelity, but attention to all the different branches has harassed me beyond Measure.' Yet, despite his having toyed with the notion of resignation, his sense of duty soon re-asserted itself; he added, 'But whatever I think my duty I will do & nothing shall deter me from.' The biographical note in Anthony Clarke's genealogical roll makes the point even more forcefully: 'The duties of the arduous station which he filled on the Coast of Africa were discharged with the strictest honour and the most zealous attention to the Interests of his Majesty's Government as well as to the welfare of the Colony over which

¹⁰⁰ See fn. 39 above.

¹⁰¹ See fn. 38 above.

he presided’, adding the bitter comment, ‘to that zealous attention he fell a sacrifice.’

The genealogical roll suggests another course that Clarke’s career might have taken. Reference is made to ‘some curious specimens of his Talents as a Draughtsman’, then in the possession of his brother Anthony, that ‘will demonstrate the unremitting attention bestowed by him in acquiring a Qualification so essential to the character of an able Engineer.’ When he undertook these studies is not indicated but his acquisition of eight books on fortification and one on military mathematics between 1767 and 1776 may be a sign that he saw for himself a future as a military engineer before he accepted the governorship of Senegambia.

On a personal level, there is more to be said of John Clarke than that he was a diligent servant of the Crown and an assiduous collector of books. The meticulous endorsement of the volumes in his library with his name and the date of acquisition, the detailed catalogue that accompanied them (which includes notes on the proposed inspection, repair and uniform binding of his books, as well as a sketch of the design for a typical book spine)¹⁰²and the alacrity with which he set about resolving the chaotic situation in Senegambia occasioned by neglect on the part of O’Hara and mismanagement by MacNamara, all suggest him to be a man with a love of order. Dr Schotte gives a hint of his general character that reinforces this impression: ‘Governor Clarke lived very regular in every respect’.¹⁰³ However, lest this might make him appear a somewhat austere figure, we must turn again to the genealogical roll for a more intimate portrayal: ‘The many amiable and benevolent qualities which endeared him to social Life will long be remembered by his grateful Relatives and affectionate Friends.’ It is an epitaph that many would envy.

Clarke died intestate and administration of his estate was granted to two of his creditors, Samuel Bicknell and William Bishopp, on 17 March 1781.¹⁰⁴ In August 1786, Bicknell inserted a notice in *The London Gazette* for those having demands on the estate to deliver particulars of their claims to his premises at 24 Bishopsgate Street, London, on or before 29 September.¹⁰⁵ Clarke’s father had renounced Letters of Administration and, at first sight, it seems surprising that he was

¹⁰² Parr, ‘John Clarke’s *Military Institutions of Vegetius*’, pp. 188-189.

¹⁰³ Schotte, *A Treatise on the Synochus Atrabiliosa*, p. 156.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, PROB 6/157, f. 38.

¹⁰⁵ *London Gazette*, No. 12777 (Saturday August 12 – Tuesday August 15, 1786).

not prepared to take on the administration. However, it may be inferred from the date of Bicknell's notice that part, at least, of the estate was held in Senegambia and, because of the political situation after the capture of the province by the French in 1779, could not be accessed until after hostilities were concluded by the Treaty of Versailles in 1783. Both Bicknell and Bishopp had long associations with the province. Bishopp had for many years been the head of the medical establishment in Senegambia¹⁰⁶ and Bicknell, who at the time of the grant was a substantial trader in spirits, had for many years before starting that business kept the Senegal and African Coffee House on Cornhill.¹⁰⁷ Shortly after the taking of St Louis by the British in 1758, Bicknell's and the Senegal Coffee House in St Michael's Alley, Cornhill, was advertised as a venue at which anyone wishing to have any connection or correspondence with Senegal could meet 'the principal Gentlemen, Merchants, Officers and Commanders of Ships trading to that new British Settlement on the Coast of Africa' and where correspondence could be left for 'their Friends at Senegal'.¹⁰⁸ Clarke's father, therefore, may have felt that Bicknell and Bishopp had connections that made them better able than he to administer the estate. It may be no coincidence that in 1786 Bicknell also administered the estate of George Nicholson, a merchant in Senegambia and member of the council of the province.¹⁰⁹

It has been noted above that the author of the biographical panel in the genealogical roll considered that Clarke's various works on military tactics and his translation of Vegetius would be 'lasting Monuments of his Genius as an Author'. The writer has to date been unable to identify any of the works on tactics. As far as can be ascertained, Clarke wrote no books other than his translation of Vegetius; the John Clarke who published a translation of Justinus' *Historiae Philippicae*, with whom he has apparently been identified,¹¹⁰ was a schoolmaster and educational reformer, and translator of many other classical authors, who

106 Schotte, *A Treatise on the Synochus Atrabiliosa*, p. 36.

107 *Memoir of William Bicknell 1749-1825* <<http://www.marcusbicknell.co.uk/obh/obh6.htm>> [accessed 6 July 2016].

108 *London Gazette*, No. 9823 (Saturday September 2 – Tuesday September 5, 1758).

109 *London Gazette*, No. 12716 (Tuesday January 10 – Saturday January 14, 1786); *ibid.*, No. 12722 (Tuesday January 31 – Saturday February 4, 1786).

110 Gruber, *Books and the British Army*, pp. 31 & 61 n. 96, 187.

died two years before our John Clarke was born.¹¹¹Possibly these works took the form of articles in magazines. If the works on tactics have proved somewhat more ephemeral than the author of the biographical panel may have imagined, the same cannot be said of the translation of Vegetius. John Millan and his successors, Thomas and John Egerton, continued to advertise it in their publications until at least the end of the 1780s and in 1777 John Phipps, a lieutenant in the 70th Foot, included it in a list of ‘Books for an Officer’s Portable Library’.¹¹²In America, as late as 1816 it was included in a lengthy catalogue of military books ‘recommended to such young officers, as are ambitious of obtaining extensive knowledge of the science of war.’¹¹³

Vegetius fell somewhat from favour in the nineteenth century but a verbatim copy of Clarke’s entire work was circulated in mimeographed form to students of the U.S. Army War College, Washington D.C., as part of the 1927/8 course at the College and in 1940 Major (later Brigadier-General) Thomas R. Phillips, an instructor at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, included an abridgement of the first three books of Clarke’s translation as one of a collection of five military classics under the general title of *Roots of Strategy*. Apart from Vegetius, this collection included Sun Tzu ‘On the Art of War’, the ‘Reveries on the Art of War’ by Marshal Maurice de Saxe, the instructions of Frederick the Great to his generals and the military maxims of Napoleon. Together these constituted ‘the five greatest military classics of all time’ and were ‘an indispensable part of an officer’s military education and the foundation of a military library.’¹¹⁴The abridgement of Vegetius was published separately in 1944 under the title *The Military Institutions of the Romans* and since then has been re-published numerous times by various publishers under that and differing titles. The latest print edition known to the writer was published in 2014 and a Kindle edition was published in 2015. It is also available online. *Roots of Strategy* was re-issued by Stackpole Books in 1985 and remains in print. Clarke’s complete work

111 Richard S. Thompson, ‘Clarke, John (*hap.* 1687, *d.* 1734)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5509>> [accessed 14 June 2016].

112 J. Phipps, *A System of Military Discipline for His Majesty’s Army* (London, 1777), p. 114.

113 E. Hoyt, *Rules and Regulations for Drill, Sabre Exercise, Equitation, Formation and Field Movements of Cavalry* (3rd edn, Greenfield, 1816), pp. xli, xliii.

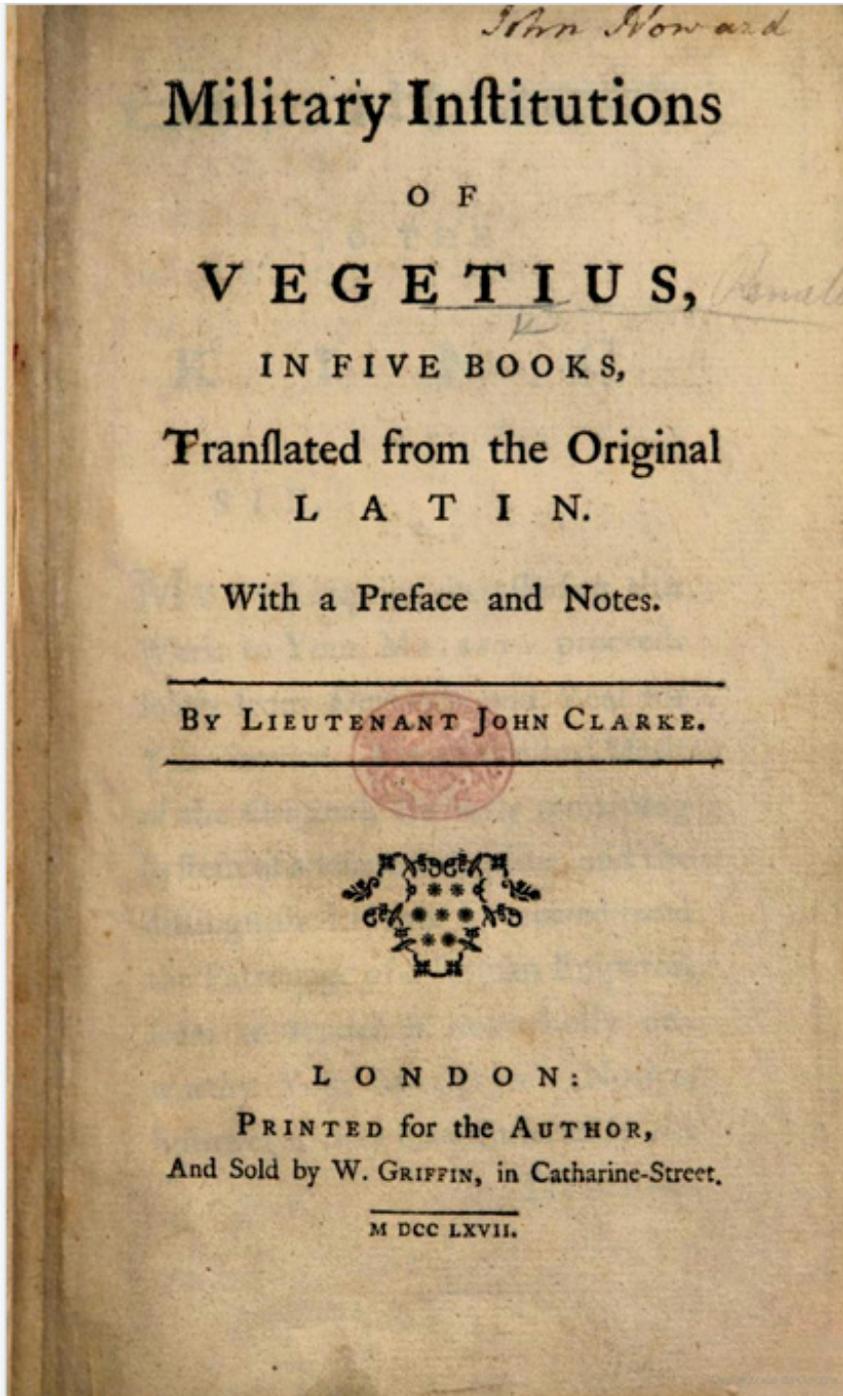
114 T. R. Phillips (ed.), *Roots of Strategy* (Harrisburg, 1940), p. 12.

has been published by Gale ECCO (Eighteenth Century Collections Online) Print Editions as a print-on-demand book, reproducing the copy in the British Library, and the same copy has been published online by Google Books. Thus, the student of Vegetius has ready access to John Clarke's translation, either complete or in Phillips' abridgement, 250 years after it was originally published – a 'lasting Monument' indeed.

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¹¹⁵ Dr Parr's thesis is now available online at <<http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1485839/>> [accessed 10 December 2016].





Costume Armor in the
Classical Style Helmet
includes original paper label
of Hallé French ca. 1788–90.
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