

Steel 64

Chapter 64: Supplying the Militia

Berengar was currently standing in one of his many Nitreries, formed to produce Saltpeter from common manure. It was the primary ingredient in the creation of gunpowder and was very rare in Europe as a naturally occurring substance. However, with the knowledge he gained from his previous life, which was far more advanced than this world, he knew of a way to create it from manure, ash, plant greens, and of course, cow urine. Though this was an extensive process, and as such, he had been relying on the trade networks throughout to import the material for the use in his militia's weapons.

However, after nearly four months of producing the material, his first batch of homegrown saltpeter was about to come to fruition. Since he initially constructed his industrial district, he had set aside an area to produce potassium nitrate, also known as saltpeter. These facilities were called nitreries. With an ever-increasing demand for gunpowder, he had expanded his nitreries throughout the industrial sector and even into dedicated plots of land outside the burgeoning town.

Though the process was simple; it took a lot of time to complete; essentially, one would create a waterproof mixture of manure, green plant matter, and ash. From there, they would make sure it was covered in a stable environment with limited sunlight and pour the cow urine on the mixture once a week for three to four months. Eventually, yellow crystals would form, be skimmed out of the mixture, and then placed into a bucket with holes in the bottom with a paper filter. The remainder of the bucket would be filled 3/4s of the way with the leftover pile and have boiling water poured into it until the pile was gone.

This process would be repeated until all of the saltpeter could be harvested, where it would then be mixed with charcoal and sulfur to make black powder. Now was finally the day when his armies no longer had to rely on expensive imports of the rare material and could produce it themselves in a constantly growing capacity. Truthfully Berengar pitied the men who had to work in the nitreries at it seemed like a filthy job to him, but it was entirely necessary, and thus they were paid very well for their labor.

There was a gaze of pride on Berengar's face as he saw the results of his efforts and was greatly pleased by them. He congratulated the men on their first successful batch of the substance.

"Men, you have done an amazing job these last few months, and I hereby award you all with a 10% raise to your salaries. Keep up the excellent work, and more rewards are sure to come!"

The men who engaged in such dirty work were truly ecstatic when they heard they were given a raise for their performances. All of their hard work had paid off. However, they could not become complacent and needed to begin preparing the next batch. A continuous supply of the substance was necessary for Berengar to wage war in the most efficient manner possible.

Thus Berengar left the men to their work as he returned to his other enterprises. Berengar noticed that the men beneath his command were currently running drills as per usual. There was a constant influx of recruits within the Militia, which acted more as a National Guard than an Army at the moment. Despite, some of the men in his militia being inducted into the Town Guard full time. The majority of them only trained on weekends after completing basic and specialized training.

Currently, his militia had reached his goal of roughly 1000 foot soldiers in 6 companies, as well as two full Artillery batteries filled with a total of 12 field guns and 300 men. He was one Artillery battery away from fielding a full Artillery Battalion. A feat which he would desire to achieve shortly. However, it would be some time yet until he could achieve it.

Berengar had gone through great expense to acquire a sufficient supply of warhorses, something his region was desperately lacking. As such, he currently only had a company of 80 Cavalrymen, though he had initially decided to use Demi-Lancers, ultimately he had changed his mind after he considered the fact that for now, he would be fighting medieval armies, without any significant access to gunpowder. As such he decided to go with the extremely effective cuirassiers which would be capable of breaking any spear formations with their pistols, before charging them down with their sabers. This elite unit of heavy cavalry was equipped in three quarter's plate armor, with an enclosed burgonet, and a pair of gauntlets. The weapons they wielded were a pair of pistols, as well as a dussack sword

Recognizing his dire need for warhorses, Berengar had begun a breeding program for species such as coursers. Still, it would be years before he could see the results in any significant capacity. Thus, for now, all he could do was import the horses to his region at a high cost. Luckily for him, his family was now extraordinarily wealthy due to the steel and textile trades. Many noblemen were willing to pay a premium to get their hands on such a large quantity of steel for use in their armies. Completely unaware that against Berengar's forces, mass equipping your forces with steel brigandine and plate was useless, but then again, they never expected Berengar to have such lofty ambitions.

After overseeing the militia exercises, Berengar returned to his home, where he sat in his father's study with a liter of beer in his hands, slowly going over the remaining paperwork for the day. Tomorrow Adela would depart from his land, and he would not be able to see his little fiancée's adorable face for some time. At least he would be able to visit her for her birthday in a few months, speaking of which he should probably have some exquisite jewelry made for her to show his affection. After thinking about such things, he spent the remainder of his nightly work drafting plans for a ludicrously expensive set of jewels for his beloved.