

School # 1
Tena P.
Students age 15
Hadrian AR Quinarius

From Marcus Rabirius Lucianus to my son, Marcus Rabirius Camillus, written from the province of Britannia, in the reign of the Emperor Hadrian, 117-138 AD.

I'm sorry it has taken me so long to return your letters, but as you will soon find out, the Celts attempted another revolt. We've been very busy as of late with the Celts attacking and Hadrian, our new emperor, coming around to inspect the camps. I have faith that he will be a great emperor and has excellent ideas to insure peace with our enemies. He was extremely worried about the battle we fought with the Celts. Although they are barbarians, and it was just a small revolt, they had the element of surprise. They advanced toward our small and inadequate frontier fort in the night, during the changing of the guard. I regretfully admit they caught us completely unprepared. We lost three of our best fighters; their throats were slit in the night. We also lost ten of the young, brave soldiers. About fifteen of our men were critically wounded and about thirty slightly injured. We thought the Celts were weak and would have given up after the second day of the conflict; however, they had proven themselves strong and brave. They were also stronger in number than had originally been thought. Fortunately, Hadrian stopped at the fort the day before the attack for an inspection. If it hadn't been for him giving the men support and fighting alongside them, I don't think the men would have had the hope to last so long. The men were weary from repairing the wall of the fort a mile away. Our respected emperor, Hadrian, was there. His steadfast endurance encouraged the men, and they held tight to the hope that we would enjoy the sweet flavor of victory. Even when the enemy almost breached the main gate, the men swore they were still going to win. It was wonderful to see youthful men so ambitious and full of the spirit of comradeship. It was a reminder that there is some good out in this world.

In the end, the Celts, with their small and homemade weapons, were no match for the walls of our fort. Although we do live in one of the older forts, its walls remain sturdy. The revolt lasted about twenty days. I believe we acquired some great spoils. Not only did we capture about sixty of the barbarians to be sold as slaves, but we also gained another mile or so of land. Hadrian sent out scouts to search the area and determine its usefulness. They returned and reported that there were no soldiers in sight. They only saw a few people living on one of the farms on the frontier.

The Britons were especially happy the revolt was over because the Celts were beginning to attack their farms. At least fifteen British farmers and their families sought shelter and medical attention from our fort. Most of the people who came were women with children and young men ordered by their fathers to take the mother and siblings to safety. Some were so badly wounded that all our doctors could do for them was ease their pain until their thread ran out and Hermes Psychopompas came to lead their souls to The Underworld. It was heart-wrenching to see a young child watch its mother die, especially when its father was most likely dead. One young boy in particular sat by his mother for hours after she died trying to wake her. Many of the women tried to get him away from the body, but he wouldn't leave her side. He just sat there shaking her and pleading that if

she would just wake up, he would never be a bad boy again. He would never disobey her again. Many of us, having young children of our own, began to cry when we say this pitiful sight.

Later I discovered his father was killed by the Celts. He was a strong and brave man attempting to save his family's livelihood. He was able to save his family but not their farm or his own life. It is comforting to know that his friends and family will always remember him with reverence for his deeds.

This conflict with the Celts was victorious. As by the grace of Nike, we were granted a glorious victory. Many have said they saw her hovering over us with her hands reaching down to protect us with her wreath of victory. As I am reminded of the spoils we recovered from the battle, my heart is heavy with memories of the havoc and death that also surrounded us. I hope you, my son, will never have to see a war of this magnitude. It is my hope that the winged victories continue to keep the peace and protect the good men who are fighting for the safety of their families.

Enough about the perils of war. Your mother tells me you both are doing well. She told me you've been practicing your swordsmanship in the hortus (garden) with Lucius. I am grateful for all that he taught me as a young boy. His teachings have served me well. I beseech you to honor him and listen carefully to his teachings. One day, you will need to retrieve that knowledge, and you will be glad you had this opportunity. Your mother also told me that you hit one of the gardeners while practicing. I only ask that you be more careful next time because even though a rudis (wooden practice sword) isn't sharp, it can still cause serious damage. She has also informed me that the pillar you were fighting won. Thank you son for that, because you brought laughter to me in rough times. All the men in my contubernium were entertained and will soon be sending you pointers on how to beat the pillar next time it attacks. I also heard that you were pretending to be a soldier, fighting off the barbarians.

Yes, war brings spoils from the people and lands we conquer; but it also leaves behind pain and death. The horrors I have seen in battle will plague me for the rest of my life. I have seen men on the battlefield sliced to shreds and left for vultures. Many nights I have lain awake hearing the screams of the wounded as they die. The worst sound of war that haunts me at night is that of a child screaming in desperation for its life after it realizes that its last caretaker is dead. Most of the wounded scream for the gods to have mercy on them and kill them fast. There are others who plead for someone to save them. Many nights I have felt like I would go mad if I had to listen to their screams anymore, but I realize that I am fortunate. I remain, by the will of the gods, to live another day.

When the nights become almost unbearable, I think of celebrating victoriously and enjoying the peace restored to the frontiers. As of late, I have begun to think that Hadrian's Wall idea is the only thing that will bring about this peace. I'm sure this news will reach Rome soon, but after the revolt ended, Hadrian stayed in his tent for a whole day not eating or talking to anyone. All he did was think and pray to the gods for guidance. When he immersed that night, he announced to the camp that he was planning to build a huge wall that would stretch from coast to coast, separating our provinces from the Celts. He believes it will bring us peace and safety. To demonstrate his confidence he is going to order a winged victory to be stamped on his coin. He believes we will be granted victory over the Celts and put an end to the raids on their farms.

Listen to me. I have already rambled on far to long. I will finish my letter saying that I love you and will always love you. I want you to take care of your mother and be steadfast and respectful. Stay out of trouble, obey your elders, and pay close attention to your studies. I look forward to your next letter and also to my return when I will see your and your mother's smiling faces again.

Marcus Rabirius Lucianus