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# War Commentaries 古典

DE BELLO GALLICO and DE BELLO CIVILI

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY  
JOHN WARRINGTON



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## CAIUS JULIUS CAESAR

Born in 102 B.C. Consul in Rome in 60 B.C., and formed a triumvirate with Pompey and Crassus. Campaigns in Gaul and Britain, 60-51 B.C. On death of Crassus and Pompey, Caesar became dictator. Murdered in 44 B.C.

*EVERYMAN, I will go with thee,  
and be thy guide,  
In thy most need to go by thy side*

TO  
ALFRED ARNOLD  
HOMINI CONIUNCTISSIMO

## INTRODUCTION

I. The year 102 B.C., in which Gaius Julius Caesar was born,<sup>1</sup> was one of destiny. It was the year in which his uncle Marius, at the head of an army lately reorganized, annihilated the Teutones at Aix. It also inaugurated a period in the struggle between the popular and aristocratic parties, during which the interests of the republic yielded to the ambitions of a few powerful men, who, espousing the aims of political parties only to establish their own fortunes and authority, and relying upon armed force to achieve those ends, gave the final blow to a constitution already tottering to its fall.

The Social War (91-87 B.C.) was followed by the contest between Marius and Sulla, leaders respectively of the *populares* and *optimates*; and that bitter conflict (88-78) marked the beginning of more than half a century of civil strife. Sulla's dictatorship (81-79) ended temporarily the party struggles; but much of his constitution was abolished after his death, during a popular reaction led by Pompey and Crassus.

In the meantime Caesar had grown to manhood. According to Suetonius, whose account, though written perhaps one hundred and fifty years later, there seems no cause to doubt, Caesar was tall and pale, with full lips and dark piercing eyes. Scrupulous about his appearance, he attempted to conceal his premature baldness. He saw military service in Asia and Cilicia between 83 and 78 and was decorated for bravery at the storming of Mytilene under Minucius Thermus in 80. In that year also he was prominent among those who opposed the Sullan constitution; and in 77 he made his name at the Roman Bar, when he prosecuted Dolabella and established his reputation as an orator second only to Cicero.

In 68 he was quaestor in Spain; and in the following year Pompey left for the East, where for the next five years he conducted a number of successful campaigns, annexed Bithynia, Pontus, and Syria, and settled Judaea. During his term as aedile in 65 Caesar, an avowed supporter of the *populares*,

<sup>1</sup> This is the most probable date assigned by Mommsen. The traditional date is 100, and Carcopino argues for 101.

almost ruined himself by his prodigality in staging public games, and soon found himself indebted to Pompey's rival, the wealthy financier Marcus Licinius Crassus. In consequence of this association he was suspected of complicity in the first Catilinarian conspiracy; and in 63 he still further enraged the *optimates* by his election as pontifex maximus and by his planning, together with Crassus and at Pompey's expense, the agrarian measures which, proposed by the tribune Rullus, failed to become law owing to the vehement opposition of Cicero.

In 62 Pompey returned triumphant from the East, his sympathies no longer with the *populares*; but he disbanded his army, and thereby sacrificed an opportunity of establishing himself in power. The Senate, however, refused to provide land for his veterans or to ratify his Eastern settlement, and so alienated his support. Caesar meanwhile had served his term of office as praetor (62) and in 61 was governor of Further (i.e. Western) Spain, where he won a number of successes against the Lusitanians and made good his financial losses of four years earlier. Returning in 60, he asked leave of the Senate to stand for the consulate. Permission was refused. Accordingly, he formed with Pompey and Crassus the First Triumvirate in opposition to the Senate, secured the consulate for the year 59, and gave his daughter Julia<sup>1</sup> in marriage to Pompey.

The year 59 was one of the most momentous in the history of Western Europe, for it witnessed the *Lex Vatinia*, which conferred on Caesar, for five years as from March 58, the government of Cisalpine Gaul<sup>2</sup> and Illyricum, to which the senate added Transalpine Gaul,<sup>3</sup> with four legions, a quaestor, and a staff of five (soon increased to ten) *legati*. He started for his province early in 58, and was soon engaged in that series of brilliant campaigns, of which he has left us an

<sup>1</sup> Caesar married thrice: first, Cornelia, daughter of Lucius Cinna in 84; his refusal to divorce her on Sulla's orders nearly cost him his head. Second, Pompeia, Sulla's granddaughter, in 67; divorced in 61 as not 'above suspicion.' Third, Calpurnia, daughter of Lucius Piso Caesoninus, in 59. Julia was his daughter by Cornelia.

<sup>2</sup> Northern Italy between the Alps and the Apennines.

<sup>3</sup> Languedoc, Dauphiné, and Provence. After Caesar's conquests it included the whole area bounded by the Rhine, the Ocean, the Pyrénées, and the Mediterranean.



account in the *De Bello Gallico*. He used, however, to return for a period each year to Northern Italy after settling his troops in winter quarters; and on one such visit, in April 56, he met his colleagues at Lucca; the Triumvirate was renewed, and his own command extended for another five years as from 55 B.C. However, in 54 Julia died, and a year later Crassus was slain at Carrhae. The alliance of Pompey with Caesar, founded on personal interest and cemented only by a short-lived marriage, began quickly to dissolve. Both were ambitious: Pompey was jealous of his colleague's success in Gaul and of his renown as a commander in the field; nor did Caesar intend to lay down his office and risk the malice of his enemies. A crisis was at hand.

The conference of Lucca had conferred upon Pompey and Crassus the consulate for 55, and a five years' *imperium*<sup>1</sup> from that date. In 52 Pompey's *imperium* was prolonged for yet another five years. The senatorial party had determined to be revenged on Caesar, and constitutional arguments were adduced to cover the hatred that invariably follows superior intelligence and material success: for if Caesar was a threat to the republic, the republic was already in the throes of death, unequal to honest administration and unworthy of empire. A small clique, led by Marcus Porcius Cato, resolved that as soon as Caesar's command expired in November 49 they would prosecute him for treason or extortion. Now according to Roman law an interval of ten years was required to elapse between a consul's one term of office and the next. Caesar would therefore be entitled to stand for election in 49: if elected he would be legally immune from prosecution, and it was therefore decided to recall him before the expiry of his command. Pompey's support was indispensable to effect this measure, and it was urgently solicited. After temporizing throughout the years 51 and 50 he consented, and the die was cast. On the night of 11 January 49 B.C. Caesar crossed the Rubicon.

In his unfinished work, *De Bello Civili*, we have an account of those wonderful campaigns in Italy, Spain, Epirus, and the crowning glory of Pharsalus, down to November 48. Having established his mistress, Cleopatra, on the throne of

<sup>1</sup> Supreme administrative power, including military command and right to interpret the laws. Pompey's province was Spain, but he governed by proxy.

Egypt, and defeated Pharnaces of Pontus at Zela (47), he returned to Rome: but early next year he went to Africa to meet a new threat from the combined forces of Metellus Scipio and King Juba I of Numidia. They were annihilated at Thapsus, after a campaign of only four months, and Caesar celebrated four triumphs in honour of his Gallic, Alexandrian, Pontic, and African successes. The final struggle ended with the victory at Munda, over the sons of Pompey and Labienus (45): Caesar was master of the Roman world, emperor in all but name, and the republic had passed away for ever. Less than a year later, on the Ides of March 44 B.C., he lay murdered at the foot of Pompey's statue.

We cannot enter here into Caesar's administration during the brief period of his supremacy, for the Commentaries are concerned almost exclusively with his military enterprises. Lucan has described him in a famous line:

'Nil actum credens cum quid superesset agendum.'

Endowed with marvellous energy of mind and body, he was an able and astute politician; and his measures were conceived on a popular basis with a certain breadth of view. Yet we must hesitate to call him a statesman of the first rank: for there is evidence to suggest either that he aimed to make Rome a totalitarian state, or that he was an opportunist—both signs of weakness rather than of strength in the sphere of government.

II. The military genius of Caesar, unsurpassed in the ancient world, is evident upon every page of the Commentaries; and certain questions will occur to the student of his campaigns, answers to which are essential to a proper understanding of the nature and the magnitude of his achievement.

First, then, as to the organization of Caesar's army, which was the main instrument of his rise to power. It was substantially the same as that instituted by Marius, who substituted voluntary enlistment for conscription on a property basis, and established an army more closely attached to, because more directly dependent on, its commander-in-chief.

The largest military unit was the legion, normally consisting, though often much below strength, of 6,000 men in ten cohorts. The cohort of 600 men was the principal unit: it finds an almost exact modern equivalent in the battalion, and has been so translated in the following pages. Each cohort

was made up of three maniples of two centuries apiece. On active service one or more cohorts might be detached for various duties. Enlistment was for twenty years; equipment was uniform; and pay was raised by Caesar from 120 denarii to 225 denarii (about £7 10s.) a year, less a deduction for rations.

The legionary officers have no exact modern counterparts. The commander-in-chief (*imperator*) had (a) a quaestor, who combined the duties of chief of staff and quartermaster-general; (b) a staff (varying in number) of *legati*, of senatorial rank, whom, according to the context, I have described either as staff officers, officers of general rank, or legionary commanders. It was Caesar himself who first placed each legion under the immediate command of a *legatus*, though it should be noted that not every *legatus* was at all times so employed; (c) the *tribuni militum*, of equestrian rank, of whom there were six to each legion, were used by Caesar to command cohorts, groups of cohorts, and even ships. I have described them generally as battalion commanders; (d) under them were the centurions, officers who had risen from the ranks, and upon whom the general principally relied in battle; each of them commanded a century, so that there were 60 to the legion. The senior centurion, often mentioned by Caesar, was he who commanded the leading century in the first maniple of No. 1 cohort.

Attached to the legion were units of auxiliary horse and foot, recruited outside Italy and commanded by *praefecti*, some of whom were native officers. The cavalry was mainly from Germany, Gaul, and Spain; the infantry were light-armed troops, e.g. slingers and archers.

The commander-in-chief was responsible not only for handling these units in camp, on the march, and on the battlefield. He had also to arrange his own commissariat and communications; he received no strategic directives from his government: and in place of maps he had to rely upon native guides. A perusal of Caesar's narrative reveals on the one hand that both he and his men had powers of physical endurance, which to-day may well appear incredible. It likewise proves his mastery in every branch of the science of war. The devotion of his troops is evident throughout, and his marvellous ability to handle soldiers under the most difficult and trying circumstances is perhaps nowhere better

shown than at the siege of Bourges, and in the astonishing operations immediately after Pharsalus.

But if the loyalty and affection of his men were due mainly to his own personality and to his sincere interest in their welfare, that loyalty and affection were strengthened and confirmed by his success: for as he himself remarks, soldiers have no use for a failure. What then were Caesar's outstanding qualities in the field? 'Swiftiness (*celeritas*) always and everywhere; discipline tempered with understanding of the fallible human element, but unbending towards cowardice and rebellion; clemency towards the defeated.

III. The first seven books of the *De Bello Gallico* were probably written during the winter of 52-51 B.C. at Bibracte, and published early in the latter year. The eighth book was added by Aulus Hirtius some time before his own death in 43. Caesar had not to rely entirely upon his memory, for he had access not only to his own private papers and his dispatches to the Senate, which were still extant when Suetonius wrote, but also to reports from his lieutenants and others. It is likewise possible that in such technical descriptions as those of the Rhine bridge (*Bell. Gall.* IV) and the fort, etc., at Marseilles (*Bell. Civ.* II) he had the assistance of Lucius Cornelius Balbus, his chief engineer. The *De Bello Civili*, which carries us down only to the Alexandrian episode,<sup>1</sup> besides being incomplete as an account of the Civil War, is a less carefully finished work: a mere sketch, perhaps destined for ultimate revision, composed in short intervals of leisure after Thapsus and Munda, and certainly not published by Caesar. Cicero<sup>2</sup> and Hirtius,<sup>3</sup> indeed, suggest that even the *De Bello Gallico* was intended rather as material for future historians. The critics of antiquity, no less than those of our own day, regarded Caesar as among the supreme exponents of the Latin language: his style is simple and straightforward, with scarcely a trace of rhetoric and scarcely an expression of opinion. The *De Bello Civili* has the same lucid style—the account of Pharsalus, for instance, is a masterpiece—but it

<sup>1</sup> The story was completed by others: *Bellum Alexandrinum* (including the campaign in Asia Minor), probably by Hirtius; *Bellum Africanum*; and *Bellum Hispaniense*, written by an eyewitness, who was, however, wonderfully dull-witted.

<sup>2</sup> *Brutus*, 75.

<sup>3</sup> *De Bell. Gall.* VIII.

is in some sense a political pamphlet offering numerous observations upon friend and foe alike.

IV. The manuscripts of the Commentaries are divided into two groups, and vary in date from the ninth to the twelfth century. The first group contains the *De Bello Gallico* only. The second includes also the *De Bello Civili*, of which it is the only source; but the text presents a veritable *crux criticorum*. The present translation is based on the following editions: *De Bello Gallico*, edited by F. Kraner and W. Dittenberger, revised by H. Meusel, 1913-20; *De Bello Civili*, edited by F. Kraner and F. Hofmann, revised by H. Meusel, 1906.

The structure of the Latin language and the Latin idiom do not lend themselves to what is generally called a literal translation. The long complicated sentences must be broken down, and some means must be found to deal with reported speech within reported speech. Briefly the original must be rendered as faithfully as possible in our modern idiom. I have therefore endeavoured to present the Commentaries in the vigorous English of to-day.

Caesar, following a convention, and not because of any Olympian aloofness, wrote in the third person. I have allowed him to speak directly in the first person: the narrative becomes thereby more vivid, and difficulties in reported speech are overcome. As the version is intended mainly for those who cannot read Latin, I have not hesitated to elucidate obscurities by paraphrase, and in one place, in the third book of the Civil War, to transpose the order of some chapters. To avoid an excessive use of footnotes I have given all units of money, weights, and measures their modern English equivalents in the text; and in order that the reader may not have constantly to refer to maps, I have given all places, when possible, their modern names, e.g. *Avaricum*=Bourges; *in finibus Haeduorum* (lit. in the territory of the Aedui)=in Burgundy. In such cases, however, the Latin appears, at least on the first occasion, in a footnote.

If the present volume is less helpful than a more 'literal' translation to young students in their efforts to construe I will only say that such is not its primary purpose, and express at the same time a hope that its perusal may give life to what is too often made for them a lifeless task.

J. W.

## NOTE TO THE 1965 REPRINT

I HAVE taken this opportunity to correct a few misprints. Two alterations should be noted: (1) Since the first publication of this volume, further study of the text and of the ground has convinced me that the defeat of Ariovistus (pp. 26-8) took place not in the vicinity of Mülhausen, but on the River Fecht. (2) I am likewise convinced that Atuatuca (pp. 81-86) cannot be identified with Tongres.

I must crave indulgence for my rendering of the heavy Roman *pilum* as 'pike'. This word normally denotes a thrusting weapon, whereas the *pilum* was thrown; but I have used 'pike' to distinguish it from the much lighter 'javelin' or 'spear'.

J. W.

1965.

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# THE GALLIC WARS

## BOOK I: 58 B.C.

### GEOGRAPHICAL AND RACIAL DIVISIONS OF GAUL

GAUL consists of three distinct regions, inhabited respectively by the Belgae, the Aquitani, and a people who call themselves Celts, but are known to us as Galli. The boundary between these latter and the Aquitani is the river Garonne, the Marne and Seine forming the Gallo-Belgic frontier. Variations in custom, language, and law distinguish these three peoples of whom the sturdiest are the Belgae. They are remote from the Roman Province, they have infrequent trade contacts with its high culture and refinement, and thus remain unaffected by influences which tend to effeminate character. They are, moreover, constantly at war with the Germans, whose country lies beyond the Rhine. Among the Galli no people is more formidable than the Helvetii: they too are engaged in almost ceaseless hostilities, offensive or defensive, against the Germans.

### CONSPIRACY OF ORGETORIX, 61 B.C.

At the time of which I write, by far the wealthiest and most distinguished of the Helvetii was a man named Orgetorix, the goal of whose consuming ambition was nothing less than supreme power. In the consulship of Messala and Piso [61 B.C.] he conspired with his fellow chieftains and persuaded the whole people to migrate. He argued that with their superior military skill they could make short work of subjugating the whole of Gaul; and his inducements were the more acceptable because of the narrow geographical limits of their territory. On one side a great river, the Rhine, barred them from Germany; on another the lofty Jura range stood between them and the Sequani; and they were cut off on a third side from the Roman Province by the Lake of Geneva and the Rhône. In these circumstances their movements were restricted. To launch an attack across their frontiers