

## THE LITERARY GENERAL\*

By A. J. DUNSTON

I HAVE chosen for my subject tonight "The Literary General". History has known many soldiers who have believed the pen of retirement to be sharper than the sword of active service, and have accordingly written their memoirs to celebrate their successes and to exculpate their failures. It has known few, however, whose literary activity has been so versatile and so much a part of their whole lives. Having honoured me with the Chair of Latin within this University, you will have realized that it is to Caius Julius Caesar that I refer.

It seemed in many ways an appropriate subject, for even in a gathering of those who are not primarily students of the classics there can be few who have not already been introduced to Caesar. One of the most important political figures of the last century of the Roman Republic will be known to all who have studied Ancient History, and the *Commentaries on the Gallic War* having remained for over a century a work as popular with the directors of school syllabuses as it is often unpopular with pupils, few who have studied Latin, if only for a year or two at school, will be unacquainted with a portion of the writings of one of Rome's greatest soldiers and strategists. But in few cases, I suspect, do such persons turn back in after life to Caesar, to read and enjoy his work as literature: rarely does the acquaintance ripen into friendship. Professional soldiers and strategists of all ages, and not least those of our own generation, have made intensive study of, and learned invaluable lessons from, the details of his campaigns. Students of the history of Rome have studied his importance as a statesman in her political history: they have directed endless and minute enquiry into the military, topographical and chronological questions connected with his legislation and his campaigns—for instance, the exact limits of the legal term of his Gallic command has a lengthy bibliography of its own—they have examined critically his extant writings to evaluate them as historical evidence. His place in Roman literature has not been examined either so critically or so fully. So my object tonight is first to show how a consideration of the fragments of his lost works reveals a versatility of literary interests which, in combination with his other and more familiar activities in the legal, military and political history of Rome, shows him to have been a man whose talent would have been remarkable in any age. Secondly, to show in a re-valuation of his extant work the influence of his varied literary interest, and, above all, of his stylistic beliefs. Finally, briefly

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to sum up Caesar's literary importance. I shall take, therefore, as a background text against which to speak, the judgment of a German literary historian, W. S. Teuffel :

“ The very qualities which made Caesar the ruler of Rome were not likely to make him a brilliant writer. Handling his language, as he did, with a complete mastery both in speaking and writing, he still used it only as a means of attaining definite political aims, and both his subject and his style were controlled by these aims and *by the unimaginative cast of his mind.*”

The extant works of Caesar are Books I-VII of the *Commentarii de bello Gallico* and the three books of the *Commentarii de bello civili*. After his death, his nearest friends thought it incumbent upon themselves to describe, or to obtain accounts of, those campaigns which Caesar had not narrated himself. So the story of the last year of the Gallic campaigns is told, in what we now call *de bello Gallico*, Book VIII, by Aulus Hirtius, who had served under Caesar since 54 B.C. Caesar's account of the civil war stops short at the commencement of the Alexandrian campaign of 48 B.C. : it was completed by the Books on the Alexandrian, African and Spanish wars. The authorship of these three books is uncertain ; the *Alexandrian War* may well have been written by Hirtius ; the *African War* was written by an author whose literary ability, though considerable, falls a little short of that of Hirtius. The *Spanish War*, on the other hand, must, as Macaulay judged, “ have been written by some sturdy old centurion who fought better than he composed ”. The text is in many places hopelessly corrupt, there are many *lacunae*, or gaps, which cannot now be filled. But this disfiguration cannot conceal the fact that its style is that of the *sermo cotidianus*—the language of everyday speech—and that its author was a man utterly lacking a sense of historical perspective. It may well represent material prepared by a subordinate officer as a basis on which a more literary and historically minded senior, who in the event was, for some reason, prevented from this undertaking, could have constructed a more competent account. But with all its faults, the *Bellum Hispaniense* is an interesting work, and we should be grateful for the trick of fate that has preserved it for us. I shall refer to it later as an example of how the *commentarius* style could be debased.

Turning to Caesar's lost works, I shall consider first his oratory. None of Caesar's political or legal orations are extant, but we can judge something of their character from the few speeches in his Commentaries, and above all, from Roman criticism. They must have been at once simple and pure in language, concise, clearly and closely logical, and very effective. He was, in short, an Atticist : somewhat severer in his Atticism than Cicero, but, with Cicero, in marked contrast with Hortensius, their older contemporary, Cicero's forensic rival, the Latin representative of the florid Asian style. Quintilian was later to remark<sup>1</sup> that had Caesar been able to devote more time to oratory, only Cicero himself could have been classed with

<sup>1</sup> *Institutio Oratoria*, X, 1, 114. All quotations of Latin authors are, unless otherwise stated, from the Loeb translation.

him. In the Brutus,<sup>2</sup> in which his principles of the theory and practice of Roman oratory, laid down some years earlier in the *De Oratore*, find an historical and practical application, Cicero has this to say of Caesar. Atticus is speaking :

“ My own judgment of Caesar—and I have more than once heard it confirmed by the competent judgment of Cicero here—is that of all our orators he is the *purest user of the Latin tongue*.” *Illum omnium fere oratorum latine loqui elegantissime*. The Latin word *elegantia* means a fastidious selectivity in vocabulary of classicism. “ While he has that distinction by family inheritance, yet he has sought to bring to perfection that merit of correct speech by *diligent and enthusiastic studies of a recondite and esoteric kind*. And more than that, in the midst of the most absorbing activities he wrote and dedicated to you, Cicero, his careful treatise on the principles of correct Latinity, and prefaced his treatment with the statement that the *choice of words was the foundation of eloquence*. And upon you, who prefer to have me rather than yourself speak about Caesar, he bestowed praise of a unique kind : for after addressing you by name in his dedication, he uses these words : ‘ And if, to the task of giving brilliant and oratorical expression to their thought, some have devoted unremitting study and practice—wherein we must recognize that you, as almost the pioneer and inventor of eloquence, have deserved well of the name and prestige of Rome—yet are we therefore to look upon the *mastery of the easy and familiar speech of daily life as a thing that now may be neglected?* ’ ”

Atticus goes on to say that the previous generation excelled in purity of tongue, but that degeneration had set in with the lapse of time. “ Caesar, however, by invoking rational theory strives to correct distorted and corrupt usage by restoring usage pure and uncorrupted. Thus, by joining to this careful selection of Latin words—a selection incumbent on every true offspring of Roman blood whether orator or not—the characteristic embellishments of oratorical style, he produces an effect as of placing a well-painted picture in a good light. Having this peculiar merit of a choice vocabulary in addition to the qualities common to other orators, I do not see to whom he should give place. He is master of an eloquence, which is brilliant and with no suggestion of routine.”

In the earlier part of that quotation, Cicero remarks that Caesar’s zeal for pure Latinity is in part due to family practice and tradition—*domestica consuetudo*. It is not hard to find evidence of the influences which moulded the young Caesar. His mother, Aurelia, along with Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi, and Atia the mother of Augustus, is praised by the author of the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*<sup>3</sup> for having raised her son, “ in her own lap, at her own knee, and not in the chamber of some hireling nurse, in the rigorous system of the older Republic which aimed that the natural disposition of every child, while still sound at the core and untainted, not warped as yet by any vicious tendencies, might at once lay hold with heart and soul on virtuous accomplishments, and whether its bent was towards the army, or the law, or the

<sup>2</sup> §252 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Ch. XXVIII.

pursuit of eloquence, might make that its sole aim or its all-absorbing interest."<sup>4</sup> A similar discrimination chose as domestic tutor for him M. Antonius Gniphō, who later established a school of rhetoric at Rome to which even Cicero in his middle life would go after his daily labours in the forum were over. Suetonius, in his *Life of Caesar*,<sup>5</sup> tells us further that from an early age Caesar modelled his oratory on that of his uncle, C. Julius Caesar Strabo. Caesar Strabo was famous for his wit, urbanity, i.e. idiomatic purity, charm of speech and for a conversational style more effective than the rhetorical vehemence of other orators. He was also a poet of sufficient merit to be a member of the *collegium poetarum*—the poets' guild, and the fourth century grammarian Victorinus attributes to him innovations in pronunciation and orthography which seem to suggest he was the author of grammatical treatises. His step-brother was Q. Lutatius Catulus, who was in close connection with the Scipionic Circle and is frequently praised by Cicero as the most eminent purist of his day. With such a family tradition, and with such influences moulding his development, it is easy to see how Julius Caesar was equipped to take a foremost place among the orators of his day.

Caesar was, then, in his oratory, a follower of the Atticist rather than the Asianist school. His composition of the *De Analogia*, a work which is often falsely referred to as a grammar instead of, correctly, a grammatical treatise, shows him to have participated in another literary controversy.

The Analogist-Anomalist controversy had existed from the earliest days in which interest had begun to be shown in linguistic phenomena. The earliest champions of Analogy, which sought to define rules for conjugation, declension and inflexion, were the Alexandrian grammarians, especially Aristophanes of Byzantium; and of Anomaly, which denied the possibility of this, Chrysippus, the Pillar of the Stoic Porch, and the grammarians of the Pergamene school, notably Crates of Mallos. Though the controversy continued until as late as the second century A.D., when we find Sextus Empiricus as a spirited champion of the Anomalists, it was perhaps rather barren, though as has often been remarked, it had one positive result in the interest which it stimulated in grammatical studies. Caesar doubtless learned the Alexandrian defence of Analogy from his tutor Gniphō, who had been educated at Alexandria before coming to Rome, where he later wrote a treatise *de Latino sermone*.

As Socrates in the discussion of the nature of language in the *Cratylus* took a mean position between the standpoints of Cratylus and Hermogenes, so in the Analogist-Anomalist controversy the majority of Roman writers—Varro, Caesar, Cicero, Quintilian—inclined to a compromise view, and we find both Caesar and Cicero agreeing in allowing the claims of Analogy, but as modified by those of popular usage—*consuetudo*. So Cicero, though knowing that in early Latin there was no aspirate in words like *triumphus*, *Cethegus*, followed popular usage in restoring it, e.g. *triumphus*, *Cethegus*. The well-known fragment of the *De Analogia* of Caesar preserved by Gellius warns that unusual words must be avoided like rocks at sea . . .

<sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.*, Peterson's translation.

<sup>5</sup> Ch. 55.

*ut tanquam scopulum sic fugias inauditum atque insolens uerbum.* But we ought to remember that Priscian credits Caesar with the use of a present participle of the verb "to be", *ens*, on the analogy of *possum*, *potens*.

There would seem to have been a large measure of agreement between Cicero and Caesar in their attitude to the Analogist-Anomalist controversy. The exact nature of Caesar's treatise cannot be with certainty discovered from the extant fragments. The work is quoted extensively by the grammarians and scholars of the early centuries of the Christian era from Quintilian to Cassiodorus. Quite a number of these references are second-hand, mainly in references from the Elder Pliny, doubtless from his work *de dubio sermone*, and often the same fragment is quoted and re-quoted according to each grammarian's proneness to reproduce the arguments of his predecessors. Nevertheless, the numerous other fragments make it seem certain that the work survived on its own merits for some considerable time.

In the first issue of *Classical Philology*,<sup>6</sup> Professor Hendrickson argues that the *De Analogia* was not a systematic treatise, but a controversial work inspired by, and in answer to, certain passages of the *De Oratore* in which Cicero's views on the importance of and the means of attaining a pure Latinity are expounded. The very nature of the fragments, which reveal a wide discussion of the technicalities of declension and inflexion, seems to argue strongly against the first part of this conclusion. But that it was controversial in spirit is very probable, though the main written arguments may have been contained in the dedication to Cicero and in the introduction. The core of these may well be preserved in the fragment quoted by Cicero himself. "Are we therefore to look upon the mastery of the easy and familiar speech of daily life as a thing that may now be neglected? . . ." In other words, Cicero and Caesar differed in their conceptions of the value of a pure *Latinitas*: Cicero thinking it of secondary importance compared with the superstructure which rhetorical training could build upon it, Caesar giving rhetorical embellishment a minor place compared with the study and development of a simple style based on the *sermo cotidianus* in its purest form.

It is remarkable in itself to learn of such a treatise coming from the pen of one who was primarily a statesman and soldier: it becomes more so when we investigate the circumstances of its composition. We have already heard Cicero relating how it was composed "in the midst of absorbing activities",<sup>7</sup> and will recognize Fronto's "*inter tela uolantia et inter classicas et tubas*"<sup>8</sup> ("amid flying weapons and the din of military trumpets") as an over-imaginative and picturesque expansion. Suetonius<sup>9</sup> may be nearer the truth in recording that it was composed while Caesar was crossing the Alps after holding the winter assizes in Nearer Gaul. He adds that Caesar similarly composed a poem, *Iter (My Journey)*, on his way to Spain in 46 B.C. We can but lament the loss of this poem, for the comparison with Namatian's *De*

<sup>6</sup> 1906.

<sup>7</sup> *Brutus*, §253.

<sup>8</sup> P. 221.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, Ch. 56.

*reditu suo* and Ausonius's *Mosella* would doubtless have been very instructive. When Plutarch quotes C. Oppius, one of Caesar's close friends, as authority for the statement that Caesar would even dictate from horseback, he is perhaps over-credulous: his earlier statement that Caesar used to travel between cities, garrisons and camps in a litter with a slave at his side taking dictation is more plausible.

Caesar's literary and intellectual versatility is further attested by his other lost works, and we shall note among these two further instances of good-natured controversy with Cicero, the first of which may have its origin in his stylistic beliefs.

Suetonius mentioned the poem *My Journey*. The younger Pliny<sup>10</sup> justifies the inference that Caesar wrote poems and epigrams. Undiscriminating editors long attributed to him a poem on a vegetable, on the authority of a passage in the *Natural History* of the elder Pliny,<sup>11</sup> "*olus quoque silvestre trium foliorum Divi Iulii carminibus praecipue iocisque militaribus celebratum*" ("there is too a kind or wild cabbage which has three leaves which has been made famous especially by the poems of Julius Caesar and soldiers' jokes"). But *trium foliorum* though at first sight plausible, is an obvious corruption for "*triumpho*", and the passage thus emended reads "a kind of wild cabbage which has been made famous especially by the soldiers' jokes during Caesar's triumphal procession"—i.e., when in the ribald military songs usual on such occasions his men chided Caesar with having fed them on wild charnock at the siege of Dyrrachium. Caesar's poem on the wild cabbage seems then to be a myth. There is, however, no reason for doubting Suetonius's<sup>12</sup> testimony that he wrote an encomium of Hercules and a tragedy, the *Oedipus*. He hints, in fact, that all Caesar's poetry was a tragedy, for he adds that Augustus later forbade their publication. A speaker in the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*<sup>13</sup> gives a similar impression. "Caesar and Brutus wrote poems, and copies of them were sent to libraries. Their poetry was not better than that of Cicero, but luckier in that fewer people knew about it!" Today we can form a very different opinion of the importance or merits of Cicero's poetry from the extant fragments. All that we have of Caesar's verse is the fragment preserved in the Suetonian *Life of Terence*.<sup>14</sup> Suetonius first records a similar fragment of Cicero. It begins: "*Tu quoque qui solus lecto sermone, Terenti, . . .*" ("You too, Terence, who alone reclothe Menander in choice speech, and rendering him into the Latin tongue, present him with quiet utterance on our public stage, speaking with a certain graciousness and with sweetness in every word.")

This Ciceronian fragment is from the *Ἀέτιμων*, a volume of miscellaneous content, and it is a reasonable inference from the opening words that these verses come from a section which contained epigrams on famous writers. Suetonius, then, records Caesar's verses "*Tu quoque, tu in summis, o dimidiate Menander*" ("You, too, o halved-Menander, are ranked among the greatest, and rightly so, thou lover of pure language. But would that power had been added to your verses that your

<sup>10</sup> *Epistulae*, V, 3, 5.

<sup>11</sup> XIX, 144.

<sup>12</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Ch. 21.

<sup>14</sup> §V.

excellence in comedy might have equalled that of the Greeks, and that you might have escaped criticism for this flaw.") We know from a letter of Cicero,<sup>15</sup> written to his brother Quintus, who was at that time serving with Caesar in Gaul, that Cicero used to send his own verses to Caesar for frank criticism. The similarity of theme in the fragments I have quoted, and especially the identical opening words lead me to suspect that in this fragment of Caesar we have verses written by way of reply to those of Cicero. "You praise his diction, Cicero, though I would prefer to call it 'pure' rather than 'choice', and you rightly mention his debt to Menander. But whereas you further praise his graciousness and sweetness of style, my attraction to him for his fastidious purity does not blind my realization of the weakness and flaccidity of his drama."

Caesar's *Anticato*, in two books, was without question intended as a political pamphlet, and to be an answer to Cicero's eulogy. The work was by no means unique. Metellus Scipio had composed what Plutarch calls a βίβλιον βλασφημίας even before Cato died, and the famous death at Utica gave rise to a whole series of tracts. Cicero's eulogy provoked an immediate reaction from Caesar, and a letter of Cicero<sup>16</sup> tells how Hirtius was ordered to write a letter in which vituperation of Cato was combined with flattery of Cicero. The *Anticatones* followed this up: they were extremely bitter, as Plutarch<sup>17</sup> records, and as Cicero himself admits in the *Topica*<sup>18</sup> written when Caesar himself was safely dead, though his immediate reaction had been to express himself very favourably to Caesar on the work.<sup>19</sup> If Caesar thought Cicero had gone too far, Brutus thought he had not gone far enough, and remedied the defect with a composition of his own. The Republicans Fadius Gallus and Munatius Rufus added their own panegyrics too. Between them they seem to have silenced the opposition, for we hear of no further tracts until those of Augustus, and, in the time of Nero, of Thræsea Paetus.

Finally, we have references to a work not mentioned by Suetonius, but attested by Macrobius<sup>20</sup> and Pliny the elder,<sup>21</sup> a *liber de astris* (a work on astronomy). This is quite credible. Caesar's revision of the calendar by the drastic measure of a year of 445 days, "the last year of the confusion", as Macrobius calls it, followed by the adaptation of the Egyptian solar calendar to Roman needs, was a much-needed reform and one which lasted until 1582. There is no need to suppose that the bulk of this reform was the work of others to which Caesar but added his name, and I hope later to illustrate further his scientific interests from the *Gallic War*. And if Caesar had the knowledge which enabled him to reform the calendar, he could well write on astronomy. It is noticeable that the work was original—a scholiast on Lucan<sup>22</sup> compares it with that of Eudoxus—and that he did not attempt another translation

<sup>15</sup> *Ad Quintum fratrem*, II, xvi.

<sup>16</sup> *Ad Atticum*, XII, 40, 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Life of Caesar*, 54.

<sup>18</sup> *Topica*, 94.

<sup>19</sup> *Ad Att.* XIII, 50, 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Saturnalia*, I, 16, 39.

<sup>21</sup> *Natura Historia*, XVIII *passim*.

of Aratus, that work having been translated twice already and being, in view of its inexplicable popularity, destined to see two more versions in the next century.

From the evidence of Caesar's lost works we see him as a holder of strong stylistic views, and as a man of great versatility: if we turn to the *Gallic War* these points are equally apparent. Limited by time, I have confined my consideration to the better known of Caesar's extant works, and omit discussion of how and when the *Gallic War* was composed. But I believe it to be obvious from the unity and consistency of the work as a whole that at the least it received final revision as a whole by Caesar at one particular time.

In a passage of the *Brutus*<sup>23</sup> which comes just after those already quoted, Cicero praises the *Commentaries*: "Admirable indeed! They are like nude figures, straight and beautiful; stripped of all ornament of style as if they had laid aside a garment. His aim was to furnish others with material for writing history, and perhaps he has succeeded in gratifying the inept, who may wish to apply their curling-irons to his material: but men of sound judgment he has deterred from writing, since in history there is nothing more pleasing than brevity clear and correct."

The word *commentarius* was used properly of notes, and of the official chancery language. The *Commentarii Pontificum* were compilations in note form of rulings of the priestly colleges, and, similarly, the *Commentarii Magistratum*, records of the transactions of magistrates. It is used too of notes for speeches. Tiro published a number of Cicero's speech-notes. Like the letters, these were probably never intended for publication. On the other hand, the published notes of his younger contemporary, Sulpicius Rufus, may well have been written up for publication. Quintilian suspected, at any rate, that they had been written with an eye to posterity. And so indeed, later, Gaius, in the second century A.D., subtitled the four books of his *Institutiones* 'Commentarii', as if to disclaim any pretence to polished literary style. We know, too, of much autobiographical activity at Rome in the generation before that of Caesar. Q. Lutatius Catulus, whom I have already mentioned, wrote a *liber de consulatu et de rebus gestis suis*, which was, not surprisingly from such a purist, *conscriptum molli et Xenophonteo genere sermonis*. Rufus, too, and Aemilius Scaurus published similar works. But we first hear of the *commentarius* style employed in this connection by Sulla, and references to his twenty-two books of autobiography call them *Commentarii rerum gestarum*. Caesar may then not have been original either in his choice of the *commentarius* style or his elevation of it to a conscious literary genre; his perfection, however, was unrivalled.

Hirtius has this to say of the *Commentaries* in the preface to Book VIII of the *Gallic War*:

"It is universally agreed that nothing was ever so elaborately finished by others that is not surpassed by the refinement of these Commentaries. They have been published that historians may not lack knowledge of those great achievements;

<sup>22</sup> Lucan, X, 185.

<sup>23</sup> §262.



and so strong is the unanimous verdict of approval as to make it appear that historians have been robbed of an opportunity rather than enriched with one. Yet herein is our own admiration greater than all other men's; the world knows how excellently, how faultlessly, but *we* know also how easily, how speedily he completed them."

Both Cicero and Hirtius agree in the opinion that Caesar wrote to provide others with the materials for history, but in fact produced a work which could, in its own right, be called a history. I add, without comment, words from the preface to the first volume of Sir Winston Churchill's *The Second World War*, "I do not describe it as history, for that belongs to another generation. But I claim with confidence that it is a contribution to history which will be of service to the future". I propose to treat Caesar's work as history, and judge it by the high standards laid down two centuries later for the ideal historian by Lucian in his treatise "How to write History". . . . for one can hardly find a higher conception of the nature and purpose of history in the ancient world.

Lucian first postulates three qualities necessary in the historian: political insight, an independent spirit, and facility of expression. That Caesar had the first of these is evident from his career; his Commentaries are in themselves evidence that he also possessed the third. To determine whether he was in fact an independent spirit, and has given us a faithful account with no *suppressio ueri* or *suggestio falsi* is the proper province of the historian, and I am concerned tonight primarily with Caesar's literary merits. But it may be said that it is instructive to consider carefully what he has to say of his own disasters (for example, he makes no attempt to conceal, in Book II, that the Nervii took him completely by surprise, and in Book VII is quite open about the early reverses at Gergovia) and to compare the praise and blame bestowed on his subordinates with that bestowed by Hirtius in Book VIII, with especial reference to the latter's treatment of Labienus.

For the aims of the historian, Lucian considers Thucydides to be the noble legislator, and follows him in the pragmatic view he takes of the nature and purpose of history. The historian, aiming to produce a work which shall be a possession for ever, must set before himself the test of use. Should history ever repeat itself, the records of the past may give present guidance. Considered as a whole, the *Gallic War* affords a notable example of how to conduct a successful campaign on a large expanse of territory with comparatively limited forces. On a closer view, it is noticeable how Caesar occasionally departs from his main narration to give precise details of his own, and of the enemy's, tactics and methods. So, he makes particular reference to the German method of close infantry-cavalry co-operation, to the Gallic method of attacking fortified towns, to British chariot tactics. So too we find frequent reference to the strategy of *timoris opinio*—lulling the enemy into a sense of false security which may then be exploited. This was employed by Sabinus against the Venelli, by Caesar against the Nervii, by Labienus against Indutiomarus and the Treveri. When at Alesia the besieging army itself came under attack, he goes out of his way to describe in detail the special siege-works which were constructed to meet the occasion. And last, but not least, that bridge over the Rhine. *We* find the

passage difficult, but only, perhaps, because we do not know the exact equivalents of his technical terms. If descriptions of this sort seem tedious, they must not be allowed to affect our critical appreciation of his narrative. They had a purpose, and for later Roman commanders may well have performed the function of our modern Field Service Pocket Book.

If Caesar considers the needs of his military-minded readers, he does not neglect the layman. So in the very first chapter we find a brief description of Gaul and its inhabitants, an introduction carefully constructed so as to set the scene for the narrative, telling us as much as we need for the moment and no more. As we read through it, we find ourselves embarked on the narrative without having noticed the transition—it is so natural: from Gaul in general to the Helvetii in particular, thence to Orgetorix and his plotting, and the story has commenced. Later in Book VI, Caesar devotes eighteen chapters to a fuller and fascinating comparative account of Gaul and Germany, the people and their habits. Now apart from parenthetical references to facts previously mentioned, Caesar uses the third person when speaking of himself. Only occasionally does he stop to reveal his own private emotion, as, for example, at the end of Book I, where he expresses his personal feelings at the safe recovery of Procillus . . .

“And indeed it brought Caesar no less pleasure than the victory itself, to see a most distinguished member of the Province, his own close friend and guest, snatched from the hands of the enemy and restored to himself, and to feel that fortune had in no wise lessened, by the loss of his friend, his own great pleasure and gratification.”

But there are five instances where he makes an intrusion in the first person into an otherwise detached and impersonal narration. Of these, four introduce personal beliefs, and two of them occur in the long descriptive passage in Book VI. In the first, he is telling how the novice Druids learn large numbers of verses by heart, and in public and private documents make use of Greek: “I believe”, he says, “that they have adopted the practice for two reasons—that they do not wish the rule to become common property, nor those who learn it to rely on writing and so neglect the cultivation of the memory. And in fact it does usually happen that the assistance of writing tends to relax the diligence of the student, and the action of the memory.” Again, later, he mentions the Hercynian Forest, and adds: “Which I see was known by report to Eratosthenes, and certain other Greeks. They, however, call it the Orcynian Forest.” Again, in his description of Britain, he discusses the coast off the Isle of Man. “Touching this, some have written that, in midwinter, night there lasts for thirty whole days. We could discover nothing of this by inquiries, but by exact measurements by the water-clock observed that the nights were shorter than on the continent.” Professor Thomson, in his *History of Ancient Geography*, is perhaps a little hard on Caesar here (as again later when he uses an exclamation mark in surprise that Caesar should have written a work on Grammar) “. . . Caesar (if the chapter is his) found the nights in Britain were shorter . . .” There are no literary or textual reasons for thinking the chapter spurious, and we have seen enough of Caesar’s varied interests to realize how typical of him was the observation of this

phenomenon, the enquiry, the experiment and the comment. The last two examples I have quoted show Caesar as the great general who found time, and had the ability, to exercise academic interest side by side with military strategy, and who gives us now and then—almost unconsciously—a quick glimpse at that other side of the man.

Lucian next proceeds to offer detailed suggestions as to the ideal nature of the historian's diction and style. These I must compress and rearrange slightly.

Diction, he says, must avoid both heights and depths. The historian's vocabulary must be such as may be understood by the people, avoiding equally the abstruse and the illiberal jargon of the market-place. The dual aim must be for the vulgar to comprehend, the cultivated to commend.

We have already examined Caesar's views on stylistic matters at length, and the many manifestations of them. But the greatest is the style in which the Commentaries are written. Comparatively simple—the use made of him as a text-book testifies to that—yet with a mastery which evoked the praise of Cicero. How difficult it is to attain the same perfection of the *sermo cotidianus* as Caesar did, how easy to fall short in the attempt, can clearly be seen by comparing the other works of the *Corpus Caesarianum*. Book VIII of the *Gallic War* comes nearest to Caesar's standard, but as we read it we feel at once that Caesar's master-touch is lacking. A partial explanation is revealed in a metaphor of Lucian: "Let the spirit ride on horseback, the expression running on foot beside, but holding on to the saddle so as not to be outstripped." The author of the *Spanish War* and Caesar are in great contrast here. I am aware that there can be no real comparison between the literary general and the almost illiterate centurion, but I take the opportunity to draw attention to the *Spanish War*, as it is a work which is seldom read or studied except by historians. Consider these four passages, all from battle-scenes in the *Spanish War*. The first comes at the end of a brief description of an encounter with the enemy. *Hic alternis non solum morti mortem exaggerabant, sed tumulos tumulis exaequabant* ("Hereupon by turns not only did they pile corpse on corpse, but raised heaps of dead on heaps of dead"). It is very like the weighty fragment of Aeschylus' *Glaucus Potnieus*, which, when Aeschylus and Euripides are represented as holding a weighing competition of words in the 'Frogs' of Aristophanes, is thrown into the scale pan and causes it to sink heavily. "Chariot on chariot, corpse on corpse." Perhaps the lines in the Latin conceal a fragment of Ennius based on the Greek. Certainly Ennius is quoted in the next two examples. He wants to tell of a short withdrawal. . . . *Hic tum, ut ait Ennius, nostri cessere parumper*. And again later, "Hereupon", as Ennius says, "foot pressed on foot, arms clashed on arms". Lastly, he is describing a single-combat. . . . "Hereupon, as the story goes that Achilles once went forth to meet Memnon, Q. Pompeius Niger set forth. . . ." He is just displaying the few bits of Ennius he remembered from his school-days, and the passages, set as they are amid the most commonplace and lowly diction, have an effect little short of comical. Lucian agreed that diction should not be without a touch of the poetical, but in moderation. Livy has shown how this may be achieved in many striking phrases which recall Virgil or Ennius. With Livy, it is but one of the many

factors which go to make up what Quintilian called his *lactea ubertas*—his “creamy richness”. In the *Spanish War* the intended effect falls flat. Applying Lucian’s metaphor to Livy, Caesar and the author of the *Spanish War*, we might say that in Livy the spirit is ever on horseback, and the expression is from time to time given a lift; in the *Spanish War* the spirit has to walk all the time, while the expression crawls behind, occasionally borrowing a horse to catch up; in Caesar the spirit rides alone.

In Book XLIII, Chapter 13, Livy tells how in writing of ancient events his mind is somehow projected back into the past. . . *nescio quo pacto antiquus fit animus*. Thus he explains that power of imaginative insight which enabled him to look away from a particular event to the feelings of those involved. So writing in the first century B.C. about the sack of Alba Longa some six centuries previously, he paints this vivid picture.

“In the city, gloomy silence and a grief beyond words so petrified the minds of all that, forgetting in their terror what to leave behind, what to take with them, incapable of thinking for themselves, at one moment they would stand on their thresholds asking one another’s advice, at another wander aimlessly through their houses to see them for the last time.”

Livy has here touched the universal. But that is the difference between poetry and history, said Aristotle, that poetry treats of the universal, history of the particular—the particular being what Alcibiades did or had done to him. Those who agree that “the way of intuitive understanding and imaginative insight has always been that of the best historians” praise Livy. And Caesar too. Witness two descriptions of men besieged in their camps—both occasions on which Caesar was not himself present.

“It was announced that the troops would break out at dawn. The rest of the night was spent without sleep, for each soldier was looking over his effects to see what he could carry with him, and what part of his winter equipment he must needs leave behind.”

And again, in Book VI, the enemy have made a surprise attack: “There was confusion throughout the camp, and one sought from another the cause of the uproar. No one had a care to which point the companies were to move, or in what quarter each man was to assemble. One declared that the camp was already taken, another insisted that the barbarians were come victorious from the destruction of the army and the C.-in-C., and the majority pictured to themselves new superstitions because of the place, and set before their eyes the disaster of Cotta and Titurius who, they remembered, fell in the same fort.”

Finally, a similar account, not without its humour, of the time when a sudden panic, caused by fear of the Germans against whom they were marching, fell on Caesar’s camp. “It began first with the military tribunes, detachment commanders, and the others who had followed Caesar from Rome to court his friendship, without any experience of warfare. Advancing various reasons, which, according to their

own statement, obliged them to depart, some sought his permission to leave ; some were compelled by very shame to stay, to avoid the suspicion of cowardice. These were unable to disguise their looks, or even, at times, to restrain their tears. They hid in their tents to complain of their own fate, or lament in company with friends the common danger. Everywhere throughout the camp there was a signing of wills." What a contrast to the dry epitomizing of Florus : " So great was the alarm inspired in the camp by this unknown people that there was a general making of wills even in the camp square." In all these scenes we have vivid descriptions. Our general could smile, too, as when he reproves Volusenus, whom he had sent with one ship to make a reconnaissance-in-force of Britain : " Volusenus observed all the country—so far as was possible for an officer who did not dare to disembark and entrust himself to the rough natives—and on the fifth day returned to Caesar, and reported his observations in Britain."

Thucydides' speeches have often been called a fatal legacy to ancient historians. He himself claimed, and Lucian reiterated, that speeches, though they cannot always reproduce the actual words spoken, must be appropriate to the particular person and the particular occasion. Thucydides' speeches are admirable, but the legacy became truly fatal in an age in which rhetoric was so important. So Dionysius of Halicarnassus wrote, in the preface to his *Roman Antiquities*, that " Those who write history to display the wealth of their rhetoric are neither admired by posterity for their fame, nor praised for their eloquence ". But good and honest critic though he was, he failed to live to his own standards. For example, the Coriolanus story, in itself of very dubious authenticity, occupies but six and a half chapters in all in Livy. In Dionysius it is told in one hundred and ten chapters, with fifteen speeches. But inability to practise what is preached does not necessarily devalue the sermon. The longest speech in Caesar, in direct form, is that of the Gaul Critognatus at Alesia. It is forceful, and makes its points clearly but without undue elaboration. And Caesar tells us that it is included because of its unusually cruel tone, for Critognatus had advocated cannibalism as a means of prolonging the siege. Elsewhere, Caesar is restrained, usually employing the indirect method of narration to run lucidly over the main points. We have heard testimony of his oratorical ability ; we see now how he could restrain it . . . he was no "*amator ingeni sui*". Not so the author of the *Spanish War*. This is part of the speech of Tullius as he surrenders : ". . . Would that the immortal gods had seen to it that I had been your man, Caesar, rather than Pompey's, and thus had exhibited my constant bravery throughout your victory rather than his defeat." The last chapter of the book gives Caesar's speech after Munda ; when it ends in hopeless corruption and a lacuna, to be quite honest, I can feel no deep sense of loss.

Lucian would have his historian assume a position like that of Zeus in Homer—looking now on this side, now on that, now on both together. A good general must obviously be able to appreciate a situation from his own and from the enemy's points of view. Caesar could, and, moreover, in his writing, remembered to do so for the enlightenment of his readers. In his narrative one can follow the action easily, one

is told of causes, reasons, and shown the situation from two points of view. Very different is the *Spanish War*, for there we find no reasons given for anything. *That* history is bald in the extreme—like the man whose example Lucian warns historians to avoid, “who wrote down a bald list of events, as prosy and as commonplace as a private’s or a sutler’s diary”. The only place in which he seems to me to rise is when, revealing a little of the martial spirit of the Roman legionary, he says, as the day of the battle of Munda dawned, that it was a very fine day for a battle. It is illuminating to put one of his chapters alongside one of Caesar’s. My translation endeavours to retain the same lack of clarity as the original: The situation is that the Caesarians are besieging the Pompeians in a city.

“On the next day, Pompey began to construct a communication-trench from his camp to the river, and when a few of our cavalry had been discovered at their post by a larger force of the enemy, they were thrown out of their post, and three were killed. That same day, A. Valgius, the son of a senator, whose brother was in Pompey’s camp, left all his possessions behind, mounted his horse and fled. A spy from Pompey’s 2nd legion was caught by the soldiers and killed: at the same time a sling stone with a message on it was sent; this said that on the day that they moved up to capture the city, he would hang out a shield. In the hope of this (for some hoped they would be able to climb the walls and take the city) on the next day they began to make earthworks against the wall, and quite a large part of the former wall was thrown down. [Here there is a lacuna, and a confused account of envoys reaching Caesar.] To them Caesar replied it was his custom to give, not receive conditions. When these had returned to the city, and the answer had been announced, a shout was raised, and all kinds of weapons were thrown . . . [a *τρικώλον* of unconnected Ablatives Absolute this, prefaced by a temporal clause] they began to do battle along the whole length of the wall. On this account, almost all the men in our camp had no doubts that they would make a sally that day. So a line of siege was laid round the city, and for some time there was a fierce battle, and at the same time a projectile fired by our men knocked down a tower, and by this projectile, of the enemy who were on that tower, five were knocked off, and one boy whose job it had been to keep an eye on the ballista.”

Here, in twenty-four and a half lines of the Oxford Classical Text, is indeed Lucian’s historian who could not discriminate . . . “who never gives the rose a glance, but devotes all his curiosity to the thorns on the stem”. Compare a typical chapter of Caesar, chosen at random, twelve lines of the Oxford Text, Book I, Chapter 37. The Aedui and Treveri complain about frontier violations . . . the news. Caesar decides to move up . . . the action taken. He does this because he fears these new attackers may link forces with his enemy Ariovistus . . . the reasons. He makes arrangements for securing the supply-line, and moves by forced marches . . . the method. Compactness, but with all the essential details and the reasons for them . . . that is the characteristic of Caesar’s narrative.

In the *Commentaries*, we have something unique in Latin literature—a general's personal account of his own campaigns. The author is a man of unusually varied talents, great politician, general and man of letters. The acuteness of the general leads to a shrewd narration, which the ability of the man of letters shapes into a clearly written and concise story to which the personality of the man has much to add. "I do not think", wrote Macaulay, in his own copy of Caesar, "that there is better evidence of the genuineness of any book in the world than of the first seven books of Caesar's *Commentaries*. To doubt on that subject is the mere rage of skepticism. His manner is the perfection of good sense and good taste. He rises on me, also, as a *man*."

The most that can be said of the judgment of W. S. Teuffel, which I quoted at the outset, is that it fairly acknowledges Caesar's mastery of language. The inappropriateness of the phrase "the unimaginative cast of his mind" is, I hope, now evident. It is fair to say that with Caesar and Cicero, who stand so far apart in the field of politics but so close in that of literature, we arrive at the highest point of literary appreciation shown in the pre-Augustan period of Roman literature. And in the field of literature Caesar has a threefold importance. First, for his varied activity as a writer. Secondly, for the encouragement which he gave to literary studies: this we see manifested not only in his contributions to the literary controversies of his day but in more concrete acts, e.g. in his conferment of citizenship upon foreign teachers of the liberal arts at Rome, in the establishment projected, though not fulfilled until the time of Augustus, of the first public library at Rome, in the literary inspiration given to his personal as well as political friends—to Hirtius, Oppius, Balbus. And lastly, his influence on Augustus. The second half of the polymath Varro's "Compendium of Roman Religion" is known to have been dedicated to Caesar. This may reflect no more than the formal dedication of a work on religion to the Pontifex Maximus. On the other hand, it may be that Caesar realized how invaluable in its popular influence could be the support of prominent literary figures in his reorganization of the State and reestablishment of the early ritual in religious observances. And conversely, how dangerous could be the popular effect of criticism. There is a tradition of conciliatory, if unavailing, overtures to the poet Catullus, whose stinging iambic attacks on Mamurra, Caesar's chief engineer officer and close friend, had in effect hit no less violently at Caesar himself, and whose indignant *socer generaque perdidistis omnia* ("Father Caesar and son-in-law Pompey, between you you have wrecked Rome") must have found a ready echo on the lips of Caesar's political enemies. The literary patronage of the Augustan age, however reprehensibly political in origin, was to make possible the creation of the finest works of Latin literature. It looks very much as if Augustus had learned a very valuable lesson here from his adoptive father, the Literary General.