

The 4th century military manual by Vegetius was the most influential work of its kind from the middle ages through the 17th century. The first translation in English was done in 1408 for Richard III, but the first appearance in print of a translation was this 1572 edition. The translator was John Sadler, whose work was encouraged by the amateur historian, Sir Edmund Brudenell. According to the Dictionary of National Biography, Brudenell, “thought it was high time Vegetius’s study of Roman military methods as the means to empire was made available to all Englishmen. His wise and prudent consuls for all governors and captains, having already been most diligently translated by not only the Italians, the Germans, and the French, but also by many other nations.” The woodcuts, which are a major part of the value here, are copied from the 1511 Erefort edition. The provenance of this copy is important, too. It belonged to Thomas Fremantle, who put together what is considered the most extensive collection of early printed books focused on military matters. There are many early editions of Vegetius, but our first English edition is extremely rare. The last complete copy we were able to trace at auction was 1967. When a book is this rare, a collector often times has to be very forgiving, and be willing to accept a copy that is not in very good condition. But the present copy is extremely nice. It’s in an unworn Riviere binding, it has extremely wide margins, and although it’s possible that the text has been pressed and perhaps even lightly washed, especially the title page, the interior is very fresh, it’s very crisp, and the copy is altogether agreeable.