

CHAPTER 7

DOMESTIC SLAVES AND RURAL SLAVES

126.

Digest 32, 99: Paulus. from the single-volume work The Meaning of the Term 'Equipment'

The uniform condition ascribed to slaves by Greek and Roman legal codes masks the fact that they performed a wide variety of different economic roles, all of which might equally be performed by dependants of free or citizen status. The actual living and working conditions of slaves might differ greatly. Slaves who worked on an estate which their master rarely visited were far less likely to develop any personal feelings towards the head of their household than those who saw him daily—particularly in the Roman period, when some masters owned thousands of slaves, with many of whom they can have had virtually no personal contact. Sending a slave away from the urban household to work on a a country estate was considered a punishment and a degradation (109, 236).

Roman jurists developed a clear distinction between the 'urban family' and the 'rural family'; although largely a distinction of status, it corresponds to a great extent to the division between slaves who provided services and those engaged in agricultural production, and by late antiquity rural slaves were considered as producers permanently tied to the land they worked (like other *coloni*), while the 'urban family' could still be treated by the owner like other moveable property (*CTh.* 6, 35.1; 12, 1.6; 10,8.4).

When 'urban slaves' have been specified in a legacy, some authorities distinguish property in urban slaves not by place, but by the type of work done, so that even if they are on a rural estate, they are considered to be urban slaves so long as they do not do agricultural work. It should also be said that any slaves whom the head of the household used to list among his urban slaves, should be held to be urban slaves; this can most effectively be checked from the family journal or from the ration lists.

(1) Doubts may arise about whether slaves used for hunting or fowling should be included amongst the urban or the rural slaves. They should be listed as belonging there where the head of the household kept them and fed them.

(2) Mule-drivers perform an urban service, unless the testator had them allocated specifically to rural work.

(3) Some authorities think that a slave who is the child of a slave woman who belongs to the urban group but was sent to an estate in the country to be brought up belongs to neither group; we should consider whether he doesn't belong to the urban group—that seems to be much more sensible.

(4) When a legacy specifies 'slaves who are litter-bearers', then a slave who is both a litter-bearer and a cook passes to the legatee.

(5) If 'home-born slaves' (*vernae*) are left to one man, and 'messengers' (*cursores*) to another, then any who are both home-born and messengers will be classified as messengers: for a particular type always takes precedence in law before a general class. If there are any slaves who fall into two types or two classes, then they will generally be shared between the legatees.

127. *ILS 1514*

The kinds of services provided by slaves in Greek and Roman households were similar to those required from dependants in other societies. Diogenes Laertius' account of the Wills of his philosophers gives us some idea of the number of personal slaves there might be in a wealthy man's retinue, including litter-bearers and a secretary (No. 95 above). Romances like *Leukippe and Kleitophon* show that slaves would be used to provide background music at mealtimes (1, 5.4), as messengers (1, 12.1), doorkeepers (2, 26.1), concubines (2, 26.1), to wake you up in the morning (1, 6.5) and generally as attendants; they would be beaten mercilessly if their master was angry with them (4, 15.6). An inscription from Rome shows that a finance officer of Tiberius who was himself a slave was accompanied on a trip to the capital by sixteen of his own under-slaves (*vicarii*); their functions are all specified, except for that of the single woman amongst them.

To Musicus Scurranus [slave] of Tiberius Caesar Augustus, super-intendent of the Gallic Treasury for the province of Lyon: [dedicated] to him, as he well deserved, by those of his under-slaves who were with him at Rome when he died:

Venustus, buying agent	Agathopus, physician	Facilis, attendant
Decimianius, treasurer	Epaphra, in charge of silver	Anthus, in charge of silver
Dicaeus, attendant	Primio, in charge of wardrobe	Hedylus, chamberlain

Mutatus,
attendant
Creticus,
attendant

Communis,
chamberlain
Pothus,
attendant
Tiasus,
cook

Firmus,
cook
Secunda.

128.

Xenophon, *The Householder*, 7

Xenophon describes how the wealthy landowner Iskhomakhos instructs his young wife in her duties, which include training her slave attendants. Their skills are not very different from those required of their mistress.

(41) You have some enjoyable tasks of your own, like when you take a girl who knows nothing about spinning wool, and make her skilled in it, and she becomes worth twice as much to you; or when you take a girl who knows nothing about management or the duties of a servant, and you make her skilled and trustworthy and a good attendant, so that she becomes worth any sum at all; or when you have the opportunity to reward those in your household who are self-controlled and useful, and to punish anyone who seems to be bad...

129.

The Nurse: *ILS* 8532

It was of course the more unpleasant, troublesome and time-consuming domestic tasks that were given to slaves. Despite the social pressures on mothers to nurse and look after their own children, those who could afford it preferred to leave them to nurses, bought or hired (see Tacitus, *Dialogus* 28f.); Quintilian (*Inst. Or.*, 1, 4f.=L&R II, 73) discusses how important the right choice of nurse is even before he mentions the role of parents. By no means all nurses were slaves or freedwomen, rather than poor citizen women, but some inscriptions explicitly mention nurses who had been slaves (see No. 136 below).

To the Spirits of the Dead.
To Servia Cornelia Sabina, freedwoman of Servius. Servius
Cornelius Dolabella Metillianus
made this for his nurse and 'mummy' (*nutrici et mammul.*),
who well deserved it.

130.

Quintilian, *Educating an Orator*, 1, 1

The slaves who were closest to their masters were the ones who had looked after them when they had been children: for women, their nurse, and for men normally the *paedagogus*, the slave who had accompanied them to school every morning and had generally been responsible for protecting and assisting them. Even the law recognised how deep the friendships between these slaves and their masters might be (see No. 5, Ch. 19 above).

But although the educational role of these slaves was crucial, they were often appointed merely because they were useless for any other kind of work: when Pericles saw a slave fall from a tree and break his leg, he is said to have remarked that he had just become a *paedagogus* (Stobaeus, *Florida*, 4.209).

(8) What was said about nurses should also be said about the playmates with whom the child you want to become a great orator is going to be brought up. There is an additional point to make about tutors; they should either be thoroughly well educated (which I would prefer) or else they should be aware of their lack of education. Nothing is worse than those who have got a little beyond the alphabet and falsely persuade themselves that they are very knowledgeable. For they think it insults their dignity to give way to those whose job it is to teach, and they imperiously and sometimes brutally impose their own stupidity on their charges as though they had some claim to authority (which is what makes all people of this kind inordinately proud). And their foolishness is equally harmful to their charges' character, certainly if it was Alexander's tutor Leonides who infected him with some of his vices (so Diogenes the Babylonian says); as a result of the education he had received as a child, these vices clung to him when he had grown up and was already the greatest of kings.

131.

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 12, 32

As with doctors (No. 73 above), so with *paedagogi* it was felt to be somehow unnatural for a free man to be under the control of a slave, even if he was just a child. This resentment felt by the Greek and Roman elite at having once had slaves as their special companions expressed itself in frequent jokes about *paedagogi* (for example, in Roman comedy; see Martial, 11.39, and No. 240 below). When Pliny illustrates the exceptional expense of frankincense, he tells how the world's greatest conqueror had once been told off by a slave.

(62) When as a boy Alexander the Great was heaping piles of incense onto an altar, his *paedagogus* Leonides told him that he would be able to invoke the gods in such a lavish way once he had conquered the peoples who produced incense; and when he had won control over Arabia, he sent a ship laden with incense to him, telling him to worship the gods unstintingly.

132.

Seneca, *Letters*, 27

Other functions performed by slaves were to remind their master of the names of the people he met (the *nomenclator*), and even to provide entertainment by memorising poetry: this case presses to absurdity the idea that a slave is a mere tool extending his master's faculties.

(5) There is another type of knowledge which does allow us to use the assistance of others. I remember that there was a very rich man called Calvisius Sabinus. He inherited a freedman's estate, and his mind too: never was it so scandalous that a man should have wealth. His memory was so bad that he would sometimes forget the name Ulysses, or Achilles or Priam—persons we all know as well as we know our tutors. No slave assigned the job of reminding us of people's names (*nomenclator*), no matter how old, ever made so many mistakes in imposing names on humble clients rather than repeating them properly, as Sabinus did when he mentioned Trojans and Greeks. Yet he wanted to appear to be an educated man. (6) The following solution occurred to him: at enormous expense he bought some slaves, one to memorise the whole of Homer off by heart, another Hesiod, and one each assigned to the nine lyric poets. That he paid an enormous price for them isn't surprising—he couldn't find any for sale, and had to contract for them to be trained. After he had acquired this slave gang, he started pestering his dinner guests. He kept some of them stationed at the end of his couch and would continually ask them for some lines of poetry to quote—though he'd often forget in the middle of a word. (7) Satellius Quadratus was someone who went in for cheating stupid rich men, and therefore also for flattering them and, consistently enough, for making fools of them: he suggested he should get a gang of grammarians to stand in for the slaves who have to clear up the left-overs. When Sabinus said that these slaves had cost him 100,000 Sesterces each, he said, 'The same number of book-cases would have been cheaper.' But Sabinus' attitude was that, whatever anyone in his household knew, he knew. (8) Satellius also tried to persuade him to go in for wrestling: Sabinus was a pale and weak invalid whose reply was, 'How could I—it takes all my energy to stay alive.' 'You mustn't say that,' came the riposte, 'don't you see how many slaves you own who are in excellent health?'

133.

Suetonius, *Grammarians*

While some slaves were treated as mere mechanical devices assisting their owner's intellectual activity (as readers, *lectores*, or shorthand clerks, *notarii*: see Pliny, *Letters*, 3, 5.12 and 15), others could themselves play an important role in the development of Latin philology and literary criticism.

(7) Marcus Antonius Gniphō was born in Gaul of free birth, but was abandoned, then manumitted and educated by the man who brought him up; some say that this was at Alexandria, where he lived with Dionysius Scytobrachio, but I'm not prepared to believe this because the chronology doesn't fit at all. He is said to have been extremely talented, with an unparalleled memory, as learned in Greek as in Latin, with a pleasant and easy-going character; and he never made any agreement about getting paid—so that he obtained more, as a result of the generosity of his pupils. He first taught at the house of the divine Julius, who was still a boy at the time, and later at his own home.

(11) According to some sources, Publius Valerius Cato was the freedman of someone from Gaul called Bursenus; he himself asserts in the pamphlet entitled 'Indignation' that he was born free and left an orphan, and that that was how he was so easily stripped of his inheritance during the lawless period of Sulla's dictatorship.

(12) Cornelius Epicadus was the freedman of Lucius Cornelius Sulla the Dictator; he became an official herald (*calator*) of the College of Augurs, and also very close to Sulla's son Faustus, which is why he always maintained that he was a freedman of both. He also finished the last book of Sulla's autobiography, which Sulla had left incomplete.

(13) Staberius Eros was a † Thracian bought at a public sale, and later set free because of his interest in literature. Amongst others, he taught Brutus and Cassius. Some people say that he was endowed with such nobility of character that during Sulla's dictatorship, he accepted the children of the proscribed at his classes without charging them any fee.

(15) Lenaeus was the freedman of Pompey the Great and went with him on almost all his expeditions... The story is told that when he was still a slave (*puer*) he escaped from his chains and fled back to his own country, where he taught literature; he sent his master the price he had cost him, but was manumitted for nothing because of his excellent character and scholarship.

(23) Quintus Remmius Palaemon of Vicenza is said to have been the house-born slave of some woman. He was originally a weaver, but then learned letters when he accompanied his master's son to school.

(27) Lucius Voltacilius Pilutus is said to have been a slave, and even to have been chained up in the old-fashioned way as a door-keeper, until he was set free because of his intelligence and interest in literature, and assisted his patron in making legal accusations in court.

134.

Xenophon, *The Householder*, 9

The most important domestic slave was the manager, since he or she would allow the master the leisure required for participation in civic affairs (see No. 2, Ch. 23). Iskhomakhos says that he had personally trained his managers

(*epitropoi*) to be careful and loyal agents, and the head of the women slaves is also treated with respect.

(11) When we chose our manageress, we considered which woman seemed to us to show the most temperance with regard to food and wine and sleep and intercourse with men, and in addition which one seemed to be endowed with the best memory and to be the most circumspect (so that she would avoid being punished by us for carelessness) and most keen to please us so that we would reward her in return. (12) We taught her to be well disposed towards us by communicating our joy to her when we were pleased, and asking for her sympathy if there was something which disappointed us. We trained her to want the household to prosper, by making her know all about it and making sure she shared in its success. (13) And we encouraged her to develop a sense of justice by giving more honour to the just slaves than to the unjust ones, and pointing out to her that their lives had more riches and more freedom than those of the unjust. And that was the position which we entrusted to her.

135.

Seneca, *Letters*, 12

Nineteenth-century abolitionists were keen to argue that apart from being immoral, slave labour was less economic than that provided by a free labour market. One of the points they made was that a capitalist employer did not have to concern himself with that section of the workforce which was sick or too old to work, whereas slave-owners did have to look after such people. The number of functions which might usefully be performed by old and feeble slaves was limited; they could become *paedagogi* (Nos. 130–1 above), *nomenclatores* (No. 132) or door-keepers. Seneca's story about how he failed to recognise his old playmate is an illustration of the callous ancient attitude to old age generally; and also an instance of the immediate tour of inspection of an estate a master had not seen for a long time, recommended by the agricultural textbooks (No. 149, Ch. 6 below).

(1) Wherever I turn, I see indications that I'm getting old. I was visiting a suburban estate of mine and complaining about the expense of the dilapidated building. My manager told me that this wasn't the fault of neglect on his part—he was doing everything, but the fact was that the building was old. Actually this house was built under my own supervision—what is to happen to me, if stones of the same age as myself are in such a crumbling state? (2) I was upset at what he had said and used the next suitable occasion for an outburst of anger. 'These planetrees are obviously not being looked after,' I said; 'there aren't any leaves on them; the branches are all knotted and parched, and the bark is flaking off those squalid trunks. That wouldn't happen if someone was digging round them and giving them water.' He swore by my own soul (*genius*) that he was doing whatever he could, that there was no respect in which his efforts were falling short—but they were old. Between ourselves, I planted them

myself; I saw their first growth of leaves. (3) I went up to the entrance. ‘Who,’ I said, ‘is that decrepit fellow? How suitable that he should have been moved to the door—he’s clearly waiting to move on. Where on earth did you get hold of him? What possessed you to steal a corpse from someone else?’ But the fellow said to me, ‘Don’t you recognise me? I’m Felicio—you used to give me puppets at the Saturnalia. I’m the son of your manager Philositus, I was your playmate when I was little.’ ‘The man’s absolutely mad.’ I said. ‘Now he’s turned into a little boy and a playmate of mine. Could be true though—he’s toothless as a child.’

136.

Pliny, *Letters*, 6, 3

An old family retainer who was particularly close to his or her master might be pensioned off with a small estate—but one assumes that this will have been rare.

Greetings from Gaius Plinius to Verus.

I thank you for taking over the running of the little farm which I had presented to my old nurse. It was worth 100,000 Sesterces when I originally gave it to her; but afterwards the income declined and the value of the estate fell accordingly; with you managing it, it will recover its former value. You must remember that it is not trees and soil with which I have entrusted you (although I’ve done that too), but rather with a gift that I had made, and that it is as important to me who gave it as to her who received it, that it should be as profitable as possible.

137.

Digest 14, 5.8: Paulus, from *Decrees*, book 1

Slaves could be used to do those jobs which were unpleasant or risky or took up a lot of time, and therefore ranked as low status in the eyes of ancient agrarian societies: shipping, manufacture, trade and banking. Much entrepreneurial activity was the particular sphere of freedmen (see No. 47 above); there is a certain amount of evidence about the role of slaves and freedmen in Roman brick and pottery production (see Burford, *Craftsmen*). A notable freedman banker was Pasion † 370 BC), who was so successful that he was, exceptionally, granted Athenian citizenship (his career is well documented by Isocrates’ *Trapeziticus* and many of Demosthenes’ speeches). But so long as the agent was still a slave, his master was legally responsible for all his undertakings, and this might land him in serious difficulties. Here the jurist Paulus tells how one of the Severan emperors rejected his opinion on a verdict which had been appealed against.

Titianus Primus had appointed a slave to make loans and accept pledges as security for these loans. But in addition, this slave made a habit of taking over

debts owed to grain-merchants by purchasers and paying them off. The slave ran away, and the person who was responsible for recovering the price of the grain brought an action against the master on the grounds that the slave was his agent. But Primus denied that an action could be brought against him on this account, since the slave had not been appointed to undertake deals of this kind. When it also emerged that the same slave had undertaken various other deals and rented a granary and paid off debts owed by a number of people, the Prefect of the Corn Supply gave a ruling against the owner. I stated my own opinion, which was that this seemed to be analogous to giving surety for bail: he had paid off other people's debts, but had not himself incurred any debts on their behalf. It is not normal for an action to be allowed against a master on these grounds, and the master did not appear to have given any such orders. The Emperor, however, upheld the Prefect's ruling, since the master had given the impression that he had appointed the slave to act on his behalf in everything.

138.

Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies*, 9, 12.1ff.

A curious case of fraud by a slave banker is told by an early Christian theologian. Hippolytus is attacking a rival theological tradition which he accuses of having tainted Christianity with Greek philosophical ideas going back to Heraclitus. In classical rhetoric, criticism of a person's ideas was thought to be immeasurably strengthened by an attack on the teacher—an invective. One of the recognised elements of a classical invective was to accuse the opposition of coming from a low social background: here Hippolytus tells us how his opponent and rival for the Papacy, Callistus, was not just of servile origin, but also incompetent in business and disloyal to his master.

He happened to be the house-slave of someone called Carpophorus, a Christian believer belonging to the Emperor's household. Carpophorus entrusted a considerable sum of money to him, since he seemed to be a reliable person, and told him to invest it profitably in banking. He took the money and set up a bank in what is called the 'Public Fish-Market', and in time several quite significant deposits were lodged with him on behalf of widows and other Christians, since the legal responsibility lay with Carpophorus. But Callistus managed to waste it all and got himself into a hopeless situation. When this had happened, someone informed Carpophorus, who said that he would require Callistus to present his accounts for inspection. When Callistus heard about this he could see the danger that he would be in from his master and ran away to escape by sea. He found a ship at Portus ready to set sail and went on board prepared to go anywhere the ship might be sailing to. But even this didn't enable him to get away unnoticed, since someone had told Carpophorus what had happened, and he went down to the harbour as a result of this information and tried to get on board the ship. But the ship was at anchor in

the middle of the harbour, and the captain was in no hurry to set sail, and Callistus saw his master when he was still a long way off. Since he was on board ship, he saw that he couldn't avoid being recaptured; he didn't think his life was worth living for and he thought that he was finished and threw himself into the sea. But the people on the shore all started to shout and the sailors jumped into their boats and pulled him out against his will. In this way he was given back to his owner and carted off to Rome, and his master put him to work in the tread-mill. Some time went by, and then—as so often happens—some fellow-Christians came to Carpophorus and asked him to release the runaway from his punishment, saying that he had admitted to them that there were some people with whom he had deposited the missing money. Carpophorus was a humane man and said that he didn't care about recovering money he had lost himself; on the other hand he was concerned about the sums that had been deposited by others, since a lot of people had complained that they had entrusted their deposits to Callistus because the legal responsibility lay with Carpophorus. Yet he accepted their arguments and ordered Callistus to be freed from the tread-mill. But he didn't have anything with which to pay back his creditors, and because he wasn't able to run off again because he was being kept under guard, he worked out a plan to get himself killed: one Saturday, pretending that he was going to meet his creditors, he went to the synagogue where the Jews assembled, and got up and created a disturbance. The Jews were upset by his behaviour and started insulting and beating him and dragged him off to the Urban Prefect, Fuscianus. Here they made a statement to the following effect: 'The Romans have agreed that we can recite in public the laws of our ancestors, and then this fellow comes along and stops us by causing a disturbance and proclaiming that he's a Christian.' Fuscianus, from the judge's bench, was very angry with Callistus on the basis of the evidence presented by the Jews; and someone went and told Carpophorus what had occurred. Carpophorus hurried off to the Prefect's court and shouted, 'Lord Fuscianus, I beg you, don't believe this man, he isn't a Christian at all but wants to get himself killed because he's made away with a lot of money belonging to me, as I shall show you.' The Jews assumed that this was a trick on the part of Carpophorus to have him released on this pretext, so they appealed to the Prefect in an even more hostile manner. He gave in to them, had Callistus whipped and sentenced to be sent to the mines in Sardinia.

In the end Callistus managed to get his name on to a list of Christian prisoners who were pardoned by Commodus at the instigation of his concubine Marcia, who was herself a Christian; he returned to Italy and was elected Pope—quite unjustifiably, according to Hippolytus.

139.

Xenophon, *The Householder*, 5

From the point of view of production, slavery may be seen primarily as a mechanism for achieving a quantitative increase in the productivity of the household unit, rather than as a separate 'mode of production'. In Hesiod (*Works and Days* 406) and Homer, slaves provide domestic services and are not used in agriculture; such work is carried out by dependant tenants or day-labourers (*Odyssey* 11,489; 18,356–64). But in the classical period, slaves are found providing additional labour for work on the land in Chios (see No. 80, 265b) and Corcyra (Thucydides 3, 73). The fact that only twelve of the seventy-nine slaves whose occupations are specified on Athenian apostasy records worked on the land (see No. 27) may mean that slaves were more frequently used in domestic service and industry than in agriculture, or more probably that agricultural slaves were far less likely to win their freedom. For the rich at least, the use of agricultural slaves is taken for granted. Thus Xenophon praises agriculture because a man who is experienced in controlling agricultural slaves will also be a good army officer.

(14) Farming also trains men to assist each other as a team. When you campaign against an enemy, you use men; and working the land requires men too. (15) So if you are going to be a good farmer, you must make your workers co-operative and willing to obey you; and when you lead men against an enemy you must try to achieve this too, by giving rewards to those who behave as brave men should, and punishing those who lack discipline. (16) It is just as necessary for a farmer to give his workers frequent encouragement as for a general to encourage his troops. Slaves have no less need of something good to hope for than do free men—if anything, more, so that they may stay with you willingly.

140.

Aristotle, *Politics*, 7, 9

Aristotle believed that all those who did agricultural work should have a lower status than leisured gentleman citizens. In actual fact classical Athens was a society of peasant farmers who worked the land themselves, side by side with their sons and any slaves they may have had; Aristotle was thinking of the ideal of Sparta, where the Helot population liberated the citizens for political and military activity.

(9) If I am to state my own preference, the people who cultivate the land should be slaves; they should not all come from the same tribe or nation, and they should not be too courageous. This will make them useful workers and safe from the danger of revolt. As a second best, they should be non-Greek-speaking serfs (*barbarous perioikous*) with natural characters as similar as possible to those I have indicated. Those of them who are used on

private estates must be private property, and those used on community land public property. I will discuss on a separate occasion how slaves ought to be treated, and why it is better if freedom is held out as a prize to all slaves.

141.

Appian, *Roman Civil Wars*, 1, 1

At Rome, slaves did not liberate the peasant farmer to take part in democratic politics, but to fight to conquer an empire. For the wealthy, there were great advantages in using slave rather than free labour. The best ancient analysis is given by Appian in the introduction to his account of the civil strife which led to the fall of the Roman republic.

(7) When the Romans had won control over one part of Italy after another through warfare, they took part of the land and built settlements there, or if there were towns there already, they selected settlers from amongst their own people. They intended these colonies to fulfil the functions of garrisons; on each occasion when they won control of land through war, they immediately allocated any that was being worked to their colonists, or else sold it or leased it out, while as regards the land which was then lying fallow as a result of the fighting (and that was the greater proportion), they proclaimed that since they didn't have the time to divide it up into lots, anyone who wished to work it could do so in the meantime for an annual rent of one-tenth of the crops harvested each year, and one-fifth of the fruit. Similar assessments were decreed for those who had herds of cattle or smaller livestock. This was done with a view to increasing the population of Italy, which seemed to them to be particularly able to endure hard work, so that they would have allies to call upon in that country. But they achieved the exact opposite. What happened was that the rich got hold of most of that land which was not distributed as allotments, and as time passed they assumed that no one would take it away from them; and they persuaded the poor owners of small farms bordering on their own to sell them, or even seized some farms by violence, so that they came to cultivate huge estates instead of individual farms; and they used bought slaves as cultivators and herdsmen, so that they wouldn't have to depend upon free men who could be called away from their work to serve in the army. And owning slaves was very profitable because they produced lots of children so that the number of slaves relentlessly increased because they weren't liable to military service. Those property-owners who were powerful became extremely wealthy, and the number of slaves increased throughout the country, while the Italians became fewer and poorer, oppressed by poverty, by taxes and by military service. And even if there was a period when they weren't away on campaign, they sat around without employment, because the land was owned by the rich and they used slaves to work it instead of free workers.

(8) For these reasons the Roman people became concerned that they might no longer have enough Italian allies, and that these vast numbers of slaves might constitute a danger to their government of Italy. But they didn't see how things could be put right since it wasn't easy, nor entirely fair, to deprive so many men of such a large amount of property which they had possessed for such a long time, including trees they had planted themselves and buildings and equipment. With great difficulty the Plebeian Tribunes introduced a law that no one should have more than 500 *iugera* of this land, and shouldn't graze more than 100 cattle or 500 lesser animals on it. To give effect to these provisions they ordered landowners to employ a certain proportion of free men, who would watch over what was going on and submit reports.

They included all these things in a law and reinforced it with an oath and decreed a penalty, and they thought that the land that was left would soon be distributed to the poor in small allotments. But no one took any notice either of the law or of the oaths.

142.

Suetonius, *Julius*, 42

The danger that the presence of slaves caused to civil society was recognised, not because of the possibility of slave revolts, but because of the threat it posed to the survival of the peasants on whom the Roman elite depended for service in the army.

In order to restore the declining population of Rome, he decreed that no citizen over twenty and under †forty who had not been inducted into the army should be away from Italy for more than three years at a time; nor should anyone who was a Senator's son go abroad, except in attendance upon an officer or magistrate, and those who engaged in ranching should have not less than one-third free-born persons among their herdsmen.

143.

Livy, 6, 12

Complaints about the lack of free manpower, especially for military purposes, occur in Lucan (7, 387–439 and 1, 158–82), Seneca Rhetor (*Excerpt. Controv.* 5, 5) and Livy (7, 25.9); here Livy has been wondering how it was possible for the Volsci and the Aequi to find the soldiers to fight Rome year after year in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. He had been unable to find any explanation in his sources, but:

It is plausible... (5) that there was then a vast number of free persons living in the same places in which there is hardly the tiniest seed-bed for soldiers left today, and which only the Romans' slaves stop from becoming a desert.

144.

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 18, 4

The contrast between contemporary slave gangs and the old Roman peasant heroes who worked smallholdings themselves was frequent in rhetoric (see Nos. 80–1 above); but the use of chained slaves was not merely a rhetorical *topos* (146, 149 Ch. 9.4), In contrast to the times of Cincinnatus:

(21) Nowadays farmwork is done by feet which have been chained, by hands which have been punished, by faces which have been branded; but the earth which we call our mother and claim to work for is not so stupid that we should think that she is not displeased and angry that this work is done by the labour of such slaves. Should we be surprised that we do not get the same profits from slave prisons as used to be got from the labour of Roman commanders?

145.

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 18, 7

One assumption which it is not safe to make is that the use of large numbers of disciplined slave workers led to increased efficiency by allowing the kinds of economies of scale which may have been possible on the cotton, sugar or coffee plantations of the New World. One reason for this was that it was felt that slave workers needed a great deal of supervision (see, for example, No. 149 below); the other was that ancient technology had not developed the kinds of tools and techniques which prove more profitable where the scale is larger. Hence there arose the paradox that the ‘best’ estate in terms of size was not the ‘best’ in terms of profits—and once again we find that size is a function of display, not of profitability.

(36) The worst thing for a farm is to be worked by slaves housed in a prison—like anything else that is done by men who have no hope. It may seem rash to quote an old maxim, and perhaps you won’t believe it if you don’t think about it carefully: ‘Nothing is more pointless than having the best farm to cultivate.’ (37) Lucius Tarius Rufus, who rose to the consulship from an extremely humble background as a result of his military ability, was in most respects as thrifty as the heroes of old; but in order to enhance his glory, he wasted a fortune of 100 million Sesterces which had been presented to him by the Divine Augustus on buying and cultivating land in Picenum—so that his heir had to repudiate the estate.

So does farming mean disaster and starvation? Not at all: but moderation is the best standard in all things. (38) Having a good farm is essential, but having the largest one of all (*optime colere*) is disastrous, except when the farmer can cultivate it with the labour of his own children or with persons he has to feed in any case.

146.

Pliny, *Letters*, 3, 19

Romans knew that a larger estate would mean some improved efficiency, but these economies were unconnected with the actual method of exploiting the land, and were outweighed by other considerations. This letter also reminds us of the universal threat of debt hanging over every peasant farmer. The reference to slaves in [section 7](#) does not mean that Pliny considered replacing the tenant smallholders of this estate (at Como in northern Italy) with slaves: the slaves are among the farm tools the tenants had to sell to pay off their debts (for slaves as part of the equipment (*instrumentum*) entrusted to tenants, see *ILS* 6675, Ch. 43).

Greetings from Caius Plinius to Calvisius Rufus.

(1) I would like to include you amongst my advisors in a matter concerning my household, as I always do. An estate is being offered for sale which borders upon and is even partially surrounded by my own. There are many things which I find attractive about it, and some important ones which deter me. (2) I am attracted primarily by the advantages of joining up the two estates; then there's the fact that both estates could be inspected on a single visit (which is not only pleasant, but has material advantages too); they can be managed by the same agent, and virtually by the same foremen; there will only be one house to maintain and furnish—the other one will only have to be kept in a decent condition. (3) My comparison takes into account the cost of furniture, slaves to look after the house and the garden, tool-makers, and the personnel and materials needed for hunting. It makes a great deal of difference whether you can keep them all in one place or have to have them spread out among several.

(4) On the other hand, I fear that it would not be wise to concentrate so much property which could be affected by the same climatic and other disasters; it seems safer to insure oneself against the uncertainties of Fortune by having one's property in different places. And indeed changes of scenery and climate are quite enjoyable, as is travelling from one farm to another.

(5) But the most crucial thing to consider is that these fields are fertile, rich and well irrigated; they consist of pasture, vineyards and woodland which provides trees and thus a steady if moderate income.

(6) However, the advantages of the soil have been diminished as a result of bad cultivation. The previous owner frequently foreclosed on debts, and although this enabled him to cut down the tenants' rent arrears in the short term, he destroyed their long-term resources so that the arrears soon increased again. (7) So these fields will have to be stocked with slaves, who cost more if they are honest; I don't use chained slaves anywhere, and no one there does either...

147.
Columella, 1, 7

Discussions of whether to have your land cultivated by free tenants or slaves refer to the system of management, not the nature of the workforce: tenants might use slaves too, and some tenants would be just as much absentees as the landlords themselves.

The ancient consensus—which was not necessarily correct—was that, as long as the farm manager was competent, slaves would produce greater surpluses everywhere except on marginal land, and on land so far away that the owner could not supervise it regularly.

(1) The landowner must be as careful in selecting his workforce as in other things. These may be either tenants (*coloni*) or slaves, who may be loose or chained. He should treat his tenants in a pleasant and easy fashion, and should be more insistent that they work properly than that they pay their rent, since they will find this less offensive and it will be generally more advantageous—for when land is properly cultivated, it will generally bring in profits and never losses, unless there is a major disaster due to climatic conditions or brigands; and the tenant will therefore not dare to ask for payments to be remitted. (2) But the owner should not insist on his strict legal rights in respect of every single one of the obligations he has imposed upon his tenant, like the date when rent is due to be paid, or demanding additional little exactions like firewood; remembering about these things gives rural workers more trouble than expense. So we should not insist on our legal rights, since absolute justice is absolute torture, as our ancestors said. But we shouldn't abandon our rights completely either; as the money-lender Alfius is said to have remarked—and how right he was—'even the best debts become bad if they are not called in'.

(3) I myself remember how as an old man Publius Volusius, an extremely wealthy ex-consul, used to say that the most fortunate farm was one whose tenants were local people who had been born there and effectively inherited the place and stayed there because they were familiar with it right from their childhood. So I believe absolutely that frequent changes of tenants are bad for a farm; but renting to a tenant who lives at Rome and prefers to have the land cultivated by his slaves than by himself is worse. (4) Saserna used to say that you would get law suits rather than rents from this sort of person; and that is why we should be careful that if we cannot farm the estate ourselves or through our own slaves, our tenants are rural people and do not change frequently. But this should only happen in areas which have been abandoned because of a bad climate or infertile soil. (5) If the climate is only moderately healthy, and the soil moderately fertile, then you will always get a higher return from an estate you look after yourself than from tenants—and you will even get a higher return if it is looked after by a manager, unless this slave is particularly incompetent or corrupt. And if he does suffer from either of these vices, there can be no doubt that he generally does so, or at least is encouraged to do so,

as the result of a mistake on his master's part, since his master could have made sure that he was not put in charge in the first place and that he was removed if he had already been appointed.

(6) But when farms are a long way away, so that the head of the household finds it difficult to visit them, then any kind of cultivation by free tenants is preferable to that of slave managers; particularly for arable farming, since a tenant can do minimal damage to such a farm, as he can to vineyards and orchards, while slaves can do a lot of harm. They may hire out oxen and not pasture other cattle properly and not plough properly and claim that they have sown far more seed than they in fact have and not look after what they have sown to make it grow properly, and lose a lot of the harvested grain during threshing as a result of theft or incompetence. (7) They may steal it themselves or fail to take proper precautions against other thieves or just not compile trustworthy accounts. The result is that neither the manager nor the slaves do their work properly and the reputation of the estate declines. That is why I think that a farm of this kind should be let to tenants if, as I said, the owner cannot be there himself.

148.

Varro, *Agriculture*, 1, 17

Varro's remarks about the agricultural labour-force contain references to the use of children by those who couldn't afford slaves, to serfdom, and to incentives both for overseers and others.

(1) I shall now discuss the instruments by means of which the land is tilled. Some theorists divide these into two parts, the men, and the men's tools, without which they cannot work the land; others prefer a threefold classification, the class of instruments endowed with speech, that which is inarticulate and that which is speechless. That endowed with speech includes slaves, the inarticulate includes cattle, and the speechless wagons. (2) All fields are worked by human beings, whether slaves or free men or both; they are worked by free men either when these people work their own land, as many poor people do together with their offspring, or when they are hired labourers, when major agricultural operations like the vine harvest or hay-cutting are carried out by means of the hired labour of free men: or else by those persons whom the Romans used to call 'debt-bondsmen' (*obaerati*) and of whom there are large numbers even today in Asia Minor and Egypt and Illyricum. (3) My opinion about these people as a class is the following: it is better to work unhealthy land with hired labourers than with slaves, and even in healthier districts, for the more important agricultural operations like bringing in the produce of the vintage or the harvest. As regards the kinds of qualifications these people should have, Cassius [C. Dionysius of Utica, an agricultural writer of the early first century BC] writes:

You should obtain labourers who are able to put up with hard work, not less than twenty-two years old and quick to learn the work of the farm. You can assess this on the basis of how they carried out their previous duties, or by asking those of them who are newly engaged what they had been accustomed to do for their previous employer.

Slaves ought neither to be fearful nor brash. (4) Those put in charge of them should know how to read and write and have some culture; they should be honest and older than the hired labourers I mentioned above—for they will be more prepared to obey them than they would younger men. In addition it is particularly important that whoever is in charge should have practical experience of farming. For he shouldn't just give orders but also work himself, so that his subordinates imitate his example and realise that he has been put in charge of them for a good reason, because he knows more about it than they do. (5) And they must not be allowed to enforce their orders by beatings rather than words, so long as this is likely to achieve the same result. Nor should several slaves of the same ethnic origin be obtained; house-hold difficulties tend most frequently to arise from this cause. Overseers are to be encouraged with rewards to work more efficiently, and care must be taken that they have some property (*peculium*) of their own and women slaves to live with them, by whom they can have children; this makes them more reliable and more attached to the farm. It is because of these family ties that the slaves of Epirus are highly regarded and highly expensive. (6) The goodwill of overseers should be won by treating them with a certain degree of respect, and as for those labourers whose work is better than that of the others, they ought to be consulted about what work is to be done, because in that case they will not think that they are looked down upon so much but rather that their employer has some consideration for them. (7) They can be made more keen on their work by being more generously treated as regards food rations or clothing or exemption from work or permission to graze some animal of their own on the farm or other things of this kind, so that if anyone has been ordered to do a particularly unpleasant job or has been punished for something, he can be reconciled by these privileges and his goodwill and loyalty towards his master restored.

149. Columella, 1, 8

In the mid-first century AD, Columella gave the following advice about the selection of managers and labourers, and their tasks. He also refers to the ideal that a farm should be as self-sufficient as possible (8.8), to the danger that a manager will exploit his position of authority to behave brutally or sadistically (8.10 and 16ff., on the *ergastula*), and to the incentive of marriage (8.5). He advises masters against letting their managers undertake business deals on

their behalf; disagrees with Plato about sharing a joke with one's slaves, at least those one rarely saw (8.15: see No. **80**, 265b above). While 8.19 is no evidence for the systematic breeding of slaves in Roman times, it does prove that manumission was not universal, or even normal, for agricultural slaves.

The Manager

(1) The next thing to consider is which slave to put in charge of which particular office and what jobs each should be assigned to. My first advice is not to appoint as manager one of those slaves who are physically attractive or someone out of the ranks of those who have performed specialised services in the city household. (2) This kind of slave is dedicated to sleep and idleness, and because he has been used to leisure, gymnastics, race-courses, theatres, dicing, wineshops and brothels, he dreams of this nonsense all the time; and when this sort of thing is applied to farming, the owner doesn't just lose the value of his slave, but of his whole property. You should choose someone who has been hardened to agricultural work from childhood and tested by experience. If there isn't anyone like this, you should put someone in charge who is already used to hard work as a slave. (3) He should no longer be a young man, since this will detract from his authority to command since old men don't like to obey some youngster; nor should he have reached old age yet, or he will not have the stamina for work of the most strenuous kind. He should be middle-aged and fit and know about agriculture, or at least be so dedicated that he will be able to learn quickly. There is no point in having one man in authority and someone else to point out what work has to be done, (4) as a man who is just learning from one of those under him what ought to be done and how to go about doing it won't really be able to insist that it gets done. Even someone who cannot read and write can supervise an estate properly, as long as he has a first-rate memory; Cornelius Celsus says that a manager of this kind brings his master money more often than he brings him his accounts; because he is illiterate he can't cook the figures so easily, and he won't dare to do so through a confederate who would know exactly what was going on. (5) Whomever you appoint as manager, you must allocate him a woman to live with him and keep him in check and also to help him in various things. The manager should also be told not to be on particularly good terms with any one of the slaves on the farm, let alone with anyone from outside. But occasionally he should confer a mark of distinction on any slave whom he sees working hard, and dedicated to the jobs assigned to him, by inviting him to eat with him on a feast day. He must not make any religious sacrifices except if the master has told him to. (6) He must not let fortune-tellers or sorceresses onto the farm; both of these types of silly superstition cause unsophisticated people to spend money and result in wrongdoing. He should not spend his time in the city or at markets except to buy or sell something which concerns him. (7) As Cato says, the manager should not go out a lot;

he should not go beyond the boundaries of the estate except to find out about some agricultural technique, and even then he should only go to places from which he can get back [on the same day]. He must not allow any new tracks or paths to be made on the estate; and he should not receive anyone as a guest unless he is a friend or close relative of his master.

(8) Those are the things he must be told to avoid; and he must be urged to make sure that twice as many metal tools and instruments are kept stored away in good condition as are required by the number of slaves, so that nothing will ever have to be borrowed from one of the neighbours; for the expense in terms of the slave's labour being lost outweighs the cost of providing such extra equipment. (9) He should dress and clothe the slaves in a functional rather than an attractive way, so that they are protected against storms, frost and rain; long-sleeved coats, patchwork cloaks and hoods afford protection against all of these. If they have these, the weather will never be so bad that there isn't some work they can do out in the open. (10) He should not merely be skilled at agricultural work; he should also have such personal qualities—insofar as this is possible in a slave—that he will exercise his authority neither carelessly nor brutally, and should always be giving encouragement to some of the better slaves, and should not be too hard on those who are less good, so that they will fear him for being severe rather than hate him for being cruel. He will achieve this if he keeps watch over those under his authority so that they don't do anything wrong, instead of finding that he has to punish delinquents as a result of his own incompetence. (11) There is no better way of controlling even the most worthless man than by insisting that he does his work, and that what is due should be completed; and by insisting that the manager is always at his post. In that way those who are responsible for particular jobs will be keen to carry out their tasks properly, and the other slaves will be so exhausted by their work that they will be more interested in rest and sleep than in fun and games.

(12) I approve of several excellent ancient precepts which are now no longer practised—that a manager should not ask one of his fellowslaves to do anything for him unless it is on the master's business; that he should take all his meals in the presence of the slaves and should be served with the same food as they. In this way he will make sure that the bread has been baked properly and that everything has been prepared hygienically. He should allow no one to leave the farm unless he has sent him himself, and he should not send anyone away unless it is absolutely necessary. (13) He should not do any business for himself and should not use his master's money on deals involving animals or anything else, as this sort of dealing distracts the manager's attention and will make it impossible for him to settle his accounts satisfactorily with his master because he will have stock instead of money. In general, you have to make absolutely sure that he does not think that he knows what he doesn't know, and that he should always try to learn about things he is ignorant of. (14) It is good to do something knowledgeably, but it does much

more harm to do it wrongly—for there is one single basic principle in agriculture, which is to do whatever needs doing just once; since everything has already been ruined if there was a mistake due to ignorance or incompetence which had to be put right, and things will not grow again later in such a way as to restore what was lost and produce profits to make up for the losses of the past.

The Labourers

(15) These are the rules which should be adhered to with regard to the other slaves; I do not regret having followed them myself. One should address those rural workers who have not behaved improperly in a friendly way more frequently than one would one's urban slaves. When I realised that such friendliness on the master's part relieved the burden of their continual labour, I often joked with them and allowed them to joke more freely. What I do quite often nowadays is discuss some new piece of work with them as though they were more knowledgeable than I am, and in this way I can find out what each one's attitude is and how intelligent he is. And I've noticed that they are much more willing to start a piece of work when they think that they've been consulted about it and that it was actually they who first suggested it.

(16) There are some things that every careful man recognises: that he must inspect the slaves in the farm prison (*ergastulum*) to check that they're properly bound and that the actual building where they are kept is sufficiently strong and whether the manager has either tied anyone up without the owner's knowledge or set him free. For the manager has to be absolutely obedient both in not setting free without the owner's permission anyone whom he has ordered to be punished in this way, and in not setting free before the master has found out about it anyone whom he has decided to chain up on his own initiative.

(17) The head of the household should inspect this type of slave correspondingly more carefully, and make sure that they are not being maltreated as regards clothing and other rations, in proportion as they are under the control of a greater number of superiors—managers, foremen and prison-keepers—and are more vulnerable to suffer injustice, and also become more dangerous if they have been badly treated as the result of anyone's sadism or greed. (18) That is why the master should ask both them and those who are not chained up (since these are more likely to be trusted) whether they are being treated in accordance with his instructions, and he must himself taste their food and drink to see that it is acceptable, and check their clothing, their fetters and their footwear. He must frequently give them an opportunity to complain about anyone who makes them suffer as a result of cruelty or dishonesty. I personally will sometimes punish those responsible for justifiable complaints in the same way as I will severely punish those who incite the slaves to disobedience or criticise their overseers slanderously; and conversely I will reward those who work hard and diligently. (19) I have also given the

mothers of large families—who ought to be honoured when they have had a certain number of children—freedom from work and sometimes even manumitted them when they had raised several children. If there were three children, they were exempted from work, if more, they got their freedom in addition. [This passage has been interpreted as evidence of systematic breeding of slaves in Roman times.] If the head of the household behaves justly and carefully in this way, he will find that his patrimony increases greatly. (20) He should also remember to worship the farm gods whenever he arrives from the city on a visit; and if there is time, he should start his tour of inspection at once, or otherwise on the next day, and visit every part of his estate and try to work out how much discipline and supervision have declined as a result of his absence, and whether there are any vines, trees or crops that are missing; and he must count his cattle, his slaves, the farm tools and the furniture. If he has made a habit of doing all these things over a period of many years, then discipline will remain good when he reaches old age, and, however infirm he becomes with the years, he will never be scorned by his slaves.

(Ch. 9.1) I should also say something about the kind of physical and mental faculties appropriate to each particular job. We should put men who are hard-working and utterly abstemious in charge of the flocks and herds. Each of these points is much more relevant to this particular job, since they will have to be continuously on the look-out and very skilled. (2) Intelligence is a necessary, but not a sufficient, quality for the ploughman, if a loud voice and large physique do not give him the necessary authority over his oxen. But he must be gentle as well as powerful; if the oxen are both to obey his commands and not be worn out by their work and by being beaten, and thus survive for longer, then he must terrify them rather than be brutal to them. I will deal with the tasks of shepherds and cowherds in greater detail elsewhere [books 7, 1–7 and 6, 1–26 respectively]. (3) All I want to say here is that strength and physique are irrelevant to these, but essential to ploughmen. Anyone who is particularly tall will become a ploughboy, both for the reason I mentioned just now, and because, of all agricultural activities, ploughing is least exhausting to a tall man, since he is able to stand up straight and rest his weight on the plough handle. A common labourer may be of any height whatsoever, as long as he is able to sustain hard work. (4) Vineyards do not need tall men, but rather broad and powerfully built ones, for they are better at digging and pruning and the other things required here. It is not so important as in other kinds of agricultural work that the men should be honest, since they will be working with others and under supervision; troublesome slaves are also often more intelligent, and this is what is needed in viticulture—the worker shouldn't just be strong, but also have good judgement. That is why vineyards are often worked by slaves in chains. (5) But there is nothing that a good man cannot do better than a bad man if he is as nimble—I have to add that, or someone might think that I preferred to work my land with dishonest rather than honest slaves.

It is also my view that the jobs done by different slaves should be kept separate, so that everyone doesn't do the same thing. (6) That is not to the farmer's advantage: no one thinks that any particular job is his own responsibility, and when he does work hard the advantage is everyone's and not specifically his, and as a result he avoids whatever work he can. And when work done by many has been done badly, it is impossible to identify who was responsible. That is why ploughmen must be kept distinct from vintagers and vintagers from ploughmen and both from ordinary labourers. (7) You should also form groups of not more than ten men each—our ancestors called them *decuriae* and were very much in favour of them, since it is particularly easy to keep watch over this number of men, while a larger crowd can escape the control of the overseer as he leads the way. (8) So if you have a large estate, you must assign these groups to different sections of it, and the work must be distributed in such a way that the men will not be on their own or in pairs, since they cannot be supervised properly if they are scattered all over the place; and conversely they must not be in groups of more than ten, since individuals will not consider that the work has anything to do with them personally if they are part of a large crowd. This system will induce them to compete with each other, and also identify those who are lazy. When a job becomes more interesting because there is an element of competition, then it will seem to be fair that those who don't pull their weight should be punished, and no one will complain about it.

150.

Varro, *Agriculture*, 2, 10

Some special problems arose as the result of using slaves as herdsmen or shepherds. This was a particularly undesirable occupation: not only was a herdsman exposed to the climate and the danger of attack by brigands and wild beasts, but he led a solitary life with long periods away from the centres of human activity and from his wife and home. Such a 'marginal' occupation tended to be left to low-status workers, and the Greeks too used slaves (see Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 1121ff.: AVN 78).

On the other hand, moving large herds of cattle from summer to winter pastures (transhumance) caused problems: while it was virtually impossible to supervise these slaves, they had to be physically strong and well armed to protect their flocks. In the second century BC, Italian ranching increased greatly in importance, partly because rich Romans leased estates confiscated from those Italian communities which had supported Hannibal (see No. 141 above), and partly because leather and other products were needed as military equipment in Rome's wars of expansion. It was not surprising that these herdsmen contributed to the de-stabilisation of Sicily (see No. 229, Ch. 27) and Italy (see No. 228), and continued to cause trouble later (No. 233).

(1) **Atticus:** We still have to discuss in this section how many and what kinds of herdsmen we should have.

Cossinius: For larger stock you need older men, for smaller stock even boys will do; but with regard to both groups, those who work along the cattle trails must be stronger than those who can go back to the farm-building on the estate every day—which is of course why you will see young men out in the cattle pastures, while not just boys but even young girls will be looking after the animals on the farm. (2) Those who look after animals should be required to spend the whole day pasturing their flocks, and have all the flocks feed together; on the other hand, everyone is to spend the night with his own flock. They should all be under the charge of a single Chief Herdsman; he should preferably be older and also more experienced than the others, since they will be more willing to obey someone who is older and more experienced than they are. (3) But he must not be so much older as to be unable to put up with hard work as a result of the infirmity of age. For neither old men nor boys easily put up with the hardships of the cattle trails along steep and rugged mountain sides; those who look after herds have to suffer these hardships, especially if they are herds of cattle or goats, which prefer rocky and wooded pastures. You should choose men of powerful physique, fast-moving and nimble, who aren't clumsy when they move their limbs, and aren't just able to follow after the flock but also to defend it from predatory beasts or brigands, who can lift loads up onto the backs of the pack animals, are good at sprinting and at hitting their target. (4) Not every race is good at looking after herds; neither Bastulans nor Turdulans [Spanish tribes] are suitable, but Gauls are particularly good at it, especially with beasts of burden.

As regards purchasing slaves, there are six ways of obtaining legitimate ownership:

1. by legal inheritance;
2. by acquiring him according to the proper forms by mancipatory purchase (*mancipio*) from someone who is legally entitled to sell;
3. when someone who is entitled to surrender the slave legally surrenders him under the proper circumstances (*in iure cessio*);
4. as a result of unchallenged possession (*usucapio*);
5. if he has bought him at an auction of war booty 'under the crown' (*sub corona*);
6. finally, when he has bought him as part of a property, or at a sale by auction (*sectio*) of property, confiscated by the State.

(5) When these persons are sold it is usual for the slave's savings (*peculium*) to go with him unless expressly excluded; and there is a guarantee that he is healthy and free from responsibility for any thefts or liability for any damage; alternatively, if the transaction is not by mancipatory purchase, there is a

guarantee of double the price paid, or of the simple purchase price if that is what has been agreed [see Nos. 104–5 above].

During the day the herdsman of each particular herd should eat his meals alone, but all of those who are under one Chief Herdsman should eat their supper together in the evening. The Chief Herdsman has to make sure that all the equipment needed by the flocks and the herdsmen follows after them, especially the food for the men and veterinary supplies for the animals. The owners keep pack animals for this purpose—sometimes mares, sometimes any other animal which is able to carry a load on its back.

(6) With regard to the breeding of children among herdsmen: there is no problem about those who stay on the farm all the time, since they have a slave woman with them on the estate, and this satisfies the sexual needs of the herdsman. But many people have thought it a good idea that women should be sent along with those who look after the animals on the cattle trails and in wooded country, and protect themselves from the rain with hastily constructed shelters rather than farm buildings; these women should follow the herds, prepare the herdsmen's meals and keep them busy at their work. Such women must be physically strong and not unattractive...

Here Varro digresses on the physical strength of these ladies, particularly in Illyricum, compared with pampered Roman matrons. He also says the Chief Herdsman must know writing; and there are some statistics about the number of herdsmen needed for different kinds of stock: one per 80–100 sheep (flocks usually consist of 700–800, sometimes up to 1,000 head; the proportion of shepherds can be reduced with larger flocks), and two men for 50 mares.

151.

Cato, Agriculture, 5

The manager was the key figure in maintaining productivity—especially if the landowner only rarely visited an estate: this was frequently the case at Rome, where the commitments of social and political life required his presence in the Forum.

Consequently, managers were treated as a special category of slave in theoretical analyses of household management as well as practical handbooks on agriculture. The earliest Latin one was written by Cato the Elder for the benefit of his son.

These will be the duties of the manager:

Let him keep strict discipline.

Let religious festivals be observed.

He must keep his hands off what doesn't belong to him, and look after what does properly.

He must sort out disputes amongst the slaves.

If anyone has done anything wrong, he must punish him fairly in proportion to the damage he has caused.

The slaves must not be badly treated or suffer from cold or hunger.

He must keep them hard at work to stop them getting involved in trouble or things that don't concern them.

If the manager doesn't want them to make trouble, they won't.

If he does let them make trouble, the master must not let him get away with it.

He must reward good work, so that the others have an incentive to work well too.

The manager must not be the kind of person who goes out a lots he must always be sober, he must never go out to dinner.

He must keep the slaves at their work and make sure that the master's orders are put into effect.

He must not think that he is wiser than his master.

His master's friends he must consider his own friends.

He must listen to whoever he is ordered to listen to.

He must not get involved in any religious activities except those at the crossroads during the festival of the Compitalia, and those at the household hearth.

He must lend no one money without his master's orders; and he must insist on repayment of any money his master has lent.

He must lend no one any seed, fodder, barley, wine or oil.

He should have two or three neighbouring households from whom to borrow things he needs, or to lend to, and no one else.

He should frequently go through the accounts with his master.

He must not employ the same day or wage-labourers for more than a day at a time.

He should not want to buy anything without the master's knowledge, nor to keep anything secret from the master.

He should not have any favourites.

He should have no desire to consult diviners, augurs, fortune-tellers or astrologers.

He must not be sparing with seed-corn, for that leads to disaster.

He must take pains to know how to carry out every agricultural operation, and must do so frequently, but never to the extent of tiring himself out. If he does this, he will find out the intentions of the slaves, and they will be more willing to do their work.

If he does these things, he will be less keen to go out, his health will be better and he will sleep better.

He must be the first to get out of bed, and the last to go to bed. Before that he must see that the farm is shut up, that everyone is asleep in their proper place. and that the animals are provided with fodder.

152.
ILS 7367

Virtually all the funerary inscriptions relating to slaves refer to those of the urban *familia*; of rural workers, only the managers generally had the means, the literacy and the motivation to perpetuate their memory.

There is one case from Teate Marrucinorum (Chieti near Pescara, on the east coast of Italy) of a rural slave gang honouring its manager.

HIPPOCRATI PLAUTI VILIC. FAMILIA RUST. QUIBUS IMPERAVIT MODESTE.

To Hippocrates, manager of Plautus; the rural slaves, over whom he exercised authority with moderation.

153.
ILS 7370

Sometimes a master or mistress would erect a monument at Rome to a good steward,

To the Spirits of the Dead. To Sabinianus, a manager and a good and most faithful person.
His mistress Memmia Juliana

154.
ILS 7372

An inscription from Atina in central Italy mentions the manageress as well.

Caius Obinius Epicadus, freedman of Caius, and Trebia Aprodisia, freedwoman of Caia, were managers here for fourteen years.

155.
Cicero, *Verrines* 2, 3.50

The extent of dependence upon the *vilicus* is expressed by the nightmare of the ‘bad steward’ (so frequent in the parables of the New Testament). In his prosecution of Verres, Roman governor of Sicily, for corruption, Cicero exploits the jury’s anxieties about their own managers by comparing Verres’ sale of the rights to collect state taxes, to a *vilicus* who sells part of the estate and pretends to his master that this represents an increase in the income.

(119) When this was what actually happened [i.e. corruption], do you dare state that you sold the 10 per cent tax at a high price—when it is clear that you sold the goods and fortunes of the farmers for your own profit instead of that of the Republic? It is as though some manager responsible for an estate which should have brought in an income of 10,000 Sesterces sent his master 20,000 rather than 10,000 by cutting down and selling all the trees, removing the

tiles, getting rid of all the equipment and stock—and pocketed an additional 100,000 Sesterces for himself. His master will at first be unaware of the damage he has suffered and will be pleased with his manager and delighted that the income from his farm has risen by such an extent; but afterwards, when he hears that all those things on which the cultivation and profits of a farm depend have been taken away and sold, he will inflict the most severe punishment on his manager and think that he has been extremely badly treated.

156.

Achilles Tattius, Leukippe and Kleitophon, 5, 17

When a landowner was away abroad for a long time, the manager's opportunities for indulging in speculation and less sophisticated vices were virtually unlimited. The handbooks advised an immediate tour of inspection on the master's return (see Nos. **135**, **149** and **202**). A Greek romance describes what a wealthy widow called Melite found her steward Sosthenes had been doing in her absence.

After a voyage of five more days, we landed at Ephesus. She owned a large house, one of the finest ones there, expensively equipped and with lots of slaves. She ordered a particularly splendid dinner to be prepared and said, 'Let us go and visit the fields in the meantime.' These were about half a mile from the city; so we climbed into a carriage and drove there. As soon as we got there, we were walking along the rows of flowers, when suddenly a woman bound with thick ropes and holding a pitchfork threw herself at our feet; her hair had been cut off, her body was unkempt and the tunic she was wearing was filthy. 'Pity me, Mistress,' she said, 'as one woman to another: I was born free, but now by Fortune's will I am a slave.' She fell silent, so Melite said, 'Get up woman. Tell me who you are, and where you are from, and who put those irons on you. For despite your misfortunes your appearance proclaims that you must be of good birth.'

'It's your slave, because I wouldn't be a slave to his bed. I'm Lakaina, a Thessalian by race. I lay this my fate before you in supplication. Free me from the disaster in which I find myself. Give me some protection until I can pay you two thousand—for that was what Sosthenes paid the pirates for me. I guarantee that I can get hold of it very quickly; if I can't, I shall serve you as a slave [until the debt is paid off]. You can see with how many stripes he has beaten me'—here she undid her tunic and showed how her back had been horribly scarred. I was very moved by this story; she reminded me a little of Leukippe.

Melite said, 'Don't worry, woman. We'll free you from these bonds and send you home without requiring any compensation. Let someone go and call Sosthenes to us.'

So she was immediately freed from her bonds, and he arrived in great confusion. Melite said to him: 'You evil man, which even of my most useless

slaves have you ever seen degraded in this way by me? Who is this woman? Tell me, and don't you dare lie to me.'

'All I know, Mistress, is that a trader called Kallisthenes sold her to me; he said he had bought her from pirates, but that she was free. [We are told that this man was the 'regular' slave-trader (*emporos syn th s*) of the pirates: 8, 16.7.] The trader said that her name was Lakaina.'

She demoted him on the spot from his position as manager, and gave the girl to the women who attended to her, telling them to give her a bath and dress her in fresh clothes and take her to the city. Then when she had made all the other arrangements regarding her fields, which was why she had gone there, she got back into the carriage with me, and we returned to the city and sat down to dinner.

157.

Columella, 12, 3

The manager's wife also had a role to play in ensuring that an estate produced a profitable income for its owner. Columella's account shows that when rural slaves fell ill, they they were not always treated as harshly as Cato's statements (No. 202 below) might imply; it also illustrates the ideal that a farm should be as self-sufficient as possible (for example, as regards clothing).

(6) In rainy weather and at times when the woman cannot do any agricultural work in the open because of cold or frost, she is to occupy herself with woolwork. To enable her to get on with the job of spinning and weaving and to make the others do it as well, wool should be prepared and ready-carded. It will do no harm if clothing for herself and the overseers and the other senior slaves is made at home in order to reduce the owner's expenses. (7) What she must continually be careful about is to go round once the slaves have left the farmhouse and look for anyone who ought to be out working in the fields; and if she finds any malingerer inside, who has escaped the notice of her husband, as can happen, she must ask why he is not at work and find out whether he has stayed behind because he feels ill or because he is lazy. If she finds that this is the case, she must immediately take him to the hospital, even if he is only pretending to be ill; for it is worthwhile letting someone exhausted by his work take a day or two off and look after him, rather than force him to work excessively so that he really does become ill.

(8) Finally, she ought to stay in any one place as little as possible; her job is not to sit still, but sometimes to go to the loom and teach the person working there any particular skill she has, or learn some such skill from someone who knows more than she does; sometimes she should go and see those who are preparing the slaves' food; she must make sure that the kitchens, the cowsheds and not least the pens are properly cleaned; she should occasionally go and open up the sickroom, even if there aren't any patients there, and clean it so that it is in an orderly and healthy state to receive anyone who may fall ill.

