

***JULIUS  
CAESAR***

A classical oil painting of Julius Caesar, showing him from the chest up. He is wearing a laurel wreath and a white toga draped over a red garment. His expression is serious and contemplative.

***THE CIVIL  
WAR***

**Julius Caesar**

# **The Civil War**

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# Table of Contents

[Book 1](#)

[Book 2](#)

[Book 3](#)

I will now say nothing concerning the absurd opinion of those who assert that the following *Commentaries on the Civil War* were not written by Caesar himself. Even without the authority of Suetonius, the diction itself would be sufficient to convince the most skeptical that Caesar and no other was the author. I am of the opinion of those who think that the beginning of these Commentaries is lost. For I can not be convinced that Caesar commenced so abruptly; and History itself gives sufficient evidence that many circumstances require to be previously stated. For which reason we thought that it would be well worth our attention to compile from Plutarch, Appian, and Dion, a narrative of such facts as seemed necessary to fill up the chasm; these facts are as follows: "When Caesar, after reducing all Transalpine Gaul, had passed into Cisalpine Gaul, he determined for many reasons to send ambassadors to Rome to request for him the consulate, and a prolongation of the command of his province. Pompey, who was estranged from Caesar, although he was not as yet at open enmity with him, determined neither to aid him by his influence nor openly oppose him on this occasion. But the consuls Lentulus and Marcellus, who had previously been on unfriendly terms with Caesar, resolved to use all means in their power to prevent him from gaining his object. Marcellus in particular did not hesitate to offer Caesar other insults. Caesar had lately planned the colony of Novumcomum in Gaul: Marcellus, not content with taking from it the right of citizenship, ordered the principal man of the colony to be arrested and scourged at Rome, and sent him to make his complaints to Caesar: an insult of this description had never before been offered to a Roman citizen. While these transactions are taking place, Caius Curio, tribune of the commons, comes to Caesar in his province. Curio had made many and energetic struggles, in behalf of the republic and Caesar's cause: at length when he

perceived that all his efforts were vain, he fled through fear of his adversaries, and informed Caesar of all the transactions that had taken place, and of the efforts made by his enemies to crush him. Caesar received Curio with great kindness, as he was a man of the highest rank, and had great claims on himself and the republic, and thanked him warmly for his numerous personal favors. But Curio, as war was being openly prepared against Caesar, advised him to concentrate his troops, and rescue the republic now oppressed by a few daring men. Caesar, although he was not ignorant of the real state of affairs, was however of opinion that particular regard should be paid to the tranquillity of the republic, lest any one should suppose that he was the originator of the war. Therefore, through his friends, he made this one request, that two legions, and the province of Cisalpine Gaul, and Illyricum, should be left him. All these acts were performed by Caesar, with the hope that his enemies might be induced by the justice of his demands, to preserve the peace of the republic. Even Pompey himself did not dare to oppose them. But when Caesar could not obtain his request from the consuls, he wrote to the senate a letter, in which he briefly stated his exploits and public services, and entreated that he should not be deprived of the favor of the people, who had ordered, that he, although absent, should be considered a candidate at the next elections; and he stated also that he would disband his army, if the senate and people of Rome would pass a resolution to that effect, provided that Pompey would do the same. That, as long as the latter should retain the command of his army, no just reason could exist that he (Caesar) should disband his troops and expose himself to the insults of his enemies. He intrusted this letter to Curio to bear to its destination; the latter traveled one hundred and sixty miles with incredible dispatch, and reached the city in three days' time, before the beginning of January, and before the consuls could pass any decree concerning Caesar's

command. Curio, after accomplishing his journey, kept the letter, and did not give it up, until there was a crowded meeting of the senate, and the tribunes of the commons were present; for he was afraid, lest, if he gave it up previously, the consuls should suppress it.

# Book 1

## Table of Contents

### 1

When Caesar's letter was delivered to the consuls, they were with great difficulty, and a hard struggle of the tribunes, prevailed on to suffer it to be read in the senate; but the tribunes could not prevail, that any question should be put to the senate on the subject of the letter. The consuls put the question on the regulation of the state. Lucius Lentulus the consul promises that he will not fail the senate and republic, "if they declared their sentiments boldly and resolutely, but if they turned their regard to Caesar, and courted his favor, as they did on former occasions, he would adopt a plan for himself, and not submit to the authority of the senate: that he too had a means of regaining Caesar's favor and friendship." Scipio spoke to the same purport, "that it was Pompey's intention not to abandon the republic, if the senate would support him; but if they should hesitate and act without energy, they would in vain implore his aid, if they should require it hereafter."

### 2

This speech of Scipio's, as the senate was convened in the city, and Pompey was near at hand, seemed to have fallen from the lips of Pompey himself. Some delivered their sentiments with more moderation, as Marcellus first, who in the beginning of his speech, said, "that the question ought not to be put to the senate on this matter, till levies were made throughout all Italy, and armies raised under whose protection the senate might freely and safely pass such resolutions as they thought proper;" as Marcus Calidius

afterward, who was of opinion, "that Pompey should set out for his province, that there might be no cause for arms; that Caesar was naturally apprehensive as two legions were forced from him, that Pompey was retaining those troops, and keeping them near the city to do him injury:" as Marcus Rufus, who followed Calidius almost word for word. They were all harshly rebuked by Lentulus, who peremptorily refused to propose Calidius's motion. Marcellus, overawed by his reproofs, retracted his opinion. Thus most of the senate, intimidated by the expressions of the consul, by the fears of a present army, and the threats of Pompey's friends, unwillingly and reluctantly adopted Scipio's opinion, that Caesar should disband his army by a certain day, and should he not do so, he should be considered as acting against the state. Marcus Antonius, and Quintus Cassius, tribunes of the people, interposed. The question was immediately put on their interposition. Violent opinions were expressed; whoever spoke with the greatest acrimony and cruelty was most highly commended by Caesar's enemies.

### 3

The senate having broken up in the evening, all who belonged to that order were summoned by Pompey. He applauded the forward, and secured their votes for the next day; the more moderate he reproved and excited against Caesar. Many veterans, from all parts, who had served in Pompey's armies, were invited to his standard by the hopes of rewards and promotions. Several officers belonging to the two legions, which had been delivered up by Caesar, were sent for. The city and the *comitium* were crowded with tribunes, centurions, and veterans. All the consul's friends, all Pompey's connections, all those who bore any ancient enmity to Caesar, were forced into the senate house. By their concourse and declarations the timid were awed, the irresolute confirmed, and the greater part deprived of the



power of speaking their sentiments with freedom. Lucius Piso, the censor, offered to go to Caesar: as did likewise Lucius Roscius, the praetor, to inform him of these affairs, and require only six days' time to finish the business. Opinions were expressed by some to the effect that commissioners should be sent to Caesar to acquaint him with the senate's pleasure.

#### 4

All these proposals were rejected, and opposition made to them all, in the speeches of the consul, Scipio, and Cato. An old grudge against Caesar and chagrin at a defeat actuated Cato. Lentulus was wrought upon by the magnitude of his debts, and the hopes of having the government of an army and provinces, and by the presents which he expected from such princes as should receive the title of friends of the Roman people, and boasted among his friends, that he would be a second Sulla, to whom the supreme authority should return. Similar hopes of a province and armies, which he expected to share with Pompey on account of his connection with him, urged on Scipio; and moreover he was influenced by the fear of being called to trial, and the adulation and an ostentatious display of himself and his friends in power, who at that time had great influence in the republic, and courts of judicature. Pompey himself, incited by Caesar's enemies, because he was unwilling that any person should bear an equal degree of dignity, had wholly alienated himself from Caesar's friendship, and procured a reconciliation with their common enemies; the greatest part of whom he had himself brought upon Caesar during his affinity with him. At the same time, chagrined at the disgrace which he had incurred by converting the two legions from their expedition through Asia and Syria, to augment his own power and authority, he was anxious to bring matters to a war.

## 5

For these reasons every thing was done in a hasty and disorderly manner, and neither was time given to Caesar's relations to inform him of the state of affairs nor liberty to the tribunes of the people to deprecate their own danger, nor even to retain the last privilege, which Sulla had left them, the interposing their authority; but on the seventh day they were obliged to think of their own safety, which the most turbulent tribunes of the people were not accustomed to attend to, nor to fear being called to an account for their actions, till the eighth month. Recourse is had to that extreme and final decree of the senate (which was never resorted to even by daring proposers except when the city was in danger of being set on fire, or when the public safety was despaired of). "That the consuls, praetors, tribunes of the people, and proconsuls in the city, should take care that the state received no injury." These decrees are dated the eighth day before the ides of January; therefore, in the first five days, on which the senate could meet, from the day on which Lentulus entered into his consulate, the two days of election excepted, the severest and most virulent decrees were passed against Caesar's government, and against those most illustrious characters, the tribunes of the people. The latter immediately made their escape from the city, and withdrew to Caesar, who was then at Ravenna, awaiting an answer to his moderate demands; to see if matters could be brought to a peaceful termination by any equitable act on the part of his enemies.

## 6

During the succeeding days the senate is convened outside the city. Pompey repeated the same things which he had declared through Scipio. He applauded the courage and firmness of the senate, acquainted them with his force, and

told them that he had ten legions ready; that he was moreover informed and assured that Caesar's soldiers were disaffected, and that he could not persuade them to defend or even follow him. Motions were made in the senate concerning other matters; that levies should be made through all Italy; that Faustus Sulla should be sent as proprætor into Mauritania; that money should be granted to Pompey from the public treasury. It was also put to the vote that king Juba should be honored with the title of friend and ally. But Marcellus said that he would not allow this motion for the present. Philip, one of the tribunes, stopped the appointment of Sulla; the resolutions respecting the other matters passed. The provinces, two of which were consular, the remainder prætorian, were decreed to private persons; Scipio got Syria, Lucius Domitius Gaul: Philip and Marcellus were omitted, from a private motive, and their lots were not even admitted. To the other provinces prætors were sent, nor was time granted as in former years, to refer to the people on their appointment, nor to make them take the usual oath, and march out of the city in a public manner, robed in the military habit, after offering their vows: a circumstance which had never before happened. Both the consuls leave the city, and private men had lictors in the city and capital, contrary to all precedents of former times. Levies were made throughout Italy, arms demanded, and money exacted from the municipal towns, and violently taken from the temples. All distinctions between things human and divine, are confounded.

## 7

These things being made known to Caesar, he harangued his soldiers; he reminded them "of the wrongs done to him at all times by his enemies, and complained that Pompey had been alienated from him and led astray by them through envy and a malicious opposition to his glory, though

he had always favored and promoted Pompey's honor and dignity. He complained that an innovation had been introduced into the republic, that the intercession of the tribunes, which had been restored a few years before by Sulla, was branded as a crime, and suppressed by force of arms; that Sulla, who had stripped the tribunes of every other power, had, nevertheless, left the privilege of intercession unrestrained; that Pompey, who pretended to restore what they had lost, had taken away the privileges which they formerly had; that whenever the senate decreed, 'that the magistrates should take care that the republic sustained no injury' (by which words and decree the Roman people were obliged to repair to arms), it was only when pernicious laws were proposed; when the tribunes attempted violent measures; when the people seceded, and possessed themselves of the temples and eminences of the city; (and these instances of former times, he showed them were expiated by the fate of Saturninus and the Gracchi): that nothing of this kind was attempted now, nor even thought of: that no law was promulgated, no intrigue with the people going forward, no secession made; he exhorted them to defend from the malice of his enemies the reputation and honor of that general under whose command they had for nine years most successfully supported the state; fought many successful battles, and subdued all Gaul and Germany." The soldiers of the thirteenth legion, which was present (for in the beginning of the disturbances he had called it out, his other legions not having yet arrived), all cry out that they are ready to defend their general, and the tribunes of the commons, from all injuries.

## 8

Having made himself acquainted with the disposition of his soldiers, Caesar set off with that legion to Arminium, and there met the tribunes, who had fled to him for protection;

he called his other legions from winter quarters; and ordered them to follow him. Thither came Lucius Caesar, a young man, whose father was a legate under Caesar. He, after concluding the rest of his speech, and stating for what purpose he had come, told Caesar that he had commands of a private nature for him from Pompey; that Pompey wished to clear himself to Caesar, lest he should impute those actions which he did for the republic, to a design of affronting him; that he had ever preferred the interest of the state to his own private connections; that Caesar, too, for his own honor, ought to sacrifice his desires and resentment to the public good, and not vent his anger so violently against his enemies, lest in his hopes of injuring them, he should injure the republic. He spoke a few words to the same purport from himself, in addition to Pompey's apology. Roscius, the praetor, conferred with Caesar almost in the same words, and on the same subject, and declared that Pompey had empowered him to do so.

## 9

Though these things seemed to have no tendency toward redressing his injuries, yet having got proper persons by whom he could communicate his wishes to Pompey; he required of them both, that, as they had conveyed Pompey's demands to him, they should not refuse to convey his demands to Pompey; if by so little trouble they could terminate a great dispute, and liberate all Italy from her fears. "That the honor of the republic had ever been his first object, and dearer to him than life; that he was chagrined, that the favor of the Roman people was wrested from him by the injurious reports of his enemies; that he was deprived of a half-year's command, and dragged back to the city, though the people had ordered that regard should be paid to his suit for the consulate at the next election, though he was not present; that, however, he had patiently submitted

to this loss of honor, for the sake of the republic; that when he wrote letters to the senate, requiring that all persons should resign the command of their armies, he did not obtain even that request; that levies were made throughout Italy; that the two legions which had been taken from him, under the pretense of the Parthian war, were kept at home, and that the state was in arms. To what did all these things tend, unless to his ruin? But, nevertheless, he was ready to condescend to any terms, and to endure every thing for the sake of the republic. Let Pompey go to his own province; let them both disband their armies; let all persons in Italy lay down their arms; let all fears be removed from the city; let free elections, and the whole republic be resigned to the direction of the senate and Roman people. That these things might be the more easily performed, and conditions secured and confirmed by oath, either let Pompey come to Caesar, or allow Caesar to go to him; it might be that all their disputes would be settled by an interview."

## **10**

Roscius and Lucius Caesar, having received this message, went to Capua, where they met the consuls and Pompey, and declared to them Caesar's terms. Having deliberated on the matter, they replied, and sent written proposals to him by the same persons, the purport of which was, that Caesar should return into Gaul, leave Ariminum, and disband his army: if he complied with this, that Pompey would go to Spain. In the mean time, until security was given that Caesar would perform his promises, that the consuls and Pompey would not give over their levies.

## **11**

It was not an equitable proposal, to require that Caesar should quit Ariminum and return to his province; but that he

(Pompey) should himself retain his province and the legions that belonged to another, and desire that Caesar's army should be disbanded, while he himself was making new levies: and that he should merely promise to go to his province, without naming the day on which he would set out; so that if he should not set out till after Caesar's consulate expired, yet he would not appear bound by any religious scruples about asserting a falsehood. But his not granting time for a conference, nor promising to set out to meet him, made the expectation of peace appear very hopeless. Caesar, therefore, sent Marcus Antonius, with five cohorts from Ariminum to Arretium; he himself staid at Ariminum with two legions, with the intention of raising levies there. He secured Pisaurus, Fanum, and Ancona, with a cohort each.

## 12

In the mean time, being informed that Thermus the praetor was in possession of Iguvium, with five cohorts, and was fortifying the town, but that the affections of all the inhabitants were very well inclined toward himself, he detached Curio with three cohorts, which he had at Ariminum and Pisaurus. Upon notice of his approach, Thermus, distrusting the affections of the townsmen, drew his cohorts out of it and made his escape; his soldiers deserted him on the road, and returned home. Curio recovered Iguvium, with the cheerful concurrence of all the inhabitants. Caesar, having received an account of this, and relying on the affections of the municipal towns, drafted all the cohorts of the thirteenth legion from the garrison, and set out for Auximum, a town into which Attius had brought his cohorts, and of which he had taken possession, and from which he had sent senators round about the country of Picenum, to raise new levies.

## 13

Upon news of Caesar's approach, the senate of Auximum went in a body to Attius Varus; and told him that it was not a subject for them to determine upon: yet neither they, nor the rest of the freemen would suffer Gaius Caesar, a general, who had merited so well of the republic, after performing such great achievements, to be excluded from their town and walls; wherefore he ought to pay some regard to the opinion of posterity, and his own danger. Alarmed at this declaration, Attius Varus drew out of the town the garrison which he had introduced, and fled. A fear of Caesar's front rank having pursued him, obliged him to halt, and when the battle began, Varus is deserted by his troops: some of them disperse to their homes, the rest come over to Caesar; and along with them, Lucius Pupius, the chief centurion, is taken prisoner and brought to Caesar. He had held the same rank before in Gnaeus Pompey's army. But Caesar applauded the soldiers of Attius, set Pupius at liberty, returned thanks to the people of Auximum, and promised to be grateful for their conduct.

## 14

Intelligence of this being brought to Rome, so great a panic spread on a sudden that when Lentulus, the consul, came to open the treasury, to deliver money to Pompey by the senate's decree, immediately on opening the hallowed door he fled from the city. For it was falsely rumored that Caesar was approaching, and that his cavalry were already at the gates. Marcellus, his colleague, followed him, and so did most of the magistrates. Gnaeus Pompey had left the city the day before, and was on his march to those legions which he had received from Caesar, and had disposed in winter quarters in Apulia. The levies were stopped within the city. No place on this side of Capua was thought secure. At



Capua they first began to take courage and to rally, and determined to raise levies in the colonies, which had been sent thither by the Julian law: and Lentulus brought into the public market place the gladiators which Caesar maintained there for the entertainment of the people, and confirmed them in their liberty, and gave them horses and ordered them to attend him; but afterward, being warned by his friends that this action was censured by the judgment of all, he distributed them among the slaves of the district of Campania, to keep guard there.

## 15

Caesar, having moved forward from Auximum, traversed the whole country of Picenum. All the governors in these countries most cheerfully received him, and aided his army with every necessary. Embassadors came to him even from Cingulum, a town which Labienus had laid out and built at his own expense, and offered most earnestly to comply with his orders. He demanded soldiers: they sent them. In the mean time, the twelfth legion came to join Caesar; with these two he marched to Asculum, the chief town of Picenum. Lentulus Spinther occupied that town with ten cohorts; but, on being informed of Caesar's approach, he fled from the town, and, in attempting to bring off his cohorts with him, was deserted by a great part of his men. Being left on the road with a small number, he fell in with Vibullius Rufus, who was sent by Pompey into Picenum to confirm the people in their allegiance. Vibullius, being informed by him of the transactions in Picenum, takes his soldiers from him and dismisses him. He collects, likewise, from the neighboring countries, as many cohorts as he can from Pompey's new levies. Among them he meets with Ulcilles Hirrus fleeing from Camernium, with six cohorts, which he had in the garrison there; by a junction with which he made up thirteen cohorts. With them he marched by