

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

Book 6

Table of Contents

<u>Julius Caesar's War Commentaries</u>	1
<u>Book 6</u>	1

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

Book 6

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

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

Book 6 – (53 B.C.)

[6.1]Caesar, expecting for many reasons a greater commotion in Gaul, resolves to hold a levy by the means of M. Silanus C. Antistius Reginus, and T. Sextius, his lieutenants: at the same time he requested Cn. Pompey, the proconsul, that since he was remaining near the city invested with military command for the interests of the commonwealth, he would command those men whom when consul he had levied by the military oath in Cisalpine Gaul, to join their respective corps, and to proceed to him; thinking it of great importance, as far as regarded the opinion which the Gauls would entertain for the future, that that the resources of Italy should appear so great that if any loss should be sustained in war, not only could it be repaired in a short time, but likewise be further supplied by still larger forces. And when Pompey had granted this to the interests of the commonwealth and the claims of friendship, Caesar having quickly completed the levy by means of his lieutenants, after three regiments had been both formed and brought to him before the winter [had] expired, and the number of those cohorts which he had lost under Q. Titurius had been doubled, taught the Gauls, both by his dispatch and by his forces what the discipline and the power of the Roman people could accomplish.

[6.2]Indutiomarus having been slain, as we have stated, the government was conferred upon his relatives by the Treviri. They cease not to importune the neighboring Germans and to promise them money: when they could not obtain [their object] from those nearest them, they try those more remote. Having found some states willing to accede to their wishes, they enter into a compact with them by a mutual oath, and give hostages as a security for the money: they attach Ambiorix to them by an alliance and confederacy. Caesar, on being informed of their acts, since he saw that war was being prepared on all sides, that the Nervii, Aduatuci, and Menapii, with the addition of all the Germans on this side of the Rhine were under arms, that the Senones did not assemble according to his command, and were concerting measures with the Carnutes and the neighboring states, that the Germans were importuned by the Treviri in frequent embassies, thought that he ought to take measures for the war earlier [than usual].

[6.3]Accordingly, while the winter was not yet ended, having concentrated the four nearest legions, he marched unexpectedly into the territories of the Nervii, and before they could either assemble or retreat, after capturing a large number of cattle and of men, and wasting their lands and giving up that booty to the soldiers, compelled them to enter into a surrender and give him hostages. That business having been speedily executed, he again led his legions back into winter-quarters. Having proclaimed a council of Gaul in the beginning of the spring, as he had been accustomed [to do], when the deputies from the rest, except the Senones, the Carnutes, and the Treviri, had come, judging this to be the commencement of war and revolt, that he might appear to consider all things of less consequence [than that war], he transfers the council to Lutetia of the Parisii. These were adjacent to the Senones, and had united their state to them during the memory of their fathers, but were thought to have no part in the present plot. Having proclaimed this from the tribunal, he advances the same day toward the Senones with his legions, and arrives among them by long marches.

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

[6.4]Acco, who had been the author of that enterprise, on being informed of his arrival, orders the people to assemble in the towns; to them, while attempting this, and before it could be accomplished, news is brought that the Romans are close at hand: through necessity they give over their design and send ambassadors to Caesar for the purpose of imploring pardon; they make advances to him through the Aedui, whose state was from ancient times under the protection of Rome. Caesar readily grants them pardon, and receives their excuse, at the request of the Aedui, because he thought that the summer season was one for an impending war, not for an investigation. Having imposed one hundred hostages, he delivers these to the Aedui to be held in charge by them. To the same place the Carnutes send ambassadors and hostages, employing as their mediators the Remi, under whose protection they were: they receive the same answers. Caesar concludes the council and imposes a levy of cavalry on the states.

[6.5]This part of Gaul having been tranquilized, he applies himself entirely both in mind and soul to the war with the Treviri and Ambiorix. He orders Cavarinus to march with him with the cavalry of the Senones, lest any commotion should arise either out of his hot temper, or out of the hatred of the state which he had incurred. After arranging these things, as he considered it certain that Ambiorix would not contend in battle, he watched his other plans attentively. The Menapii bordered on the territories of the Eburones, and were protected by one continued extent of morasses and woods; and they alone out of Gaul had never sent ambassadors to Caesar on the subject of peace. Caesar knew that a tie of hospitality subsisted between them and Ambiorix: he also discovered that the latter had entered into an alliance with the Germans by means of the Treviri. He thought that these auxiliaries ought to be detached from him before he provoked him to war; lest he, despairing of safety, should either proceed to conceal himself in the territories of the Menapii, or should be driven to coalesce with the Germans beyond the Rhine. Having entered upon this resolution, he sends the baggage of the whole army to Labienus, in the territories of the Treviri and orders two legions to proceed to him: he himself proceeds against the Menapii with five lightly-equipped legions. They, having assembled no troops, as they relied on the defense of their position, retreat into the woods and morasses, and convey thither all their property.

[6.6]Caesar, having divided his forces with C. Fabius, his lieutenant, and M. Crassus his questor, and having hastily constructed some bridges, enters their country in three divisions, burns their houses and villages, and gets possession of a large number of cattle and men. Constrained by these circumstances the Menapii send ambassadors to him for the purpose of suing for peace. He, after receiving hostages, assures them that he will consider them in the number of his enemies if they shall receive within their territories either Ambiorix or his ambassadors. Having determinately settled these things, he left among the Menapii, Commius the Atrebatian, with some cavalry as a guard; he himself proceeds toward the Treviri.

[6.7]While these things are being performed by Caesar, the Treviri, having drawn together large forces of infantry and cavalry, were preparing to attack Labienus and the legion which was wintering in their territories, and were already not further distant from him than a journey of two days, when they learn that two legions had arrived by the order of Caesar. Having pitched their camp fifteen miles off, they resolve to await the support of the Germans. Labienus, having learned the design of the enemy, hoping that through their rashness there would be some opportunity of engaging, after leaving a guard of five cohorts for the baggage, advances against the enemy with twenty-five cohorts and a large body of cavalry, and, leaving the space of a mile between them, fortifies his camp. There was between Labienus and the enemy a river difficult to cross, and with steep banks: this neither did he himself design to cross, nor did he suppose the enemy would cross it. Their hope of auxiliaries was daily increasing. He [Labienus] openly says in a council that "since the Germans are said to be approaching, he would not bring into uncertainty his own and the army's fortunes, and the next day would move his camp at early dawn." These words are quickly carried to the enemy, since out of so large a number of cavalry composed of Gauls, nature compelled some to favor the Gallic interests. Labienus, having assembled the tribunes of the soldiers and principal centurions by night, states what his design is, and, that he may the more easily give the enemy a belief of his fears, he orders the camp to be moved with greater noise and confusion than was usual with the Roman people. By these means he makes his departure [appear] like a retreat. These things, also, since the camps were so near, are reported to the enemy by scouts before daylight.

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

[6.8] Scarcely had the rear advanced beyond the fortifications when the Gauls, encouraging one another "not to cast from their hands the anticipated booty, that it was a tedious thing, while the Romans were panic-stricken, to be waiting for the aid of the Germans, and that their dignity did not suffer them to fear to attack with such great forces so small a band, particularly when retreating and encumbered," do not hesitate to cross the river and give battle in a disadvantageous position. Labienus suspecting that these things would happen, was proceeding quietly, and using the same pretense of a march, in order that he might entice them across the river. Then, having sent forward the baggage some short distance and placed it on a certain eminence, he says, "Soldiers, you have the opportunity you have sought: you hold the enemy in an encumbered and disadvantageous position: display to us, your leaders, the same valor you have oftentimes displayed to your general: imagine that he is present and actually sees these exploits." At the same time he orders the troops to face about toward the enemy and form in line of battle, and, dispatching a few troops of cavalry as a guard for the baggage, he places the rest of the horse on the wings. Our men, raising a shout, quickly throw their javelins at the enemy. They, when, contrary to their expectation, they saw those whom they believed to be retreating, advance toward them with threatening banners, were not able to sustain even the charge, and, being put to flight at the first onslaught, sought the nearest woods; Labienus pursuing them with the cavalry, upon a large number being slain, and several taken prisoners, got possession of the state a few days after; for the Germans, who were coming to the aid of the Treviri, having been informed of their flight, retreated to their homes. The relations of Indutiomarus, who had been the promoters of the revolt, accompanying them, quitted their own state with them. The supreme power and government were delivered to Cingetorix, whom we have stated to have remained firm in his allegiance from the commencement.

[6.9] Caesar, after he came from the territories of the Menapii into those of the Treviri, resolved for two reasons to cross the Rhine; one of which was, because they had sent assistance to the Treviri against him; the other, that Ambiorix might not have a retreat among them. Having determined on these matters, he began to build a bridge a little above that place where he had before conveyed over his army. The plan having been known and laid down, the work is accomplished in a few days by the great exertion of the soldiers. Having left a strong guard at the bridge on the side of the Treviri, lest any commotion should suddenly arise among them, he leads over the rest of the forces and the cavalry. The Ubii, who before had sent hostages and come to a capitulation, send ambassadors to him, for the purpose of vindicating themselves, to assure him that "neither had auxiliaries been sent to the Treviri from their state, nor had they violated their allegiance;" they entreat and beseech him "to spare them, lest, in his common hatred of the Germans, the innocent should suffer the penalty of the guilty: they promise to give more hostages, if he desire them." Having investigated the case, Caesar finds that the auxiliaries had been sent by the Suevi; he accepts the apology of the Ubii, and makes the minute inquiries concerning the approaches and the routes to the territories of the Suevi.

[6.10] In the mean time he is informed by the Ubii, a few days after, that the Suevi are drawing all their forces into one place, and are giving orders to those nations which are under their government to send auxiliaries of infantry and of cavalry. Having learned these things, he provides a supply of corn, selects a proper place for his camp, and commands the Ubii to drive off their cattle and carry away all their possessions from the country parts into the towns, hoping that they, being a barbarous and ignorant people, when harassed by the want of provisions, might be brought to an engagement on disadvantageous terms: he orders them to send numerous scouts among the Suevi, and learn what things are going on among them. They execute the orders, and, a few days having intervened, report that all the Suevi, after certain intelligence concerning the army of the Romans had come, retreated with all their own forces and those of their allies, which they had assembled, to the utmost extremities of their territories: that there is a wood there of very great extent, which is called Bacenis; that this stretches a great way into the interior, and, being opposed as a natural barrier, defends from injuries and incursions the Cherusci against the Suevi, and the Suevi against the Cherusci: that at the entrance of that forest the Suevi had determined to await the coming up of the Romans.

[6.11] Since we have come to the place, it does not appear to be foreign to our subject to lay before the reader an account of the manners of Gaul and Germany, and wherein these nations differ from each other. In Gaul there are factions not only in all the states, and in all the cantons and their divisions, but almost in each family, and of these

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

factions those are the leaders who are considered according to their judgment to possess the greatest influence, upon whose will and determination the management of all affairs and measures depends. And that seems to have been instituted in ancient times with this view, that no one of the common people should be in want of support against one more powerful; for, none [of those leaders] suffers his party to be oppressed and defrauded, and if he do otherwise, he has no influence among his party. This same policy exists throughout the whole of Gaul; for all the states are divided into two factions.

[6.12]When Caesar arrived in Gaul, the Aedui were the leaders of one faction, the Sequani of the other. Since the latter were less powerful by themselves, inasmuch as the chief influence was from of old among the Aedui, and their dependencies were great, they had united to themselves the Germans and Ariovistus, and had brought them over to their party by great sacrifices and promises. And having fought several successful battles and slain all the nobility of the Aedui, they had so far surpassed them in power, that they brought over, from the Aedui to themselves, a large portion of their dependents and received from them the sons of their leading men as hostages, and compelled them to swear in their public character that they would enter into no design against them; and held a portion of the neighboring land, seized on by force, and possessed the sovereignty of the whole of Gaul. Divitiacus urged by this necessity, had proceeded to Rome to the senate, for the purpose of entreating assistance, and had returned without accomplishing his object. A change of affairs ensued on the arrival of Caesar, the hostages were returned to the Aedui, their old dependencies restored, and new acquired through Caesar (because those who had attached themselves to their alliance saw that they enjoyed a better state and a milder government), their other interests, their influence, their reputation were likewise increased, and in consequence, the Sequani lost the sovereignty. The Remi succeeded to their place, and, as it was perceived that they equaled the Aedui in favor with Caesar, those, who on account of their old animosities could by no means coalesce with the Aedui, consigned themselves in clientship to the Remi. The latter carefully protected them. Thus they possessed both a new and suddenly acquired influence. Affairs were then in that position that the Aedui were considered by far the leading people, and the Remi held the second post of honor.

[6.13]Throughout all Gaul there are two orders of those men who are of any rank and dignity: for the commonality is held almost in the condition of slaves, and dares to undertake nothing of itself, and is admitted to no deliberation. The greater part, when they are pressed either by debt, or the large amount of their tributes, or the oppression of the more powerful, give themselves up in vassalage to the nobles, who possess over them the same rights without exception as masters over their slaves. But of these two orders, one is that of the Druids, the other that of the knights. The former are engaged in things sacred, conduct the public and the private sacrifices, and interpret all matters of religion. To these a large number of the young men resort for the purpose of instruction, and they [the Druids] are in great honor among them. For they determine respecting almost all controversies, public and private; and if any crime has been perpetrated, if murder has been committed, if there be any dispute about an inheritance, if any about boundaries, these same persons decide it; they decree rewards and punishments; if any one, either in a private or public capacity, has not submitted to their decision, they interdict him from the sacrifices. This among them is the most heavy punishment. Those who have been thus interdicted are esteemed in the number of the impious and the criminal: all shun them, and avoid their society and conversation, lest they receive some evil from their contact; nor is justice administered to them when seeking it, nor is any dignity bestowed on them. Over all these Druids one presides, who possesses supreme authority among them. Upon his death, if any individual among the rest is pre-eminent in dignity, he succeeds; but, if there are many equal, the election is made by the suffrages of the Druids; sometimes they even contend for the presidency with arms. These assemble at a fixed period of the year in a consecrated place in the territories of the Carnutes, which is reckoned the central region of the whole of Gaul. Hither all, who have disputes, assemble from every part, and submit to their decrees and determinations. This institution is supposed to have been devised in Britain, and to have been brought over from it into Gaul; and now those who desire to gain a more accurate knowledge of that system generally proceed thither for the purpose of studying it.

[6.14]The Druids do not go to war, nor pay tribute together with the rest; they have an exemption from military service and a dispensation in all matters. Induced by such great advantages, many embrace this profession of their

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

own accord, and [many] are sent to it by their parents and relations. They are said there to learn by heart a great number of verses; accordingly some remain in the course of training twenty years. Nor do they regard it lawful to commit these to writing, though in almost all other matters, in their public and private transactions, they use Greek characters. That practice they seem to me to have adopted for two reasons; because they neither desire their doctrines to be divulged among the mass of the people, nor those who learn, to devote themselves the less to the efforts of memory, relying on writing; since it generally occurs to most men, that, in their dependence on writing, they relax their diligence in learning thoroughly, and their employment of the memory. They wish to inculcate this as one of their leading tenets, that souls do not become extinct, but pass after death from one body to another, and they think that men by this tenet are in a great degree excited to valor, the fear of death being disregarded. They likewise discuss and impart to the youth many things respecting the stars and their motion, respecting the extent of the world and of our earth, respecting the nature of things, respecting the power and the majesty of the immortal gods.

[6.15]The other order is that of the knights. These, when there is occasion and any war occurs (which before Caesar's arrival was for the most part wont to happen every year, as either they on their part were inflicting injuries or repelling those which others inflicted on them), are all engaged in war. And those of them most distinguished by birth and resources, have the greatest number of vassals and dependents about them. They acknowledge this sort of influence and power only.

[6.16]The nation of all the Gauls is extremely devoted to superstitious rites; and on that account they who are troubled with unusually severe diseases, and they who are engaged in battles and dangers, either sacrifice men as victims, or vow that they will sacrifice them, and employ the Druids as the performers of those sacrifices; because they think that unless the life of a man be offered for the life of a man, the mind of the immortal gods can not be rendered propitious, and they have sacrifices of that kind ordained for national purposes. Others have figures of vast size, the limbs of which formed of osiers they fill with living men, which being set on fire, the men perish enveloped in the flames. They consider that the oblation of such as have been taken in theft, or in robbery, or any other offense, is more acceptable to the immortal gods; but when a supply of that class is wanting, they have recourse to the oblation of even the innocent.

[6.17]They worship as their divinity, Mercury in particular, and have many images of him, and regard him as the inventor of all arts, they consider him the guide of their journeys and marches, and believe him to have great influence over the acquisition of gain and mercantile transactions. Next to him they worship Apollo, and Mars, and Jupiter, and Minerva; respecting these deities they have for the most part the same belief as other nations: that Apollo averts diseases, that Minerva imparts the invention of manufactures, that Jupiter possesses the sovereignty of the heavenly powers; that Mars presides over wars. To him, when they have determined to engage in battle, they commonly vow those things which they shall take in war. When they have conquered, they sacrifice whatever captured animals may have survived the conflict, and collect the other things into one place. In many states you may see piles of these things heaped up in their consecrated spots; nor does it often happen that any one, disregarding the sanctity of the case, dares either to secrete in his house things captured, or take away those deposited; and the most severe punishment, with torture, has been established for such a deed.

[6.18]All the Gauls assert that they are descended from the god Dis, and say that this tradition has been handed down by the Druids. For that reason they compute the divisions of every season, not by the number of days, but of nights; they keep birthdays and the beginnings of months and years in such an order that the day follows the night. Among the other usages of their life, they differ in this from almost all other nations, that they do not permit their children to approach them openly until they are grown up so as to be able to bear the service of war; and they regard it as indecorous for a son of boyish age to stand in public in the presence of his father.

[6.19]Whatever sums of money the husbands have received in the name of dowry from their wives, making an estimate of it, they add the same amount out of their own estates. An account is kept of all this money conjointly, and the profits are laid by: whichever of them shall have survived [the other], to that one the portion of both

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

reverts together with the profits of the previous time. Husbands have power of life and death over their wives as well as over their children: and when the father of a family, born in a more than commonly distinguished rank, has died, his relations assemble, and, if the circumstances of his death are suspicious, hold an investigation upon the wives in the manner adopted toward slaves; and, if proof be obtained, put them to severe torture, and kill them. Their funerals, considering the state of civilization among the Gauls, are magnificent and costly; and they cast into the fire all things, including living creatures, which they suppose to have been dear to them when alive; and, a little before this period, slaves and dependents, who were ascertained to have been beloved by them, were, after the regular funeral rites were completed, burnt together with them.

[6.20]Those states which are considered to conduct their commonwealth more judiciously, have it ordained by their laws, that, if any person shall have heard by rumor and report from his neighbors any thing concerning the commonwealth, he shall convey it to the magistrate, and not impart it to any other; because it has been discovered that inconsiderate and inexperienced men were often alarmed by false reports, and driven to some rash act, or else took hasty measures in affairs of the highest importance. The magistrates conceal those things which require to be kept unknown; and they disclose to the people whatever they determine to be expedient. It is not lawful to speak of the commonwealth, except in council.

[6.21]The Germans differ much from these usages, for they have neither Druids to preside over sacred offices, nor do they pay great regard to sacrifices. They rank in the number of the gods those alone whom they behold, and by whose instrumentality they are obviously benefited, namely, the sun, fire, and the moon; they have not heard of the other deities even by report. Their whole life is occupied in hunting and in the pursuits of the military art; from childhood they devote themselves to fatigue and hardships. Those who have remained chaste for the longest time, receive the greatest commendation among their people; they think that by this the growth is promoted, by this the physical powers are increased and the sinews are strengthened. And to have had knowledge of a woman before the twentieth year they reckon among the most disgraceful acts; of which matter there is no concealment, because they bathe promiscuously in the rivers and [only] use skins or small cloaks of deer's hides, a large portion of the body being in consequence naked.

[6.22]They do not pay much attention to agriculture, and a large portion of their food consists in milk, cheese, and flesh; nor has any one a fixed quantity of land or his own individual limits; but the magistrates and the leading men each year apportion to the tribes and families, who have united together, as much land as, and in the place in which, they think proper, and the year after compel them to remove elsewhere. For this enactment they advance many reasons—lest seduced by long-continued custom, they may exchange their ardor in the waging of war for agriculture; lest they may be anxious to acquire extensive estates, and the more powerful drive the weaker from their possessions; lest they construct their houses with too great a desire to avoid cold and heat; lest the desire of wealth spring up, from which cause divisions and discords arise; and that they may keep the common people in a contented state of mind, when each sees his own means placed on an equality with [those of] the most powerful.

[6.23]It is the greatest glory to the several states to have as wide deserts as possible around them, their frontiers having been laid waste. They consider this the real evidence of their prowess, that their neighbors shall be driven out of their lands and abandon them, and that no one dare settle near them; at the same time they think that they shall be on that account the more secure, because they have removed the apprehension of a sudden incursion. When a state either repels war waged against it, or wages it against another, magistrates are chosen to preside over that war with such authority, that they have power of life and death. In peace there is no common magistrate, but the chiefs of provinces and cantons administer justice and determine controversies among their own people. Robberies which are committed beyond the boundaries of each state bear no infamy, and they avow that these are committed for the purpose of disciplining their youth and of preventing sloth. And when any of their chiefs has said in an assembly "that he will be their leader, let those who are willing to follow, give in their names;" they who approve of both the enterprise and the man arise and promise their assistance and are applauded by the people; such of them as have not followed him are accounted in the number of deserters and traitors, and confidence in all matters is afterward refused them. To injure guests they regard as impious; they defend from

wrong those who have come to them for any purpose whatever, and esteem them inviolable; to them the houses of all are open and maintenance is freely supplied.

[6.24]And there was formerly a time when the Gauls excelled the Germans in prowess, and waged war on them offensively, and, on account of the great number of their people and the insufficiency of their land, sent colonies over the Rhine. Accordingly, the Volcae Tectosages, seized on those parts of Germany which are the most fruitful [and lie] around the Hercynian forest, (which, I perceive, was known by report to Eratosthenes and some other Greeks, and which they call Orcynia), and settled there. Which nation to this time retains its position in those settlements, and has a very high character for justice and military merit; now also they continue in the same scarcity, indigence, hardihood, as the Germans, and use the same food and dress; but their proximity to the Province and knowledge of commodities from countries beyond the sea supplies to the Gauls many things tending to luxury as well as civilization. Accustomed by degrees to be overmatched and worsted in many engagements, they do not even compare themselves to the Germans in prowess.

[6.25]The breadth of this Hercynian forest, which has been referred to above, is to a quick traveler, a journey of nine days. For it can not be otherwise computed, nor are they acquainted with the measures of roads. It begins at the frontiers of the Helvetii, Nemetes, and Rauraci, and extends in a right line along the river Danube to the territories of the Daci and the Anartes; it bends thence to the left in a different direction from the river, and owing to its extent touches the confines of many nations; nor is there any person belonging to this part of Germany who says that he either has gone to the extremity of that forest, though he had advanced a journey of sixty days, or has heard in what place it begins. It is certain that many kinds of wild beast are produced in it which have not been seen in other parts; of which the following are such as differ principally from other animals, and appear worthy of being committed to record.

[6.26]There is an ox of the shape of a stag, between whose ears a horn rises from the middle of the forehead, higher and straighter than those horns which are known to us. From the top of this, branches, like palms, stretch out a considerable distance. The shape of the female and of the male is the same; the appearance and the size of the horns is the same.

[6.27]There are also [animals] which are called elks. The shape of these, and the varied color of their skins, is much like roes, but in size they surpass them a little and are destitute of horns, and have legs without joints and ligatures; nor do they lie down for the purpose of rest, nor, if they have been thrown down by any accident, can they raise or lift themselves up. Trees serve as beds to them; they lean themselves against them, and thus reclining only slightly, they take their rest; when the huntsmen have discovered from the footsteps of these animals whither they are accustomed to betake themselves, they either undermine all the trees at the roots, or cut into them so far that the upper part of the trees may appear to be left standing. When they have leant upon them, according to their habit, they knock down by their weight the unsupported trees, and fall down themselves along with them.

[6.28]There is a third kind, consisting of those animals which are called uri. These are a little below the elephant in size, and of the appearance, color, and shape of a bull. Their strength and speed are extraordinary; they spare neither man nor wild beast which they have espied. These the Germans take with much pains in pits and kill them. The young men harden themselves with this exercise, and practice themselves in this kind of hunting, and those who have slain the greatest number of them, having produced the horns in public, to serve as evidence, receive great praise. But not even when taken very young can they be rendered familiar to men and tamed. The size, shape, and appearance of their horns differ much from the horns of our oxen. These they anxiously seek after, and bind at the tips with silver, and use as cups at their most sumptuous entertainments.

[6.29]Caesar, after he discovered through the Ubian scouts that the Suevi had retired into their woods, apprehending a scarcity of corn, because, as we have observed above, all the Germans pay very little attention to agriculture, resolved not to proceed any further; but, that he might not altogether relieve the barbarians from the fear of his return, and that he might delay their succors, having led back his army, he breaks down, to the length

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

of 200 feet, the further end of the bridge, which joined the banks of the Ubii, and at the extremity of the bridge raises towers of four stories, and stations a guard of twelve cohorts for the purpose of defending the bridge, and strengthens the place with considerable fortifications. Over that fort and guard he appointed C. Volcatius Tullus, a young man; he himself, when the corn began to ripen, having set forth for the war with Ambiorix (through the forest Arduenna, which is the largest of all Gaul, and reaches from the banks of the Rhine and the frontiers of the Treviri to those of the Nervii, and extends over more than 500 miles), he sends forward L. Minucius Basilius with all the cavalry, to try if he might gain any advantage by rapid marches and the advantage of time, he warns him to forbid fires being made in the camp, lest any indication of his approach be given at a distance: he tells him that he will follow immediately.

[6.30]Basilius does as he was commanded; having performed his march rapidly, and even surpassed the expectations of all, he surprises in the fields many not expecting him; through their information he advances toward Ambiorix himself, to the place in which he was said to be with a few horse. Fortune accomplishes much, not only in other matters, but also in the art of war. For as it happened by a remarkable chance, that he fell upon [Ambiorix] himself unguarded and unprepared, and that his arrival was seen by the people before the report or information of his arrival was carried thither; so it was an incident of extraordinary fortune that, although every implement of war which he was accustomed to have about him was seized, and his chariots and horses surprised, yet he himself escaped death. But it was effected owing to this circumstance, that his house being surrounded by a wood (as are generally the dwellings of the Gauls, who, for the purpose of avoiding heat, mostly seek the neighborhood of woods and rivers), his attendants and friends in a narrow spot sustained for a short time the attack of our horse. While they were fighting, one of his followers mounted him on a horse; the woods sheltered him as he fled. Thus fortune tended much both toward his encountering and his escaping danger.

[6.31]Whether Ambiorix did not collect his forces from cool deliberation, because he considered he ought not to engage in a battle, or [whether] he was debarred by time and prevented by the sudden arrival of our horse, when he supposed the rest of the army was closely following, is doubtful: but certainly, dispatching messengers through the country, he ordered every one to provide for himself; and a part of them fled into the forest Arduenna, a part into the extensive morasses; those who were nearest the ocean concealed themselves in the islands which the tides usually form; many, departing from their territories, committed themselves and all their possessions to perfect strangers. Cativolcus, king of one half of the Eburones, who had entered into the design together with Ambiorix, since, being now worn out by age, he was unable to endure the fatigue either of war or flight, having cursed Ambiorix with every imprecation, as the person who had been the contriver of that measure, destroyed himself with the juice of the yew-tree, of which there is a great abundance in Gaul and Germany.

[6.32]The Segui and Condrusi, of the nation and number of the Germans, and who are between the Eburones and the Treviri, sent ambassadors to Caesar to entreat that he would not regard them in the number of his enemies, nor consider that the cause of all the Germans on this side the Rhine was one and the same; that they had formed no plans of war, and had sent no auxiliaries to Ambiorix. Caesar, having ascertained this fact by an examination of his prisoners, commanded that if any of the Eburones in their flight had repaired to them, they should be sent back to him; he assures them that if they did that, he will not injure their territories. Then, having divided his forces into three parts, he sent the baggage of all the legions to Aduatuca. That is the name of a fort. This is nearly in the middle of the Eburones, where Titurius and Aurunculeius had been quartered for the purpose of wintering. This place he selected as well on other accounts as because the fortifications of the previous year remained, in order that he might relieve the labor of the soldiers. He left the fourteenth legion as a guard for the baggage, one of those three which he had lately raised in Italy and brought over. Over that legion and camp he places Q. Tullius Cicero and gives him 200 horse.

[6.33]Having divided the army, he orders T. Labienus to proceed with three legions toward the ocean into those parts which border on the Menapii; he sends C. Trebonius with a like number of legions to lay waste that district which lies contiguous to the Aduatuci; he himself determines to go with the remaining three to the river Sambre, which flows into the Meuse, and to the most remote parts of Arduenna, whither he heard that Ambiorix had gone

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

with a few horse. When departing, he promises that he will return before the end of the seventh day, on which day he was aware corn was due to that legion which was being left in garrison. He directs Labienus and Trebonius to return by the same day, if they can do so agreeably to the interests of the republic; so that their measures having been mutually imparted, and the plans of the enemy having been discovered, they might be able to commence a different line of operations.

[6.34]There was, as we have above observed, no regular army, nor a town, nor a garrison which could defend itself by arms; but the people were scattered in all directions. Where either a hidden valley, or a woody spot, or a difficult morass furnished any hope of protection or of security to any one, there he had fixed himself. These places were known to those who dwelt in the neighborhood, and the matter demanded great attention, not so much in protecting the main body of the army (for no peril could occur to them altogether from those alarmed and scattered troops), as in preserving individual soldiers; which in some measure tended to the safety of the army. For both the desire of booty was leading many too far, and the woods with their unknown and hidden routes would not allow them to go in large bodies. If he desired the business to be completed and the race of those infamous people to be cut off, more bodies of men must be sent in several directions and the soldiers must be detached on all sides; if he were disposed to keep the companies at their standards, as the established discipline and practice of the Roman army required, the situation itself was a safeguard to the barbarians, nor was there wanting to individuals the daring to lay secret ambuscades and beset scattered soldiers. But amid difficulties of this nature as far as precautions could be taken by vigilance, such precautions were taken; so that some opportunities of injuring the enemy were neglected, though the minds of all were burning to take revenge, rather than that injury should be effected with any loss to our soldiers. Caesar dispatches messengers to the neighboring states; by the hope of booty he invites all to him, for the purpose of plundering the Eburones, in order that the life of the Gauls might be hazarded in the woods rather than the legionary soldiers; at the same time, in order that a large force being drawn around them, the race and name of that state may be annihilated for such a crime. A large number from all quarters speedily assembles.

[6.35]These things were going on in all parts of the territories of the Eburones, and the seventh day was drawing near, by which day Caesar had purposed to return to the baggage and the legion. Here it might be learned how much fortune achieves in war, and how great casualties she produces. The enemy having been scattered and alarmed, as we related above, there was no force which might produce even a slight occasion of fear. The report extends beyond the Rhine to the Germans that the Eburones are being pillaged, and that all were without distinction invited to the plunder. The Sigambri, who are nearest to the Rhine, by whom, we have mentioned above, the Tenchtheri and Usipetes were received after their retreat, collect 2,000 horse; they cross the Rhine in ships and barks thirty miles below that place where the bridge was entire and the garrison left by Caesar; they arrive at the frontiers of the Eburones, surprise many who were scattered in flight, and get possession of a large amount of cattle, of which barbarians are extremely covetous. Allured by booty, they advance further; neither morass nor forest obstructs these men, born amid war and depredations; they inquire of their prisoners in what part Caesar is; they find that he has advanced further, and learn that all the army has removed. Thereon one of the prisoners says, "Why do you pursue such wretched and trifling spoil; you, to whom it is granted to become even now most richly endowed by fortune? In three hours you can reach Aduatuca; there the Roman army has deposited all its fortunes; there is so little of a garrison that not even the wall can be manned, nor dare any one go beyond the fortifications." A hope having been presented them, the Germans leave in concealment the plunder they had acquired; they themselves hasten to Aduatuca, employing as their guide the same man by whose information they had become informed of these things.

[6.36]Cicero, who during all the foregoing days had kept his soldiers in camp with the greatest exactness, and agreeable to the injunctions of Caesar, had not permitted even any of the camp-followers to go beyond the fortification, distrusting on the seventh day that Caesar would keep his promise as to the number of days, because he heard that he had proceeded further, and no report as to his return was brought to him, and being urged at the same time by the expressions of those who called his tolerance almost a siege, if, forsooth, it was not permitted them to go out of the camp, since he might expect no disaster, whereby he could be injured, within three miles of

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

the camp, while nine legions and all the cavalry were under arms, and the enemy scattered and almost annihilated, sent five cohorts into the neighboring corn-lands, between which and the camp only one hill intervened, for the purpose of foraging. Many soldiers of the legions had been left invalided in the camp, of whom those who had recovered in this space of time, being about 300, are sent together under one standard; a large number of soldiers' attendants besides, with a great number of beasts of burden, which had remained in the camp, permission being granted, follow them.

[6.37]At this very time, the German horse by chance came up, and immediately, with the same speed with which they had advanced, attempt to force the camp at the Decuman gate, nor were they seen, in consequence of woods lying in the way on that side, before they were just reaching the camp: so much so, that the sutlers who had their booths under the rampart had not an opportunity of retreating within the camp. Our men, not anticipating it, are perplexed by the sudden affair, and the cohort on the outpost scarcely sustains the first attack. The enemy spread themselves on the other sides to ascertain if they could find any access. Our men with difficulty defend the gates; the very position of itself and the fortification secures the other accesses. There is a panic in the entire camp, and one inquires of another the cause of the confusion, nor do they readily determine whither the standards should be borne, nor into what quarter each should betake himself. One avows that the camp is already taken, another maintains that, the enemy having destroyed the army and commander-in-chief, are come hither as conquerors; most form strange superstitious fancies from the spot, and place before their eyes the catastrophe of Cotta and Titurius, who had fallen in the same fort. All being greatly disconcerted by this alarm, the belief of the barbarians is strengthened that there is no garrison within, as they had heard from their prisoner. They endeavor to force an entrance and encourage one another not to cast from their hands so valuable a prize.

[6.38]P. Sextius Baculus, who had led a principal century under Caesar (of whom we have made mention in previous engagements), had been left an invalid in the garrison, and had now been five days without food. He, distrusting his own safety and that of all, goes forth from his tent unarmed; he sees that the enemy are close at hand and that the matter is in the utmost danger; he snatches arms from those nearest, and stations himself at the gate. The centurions of that cohort which was on guard follow him; for a short time they sustain the fight together. Sextius faints, after receiving many wounds; he is with difficulty saved, drawn away by the hands of the soldiers. This space having intervened, the others resume courage so far as to venture to take their place on the fortifications and present the aspect of defenders.

[6.39]The foraging having in the mean time been completed, our soldiers distinctly hear the shout; the horse hasten on before and discover in what danger the affair is. But here there is no fortification to receive them, in their alarm: those last enlisted, and unskilled in military discipline turn their faces to the military tribune and the centurions; they wait to find what orders may be given by them. No one is so courageous as not to be disconcerted by the suddenness of the affair. The barbarians, espying our standard in the distance, desist from the attack; at first they suppose that the legions, which they had learned from their prisoners had removed further off, had returned; afterward, despising their small number, they make an attack on them at all sides.

[6.40]The camp-followers run forward to the nearest rising ground; being speedily driven from this they throw themselves among the standards and companies: they thus so much the more alarm the soldiers already affrighted. Some propose that, forming a wedge, they suddenly break through, since the camp was so near; and if any part should be surrounded and slain, they fully trust that at least the rest may be saved; others, that they take their stand on an eminence, and all undergo the same destiny. The veteran soldiers whom we stated to have set out together [with the others] under a standard, do not approve of this. Therefore encouraging each other, under the conduct of Caius Trebonius, a Roman knight, who had been appointed over them, they break through the midst of the enemy, and arrive in the camp safe to a man. The camp attendants and the horse following close upon them with the same impetuosity, are saved by the courage of the soldiers. But those who had taken their stand upon the eminence having even now acquired no experience of military matters, neither could persevere in that resolution which they approved of, namely, to defend themselves from their higher position, nor imitate that vigor and speed which they had observed to have availed others; but, attempting to reach the camp, had descended into an unfavorable

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

situation. The centurions, some of whom had been promoted for their valor from the lower ranks of other legions to higher ranks in this legion, in order that they might not forfeit their glory for military exploits previously acquired, fell together fighting most valiantly. The enemy having been dislodged by their valor, a part of the soldiers arrived safe in camp contrary to their expectations; a part perished, surrounded by the barbarians.

[6.41]The Germans, despairing of taking the camp by storm, because they saw that our men had taken up their position on the fortifications, retreated beyond the Rhine with that plunder which they had deposited in the woods. And so great was the alarm, even after the departure of the enemy, that when C. Volusenus, who had been sent with the cavalry, arrived that night, he could not gain credence that Caesar was close at hand with his army safe. Fear had so pre-occupied the minds of all, that their reason being almost estranged, they said that all the other forces having been cut off, the cavalry alone had arrived there by flight, and asserted that, if the army were safe, the Germans would not have attacked the camp; which fear the arrival of Caesar removed.

[6.42]He, on his return, being well aware of the casualties of war, complained of one thing [only], namely, that the cohorts had been sent away from the outposts and garrison [duty], and pointed out that room ought not to have been left for even the most trivial casualty; that fortune had exercised great influence in the sudden arrival of their enemy; much greater, in that she had turned the barbarians away from the very rampart and gates of the camp. Of all which events, it seemed the most surprising, that the Germans, who had crossed the Rhine with this object, that they might plunder the territories of Ambiorix, being led to the camp of the Romans, rendered Ambiorix a most acceptable service.

[6.43]Caesar, having again marched to harass the enemy, after collecting a large number [of auxiliaries] from the neighboring states, dispatches them in all directions. All the villages and all the buildings, which each beheld, were on fire: spoil was being driven off from all parts; the corn not only was being consumed by so great numbers of cattle and men, but also had fallen to the earth, owing to the time of the year and the storms; so that if any had concealed themselves for the present, still, it appeared likely that they must perish through want of all things, when the army should be drawn off. And frequently it came to that point, as so large a body of cavalry had been sent abroad in all directions, that the prisoners declared Ambiorix had just then been seen by them in flight, and had not even passed out of sight, so that the hope of overtaking him being raised, and unbounded exertions having been resorted to, those who thought they should acquire the highest favor with Caesar, nearly overcame nature by their ardor, and continually, a little only seemed wanting to complete success; but he rescued himself by [means of] lurking—places and forests, and, concealed by the night made for other districts and quarters, with no greater guard than that of four horsemen, to whom along he ventured to confide his life.

[6.44]Having devastated the country in such a manner, Caesar leads back his army with the loss of two cohorts to Durocortorum of the Remi, and, having summoned a council of Gaul to assemble at that place, he resolved to hold an investigation respecting the conspiracy of the Senones and Carnutes, and having pronounced a most severe sentence upon Acco, who had been the contriver of that plot, he punished him after the custom of our ancestors. Some fearing a trial, fled; when he had forbidden these fire and water, he stationed in winter quarters two legions at the frontiers of the Treviri, two among the Lingones, the remaining six at Agendicum, in the territories of the Senones; and, having provided corn for the army, he set out for Italy, as he had determined, to hold the assizes.

End of Book 6