

Julius Caesar's War Commentaries

Book 2

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Book 2

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Book 2 – (57 B.C.)

[2.1]While Caesar was in winter quarters in Hither Gaul, as we have shown above, frequent reports were brought to him, and he was also informed by letters from Labienus, that all the Belgae, who we have said are a third part of Gaul, were entering into a confederacy against the Roman people, and giving hostages to one another; that the reasons of the confederacy were these – first, because they feared that, after all [Celtic] Gaul was subdued, our army would be led against them; secondly, because they were instigated by several of the Gauls; some of whom as [on the one hand] they had been unwilling that the Germans should remain any longer in Gaul, so [on the other] they were dissatisfied that the army of the Roman people should pass the winter in it, and settle there; and others of them, from a natural instability and fickleness of disposition, were anxious for a revolution; [the Belgae were instigated] by several, also, because the government in Gaul was generally seized upon by the more powerful persons and by those who had the means of hiring troops, and they could less easily effect this object under our dominion.

[2.2]Alarmed by these tidings and letters, Caesar levied two new legions in Hither Gaul, and, at the beginning of summer, sent Q. Pedius, his lieutenant, to conduct them further into Gaul. He, himself, as soon as there began to be plenty of forage, came to the army. He gives a commission to the Senones and the other Gauls who were neighbors of the Belgae, to learn what is going on among them [i.e. the Belgae], and inform him of these matters. These all uniformly reported that troops were being raised, and that an army was being collected in one place. Then, indeed, he thought that he ought not to hesitate about proceeding toward them, and having provided supplies, moves his camp, and in about fifteen days arrives at the territories of the Belgae.

[2.3]As he arrived there unexpectedly and sooner than any one anticipated, the Remi, who are the nearest of the Belgae to [Celtic] Gaul, sent to him Iccius and Antebrogius, [two of] the principal persons of the state, as their ambassadors: to tell him that they surrendered themselves and all their possessions to the protection and disposal of the Roman people: and that they had neither combined with the rest of the Belgae, nor entered into any confederacy against the Roman people: and were prepared to give hostages, to obey his commands, to receive him into their towns, and to aid him with corn and other things; that all the rest of the Belgae were in arms; and that the Germans, who dwell on this side of the Rhine, had joined themselves to them; and that so great was the infatuation of them all, that they could not restrain even the Suessiones, their own brethren and kinsmen, who enjoy the same rights, and the, same laws, and who have one government and one magistracy [in common] with themselves, from uniting with them.

[2.4]When Caesar inquired of them what states were in arms, how powerful they were, and what they could do, in war, he received the following information: that the greater part of the Belgae were sprung, from the Germans, and that having crossed the Rhine at an early period, they had settled there, on account of the fertility of the country, and had driven out the Gauls who inhabited those regions; and that they were the only people who, in the memory of our fathers, when all Gaul was overrun, had prevented and that having crossed the Rhine at an early period, they had settled there, on account of the fertility of the country, and had driven out the Gauls who

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inhabited those regions; and that they were the only people who, in the memory of our fathers, when all Gaul was overrun, had prevented the Teutones and the Cimbri from entering their territories; the effect of which was, that, from the recollection of those events, they assumed to themselves great authority and haughtiness in military matters. The Remi said, that they had known accurately every thing respecting their number, because being united to them by neighborhood and by alliances, they had learned what number each state had in the general council of the Belgae promised for that war. That the Bellovaci were the most powerful among them in valor, influence, and the number of men; that these could muster 100,000 armed men, [and had] promised 60,000 picked men out of that number, and demanded for themselves the command of the whole war. That the Suessiones were their nearest neighbors and possessed a very extensive and fertile country; that among them, even in our own memory, Divitiacus, the most powerful man of all Gaul, had been king; who had held the government of a great part of these regions, as well as of Britain; that their king at present was Galba; that the direction of the whole war was conferred by the consent of all, upon him, on account of his integrity and prudence; that they had twelve towns; that they had promised 50,000 armed men; and that the Nervii, who are reckoned the most warlike among them, and are situated at a very great distance, [had promised] as many; the Atrebatas 15,000; the Ambiani, 10,000; the Morini, 25,000; the Menapii, 9,000; the Caleti, 10,000; the Velocasses and the Veromandui as many; the Aduatuci 19,000; that the Condrusi, the Eburones, the Caeraesi, the Paemani, who are called by the common name of Germans [had promised], they thought, to the number of 40,000.

[2.5]Caesar, having encouraged the Remi, and addressed them courteously, ordered the whole senate to assemble before him, and the children of their chief men to be brought to him as hostages; all which commands they punctually performed by the day [appointed]. He, addressing himself to Divitiacus, the Aeduan, with great earnestness, points out how much it concerns the republic and their common security, that the forces of the enemy should be divided, so that it might not be necessary to engage with so large a number at one time. [He asserts] that this might be affected if the Aedui would lead their forces into the territories of the Bellovaci, and begin to lay waste their country. With these instructions he dismissed him from his presence. After he perceived that all the forces of the Belgae, which had been collected in one place, were approaching toward him, and learned from the scouts whom he had sent out, and [also] from the Remi, that they were then not far distant, he hastened to lead his army over the Aisne, which is on the borders of the Remi, and there pitched his camp. This position fortified one side of his camp by the banks of the river, rendered the country which lay in his rear secure from the enemy, and furthermore insured that provisions might without danger be brought to him by the Remi and the rest of the states. Over that river was a bridge: there he places a guard; and on the other side of the river he leaves Q. Titurius Sabinus, his lieutenant, with six cohorts. He orders him to fortify a camp with a rampart twelve feet in height, and a trench eighteen feet in breadth.

[2.6]There was a town of the Remi, by name Bibrax, eight miles distant from this camp. This the Belgae on their march began to attack with great vigor. [The assault] was with difficulty sustained for that day. The Gauls' mode of besieging is the same as that of the Belgae: when after having drawn a large number of men around the whole of the fortifications, stones have begun to be cast against the wall on all sides, and the wall has been stripped of its defenders, [then], forming a testudo, they advance to the gates and undermine the wall: which was easily effected on this occasion; for while so large a number were casting stones and darts, no one was able to maintain his position upon the wall. When night had put an end to the assault, Iccius, who was then in command of the town, one of the Remi, a man of the highest rank and influence among his people, and one of those who had come to Caesar as ambassador [to sue] for peace, sends messengers to him, [to report] "That, unless assistance were sent to him he could not hold out any longer."

[2.7]Thither, immediately after midnight, Caesar, using as guides the same persons who had come to him as messengers from Iccius, sends some Numidian and Cretan archers, and some Balearian slingers as a relief to the towns-people, by whose arrival both a desire to resist together with the hope of [making good their] defense, was infused into the Remi, and, for the same reason, the hope of gaining the town, abandoned the enemy. Therefore, after staying a short time before the town, and laying waste the country of the Remi, when all the villages and buildings which they could approach had been burned, they hastened with all their forces to the camp of Caesar, and encamped within less than two miles [of it]; and their camp, as was indicated by the smoke and fires, extended more than eight miles in breadth.

[2.8]Caesar at first determined to decline a battle, as well on account of the great number of the enemy as their

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distinguished reputation for valor: daily, however, in cavalry actions, he strove to ascertain by frequent trials, what the enemy could effect by their prowess and what our men would dare. When he perceived that our men were not inferior, as the place before the camp was naturally convenient and suitable for marshaling an army (since the hill where the camp was pitched, rising gradually from the plain, extended forward in breadth as far as the space which the marshaled army could occupy, and had steep declines of its side in either direction, and gently sloping in front gradually sank to the plain); on either side of that hill he drew a cross trench of about four hundred paces, and at the extremities of that trench built forts, and placed there his military engines, lest, after he had marshaled his army, the enemy, since they were so powerful in point of number, should be able to surround his men in the flank, while fighting. After doing this, and leaving in the camp the two legions which he had last raised, that, if there should be any occasion, they might be brought as a reserve, he formed the other six legions in order of battle before the camp. The enemy, likewise, had drawn up their forces which they had brought out of the camp.

[2.9] There was a marsh of no great extent between our army and that of the enemy. The latter were waiting to see if our men would pass this; our men, also, were ready in arms to attack them while disordered, if the first attempt to pass should be made by them. In the mean time battle was commenced between the two armies by a cavalry action. When neither army began to pass the marsh, Caesar, upon the skirmishes of the horse [proving] favorable to our men, led back his forces into the camp. The enemy immediately hastened from that place to the river Aisne, which it has been; stated was behind our camp. Finding a ford there, they endeavored to lead a part of their forces over it; with the design, that, if they could, they might carry by storm the fort which Q. Titurius, Caesar's lieutenant, commanded, and might cut off the bridge; but, if they could not do that, they should lay waste the lands of the Remi, which were of great use to us in carrying on the war, and might hinder our men from foraging.

[2.10] Caesar, being apprized of this by Titurius, leads all his cavalry and light-armed Numidians, slingers and archers, over the bridge, and hastens toward them. There was a severe struggle in that place. Our men, attacking in the river the disordered enemy, slew a great part of them. By the immense number of their missiles they drove back the rest, who, in a most courageous manner were attempting to pass over their bodies, and surrounded with their cavalry, and cut to pieces those who had first crossed the river. The enemy, when they perceived that their hopes had deceived them both with regard to their taking the town by storm and also their passing the river, and did not see our men advance to a more disadvantageous place for the purpose of fighting, and when provisions began to fail them, having called a council, determined that it was best for each to return to his country, and resolved to assemble from all quarters to defend those into whose territories the Romans should first march an army; that they might contend in their own rather than in a foreign country, and might enjoy the stores of provision which they possessed at home. Together with other causes, this consideration also led them to that resolution, viz: that they had learned that Divitiacus and the Aedui were approaching the territories of the Bellovaci. And it was impossible to persuade the latter to stay any longer, or to deter them from conveying succor to their own people.

[2.11] That matter being determined on, marching out of their camp at the second watch, with great noise and confusion, in no fixed order, nor under any command, since each sought for himself the foremost place in the journey, and hastened to reach home, they made their departure appear very like a flight. Caesar, immediately learning this through his scouts, [but] fearing an ambushade, because he had not yet discovered for what reason they were departing, kept his army and cavalry within the camp. At daybreak, the intelligence having been confirmed by the scouts, he sent forward his cavalry to harass their rear; and gave the command of it to two of his lieutenants, Q. Pedius, and L. Aurunculeius Cotta. He ordered T. Labienus, another of his lieutenants, to follow them closely with three legions. These, attacking their rear, and pursuing them for many miles, slew a great number of them as they were fleeing; while those in the rear with whom they had come up, halted, and bravely sustained the attack of our soldiers; the van, because they appeared to be removed from danger, and were not restrained by any necessity or command, as soon as the noise was heard, broke their ranks, and, to a man, rested their safety in flight. Thus without any risk [to themselves] our men killed as great a number of them as the length of the day allowed; and at sunset desisted from the pursuit, and betook themselves into the camp, as they had been commanded.

[2.12] On the day following, before the enemy could recover from their terror and flight, Caesar led his army

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into the territories of the Suessiones, which are next to the Remi, and having accomplished a long march, hastens to the town named Noviodunum. Having attempted to take it by storm on his march, because he heard that it was destitute of [sufficient] defenders, he was not able to carry it by assault, on account of the breadth of the ditch and the height of the wall, though few were defending it. Therefore, having fortified the camp, he began to bring up the vineae, and to provide whatever things were necessary for the storm. In the mean time the whole body of the Suessiones, after their flight, came the next night into the town. The vineae having been quickly brought up against the town, a mound thrown up, and towers built, the Gauls, amazed by the greatness of the works, such as they had neither seen nor heard of before, and struck also by the dispatch of the Romans, send ambassadors to Caesar respecting a surrender, and succeed in consequence of the Remi requesting that they [the Suessiones] might be spared.

[2.13]Caesar, having received as hostages the first men of the state, and even the two sons of king Galba himself; and all the arms in the town having been delivered up, admitted the Suessiones to a surrender, and led his army against the Bellovaci. Who, when they had conveyed themselves and all their possessions into the town Galled Bratuspantium, and Caesar with his army was about five miles distant from that town, all the old men, going out of the town, began to stretch out their hands to Caesar, and to intimate by their voice that they would throw themselves on his protection and power, nor would contend in arms against the Roman people. In like manner, when he had come up to the town, and there pitched his camp, the boys and the women from the wall, with outstretched hands, after their custom, begged peace from the Romans.

[2.14]For these Divitiacus pleads (for after the departure of the Belgae, having dismissed the troops of the Aedui, he had returned to Caesar). "The Bellovaci had at all times been in the alliance and friendship of the Aeduan state; that they had revolted from the Aedui and made war upon the Roman people, being urged thereto by their nobles, who said that the Aedui, reduced to slavery by Caesar, were suffering every indignity and insult. That they who had been the leaders of that plot, because they perceived how great a calamity they had brought upon the state, had fled into Britain. That not only the Bellovaci, but also the Aedui, entreated him to use his [accustomed] clemency and lenity toward them [the Bellovaci]: which if he did, he would increase the influence of the Aedui among all the Belgae, by whose succor and resources they had been accustomed to support themselves whenever any wars occurred."

[2.15]Caesar said that on account of his respect for Divitiacus and the Aeduans, he would receive them into his protection, and would spare them; but, because the state was of great influence among the Belgae, and pre-eminent in the number of its population, he demanded 600 hostages. When these were delivered, and all the arms in the town collected, he went from that place into the territories of the Ambiani, who, without delay, surrendered themselves and all their possessions. Upon their territories bordered the Nervii, concerning whose character and customs when Caesar inquired he received the following information: – That there was no access for merchants to them; that they suffered no wine and other things tending to luxury to be imported; because, they thought that by their use the mind is enervated and the courage impaired: that they were a savage people and of great bravery: that they upbraided and condemned the rest of the Belgae who had surrendered themselves to the Roman people and thrown aside their national courage: that they openly declared they would neither send ambassadors, nor accept any condition of peace."

[2.16]After he had made three days march through their territories, he discovered from some prisoners, that the river Sambre was not more than ten miles from his camp; that all the Nervii had stationed themselves on the other side of that river, and together with the Atrebates and the Veromandui, their neighbors, were there awaiting the arrival of the Romans; for they had persuaded both these nations to try the same fortune of war [as themselves]: that the forces of the Aduatuci were also expected by them, and were on their march; that they had put their women, and those who through age appeared useless for war, in a place to which there was no approach for an army, on account of the marshes.

[2.17]Having learned these things, he sends forward scouts and centurions to choose a convenient place for the camp. And as a great many of the surrounding Belgae and other Gauls, following Caesar, marched with him; some of these, as was afterwards learned from the prisoners, having accurately observed, during those days, the army's method of marching, went by night to the Nervii, and informed them that a great number of baggage-trains passed between the several legions, and that there would be no difficulty, when the first legion had come into the camp, and the other legions were at a great distance, to attack that legion while under baggage,

which being routed, and the baggage–train seized, it would come to pass that the other legions would not dare to stand their ground. It added weight also to the advice of those who reported that circumstance, that the Nervii, from early times, because they were weak in cavalry, (for not even at this time do they attend to it, but accomplish by their infantry whatever they can,) in order that they might the more easily obstruct the cavalry of their neighbors if they came upon them for the purpose of plundering, having cut young trees, and bent them, by means of their numerous branches [extending] on to the sides, and the quick–briars and thorns springing up between them, had made these hedges present a fortification like a wall, through which it was not only impossible to enter, but even to penetrate with the eye. Since [therefore] the march of our army would be obstructed by these things, the Nervii thought that the advice ought not to be neglected by them.

[2.18]The nature of the ground which our men had chosen for the camp was this: A hill, declining evenly from the top, extending to the river Sambre, which we have mentioned above: from this river there arose a [second] hill of like ascent, on the other side and opposite to the former, and open for about 200 paces at the lower part; but in the upper part, woody, (so much so) that it was not easy to see through it into the interior. Within these woods the enemy kept themselves in concealment; a few troops of horse–soldiers appeared on the open ground, along the river. The depth of the river was about three feet.

[2.19]Caesar, having sent his cavalry on before, followed close after them with all his forces; but the plan and order of the march was different from that which the Belgae had reported to the Nervii. For as he was approaching the enemy, Caesar, according to his custom, led on [as the van six legions unencumbered by baggage; behind them he had placed the baggage– trains of the whole army; then the two legions which had been last raised closed the rear, and were a guard for the baggage–train. Our horse, with the slingers and archers, having passed the river, commenced action with the cavalry of the enemy. While they from time to time betook themselves into the woods to their companions, and again made an assault out of the wood upon our men, who did not dare to follow them in their retreat further than the limit to which the plain and open parts extended, in the mean time the six legions which had arrived first, having measured out the work, began to fortify the camp. When the first part of the baggage train of our army was seen by those who lay hid in the woods, which had been agreed on among them as the time for commencing action, as soon as they had arranged their line of battle and formed their ranks within the woods, and had encouraged one another, they rushed out suddenly with all their forces and made an attack upon our horse. The latter being easily routed and thrown into confusion, the Nervii ran down to the river with such incredible speed that they seemed to be in the woods, the river, and close upon us almost at the same time. And with the same speed they hastened up the hill to our camp, and to those who were employed in the works.

[2.20]Caesar had every thing to do at one time: the standard to be displayed, which was the sign when it was necessary to run to arms; the signal to be given by the trumpet; the soldiers to be called off from the works; those who had proceeded some distance for the purpose of seeking materials for the rampart, to be summoned; the order of battle to be formed; the soldiers to be encouraged; the watchword to be given. A great part of these arrangements was prevented by the shortness of time and the sudden approach and charge of the enemy. Under these difficulties two things proved of advantage; [first] the skill and experience of the soldiers, because, having been trained by former engagements, they could suggest to themselves what ought to be done, as conveniently as receive information from others; and [secondly] that Caesar had forbidden his several lieutenants to depart from the works and their respective legions, before the camp was fortified. These, on account of the near approach and the speed of the enemy, did not then wait for any command from Caesar, but of themselves executed whatever appeared proper.

[2.21]Caesar, having given the necessary orders, hastened to and fro into whatever quarter fortune carried him, to animate the troops, and came to the tenth legion. Having encouraged the soldiers with no further speech than that "they should keep up the remembrance of their wonted valor, and not be confused in mind, but valiantly sustain the assault of the enemy ;" as the latter were not further from them than the distance to which a dart could be cast, he gave the signal for commencing battle. And having gone to another quarter for the purpose of encouraging [the soldiers], he finds them fighting. Such was the shortness of the time, and so determined was the mind of the enemy on fighting, that time was wanting not only for affixing the military insignia, but even for putting on the helmets and drawing off the covers from the shields. To whatever part any one by chance came from the works (in which he had been employed), and whatever standards he saw first, at these he stood, lest in seeking his own company he should lose the time for fighting.

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[2.22]The army having been marshaled, rather as the nature of the ground and the declivity of the hill and the exigency of the time, than as the method and order of military matters required; while the legions in the different places were withstanding the enemy, some in one quarter, some in another, and the view was obstructed by the very thick hedges intervening, as we have before remarked, neither could proper reserves be posted, nor could the necessary measures be taken in each part, nor could all the commands be issued by one person. Therefore, in such an unfavorable state of affairs, various events of fortune followed.

[2.23]The soldiers of the ninth and tenth legions, as they had been stationed on the left part of the army, casting their weapons, speedily drove the Atrebatas (for that division had been opposed to them,) who were breathless with running and fatigue, and worn out with wounds, from the higher ground into the river; and following them as they were endeavoring to pass it, slew with their swords a great part of them while impeded (therein). They themselves did not hesitate to pass the river; and having advanced to a disadvantageous place, when the battle was renewed, they [nevertheless] again put to flight the enemy, who had returned and were opposing them. In like manner, in another quarter two different legions, the eleventh and the eighth, having routed the Veromandui, with whom they had engaged, were fighting from the higher ground upon the very banks of the river. But, almost the whole camp on the front and on the left side being then exposed, since the twelfth legion was posted in the right wing, and the seventh at no great distance from it, all the Nervii, in a very close body, with Boduognatus, who held the chief command, as their leader, hastened toward that place; and part of them began to surround the legions on their unprotected flank, part to make for the highest point of the encampment.

[2.24]At the same time our horsemen, and light-armed infantry, who had been with those, who, as I have related, were routed by the first assault of the enemy, as they were betaking themselves into the camp, met the enemy face to face, and again sought flight into another quarter; and the camp-followers who from the Decuman Gate, and from the highest ridge of the hill had seen our men pass the river as victors, when, after going out for the purposes of plundering, they looked back and saw the enemy parading in our camp, committed themselves precipitately to flight; at the same time there arose the cry and shout of those who came with the baggage-train: and they (affrighted), were carried some one way, some another. By all these circumstances the cavalry of the Treviri were much alarmed, (whose reputation for courage is extraordinary among the Gauls, and who had come to Caesar, being sent by their state as auxiliaries), and, when they saw our camp filled with a large number of the enemy, the legions hard pressed and almost held surrounded, the camp-retainers, horsemen, slingers, and Numidians fleeing on all sides divided and scattered, they, despairing of our affairs, hastened home, and related to their state that the Romans were routed and conquered, [and] that the enemy were in possession of their camp and baggage-train.

[2.25]Caesar proceeded, after encouraging the tenth legion, to the right wing; where he perceived that his men were hard pressed, and that in consequence of the standards of the twelfth legion being collected together in one place, the crowded soldiers were a hinderance to themselves in the fight; that all the centurions of the fourth cohort were slain, and the standard-bearer killed, the standard itself lost, almost all the centurions of the other cohorts either wounded or slain, and among them the chief centurion of the legion P. Sextius Baculus, a very valiant man, who was so exhausted by many and severe wounds, that he was already unable to support himself; he likewise perceived that the rest were slackening their efforts, and that some, deserted by those in the rear, were retiring from the battle and avoiding the weapons; that the enemy [on the other hand] though advancing from the lower ground, were not relaxing in front, and were [at the same time] pressing hard on both flanks; he also perceived that the affair was at a crisis, and that there was not any reserve which could be brought up, having therefore snatched a shield from one of the soldiers in the rear (for he himself had come without a shield), he advanced to the front of the line, and addressing the centurions by name, and encouraging the rest of the soldiers, he ordered them to carry forward the standards, and extend the companies, that they might the more easily use their swords. On his arrival, as hope was brought to the soldiers and their courage restored, while every one for his own part, in the sight of his general, desired to exert his utmost energy, the impetuosity of the enemy was a little checked.

[2.26]Caesar, when he perceived that the seventh legion, which stood close by him, was also hard pressed by the enemy, directed the tribunes of the soldiers to effect a junction of the legions gradually, and make their charge upon the enemy with a double front; which having been done, since they brought assistance the one to the other, nor feared lest their rear should be surrounded by the enemy, they began to stand their ground more boldly, and to

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fight more courageously. In the mean time, the soldiers of the two legions which had been in the rear of the army, as a guard for the baggage–train, upon the battle being reported to them, quickened their pace, and were seen by the enemy on the top of the hill; and Titus Labienus, having gained possession of the camp of the enemy, and observed from the higher ground what was going on in our camp, sent the tenth legion as a relief to our men, who, when they had learned from the flight of the horse and the sutlers in what position the affair was, and in how great danger the camp and the legion and the commander were involved, left undone nothing [which tended] to dispatch.

[2.27]By their arrival, so great a change of matters was made, that our men, even those who had fallen down exhausted with wounds, leaned on their shields, and renewed the fight: then the camp–retainers, though unarmed, seeing the enemy completely dismayed, attacked [them though] armed; the horsemen too, that they might by their valor blot the disgrace of their flight, thrust themselves before the legionary soldiers in all parts of the battle. But the enemy, even in the last hope of safety, displayed such great courage, that when the foremost of them had fallen, the next stood upon them prostrate, and fought from their bodies; when these were overthrown, and their corpses heaped up together, those who survived cast their weapons against our men [thence], as from a mound, and returned our darts which had fallen short between [the armies]; so that it ought not to be concluded, that men of such great courage had injudiciously dared to pass a very broad river, ascend very high banks, and come up to a very disadvantageous place; since their greatness of spirit had rendered these actions easy, although in themselves very difficult.

[2.28]This battle being ended, and the nation and name of the Nervii being almost reduced to annihilation, their old men, whom together with the boys and women we have stated to have been collected together in the fenny places and marshes, on this battle having been reported to them, since they were convinced that nothing was an obstacle to the conquerors, and nothing safe to the conquered, sent ambassadors to Caesar by the consent of all who remained, and surrendered themselves to him; and in recounting the calamity of their state, said that their senators were reduced from 600 to three; that from 60,000 men they [were reduced] to scarcely 500 who could bear arms; whom Caesar, that he might appear to use compassion toward the wretched and the suppliant, most carefully spared; and ordered them to enjoy their own territories and towns, and commanded their neighbors that they should restrain themselves and their dependents from offering injury or outrage [to them].

[2.29]When the Aduatici, of whom we have written above, were coming up with all their forces to the assistance of the Nervii, upon this battle being reported to them, they returned home after they were on the march; deserting all their towns and forts, they conveyed together all their possessions into one town, eminently fortified by nature. While this town had on all sides around it very high rocks and precipices, there was left on one side a gently ascending approach, of not more than 200 feet in width; which place they had fortified with a very lofty double wall: besides, they had placed stones of great weight and sharpened stakes upon the walls. They were descended from the Cimbri and Teutones, who, when they were marching into our province and Italy, having deposited on this side the river Rhine such of their baggage–trains as they could not drive or convey with them, left 6,000 of their men as a guard and defense for them. These having, after the destruction of their countrymen, been harassed for many years by their neighbors, while one time they waged war offensively, and at another resisted it when waged against them, concluded a peace with the consent of all, and chose this place as their settlement.

[2.30]And on the first arrival of our army they made frequent sallies from the town, and contended with our men in trifling skirmishes; afterward, when hemmed in by a rampart of twelve feet [in height], and fifteen miles in circuit, they kept themselves within the town. When, vineae having been brought up and a mound raised, they observed that a tower also was being built at a distance, they at first began to mock the Romans from their wall, and to taunt them with the following speeches. "For what purpose was so vast a machine constructed at so great a distance? With what hands," or "with what strength did they, especially [as they were] men of such very small stature" (for our shortness of stature, in comparison to the great size of their bodies, is generally a subject of much contempt to the men of Gaul) "trust to place against their walls a tower of such great weight."

[2.31]But when they saw that it was being moved, and was approaching their walls, startled by the new and unaccustomed sight, they sent ambassadors to Caesar [to treat] about peace; who spoke in the following manner: "That they did not believe the Romans waged war without divine aid, since they were able to move forward machines of such a height with so great speed, and thus fight from close quarters; that they resigned themselves

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and all their possessions to [Caesar's] disposal: that they begged and earnestly entreated one thing, viz., that if perchance, agreeable to his clemency and humanity, which they had heard of from others, he should resolve that the Aduatuci were to be spared, he would not deprive them of their arms; that all their neighbors were enemies to them and envied their courage, from whom they could not defend themselves if their arms were delivered up: that it was better for them, if they should be reduced to that state, to suffer any fate from the Roman people, than to be tortured to death by those among whom they had been accustomed to rule."

[2.32]To these things Caesar replied, "That he, in accordance with his custom, rather than owing to their desert, should spare the state, if they should surrender themselves before the battering-ram should touch the wall; but that there was no condition of surrender, except upon their arms being delivered up; that he should do to them that which he had done in the case of the Nervii, and would command their neighbors not to offer any injury to those who had surrendered to the Roman people." The matter being reported to their countrymen, they said that they would execute his commands. Having cast a very large quantity of their arms from the wall into the trench that was before the town, so that the heaps of arms almost equalled the top of the wall and the rampart, and nevertheless having retained and concealed, as we afterward discovered, about a third part in the town, the gates were opened, and they enjoyed peace for that day.

[2.33]Toward evening Caesar ordered the gates to be shut, and the soldiers to go out of the town, lest the towns-people should receive any injury from them by night. They [the Aduatuci], by a design before entered into, as we afterwards understood, because they believed that, as a surrender had been made, our men would dismiss their guards, or at least would keep watch less carefully, partly with those arms which they had retained and concealed, partly with shields made of bark or interwoven wickers, which they had hastily covered over with skins, (as the shortness of time required) in the third watch, suddenly made a sally from the town with all their forces [in that direction] in which the ascent to our fortifications seemed the least difficult. The signal having been immediately given by fires, as Caesar had previously commended, a rush was made thither [i. e. by the Roman soldiers] from the nearest fort; and the battle was fought by the enemy as vigorously as it ought to be fought by brave men, in the last hope of safety, in a disadvantageous place, and against those who were throwing their weapons from a rampart and from towers; since all hope of safety depended on their courage alone. About 4,000 of the men having been slain, the rest were forced back into the town. The day after, Caesar, after breaking open the gates, which there was no one then to defend, and sending in our soldiers, sold the whole spoil of that town. The number of 53,000 persons was reported to him by those who had bought them.

[2.34]At the same time he was informed by P. Crassus, whom he had sent with one legion against the Veneti, the Unelli, the Osismii, the Curiosolitae, the Sesuvii, the Aulerci, and the Rhedones, which are maritime states, and touch upon the [Atlantic] ocean, that all these nations were brought under the dominion and power of the Roman people.

[2.35]These things being achieved, [and] all Gaul being subdued, so high an opinion of this war was spread among the barbarians, that ambassadors were sent to Caesar by those nations who dwelt beyond the Rhine, to promise that they would give hostages and execute his commands. Which embassies Caesar, because he was hastening into Italy and Illyricum, ordered to return to him at the beginning of the following summer. He himself, having led his legions into winter quarters among the Carnutes, the Andes, and the Turones, which states were close to those regions in which he had waged war, set out for Italy; and a thanksgiving of fifteen days was decreed for those achievements, upon receiving Caesar's letter; [an honor] which before that time had been conferred on none.

End of Book 2