

# **Julius Caesar's War Commentaries**

Book 8

# Table of Contents

<u>Julius Caesar's War Commentaries</u> .....	1
<u>Book 8</u> .....	1

# Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

## Book 8

Translated by W. A. McDevitte and W. S. Bohn

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

Preface to book 8

[8.0]Prevailed on by your continued solicitations, Balbus, I have engaged in a most difficult task, as my daily refusals appear to plead not my inability, but indolence, as an excuse. I have compiled a continuation of the Commentaries of our Caesar's Wars in Gaul, not indeed to be compared to his writings, which either precede or follow them; and recently, I have completed what he left imperfect after the transactions in Alexandria, to the end, not indeed of the civil broils, to which we see no issue, but of Caesar's life. I wish that those who may read them could know how unwillingly I undertook to write them, as then I might the more readily escape the imputation of folly and arrogance, in presuming to intrude among Caesar's writings. For it is agreed on all hands, that no composition was ever executed with so great care, that it is not exceeded in elegance by these Commentaries, which were published for the use of historians, that they might not want memoirs of such achievements; and they stand so high in the esteem of all men, that historians seem rather deprived of, than furnished with material. At which we have more reason to be surprised than other men; for they can only appreciate the elegance and correctness with which he finished them, while we know with what ease and expedition. Caesar possessed not only an uncommon flow of language and elegance of style, but also a thorough knowledge of the method of conveying his ideas. But I had not even the good fortune to share in the Alexandrian or African war; and though these were partly communicated to me by Caesar himself, in conversation, yet we listen with a different degree of attention to those things which strike us with admiration by their novelty, and those which we design to attest to posterity. But, in truth, while I urge every apology, that I may not be compared to Caesar, I incur the charge of vanity, by thinking it possible that I can in the judgment of any one be put in competition with him. Farewell.

---

Book 8 — (51–50 B.C.)

[8.1]Gaul being entirely reduced, when Caesar having waged war incessantly during the former summer, wished to recruit his soldiers after so much fatigue, by repose in winter quarters, news was brought him that several states were simultaneously renewing their hostile intention, and forming combinations. For which a probable reason was assigned; namely, that the Gauls were convinced that they were not able to resist the Romans, with any force they could collect in one place; and hoped that if several states made war in different places at the same time, the Roman army would neither have aid, nor time, nor forces, to prosecute them all: nor ought any single state to decline any inconveniences that might befall them, provided that by such delay, the rest should be enabled to assert their liberty.

[8.2]That this notion might not be confirmed among the Gauls, Caesar left Marcus Antonius, his questor, in charge of his quarters, and set out himself with a guard of horse, the day before the kalends of January, from the town Bibracte, to the thirteenth legion, which he had stationed in the country of the Bituriges, not far from the territories of the Aedui, and joined to it the eleventh legion which was next it. Leaving two cohorts to guard the baggage, he leads the rest of his army into the most plenti guard of horse, the day before the kalends of January,

## Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

from the town Bibracte, to the thirteenth legion, which he had stationed in the country of the Bituriges, not far from the territories of the Aedui, and joined to it the eleventh legion which was next it. Leaving two cohorts to guard the baggage, he leads the rest of his army into the most plentiful part of the country of the Bituriges; who, possessing an extensive territory and several towns, were not to be deterred, by a single legion quartered among them, from making warlike preparation, and forming combinations.

[8.3]By Caesar's sudden arrival, it happened, as it necessarily must, to an unprovided and dispersed people, that they were surprised by our horse, while cultivating the fields without any apprehensions, before they had time to fly to their towns. For the usual sign of an enemy's invasion, which is generally intimated by the burning of their towns, was forbidden by Caesar's orders; lest if he advanced far, forage and corn should become scarce, or the enemy be warned by the fires to make their escape. Many thousands being taken, as many of the Bituriges as were able to escape the first coming of the Romans, fled to the neighboring states, relying either on private friendship, or public alliance. In vain; for Caesar, by hasty marches, anticipated them in every place, nor did he allow any state leisure to consider the safety of others, in preference to their own. By this activity, he both retained his friends in their loyalty, and by fear, obliged the wavering to accept offers of peace. Such offers being made to the Bituriges, when they perceived that through Caesar's clemency, an avenue was open to his friendship, and that the neighboring states had given hostages, without incurring any punishment, and had been received under his protection, they did the same.

[8.4]Caesar promises his soldiers, as a reward for their labor and patience, in cheerfully submitting to hardships from the severity of the winter, the difficulty of the roads, and the intolerable cold, two hundred sesterii each, and to every centurian two thousand, to be given instead of plunder: and sending his legions back to quarters, he himself returned on the fortieth day to Bibracte. While he was dispensing justice there, the Bituriges send ambassadors to him, to entreat his aid against the Carnutes, who they complained had made war against them. Upon this intelligence, though he had not remained more than eighteen days in winter quarters, he draws the fourteenth and sixth legion out of quarters on the Saone, where he had posted them as mentioned in a former Commentary, to procure supplies of corn. With these two legions he marches in pursuit of the Carnutes.

[8.5]When the news of the approach of our army reached the enemy, the Carnutes, terrified by the suffering of other states, deserted their villages and towns (which were small buildings, raised in a hurry, to meet the immediate necessity, in which they lived to shelter themselves against the winter, for, being lately conquered, they had lost several towns), and dispersed and fled. Caesar, unwilling to expose his soldiers to the violent storms that break out, especially at that season, took up his quarters at Genabum, a town of the Carnutes; and lodged his men in houses, partly belonging to the Gauls, and partly built to shelter the tents, and hastily covered with thatch. But the horse and auxiliaries he sends to all parts to which he was told the enemy had marched; and not without effect, as our men generally returned loaded with booty. The Carnutes, overpowered by the severity of the winter, and the fear of danger, and not daring to continue long in any place, as they were driven from their houses, and not finding sufficient protection in the woods, from the violence of the storms, after losing a considerable number of their men, disperse, and take refuge among the neighboring states.

[8.6]Caesar, being contented, at so severe a season, to disperse the gathering foes, and prevent any new war from breaking out, and being convinced, as far as reason could foresee, that no war of consequence could be set on foot in the summer campaign, stationed Caius Trebonius, with the two legions which he had with him, in quarters at Genabum: and being informed by frequent embassies from the Remi, that the Bellovaci (who exceed all the Gauls and Belgae in military prowess), and the neighboring states, headed by Correus, one of the Bellovaci, and Comius, the Atrebatian, were raising an army, and assembling at a general rendezvous, designing with their united forces to invade the territories of the Suessiones, who were put under the patronage of the Remi: and moreover, considering that not only his honor, but his interest was concerned, that such of his allies, as deserved well of the republic, should suffer no calamity; he again draws the eleventh legion out of quarters, and writes besides to Caius Fabius, to march with his two legions to the country of the Suessiones; and he sends to Trebonius for one of his two legions. Thus, as far as the convenience of the quarters, and the management of the war admitted, he laid the burden of the expedition on the legions by turns, without any intermission to his own toils.

[8.7]As soon as his troops were collected, he marched against the Bellovaci: and pitching his camp in their territories, detached troops of horse all round the country, to take prisoners, from whom he might learn the

## Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

enemy's plan. The horse, having executed his orders bring him back word, that but few were found in the houses: and that even these had not stayed at home to cultivate their lands (for the emigration was general from all parts) but had been sent back to watch our motions. Upon Caesar's inquiring from them, where the main body of the Bellovaci were posted, and what was their design: they made answer, "that all the Bellovaci, fit for carrying arms, had assembled in one place, and along with them the Ambiani, Aulerci, Caletes, Velocasses, and Atrebatas, and that they had chosen for their camp, an elevated position, surrounded by a dangerous morass: that they had conveyed all their baggage into the most remote woods: that several noblemen were united in the management of the war; but that the people were most inclined to be governed by Correus, because they knew that he had the strongest aversion to the name of the Roman people: that a few days before Comius had left the camp to engage the Germans to their aid whose nation bordered on theirs, and whose numbers were countless: that the Bellovaci had come to a resolution, with the consent of all the generals and the earnest desire of the people, if Caesar should come with only three legions, as was reported, to give him battle, that they might not be obliged to encounter his whole army on a future occasion, when they should be in a more wretched and distressed condition; but if he brought a stronger force, they intended to remain in the position they had chosen, and by ambuscade to prevent the Romans from getting forage (which at that season was both scarce and much scattered), corn, and other necessaries.

[8.8]When Caesar was convinced of the truth of this account from the concurring testimony of several persons, and perceived that the plans which were proposed were full of prudence, and very unlike the rash resolves of a barbarous people, he considered it incumbent on him to use every exertion, in order that the enemy might despise his small force and come to an action. For he had three veteran legions of distinguished valor, the seventh, eighth and ninth. The eleventh consisted of chosen youth of great hopes, who had served eight campaigns, but who, compared with the others, had not yet acquired any great reputation for experience and valor. Calling therefore a council, and laying before it the intelligence which he had received, he encouraged his soldiers. In order if possible to entice the enemy to an engagement by the appearance of only three legions, he ranged his army in the following manner, that the seventh, eighth, and ninth legions should march before all the baggage; that then the eleventh should bring up the rear of the whole train of baggage (which however was but small, as is usual on such expeditions), so that the enemy could not get a sight of a greater number than they themselves were willing to encounter. By this disposition he formed his army almost into a square, and brought them within sight of the enemy sooner than was anticipated.

[8.9]When the Gauls, whose bold resolutions had been reported to Caesar, saw the legions advance with a regular motion, drawn up in battle array; either from the danger of an engagement, or our sudden approach, or with the design of watching our movements, they drew up their forces before the camp, and did not quit the rising ground. Though Caesar wished to bring them to battle, yet being surprised to see so vast a host of the enemy, he encamped opposite to them, with a valley between them, deep rather than extensive. He ordered his camp to be fortified with a rampart twelve feet high, with breastworks built on it proportioned to its height and two trenches, each fifteen feet broad, with perpendicular sides to be sunk: likewise several turrets, three stories high, to be raised, with a communication to each other by galleries laid across and covered over; which should be guarded in front by small parapets of osiers; that the enemy might be repulsed by two rows of soldiers. The one of whom, being more secure from danger by their height might throw their darts with more daring and to a greater distance; the other which was nearer the enemy, being stationed on the rampart, would be protected by their galleries from darts falling on their heads. At the entrance he erected gates and turrets of a considerable height.

[8.10]Caesar had a double design in this fortification; for he both hoped that the strength of his works, and his [apparent] fears would raise confidence in the barbarians; and when there should be occasion to make a distant excursion to get forage or corn, he saw that his camp would be secured by the works with a very small force. In the mean time there were frequent skirmishes across the marsh, a few on both sides sallying out between the two camps. Sometimes, however, our Gallic or German auxiliaries crossed the marsh, and furiously pursued the enemy; or on the other hand the enemy passed it and beat back our men. Moreover there happened in the course of our daily foraging, what must of necessity happen, when corn is to be collected by a few scattered men out of private houses, that our foragers dispersing in an intricate country were surrounded by the enemy; by which, though we suffered but an inconsiderable loss of cattle and servants, yet it raised foolish hopes in the barbarians; but more especially, because Comius, who I said had gone to get aid from the Germans, returned with some

## Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

cavalry, and though the Germans were only 500, yet the barbarians were elated by their arrival.

[8.11]Caesar, observing that the enemy kept for several days within their camp, which was well secured by a morass and its natural situation, and that it could not be assaulted without a dangerous engagement, nor the place inclosed with lines without an addition to his army, wrote to Trebonius to send with all dispatch for the thirteenth legion which was in winter quarters among the Bituriges under Titus Sextius, one of his lieutenants; and then to come to him by forced marches with the three legions. He himself sent the cavalry of the Remi, and Lingones, and other states, from whom he had required a vast number, to guard his foraging parties, and to support them in case of any sudden attack of the enemy.

[8.12]As this continued for several days, and their vigilance was relaxed by custom (an effect which is generally produced by time), the Bellovaci, having made themselves acquainted with the daily stations of our horse, lie in ambush with a select body of foot in a place covered with woods; to it they sent their horse the next day, who were first to decoy our men into the ambuscade, and then when they were surrounded, to attack them. It was the lot of the Remi to fall into this snare, to whom that day had been allotted to perform this duty; for, having suddenly got sight of the enemy's cavalry, and despising their weakness, in consequence of their superior numbers, they pursued them too eagerly, and were surrounded on every side by the foot. Being, by this means thrown into disorder they returned with more precipitation than is usual in cavalry actions, with the loss of Vertiscus the governor of their state, and the general of their horse, who, though scarcely able to sit on horseback through years, neither, in accordance with the custom of the Gauls, pleaded his age in excuse for not accepting the command, nor would he suffer them to fight without him. The spirits of the barbarians were puffed up, and inflated at the success of this battle, in killing the prince, and general of the Remi; and our men were taught by this loss, to examine the country, and post their guards with more caution, and to be more moderate in pursuing a retreating enemy.

[8.13]In the mean time daily skirmishes take place continually in view of both camps; these were fought at the ford and pass of the morass. In one of these contests the Germans, whom Caesar had brought over the Rhine, to fight, intermixed with the horse, having resolutely crossed the marsh, and slain the few who made resistance, and boldly pursued the rest, so terrified them, that not only those who were attacked hand to hand, or wounded at a distance, but even those who were stationed at a greater distance to support them, fled disgracefully; and being often beaten from the rising grounds, did not stop till they had retired into their camp, or some, impelled by fear, had fled further. Their danger threw their whole army into such confusion, that it was difficult to judge whether they were more insolent after a slight advantage or more dejected by a trifling calamity.

[8.14]After spending several days in the same camp, the guards of the Bellovaci, learning that Caius Trebonius was advancing nearer with his legions, and fearing a siege like that of Alesia, send off by night all who were disabled by age or infirmity, or unarmed, and along with them their whole baggage. While they are preparing their disorderly and confused troop for march (for the Gauls are always attended by a vast multitude of wagons, even when they have very light baggage), being overtaken by day-light, they drew their forces out before their camp, to prevent the Romans attempting a pursuit before the line of their baggage had advanced to a considerable distance. But Caesar did not think it prudent to attack them when standing on their defense, with such a steep hill in their favor, nor keep his legions at such a distance that they could quit their post without danger: but, perceiving that his camp was divided from the enemy's by a deep morass, so difficult to cross that he could not pursue with expedition, and that the hill beyond the morass, which extended almost to the enemy's camp, was separated from it only by a small valley, he laid a bridge over the morass and led his army across, and soon reached the plain on the top of the hill, which was fortified on either side by a steep ascent. Having there drawn up his army in order of battle, he marched to the furthest hill, from which he could, with his engines, shower darts upon the thickest of the enemy.

[8.15]The Gauls, confiding in the natural strength of their position, though they would not decline an engagement if the Romans attempted to ascend the hill, yet dared not divide their forces into small parties, lest they should be thrown into disorder by being dispersed, and therefore remained in order of battle. Caesar, perceiving that they persisted in their resolution, kept twenty cohorts in battle array, and, measuring out ground there for a camp, ordered it to be fortified. Having completed his works, he drew up his legions before the rampart and stationed the cavalry in certain positions, with their horses bridled. When the Bellovaci saw the Romans prepared to pursue them, and that they could not wait the whole night, or continue longer in the same place

## Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

without provisions, they formed the following plan to secure a retreat. They handed to one another the bundles of straw and sticks on which they sat (for it is the custom of the Gauls to sit when drawn up in order of battle, as has been asserted in former commentaries), of which they had great plenty in their camp, and piled them in the front of their line; and at the close of the day, on a certain signal, set them all on fire at one and the same time. The continued blaze soon screened all their forces from the sight of the Romans, which no sooner happened than the barbarians fled with the greatest precipitation.

[8.16] Though Caesar could not perceive the retreat of the enemy for the intervention of the fire, yet, suspecting that they had adopted that method to favor their escape, he made his legions advance, and sent a party of horse to pursue them; but, apprehensive of an ambuscade, and that the enemy might remain in the same place and endeavor to draw our men into a disadvantageous situation, he advances himself but slowly. The horse, being afraid to venture into the smoke and dense line of flame, and those who were bold enough to attempt it being scarcely able to see their horse's heads, gave the enemy free liberty to retreat, through fear of an ambuscade. Thus by a flight, full at once of cowardice and address, they advanced without any loss about ten miles, and encamped in a very strong position. From which, laying numerous ambuscades, both of horse and foot, they did considerable damage to the Roman foragers.

[8.17] After this had happened several times, Caesar discovered from a certain prisoner, that Correus, the general of the Bellovaci, had selected six thousand of his bravest foot and a thousand horse, with which he designed to lie in ambush in a place to which he suspected the Romans would send to look for forage, on account of the abundance of corn and grass. Upon receiving information of their design Caesar drew out more legions than he usually did, and sent forward his cavalry as usual, to protect the foragers. With these he intermixed a guard of light infantry, and himself advanced with the legions as fast as he could.

[8.18] The Gauls, placed in ambush, had chosen for the seat of action a level piece of ground, not more than a mile in extent, inclosed on every side by a thick wood or a very deep river, as by a toil, and this they surrounded. Our men, apprised of the enemy's design, marched in good order to the ground, ready both in heart and hand to give battle, and willing to hazard any engagement when the legions were at their back. On their approach, as Correus supposed that he had got an opportunity of effecting his purpose, he at first shows himself with a small party and attacks the foremost troops. Our men resolutely stood the charge, and did not crowd together in one place, as commonly happens from surprise in engagements between the horse, whose numbers prove injurious to themselves.

[8.19] When by the judicious arrangement of our forces only a few of our men fought by turns, and did not suffer themselves to be surrounded, the rest of the enemy broke out from the woods while Correus was engaged. The battle was maintained in different parts with great vigor, and continued for a long time undecided, till at length a body of foot gradually advanced from the woods in order of battle and forced our horse to give ground: the light infantry, which were sent before the legions to the assistance of the cavalry, soon came up, and, mixing with the horse, fought with great courage. The battle was for some time doubtful, but, as usually happens, our men, who stood the enemy's first charge, became superior from this very circumstance that, though suddenly attacked from an ambuscade, they had sustained no loss. In the mean time the legions were approaching, and several messengers arrived with notice to our men and the enemy that the [Roman] general was near at hand, with his forces in battle array. Upon this intelligence, our men, confiding in the support of the cohorts, fought most resolutely, fearing, lest if they should be slow in their operations they should let the legions participate in the glory of the conquest. The enemy lose courage and attempt to escape by different ways. In vain; for they were themselves entangled in that labyrinth in which they thought to entrap the Romans. Being defeated and put to the rout, and having lost the greater part of their men, they fled in consternation whithersoever chance carried them; some sought the woods, others the river, but were vigorously pursued by our men and put to the sword. Yet, in the mean time, Correus, unconquered by calamity, could not be prevailed on to quit the field and take refuge in the woods, or accept our offers of quarter, but, fighting courageously and wounding several, provoked our men, elated with victory, to discharge their weapons against him.

[8.20] After this transaction, Caesar, having come up immediately after the battle, and imagining that the enemy, upon receiving the news of so great a defeat, would be so depressed that they would abandon their camp, which was not above eight miles distant from the scene of action, though he saw his passage obstructed by the river, yet he marched his army over and advanced. But the Bellovaci and the other states, being informed of the

## Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

loss they had sustained by a few wounded men who having escaped by the shelter of the woods, had returned to them after the defeat, and learning that every thing had turned out unfavorable, that Correus was slain, and the horse and most valiant of their foot cut off, imagined that the Romans were marching against them, and calling a council in haste by sound of trumpet, unanimously cry out to send ambassadors and hostages to Caesar.

[8.21]This proposal having met with general approbation, Comius the Atrebatian fled to those Germans from whom he had borrowed auxiliaries for that war. The rest instantly send ambassadors to Caesar; and requested that he would be contented with that punishment of his enemy, which if he had possessed the power to inflict on them before the engagement, when they were yet uninjured, they were persuaded from his usual clemency and mercy, he never would have inflicted; that the power of the Bellovaci was crushed by the cavalry action; that many thousand of their choicest foot had fallen, that scarce a man had escaped to bring the fatal news. That, however, the Bellovaci had derived from the battle one advantage, of some importance, considering their loss; that Correus, the author of the rebellion, and agitator of the people, was slain: for that while he lived the senate had never equal influence in the state with the giddy populace.

[8.22]Caesar reminded the ambassadors who made these supplications, that the Bellovaci had at the same season the year before, in conjunction with other states of Gaul, undertaken a war, and that they had persevered the most obstinately of all in their purpose, and were not brought to a proper way of thinking by the submission of the rest: that he knew and was aware that the guilt of a crime was easily transferred to the dead; but that no one person could have such influence, as to be able by the feeble support of the multitude to raise a war and carry it on without the consent of the nobles, in opposition to the senate, and in despite of every virtuous man; however he was satisfied with the punishment, which they had drawn upon themselves.

[8.23]The night following the ambassadors bring back his answer to their countrymen and prepare the hostages. Ambassadors flock in from the other states, which were waiting for the issue of the [war with the] Bellovaci: they give hostages, and receive his orders; all except Comius, whose fears restrained him from intrusting his safety to any person's honor. For the year before, while Caesar was holding the assizes in Hither Gaul, Titus Labienus, having discovered that Comius was tampering with the state, and raising a conspiracy against Caesar, thought he might punish his infidelity without perfidy; but judging that he would not come to his camp at his invitation, and unwilling to put him on his guard by the attempt, he sent Caius Volusenus Quadratus, with orders to have him put to death under pretense of conference. To effect his purpose, he sent with him some chosen centurions. When they came to the conference, and Volusenus, as had been agreed on, had taken hold of Comius by the hand, and one of the centurions, as if surprised at so uncommon an incident, attempted to kill him, he was prevented by the friends of Comius, but wounded him severely in the head by the first blow. Swords were drawn on both sides, not so much with a design to fight as to effect an escape, our men believing that Comius had received a mortal stroke; and the Gauls, from the treachery which they had seen, dreading that a deeper design lay concealed. Upon this transaction, it was said that Comius made a resolution never to come within sight of any Roman.

[8.24]When Caesar, having completely conquered the most warlike nations, perceived that there was now no state which could make preparations for war to oppose him, but that some were removing and fleeing from their country to avoid present subjection, he resolved to detach his army into different parts of the country. He kept with himself Marcus Antonius the quaestor, with the eleventh legion; Caius Fabius was detached with twenty-five cohorts into the remotest part of Gaul, because it was rumored that some states had risen in arms, and he did not think that Caius Caninius Rebilus, who had the charge of that country, was strong enough to protect it with two legions. He ordered Titus Labienus to attend himself, and sent the twelfth legion which had been under him in winter quarters, to Hither Gaul, to protect the Roman colonies, and prevent any loss by the inroads of barbarians similar to that which had happened the year before to the Tergestines, who were cut off by a sudden depredation and attack. He himself marched to depopulate the country of Ambiorix, whom he had terrified and forced to fly, but despaired of being able to reduce under his power; but he thought it most consistent with his honor to waste his country both of inhabitants, cattle, and buildings, so that from the abhorrence of his countrymen, if fortune suffered any to survive, he might be excluded from a return to his state for the calamities which he had brought on it.

[8.25]After he had sent either his legions or auxiliaries through every part of Ambiorix's dominions, and wasted the whole country by sword, fire, and rapine, and had killed or taken prodigious numbers, he sent



## Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

Labienus with two legions against the Treviri, whose state, from its vicinity to Germany, being engaged in constant war, differed but little from the Germans, in civilization and savage barbarity; and never continued in its allegiance, except when awed by the presence of his army.

[8.26]In the mean time Caius Caninius, a lieutenant, having received information by letters and messages from Duracius, who had always continued in friendship to the Roman people, though a part of his state had revolted, that a great multitude of the enemy were in arms in the country of the Pictones, marched to the town Limonum. When he was approaching it, he was informed by some prisoners, that Duracius was shut up by several thousand men, under the command of Dumnacus, general of the Andes, and that Limonum was besieged, but not daring to face the enemy with his weak legions, he encamped in a strong position: Dumnacus, having notice of Caninius's approach, turned his whole force against the legions, and prepared to assault the Roman camp. But after spending several days in the attempt, and losing a considerable number of men, without being able to make a breach in any part of the works, he returned again to the siege of Limonum.

[8.27]At the same time, Caius Fabius, a lieutenant, brings back many states to their allegiance, and confirms their submission by taking hostages; he was then informed by letters from Caninius, of the proceedings among the Pictones. Upon which he set off to bring assistance to Duracius. But Dumnacus, hearing of the approach of Fabius, and despairing of safety, if at the same time he should be forced to withstand the Roman army without, and observe, and be under apprehension from the town's people, made a precipitate retreat from that place with all his forces. Nor did he think that he should be sufficiently secure from danger, unless he led his army across the Loire, which was too deep a river to pass except by a bridge. Though Fabius had not yet come within sight of the enemy, nor joined Caninius; yet being informed of the nature of the country, by persons acquainted with it, he judged it most likely that the enemy would take that way, which he found they did take. He therefore marched to that bridge with his army, and ordered his cavalry to advance no farther before the legions than that they could return to the same camp at night, without fatiguing their horses. Our horse pursued according to orders, and fell upon Dumnacus's rear and attacking them on their march, while fleeing, dismayed, and laden with baggage, they slew a great number, and took a rich booty. Having executed the affair so successfully, they retired to the camp.

[8.28]The night following, Fabius sent his horse before him, with orders to engage the enemy, and delay their march till he himself should come up. That his orders might be faithfully performed, Quintus Atius Varus, general of the horse, a man of uncommon spirit and skill, encouraged his men, and pursuing the enemy, disposed some of his troops in convenient places, and with the rest gave battle to the enemy. The enemy's cavalry made a bold stand, the foot relieving each other, and making a general halt, to assist their horse against ours. The battle was warmly contested. For our men, despising the enemy whom they had conquered the day before, and knowing that the legions were following them, animated both by the disgrace of retreating, and a desire of concluding the battle expeditiously by their own courage, fought most valiantly against the foot: and the enemy, imagining that no more forces would come against them, as they had experienced the day before, thought they had got a favorable opportunity of destroying our whole cavalry.

[8.29]After the conflict had continued for some time with great violence, Dumnacus drew out his army in such a manner, that the foot should by turns assist the horse. Then the legions, marching in close order, came suddenly in sight of the enemy. At this sight, the barbarian horse were so astonished, and the foot so terrified, that breaking through the line of baggage, they betook themselves to flight with a loud shout, and in great disorder. But our horse, who a little before had vigorously engaged them, while they made resistance, being elated with joy at their victory, raising a shout on every side, poured round them as they ran, and as long as their horses had strength to pursue, or their arms to give a blow, so long did they continue the slaughter of the enemy in that battle, and having killed above twelve thousand men in arms, or such as threw away their arms through fear, they took their whole train of baggage.

[8.30]After this defeat, when it was ascertained that Drapes, a Senonian (who in the beginning of the revolt of Gaul had collected from all quarters men of desperate fortunes, invited the slaves to liberty, called in the exiles of the whole kingdom, given an asylum to robbers, and intercepted the Roman baggage and provisions), was marching to the province with five thousand men, being all he could collect after the defeat, and that Luterius a Cadurcian who, as it has been observed in a former commentary, had designed to make an attack on the Province in the first revolt of Gaul, had formed a junction with him, Caius Caninius went in pursuit of them with two legions, lest great disgrace might be incurred from the fears or injuries done to the Province by the depredations

## Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

of a band of desperate men.

[8.31] Caius Fabius set off with the rest of the army to the Carnutes and those other states, whose force he was informed, had served as auxiliaries in that battle, which he fought against Dumnacus. For he had no doubt that they would be more submissive after their recent sufferings, but if respite and time were given them, they might be easily excited by the earnest solicitations of the same Dumnacus. On this occasion Fabius was extremely fortunate and expeditious in recovering the states. For the Carnutes, who, though often harassed had never mentioned peace, submitted and gave hostages: and the other states, which lie in the remotest parts of Gaul, adjoining the ocean, and which are called Armoricae, influenced by the example of the Carnutes, as soon as Fabius arrived with his legions, without delay comply with his command. Dumnacus, expelled from his own territories, wandering and skulking about, was forced to seek refuge by himself in the most remote parts of Gaul.

[8.32] But Drapes in conjunction with Luterius, knowing that Caninius was at hand with the legions, and that they themselves could not without certain destruction enter the boundaries of the province, while an army was in pursuit of them, and being no longer at liberty to roam up and down and pillage, halt in the country of the Cadurci, as Luterius had once in his prosperity possessed a powerful influence over the inhabitants, who were his countrymen, and being always the author of new projects, had considerable authority among the barbarians; with his own and Drapes' troops he seized Uxellodunum, a town formerly in vassalage to him, and strongly fortified by its natural situation; and prevailed on the inhabitants to join him.

[8.33] After Caninius had rapidly marched to this place, and perceived that all parts of the town were secured by very craggy rocks, which it would be difficult for men in arms to climb even if they met with no resistance; and moreover, observing that the town's people were possessed of effects, to a considerable amount, and that if they attempted to convey them away in a clandestine manner, they could not escape our horse, or even our legions; he divided his forces into three parts, and pitched three camps on very high ground, with the intention of drawing lines round the town by degrees, as his forces could bear the fatigue.

[8.34] When the townsmen perceived his design, being terrified by the recollection of the distress at Alesia, they began to dread similar consequences from a siege; and above all Luterius, who had experienced that fatal event, cautioned them to make provisions of corn; they therefore resolve by general consent to leave part of their troops behind, and set out with their light troops to bring in corn. The scheme having met with approbation, the following night Drapes and Luterius leaving two thousand men in the garrison, marched out of the town with the rest. After a few days' stay in the country of the Cadurci (some of whom were disposed to assist them with corn, and others were unable to prevent their taking it) they collected a great store. Sometimes also attacks were made on our little forts by sallies at night. For this reason Caninius deferred drawing his works round the whole town, lest he should be unable to protect them when completed, or by disposing his garrisons in several places, should make them too weak.

[8.35] Drapes and Luterius, having laid in a large supply of corn, occupying a position at about ten miles distance from the town, intending from it to convey the corn into the town by degrees. They chose each his respective department. Drapes stayed behind in the camp with part of the army to protect it; Luterius conveys the train with provisions into the town. Accordingly, having disposed guards here and there along the road, about the tenth hour of the night, he set out by narrow paths through the woods, to fetch the corn into the town. But their noise being heard by the sentinels of our camp, and the scouts which we had sent out, having brought an account of what was going on, Caninius instantly with the ready-armed cohorts from the nearest turrets made an attack on the convoy at the break of day. They, alarmed at so unexpected an evil, fled by different ways to their guard: which as soon as our men perceived, they fell with great fury on the escort, and did not allow a single man to be taken alive. Luterius escaped thence with a few followers, but did not return to the camp.

[8.36] After this success, Caninius learned from some prisoners, that a part of the forces was encamped with Drapes, not more than ten miles off: which being confirmed by several, supposing that after the defeat of one general, the rest would be terrified, and might be easily conquered, he thought it a most fortunate event that none of the enemy had fled back from the slaughter to the camp, to give Drapes notice of the calamity which had befallen him. And as he could see no danger in making the attempt, he sent forward all his cavalry and the German foot, men of great activity, to the enemy's camp. He divides one legion among the three camps, and takes the other without baggage along with him. When he had advanced near the enemy, he was informed by scouts, which he had sent before him, that the enemy's camp, as is the custom of barbarians, was pitched low, near the

banks of a river, and that the higher grounds were unoccupied: but that the German horse had made a sudden attack on them, and had begun the battle. Upon this intelligence, he marched up with his legion, armed and in order of battle. Then, on a signal being suddenly given on every side, our men took possession of the higher grounds. Upon this the German horse observing the Roman colors, fought with great vigor. Immediately all the cohorts attack them on every side; and having either killed or made prisoners of them all, gained great booty. In that battle, Drapes himself was taken prisoner.

[8.37]Caninius, having accomplished the business so successfully, without having scarcely a man wounded, returned to besiege the town; and, having destroyed the enemy without, for fear of whom he had been prevented from strengthening his redoubts, and surrounding the enemy with his lines, he orders the work to be completed on every side. The next day, Caius Fabius came to join him with his forces, and took upon him the siege of one side.

[8.38]In the mean time, Caesar left Caius Antonius in the country of the Bellovaci, with fifteen cohorts, that the Belgae might have no opportunity of forming new plans in future. He himself visits the other states, demands a great number of hostages, and by his encouraging language allays the apprehensions of all. When he came to the Carnutes, in whose state he has in a former commentary mentioned that the war first broke out; observing, that from a consciousness of their guilt, they seemed to be in the greatest terror: to relieve the state the sooner from its fear, he demanded that Guturvatus, the promoter of that treason, and the instigator of that rebellion, should be delivered up to punishment. And though the latter did not dare to trust his life even to his own countrymen, yet such diligent search was made by them all, that he was soon brought to our camp. Caesar was forced to punish him, by the clamors of the soldiers, contrary to his natural humanity, for they alleged that all the dangers and losses incurred in that war, ought to be imputed to Guturvatus. Accordingly, he was whipped to death, and his head cut off.

[8.39]Here Caesar was informed by numerous letters from Caninius of what had happened to Drapes and Luterius, and in what conduct the town's people persisted: and though he despised the smallness of their numbers, yet he thought their obstinacy deserving a severe punishment, lest Gaul in general should adopt an idea that she did not want strength but perseverance to oppose the Romans; and lest the other states, relying on the advantage of situation, should follow their example and assert their liberty; especially as he knew that all the Gauls understood that his command was to continue but one summer longer, and if they could hold out for that time, that they would have no further danger to apprehend. He therefore left Quintus Calenus, one of his lieutenants, behind him, with two legions, and instructions to follow him by regular marches. He hastened as much as he could with all the cavalry to Caninius.

[8.40]Having arrived at Uxellodunum, contrary to the general expectation, and perceiving that the town was surrounded by the works, and that the enemy had no possible means of retiring from the assault, and being likewise informed by the deserters that the townsmen had abundance of corn, he endeavoured to prevent their getting water. A river divided the valley below, which almost surrounded the steep craggy mountain on which Uxellodunum was built. The nature of the ground prevented his turning the current: for it ran so low down at the foot of the mountain, that no drains could be sunk deep enough to draw it off in any direction. But the descent to it was so difficult, that if we made opposition, the besieged could neither come to the river nor retire up the precipice without hazard of their lives. Caesar perceiving the difficulty, disposed archers and slingers, and in some places, opposite to the easiest descents, placed engines, and attempted to hinder the townsmen from getting water at the river, which obliged them afterward to go all to one place to procure water.

[8.41]Close under the walls of the town, a copious spring gushed out on that part, which for the space of nearly three hundred feet, was not surrounded by the river. While every other person wished that the besieged could be debarred from this spring, Caesar alone saw that it could be effected, though not without great danger. Opposite to it he began to advance the vineae toward the mountain, and to throw up a mound, with great labor and continual skirmishing. For the townsmen ran down from the high ground, and fought without any risk, and wounded several of our men, yet they obstinately pushed on and were not deterred from moving forward the vineae, and from surmounting by their assiduity the difficulties of situation. At the same time they work mines, and move the crates and vineae to the source of the fountain. This was the only work which they could do without danger or suspicion. A mound sixty feet high was raised; on it was erected a turret of ten stories, not with the intention that it should be on a level with the wall (for that could not be effected by any works), but to rise above the top of the spring. When our engines began to play from it upon the paths that led to the fountain, and the

townsmen could not go for water without danger, not only the cattle designed for food and the working cattle, but a great number of men also died of thirst.

[8.42] Alarmed at this calamity, the townsmen fill barrels with tallow, pitch, and dried wood: these they set on fire, and roll down on our works. At the same time, they fight most furiously, to deter the Romans, by the engagement and danger, from extinguishing the flames. Instantly a great blaze arose in the works. For whatever they threw down the precipice, striking against the vineae and agger, communicated the fire to whatever was in the way. Our soldiers on the other hand, though they were engaged in a perilous sort of encounter, and laboring under the disadvantages of position, yet supported all with very great presence of mind. For the action happened in an elevated situation, and in sight of our army; and a great shout was raised on both sides; therefore every man faced the weapons of the enemy and the flames in as conspicuous a manner as he could, that his valor might be the better known and attested.

[8.43] Caesar, observing that several of his men were wounded, ordered the cohorts to ascend the mountain on all sides, and, under pretense of assailing the walls, to raise a shout: at which the besieged being frightened, and not knowing what was going on in other places, call off their armed troops from attacking our works, and dispose them on the walls. Thus our men without hazarding a battle, gained time partly to extinguish the works which had caught fire, and partly to cut off the communication. As the townsmen still continued to make an obstinate resistance, and even, after losing the greatest part of their forces by drought, persevered in their resolution: at last the veins of the spring were cut across by our mines, and turned from their course. By this their constant spring was suddenly dried up, which reduced them to such despair that they imagined that it was not done by the art of man, but the will of the gods; forced, therefore, by necessity, they at length submitted.

[8.44] Caesar, being convinced that his lenity was known to all men, and being under no fears of being thought to act severely from a natural cruelty, and perceiving that there would be no end to his troubles if several states should attempt to rebel in like manner and in different places, resolved to deter others by inflicting an exemplary punishment on these. Accordingly he cut off the hands of those who had borne arms against him. Their lives he spared, that the punishment of their rebellion might be the more conspicuous. Drapes, who I have said was taken by Caninius, either through indignation and grief arising from his captivity, or through fear of severer punishments, abstained from food for several days, and thus perished. At the same time, Luterius, who, I have related, had escaped from the battle, having fallen into the hands of Epasnactus, an Arvernian (for he frequently changed his quarters, and threw himself on the honor of several persons, as he saw that he dare not remain long in one place, and was conscious how great an enemy he deserved to have in Caesar), was by this Epasnactus, the Arvernian, a sincere friend of the Roman people, delivered without any hesitation, a prisoner to Caesar.

[8.45] In the mean time, Labienus engages in a successful cavalry action among the Treviri; and, having killed several of them and of the Germans, who never refused their aid to any person against the Romans, he got their chiefs alive into his power, and, among them, Surus, an Aeduan, who was highly renowned both for his valor and birth, and was the only Aeduan that had continued in arms till that time. Caesar, being informed of this, and perceiving that he had met with good success in all parts of Gaul, and reflecting that, in former campaigns [Celtic] Gaul had been conquered and subdued; but that he had never gone in person to Aquitania, but had made a conquest of it, in some degree, by Marcus Crassus, set out for it with two legions, designing to spend the latter part of the summer there. This affair he executed with his usual dispatch and good fortune. For all the states of Aquitania sent ambassadors to him and delivered hostages. These affairs being concluded, he marched with a guard of cavalry toward Narbo, and drew off his army into winter quarters by his lieutenants. He posted four legions in the country of the Belgae, under Marcus Antonius, Caius Trebonius, Publius Vatinius, and Quintus Tullius, his lieutenants. Two he detached to the Aedui, knowing them to have a very powerful influence throughout all Gaul. Two he placed among the Turoni, near the confines of the Carnutes, to keep in awe the entire tract of country bordering on the ocean; the other two he placed in the territories of the Lemovices, at a small distance from the Arverni, that no part of Gaul might be without an army. Having spent a few days in the province, he quickly ran through all the business of the assizes, settled all public disputes, and distributed rewards to the most deserving; for he had a good opportunity of learning how every person was disposed toward the republic during the general revolt of Gaul, which he had withstood by the fidelity and assistance of the Province.

[8.47] Having finished these affairs, he returned to his legions among the Belgae and wintered at Nemetocenna: there he got intelligence that Comius, the Atrebatian had had an engagement with his cavalry. For

when Antonius had gone into winter quarters, and the state of the Atrebatas continued in their allegiance, Comius, who, after that wound which I before mentioned, was always ready to join his countrymen upon every commotion, that they might not want a person to advise and head them in the management of the war, when his state submitted to the Romans, supported himself and his adherents on plunder by means of his cavalry, infested the roads, and intercepted several convoys which were bringing provisions to the Roman quarters.

[8.48] Caius Volusenus Quadratus was appointed commander of the horse under Antonius, to winter with him: Antonius sent him in pursuit of the enemy's cavalry; now Volusenus added to that valor which was pre-eminent in him, a great aversion to Comius, on which account he executed the more willingly the orders which he received. Having, therefore, laid ambuscades, he had several encounters with his cavalry and came off successful. At last, when a violent contest ensued, and Volusenus, through eagerness to intercept Comius, had obstinately pursued him with a small party; and Comius had, by the rapidity of his flight, drawn Volusenus to a considerable distance from his troops, he, on a sudden, appealed to the honor of all about him for assistance not to suffer the wound, which he had perfidiously received, to go without vengeance; and, wheeling his horse about, rode unguardedly before the rest up to the commander. All his horse following his example, made a few of our men turn their backs and pursued them. Comius, clapping spurs to his horse, rode up to Volusenus, and, pointing his lance, pierced him in the thigh with great force. When their commander was wounded, our men no longer hesitated to make resistance, and, facing about, beat back the enemy. When this occurred, several of the enemy, repulsed by the great impetuosity of our men, were wounded, and some were trampled to death in striving to escape, and some were made prisoners. Their general escaped this misfortune by the swiftness of his horse. Our commander, being severely wounded, so much so that he appeared to run the risk of losing his life, was carried back to the camp. But Comius, having either gratified his resentment, or, because he had lost the greatest part of his followers, sent ambassadors to Antonius, and assured him that he would give hostages as a security that he would go wherever Antonius should prescribe, and would comply with his orders, and only entreated that this concession should be made to his fears, that he should not be obliged to go into the presence of any Roman. As Antonius judged that his request originated in a just apprehension, he indulged him in it and accepted his hostages. Caesar, I know, has made a separate commentary of each year's transactions, which I have not thought it necessary for me to do, because the following year, in which Lucius Paulus and Caius Marcellus were consuls, produced no remarkable occurrences in Gaul. But that no person may be left in ignorance of the place where Caesar and his army were at that time, have thought proper to write a few words in addition to this commentary.

[8.49] Caesar, while in winter quarters in the country of the Belgae, made it his only business to keep the states in amity with him, and to give none either hopes of, or pretext for a revolt. For nothing was further from his wishes than to be under the necessity of engaging in another war at his departure; lest, when he was drawing his army out of the country, any war should be left unfinished, which the Gauls would cheerfully undertake, when there was no immediate danger. Therefore, by treating the states with respect, making rich presents to the leading men, imposing no new burdens, and making the terms of their subjection lighter, he easily kept Gaul (already exhausted by so many unsuccessful battles) in obedience.

[8.50] When the winter quarters were broken up he himself, contrary to his usual practice, proceeded to Italy, by the longest possible stages, in order to visit the free towns and colonies, that he might recommend to them the petition of Marcus Antonius, his treasurer, for the priesthood. For he exerted his interest both cheerfully in favor of a man strongly attached to him, whom he had sent home before him to attend the election, and zealously to oppose the faction and power of a few men, who, by rejecting Marcus Antonius, wished to undermine Caesar's influence when going out of office. Though Caesar heard on the road, before he reached Italy that he was created augur, yet he thought himself in honor bound to visit the free towns and colonies, to return them thanks for rendering such service to Antonius by their presence in such great numbers [at the election], and at the same time to recommend to them himself, and his honor in his suit for the consulate the ensuing year. For his adversaries arrogantly boasted that Lucius Lentulus and Caius Marcellus had been appointed consuls, who would strip Caesar of all honor and dignity: and that the consulate had been injuriously taken from Sergius Galba, though he had been much superior in votes and interest, because he was united to Caesar, both by friendship, and by serving as lieutenant under him.

[8.51] Caesar, on his arrival, was received by the principal towns and colonies with incredible respect and affection; for this was the first time he came since the war against united Gaul. Nothing was omitted which could

## Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

be thought of for the ornament of the gates, roads, and every place through which Caesar was to pass. All the people with their children went out to meet him. Sacrifices were offered up in every quarter. The market places and temples were laid out with entertainments, as if anticipating the joy of a most splendid triumph. So great was the magnificence of the richer and zeal of the poorer ranks of the people.

[8.52]When Caesar had gone through all the states of Cisalpine Gaul, he returned with the greatest haste to the army at Nemetocenna; and having ordered all his legions to march from winter quarters to the territories of the Treviri, he went thither and reviewed them. He made Titus Labienus governor of Cisalpine Gaul, that he might be the more inclined to support him in his suit for the consulate. He himself made such journeys as he thought would conduce to the health of his men by change of air; and though he was frequently told that Labienus was solicited by his enemies, and was assured that a scheme was in agitation by the contrivance of a few, that the senate should interpose their authority to deprive him of a part of his army; yet he neither gave credit to any story concerning Labienus, nor could be prevailed upon to do any thing in opposition to the authority of the senate; for he thought that his cause would be easily gained by the free voice of the senators. For Caius Curio, one of the tribunes of the people, having undertaken to defend Caesar's cause and dignity, had often proposed to the senate, "that if the dread of Caesar's arms rendered any apprehensive, as Pompey's authority and arms were no less formidable to the forum, both should resign their command, and disband their armies. That then the city would be free, and enjoy its due rights." And he not only proposed this, but of himself called upon the senate to divide on the question. But the consuls and Pompey's friends interposed to prevent it; and regulating matters as they desired, they broke up the meeting.

[8.53]This testimony of the unanimous voice of the senate was very great, and consistent with their former conduct; for the preceding year, when Marcellus attacked Caesar's dignity, he proposed to the senate, contrary to the law of Pompey and Crassus, to dispose of Caesar's province, before the expiration of his command, and when the votes were called for, and Marcellus, who endeavored to advance his own dignity, by raising envy against Caesar, wanted a division, the full senate went over to the opposite side. The spirit of Caesar's foes was not broken by this, but it taught them, that they ought to strengthen their interest by enlarging their connections, so as to force the senate to comply with whatever they had resolved on.

[8.54]After this a decree was passed by the senate, that one legion should be sent by Pompey, and another by Caesar, to the Parthian war. But these two legions were evidently drawn from Caesar alone. For the first legion which Pompey sent to Caesar, he gave Caesar, as if it belonged to himself, though it was levied in Caesar's province. Caesar, however, though no one could doubt the design of his enemies, sent the legion back to Cneius Pompey, and in compliance with the decree of the senate, ordered the fifteenth, belonging to himself, and which was quartered in Cisalpine Gaul, to be delivered up. In its room he sent the thirteenth into Italy, to protect the garrisons from which he had drafted the fifteenth. He disposed his army in winter quarters, placed Caius Trebonius, with four legions among the Belgae, and detached Caius Fabius, with four more, to the Aedui; for he thought that Gaul would be most secure, if the Belgae, a people of the greatest valor, and the Aedui, who possessed the most powerful influence, were kept in awe by his armies.

[8.55]He himself set out for Italy; where he was informed on his arrival, that the two legions sent home by him, and which by the senate's decree, should have been sent to the Parthian war, had been delivered over to Pompey, by Caius Marcellus the consul, and were retained in Italy. Although from this transaction it was evident to every one that war was designed against Caesar, yet he resolved to submit to any thing, as long as there were hopes left of deciding the dispute in an equitable manner, rather than to have recourse to arms.

End of Book 8