

Thesis.

Military career of Julius Caesar.

By.

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Julius Caesar was born at Rome on the 4th. of the Ides of Quintilis or July 12, 654.

His father was C. Julius Caesar a Praetor who died suddenly at Pisa in 670. His mother was Aurelia descended from an illustrious Plebeian family. His mother was a high minded and moral woman and his success in his later life was largely due to the training he received from her.

He was a nephew to Marius the great popular leader. From this relationship he was strongly attached to the popular cause. His leaning towards this cause was further increased by his marriage with Cornelia the daughter of Cinna.

When Sulla became dictator he ordered several of the doubtful patricians to divorce their wives. Among them he ordered Caesar to divorce Cornelia. This Caesar refused to do and in consequence had to flee into hiding for his life. He was eventually pardoned, but Sulla is reported to have said when he granted the pardon; "Well! be it so, you will it; but know that he, whose pardon you demand, will one day ruin the party of the great for which we have fought together, for, trust me, there are several Mariuses in this young

man!" Caesar is one of the few who opposed the dictator's wrath and lived.

After his pardon Caesar went to Asia and stayed at the court of Nicomedes, king of Bithynia. While here he took part in the hostilities against Mithridates. At the capture of Mitylene he saved the life of a Roman citizen and thereby gained a civic crown. This is probably Caesar's first military campaign. Caesar returned to Rome in 676.

The way that a young man came into prominence was to accuse one of the governors of the provinces of extortion. This Caesar did by accusing Dolabella the governor of Macedonia. Dolabella was defended by two of the greatest orators of their time, Hortensius and Cotta. The success of the charge did in no way effect the fame of the accuser and Caesar's speech was a grand success and the popular party began to look toward him as a leader.

Caesar was a good orator, but he did not consider himself yet competent so in 678 he went to Rhodes to study under Molo. On his way to Rhodes he was captured by pirates. They demanded 20 talents for his release but he offered 50 talents or £ 11,640. While in the hands

of the pirates he gained their good will by his amiable character. He often told them in a joking way that when he got free he would some day crucify them. After his release he gathered a squadron of ships on his own authority and captured them with their booty, and eventually did crucify them. After this he went to Rhodes and studied for two years. (688)

While at Rhodes his uncle, Gotta, was governor of Bithynia and in his war with Mithridates was hard pressed. Caesar crossed from Rhodes and led men and so effectually aided his uncle that Mithridates was driven out of the Province.

He then returned to Rome and his friends nominated him military tribune. He was elected by a large majority.

At the time of the consulship of Pompey and Crassus there were three factions in Rome the leaders of which were Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus.

Caesar was elected Questor in 686 and this office gave him a seat in the Senate. During this term of office his wife Cornelia and his aunt Julia, wife of Marius, died. He delivered a funeral address for them and made many

allusions to Marius. This speech made the popular party more than ever his supporters.

In 693 Caesar's term of office as Praetor expired and he was given the government of Spain. When he was about to embark for Spain his creditors interfered and he had to borrow 830 talents of brass to pay them before he could proceed to Spain.

The mountain tribes of Spain were very unruly and were ravaging the low countries. Caesar made war on these and defeated one and made them keep within their own limits. Some of the other warlike tribes fearing the same fate moved their possessions across the river Durus. Caesar immediately occupied the vacated towns and went in pursuit of the people. They determined to fight and by driving their flocks and herds before them thought the Romans would be so eager to gain the booty that they would fall easy victims. But Caesar made for the enemy and routed them. While he was on this campaign the tribe he had conquered rallied and occupied the road which he had went out upon. Caesar thereupon took another road. The Barbarians intercepted him, but were defeated and fled to an island. As Caesar had no ships he ordered

rafts to be built. He crossed on these, but was unsuccessful, though later he obtained ships and recrossed and conquered the Barbarians. He then sailed to Brigantium. The inhabitants of the city were so frightened by so many ships that they surrendered without a struggle. Thus the whole of Lusitania became a tributary of Rome.

When the Senate at Rome heard of his successes they decreed a holiday in his honor and granted him a triumph on his return.

Caesar governed the province with justice and equity, but during his campaigns he had secured a large amount of booty and besides allotting a portion to each soldier and sending some to the treasury he had a large fortune left for himself.

After his term of office had expired in Spain he returned to Rome and demanded a triumph and to be a candidate for the consulship. The Senate would not agree to grant both. Caesar therefore let his triumph go and became a candidate for the consulship.

The Senate had made Pompey and Crassus their enemies. Caesar now attempted to bind to himself Pompey, Crassus, and Cicero. He

succeeded with Pompey and Crassus but failed with Cicero. This combination of Caesar, Pompey and Crassus is sometimes called the First Triumvirate.

Caesar was elected consul unanimously. He had for his colleague, Bibulus.

All through their consulship, Bibulus opposed Caesar in every thing he did. Caesar at first attempted to conciliate all parties but failing in this he held to his old principles and carried his measures over the combined opposition of all his enemies.

We will pass over his consulship which was occupied only with political wrangles in which, however, Caesar was always successful. Near the end of his term of office the Senate allotted to him the supervision of the roads and forests of Italy. He appealed to the people and obtained for his province the command of Cisalpine Gaul and Illyria. This command would give him three legions and was to last for a period of five years. The Senate then from some motive unknown added to this the government of Transalpine Gaul with a 4th. legion.

Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus secured the election for consuls for the next term

Piso the father-in-law of Caesar and Cabiuius the devoted follower of Pompey. After his term of office expired Caesar remained outside the walls of Rome two months to watch the movement of political affairs.

Caesar had set for himself a gigantic problem and one that would increase in importance and difficulty. The Romans were always in fear of an invasion from the north. The Helvetii were a tribe of hardy, warlike people who inhabited Switzerland and on whom the Romans depended to keep the Germans in check in that quarter. This they had successfully done for a long time but they were becoming tired and had grown so numerous that their valleys would hardly support them. The people had decided to migrate to the shores of the Bay of Biscay.

Caesar had just completed his arrangements when word came that the Helvetii were on the move. Their numbers were estimated at 93,000 fighting men. This crowd of people attempted to cross through the province of the Gauls but were defeated by Caesar. They then tried to go by another road. Caesar came up with them while they were crossing a river and cut the part that was on his side of the river to pieces. On one

day he threw a bridge across the river. The rest of the Helvetii begged for peace and promised to go anywhere that Caesar would say. They did not return however but kept on pillaging the country. The Romans kept a day's march behind. When his provisions gave out Caesar applied to the Cediti chiefs, but although they promised provisions they never fulfilled their promise. Caesar then left the Helvetii and started for Bibracte one of the Cediti cities. The Helvetii thought the Romans were retreating and gave pursuit. They gave Caesar an opportunity and in one day he cut them to pieces. The battle lasted from noon till night. Of the survivors some were settled in Gaul and others sent back to their old homes.

After the Helvetii were disposed of Caesar turned his attention to the Germans who had invaded Gaul. After parleying some time with Ariovistus, Caesar began to force events, and near Solmar the two armies met and after a few hours of hard fighting the Germans broke and fled for the Rhine. Some few escaped across that river but the most of the rest men, and women were killed.

This ended the first campaign in Gaul. Caesar returned across the Alps to Luca.

The second campaign in Gaul was made against the Belgae Confederation. After several small engagements he came in contact with the Nervii. He was making camp one evening when the Nervii came upon them. For a time it looked as though the Romans would be defeated but Caesar rushed in unarmed and in his presence the men regained their lost ground. The Nervii, however, would not retreat they made a breastwork of their slain comrades and fought from behind it. Out of 60,000 fighting men only 500 would surrender. This battle practically broke up the Confederation of the Belgae.

Some Germans occupied a strong position at Camarac. Caesar next laid siege to this town. The Germans were conquered but on account of treachery they had employed they were sold into slavery.

It is a fact that when an enemy openly and boldly opposed Caesar he was always treated with consideration and respect, but with a treacherous foe he dealt very harshly.

Caesar then returned to Lucca during the winter. Pompey and Crassus came to him here and they agreed that Pompey and Crassus should be consuls for the next term and that

Caesar's command in Gaul should be lengthened five more years making 10 years in all.

The next summer the Roman arms were successful and the expedition to Britain was all that Caesar could have hoped for.

During the winter the Gallic tribes revolted and massacred one legion and had others surrounded. Caesar hearing of the affair hurried to their release. He did not go to Italy that winter but remained on the ground. He punished the Gallic tribes severely the next summer and for a time they were content to rest in peace.

The next year, however, they rose again under the leadership of Vercingetorix. Caesar collected his army and crossed the Alps while it was still winter and fell upon the insurgents at Avargne. After several battles with Vercingetorix he cornered him at Alesia.

Caesar surrounded Vercingetorix and then was himself surrounded by the other Gauls. They attacked him at once from in front and behind but by a little ingenuity the Gauls were defeated and Vercingetorix was forced to surrender. This was the last battle and the last revolt of the Gauls.

Caesar then busied himself with the reconstruction of the province. His policy was to make the Gauls love their dependence instead of hating it. He succeeded extremely well, for when later nearly every province revolted, the Gauls remained loyal to the man.

We will pass over the rest of Caesar's command in Gaul. Suffice to say that Crassus was killed in the East and Pompey had become the declared enemy of Caesar.

Pompey was given an army ostensibly to carry on the war in the East. When Caesar's term of office was nearly over he demanded to be a candidate for consul while still in Gaul or that if he disbanded his army Pompey be compelled to disband his also. This Pompey refused to do and the Senate ordered Caesar to appear at Rome as a private citizen and answer for his conduct.

He appealed to his army and as a consequence advanced at the head of it into Italy.

This was a declaration of war and the Senate took it as such. With Pompey or their General they left Rome in such haste that they left the money in the treasury.

Caesar advanced and occupied Rome. Pompey and the Senate retreated to Brindisi where

they embarked for Greece. After Pompey and the Senate had left Italy Caesar was the sole master of the peninsula.

The Senate had a large army in Spain and Caesar first undertook to conquer it. This he accomplished at Lerida. The captured army were released. Caesar sent Curio to hold Africa in subjugation but he was defeated by Juba. It was now mid-winter but Caesar resolved to cross to Greece. He had no ships but Pompey had a large fleet that controlled the sea. Caesar went to Brindisi and built transports and conveyed part of his army over to Greece in spite of the vigilance of Bibulus who was in command of the ships of Pompey.

Bibulus, however, kept so close a watch after that, that Antony could not cross and join Caesar for some time. When he did succeed in crossing he was swept by wind and currents on the opposite side of Pompey's army from where Caesar was. Caesar by a quick march joined forces before Pompey had time to think of acting on his advantage.

Caesar then laid siege to Pompey and a few skirmishes took place but to no purpose. Some deserters from Caesar informed Pompey

of a week place in Caesar's lines and Pompey detached him at that place. The defeat would have been complete if Pompey had acted as a good general should.

However, Caesar was able to get his army away and retreated. Pompey followed and the two armies met at Pharsalia. The battle that followed was a fierce conflict but resulted in the rout of Pompey's army and the capture of his camp and stores. A great many of the Senators fell in this battle.

Pompey fled to the sea and embarked with a few of his followers and sailed for Egypt. On his way he applied at several towns for admittance but was refused. When he reached Egypt he was treacherously murdered.

Caesar followed Pompey to Egypt and when he arrived there and was shown Pompey's head he resolved to avenge the murder. He had but one legion and the Egyptians fought so well that at one time he was reduced to great straits and had to swim for his life. Reinforcements came and he conquered the Egyptians and placed Cleopatra on the throne.

Caesar stayed in Egypt to arrange affairs so long that the Senatorial faction

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had time to rally in Africa under the protection of Juba who had defeated Curio.

Caesar next went to Syria where his presence was needed. Pharnaces was the son of Mithridates and had held himself in neutrality toward Pompey and Caesar. After Caesar's victory at Pharsalia he did not think Caesar would interfere if he made war on one of the kings who had aided Pompey. Calpurnius, Caesar's lieutenant in Asia went to intercept Pharnaces. He had but one legion but ordered Pharnaces to fall back within his own frontiers. This he declined to do and Calpurnius attacked him in an intricate position but could do nothing but cut his way to a secure position.

When Caesar reached Asia he was sent a crown of gold by Pharnaces. But this would not satisfy Caesar. He met Pharnaces at Gela and completely conquered him.

After this Caesar went to Rome and restored order there. Then he sailed for Africa to meet the Senatorial army which had rallied there. Before he sailed for Africa a mutiny occurred in his army and the 10th. legion demanded their pay and discharge. Caesar quelled the mutiny simply by his presence.

He landed in Africa and several skirmishes took place. He could not for some time force them into an engagement but at last his chance came. Scipio who commanded the Senatorial army, had a division of his army on a peninsula. Caesar occupied the neck of the peninsula and his ships blockaded it by sea.

Scipio and Juba then came down out of the hills and the battle of Thapsus followed in which Scipio and the most of his army was killed.

Caesar had shown a policy of uniform kindness but his enemies had murdered every one of his friends they could get their hands on. The engagement of Thapsus is hardly deserving of the name battle because Caesar's soldiers were savage at the way the enemy had treated the captured soldiers and Caesar could not prevent their killing every man that came in their power.

Cato who was in command of a small force at Utica killed himself after this battle. Afranius and Sulla Jr. were captured after the battle and put to death. King Juba and Petreus died on each others swords.

Caesar returned to Rome and was named dictator. He instituted several needed reforms among which were the revision of the calendar and a revision of the criminal laws.

The last effort of the Senatorial party was made in Spain by Labienus and the young Pompey. Caesar went to Spain and the last battle of the war was fought on the plains of Munda. The two armies were of nearly equal strength, and were both of Roman soldiers equally well drilled and determined to fight to the last. The scale of fortune turned in favor of Caesar when Labienus seemed to retreat. His men gave way and divided into two parts. One made its way to Cordova and the other threw itself into the millage of Munda.

Munda was besieged and the poor wretches sallied out but were driven back and forced to surrender.

After this Caesar stormed the walls of Cordova and the soldiers murdered every person in the city and plundered and burned it. Thus ended the long and bloody war between the Senate and Caesar.

After this battle the bureaucracy pretended to submit willingly. They were only waiting for a chance to avenge themselves and when this chance came they were not long in taking advantage of it. Caesar was murdered by the ones to whom he had shown the most mercy.

Some historians say Caesar always aimed at a monarchy and that he never once turned aside from his purpose. In this I think they wrong him and at the same time give him credit for superhuman qualities of insight and foresight.

He used his insight to read the character of the people so he could employ those that were suited to his purpose. He certainly must have been gifted with foresight if he aimed at a monarchy when he took the Government of Gaul. That was an undertaking fraught with the gravest perils.

Do let us not accuse a great soul of mean principles and at the same time ascribe to it superhuman powers. Let us think of Caesar as an honest politician who had his principles and who stood by them through wars of words and wars of swords.

As to his military capacities he undoubtedly was the greatest of the Roman generals. He was brave, quick to see a change and quick to take advantage of it.

He was ingenious as seen in his war with Vercingetorix. He had confidence in his own abilities and confidence in his soldiers. He had a possessing manner which made staunch friends every where he went.

Yes I think Napoleon is nearly correct when he says, "Caesar was the greatest Roman general and perhaps the greatest general that ever lived."