

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

Aulus Hirtius

Table of Contents

<u>Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars</u>	1
<u>Aulus Hirtius</u>	1

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

Aulus Hirtius

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

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

[1]When the war broke out at Alexandria, Caesar sent to Rhodes, Syria, and Cilicia, for all his fleet; and summoned archers from Crete, and cavalry from Malchus, king of the Nabatheans. He likewise ordered military engines to be provided, corn to be brought, and forces dispatched to him. Meanwhile he daily strengthened his fortifications by new works; and such parts of the town as appeared less tenable were strengthened with testudos and mantelets. Openings were made in the walls, through which the battering-rams might play; and the fortifications were extended over whatever space was covered with ruins, or taken by force. For Alexandria is in a manner secure from fire, because the houses are all built without joists or wood, and are all vaulted, and roofed with tile or pavement. Caesar's principal aim was, to inclose with works the smallest part of the town, separated from the rest by a morass toward the south: with these views, first, that as the city was divided into two parts, the army should be commanded by one general and one council; in the second place, that he might be able to succor his troops when hard pressed, and carry aid from the other part of the city. Above all, he by this means made sure of water and forage, as he was but ill provided with the one, and wholly destitute of the other. The morass, on the contrary, served abundantly to supply him with both.

[2]Nor were the Alexandrians remiss on their side, or less active in the conduct of their affairs. For they had sent deputies and commissioners into all parts, where the powers and territories of Egypt extend, to levy troops. They had carried vast quantities of darts and engines into the town, and drawn together an innumerable multitude of soldiers. Nevertheless workshops were established in every part of the city, for the making of arms. They enlisted all the slaves that were of age; and the richer citizens supplied them with food and pay. By a judicious disposition of this multitude, they guarded the fortifications in the remoter parts of the town; while they quartered the veteran cohorts, which were exempted from all other service, in the squares and open places; that on whatever side an attack should be made, they might be at hand to give relief, and march fresh to the charge. They shut up all the avenues and passes by a triple wall built of square stones, and carried to the height of forty feet. They defended the lower parts of the town by very high towers of ten stories: besides which, they had likewise contrived a kind of moving towers, which consisted of the same number of stories, and which being fitted with ropes and wheels, could, by means of horses, as the streets of Alexandria were quite even and level, be conveyed wherever their service was necessary.

[3]The city abounding in every thing, and being very rich, furnished ample materials for these several works: and as the people were extremely ingenious, and quick of apprehension, they so well copied what they saw done by us that our men seemed rather to imitate their works. They even invented many things themselves, and attacked our works, at the same time that they defended their own. Their chiefs every where represented: "That the people of Rome were endeavoring by degrees to assume the possession of Egypt; that a few years before Gabinius had come thither with an army; that Pompey had retreated to the same place in his flight; that Caesar was now among them with a considerable body of troops, nor had they gained any thing by Pompey's death; that Caesar should not prolong his stay; that if they did not find means to expel him, the kingdom would be reduced to a Roman province: and that they ought to do it at once, for he, blockaded by the storms on account of the season of the

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

year, could receive no supplies from beyond the sea."

[4]Meanwhile, a division arising between Achilles, who commanded the veteran army, and Arsinoe, the youngest daughter of king Ptolemy, as has been mentioned above, while they mutually endeavored to supplant one another, each striving to engross the supreme authority, Arsinoe, by the assistance of the eunuch Ganymed, her governor, at length prevailed, and slew Achilles. After his death, she possessed the whole power without a rival, and raised Ganymed to the command of the army; who, on his entrance upon that high office, augmented the largesses of the troops, and with equal diligence discharged all other parts of his duty.

[5]Alexandria is almost quite hollow underneath, occasioned by the many aqueducts to the Nile, that furnish the private houses with water; where being received in cisterns, it settles by degrees, and becomes perfectly clear. The master and his family are accustomed to use this: for the water of the Nile being extremely thick and muddy, is apt to breed many distempers. The common people, however, are forced to be contented with the latter, because there is not a single spring in the whole city. The river was in that part of the town which was in the possession of the Alexandrians. By which circumstance Ganymed was reminded that our men might be deprived of water; because being distributed into several streets, for the more easy defense of the works, they made use of that which was preserved in the aqueducts and the cisterns of private houses.

[6]With this view he began a great and difficult work; for having stopped up all the canals by which his own cisterns were supplied, he drew vast quantities of water out of the sea, by the help of wheels and other engines, pouring it continually into the canals of Caesar's quarter. The cisterns in the nearest houses soon began to taste salter than ordinary, and occasioned great wonder among the men, who could not think from what cause it proceeded. They were even ready to disbelieve their senses when those who were quartered a little lower in the town assured them that they found the water the same as before. This put them upon comparing the cisterns one with another, and by trial they easily perceived the difference. But in a little time the water in the nearest houses became quite unfit for use, and that lower down grew daily more tainted and brackish.

[7]All doubt being removed by this circumstance, such a terror ensued among the troops that they fancied themselves reduced to the last extremity. Some complained of Caesar's delay, that he did not order them immediately to repair to their ships. Others dreaded a yet greater misfortune, as it would be impossible to conceal their design of retreating from the Alexandrians, who were so near them; and no less so to embark in the face of a vigorous and pursuing enemy. There were besides a great number of the townsmen in Caesar's quarter, whom he had not thought proper to force from their houses, because they openly pretended to be in his interest, and to have quitted the party of their follow-citizens. But to offer here a defense either of the sincerity or conduct of these Alexandrians, would be only labor in vain, since all who know the genius and temper of the people must be satisfied that they are the fittest instruments in the world for treason.

[8]Caesar labored to remove his soldiers' fears by encouraging and reasoning with them. For he affirmed "that they might easily find fresh water by digging wells, as all sea coasts naturally abounded with fresh springs: that if Egypt was singular in this respect, and differed from every other soil, yet still, as the sea was open, and the enemy without a fleet, there was nothing to hinder their fetching it at pleasure in their ships, either from Paraetionium on the left, or from the island on the right; and as their two voyages were in different directions, they could not be prevented by adverse winds at the same time; that a retreat was on no account to be thought of, not only by those that had a concern for their honor, but even by such as regarded nothing but life; that it was with the utmost difficulty they could defend themselves behind their works; but if they once quitted that advantage, neither in number or situation would they be a match for the enemy: that to embark would require much time, and be attended with great danger, especially where it must be managed by little boats: that the Alexandrians, on the contrary, were nimble and active, and thoroughly acquainted with the streets and buildings; that, moreover, when flushed with victory, they would not fail to run before, seize all the advantageous posts, possess themselves of the tops of the houses, and by annoying them in their retreat, effectually prevent their getting on board; that they must therefore think no more of retreating, but place all their hopes of safety in victory."

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

[9]Having by this speech re-assured his men, he ordered the centurions to lay aside all other works, and apply themselves day and night to the digging of wells. The work once begun, and the minds of all aroused to exertion, they exerted themselves so vigorously that in the very first night abundance of fresh water was found. Thus, with no great labor on our side, the mighty projects and painful attempts of the Alexandrians were entirely frustrated. Within these two days the thirty-seventh legion, composed of Pompey's veterans that had surrendered to Caesar, embarking by order of Domitius Calvinus, with arms, darts, provisions, and military engines, arrived upon the coast of Africa, a little above Alexandria. These ships were hindered from gaining the port by an easterly wind, which continued to blow for several days; but all along that coast it is very safe to ride at anchor. Being detained, however, longer than they expected, and distressed by want of water, they gave notice of it to Caesar, by a dispatch sloop.

[10]Caesar, that he might himself be able to determine what was best to be done, went on board one of the ships in the harbor, and ordered the whole fleet to follow. He took none of the land forces with him, because he was unwilling to leave the works unguarded during his absence. Being arrived at that part of the coast known by the name of Chersonesus, he sent some mariners on shore to fetch water. Some of these venturing too far into the country for the sake of plunder, were intercepted by the enemy's horse. From them the Egyptians learned that Caesar himself was on board, without any soldiers. Upon this information, they thought fortune had thrown in their way a good opportunity of attempting something with success. They therefore manned all the ships that they had ready for sea, and met Caesar on his return. He declined fighting that day, for two reasons, first, because he had no soldiers on board, and secondly, because it was past four in the afternoon. The night, he was sensible, must be highly advantageous to his enemies, who depended on their knowledge of the coast, while he would be deprived of the benefit of encouraging his men, which could not be done with any effect in the dark, where courage and cowardice must remain equally unknown. Caesar, therefore, drew all his ships toward the shore, where he imagined the enemy would not follow him.

[11]There was one Rhodian galley in Caesar's right wing, considerably distant from the rest. The enemy observing this, could not restrain themselves, but came forward with four-decked ships, and several open barks, to attack her. Caesar was obliged to advance to her relief, that he might not suffer the disgrace of seeing one of his galleys sunk before his eyes though, had he left her to perish, he judged that she deserved it for her rashness. The attack was sustained with great courage by the Rhodians, who, though at all times distinguished by their valor and experience in engagements at sea yet exerted themselves in a particular manner on this occasion, that they might not draw upon themselves the charge of having occasioned a misfortune to the fleet. Accordingly they obtained a complete victory, took one four-banked galley, sunk another, disabled a third, and slew all that were on board, besides a great number of the combatants belonging to the other ships. Nay, had not night interposed, Caesar would have made himself master of their whole fleet. During the consternation that followed upon this defeat, Caesar, finding the contrary winds to abate, took the transports in tow, and advanced with the victorious fleet to Alexandria.

[12]The Alexandrians, disheartened at this loss, since they found themselves now worsted, not by the superior valor of the soldiers, but by the skill and ability of the mariners, retired to the tops of their houses, and blocked up the entrances of their streets, as if they feared our fleet might attack them even by land. But soon after, Ganymed assuring them in council, that he would not only restore the vessels they had lost, but even increase their number, they began to repair their old ships with great expectation and confidence, and resolved to apply more than ever to the putting their fleet in a good condition. And although they had lost above a hundred and ten ships in the port and arsenal, yet they did not relinquish the idea of repairing their fleet; because, by making themselves masters of the sea, they saw they would have it in their power to hinder Caesar's receiving any reinforcements or supplies. Besides, being mariners, born upon the sea-coast, and exercised from their infancy in naval affairs, they were desirous to return to that wherein their true and proper strength lay, remembering the advantages they had formerly gained, even with their little ships. They therefore applied themselves with all diligence to the equipping a fleet.

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

[13]Vessels were stationed at all the mouths of the Nile; for receiving and gathering in the customs. Several old ships were likewise lodged in the king's private arsenals which had not put to sea for many years. These last they refitted, and recalled the former to Alexandria. Oars were wanting; they uncovered the porticos, academies, and public buildings, and made use of the planks they furnished for oars. Their natural ingenuity, and the abundance of all things to be met with in the city, supplied every want. In fine, they had no long navigation to provide for, and were only solicitous about present exigences, foreseeing they would have no occasion to fight but in the port. In a few days, therefore, contrary to all expectation, they had fitted out twenty-two quadriremes, and five quinqueremes. To these they added a great number of small open barks; and after testing the efficiency of each in the harbor, put a sufficient number of soldiers on board, and prepared every thing necessary for an engagement. Caesar had nine Rhodian galleys (for of the ten which were sent, one was shipwrecked on the coast of Egypt), eight from Pontus, five from Lycia, and twelve from Asia. Of these, ten were quadriremes, and five quinqueremes; the rest were smaller, and for the most part without decks. Yet, trusting to the valor of his soldiers, and being acquainted with the strength of the enemy, he prepared for an engagement.

[14]When both sides were come to have sufficient confidence in their own strength, Caesar sailed round Pharos, and formed in line of battle opposite to the enemy. He placed the Rhodian galleys on his right wing, and those of Pontus on his left. Between these he left a space of four hundred paces, to allow for extending and working the vessels. This disposition being made, he drew up the rest of the fleet as a reserve, giving them the necessary orders, and distributing them in such a manner that every ship followed that to which she was appointed to give succor. The Alexandrians brought out their fleet with great confidence, and drew it up, placing their twenty-two quadriremes in front, and disposing the rest behind them in a second line, by way of reserve. They had besides a great number of boats and smaller vessels, which carried fire and combustibles, with the intention of intimidating us by their number, cries, and flaming darts. Between the two fleets were certain flats, separated by very narrow channels, and which are said to be on the African coast, as being in that division of Alexandria which belongs to Africa. Both sides waited which should first pass these shallows, because whoever entered the narrow channels between them, in case of any misfortune, would be impeded both in retreating and working their ships to advantage.

[15]Euphranor commanded the Rhodian fleet, who for valor and greatness of mind deserved to be ranked among our own men rather than the Grecians. The Rhodians had raised him to the post of admiral, on account of his known courage and experience. He, perceiving Caesar's design, addressed him to this effect: "You seem afraid of passing the shallow first, lest you should be thereby forced to come to an engagement, before you can bring up the rest of the fleet. Leave the matter to us; we will sustain the fight (and we will not disappoint your expectations), until the whole fleet gets clear of the shallows. It is both dishonorable and afflicting that they should so long continue in our sight with an air of triumph." Caesar, encouraging him in his design, and bestowing many praises upon him, gave the signal for engaging. Four Rhodian ships having passed the shallows, the Alexandrians gathered round and attacked them. They maintained the fight with great courage, disengaging themselves by their art and address, and working their ships with so much skill, that notwithstanding the inequality of number, none of the enemy were suffered to run alongside, or break their oars. Meantime the rest of the fleet came up; when, on account of the narrowness of the place, art became useless, and the contest depended entirely upon valor. Nor was there at Alexandria a single Roman or citizen who remained engaged in the attack or defense, but mounted the tops of the houses and all the eminences that would give a view of the fight, addressing the gods by vows and prayers for victory.

[16]The event of the battle was by no means equal; a defeat would have deprived us of all resources either by land or sea; and even if we were victorious, the future would be uncertain. The Alexandrians, on the contrary, by a victory gained every thing; and if defeated, might yet again have recourse to fortune. It was likewise a matter of the highest concern to see the safety of all depend upon a few, of whom, if any were deficient in resolution and energy, they would expose their whole party to destruction. This Caesar had often represented to his troops during the preceding days, that they might be thereby induced to fight with the more resolution, when they knew the common safety to depend upon their bravery. Every man said the same to his comrade, companion, and friend,

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

beseeking him not to disappoint the expectation of those who had chosen him in preference to others for the defense of the common interest. Accordingly, they fought with so much resolution, that neither the art nor address of the Egyptians, a maritime and seafaring people, could avail them, nor the multitude of their ships be of service to them; nor the valor of those selected for this engagement be compared to the determined courage of the Romans. In this action a quinquereme was taken, and a bireme, with all the soldiers and mariners on board, besides three sunk, without any loss on our side. The rest fled toward the town, and protecting their ships under the mole and forts, prevented us from approaching.

[17]To deprive the enemy of this resource for the future, Caesar thought it by all means necessary to render himself master of the mole and island; for having already in a great measure completed his works within the town, he was in hopes of being able to defend himself both in the island and city. This resolution being taken, he put into boats and small vessels ten cohorts, a select body of light-armed infantry, and such of the Gallic cavalry as he thought fittest for his purpose, and sent them against the island; while, at the same time, to create a diversion, he attacked it on the other with his fleet, promising great rewards to those who should first render themselves masters of it. At first, the enemy firmly withstood the impetuosity of our men; for they both annoyed them from the tops of the houses, and gallantly maintained their ground along the shore; to which being steep and craggy, our men could find no way of approach; the more accessible avenues being skillfully defended by small boats, and five galleys, prudently stationed for that purpose. But when after examining the approaches, and sounding the shallows, a few of our men got a footing upon the shore, and were followed by others, who pushed the islanders, without intermission; the Pharians at last betook themselves to flight. On their defeat, the rest abandoning the defense of the port, quitted their ships, and retired into the town, to provide for the security of their houses

[18]But they could not long maintain their ground there: though, to compare small things with great, their buildings were not unlike those of Alexandria, and their towers were high, and joined together so as to form a kind of wall; and our men had not come prepared with ladders, fascines, or any weapons for assault. But fear often deprives men of intellect and counsel, and weakens their strength, as happened upon this occasion. Those who had ventured to oppose us on even ground, terrified by the loss of a few men, and the general rout, durst not face us from a height of thirty feet; but throwing themselves from the mole into the sea, endeavored to gain the town, though above eight hundred paces distant. Many however were slain, and about six hundred taken.

[19]Caesar, giving up the plunder to the soldiers, ordered the houses to be demolished, but fortified the castle at the end of the bridge next the island, and placed a garrison in it. This the Pharians had abandoned; but the other, toward the town, which was considerably stronger, was still held by the Alexandrians. Caesar attacked it next day; because by getting possession of these two forts, he would be entirely master of the port, and prevent sudden excursions and piracies. Already he had, by means of his arrows and engines, forced the garrison to abandon the place, and retire toward the town. He had also landed three cohorts which was all the place would contain; the rest of his troops were stationed in their ships. This being done, he orders them to fortify the bridge against the enemy, and to fill with stones and block up the arch on which the bridge was built, through which there was egress for the ships. When one of these works was accomplished so effectually, that no boat could pass out at all, and when the other was commenced, the Alexandrians sallied, in crowds from the town, and drew up in an open place, over against the intrenchment we had cast up at the head of the bridge. At the same time they stationed at the mole the vessels which they had been wont to make pass under the bridge, to set fire to our ships of burden. Our men fought from the bridge and the mole; the enemy from the space, opposite to the bridge, and from their ships, by the side of the mole.

[20]While Caesar was engaged in these things, and in exhorting his troops, a number of rowers and mariners, quitting their ships, threw themselves upon the mole, partly out of curiosity, partly to have a share in the action. At first, with stones and slings, they forced the enemy's ships from the mole; and seemed to do still greater execution with their darts. But when, some time after, a few Alexandrians found means to land, and attack them in flank, as they had left their ships without order or discipline, so they soon began to flee, with precipitation. The Alexandrians, encouraged by this success, landed in great numbers, and vigorously pressed upon our men, who

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

were, by this time, in great confusion. Those that remained in the galleys perceiving this, drew up the ladders and put off from the shore, to prevent the enemy's boarding them. Our soldiers who belonged to the three cohorts, which were at the head of the mole to guard the bridge, astonished at this disorder, the cries they heard behind them, and the general rout of their party, unable besides to bear up against the great number of darts which came pouring upon them, and fearing to be surrounded, and have their retreat cut off, by the departure of their ships, abandoned the fortifications which they had commenced at the bridge, and ran, with all the speed they could, toward the galleys: some getting on board the nearest vessels, overloaded and sank them: part, resisting the enemy, and uncertain what course to take, were cut to pieces by the Alexandrians. Others, more fortunate, got to the ships that rode at anchor; and a few, supported by their bucklers, making a determined struggle, swam to the nearest vessels.

[21]Caesar, endeavoring to re-animate his men, and lead them back to the defense of the works, was exposed to the same danger as the rest; when, finding them universally to give ground, he retreated to his own galley, whither such a multitude followed and crowded after him, that it was impossible either to work or put her off. Foreseeing what must happen, he flung himself into the sea, and swam to the ships that lay at some distance. Hence dispatching boats to succor his men, he, by that means, preserved a small number. His own ship, being sunk by the multitude that crowded into her, went down with all that were on board. About four hundred legionary soldiers, and somewhat above that number of sailors and rowers, were lost in this action. The Alexandrians secured the fort by strong works, and a great number of engines; and having cleared away the stones with which Caesar had blocked up the port, enjoyed henceforward a free and open navigation.

[22]Our men were so far from being disheartened at this loss, that they seemed rather roused and animated by it. They made continual sallies upon the enemy, to destroy or check the progress of their works; fell upon them as often as they had an opportunity; and never failed to intercept them, when they ventured to advance beyond their fortifications. In short, the legions were so bent upon fighting, that they even exceeded the orders and exhortations of Caesar. They were inconsolable for their late disgrace, and impatient to come to blows with the enemy; insomuch, that he found it necessary rather to restrain and check their ardor, than incite them to action.

[23]The Alexandrians, perceiving that success confirmed the Romans, and that adverse fortune only animated them the more, as they knew of no medium between these on which to ground any further hopes, resolved, as far as we can conjecture, either by the advice of the friends of their king who were in Caesar's quarter, or of their own previous design, intimated to the king by secret emissaries, to send ambassadors to Caesar to request him, "To dismiss their king and suffer him to rejoin his subjects; that the people, weary of subjection to a woman, of living under a precarious government, and submitting to the cruel laws of the tyrant Ganymed, were ready to execute the orders of the king: and if by his sanction they should embrace the alliance and protection of Caesar, the multitude would not be deterred from surrendering by the fear of danger."

[24]Though Caesar knew the nation to be false and perfidious, seldom speaking as they really thought, yet he judged it best to comply with their desire. He even flattered himself, that his condescension in sending back their king at their request, would prevail on them to be faithful; or, as was more agreeable to their character, if they only wanted the king to head their army, at least it would be more for his honor and credit to have to do with a monarch than with a band of slaves and fugitives. Accordingly, he exhorted the king, "To take the government into his own hands, and consult the welfare of so fair and illustrious a kingdom, defaced by hideous ruins and conflagrations. To make his subjects sensible of their duty, preserve them from the destruction that threatened them, and act with fidelity toward himself and the Romans, who put so much confidence in him, as to send him among armed enemies." Then taking him by the hand, he dismissed the young prince who was fast approaching manhood. But his mind being thoroughly versed in the art of dissimulation, and no way degenerating from the character of his nation, he entreated Caesar with tears not to send him back; for that his company was to him preferable to a kingdom. Caesar, moved at his concern, dried up his tears; and telling him, if these were his real sentiments, they would soon meet again, dismissed him. The king, like a wild beast escaped out of confinement, carried on the war with such acrimony against Caesar, that the tears he shed at parting seemed to have been tears

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

of joy. Caesar's lieutenants, friends, centurions, and soldiers, were delighted that this had happened; because his easiness of temper had been imposed upon by a child: as if in truth Caesar's behavior on this occasion had been the effect of easiness of temper, and not of the most consummate prudence.

[25]When the Alexandrians found that on the recovery of their king, neither had they become stronger, nor the Romans weaker; that the troops despised the youth and weakness of their king; and that their affairs were in no way bettered by his presence: they were greatly discouraged; and a report ran that a large body of troops was marching by land from Syria and Cilicia to Caesar's assistance (of which he had not as yet himself received information); still they determined to intercept the convoys that came to him by sea. To this end, having equipped some ships, they ordered them to cruise before the Canopic branch of the Nile, by which they thought it most likely our supplies would arrive. Caesar, who was informed of it, ordered his fleet to get ready, and gave the command of it to Tiberius Nero. The Rhodian galleys made part of this squadron, headed by Euphranor their admiral, without whom there never was a successful engagement fought. But fortune, which often reserves the heaviest disasters for those who have been loaded with her highest favors, encountered Euphranor upon this occasion, with an aspect very different from what she had hitherto worn. For when our ships were arrived at Canopus, and the fleets drawn up on each side had begun the engagement, Euphranor, according to custom, having made the first attack, and pierced and sunk one of the enemy's ships; as he pursued the next a considerable way, without being sufficiently supported by those that followed him, he was surrounded by the Alexandrians. None of the fleet advanced to his relief, either out of fear for their own safety, or because they imagined he would easily be able to extricate himself by his courage and good fortune. Accordingly he alone behaved well in this action, and perished with his victorious galley.

[26]About the same time Mithridates of Pergamus, a man of illustrious descent, distinguished for his bravery and knowledge of the art of war, and who held a very high place in the friendship and confidence of Caesar, having been sent in the beginning of the Alexandrian war, to raise succors in Syria and Cilicia, arrived by land at the head of a great body of troops, which his diligence, and the affection of these two provinces, had enabled him to draw together in a very short time. He conducted them first to Pelusium, where Egypt joins Syria. Achilles, who was perfectly well acquainted with its importance, had seized and put a strong garrison into it. For Egypt is considered as defended on all sides by strong barriers; on the side of the sea by the Pharos, and on the side of Syria by Pelusium, which are accounted the two keys of that kingdom. He attacked it so briskly with a large body of troops, fresh men continually succeeding in the place of those that were fatigued, and urged the assault with so much firmness and perseverance, that he carried it the same day on which he attacked it, and placed a garrison in it. Thence he pursued his march to Alexandria, reducing all the provinces through which he passed, and conciliating them to Caesar, by that authority which always accompanies the conqueror.

[27]Not far from Alexandria lies Delta, the most celebrated province of Egypt, which derives its name from the Greek letter so called. For the Nile, dividing into two channels, which gradually diverge as they approach the sea, into which they at last discharge themselves, at a considerable distance from one another, leaves an intermediate space in form of a triangle. The king understanding that Mithridates was approaching this place, and knowing he must pass the river, sent a large body of troops against him, sufficient, as he thought, if not to overwhelm and crush him, at least to stop his march, for though he earnestly desired to see him defeated, yet he thought it a great point gained, to hinder his junction with Caesar. The troops that first passed the river, and came up with Mithridates, attacked him immediately, hastening to snatch the honor of victory from the troops that were marching to their aid. Mithridates at first confined himself to the defense of his camp, which he had with great prudence fortified according to the custom of the Romans: but observing that they advanced insolently and without caution, he sallied upon them from all parts, and put a great number of them to the sword; insomuch that, but for their knowledge of the ground, and the neighborhood of the vessels in which they had passed the river, they must have been all destroyed. But recovering by degrees from their terror, and joining the troops that followed them, they again prepared to attack Mithridates.

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

[28]A messenger was sent by Mithridates to Caesar, to inform him of what had happened. The king learns from his followers that the action had taken place. Thus, much about the same time, Ptolemy set out to crush Mithridates, and Caesar to relieve him. The king made use of the more expeditious conveyance of the Nile, where he had a large fleet in readiness. Caesar declined the navigation of the river, that he might not be obliged to engage the enemy's fleet; and coasting along the African shore, found means to join the victorious troops of Mithridates, before Ptolemy could attack him. The king had encamped in a place fortified by nature, being an eminence surrounded on all sides by a plain. Three of its sides were secured by various defenses. One was washed by the river Nile, the other was steep and inaccessible, and the third was defended by a morass.

[29]Between Ptolemy's camp and Caesar's route lay a narrow river with very steep banks, which discharged itself into the Nile. This river was about seven miles from the king's camp; who, understanding that Caesar was directing his march that way, sent all his cavalry, with a choice body of light-armed foot, to prevent Caesar from crossing, and maintain an unequal fight from the banks, where courage had no opportunity to exert itself, and cowardice ran no hazard. Our men, both horse and foot, were extremely mortified, that the Alexandrians should so long maintain their ground against them. Wherefore, some of the German cavalry, dispersing in quest of a ford, found means to swim the river where the banks were lowest; and the legionaries at the same time cutting down several large trees, that reached from one bank to another, and constructing suddenly a mound, by their help got to the other side. The enemy were so much in dread of their attack, that they betook themselves to flight; but in vain: for very few returned to the king, almost all being cut to pieces in the pursuit.

[30]Caesar, upon this success, judging that his sudden approach must strike great terror into the Alexandrians, advanced toward their camp with his victorious army. But finding it well intrenched, strongly fortified by nature, and the ramparts covered with armed soldiers, he did not think proper that his troops, who were very much fatigued both by their march and the late battle, should attack it; and therefore encamped at a small distance from the enemy. Next day he attacked a fort, in a village not far off, which the king had fortified and joined to his camp by a line of communication, with a view to keep possession of the village. He attacked it with his whole army, and took it by storm; not because it would have been difficult to carry it with a few forces; but with the design of falling immediately upon the enemy's camp, during the alarm which the loss of this fort must give them. Accordingly, the Romans, in continuing the pursuit of those that fled from the fort, arrived at last before the Alexandrian camp, and commenced a most furious action at a distance. There were two approaches by which it might be attacked; one by the plain, of which we have spoken before, the other by a narrow pass, between their camp and the Nile. The first, which was much the easiest, was defended by a numerous body of their best troops; and the access on the side of the Nile gave the enemy great advantage in distressing and wounding our men; for they were exposed to a double shower of darts: in front from the rampart, behind from the river; where the enemy had stationed a great number of ships, furnished with archers and slingers, that kept up a continual discharge.

[31]Caesar, observing that his troops fought with the utmost ardor, and yet made no great progress, on account of the disadvantage of the ground; and perceiving they had left the highest part of their camp unguarded, because, it being sufficiently fortified by nature, they had all crowded to the other attacks, partly to have a share in the action, partly to be spectators of the issue; he ordered some cohorts to wheel round the camp, and gain that ascent: appointing Carfulenus to command them, a man distinguished for bravery and acquaintance with the service. When they had reached the place, as there were but very few to defend it, our men attacked them so briskly that the Alexandrians, terrified by the cries they heard behind them, and seeing themselves attacked both in front and rear, fled in the utmost consternation on all sides. Our men, animated by the confusion of the enemy, entered the camp in several places at the same time, and running down from the higher ground, put a great number of them to the sword. The Alexandrians, endeavoring to escape, threw themselves in crowds over the rampart in the quarter next the river. The foremost tumbling into the ditch, where they were crushed to death, furnished an easy passage for those that followed. It is ascertained that the king escaped from the camp, and was received on board a ship; but by the crowd that followed him, the ship in which he fled was overloaded and sunk.

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

[32]After this speedy and successful action, Caesar, in consequence of so great a victory, marched the nearest way by land to Alexandria with his cavalry, and entered triumphant into that part of the town which was possessed by the enemy's guards. He was not mistaken in thinking that the Alexandrians, upon hearing of the issue of the battle, would give over all thoughts of war. Accordingly, as soon as he arrived, he reaped the just fruit of his valor and magnanimity. For all the multitude of the inhabitants, throwing down their arms, abandoning their works, and assuming the habit of suppliants, preceded by all those sacred symbols of religion with which they were wont to mollify their offended kings, met Caesar on his arrival and surrendered. Caesar, accepting their submission, and encouraging them, advanced through the enemy's works into his own quarter of the town, where he was received with the universal congratulations of his party, who were no less overjoyed at his arrival and presence, than at the happy issue of the war.

[33]Caesar, having thus made himself master of Alexandria and Egypt, lodged the government in the hands of those to whom Ptolemy had bequeathed it by will, conjuring the Roman people not to permit any change. For the eldest of Ptolemy's two sons being dead, Caesar settled the kingdom upon the youngest, in conjunction with Cleopatra, the elder of the two sisters, who had always continued under his protection and guardianship. The younger, Arsinoe, in whose name Ganymed, as we have seen, tyrannically reigned for some time he thought proper to banish the kingdom, that she might not raise any new disturbance, through the agency of seditious men, before the king's authority should be firmly established. Taking the sixth veteran legion with him into Syria, he left the rest in Egypt to support the authority of the king and queen, neither of whom stood well in the affections of their subjects, on account of their attachment to Caesar, nor could be supposed to have given any fixed foundation to their power, in an administration of only a few days' continuance. It was also for the honor and interest of the republic that if they continued faithful our forces should protect them; but if ungrateful that they should be restrained by the same power. Having thus settled the kingdom, he marched by land into Syria.

[34]While these things passed in Egypt, king Deiotarus applied to Domitius Calvinus, to whom Caesar had intrusted the government of Asia and the neighboring provinces, beseeching him "not to suffer the Lesser Armenia which was his kingdom, or Cappadocia, which belonged to Ariobarzanes, to be seized and laid waste by Pharnaces, because, unless they were delivered from these insults, it would be impossible for them to execute Caesar's orders, or raise the money they stood engaged to pay." Domitius, who was not only sensible of the necessity of money to defray the expenses of the war, but likewise thought it dishonorable to the people of Rome and the victorious Caesar, as well as infamous to himself, to suffer the dominions of allies and friends to be usurped by a foreign prince, sent ambassadors to Pharnaces, to acquaint him, "That he must withdraw immediately from Armenia and Cappadocia, and no longer insult the majesty and right of the Roman people, while engaged in a civil war." But believing that his deputation would have greater weight, if he was ready to second it himself at the head of an army; he repaired to the legions which were then in Asia, ordering two of them into Egypt, at Caesar's desire, and carrying the thirty–sixth: along with him. To the thirty–sixth legion Deiotarus added two more, which he had trained up for several years, according to our discipline; and a hundred horse. The like number of horse were furnished by Ariobarzanes. At the same time, he sent P. Sextius to C. Plaetorius the questor, for the legion which had been lately levied in Pontus; and Quinctius Partisius into Cilicia, to draw thence a body of auxiliary troops. All these forces speedily assembled at Comana, by orders of Domitius.

[35]Meanwhile his ambassadors bring back the following answer from Pharnaces: "That he had quitted Cappadocia; but kept possession of the Lesser Armenia, as his own, by right of inheritance: that he was willing, however, to submit every thing to the decision of Caesar, to whose commands he would pay immediate obedience." C. Domitius, sensible that he had quitted Cappadocia, not voluntarily, but out of necessity; because he could more easily defend Armenia, which lay contiguous to his own kingdom, than Cappadocia, which was more remote: and because believing, at first, that Domitius had brought all the three legions along with him, upon hearing that two were gone to Caesar, he seemed more determined to keep possession; and insisted "upon his quitting Armenia likewise, as the same right existed in both cases; nor was it just to demand that the matter should be postponed till Caesar's return, unless things were put in the condition in which they were at first." Having returned this answer, he advanced toward Armenia, with the forces above–mentioned, directing his march along

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

the hills; for from Pontus, by way of Comana, runs a woody ridge of hills, that extends as far as Lesser Armenia, dividing it from Cappadocia. The advantages he had in view, by such a march, were, that he would thereby effectually prevent all surprises, and be plentifully supplied with provisions from Cappadocia.

[36]Meantime Pharnaces sends several embassies to Domitius to treat of peace, bearing royal gifts. All these he firmly rejected, telling the deputies: "That nothing was more sacred with him, than the majesty of the Roman people, and recovering the rights of their allies." After long and continued marches, he reached Nicopolis (which is a city of Lesser Armenia, situated in a plain, having mountains, however, on its two sides, at a considerable distance), and encamped about seven miles from the town. Between his camp and Nicopolis, lay a difficult and narrow pass, where Pharnaces placed a chosen body of foot, and all his horse, in ambuscade. He ordered a great number of cattle to be dispersed in the pass, and the townsmen and peasants to show themselves, that if Domitius entered the defile as a friend, he might have no suspicion of an ambuscade, when he saw the men and flocks dispersed, without apprehension, in the fields; or if he should come as an enemy, that the soldiers, quitting their ranks to pillage, might be cut to pieces when dispersed.

[37]While this design was going forward, he never ceased sending ambassadors to Domitius, with proposals of peace and amity, fancying, by this means, the more easy to ensnare him. The expectation of peace kept Domitius in his camp; so that Pharnaces, having missed the opportunity, and fearing the ambuscade might be discovered, drew off his troops. Next day Domitius approached Nicopolis, and encamped near the town. While our men were working at the trenches, Pharnaces drew up his army in order of battle, forming his front into one line, according to the custom of the country, and securing his wings with a triple body of reserves. In the same manner, the center was formed in single files, and two intervals were left on the right and left. Domitius, ordering part of the troops to continue under arms before the rampart, completed the fortifications of his camp.

[38]Next night, Pharnaces, having intercepted the couriers who brought Domitius an account of the posture of affairs at Alexandria, understood that Caesar was in great danger, and requested Domitius to send him succors speedily, and come himself to Alexandria by the way of Syria. Pharnaces, upon this intelligence, imagined that protracting the time would be equivalent to a victory, because Domitius, he supposed, must very soon depart. He therefore dug two ditches, four feet deep, at a moderate distance from each other, on that side where lay the easiest access to the town and our forces might, most advantageously, attack him; resolving not to advance beyond them. Between these, he constantly drew up his army, placing all his cavalry upon the wings without them, which greatly exceeded ours in number, and would otherwise have been useless.

[39]Domitius, more concerned at Caesar's danger than his own, and believing he could not retire with safety, should he now desire the conditions he had rejected, or march away without any apparent cause, drew his forces out of the camp, and ranged them in order of battle. He placed the thirty–sixth legion on the right, that of Pontus on the left, and those of Deiotarus in the main body; drawing them up with a very narrow front, and posting the rest of the cohorts to sustain the wings. The armies being thus drawn up on each side, they advanced to the battle.

[40]The signal being given at the same time by both parties, they engage. The conflict was sharp and various, for the thirty–sixth legion falling upon the king's cavalry, that was drawn up without the ditch, charged them so successfully, that they drove them to the very walls of the town, passed the ditch, and attacked their infantry in the rear. But on the other side, the legion of Pontus having given way, the second line, which advanced to sustain them, making a circuit round the ditch, in order to attack the enemy in flank, was overwhelmed and borne down by a shower of darts, in endeavoring to pass it. The legions of Deiotarus made scarcely any resistance; thus the victorious forces of the king turned their right wing and main body against the thirty–sixth legion, which yet made a brave stand; and though surrounded by the forces of the enemy, formed themselves into a circle, with wonderful presence of mind, and retired to the foot of a mountain, whither Pharnaces did not think fit to pursue them, on account of the disadvantage of the place. Thus the legion of Pontus being almost wholly cut off, with great part of those of Deiotarus, the thirty–sixth legion retreated to an eminence, with the loss of about two hundred and fifty men. Several Roman knights, of illustrious rank, fell in this battle. Domitius, after this defeat, rallied the remains

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

of his broken army, and retreated, by safe ways, through Cappadocia, into Asia.

[41]Pharnaces, elated with this success, as he expected that Caesar's difficulties would terminate as he [Pharnaces] wished, entered Pontus with all his forces. There, acting as conqueror and a most cruel king, and promising himself a happier destiny than his father, he stormed many towns, and seized the effects of the Roman and Pontic citizens, inflicted punishments, worse than death, upon such as were distinguished by their age or beauty, and having made himself master of all Pontus, as there was no one to oppose his progress, boasted that he had recovered his father's kingdom.

[42]About the same time, we received a considerable check in Illyricum; which province, had been defended the preceding months, not only without insult, but even with honor. For Caesar's quaestor, Q. Cornificius, had been sent there as propraetor, the summer before, with two legions; and though it was of itself little able to support an army, and at that time in particular was almost totally ruined by the war in the vicinity, and the civil dissensions; yet, by his prudence, and vigilance, being very careful not to undertake any rash expedition, he defended and kept possession of it. For he made himself master of several forts, built on eminences, whose advantageous situation tempted the inhabitants to make descents and inroads upon the country; and gave the plunder of them to his soldiers (and although this was but inconsiderable, yet as they were no strangers to the distress and ill condition of the province, they did not cease to be grateful; the rather as it was the fruit of their own valor). And when, after the battle of Pharsalia, Octavius had retreated to that coast with a large fleet; Cornificius, with some vessels of the inhabitants of Jadaua, who had always continued faithful to the commonwealth, made himself master of the greatest part of his ships, which, joined to those of his allies, rendered him capable of sustaining even a naval engagement. And while Caesar, victorious, was pursuing Pompey to the remotest parts of the earth; when he [Cornificius] heard that the enemy had, for the most part, retired into Illyricum, on account of its neighborhood to Macedonia, and were there collecting such as survived the defeat [at Pharsalia], he wrote to Gabinius, "To repair directly thither, with the new raised legions, and join Cornificius, that if any danger should assail the province, he might ward it off, but if less forces sufficed, to march into Macedonia, which he foresaw would never be free from commotions, so long as Pompey lived."

[43]Gabinius, whether he imagined the province better provided than it really was, or depended much upon the auspicious fortune of Caesar, or confided in his own valor and abilities, he having often terminated with success difficult and dangerous wars, marched into Illyricum, in the middle of winter, and the most difficult season of the year; where, not finding sufficient subsistence in the province, which was partly exhausted, partly disaffected, and having no supplies by sea, because the season of the year had put a stop to navigation, he found himself compelled to carry on the war, not according to his own inclination, but as necessity allowed. As he was therefore obliged to lay siege to forts and castles, in a very rude season, he received many checks, and fell under such contempt with the barbarians, that while retiring to Salona, a maritime city, inhabited by a set of brave and faithful Romans, he was compelled to come to an engagement on his march; and after the loss of two thousand soldiers, thirty-eight centurions, and four tribunes, got to Salona with the rest; where his wants continually increasing, he died a few days after. His misfortunes and sudden death gave Octavius great hopes of reducing the province. But fortune, whose influence is so great in matters of war, joined to the diligence of Cornificius, and the valor of Vatinius, soon put an end to his triumphs.

[44]Vatinius, who was then at Brundisium, having intelligence of what passed in Illyricum, by letters from Cornificius, who pressed him to come to the assistance of the province, and informed him, that Octavius had leagued with the barbarians, and in several places attacked our garrisons, partly by sea with his fleet, partly by land with the troops of the barbarians; Vatinius, I say, upon notice of these things, though extremely weakened by sickness, insomuch that his strength of body no way answered his resolution and greatness of mind; yet, by his valor, surmounted all opposition, the force of his distemper, the rigor of the winter and the difficulties of a sudden preparation. For having himself but a very few galleys, he wrote to Q. Kalenus, in Achaia, to furnish him with a squadron of ships. But these not coming with that dispatch which the danger our army was in required, because Octavius pressed hard upon them, he fastened beaks to all the barks and vessels that lay in the port, whose number

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

was considerable enough, though they were not sufficiently large for an engagement. Joining these to what galleys he had, and putting on board the veteran soldiers, of whom he had a great number, belonging to all the legions, who had been left sick at Brundisium, when the army went over to Greece, he sailed for Illyricum; where, having subjected several maritime states that had declared for Octavius, and neglecting such as continued obstinate in their revolt, because he would suffer nothing to retard his design of meeting the enemy, he came up with Octavius before Epidaurus; and obliging him to raise the siege, which he was carrying on with vigor, by sea and land, joined the garrison to his own forces.

[45]Octavius, understanding that Vatinius's fleet consisted mostly of small barks, and confiding in the strength of his own, stopped at the Isle of Tauris. Vatinius followed him thither, not imagining he would halt at that place, but being determined to pursue him wherever he went. Vatinius, who had no suspicion of an enemy, and whose ships were moreover dispersed by a tempest, perceived, as he approached the isle, a vessel filled with soldiers that advanced toward him, in full sail. Upon this he gave orders for furling the sails, lowering the sail-yards, and arming the soldiers; and hoisting a flag, as a signal for battle, intimated to the ships that followed to do the same. Vatinius's men prepared themselves in the best manner their sudden surprise would allow, while Octavius advanced in good order, from the port. The two fleets drew up; Octavius had the advantage in arrangement, and Vatinius in the bravery of his troops.

[46]Vatinius, finding himself inferior to the enemy, both in the number and largeness of his ships, resolved to commit the affair to fortune, and therefore in his own quinquereme, attacked Octavius in his four-banked galley. This he did with such violence, and the shock was so great, that the beak of Octavius's galley was broken. The battle raged with great fury likewise in other places, but chiefly around the two admirals; for as the ships on each side advanced to sustain those that fought, a close and furious conflict ensued in a very narrow sea, where the nearer the vessels approached the more had Vatinius's soldiers the advantage. For, with admirable courage, they leaped into the enemy's ships, and forcing them by this means to an equal combat, soon mastered them by their superior valor. Octavius's galley was sunk, and many others were taken or suffered the same fate; the soldiers were partly slain in the ships, partly thrown overboard into the sea. Octavius got into a boat, which sinking under the multitude that crowded after him, he himself, though wounded, swam to his brigantine; where, being taken up, and night having put an end to the battle, as the wind blew very strong, he spread all his sails and fled. A few of his ships, that had the good fortune to escape, followed him.

[47]But Vatinius, after his success, sounded a retreat, and entered victorious the port whence Octavius had sailed to fight him, without the loss of a single vessel. He took, in this battle, one quinquereme, two triremes, eight two-banked galleys, and a great number of rowers. The next day was employed in repairing his own fleet, and the ships he had taken from the enemy: after which, he sailed for the island of Issa, imagining Octavius had retired thither after his defeat. In this island was a flourishing city, well affected to Octavius, which however, surrendered to Vatinius, upon the first summons. Here he understood that Octavius, attended by a few small barks, had sailed, with a fair wind, for Greece, whence he intended to pass on to Sicily, and afterward to Africa. Vatinius, having in so short a space successfully terminated the affair, restored the province, in a peaceable condition, to Cornificius, and driven the enemy's fleet out of those seas, returned victorious to Brundisium, with his army and fleet in good condition.

[48]But during the time that Caesar besieged Pompey at Dyrrachium, triumphed at Old Pharsalia, and carried on the war, with so much danger, at Alexandria, Cassius Longinus, who had been left in Spain as propraetor of the further province, either through his natural disposition, or out of a hatred he had contracted to the province, on account of a wound he had treacherously received there when quaestor, drew upon himself the general dislike of the people. He discerned this temper among them, partly from a consciousness that he deserved it, partly from the manifest indications they gave of their discontent. To secure himself against their disaffection, he endeavored to gain the love of the soldiers; and having, for this purpose, assembled them together, promised them a hundred sesterces each. Soon after, having made himself master of Medobriga, a town in Lusitania, and of Mount Herminius, whither the Medobrigians had retired, and being upon that occasion saluted imperator by the army, he

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

gave them another hundred sesterces each. These, accompanied by other considerable largesses, in great number, seemed, for the present, to increase the good-will of the army, but tended gradually and imperceptibly to the relaxation of military discipline.

[49]Cassius, having sent his army into winter quarters, fixed his residence at Corduba, for the administration of justice. Being greatly in debt, he resolved to pay it by laying heavy burdens upon the province: and, according to the custom of prodigals, made his liberalities a pretense to justify the most exorbitant demands. He taxed the rich at discretion, and compelled them to pay, without the least regard to their remonstrances; frequently making light and trifling offenses the handle for all manner of extortions. All methods of gain were pursued, whether great and reputable, or mean and sordid. None that had any thing to lose could escape accusation; insomuch, that the plunder of their private fortunes was aggravated by the dangers they were exposed to from pretended crimes.

[50]For which reasons it happened that when Longinus as proconsul did those same things which he had done as quaestor, the provincials formed similar conspiracies against his life. Even his own dependents concurred in the general hatred; who, though the ministers of his rapine, yet hated the man by whose authority they committed those crimes. The odium still increased upon his raising a fifth legion, which added to the expense and burdens of the province. The cavalry was augmented to three thousand, with costly ornaments and equipage: nor was any respite given to the province.

[51]Meanwhile he received orders from Caesar, to transport his army into Africa and march through Mauritania, toward Numidia, because king Juba had sent considerable succors to Pompey, and was thought likely to send more. These letters filled him with an insolent joy, by the opportunity they offered him of pillaging new provinces, and a wealthy kingdom. He therefore hastened into Lusitania, to assemble his legions, and draw together a body of auxiliaries; appointing certain persons to provide corn, ships, and money, that nothing might retard him at his return; which was much sooner than expected: for when interest called, Cassius wanted neither industry nor vigilance.

[52]Having got his army together, and encamped near Corduba, he made a speech to the soldiers, wherein he acquainted them with the orders he had received from Caesar and promised them a hundred sesterces each, when they should arrive in Mauritania: the fifth legion, he told them, was to remain in Spain. Having ended his speech, he returned to Corduba. The same day, about noon, as he went to the hall of justice, one Minutius Silo, a client of L. Racilius, presented him with a paper, in a soldier's habit, as if he had some request to make. Then retiring behind Racilius (who walked beside Cassius), as if waiting for an answer, he gradually drew near, and a favorable opportunity offering, seized Cassius with his left hand, and wounded him twice with a dagger in his right. A shout was then raised and an attack made on him by the rest of the conspirators, who all rushed upon him in a body. Munatius Plancus killed the lictor, that was next Longinus; and wounded Q. Cassius his lieutenant. T. Vasius and L. Mergilio seconded their countryman Plancus; for they were all natives of Italica. L. Licinius Squillus flew upon Longinus himself, and gave him several slight wounds as he lay upon the ground.

[53]By this time, his guards came up to his assistance (for he always had several beronians and veterans, armed with darts, to attend him), and surrounded the rest of the conspirators, who were advancing to complete the assassination. Of this number were Calphurnius Salvianus and Manilius Tusculus. Cassius was carried home; and Minutius Silo, stumbling upon a stone, as he endeavored to make his escape, was taken, and brought to him. Racilius retired to the neighboring house of a friend, till he should have certain information of the fate of Cassius. L. Laterensis, not doubting but he was dispatched, ran in a transport of joy to the camp, to congratulate the second and the new-raised legions upon it, who, he knew, bore a particular hatred to Cassius; and who, immediately upon this intelligence, placed him on the tribunal, and proclaimed him praetor. For there was not a native of the province, nor a soldier of the newly-raised legion, nor a person who by long residence was naturalized in the province, of which class the second legion consisted, who did not join in the general hatred of Cassius.

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

[54]Meantime Laterensis was informed that Cassius was still alive; at which, being rather grieved than disconcerted, he immediately so far recovered himself, as to go and wait upon him. By this time, the thirtieth legion having notice of what had passed, had marched to Corduba, to the assistance of their general. The twenty-first and fifth followed their example. As only two legions remained in the camp, the second, fearing they should be left alone, and their sentiments should be consequently manifested, did the same. But the new-raised legion continued firm, nor could be induced by any motives of fear to stir from its place.

[55]Cassius ordered all the accomplices of the conspiracy to be seized, and sent back the fifth legion to the camp, retaining the other three. By the confession of Minutius, he learned, that L. Racilius, L. Laterensis, and Annius Scapula, man of great authority and credit in the province, and equally in his confidence with Laterensis and Racilius, were concerned in the plot: nor did he long defer his revenge, but ordered them to be put to death. He delivered Minutius to be racked by his freed-men; likewise Calphurnius Salvianus; who, turning evidence, increased the number of the conspirators; justly, as some think; but others pretend that he was forced. L. Mergilio was likewise put to the torture. Squillus impeached many others, who were all condemned to die, except such as redeemed their lives by a fine; for he pardoned Calphurnius for ten, and Q. Sextius for fifty thousand sesterces, who, though deeply guilty, yet having, in this manner, escaped death, showed Cassius to be no less covetous than cruel.

[56]Some days after, he received letters from Caesar, by which he learned that Pompey was defeated, and had fled with the loss of all his troops, which news equally affected him with joy and sorrow. Caesar's success gave him pleasure; but the conclusion of the war would put an end to his rapines: insomuch, that he was uncertain which to wish for, victory or an unbounded licentiousness. When he was cured of his wounds, he sent to all who were indebted to him, in any sums, and insisted upon immediate payment. Such as were taxed too low, had orders to furnish larger sums. He likewise instituted a levy of Roman citizens, and as they were enrolled from all the corporations and colonies, and were terrified by service beyond the sea, he called upon them to redeem themselves from the military oath. This brought in vast revenue, but greatly increased the general hatred. He afterward reviewed the army, sent the legions and auxiliaries, designed for Africa, toward the straits of Gibraltar, and went himself to Seville, to examine the condition of the fleet. He staid there some time, in consequence of an edict he had published, ordering all who had not paid the sums in which they were amerced, to repair to him thither; which created a universal murmuring and discontent.

[57]In the mean time, L. Titius, a military tribune of the native legion, sent him notice of a report that the thirteenth legion, which Q. Cassius his lieutenant was taking with him, when it was encamped at Ilurgis, had mutinied and killed some of the centurions that opposed them, and were gone over to the second legion, who marched another way toward the Straits. Upon this intelligence he set out by night with five cohorts of the twenty-first legion, and came up with them in the morning. He staid there that day to consult what was proper to be done, and then went to Carmona, where he found the thirtieth and twenty-first legions, with four cohorts of the fifth, and all the cavalry assembled. Here he learned that the new-raised legion had surprised four cohorts, near Obucula, and forced them along with them to the second legion, where all joining, they had chosen T. Thorius, a native of Italica, for their general. Having instantly called a council, he sent Marcellus to Corduba to secure that town, and Q. Cassius, his lieutenant, to Seville. A few days after, news was brought that the Roman citizens at Corduba had revolted, and that Marcellus, either voluntarily or through force (for the reports were various), had joined them; as likewise the two cohorts of the fifth legion that were in garrison there. Cassius, provoked at these mutinies, decamped, and the next day came to Segovia, upon the river Xenil. There, summoning an assembly, to sound the disposition of the troops, he found that it was not out of any regard to him, but to Caesar, though absent, that they continued faithful, and were ready to undergo any danger for the, recovery of the province.

[58]Meantime Thorius marched the veteran legions to Corduba; and, that the revolt might not appear to spring from a seditious inclination in him or the soldiers, as likewise to oppose an equal authority to that of Q. Cassius, who was drawing together a great force in Caesar's name; he publicly gave out that his design was to recover the province for Pompey; and perhaps he did this through hatred of Caesar, and love of Pompey, whose name was

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

very powerful among those legions which M. Varro had commanded. Be this as it will, Thorius at least made it his pretense; and the soldiers were so infatuated with the thought, that they had Pompey's name inscribed upon their bucklers. The citizens of Corduba, men, women, and children, came out to meet the legions, begging "they would not enter Corduba as enemies, seeing they joined with them in their aversion to Cassius, and only desired they might not be obliged to act against Caesar."

[59]The soldiers, moved by the prayers and tears of so great a multitude, and seeing they stood in no need of Pompey's name and memory to spirit up a revolt against Cassius, and that he was as much hated by Caesar's followers as Pompey's; neither being able to prevail with Marcellus or the people of Corduba to declare against Caesar, they erased Pompey's name from their bucklers, chose Marcellus their commander, called him praetor, joined the citizens of Corduba, and encamped near the town. Two days after, Cassius encamped on an eminence, on this side the Guadalquivir, about four miles from Corduba, and within view of the town; whence he sent letters to Bogud, in Mauritania, and M. Lepidus, proconsul of Hither Spain, to come to his assistance as soon as possible, for Caesar's sake. Meanwhile he ravaged the country, and set fire to the buildings around Corduba.

[60]The legions under Marcellus, provoked at this indignity, ran to him, and begged to be led against the enemy, that they might have an opportunity of engaging with them before they could have time to destroy with fire and sword the rich and noble possessions of the inhabitants of Corduba. Marcellus, though averse to a battle, which, whoever was victorious, must turn to Caesar's detriment, yet unable to restrain the legions, led them across the Guadalquivir, and drew them up. Cassius did the same upon a rising ground, but as he would not quit his advantageous post, Marcellus persuaded his men to return to their camp. He had already begun to retire when Cassius, knowing himself to be stronger in cavalry, fell upon the legionaries with his horse, and made a considerable slaughter in their rear upon the banks of the river. When it was evident from this loss, that crossing the river was an error and attended with great loss, Marcellus removed his camp to the other side of the Guadalquivir, where both armies frequently drew up, but did not engage, on account of the inequality of the ground.

[61]Marcellus was stronger in foot, for he commanded veteran soldiers of great experience in war. Cassius depended more on the fidelity than the courage of his troops. The two camps being very near each other, Marcellus seized a spot of ground, where he built a fort, very convenient for depriving the enemy of water. Longinus, apprehending he should be besieged in a country where all were against him, quitted his camp silently in the night, and, by a quick march, reached Ulia, a town on which he thought he could rely. There he encamped so near the walls, that both by the situation of the place (for Ulia stands on an eminence), and the defenses of the town, he was on all sides secure from an attack. Marcellus followed him and encamped as near the town as possible. Having taken a view of the place he found himself reduced, by necessity, to do what was most agreeable to his own inclination; namely, neither to engage Cassius, which the ardor of his soldiers would have forced him to, had it been possible, nor to suffer him, by his excursions, to infest the territories of other states, as he had done those of Corduba. He therefore raised redoubts in proper places, and continued his works quite round the town, inclosing both Ulia and Cassius within his lines. But before they were finished, Cassius sent out all his cavalry, who he imagined might do him great service by cutting off Marcellus's provisions and forage, and could only be a useless encumbrance to him, by consuming his provisions if he was shut up in his camp.

[62]A few days after, king Bogud, having received Cassius's letters, came and joined him with all his forces, consisting of one legion, and several auxiliary cohorts. For as commonly happens in civil dissensions, some of the states of Spain at that time favored Cassius, but a yet greater number, Marcellus. Bogud came up to the advanced works of Marcellus, where many sharp skirmishes happened with various success: however, Marcellus still kept possession of his works.

[63]Meanwhile Lepidus came to Ulia, from the hither province, with thirty-five legionary cohorts, and a great body of horse and auxiliaries, with the intention of adjusting the differences between Cassius and Marcellus. Marcellus submitted without hesitation: but Cassius kept within his works, either because he thought his cause the

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

justest, or from an apprehension that his adversary's submission had prepossessed Lepidus in his favor. Lepidus encamped at Ulia, and forming a complete junction with Marcellus, prevented a battle, invited Cassius into his camp, and pledged his honor to act without prejudice. Cassius hesitated long, but at last desired that the circumvallation should be leveled, and free egress given him. The truce was not only concluded, but the works demolished, and the guards drawn off; when king Bogud attacked one of Marcellus's forts, that lay nearest to his camp, unknown to any (except perhaps Longinus, who was not exempt from suspicion on this occasion), and slew a great number of his men. And had not Lepidus interposed, much mischief would have been done.

[64]A free passage being made for Cassius, Marcellus joined camps with Lepidus; and both together marched for Corduba, while Cassius retired with his followers to Carmona. At the same time, Trebonius, the proconsul, came to take possession of the province. Cassius having notice of his arrival, sent his legions and cavalry into winter quarters, and hastened, with all his effects, to Melaca, where he embarked immediately, though it was the winter season, that he might not, as he pretended, intrust his safety to Marcellus, Lepidus, and Trebonius; as his friends gave out, to avoid passing through a province, great part of which had revolted from him; but as was more generally believed, to secure the money he had amassed by his numberless extortions. The wind favoring him as far as could be expected at that season of the year, he put into the Ebro, to avoid sailing in the night: and thence continuing his voyage, which he thought he might do with safety, though the wind blew considerably fresher, he was encountered by such a storm, at the mouth of the river, that being neither able to return on account of the stream, nor stem the fury of the waves, the ship sank, and he perished.

[65]When Caesar arrived in Syria, from Egypt, and understood from those who attended him there from Rome, and the letters he received at the same time, that the government at Rome was badly and injudiciously conducted, and all the affairs of the commonwealth managed indiscreetly; that the contests of the tribunes were producing perpetual seditions, and that, by the ambition and indulgence of the military tribunes, many things were done contrary to military usage, which tend to destroy all order and discipline, all which required his speedy presence to redress them; thought it was yet first incumbent upon him to settle the state of the provinces through which he passed; that, freeing them from domestic contentions, and the fear of a foreign enemy, they might become amenable to law and order. This he hoped soon to effect in Syria, Cilicia, and Asia, because these provinces were not involved in war. In Bithynia and Pontus indeed he expected more trouble, because he understood Pharnaces still continued in the latter, and was not likely to quit it easily, being flushed with the victory he had obtained over Domitius Calvinus. He made a short stay in most states of note, distributing rewards both publicly and privately to such as deserved them, settling old controversies, and receiving into his protection the kings, princes, and potentates, as well of the provinces as of the neighboring countries. And having settled the necessary regulations for the defense and protection of the country, he dismissed them, with most friendly feelings to himself and the republic.

[66]After a stay of some days in these parts, he named Sextus Caesar, his friend and relation, to the command of Syria and the legions appointed to guard it; and sailed himself for Cilicia, with the fleet he had brought from Egypt. He summoned the states to assemble at Tarsus, the strongest and finest city of the province; where, having settled everything that regarded either that province or the neighboring countries, through his eagerness to march to carry on the war he delayed no longer, but advancing through Cappadocia with the utmost expedition, where he stopped two days at Mazaca, he arrived at Comana, renowned for the ancient and sacred temple of Bellona, where she is worshiped with so much veneration, that her priest is accounted next in power and dignity to the king. He conferred this dignity on Lycomedes of Bithynia, who was descended from the ancient kings of Cappadocia, and who demanded it in right of inheritance; his ancestors having lost it upon occasion of the scepter being transferred to another line. As for Ariobarzanes, and his brother Ariarates, who had both deserved well of the commonwealth, he confirmed the first in his kingdom, and put the other under his protection; after which, he pursued his march with the same dispatch.

[67]Upon his approaching Pontus, and the frontiers of Gallograecia, Deiotarus, tetrarch of that province (whose title, however, was disputed by the neighboring tetrarchs) and king of Lesser Armenia, laying aside the regal

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

ornaments, and assuming the habit not only of a private person, but even of a criminal, came in a suppliant manner to Caesar, to beg forgiveness for assisting Pompey with his army, and obeying his commands, at a time when Caesar could afford him no protection: urging, that it was his business to obey the governors who were present, without pretending to judge of the disputes of the people of Rome.

[68]Caesar, after reminding him "of the many services he had done him, and the decrees he had procured in his favor when consul; that his defection could claim no excuse for want of information, because one of his industry and prudence could not but know who was master of Italy and Rome, where the senate, the people, and the majesty of the republic resided; who, in fine, was consul after Marcellus and Lentulus; told him, that he would notwithstanding forgive his present fault in consideration of his past services, the former friendship that had subsisted between them, the respect due to his age, and the solicitation of those connected with him by hospitality, and his friends who interceded in his behalf: adding, that he would defer the controversy relating to the tetrarchate to another time." He restored him the royal habit, and commanded him to join him with all his cavalry, and the legion he had trained up after the Roman manner.

[69]When he was arrived in Pontus, and had drawn all his forces together, which were not very considerable either for their number or discipline (for except the sixth legion, composed of veteran soldiers, which he had brought with him from Alexandria, and which, by its many labors and dangers, the length of its marches and voyages, and the frequent wars in which it had been engaged, was reduced to less than a thousand men, he had only the legion of Deiotarus, and two more that had been in the late battle between Domitius and Pharnaces) ambassadors arrived from Pharnaces, "to entreat that Caesar would not come as an enemy, for he would submit to all his commands." They represented particularly that "Pharnaces had granted no aid to Pompey, as Deiotarus had done, whom he had nevertheless pardoned."

[70]Caesar replied, "That Pharnaces should meet with the utmost justice, if he performed his promises: but at the same time he admonished the ambassadors, in gentle terms, to forbear mentioning Deiotarus, and not to overrate the having refused aid to Pompey. He told them that he never did any thing with greater pleasure than pardon a suppliant, but that he would never look upon private services to himself as an atonement for public injuries done the province; that the refusal of Pharnaces to aid Pompey had turned chiefly to his own advantage, as he had thereby avoided all share in the disaster of Pharsalia; that he was however willing to forgive the injuries done to the Roman citizens in Pontus, because it was now too late to think of redressing them; as he could neither restore life to the dead, nor manhood to those he had deprived of it, by a punishment more intolerable to the Romans than death itself. But that he must quit Pontus immediately, send back the farmers of the revenues, and restore to the Romans and their allies what he unjustly detained from them. If he should do this, he might then send the presents which successful generals were wont to receive from their friends" (for Pharnaces had sent him a golden crown). With this answer he dismissed the ambassadors.

[71]Pharnaces promised every thing: but hoping that Caesar, who was in haste to be gone, would readily give credit to whatever he said, that he might the sooner set out upon more urgent affairs (for every body knew that his presence was much wanted at Rome), he performed but slowly, wanted to protract the day of his departure, demanded other conditions, and in fine endeavored to elude his engagements. Caesar, perceiving his drift, did now, out of necessity, what he was usually wont to do through inclination, and resolved to decide the affair as soon as possible by a battle.

[72]Zela is a town of Pontus, well fortified, though situated in a plain; for a natural eminence, as if raised by art, sustains the walls on all sides. All around is a great number of large mountains, intersected by valleys. The highest of these, which is celebrated for the victory of Mithridates, the defeat of Triarius, and the destruction of our army, is not above three miles from Zela, and has a ridge that almost extends to the town. Here Pharnaces encamped, with all his forces, repairing the fortifications of a position which had proved so fortunate to his father.

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

[73]Caesar having encamped about five miles from the enemy, and observing that the valleys which defended the king's camp would likewise defend his own, at the same distance, if the enemy, who were much nearer, did not seize them before him; ordered a great quantity of fascines to be brought within the intrenchments. This being quickly performed, next night, at the fourth watch, leaving the baggage in the camp, he set out with the legions; and arriving at daybreak unsuspected by the enemy, possessed himself of the same post where Mithridates had defeated Triarius. Hither he commended all the fascines to be brought, employing the servants of the army for that purpose, that the soldiers might not be called off from the works; because the valley, which divided the eminence, where he was intrenching himself from the enemy, was not above a mile wide.

[74]Pharnaces perceiving this, next morning ranged all his troops in order of battle before his camp. Caesar, on account of the disadvantage of the ground, believed that he was reviewing them according to military discipline; or with a view to retard his works, by keeping a great number of his men under arms; or through the confidence of the king, that he might not seem to defend his position by his fortifications rather than by force. Therefore, keeping only his first line in order of battle, he commanded the rest of the army to go on with their works. But Pharnaces, either prompted by the place itself, which had been so fortunate to his father; or induced by favorable omens, as we were afterward told; or discovering the small number of our men that were in arms (for he took all that were employed in carrying materials to the works to be soldiers); or confiding in his veteran army, who valued themselves upon having defeated the twenty-second legion; and at the same time, despising our troops, whom he knew he had worsted, under Domitius; was determined upon a battle, and to that end began to cross the valley. Caesar, at first, laughed at his ostentation, in crowding his army into so narrow a place, where no enemy, in his right senses, would have ventured: while, in the mean time, Pharnaces continued his march, and began to ascend the steep hill on which Caesar was posted.

[75]Caesar, astonished at his incredible rashness and confidence, and finding himself suddenly and unexpectedly attacked, called off his soldiers from the works, ordered them to arms, opposed the legions to the enemy, and ranged his troops in order of battle. The suddenness of the thing occasioned some terror at first; and our ranks not being yet formed, the scythed chariots disordered and confused the soldiers: however, the multitude of darts discharged against them, soon put a stop to their career. The enemy's army followed them close, and began the battle with a shout. Our advantageous situation, but especially the assistance of the gods, who preside over all the events of war, and more particularly those where human conduct can be of no service, favored us greatly on this occasion.

[76]After a sharp and obstinate conflict, victory began to declare for us on the right wing, where the sixth legion was posted. The enemy there were totally overthrown, but, in the center and left, the battle was long and doubtful; however, with the assistance of the gods, we at last prevailed there also, and drove them with the utmost precipitation down the hill which they had so easily ascended before. Great numbers being slain, and many crushed by the flight of their own troops, such as had the good fortune to escape were nevertheless obliged to throw away their arms; so that having crossed, and got upon the opposite ascent, they could not, being unarmed, derive any benefit from the advantage of the ground. Our men flushed with victory, did not hesitate to advance up the disadvantageous ground, and attack their fortifications, which they soon forced, notwithstanding the resistance made by the cohorts left by Pharnaces to guard it. Almost the whole army was cut to pieces or made prisoners. Pharnaces himself escaped, with a few horse; and had not the attack on the camp given him an opportunity of fleeing without pursuit, he must certainly have fallen alive into Caesar's hands.

[77]Though Caesar was accustomed to victory, yet he felt incredible joy at the present success; because he had so speedily put an end to a very great war. The remembrance, too, of the danger to which he had been exposed, enhanced the pleasure, as he had obtained an easy victory in a very difficult conjuncture. Having thus recovered Pontus, and abandoned the plunder of the enemy's camp to the soldiers, he set out next day with some light horse. He ordered the sixth legion to return to Italy to receive the honors and rewards they had merited; and sent home the auxiliary troops of Deiotarus, and left two legions with Caelius Vincianus to protect the kingdom of Pontus.

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries: The Alexandrian Wars

[78]Through Gallograecia and Bithynia he marched into Asia, and examined and decided all the controversies of the provinces as he passed, and established the limits and jurisdictions of the several kings, states, and tetrarchs. Mithridates of Pergamus, who had so actively and successfully served him in Egypt, as we have related above, a man of royal descent and education (for Mithridates, king of all Asia, out of regard to his birth, had carried him along with him when very young, and kept him in his camp several years), was appointed king of Bosphorus, which had been under the command of Pharnaces. And thus he guarded the provinces of the Roman people against the attempts of barbarous and hostile kings, by the interposition of a prince firmly attached to the interests of the republic. He bestowed on him likewise the tetrarchy of Gallograecia, which was his by the law of nations and family claims, though it had been possessed for some years by Deiotarus. Thus Caesar, staying nowhere longer than the necessity of the seditions in the city required, and having settled all things relating to the provinces with the utmost success and dispatch, returned to Italy much sooner than was generally expected.

End of Book