Cicero's Views on Historical Composition as Exemplified in Caesar's Gallic Wars

Francis X. Dolan

Loyola University Chicago

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CICERO'S VIEWS ON HISTORICAL COMPOSITION
AS EXEMPLIFIED IN 'CAESAR'S
GALLIC WARS

BY
FRANCIS X. DOLAN, S.J.

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Francis X. Dolan, S.J. was born April 15, 1922 in the Bronx, New York City and received his elementary education there at the parochial schools of St. John Chrysostom and St. Nicholas of Tolentine. In 1935 he entered Regis High School in the same city and after graduation joined the Society of Jesus at the Novitiate of St. Andrew-on-Hudson, Poughkeepsie, New York in July, 1939. During his four years there he was academically connected with Fordham University. In 1943 he studied for a short time at Woodstock College, Woodstock, Maryland and in the same year transferred to West Baden College, West Baden, Indiana, where he received his A.B. degree from Loyola College, Chicago in June 1944. He had already been enrolled in the Loyola University Graduate School in January. During the scholastic year of 1946-7 he taught Latin and Greek at the Fordham Preparatory School in the Bronx, New York City.
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INTRODUCTION

Although it is true that almost everyone with a high-school course in Latin to his credit, has been initiated into the intricacies of continuous Latin prose with Caesar's Commentaries on the Gallic Wars, there are probably very few of these who ever regarded that work as more than a training-ground for recruit grammarians. Yet no better proof may be had of the literary significance of this work of Caesar than an examination of a chronological chart of Roman efforts in the field of poetic and prose composition. Such a chart shows that by the middle of the first century B.C., Rome had awakened to its responsibilities as a world-center of culture as well as of empire, and had already made significant, and not completely unoriginal, attempts at imitation of the Greeks in most of the literary forms. Livius Andronicus and Naevius, Plautus and Terence had proved that the Roman could not only appreciate the humor of the Greek New Comedy but could also produce its own literary mirth-makers. In its more serious moments Rome had taken a glimpse at the world of tragedy through the eyes of Accius and Pacuvius. In his Annales, a century and a half before, Ennius had inaugurated the Latin hexameter. Lucilius, going further, had created a new literary form, the satire which the Romans could always claim as their own. A promise of what a greater genius could do with the rather unwieldy Latin language
was given by Lucretius when he explained the causes of things in his great didactic poem, *De Rerum Natura*. Catullus notwithstanding a rather ungracious silence on the part of Horace, had in his short life displayed a remarkable and hardly equalled ability to master the wonderfully varied Greek meters, and reproduce them in his own language. Twenty years previous, in 70 B.C., Crassus and Antonius had yielded their places of honor as the foremost Roman orators, to the ardent prosecutor of Verres. In one field alone did Rome lag far behind, as Cicero himself admits,¹ and as the chronological chart will readily show, in the field of history. For it is a point of debate, whether Thucydides or Polybius were ever surpassed by any of the Roman historians, it is certainly beyond dispute that before the time of Caesar and Sallust, nothing even worthy of being put in the same class with their work had as yet appeared.

It is then this more important aspect of the Gallic Wars -- a literary significance undreamed of by the high-school boy who is struggling for the first time with indirect discourse, undreamed of, too, by many of our high-school teachers--that will form the subject of this thesis. Prescinding for the moment from the political significance of the *Commentaries*, a point which will

always be a matter of dispute, let us attempt to answer a question which may, perhaps be settled with more certainty. Can it be said that with the appearance of the Commentaries, Latin literature definitely stepped into a new field, replacing the groping steps of an Antipater or a Sisenna with the confident and more mature strides to be followed so successfully by Sallust, Livy, Tacitus and Suetonius? Can the Gallic Wars claim the title of being the first Roman literary History. That is the question of this thesis.

But since it is evident that some norm is required for deciding an issue which might well be settled by many equally probable subjective interpretations, the question may be stated more specifically in the following words: Do the Gallic Wars meet the requirements of good historical composition as those requirements were enumerated by Cicero, with whom, according to J. Wight Duff, "Latin literary criticism may be said to have its real beginning." 2

He was, at any rate, a critic who fully realized the inadequacy of Roman attempts in the field of history up to his own time. But would he admit that with the appearance of Caesar's work a change would have to be made in the statement that to write history like the Latins, satis est non esse mendacem? 3

Obviously the solution to such a question will be far from easy. True, we could select a few brief phrases from the Brutus, in which Cicero uses Atticus as a mouthpiece to state what we may presume to be his own opinion of the excellent style of the Commentaries. How much trust we are to put in these citations, however, as revealing the true mind of Cicero; and how much should be attributed to a desire to "rub Caesar the right way;" or, more sympathetically, how much is to be attributed to a simple desire to return Caesar's compliment in dedicating to the orator his De Analogia--these are matters hard to decide, involving as they do a great knowledge of a troubled mind during troubled days. But this much we can do. Taking the ideal of historical composition as it is expressed by Cicero in his rhetorical works (chiefly in the De Oratore, which was published in 55) we can attempt to determine for ourselves whether or not such an ideal is adequately represented in the Gallic Wars which were published less than five years later, in 51. If in his later rhetorical works (published after 51) Cicero gives his own word of praise to the Commentaries, we will have perhaps a confirmation of the view which holds that objectively considered the Gallic Wars marked a real advance of Latin literature in the field of history. If, however, Cicero fails to hail the work as an answer to his hopes, we need not take

4 Brutus, 262.
that fact as a refutation of the same opinion. The reason for this last statement will be given in the last chapter.

Before proceeding to enumerate in the third chapter the precise points of merit which Cicero seeks in his ideal historian, it will be necessary to say something of the relation of history to rhetoric in Latin Literature. Such a consideration will show why, in spite of the steady advance of Roman oratory, history had failed to make a corresponding progress, or to put it another way, why the little history that did appear, being so identified with the oratorical spirit, could hardly be distinguished from it as an independent pursuit. Thus we shall see the deficiencies in historical composition which were almost necessary consequences in an ancient state that was struggling for political domination, rather than aiming at any high culture mark. So, too, the ideal of Cicero will stand out in bolder relief when contrasted with the inadequate types which preceded it.
CHAPTER I
HISTORY IN LATIN LITERATURE

The students of scientific method have long discussed the question whether history is a science or an art. Whatever may be our views as to the practicality of such a subject as a point of debate, it may at least be said that it serves to keep prominently before our eyes the two great requisites of all good historical composition. They have, unfortunately, been all too rarely found in that branch of literature in the fine proportion that marks the perfect work. Few masters of scientific historical scholarship have been able to produce the pictured page of the artistic writer. Though their work may delight the hearts of students, they are caviar for the general. On the other hand, though Macaulay's style was considered a fitting model for the schoolboy, he was known to wink at the facts on more than one occasion. Nor is this a phenomenon peculiar to modern times. It is rather a weakness inherent in humanity itself which finds it difficult to combine the excellences of two pursuits—a painstaking consideration and weighing of all the facts, and an effective and interesting presentation of the facts when found.

And so we find that with the ancients too, the combination of these two characteristics is also rare. In the case of the Greeks, if we exclude Herodotus and Thucydides, it may be said in
general that there was a greater concentration on are than on the research necessary for good history. The latter, it is true, they did not ignore. Yet they were more apt to use it as a springboard for the presentation of some preconceived theory. Francis Godolphin is not alone when he says in regard to Greek history:

Yet so strong is interest in form among the ancients that the inferior historians are apt to turn history into a series of rhetorical display pieces, building up an impressive mass of antitheses and arguments from probability to the exclusion of the facts, just as the orators argued cases from probability instead of citing the facts, even when the facts were in the orator's favor.

Early Roman history went to the opposite extreme. Admitting for the moment that the Pontifical Annals make up "a precious document, which constitutes the chief and only authentic source of our knowledge of Roman history," they can hardly interest anyone but the professional scholar, or a man whose own vivid historical imagination can construct for himself the background which the recorders themselves neglected to portray. They are described by Cicero as annales pontificum maximorum, quibus nihil potest esse inlucundius.

Later, however, when the Romans first began to substitute connected history in prose for these mere tabulations, their

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2 Grenier, 106.
3 De Legibus, I, 6.
work, as far as science was concerned, labored under the same
defects of inaccuracy (if not positive distortion) as did many
works of the Greeks. Thus "Fabius belonged to the Gens Fabia, and
his work must have been, before all, a manifestation of that aris-
tocratic pride which Cato pursued everywhere with obstinate ha-
tred. Even Ennius... had had to indulge the genealogical fancies
of his protectors." And historical truth suffered just as much
when Cato mentioned in his own work no proper names except that of
Syrus, the bravest of Pyrrho's elephants. But while we may say
that the Greeks, in sacrificing science, had preserved art, we
cannot make the same excuse for the Romans. In the same passage
as that quoted above, Cicero despairingly asks: *Quamquam ex his
alius alio plus habet virium, tamen quid tam exile quam isti
omnes?*

Now, were we to seek the fundamental explanation for the
scientific deficiencies common to so much of ancient historical
composition, we would find it to be the rhetorical turn of mind
which, though not, of course, peculiar to Greece and Rome, was
certainly one of their predominant characteristics. True it is
that in an age accustomed to the printed word in book, magazine,
and newspaper, we find it hard to realize that the place of all

4 Grenier, 151
5 *De Legibus*, I, 6.
these moulders of public opinion was once chiefly supplied by the spoken word. If, however, we attempt to reconstruct these ancient conditions, it will no longer seem surprising that for the Greeks and the Romans rhetoric (which in our dictionaries is defined as the "art of discourse,") should have become almost synonymous with oratory, and that the norms of historical composition should have been almost completely neglected in a society where men were more often engaged in the political arena than in study or literary pursuits. What James Shotwell says of the Greeks may with the obvious changes be applied to the Romans:

Moreover, oratory in a Greek city, was a real force. The arena of politics was hardly larger than the amphitheatre or the agora, and it was possible to control it almost as definitely by the voice and personality of a speaker.

As a natural consequence, even when men did withdraw from public life to write history (a possibility more likely to be realized among the speculative Greeks than the practical Romans) the

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7 De Oratore, II, 63. "Harum tot tantarumque rerum videtisne nulla esse praecepta, quae in artibus rhetorum reperiantur?"
8 Ibid., II, 55. "...nemo enim studet eloquentiae nostrorum hominum, nisi ut in causis atque in foro eluceat..."
9 Shotwell, 183.
10 De Oratore, II, 55. "...apud Graecos autem eloquentissimi homines remoti a causis forensibus cum ad ceteras res inlustres tum ad historiam scribendam maxime se applicaverunt..."
attitude they adopted towards their work was far different from the scientific view of the modern historian. The desire to persuade (often at any cost) found its way into history as well. An it may not be said that this "rhetoricizing" tendency lessened with the years, at least until the advent of Polybius. For with the appearance of Isocrates and his cultivated style in the age succeeding Thucydides and Xenophon, historians became even more concerned with the ara which is indeed a requisite of history, but not as essential as the veracitas which they were often too ready to sacrifice. If history had freed itself from the clutches of poetry with the work of Thucydides, it is equally true that it walked into the jaws of rhetoric in the age that followed. Thus Werner Jaeger says of Isocrates, the leader of the new movement:

...Nor can we trace how his political preconceptions altered his view of the historical facts which he urged to support them, although it would be extremely interesting to see how, when historical knowledge comes into contact with his political interests, it is always history which is altered, to suit his wish.  

So, too, a pupil of his, Ephorus, "rejected the ideal of Thucydides to keep his speeches closely modeled upon the originals. He frankly made them up and was especially given to harangues

12 Ibid., 103.
upon the field of battle." Another pupil, Theopompus, "employed all the artifices of rhetoric to secure effect, — a Greek Macaulay or Treitschke." Timaeus of Sicily might endear himself to the modern historian by his statement that, "history differs from rhetorical composition as much as real buildings differ from those represented in scene-paintings," and that "to collect the necessary materials for writing history is by itself more laborious than the whole process of producing rhetorical compositions." But if we are to judge by the comments of Polybius, he was guilty of the sins he preached against.

It would be well to state here, however, that this confusion of the oratorical with the historical is only one of the causes of the inferior type of historiography among the Greeks. Thus we may have what Godolphin calls the "systematic error" of the historian. This is the excessive use of a general principle "by means of which he interprets events to the exclusion of contributing or material causes which should be assigned their proper place if the interpretation is not to be distorted." Herodotus

13 Shotwell, 185.
14 Ibid., 186.
15 Quoted by Polybius, Historiae, 12.28 a 1, ed. by Th. Buttner-Wobst, Teubner, Leipzig, III, 1883.
16 Ibid., 12, 28 a 2.
17 Ibid., 12, 24. 5; 25 a. 5; 26 b. 5.
18 By "inferior", we mean from the scientific, not the artistic or humanistic aspect.
19 Godolphin, xiv.
for example, in his desire to prove the truth of divine retribution, gave a protracted account of a meeting between Croesus and Solon—although all his readers must have realized that such a meeting was a chronological impossibility. "...this meeting was so well adapted to the reflections he wished to introduce on the subject of the mutability of human life and divine retribution that he felt under no obligation to respect the fact that the meeting was impossible."\textsuperscript{20} This explanation sounds fantastic to us who are accustomed to the exacting requirements of contemporary scientific procedure, but it did not seem so outrageous to the Greek mentality.

Another tendency detracting from historical accuracy was the confusion of history with tragedy which characterized a great deal of this branch of literature from Thucydides to Polybius.\textsuperscript{21} It is true that Aristotle saw the distinction between the two. History tells what happened; tragedy what might have happened, or might happen. Whether or not the other Greeks recognized the difference is beside the point. Results show that in practice they "felt that history could profitably employ the devices of poetry, even to deviating from exact truth."\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., xiii.
\textsuperscript{21} E.S. Ullman, "History and Tragedy," \textit{Transaction of the American Philological Association}, LXXIII, (1942), 27.
Without denying the importance of such factors as these in the development of Greek history, we have limited ourselves in this thesis to a consideration of the rhetorical color of ancient history. We have done so because this is a tendency that characterized both Greek and Roman history, and not Greek history alone. In fact, the influence of rhetoric is particularly marked in Roman literature (with which we are more concerned in this thesis.)

For this two causes are responsible - the political circumstances at Rome up to the time of Augustus; secondly, the very character of the Roman mentality.

We may sum up the first cause by stating that while the Romans had found it profitable to follow the bad example of the Greeks in distorting history, they did not find it conducive to their own practical ends to follow the good example that the Greeks also gave. In other words, with the advent of Polybius in the second century B.C., Greek history became more or less subordinated to philosophy instead of to rhetoric. We cannot say, however, that Roman history made the corresponding change. For while it "no doubt underwent the influence of the philosophical influence of Polybius, and still more of Posidonius..." yet it can still be said of the Roman historians that:

22 Grenier, 221.
...on the whole they seem to be the pupils of the rhetors much more than of the philosophers. History for them is really only a kind of forensic speech, in which the narrative is the principal element; the technical methods and ornaments are the same as in any other oratorical work. The political passion by which they are animated and the great part played by eloquence in Roman life clearly contribute to this conception.

The Augustan age was yet to come. Men could still speak their minds in the Forum and in the Senate. And while they could do so, speculative history was not for them. Jaeger says of real political oratory in Greece that "nourished by the life of the Greek city-state, it died when that died." In Rome political oratory was to flourish as long as the Republic lasted. And as long as it flourished, history would make little progress.

We said that the second reason for stressing the influence of oratory on Roman history-writing was the mentality of the Roman people. By this we mean that the errors or defects of Greek historiography—the "systematic error" of Herodotus, and the confusion of tragedy with history—could hardly be the defects of the Roman writer. For these are not the errors of the practical but of the speculative mind. The error of the Roman is, as we shall notice in the brief review of their efforts at history, due more

23 Ibid.
24 Jaeger, 102; cf. Wilkins, 45.
to a utilitarian outlook. The same fundamental attitude that accounts for the ease and enthusiasm with which Rome adapted herself to oratory, also explains her slowness to make any remarkable advance in history.

As we have said, Cicero realized how far behind Rome was in this field. All in all the record was none too encouraging, for him at least. When Antonius asks Catulus, Quaillis oratoris et quanti hominis in dicendo putas esse historiam scribere? the answer is Si, ut Graeci scripscrunt, summi...si, ut nostri, nihil opus est oratore; satis est non esse mendacem. Yet we are afraid that even this poor estimate of Rome's historians is a little more than they deserved. For many of them even found it hard to tell the truth, as we shall see if we look back now with Cicero over the past.

The account of early Roman historiography is well known. The religious records, i.e. the Libri Pontificum, Commentarii Pontificum, Fasti and Annales together with the records of the civic officials, the Commentarii Magistratuum comprise the earliest Roman history. Of the private documents "chiefly in the

25 Duff, 148
26 De Oratore, II, 51.
form of family chronicles to gratify patrician pride by panegyrics on ancestors, "28 we may say that when a man is "guided by the practical purpose of placing his notion, family, party or person in a favorable light," it is not to be expected that we take all that is written in such documents without a grain of salt. For after all, the writers followed the convention of composing them with their tongues in their cheeks. The same caution may be applied to the laudationes funebres of which Cicero himself has said, his laudationibus historia rerum nostrarum est facta mendiosior. 29

About the end of the third century these official and private documents were complemented, but not supplanted, by the first efforts of the Romans to write connected history. Strangely enough, Fabius Pictor, Cincius Alimentus, Acilius and Postumius Albinus did not write in Latin because, according to Duff, "the superiority of Greek authors to the official Latin records determined that the first Romans to attempt connected history in prose should use the Greek language." 30 To Cato, the anti-Hellenist, goes the honor of being the first Roman historian to write in his native

28 Duff, 86.
29 Brutus, 62.
30 Duff, 248.
tongue. His *Origines* was a step forward because in it Cato rose to a broader view of Roman history, considering the development of Rome in connection with the other Italian settlements. His reaction against the Fabian propaganda, in omitting the names of generals, etc., has already been mentioned. "The reason of this it is impossible to discover...Dislike of the great aristocratic houses into which the supreme power was steadily being concentrated, is a more probable cause." It is, at any rate, a good indication of the lack of objectivity in one whom Quintilian can still call the founder of Roman history.

The style of Cato as well as that of Calpurnius Piso who "conceived the plan of reducing the myths to historical probability," is unenthusiastically evaluated by Cicero in the *De Oratore*:

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31 Grenier (p. 151) is wrong in saying that Cato had an immediate predecessor in Fabius. "Q. Fabius Pictor wrote in Greek, and was an earlier contemporary of Cato; but the Latin version of his work was later than Cato's *Origines.*" Wilkins, *ibid.*, 251.
33 Cf. page § above.
34 Crutwell, 95.
35 Quintilian, *Institutionis Oratoriae Libri Duodecim*, XII; 11, 23, ed. by Bonnell, Teubner, Leipzig, 1903, II.
36 Crutwell, 100.
...erat enim historia nihil aliud nisi annalium confectio, cujus rei memoriaeque publicae retinendae causa ab initio rerum Romanarum usque ad P. Mucium pontificem maximum res omnis singulorum annorum mandabat litteris pontifex maximus referebatque in album et proponebat tabulam domi, potestas ut esset populo cognoscendi, eique etiam nunc annales maximi nominantur: hanc similitudinem scribendi multi secuti sunt, qui nunc sine ullis ornamentis monumenta solum temporum, hominum, locorum gestarumque rerum reliquerunt; itaque qualis apud Graecos Pherecydes, Hellanicus, Asusilas fuit alique permuti, talis noster Cato et Pictor et Piso, qui neque tenent, quibus rebus ornetur oratio — modo enim huc ista sunt importata — et, dum intelligatur quid dicant, unam dicendi laudem putant esse brevitatem.37

An improvement, however, both in the artistic and scientific aspect of historical composition was marked with the appearance of Caelius Antipater and Sempronius Asellio in that period of Roman literature which we might say roughly corresponds to the age of Isocrates in Greece. Antipater went to the trouble of looking for sources favorable to the Carthaginian cause in his work on the Punic War. Asellio gave the first real evidence of the attempt to treat the causal element in Roman history.38 Another indication of progress was had in the work of Claudius Quadrigarius who completely omitted the mythical period. This was an important step since it showed that, if nothing certain could be

37 De Oratore, II, 52-53
38 Duff, 253; Grutwell, 100.
known about the past, some men were at least resolved not to in-
vent their own accounts. But, though the archaic style of Quadri-
garius found favor with some, especially Gellius, no mention is
even made of him by Cicero in his review of the historians.

Lest we think that all the work of this period showed steady
progress in accuracy, it will be good to consider three of its more
well-known writers. Valerius Antias, who echoes the note of the
laudationes funebres by his partiality to the Valerii, has gained
through Livy's pages the "unenviable notoriety of being the most
lying of all the annalists. The chief cause of his deceptiveness
was the fabrication of circumstantial narrative, and the invention
of exact numerical accounts."39 Although Gaius Licinius Macer
claimed to have used certain ancient records which had escaped more
scholarly and reliable men than himself, the common opinion of him
is that expressed by H.J. Rose, when he says "Even the uncritical
Livy caught him lying in the interests of his family, and that he
should tell another lie to the enhancement of his own reputation
is in no way improbable."40 As a third example, we mention Sulla
who, like Caesar, has written Commentarii Rerum Suarum but whose
anti-Marian purpose, betrayed on so many of its pages, deprives
the work of the title of history.41

39 Crutwell, 101; Cf. H.J. Rose, A Handbook of Latin Literature,
40 Rose, 203; Cf. Crutwell, 102.
41 Duff, 254.
To summarize, up until the time of Cicero, there was lacking in Roman historical composition, either *ares* or *veracitas*, or that fine combination of both qualities of which we spoke at the beginning of this chapter. The deficiency on the artistic side might be explained by the fact that the more capable men were engaged in the political struggle — a field open to all during the time of the Republic. The deficiency in scientific outlook may have a double explanation. First, we have seen that those who did give themselves to writing history were, for the most part, a little too interested in personal motives, instead of being animated with that zeal for handing down truth to posterity which is the mark of the true historian. Secondly, the rhetorical education of that time (at least until 91 B.C., the time represented in the De Oratore) ignored the norms for historical composition, or presented them with an oratorical flavor.

Was it this latter deficiency that Cicero was attempting to supply in the second book of the De Oratore? We should not try to exaggerate the significance of a relatively brief passage, presented almost by way of a digression. Yet it is important

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42 De Oratore, II, 62.
43 Ullman, 33.
enough as a piece of literary criticism. Shotwell calls it a

"chapter of the history of History in miniature, the first and only one in Latin literature." After this brief treatment of

the relation of rhetoric to history in ancient times, and with an equally brief survey and evaluation of the Roman historians serving as a background, we are now better prepared to sketch Cicero's theory — it would be too ambitious to call it a philosophy — of


44 Shotwell, 214.
CHAPTER II
CICERO'S IDEAL HISTORIAN

Although references to historical composition are quite numerous in the essays and dialogues of Cicero, it must be admitted that most of them refer to style rather than to method. Moreover, after reading his remarks (in the passage from the De Oratore referred to at the end of the last chapter) on the importance of truth and accuracy in history, we find one or two other passages which appear to contradict his recommendation. In the Brutus, for example, he states that concessum est rhetoribus ementiri in historiis, ut aliquid dicere possint argutius.\(^1\) Now if we recall the narrow margin separating the rhetorician from the historian in ancient times, and if we consider the fact that "history was added by some" to the genus demonstrativum, the third division of eloquence, "and Cicero inclines to agree with them,\(^2\) we can imagine the havoc which might well be caused by a too liberal interpretation of this indulgence. So too, when Antonius exclaims; Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia nisi oratoris immortalitati.

\(^1\) Brutus, 42.
commendatur? it is easy to understand why so much of Roman history was unreliable.

But whatever may be the inconsistencies, apparent or otherwise, in the other passages of Cicero, the part of his work in which we are chiefly interested gives a brief but definite concept of what the historian should be. The occasion for the passage is as follows. Antonius (whom we may take as representing Cicero’s opinion) is telling his listeners at Crassus’ Tusculan villa that

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3 De Oratore, II, 36.
4 Quintilian is sometimes considered to confuse history with oratory, and the text, "sed effectivae quoque aliquid simile scriptis orationibus vel historiis, quod ipsum opus in parte oratoria merito ponimus, consequetur," (Inst. Orat. II, 18, 5) is quoted to support this view. But we do not think that such an interpretation is warranted by the context. Speaking of history in another place (Ibid. X, 1, 31) Quintilian says, "Est enim proxima poetis...et scribitur ad narrandum, non ad probandum; totumque opus non ad actum rei pugnamque praesentem sed ad memoriae posteritatis et ingenii famam componitur." (Italics mine.) Furthermore, we must remember that the specific term, oratory, was often used for the generic rhetoric, for reasons we have tried to indicate in the preceding chapter.
5 "...the De Oratore, where the conversational form is but a convenient framework for the exposition of theories sometimes from different points of view, but as a rule unchallenged, in the way of continuous exposition." Wilkins, 3.
although history is an art comparable to oratory, no rules for it
composition have been developed among the Romans because they, un-
like the Greeks, are not interested in anything much besides the 
elegance of the assembly or the law-courts. He then proceeds to
give some rules of his own. We shall first quote the passage in
its entirety, dividing it, however into three sections. Section
I corresponds roughly to the first requisite of history — **veraci-
tas.** Section II corresponds to the second requisite — **ars,** and
is subdivided into **a,** dealing with the presentation and arrange-
ment of the subject matter; and **b,** dealing with the style.

I Nam quis nescit primam esse legem, ne
quid falsi dicere audeat? Deinde ne quid
veri non audeat? Ne quae suspicio gratiae
sit in scribendo? Ne quae simulatias?
Haec scilicet fundamenta nota sunt omnibus,

IIa ipsa autem aedificatio posita est in rebus
et in verbis: rerum ratio ordinem temporum
desiderat, regionum descriptionem; volt,
etiam, quoniam in rebus magnis memoriaque
dignis consilia primum, deinde acta, pos-
tea eventus exspectantur, et de consiliiis
significari quid scripitor probet et in
rebus gestis declarari non solum quid ac-
tum aut dictum sit, sed etiam quo modo, et
cum de eventu dicatur, ut causae explicen-
tur omnes vel casus vel sapientiae vel te-
meritatis hominumque ipsorum non solum res
gestae, sed etiam, qui fama et nomine ex-
cellant, de cujusque vita atque natura.

IIb verborum autem ratio et genus orationis
fusum atque tractum et cum lenitate qua-
dam aequabiliter profluens sine hac iu-
dicali asperitate et sine sententialium
forensibus aculeis persequendum est.
The qualities mentioned in the first section are essential to the historian since they regard the truth of his work. Despite the fact that Antonius says, "These fundamental rules are doubtless universally known," they are the virtues so often conspicuous by their absence in so much of the work of the ancient historians. In the next chapter it will be our purpose to consider how far these rules were observed by Caesar. Has the author of the Commentaries ever been proved guilty of falsehood? Has he always told the whole truth, i.e., has he employed the rhetorician's trick of passing over significant facts to place his own position in a more favorable — or untrue light? And (since we are treating of an autobiography) does the personal element enter so much into the narrative of that most extraordinary and significant campaign, as to magnify beyond proportion the services rendered to the state during those eight years? In other words, what is the credibility of the Gallic Wars?

6 De Oratore, II, 62-64.
7 De Oratore, Ibid., 62, transl. by J.S. Watson, McKay, Philadelphia, 1897, 112.
8 Cicero himself in Ad Fam. 5:12 "urges Luceceius to write a separate history of his consulship...and to neglect the laws of history to the extent of glorifying Cicero a bit more than the strict regard for the truth might warrant." Ullman, 44.
The points mentioned in the next section of the passage from the *De Oratore* are calculated to secure not truthful, but artistic or literary history. The first division of this section — dealing with the presentation of the subject matter — emphasizes two qualities. One of these, clearness, is an obvious necessity. The other, the historical sense of coherency, was never too apparent in the work of the Roman annalist. Cicero's words in this passage, *consilia, eventus, causae, casus, sapientiae, temeritatis*, show that he is tired of the mere listing of events and desires something of the intelligent procedure of a Thucydides. It is probably this concern for causality that is responsible for the remarks he makes on characterization. Since men make history more than history makes men, it is important for the historian to show how the life or attitudes of men were responsible for certain actions. How far these hints for historic craftsmanship were carried out in the *Gallic Wars*, will be shown in the first part of the fourth chapter.

The second division of this section (IIb) treats of a subject most dear to Cicero, the style of history. We stated at the beginning of this chapter that most of his hints for historical composition treat of this element rather than of method. And almost all of his criticism of the historians before his time is directed at their lack of excellence in this regard. 

9 Cf. *De Oratore*, II, 53, 54; and *De Legibus*, I, 5, 6, 7.
is," we seem to hear him say, "that will produce a work likely to be read not only by scholars, but by all men of culture. It may produce something to rival the work of a Thucydides or an Herodotus." Cicero was looking for a history that would have about it a quality so badly lacking in the work of Piso, annales sane ex litter scriptos. Was he to find some answer to his hopes in the work of Caesar of "all our orators...the purest user of the Latin tongue?" The second part of the fourth chapter will attempt an answer to this question.12

10 Brutus, 106.
11 Ibid., 252, "Sed tamen, Brute, inquit Atticus, de Caesare et ipse ita judico, et de hoc hujus generis acerrimo aestimatore saepissime audio, illum omnium fere oratorum Latine loqui elegantissime."
12 There are other references to the kind of style suitable to history which will be considered in the fourth chapter.
CHAPTER III

THE CREDIBILITY OF THE GALlic WARS

One method of vindicating the credibility of the Gallic Wars would be to discuss all the minute details in the narrative, state the objections of every scholar who presumed to point out the falsehoods in the history, and then attempt the answer to such objections. Were this the plan of the present chapter, we would approach the subject with much apprehension. It would, indeed, require an almost eye-witness knowledge of the political background of those times to read into every word and deed of Caesar a possible misrepresentation of some unsavory event, to say nothing of the further obligation of refuting or substantiating such an interpretation. Moreover, since almost all the possible charges have been considered by T. Rice Holmes1 (who was able to do so only after years of familiarity with Caesar's work), for us to attempt the same task would be both presumptuous and unoriginal. We might add that it would be unnecessary since "hardly one of the assailants of Caesar's veracity has a European or even national reputation."2 Fortunately, however, our purpose is not such a detailed study of Caesar's historical accuracy. We shall, it is

2 Ibid., 214.
true, mention the main charges considered by Mr. Holmes and summarize the conclusions of this recognized Caesarian scholar. In so doing the aim will be only to show the typical tenuousness of most of the accusations of distortion. But the plan of defense adopted for this part of our thesis is simpler and, we think, of equal if not greater cogency. It consists in arguing from the circumstances at the time of publication, and from the motives of Caesar in composing the *Gallic Wars* to the following conclusion: This work comprises an accurate and credible account of one of Rome's great military campaigns. In other words, because of the absence of convincing proof of falsehood, the circumstantial evidence to be presented in this chapter suffices to give a prudent certitude of the reliability of Caesar in this record of his successes.

The connection, then, of this chapter with the rest of the thesis is clear. If it shall be established beyond reasonable doubt that the *Gallic Wars* fulfill the first set of prescriptions laid down by Cicero for good historical composition, the conclusion shall be that this work of Caesar's holds a partial claim, at least, to being the first Roman literary history worthy of the name. Let us proceed, therefore, to the consideration of the conformity of the *Commentaries* to the Ciceronian norms for historical veracity which were quoted in the last chapter.

It will be recalled that the first rule for reliable history,
according to Cicero, is, ...ne quid falsi dicere audeat. Deinde ne quid veri non audeat. Before examining the charges of falsehood in the *Gallic Wars*, it will be necessary to consider what purpose Caesar had in composing these accounts. For unless we are to assume the falsity of the principle, nemo gratia mendax, it follows that Caesar will deviate from the truth only when his main purpose may be better attained. Now there are two theories of his purpose in writing this history, both of which theories require an understanding of the political situation at the time of composition if they are to be grasped in their full significance.

Two years after returning to Rome from Spain where he had been praetor in 62 B.C., Caesar formed that strange coalition with Pompey and Crassus — the democrat with the former champions of the senatorial party. Caesar, it was agreed, should become the consul in 59. This he did and in that famous consulship of "Julius and Caesar" carried through many measures in favor of Pompey which the Eastern conqueror himself had been unable to secure. Following his consulship Caesar chose for his province the governorship of

3 *De Oratore*, II, 62.

4 A third theory, that Caesar wrote the *Gallic Wars* with a literary purpose alone (as in the case of the *De Análogia*) might be considered by some too naive.
Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul - for a period of five years. Now, if it is true that most students are never taught the literary significance of the Gallic Wars, the same can be repeated with emphasis of the significance of the campaigns which they describe. They were momentous both for the city of Rome (and ultimately Western civilization) and for Caesar himself. But although it is true that "Caesar's greatest accomplishment was in turning the face of Mediterranean city-culture toward Western continental Europe," it is rather the personal advantages of that campaign which concern us now.

Ever since the civil wars of Marius and Sulla, the army had begun to exert a new influence in the state, an influence which it would continue to exert in the days of the Empire. "The soldiers would not fight for any commander unless they knew him well and had served under him long, and unless they could expect from him the same rewards that Sulla had given to his veterans." That, in his own case a Gallic campaign skilfully conducted could satisfy this very need, Caesar certainly realized. There was another

advantage it would serve. Although Pompey was a fellow-triumvir
Caesar knew that the former was very anxious to be the first man
in the state and was only biding his time for a favorable opportu­
nity. Pompey's constant changes in policy was sufficient indica­
tion of that. What Caesar needed, then, above all was a military
reputation to rival that of the conqueror of Syria, Bithynia and
Pontus. And what more likely place to secure that reputation than
in the land of the Gauls — Rome's ancient and recent foe?8 Des­
pite all his excesses, Marius had endeared himself to the Roman
people by averti the invasion of the Tutones and the Cimbri.
What could not Caesar attain by subjecting an equally dangerous
host to the standards of Rome?

However, although we are the first to admit the personal mo­
tives of Caesar in carrying on the Gallic Wars, it does not seem
necessary to conclude that he felt under any obligation to defend
his war as a just one. The attempt to read such an interpretation
into Caesar's account of his campaign arises, we think, from our
own modern ethical standards which were unknown to him and to most
of the Romans. In a discussion of ancient systems of international
ethics, Louise E. Matthei states:

8 Napoleon III, Julius Caesar, Cassell, Petter and Galpin, London,
II, 1865, 8-13.
...there runs throughout Roman history a belief quite extraordinarily strong that success in arms depended on the righteousness of the war — not righteousness as regards the justice of the interests involved or the claims advanced, but in the sense of having scrupulously fulfilled all the formal and ceremonial obligations owed to the other side, most especially those involved in the due declaration of war. 9

It is this attitude that explains how Caesar himself can admit so naively from time to time that it is for their liberty that the Gauls are fighting, 10 while there is a suppressed feeling of indignation when he tells of their frequent breaches of treaties and armistices in defending that very liberty. 11 No matter what rights the Romans had to Gaul, the Gauls should play according to the rules!

If Caesar was interested in proving the morality of his actions, he was not doing as good a job as he ordinarily did. The truth of the matter is that his actions needed no justification — in the eyes of the Romans. His countrymen were rapidly becoming empire-conscious and, despite the remarks of Suetonius, 12 such a people seldom views with horror accounts of unknown native

11 Cf. ibid., III, 16.
12 Divus Julius, XXIV, "Nonnulli dedendum eum hostibus censuerint."
populations yielding themselves submissively or bowing perforce to the new saviours of the world. Both Caesar, the genius, and the freedmen by the Tiber felt that, "it was necessary that Italy should be protected against the ever-threatening invasions of the Germans by a barrier; and it was also necessary, now that Italy had become too narrow for its population, that a fresh field of expansion should be provided elsewhere. 13

What, then, is the personal aim of the *Gallic War*? Having excluded the probability of its being an ethical justification of the war, there are two main theories which remain to be considered. The first is that Caesar was trying to show that he was acting within the letter, if not the spirit of the Constitution when he undertook the conquest of Gaul and raised an army without the explicit permission of the Senate. 14 The Constitution, it is true, was rapidly becoming an heirloom, but there were some men who, like Cicero, conceived for it an impractical but sentimental affection. The sensibilities of such men, in Caesar's opinion, must not be too violently shocked. The second theory is that Caesar was trying to augment the glory of his campaigns either in the

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eyes of posterity, as Norman DeWitt holds, or, (as seems more probable in view of his selection of Gaul as his province) in the eyes of his contemporaries whom he was anxious to win over to the "new Alexander." 

Depending on which of the above mentioned aims motivated Caesar in the composition of the Commentaries, it seems that he would be inclined to violate some of Cicero's norms more than others. In other words, if he wrote to give a legal justification of the war, he would be apt to tell more falsehoods and suppress truth in order to explain the "independence of home authority which its author had allowed himself." If he wrote mainly to magnify his own glory, he would be more tempted to use animosity and partiality. These defects are not, of course, mutually exclusive but in a matter so complex as this, the following procedure seems feasible. Assuming first of all that his intention was legal justification of the war, we will consider whether or not his work conforms to those norms of Cicero whose violation would better secure this aim. Did he, we ask, deliberately misrepresent the truth? Having settled this point of the thesis, we will then assume that personal glory was his aim, and with this in view,

15 DeWitt, 342.
16 Cf. Divus Julius, VII.
17 W. Warde Fowler, Julius Caesar, Putnam's New York, 1902, 129.
will attempt to determine whether or not animosity or partiality has distorted the veracity of his account.

But whatever view we take of Caesar's purpose in writing, this must be constantly remembered. It does not follow because his main end is personal, that his work is not worthy of the name of history. Antonius says in the De Oratore that his main purpose in walking in the sun is to get exercise, but he also gets the benefit of a sunburn. Similarly, it may well be that Caesar has, incidentally to his main purpose, left us a valuable history. We cannot decide the issue a priori. The question is whether or not his personal aim has led him to express only the good and not the bad, only his successes and not his failures, only his own contributions and not those of others.

Proceeding, accordingly, to the first step, let us see if Caesar violated Cicero's first law of historical composition by distorting the facts. Although the best arguments against the probability of falsehood are to be sought in the circumstances at

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18 The question of the date of publication of the Commentaries does not seriously affect our thesis. If written in 46, the latest date (because mentioned in the Brutus), the aim would probably be that held by DeWitt, or an effort to conciliate the remaining Pompeians. If written in 50 (Holmes), or before 51 (Mommsen) or during the campaigns (Long), the aim would be legal justification of the war. But in any case we admit the personal motive.

19 De Oratore, II, 60.
the time of writing and in Caesar's own prudence, it will be helpful before developing these points, to consider briefly the four main accusations mentioned by T. Rice Holmes. As was said in the introduction to this chapter, they suffice to give us an idea of the specific charges of distortion. Holmes' refutation of these charges, together with the strong arguments from probability, will lead, we think, to the common-sense view that, though the Gallic Wars may have been written to justify the wars of Caesar, it was neither expedient nor necessary for him to depart from the truth to secure this end.

With the last part of the previous statement the opponents of Caesar's credibility will not agree. In their opinion the writer could have secured his end only by tampering with the truth. Following this conviction their next step is to ask themselves what lies Caesar would have to tell in order to make the Helvetii and Ariovistus the aggressors in the contests which inaugurated the Gallic campaign, or in order to give the impression that the Roman general was continually being forced to pursue the war.

First of all they say that Caesar imputed false motives for the Helvetian migration and that he did not give his own real motives for attacking Ariovistus. Caesar and the Romans were afraid

20 Holmes, 217-29.
that the Helvetians were desirous of founding a Gallic Empire, but according to Ferrero:

There were no political designs in their trek at all. The real center of political interest lay in quite a different direction. At the moment of Caesar's arrival what really endangered Gaul was not the Swiss peril, personified in the Helvetian trekkers, but the German peril personified in Ariovistus.21

Yet after thus emphasizing the German peril when discussing the Helvetian campaign,22 the same author thinks that Caesar had to "improvise" a war against Ariovistus. For "no reasonable pretext of war could be alleged against him."23 In order to prove these charges Ferrero used a method which "involved a drastic reconstruction of Caesar's First Commentary."24 Rather than repeat that drastic reconstruction which is presented by him in The Greatness and Decline of Rome, criticized by Holmes,25 re-presented by Ferrero,26 and recriticized by Holmes,27 it seems more prudent to consider the case settled for the present in Caesar's favor.

22 The truth of the matter is that Caesar saw there were two real dangers and, like the prudent general, diplomat and statesman that he was, dealt with one of them at a time.
23 Ferrero, 25.
24 Holmes, 218.
For the impression one gets of Ferrero's prosecution is this. Making great use of the potential for the indicative mood, and acting on the supposition that Caesar had to lie, the historian substitutes for whatever Caesar said *might have happened* that which he thinks *might have happened*. The final result of what may well be called "Ferrero's First Commentary" is a confused drama in which Caesar is making continual mistakes (but succeeding marvelously well in spite of them), and in which the Helvetians go wandering around Gaul, not seeking to establish an Empire, but preparing to attack Ariovistus and the Germans who live in the opposite direction. If Caesar lied, he did so plausibly. But his critic has put together a series of actions based on irrational and contradictory motives. Moreover he has succeeded in confusing not only his readers but himself as well. We have seen one example of this already (where he says that Caesar had to seek a pretext of war with Ariovistus.) Let us look at two others.

Discussing the General Assembly of Gaul in 58 B.C., Ferrero says:

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28 His text and footnotes abound in such expressions as: Is it not simpler to *suppose* (p. 5); Rauchenstein has shown the probability that Caesar is mistaken. (3); It seems unlikely (15); What exactly took place we do not know (16); Very likely it was more serious than Caesar wishes us to know. (27). etc. (Italics mine.)
It was hardly possible to doubt that this general assembly seemed in itself to prove, that the Helvetian war had done more to increase Roman prestige in Gaul than a generation of negotiations and senatorial debates.\textsuperscript{29}

But in the very next paragraph we read the following:

...he realized the full extent of his blunder in attacking the Helvetii...This campaign... had compromised the prestige of Rome in Gaul and lessened his chances in the war against Ariovistus...\textsuperscript{30}

The second example is even stranger. Ferrero thinks that the victory over the Helvetii which Caesar described\textsuperscript{31} was no victory at all - because he decided to rest for three days.\textsuperscript{32}

The obvious question to this is, "If the Helvetians really won the battle, why did they ask for peace at the end of that time?"

That they did ask for peace Ferrero does not deny. The following is his explanation:

Tired out by their long march, and perhaps somewhat bewildered by what had taken place, they had suddenly conceived a fear lest Rome might make them pay dear for their victory.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{29} Ferrero, 23. 
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{31} Bellum Gallicum, I, 26, 27. Hereafter the abbreviation B.G. will be used.
\textsuperscript{32} Ferrero, 17. 
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
They must have been a strange people! A victory so bewilders
them that they decide to surrender to the enemy lest a like event
again befall them.

After considering such interpretation of the Gallic War, we
hold more strongly to the belief that the suspicion of falsehood
in statements which were accepted by contemporaries who were
competent to judge, is apt to make us not serious scholars but
senseless sceptics. That Caesar lied is very possible but the
probability that he did must be proved by better arguments than
the preceding and those which follow.

The second charge to be considered in this thesis is that of
the German scholar, Rauchenstein who argues that the Helvetians
could not have attacked Caesar's entrenchments on the Rhone.
According to him, the incident was invented by Caesar to make his
enemy guilty of the first attack. We may divide his reasons for
denying Caesar's credibility into an argument from probability
and an argument from authority.

Rauchenstein's first argument, then, is that the Helvetii
would not have waited idly from March 28 (the day on which they

34 Cicero, Brutus, 262; Hirtius, B.G., VIII, 1.
35 Rauchenstein, Der Feldzug Casars gegen d. Helvetier, 1882,
51-54, (cited by Holmes, 224).
36 B.G., I, 6, 7, 8.
asked permission to cross the Rhone), until April 13 (the day on which Caesar announced the refusal of their request), if they knew Caesar was preparing his fortifications. Our answer to this objection is that the Helvetians did not know what Caesar was doing. For according to the account of Napoleon III, based on a personal examination of the site by his collaborator, Colnel Stoffel, Caesar's entrenchments could have been built unobserved within three days. Moreover, neither the account of Caesar nor of Dio Cassius states that the Helvetians actually waited a very long time. The charge of Rauchenstein is based then, on two false suppositions — that the building of the entrenchments actually took the whole period of fifteen days, and that they could not be concealed from the enemy.

Arguing from authority, Rauchenstein claims that Caesar lied because Dio Cassius makes no mention of the Helvetians attempting to storm the entrenchments. But an argument from another's silence and particularly in this case, is no argument against Caesar. For Cassius was not a military historian and so was very likely

37 Napoleon III, 59 and note; 58-64.
39 I do not think with Holmes (225) that Dio's narrative implies that they did attack. But it does not exclude that possibility either.
to exclude or omit such a point, whereas Caesar was the military historian par excellence.

We may take advantage of this example to give a general answer to those who cite Dio Cassius and Appian as authorities against Caesar. They usually do so because the Greek historians often add details which are not found in the Romans' account, but do not necessarily contradict him. That is why it may be said, "Dio Cassius is entirely at one with Caesar in his account of the Conquest of Gaul."40 The following passage written by Ernest Cary, editor of the Loeb edition of Dio Cassius, would help to avoid a lot of useless accusations of Caesar:

Unfortunately the value of his history is greatly diminished for us as a result of his blind devotion to two theories governing historical composition in his day. On the one hand... mere details should give place to the larger aspects and significance of events... On the other hand, the historian was never to forget that he was at the same time a rhetorician; if the bare facts were lacking in effectiveness, they could be adorned, modified, or variously combined in the interest of a more dramatic presentation... A good illustration of the transformation the facts could undergo in the interests of these two theories is seen in his account of the conquest of Gaul. It is now generally recognized that there is nothing in this account which need imply an ultimate source other

40 Teuffel-Schwabe, History of Roman Literature, transl. by George C. Warr, George Bell, London, 1900, I 335.
than Caesar's Commentaries; and yet were it not for the familiar names, the reader might readily be excused for failing to recognize many of the events narrated, to such an extent has Dio shifted the emphasis of the facts and assigned new motives while attempting to bring into relief the contrasts between the Gallic and the Roman character. 41

The same defect is implied in Appian:

According to modern canons of criticism, accuracy is the first and indispensable requisite of the historian, but it was not so in ancient times. General conformity to facts was of course necessary, but in most cases the aim was to make an interesting book or to furnish a setting for the political ideas, or the moral principles which he entertained. Appian was neither better nor worse in this respect than the average historians of his time. 42

The third objection, which is simply stated and even more simply answered, is based on the following passage from the first book:

Caesari renuntiatur, Helvetiis esse in animo per agrum Sequanorum et Aeduorum iter in Santonum fines facere, qui non longe a Tolosatium finibus absunt, quae civitas est in provincia. Id si fieret, intellegebat, magno cum periculo provinciae futurum, ut homines bellicosos, populi Romani inimicos, locis patentibus maxime-que frumentariis finitimos haberet. 43

Caesar, it is charged, minimized the distance between the

41 Cary, xiii-xiv.
42 Appian, Roman History, I, xi, ed. and transl. by Horace White, Macmillan, New York, 1912, I.
43 B.G., I, 10.
territory of the Santoni and Tolosates in order to make the danger seem more threatening to the Roman people. Now since the distance is actually one hundred and thirty miles, it must be admitted that the words non longe appear to be a rhetorical exaggeration. But if we use a little common-sense, it is obvious that Caesar was not asking his readers to take on his word alone a fact that they could easily prove false themselves. Non longe meant that since there was no military barrier to keep off the restless foe from the Roman territory, the enemy was in a certain and real sense near to Rome. We might say that a Japanese colony on Hawaii is not far from San Francisco. Caesar could argue from the past diplomatic procedure of the Senate that it, too, thought such an enemy to be a real threat even if it remained in Gaul. For as early as 60, Cicero states in a letter to Atticus that the Senate is sending warnings to the Gallic states telling them not to join the Helvetians who are threatening to attack the province. Whether or not Caesar was looking for a war is not the point of this thesis. We think that he was and that he had enough foresight to choose this province for that very purpose. But we think, too, that he was prudent enough to wait for a good "incident." The Helvetic invasion was an ancient Pearl Harbor.

44 Holmes, 225.
46 "Although the actual invasion did not take place till 58 B.C., it had been long meditated, and was doubtless expected at Rome." How, Cicero's Select Letters, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1934, II, 88.
The last charge of distortion to be considered by us is that the whole rhetorical tone of the Gallic Wars is that Caesar was forced to conquer Gaul. But such an impression arises from a false opinion of Caesar's purpose in writing his history. We have given sufficient reasons above\(^\text{47}\) to show that he was not required to give an ethical justification of his war. And what, we ask, in the Gallic Wars is to make us believe that he was attempting to do so? Once he undertook to conquer all of Gaul, he was forced from one campaign to another and probably found his work harder than he had expected.\(^\text{48}\) But did he ever try to prove that he was forced to conquer Gaul in the first place? He never attempts to deny the Gauls' right to their freedom. Rather he coldly narrates his own suppression of the continued rebellions of a struggling race. Recall the past history of Gallo-Roman relations and you will see why he needed to do no more to win over a Roman.

The consideration of these four typical charges of unreliability in the Commentaries of Caesar have sufficed, we think, to show us the general nature of particular accusations. Let us now restate what we said before is the simpler and more convincing argument, namely, that it was neither necessary nor expedient for

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\(^{47}\) Cf. pp. 22-23, above.

\(^{48}\) Holmes, 227.
Caesar to lie in order to prove the legality of his actions. It was not necessary to lie because after the conference at Lucca his command in Gaul had been prolonged for five years, even though he had been carrying on formally unconstitutional wars since 58. Secondly, the Senate had already decreed unprecedented thanksgivings for his victories over the Belgae and the maritime states. Thirdly, Cicero had given support to a measure in the Senate (in 56) which would provide pay for Caesar's troops (troops raised on his own authority), and had besides "pronounced a glowing panegyric on his exploits in Gaul." Lastly, we may ask with Holmes, "were not illegal and unconstitutional acts frequent in those revolutionary times?" The Constitution was dead. Caesar knew that; he was looking ahead and could not be too concerned with the fact.

Nor does it seem expedient for Caesar to have distorted the truth. His lieutenants could easily have refuted such evident falsehoods as those with which he is charged. Or is it to be

49 B.G., II, 35, "Ob easque res ex litteris Caesaris in dies quindecim supplicatio decreta est, quod ante id tempus accedit nulli."

50 Success was justification enough for the Senate provided the general did not show too many signs of becoming one of its own opponents — as Caesar of course was doing. But if the Senators wanted to oust him, they would have to do so on other grounds than the legality of his wars.

51 How, 153. This was the speech, De Provinciis Consularibus.

52 Holmes, 220.
supposed that everyone in the army was in on the secret? That would be a rather remarkable sign of unity in days when even triumvirs watched one another's actions more closely than those of public enemies.

Legal justification of his campaigns may not, however, have been Caesar's purpose in writing the Commentaries. Perhaps, to use a clever distinction of Holmes, this work was not an apology but an apologia. With a conquered nation behind him and a civil war ahead of him, "the next step in the argument is to conclude that Caesar did write an account of his conquest of Gaul to reassure his friends and to warn his enemies..." This is, we think, a most probable motive for the composition of the Gallic Wars. Rostovtzeff speaks of the Greek historians of the time who were singing the praises of Pompey. Caesar was not going to run the risk of having others ignore his services to the state. Therefore, the ambitious general "himself undertook to explain to the Roman people the significance of his task in Gaul." Now if it is true that, this, and not legal justification, was his main aim in writing, we may ask ourselves which of the norms laid down by Cicero would

53 Ibid., 229.
54 DeWitt, 341. (This is not, however, DeWitt's personal opinion.)
55 Rostovtzeff, 137.
56 Ibid., 148.
Caesar be more likely to violate. It seems that were he to resort to misrepresentation it would be to ignore the last two recommendations of the orator: Ne quae suspicio gratiae sit in scribendo. Ne quae simultatis. Let us see then whether or not Caesar made his work so much of an apologia as to be guilty of partiality or animosity.

Now it is evident that if this discussion is to have any sense whatever, we must understand what is meant by the word partial. For we are, after all, dealing with an autobiography and unless we are content to have Caesar playing a prominent part in his own accounts, even as he did in real life, we are apt to be prejudiced from the start. It must be remembered that not everyone speaking in his own defense has to be partial. Some men do not have to sacrifice truth to gain the end they desire. The only point for us to decide in this part of the thesis, then, is whether or not Caesar magnified his own successes beyond their importance.

Most of the arguments against Caesar's credibility on this score deal with exaggerations of the number of his enemies. Rice Holmes considers eight of these charges which impute lies to Caesar.

57 De Oratore, II, 62.
out of motives of vanity. In almost all of these instances the critics are scholars who come loaded down with subtle arguments from internal and external evidence to prove the military and geographical impossibility of Caesar (admittedly one of the greatest strategists of all time) ever having such a large enemy to contend with as he claims. Now although each of these arguments is refuted point for point by Holmes, it is again doubtful whether his most telling argument - because so simple and obvious - is not the fact that there were certainly many personal enemies of Caesar who would be able and anxious to refute the general's testimony, if it were so obviously exaggerated. Labienus, for instance, went over to Pompey but there is no record of him stating that Caesar's records of his own accomplishments were false. As a matter of fact, if we except the remarks of Suetonius on the criticism of Asinius Pollio, (a criticism which, as it stands, is rather

58 Holmes, 229-49.
59 Napoleon (the general) is a critic of Caesar's truthfulness in one case. He is, it is true, an adversary of weight but the answer of Holmes (243) seems to be cogent.
60 Some of the critics are: Rauchenstein, M. de la Borderie; Ihne, Eiheim.
61 Divus Julius, LVI. "Pollio Asinius, parum diligenter, parumque integra veritate compositos, putat, cum Caesar pleraque... temere crediderit, et...perperam ediderit: existimatque, rescripturum et correcturum fuisse.
vague) the Commentaries were considered accurate by the ancients. 62

There is another simple argument which because of its practicability is very likely to escape the over-zealous test-examiner. Who can doubt that the conquest of Gaul, told without any embellishments, but simply and vividly, just as it happened, was in itself an achievement sufficient to secure for Caesar the fame and the sympathy that he desired? Consider the following passage from Duruy:

But one day news came that he had defeated four hundred thousand Helvetii and a hundred and twenty thousand Suevi, and then the Belgae and Armoricans; another time that he had crossed the Rhine, and that he had carried the Roman eagles into Britain, the very western extremity of the world. And letters of officers and soldiers described those terrible struggles in the midst of wild countries... 63

Now ask yourself why he should tell lies that could easily be refuted when the Romans for the last seven years had been hearing of the conquest of the Gauls, the Germans, ultimique Brittani? Does General Eisenhower have to stretch the facts to win praise for his own achievements? Would a prudent man dare to do so? Such

62 Ibid., "De iisdem commentariis Hirtius ita praedicat: 'Ideo probantur omnium judicio, ut praerepta, non praebita, facultas scriptoribus videatur.'

extrinsic arguments from circumstances show that the Commentaries are worthy of the trust they have commonly received.

But besides being fair to the letter in speaking of his own deeds, it is possible that Caesar has sinned against the spirit of this virtue by failing to mention the actions of his helpers in the great campaigns. Such, however, does not seem to be the case. The exploits of Labienus, for example, are frequently mentioned.64 Perhaps they are coldly narrated but this coldness is a characteristic of his style which applies even to the account of his own accomplishments.65 Brutus' direction of the naval battle against the Veneti is fully described and at least implicitly praised.66 He often speaks highly of the conduct of his own men in battle,67 even though we are perhaps too often reminded that they would die gladly provided Caesar was looking on.68 Again, specific instances of valor69 are singled out to show what the general could rely on

64 B.G., V, 8, 57-58; VI, 7-8; VII, 62, 87.
65 "His coldness is marked, arising from his objective treatment, i.e., his allowing facts to tell their own story without comment." Bond and Walpole, xxxiv.
66 B.G., III, 7-16.
67 Ibid., V, 8. "Qua in re admodum fuit militum virtus laudanda, qui vectoriis gravibusque navigis non intermisso remigandi labore longarum naviun cursum adaequarunt."
68 This is true, however. As was stated above (p.22), loyalty to one commander was the new significance of the Roman army.
69 Cf. the story of Baculus, VI, 38. "...videt, imminere hostes atque in summo esse rem discrimine: capit arma a proximis atque in porta consistit;" also, the words of the famous standard-bearer on the British coast, IV, 25, "Desilite...milites, nisi vultis aquilam hostibus prodere: ego certe meum rei publicae atque imperatori officium praestitero."
for his success. The famous holdout of Quintus Cicero against the Nervii is not forgotten. Perhaps this is all a rhetorical trick to gain sympathy, but the world could use more of this kind of rhetoric. At least Caesar was not so preoccupied with himself that he failed to realize the desire of most readers to hear a little about someone other than the great commander.

How honest is he in recounting his own failures? First of all it might be asked, "Did he make mistakes?" As a matter of fact objective history proves that he did not make too many of them — except to pardon his own enemies at Rome. Suetonius concludes his account of the Gallic campaign with the following:

...per tot successus ter, nec amplius, adversum casum expertus; in Britannia, classe vi tenses- tatis prope absumpta; et in Gallia, ad Gergoviam legione fusa; et in Germanorum finibus, Titu... 71

Now although it is true that he blames this last defeat (which his troops experienced in his absence) on the foolhardiness of a general, 73 the words with which he announces his withdrawal from...

70 B.G. V, 52, "Ciceronem pro ejus merito legionemque collaudat; centuriones singillatim tribunosque militum appellat, quorum egregiam fuisse virtutem testimonio Ciceronis cognoverat."
71 Divus Julius, XXV.
72 B.G., V. 27-38.
73 Ibid., 52. "Quod detrimentum culpa et temeritate legati sit acceptum..."
Gergovia, satis ad Gallicam ostentationem minuendam militumque animos confirmandos existimans are a weak disguise of the fact that he had been beaten. If he were actually interested in covering up his failure, it would be a poor performance for one who was considered one of the finest orators at Rome. Surely his rhetoric could have served him to better advantage. But an example of the lengths to which some of his critics will go to accuse him of rhetorical intentions, is the interpretation they put on his digression on the life and customs of the Gauls and the Germans.

"Some critics - Germans, it need hardly be said - have insisted that the digression was inserted here simply to cover his retreat from the eyes of the Roman public: I invaded and I retreated - these must not stand too close to each other." But, granting that he did not dilate on his failure, is it not fair to say "it was inevitable that some things should be suppressed which would give a handle to his enemies at home." Provided he did not exaggerate his victories as Sulla did, it is unnecessary to

74 Ibid., VII, 53.
75 Ibid., VI, 11.28.
76 Fowler, 216.
77 Ibid., 132.
78 "He (Sulla) would, for example, have his readers believe that at the battle of Sacriportus he lost but 23 men and the enemy 20,000 killed and 8,000 prisoners." Ross, 206.
demand that he write *Confessions*.  

cicero's last norm for credibility in history is that the historian avoid animosity. How does Caesar observe this norm? If the *Commentaries* were published after Labienus went over to the camp of Pompey, that general certainly got more praise than he might have expected from a less gallant foe. On the other hand, if the work was written in view of the Civil War, that fact did not prevent the author from speaking favorably of Pompey whenever he mentions him. Thus, when Caesar asked recruits from Cisalpine Gaul, *Pompeius et rei publicae et amicitiae tribuisset*. Regarding the troubles at Rome in 52, Caesar remarks *iam ille urbanas reas virtute Gnei Pompei commodiorem in statum pervenisse intellexeret*. Though praised highly for his defense against the Nervii, Quintus Cicero is not given a proportionate condemnation for his rashness at Aduatuca. And if we may use the negative argument, there are no digressions to attack his political enemies. In fact, hardly any mention is made of the conditions at Rome except to tell who...  

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79 "His enemies were annoyed at his victories, made capital out of his defeats, and spread false news..." Bond and Walpole, xxxii, note 5.  
80 Cf. note 64.  
81 B.G., VI, 1.  
82 Ibid., VII, 6.  
83 Ibid., VI, 36 "...simul eorum per motus vocibus, qui illius patientiam paene obsessionem appellabant...nullam ejusmodi casum expectans..."
the consuls were in each year of the campaign. Caesar was writing a history of the Gallic War, no matter what his motive was in doing so.

We are now ready to summarize the discussion of this part of the thesis— the conformity of the Commentaries to our first division of Ciceronian norms. What, we ask, should be the reasonable opinion of the credibility of Caesar's narrative? That a man is innocent until proven guilty is one of our most valued principles. Therefore, in the absence of cogent testimony to the contrary; in the light of reliable (though not absolute) testimony to credibility, we announce as our verdict: Although Caesar's accounts of his campaigns against the Gallic and Germanic tribes were written with subjective interest, they are also an objectively accurate summary of an event which held a great significance in the fortunes of Caesar, in the growing Empire of Rome, and in the civilization of the West.

It follows, too, that if the Gallic Wars are credible history, they display a characteristic absent in so much of Roman historical compositions up to the period of Caesar and Cicero. In most of the previous work the historians' reliability was vitiated by an oratorical purpose. But Caesar did not allow the personal motive to give to his work a rhetorical tone. Perhaps the ultimate answer to this apparent contradiction may be found in Fowler's
description of Caesar's character:

His turn of mind, as has already been pointed out was not rhetorical but scientific; it was not words or ideals that attracted him, but facts and knowledge. In other words, he did not follow the pseudo-Hellenic culture of the day but asserted the truly Roman character... This is visible in his writings which have come down to us, which are the expression in the fewest possible words of military, geographical, and ethnological observations... And...it may be traced in the whole of his political work; not only in his steady refusal to deal with ideals and fancies...but in the actual application of scientific knowledge to matters of public concern.84

Whether or not Caesar would stoop to distorting the truth is not, however, the question of this thesis. It is quite possible that in the composition of the Civil Wars when the political and constitutional issues were so involved,85 Caesar might have had to use falsehood to secure his end. Fortunately, that does not concern us now. For the problem of this chapter was not, "Is Caesar a credible historian?" but "Are the Gallic Wars credible history?"

Having proved the credibility of Caesar's Commentaries, let us proceed to see whether he has provided us with a literary

84 Fowler, 358
85 How, Appendix 5, "The Legal Question at Issue between Caesar and the Senate," 312-317.
history as well, by conforming to those norms of Cicero for historical writing which deal with presentation and style.
CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORICAL ARTISTRY OF THE GALIC WARS

Although so little of Roman historical literature was really reliable, the recommendations of Cicero for attaining truth in this field are comparatively brief. For he was himself more concerned with an artistic deficiency which, we might say, doomed the historian's work to a literary mortality from the very outset. It may be that he did not recognize the scientific weakness of previous Roman history. But at any rate he did realize that reliability was the first requirement for good history. We have tried to show in the preceding chapter that the Gallic Wars meets his demands in this regard, elementary as they may be.

It is, then, on this foundation that Cicero proceeds "to build a theory of scientific criticism that would do credit to any modern University professor." Such an estimate is, of course, exaggerated if the meaning is that we have here a completely expressed theory of history. But the statement may certainly be

1 "These general chronicles, treatises for scholastic instruction or manuals for reference, and the whole literature therewith connected which subsequently became very copious in the Latin language also, can hardly be reckoned as belonging to artistic historical composition." Mommsen, IV, 604.
accepted if it means that there is contained in this passage from the *De Oratore*, in germ at least, a declaration of the simple requirements of historical craftsmanship. Although no one will deny that there have been untold advances in historical methodology since the days of the ancients, we must remember that it is the methodology and not so much the ideal that has been perfected. That Cicero's ideal, for example, was a high one is shown by the following passage in which his recommendations are summed up by Aubrey Gwynn, who uses modern expressions to denote the same suggestions that the Roman critic made so many centuries ago.

An accurate knowledge of chronology and geography, due attention to the causes which underlie superficial phenomena, the laws of human psychology, the standards of public morality and the moral influences of great personalities: all these Cicero requires, and his concluding precept is a warning against too much attention to literary ornament.

If it is asked why Cicero's artistic norms are more developed than those which deal with the scientific aspect of the historian's task, the probable answer is that the ancients regarded history as, being primarily a work of art. Although we have seen the dangers involved in too close an adherence to this view, it cannot be denied that the too scientific approach can be equally unfortunate.

3 Gwynn, 106.
"Occasionally historians have tried to avoid the contamination of art by sheer dullness in their effort to avoid being popular or literary."\(^5\) As a literary critic Cicero was anxious to avoid such a result. As sketched by him the rules for artistic composition may be divided into those treating of historical presentation and historical style.

In dealing with historical presentation, Cicero emphasizes two qualities, clarity and what may be called "historical perspective," the latter a gift possessed by very few of Caesar's predecessors. Before proceeding to determine to what extent the work of Caesar exemplifies these points, a reminder is necessary. In his own opinion Caesar was not composing a finished history but rather *commentarii rerum gestarum* for the sake of future historians.\(^6\) A short explanation of the distinction between the two will show why we must keep this fact in mind when applying the Ciceronian norms to the *Gallic Wars*. For these norms are very briefly stated and will consequently demand modification to suit the particular type of history under discussion.

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5 Godolphin, xv.
Originally *commentarii* had the technical meaning of being notes or memoranda which were given to a historian as material on which he could base his more complete work. Thus Cicero offered *commentarii* to Lucecius for writing a history of his famous consulship. But in addition to this purely preliminary function, the *Commentarii* were becoming in Caesar's time a distinct literary genre. They were not intended to secure a large circulation and (except in the case of Caesar) they were not written with too great an attempt at literary style. This new kind of history formed a sort of mean between the annalistic method of the Romans which simply grouped all events according to strict chronological sequence, and the more difficult but intelligent method which grouped events according to their causal connections. *Commentarii* were similar to the annals in this respect that they set down the events of every year separately. But they were not exactly the same because "in Caesar's youth...the distinction was already made that in the composition of *res gestae* it was not enough to tell what was done, *sed etiam quo consilio quaque ratione gesta essent."  

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8 By way of confirming his thesis that Caesar wrote his work purely for the sake of posterity, Norman DeWitt points out the similarity between the literary type he chose and the *Ephemerides* or *Hypomnemata* of Ptolemy which recorded the conquests of Alexander, "both of which terms were to be translated by the Latin *commentarii*," 345.
10 Kelsey, 233.
From this distinction between complete history and commentarii it follows that we must not attempt to make Caesar's work exemplify the requirements of Cicero to a greater extent than the latter himself would demand. For in drawing up his norms it seems that he had in view a history which would cover a large span of years. As a matter of fact he implies in the De Legibus that he was contemplating writing such a history himself. This does not mean, however, that we cannot use the norms expressed in the De Oratore as a basis for examining the artistry of the Gallic Wars. For though a universal history or a history of Rome ab urbe condita would give a writer a fuller scope for putting into practice the Cicero\-nian advice, even the writer of Commentaries should be able to profit by applying the same rules within the limitations of this new literary genre. We will then have an opportunity to see that Caesar appreciated the value of Cicero's canons. It was in fact because he did appreciate them that he "probably without

11 De Legibus, I, 8.
12 Had Caesar devoted himself to writing a universal history, he would probably have been most capable of exercising historical perspective — at least if we may judge by his ability to note trends in Roman politics and foresee the doom of the Constitution.
realizing it himself, produced a literary masterpiece of the first rank. 13

It will be helpful before we proceed to the detailed proof of this last statement to repeat the complete passage in the De Oratore which deals with the rules for an effective presentation:

...ipsa autem exaedificatio posita est in rebus et verbis: rerum ratio ordinem temporum desiderat, regionum descriptionem; volt etiam, quoniam in rebus magnis memoriaque dignis consilia primum, deinde acta, postea eventus expectantur, et de consiliis significari quid scriptor probet et in rebus gestis declarari non solum quid actum aut dictum sit, sed etiam quo modo, et cum eventu dicatur, ut causae explicantur omnes vel casus vel sapientiae vel temeritatis hominumque ipsorum non solum res gestae, sed etiam, qui fama et nomine excellent, de cujusque vita atque natura...14

In stating his first rule, rerum ratio ordinem temporum desiderat, regionum descriptionem Cicero is emphasizing, we think, that quality which is of the greatest necessity in any kind of writing. Clarity manifests itself in various ways in the various kinds of literature. Thus in a speech it would be probably most exercised in the transition from one argument to another, or in the precise statement of one's own case as opposed to that of the

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13 Kelsey, 219. So, although the words of Wight Duff, "the annalistic method which culminated in Caesar" are true in their context, (p. 417) they are apt to be a little misleading. Even were we to prescind from the style of the Gallic Wars (of which more later), the work is far superior to anything the annalists ever produced.
14 De Oratore, II, 16.
adversary; in drama, in the steady development of an intricate plot or delineation of character; in a treatise on rhetoric, for example, in the orderly division of the topics to be treated, all in their appointed order. In history which often treats of events long past or in regions unfamiliar to the reader, it would come most into play in presenting a clear chronological and topological picture of the events to be narrated. More than this of course is demanded of the historian but this, at least, is essential. For Crassus' words regarding the necessity of clearness is the speech may be applied to the composition of history as well. "We cannot hope that he who cannot make us understand what he says, will make us admire what he says." But despite the fact that clarity is a sine qua non in writing, there may be various grades of excellence in obtaining this essential objective. Let us see then how Caesar has succeeded in presenting the ordinem temporum and regi-num descriptionem in a typical instance - the expedition against the Helvetians which is related in the First Commentary.

15 This is not the only application of clarity in history, but it is, we think, the chief one.  
16 *De Oratore*, III, 38. "Neque sperare possumus eum qui non dicat quod intelligamus hunc posse quod admiremur dicere."  
17 In the following paragraphs the italicized expressions represent temporal references found in Caesar's text.
At the beginning of the book the narrow boundaries of Helvetia are accurately described, and we are told that the Gauls first conceived the idea of emigrating from them when Messalla and Marcus were consuls. They thought that two years would be sufficient for the preparations, and decided on the route through the Roman province because the Rhone was easily fordable there, whereas the route which ran between the Jura range and the river could easily be blocked against them. Accordingly, in the consulship of Lucius Piso and Gabinius they were ready to move and agreed to meet at the banks of the Rhone on March 28. Hearing of the movement, Caesar hastened to the mustering place and delayed his answer to the Helvetic request for free passage through the Roman territory. He spent the intervening time by destroying the bridge at Geneva, and by building an entrenchment from the Lake of Geneva.

18 B.G., I, 2. "...undique loci natura Helvetii continentur: una ex parte flumine Rheno altissimo, qui Agrum Helvetium a Germanis dividit, tertia lacu Lemmano et flumine Rhedano, qui est inter Sequanos et Helvetios, altera ex parte monte Iura altissimo, qui provinciam nostram ab Helvetios dividit."
19 Ibid., "...M. Messalla et M. Pisone consulibus."
20 Ibid., 3, "Ad eas res conficiendas biennium satis esse duxerunt."
21 Ibid., 6, "...inter fines Helvetiorum et Allobrogum...Rhodanus fluit isque nonnullis locis vado transitur."
22 Ibid., "...mons autem altissimus impendebat, ut facile perpauci prohibere possent."
23 Ibid., 6, "Is dies erat a.d. V. Kal. Apr. L. Pisone, A. Gabino consulibus."
24 Ibid., 7, "...legatis respondit, diem se ad deliberandum sump- turum: si quid vellent, ad Id. April. revertentur."
25 Ibid., "Pontem, qui erat ad Genevam, iubet rescindi."
to the Jura mountains. On April 13 he finally refused the request to pass through the province. After a vain attempt to force the passage of the Rhone, the Helvetians withdrew and decided to go out of their territory by the alternate route — through the land of the Sequani. Caesar hurried back to Italy, enrolled two legions and began his march back over the Alps to pursue the Helvetian host. In the land of the Ceutrones his path was blocked by the Gallic tribes, but only for a short time. For defeating them, he arrived on the seventh day in the land of the Vocontii in Further Gaul. From that point he easily proceeded to the country of the Segusiavi, the first tribe across the Rhone. By this time the Helvetians had reached the land of the Aedui. At the latter's request Caesar decided to attack the invaders. When three-fourths of the Helvetians had crossed the Saone, which separates the territory of the Aedui from that of the Sequani, Caesar came

26 Ibid., 8. "...a lacu Lemanoo, qui in flumen Rhodanum influit, ad montem Juram...milia passuum decem novem murum...fossamque perducit."
27 (P.44) Ibid., "Ubi ea dies, quam constiterat venit...negat se...dare."
28 Ibid., 9, "Relinquebatur una per Sequanos via." This had previously been described as "angustum et difficile, inter montem Iuram et flumen Rhodanum, vix qua singuli carri ducerentur..." Ibid., 6.
29 Ibid., 10, "...in fines Vocontiorum ulterioris provinciae die septimo pervenit; inde in Allobrogum fines, ab Allobrogibus in Segusiavos exercitum ducit. Hi sunt extra provinciam trans Rhodanum primi."
30 Ibid., 11, "Helvetii iam...in Aeduorum fines pervenerant."
31 Ibid., 12, "Flumen est Arar, quod per fines Aeduorum et Sequanorum in Rhodanum influit...Ubi...Caesar certior factus est, tres jam partes...id flumen traduxisse...de tertia vigilia cum legionibus tribus e castris profectus ad eam partem pervenit quae nondum flumen transierat."
upon the remaining quarter in the third watch and routed it.

Transferring his army over the Saone in one day — an operation which had taken the enemy twenty days to complete he scared the Helvetians into sending deputies. They refused the Romans' terms however and moved their camp on the following day. Caesar pursued for about a fortnight.

Meanwhile Caesar was trying to get the corn promised by the Aedui because it was only early spring. After learning that Dumnorix, the Aeduan, was causing the delay and had also been the cause of Caesar's cavalry retreating a few days before, he secured himself against further trouble from that source. On the same day the enemy came up close to the Roman camp, and Caesar told Labienus to seize a height overlooking the enemy. The latter left at the third watch and Caesar himself advanced in the fourth

32 Ibid., 13, "...cum id, quod ipsi diebus xx aegerrime confecerant, ut flumen transirent, illum uno die fecisse intellexerent, legatos ad eum mittunt."
33 Ibid., 15, "Postero die castra ex eo loco movent..."
34 Ibid., "Ita dies circiter quindecim iter fecerunt..."
35 Ibid., 16, Interim cotidie Caesar Aeduos frumentum...flagitare. Nam propter frigora, quod Gallia sub septentrionibus, ut ante dictum est, posita est, non modo frumenta in agris matura non erant, sed ne pabuli quidem satis magna copia suppeteret..."
36 Ibid., 18, "Reperiebat etiam...quod proelium equestre adversum paucis ante diebus esset factum..."
37 Ibid., 21, "Eodem die...certior factus, hostes sub Monte con-sedisse millia passuum ab ipsius castris octo..."
watch. 

38 At dawn Labienus had taken the height and Caesar had come up to within a mile of the enemy. 39 But after his plan had failed because of a blunder of one of his trusted lieutenants, the Helvetians shifted camp when the day was far spent. 40 Caesar followed on the same day and pitched his own camp three miles distant. On the morrow he ceased his pursuit and turned towards Bibracte, which was eighteen miles away because he had only two days corn supply. Thinking the retreat a detour, the enemy turned to attack him. In a fierce battle that lasted from the seventh hour to eventide, the Romans were victorious. 43 The surviving Helvetians marched all through the night and continuously for the next three days, till they reached the land of the Lingones. After a three days' interval Caesar started again in pursuit. 45 The Helvetians could stand no more. Their envoys came with terms of surrender and the threat to Rome was a thing of the past.

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38 Ibid., "De tertia vigilia Titum Labienum...summum iugum montis ascendere iubet...Ipse de quarta vigilia...ad eos contendit."
39 Ibid., 22, "Prima luce, cum summus mons a Labieno teneretur, ipse ab hostium castris non longius mille et quingentis passibus abesset."
40 Ibid., "Multo denique die...Caesar cognovit...Helvetios castra movisse."
41 Ibid., "Exe die, quo consuerat intervallo, hostes sequitur."
42 Ibid., 23, "Postridie ejus diei...iter ab Helvetiis avertit ac Bibracte ire contendit."
43 Ibid., 26, "Nam hoc toto proelio, cum ab hora septima ad vesperum pugnatum sit."
44 Ibid., "Ex eo proelio circiter milia hominum cxxx superfuerunt eaque tota nox continenter ierunt: nullam partem noctis itinerari intermisso in fines Lingonum die quarto pervenerunt, cum et propter vulnera militum et propter sepulturam occisorum nostri triduum morati eos sequi non potuissent."
45 Ibid., 26, "Ipse triduo intermisso cum omnibus copiis eos sequi."
In the preceding paragraphs we have emphasized the temporal references found in the report of the Helvetian Campaign, and have cited only those geographical references which would make the short summary intelligible and at the same time suffice to exemplify the clarity of Caesar's narrative in this regard. But his own descriptions of the country are fuller and more frequent, although they may still be considered brief and even cryptic. Besides the famous Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres and the general description of Gaul which follows, there are other numerous descriptions of particular regions, e.g. of Helvetia and the various camp sites which must be clearly pictured by the reader who desires an intelligent understanding of the battles. References to the Rhine give us an impression of its psychological and geographical importance as a barrier between two great races.

46 Ibid., I, 1.
47 Cf., n. 18 above.
48 E.G., I, 38, "Namque omnium rerum, quae ad bellum usui erant, summa erat in eo oppido facutas, idque natura loci sic muniebatur, ut magnum ad ducendum bellum daret facultatem, propter ea quod flumen Dubis ut circino circumductum paene totum oppidum cingit; reliquum spatium, quod est non amplius pedum millesexcentorum, qua flumen intermittit, mons continet magna altitudine, ita, ut radices montis ex utraque parte ripae fluminis contingant. Hunc murus circumdatus arceum efficit et cum oppido conjungit." Cf. also, II, 5, 8, 29; III, 1.
49 Ibid., IV, 16, "...cum videret Germanos tam facile impelli, ut in Galliam venirent, suis quoque rebus eos timere voluit, cum intellegerent et posse et audere populi Romani exercitum Rhenum transire."
50 Ibid., "Populi Romani imperium Rhenum finire: si se invito Germanos in Galliam transire non sequum existimaret, cur sui quicquam esse imperii aut potestatis trans Rhenum postularet?"
There are good descriptions of the land of Britain \( ^{51} \) (including one of the white cliffs of Dover) \( ^{52} \) which are accurate enough, considering the limitations of ancient geography. \( ^{53} \) As a matter of fact, with a reasonably good map to aid the eye, the Gallic Wars comprises one of the easiest high-school texts to follow. Caesar has all but thrust a teaching device into the instructor's hand. We think, then, that Cicero would admit that the recommendation he gives in the Orator when speaking of history, in qua...regio saepe aut pugna describitur, \( ^{54} \) was more than sufficiently exemplified in Caesar's work.

We may perhaps best sum up our remarks on the chronological and topological clarity of the Gallic Wars by reminding the reader that it is one of the most famous military histories of all time. This explains its peculiar attraction for the Emperor Napoleon, and the interest which was taken in it by the strategists of all time and especially during the fifteenth and

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51 Ibid., V, 11, 12, 13.
52 Ibid., IV, 23.
54 Orator, 66.
sixteenth centuries.\(^{55}\) Clearly it would never have gained such a reputation had not its author paid very close attention to details of terrain and to the order of time. For the world's fate has often been decided by the action of a moment. Being a soldier, it is precisely in his battle descriptions that Caesar shows such a marked superiority to the best of Roman historians—successors as well as predecessors. Livy becomes strangely obscure in too many of his military accounts, because he had only the scholar's acquaintance with them. Duff says that his "battle-pieces are those of an artist, not of a soldier. They entertain rather than instruct."\(^{56}\) We think that to Livy rather than to Caesar, apply the following words of Ferrero:

...he gives minute and coloured descriptions of battles and sieges, to please the peaceful burgher in Italy, who enjoyed, as men in a peaceful and settled society always will enjoy, letting his imagination roam at leisure over scenes of fighting and adventure, as he turned the pages lazily over in the comfortable seclusion of his frescoed veranda.\(^{57}\)

Here at least is a clear instance in which we may judge of Ferrero's ability to appraise the work of Caesar, and our estimate

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\(^{56}\) Duff, 657.

\(^{57}\) Ferrero, II, 162.
is not too favorable. For if we may make use of a variation on the words of Duff, the almost universal opinion of Caesar as a military historian would be as follows: "Caesar's battle-pieces are those of an artist as well as of a soldier. They entertain and instruct." In this respect Caesar is to Livy as Xenophon was to Thucydides.58 Both Xenophon and Caesar were experienced soldiers who added to the ability of grasping the significant details of terrain and time during the heat of battle, an equally remarkable facility in setting forth these details vividly and intelligently for the amateurs who would read their accounts. It is this Caesarian characteristic — one that was his both as a soldier and as an opponent of the over-rhetorical style in history — which distinguishes the Commentaries from the work of either Dio Cassius or Appian, as the more reliable report of the Gallic campaign. The latter historians, through their efforts to please, confused the accounts of their main source, though all they had to do was copy its careful attention to topological and temporal details which means so much in a military history.59

58 Godolphin, xxxii, "When Xenophon criticizes the tactics of strategy of the commanders he is usually on solid ground; when he describes manoeuvres, the lucidity and intelligibility of his style is in pleasing contrast to the complex and often obscure mode of expressions adopted by Thucydides."

But the **Gallic Wars** owes its popularity to other merits than clarity. Roger Cram is more than correct when he says, "I submit that military history and military science of antiquity are not very exciting reading, especially for the high-school students."\(^{60}\) Were strategic accuracy the only, or even the chief, recommendation of the *Commentaries*, it would be hard to explain why by the middle of the nineteenth century in America "Caesar had joined Cicero and Vergil to form the inescapable triumvirate...of secondary school study."\(^{61}\) As a matter of fact, writing a useful military account was only incidental to Caesar's main purpose.\(^{62}\) There is a more humane significance to the history of the Gallic campaigns. This, we think, is due to the conformity of the work with the other Ciceronian norms of historical presentation — those that deal with the *designs* and *methods* and *results* of the actions described, and with the *characters* which play prominent parts in the drama. To these points we shall now turn our attention.

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62 "Caesar, qualified to deal with Hannibal on equal terms, gave us involuntarily a valuable military work, whereas he himself looked upon it rather as historical and political." Spaulding, 662.
Although Cicero would probably not object to a historian merely recording events of minor significance, he considers it his clear duty when dealing with significant happenings to take the reader "behind the scenes" by showing him the why and wherefore of that significance. 63 The first step in this direction is to point out the designs or plans of the human instruments who turned the course of events into their different channels. As an example of Caesar's observance of this canon, let us take the account of the campaign against Ariovistus. 64 For if the author's purpose was to justify his war from a legal standpoint, here, if any place he would be interested in depicting both his own designs and those of his enemy. Moreover, he attains his end by a method that is particularly skillful — a speech of Divitiacus, the Aeduan. It was delivered before Caesar at the Gallic convention which followed the defeat of the Helvetians, and had for its purpose the securing of the conqueror's aid against the German invader. Whether or not the speech was actually delivered by the Gaul does not concern us now. This device was a convention in ancient history-writing and did not necessarily entail falsehood.

63 De Oratore, II, 61. "Quoniam in rebus magnis memoriaque dignis, consilia primum, deinde acta, postea eventus exspectantur...."
64 E. G. I, 31-47.
The speech begins with a brief description of the political situation in Gaul — a two-party system which was the occasion of Ariovistus' intervention to "help" the Sequani.\textsuperscript{65} In the course of the speech we have the suggestion of two of the reasons for Caesar's decision to interfere on behalf of the Gauls. They are the danger of further German advances across the Rhine,\textsuperscript{66} and the threat of a general migration of all the Gauls,\textsuperscript{67} similar to that of the Helvetians which Caesar had just succeeded in halting. By the concluding sentence of the speech:

\[\text{Caesarem vel auctoritate sua atque exercitus vel recenti victoria vel nomine populi Romani deterrere posse, ne maior multitudo Germanorum Rhenum traducatur, Galliamque omnem ab Ariovisti injuria posse defendere.}\textsuperscript{68}\]

Caesar shows that this is no petty quarrel with a German prince, but a conflict upon whose outcome will depend the subjection of

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 31. "Locutus est pro his Divitiacu Aeduus: Galliae totius factiones esse duas: harum alterius principatum tene-re Aeduos, alterius Arvernos. Hi cum tantopere de potenti inter se multos annos contendenterent, factum esse, uti ab Arver-nis Sequanisque Germani mercede arcesserentur..."  
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., "Futurum esse paucis annis, uti omnes ex Galliae inibus pellerentur atque omnes Germani Rhenum transirent..."  
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., "Nisi si quid in Caesare populoque Romano sit auxilii, omnibus Gallis idem esse faciendum quod Helvetii fecerint, ut domo emigrent, aliud domicilium, alias sedes, remotas a German-nis, petant fortunamque, quaecumque accidat, experiantur."  
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
all Gaul to the German or the Roman empire. Now that the war has taken on a fuller significance we are prepared when, a few paragraphs later, Caesar explicitly enumerates his own reasons for engaging Ariovistus. The first is that the Aedui are "friends" of the Roman people, according to an official senatorial decree. Secondly, the frequent crossing of the Rhine by the Germans was not a good omen for the Roman state. Lastly, Ariovistus had committed the unforgivable sin in the eyes of the Romans — forgetting the dignity of their name. This, then, was the meaning of the war with Ariovistus.

Similarly the plan of the emigrating Helvetians is clearly stated — to show that the movement was no mere domestic concern but an international problem. Dumnorix, according to Caesar, hoped to unite with the Aedui and the Sequani in securing the

69 Ibid., 33. "Et secundum ea multae res eum hortabuntur, quare sibi eam rem cogitandum et suscipiendam putaret, imprimis, quod Aeduos, fratres consanguineosque saepenumbero a senatu appellatos, in servitute atque in dicione videbat...teneri...

70 Ibid., "Paulatim autem Germanos consuescere Rhenum transire, et in Galliam magnam eorum multitudinem venire, populo Romano periculosum videbat..."

71 Ibid., "Ipse autem Ariovistus tantos sibi spiritus, tantam arrogantiam sumpserat, ut ferendus non videretur."

72 Meaning, we think, is a justifiable interpretation of the word, consilia, in the text of Cicero. By learning the plans of the persons engaged in the actions, we come to know the significance of those actions.
mastery of all Gaul. Nor was it only Rome's hopes to the
domination of Gaul that were threatened, but Her very security
was being weakened. For Caesar had heard that the Helvetians
intended to march through the land of the Sequani and Aedui into
that of the Santones, who were not far from Toulouse in the
Roman province.

What, finally, is the significance of the various rebellions
 recounted in the course of the Commentaries? The statement
which gives the reason for the Belgian conspiracy:

\[
\text{ita populi Romani hiemare exercitum atque in-
veterascere in Gallia moleste ferebant...}
\]

the suspicions of the Veragri and Seduni during the campaign of
the year 56 that:

\[
\text{Romanos non solum itinerum causa, sed etiam}
\text{perpetuae possessionis culmina Alpium occupare conari et ea loca finitimae provinciae}
\text{adiungere...}
\]

the hope of the maritime states:

\[
\text{in ea libertate quam a maioribus accéperint}
\text{permanere quam Romanorum servitutem per-
ferre.}
\]

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73 B.G., I, 3. "Hac oratione adducti inter se fidem et iusiuran-
dum dant et regno occupato per tres potentissimos ac firmis-
simos populos totius Galliae sese potiri posse sperant."
74 B.G., I, 10.
75 B.G., II, 1.
76 B.G., III, 2.
77 Ibid., 8.
and numerous other instances make it clear that the Gallic con-
test is one between a people struggling for their freedom and a
powerful state which is greedy of empire. If the reader fails
to get that impression while reading of the various battles and
journeys of Caesar's army, it is not the historian's fault.78

Cicero was definitely thinking of the annalistic method
which characterized so much of the Roman history-writing before
his time, when he stated the norm to be considered next. The
annals were often little more than catalogues of deeds and
names, but to suit him, the historian must not tell only what
was said or done but how it was said or done.79 Now was Caesar
any better than his predecessors in this regard? We have already
mentioned the importance of his work as a military text-book

78 The added recommendation of Cicero that the historian tell
what plans he approves and disapproves is one of those that
has to be modified according to the type of work under con-
sideration. Since the Gallic Wars is autobiographical, there
is no need of Caesar telling what plans he approves. Naturally,
hes approves of his own and disapproves of those of his enemies.
But provided that the designs are stated, we have no complaint.
It is besides far from clear whether or not history profits
from this moralistic interpretation of which Cicero speaks
and of which the Romans were so fond.

79 De Oratore, II, 61. "vult etiam... in rebus gestis declarari
non solum quid actum aut dictum sit, sed etiam quo modo..."
because of its detailed descriptions of battles. The reality of his conquest is increased for the reader by frequent passages like the description of the British war-chariots, the besieging of the Gallic fortifications, and the palisades at Alesia. He was not content to tell us that he crossed the Rhine but gave a full engineer's report of the bridge which he built for that purpose. Such details alone would make the work far more than the mere listing of the number of his enemies and the bold account of his victories. More important, however, is the success with which Caesar has fulfilled this norm of telling quo modo quid actum aut dictum sit by the general impression which the reader gets from the work as a whole. The author was not, as a matter of fact, too interested in telling the Romans that Gaul was conquered. They all knew that. But he was particularly interested in telling them that Gaul was conquered through the speed and statesmanship of the Roman commander. So often does the word celeritas occur in the Commentaries.

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80 B.G. IV, 33.
81 B.G. VII, 22.
82 Ibid., 72.
83 B.G., IV, 17. The passage is a difficult and concise bit of Latin and shows Caesar's skill in handling the language.
84 Edwards, xii, xiv.
85 B.G., I, 10, 13, 38, 54; II, 3. 12; III, 29; IV, 14; V, 11.
that he who misses this point in the history of Caesar misses
the secret of his success not only in the conquest of Gaul but
in the Civil War as well. 86

After the historian has shown the significance of the var-
ious actions and the method by which these actions were carried
out, it remains for him to state the results of those actions.
And in so doing, he is to explain whether the results are the
work of chance, foresight, or recklessness, to mention a few
possibilities. 87 Now it is obvious that the conquest of Gaul
was portrayed by Caesar as the result of his singular foresight,
and it would take too long to cite the references by which he
manages to keep this prominently before the reader's mind. But
were there not other causes which contributed to the conquest of
Gaul? Why did Caesar's enemy fail to achieve a result propor-
tionate to its courage? Can we find the answer to this in the
Commentaries? Some, at least, of the reasons are stated, though
not explicitly. First of all, the Gauls had to contend with a
great general and a great statesman. Secondly, they were being

86 "But Pompey's plan of campaign, though excellent, was unsuc-
cessful. His failure was mainly due to the astonishing acti-
vity, speed, and resoluteness of his rival."
Rostovtzeff, II, 141.
87 De Oratore, II, 61. "vult etiam...et cum eventu dicatur, ut
causae explicantur omnes vel casus vel sapientiae vel tene-
ritatis..."
led against an equally brave but better disciplined army. Third and most important of all, the Gauls were a fickle people and despite all their courage, they could never hold on long to one course or policy. If we seek then the causes for the conquest of Gaul, the answer is had in the generalship of Caesar, the courage of his army, and the weak (but not cowardly) character of his foe.

By considering the accounts of a few of the battles, we may see that Caesar put into practice the Ciceronian principle of stating causes in the minor incidents of his work as well. For instance, he blames the defeat of Titurius and Cotta on the temerity of the former in leading the army out of camp on the mere word of the enemy. When relating the attack of the

88 B.G. IV, 5. Est enim hoc Gallicae consuetudinis, uti et viatores etiam invitatos consistere cogant, et quid quisque eorum de quaque re audierit aut cognoverit, quaerant, et mercatores in oppidis vulgus circumsistat quibusque regionibus veniant quasque ibi res cognoverint, pronuntiare cogant. His rebus atque auditionibus permoti de summis saepe rebus consilia insunt, quorum eos in vestigio poenitere necesse est, cum incertis rumoribus serviant et plerique ad voluntatem eorum ficta respondant."

Cf. also B.G. IV, 13. "...et cognita Gallorum infirmitate, quantum iam apud eos hostes uno proelio auctoritatis essent consecuti, sentiebat."

89 B.G., V, 52. "...quod detrimentum culpa et temeritate legati sit acceptum, hoc aequiore animo ferendum docet..."
Sugumbri on Quintus Cicero, he blames his lieutenant for carelessness in sending men out to forage in dangerous circumstances, but he goes to great lengths to ascribe the defeat to fortune — or accident, as we would interpret it.90 The first division of the Helvetians to suffer defeat at the hands of Caesar was the canton of the Tigurini which had once slain Piso, a relative of his. But he did not claim to have foreseen the fittingness of this retribution. Instead he simply says that it had come about either through chance or by the providence of the immortal gods.91

It is evident from Cicero's last norm for historical presentation that he does not wish events to be narrated impersonally as though they happened independently of the characters involved. For he says explicitly that the life and manners of the main characters, at least, are to be described.92 And on this score, too, Caesar must receive our favorable vote. Although he is himself the most prominent character in the Gallic Wars, he is careful not to pass over the significance of his

90 B.G., VI, 42. "...multum fortunam in repantino hostium adventu potuisse iudicavit."
91 B.G., I, 12. "Ita sive casu sive consilio deorum immortalium, quae pars civitatis Helvetiae insignem calamitatem populo Romano intulerat, ea princeps poenas persolvit."
92 De Oratore, II, 61. "hominumque ipsorum non solum res gestae, sed etiam, qui fama et nomine excellant, de cujusque vita atque natura..."
opponents. We have already spoken of his descriptions of the
Gallic character as a contributing cause to their ultimate de-
feat. There are besides frequent references to their curiosity
and skill in imitation. The sixth book contains the famous
comparison between the Gauls and the Germans. How often does
Caesar attribute the decline of Gaul to the infiltration of
traders, and the supremacy of the Rhine-dwelling tribes to the
proximity of the Germans who kept their neighbors in a hardy
spirit by the constant threat of invasion? His account of the
character of the Nervii is a sample of his procedure when pre-
paring to report another conquest of his more difficult ene-
mies. Another example is the two paragraph passage devoted to
the customs of the Suebi, who have the significant trait of de-
siring as much untenanted land on their borders as possible.

93 B.G. IV, 5.
94 B.G., VII, 22. "Singulari militum nostrorum virtuti consilia
culuisque modi Gallorum occurebant, ut est summae genus sol-
liertiae atque ad omnia imitanda et efficienda, quae ab
quoque traduntur, aptissimum."
95 B.G., VI, 11-24.
96 B.G., II, 15. "Nullum aditum esse ad eos mercatoribus: nihil
pati vini reliquarumque rerum inferri, quod iis rebus relan-
guescere animos...et remitti virtutem existimarent; esse
homines feros magnaeque virtutis, increpitare atque incusare
reliquos Belgas..."
97 B.G., II, 4.
98 B.G., II, 15, 27.
99 B.G., IV, 3. "Publice maximam putant esse laudem, quam latis-
sime a suis finibus vacare agros: hac re significari, magnum
numerus civitatatum suam vim sustineri non posse."
Leaders of particular importance come in for special mention. Caesar, for example, gives a good deal of attention to Dumnorix, the Aeduan, who was popular, openhanded, and as ambitious for primacy in the state as was the Roman himself. 100 Another leading figure is Ariovistus whose speech 101 reveals a resolute leader of a proud people, and emphasizes the danger of that struggle which forms the subject of the second half of the first Commentary. No wonder the Romans were signing their wills in the camp and weeping uncontrollably before the battle! 102

Of a third hero, Vercingetorix, we need only say that his reputation as the champion of French independence has been won for him only through the pages of Caesar.

There are, too, in addition to these names of greater importance, about ninety-three "minor characters" in the Gallic Wars. 103 This is a surprisingly large number for a relatively

100 B.G., I, 9, 18; V, 6. "Erat una cum ceteris Dumnorix, de quo ante...dictum est...eum cupidum rerum novarum, cupidum imperii, magni animi, magnae...auctoritatis..."
102 Ibid., 39. "Hi neque vultum fingere neque interdum lacrimas tenere poterant: abditi in tabernaculis aut suum fatum quarebantur aut cum familiaribus suis commune periculum miserabantur. Volgo totis castris testamenta obsignabantur." This scene, is one of the most human of the many similar ones related in the Commentaries.
short work. What is more surprising, many of these characters are pictured in a way to be long remembered. We have, for instance, the general who "had reported to him as seen that which he had not seen." This gives a humorous touch to the narrative and incidentally, shows (without Caesar having to draw the moral) how uncertain are the fortunes of war, when a trusted aide could fail his general by letting the imagination play tricks on him. Other of these minor figures have been mentioned in the preceding chapter as an argument for Caesar's impartiality. Such care in depicting those who played both incidental and prominent parts in the story of his conquest has been, we think, a factor contributing greatly to the popularity of Caesar's Commentaries. For in them the thoughtful and not too unimaginative reader will find a true-to-life description of a real struggle of a dying nation against a rising empire, and from that story will be able to find many a parallel for the events of subsequent centuries. That is another reason why his work has survived, while that of most of his predecessors has fallen into oblivion.

104 B.G. I, 22. "Caesar cognovit...Considium, timore perterritum, quod non vidisset, pro viso sibi renuntiasse."
105 Cf. pp. 35-36 above.
Because so little of Roman history is extant, it is hard to say exactly how far Caesar surpassed his predecessors in all the various qualities considered above. But, at any rate, his *Gallic Wars* conforms very closely to the norms established by Cicero in the *De Oratore*. For this literary (as well as military and political) genius realized what was needed to make Roman history live and wrote accordingly. Consequently, when DeWitt says of his work, "there is no rhetorical elaboration, no philosophical interpretation of events, no dramatic scheme, no evaluation of larger historical issues," he is speaking a truth, but only a half-truth.

We come now to the second division of Cicero's recommendations for *artistic* history. For as a conclusion to his description of the ideal historical composition, he makes a reference to the proper historical style. The reference, despite its brevity, concerns the most important point of all in his eyes. Consider the prominence it holds in all his previous criticism of the Roman historians, both in the *De Oratore*, where he treats history formally, and in the occasional references to it in the remainder of the oratorical works. Thus a general description

106 DeWitt, "Non-Political Nature..." 348.
of the historians of Cato's time is Qui sine ulla ornamentalis monumenta solum temporum, hominum, locorum gestarumque relique-runt...et dum intelligatur quid dicant, unam dicendi laudem putant esse brevitatem. 107 According to his tastes, ipse etiam Piso...reliquit...annales sine exiliter scriptos...108 And after admitting that Antipater paulum se erexit et addidit maiorem historiae sonum voci, he adds ceteri non exornatores rerum, sed tantummodo narratores fuerunt.109 Moreover, even the power of Antipater was sine nitore ac palaestra.110

Such being the unfortunate reality, what, we ask, was Cicero's ideal historical style? The brief reference in the De Oratore:

...verborum autem ratio et genus orationis fusum atque tractatum et cum lenitate quadam aequabiliter profluens sine hac iudici-al asperitate et sine sententiarum forensibus aculeis persequendum est.111

is clear enough and its precepts are well exemplified by Caesar's Gallic Wars. A difficulty presents itself, however, if we

107 De Oratore, II, 54.
108 Brutus, 106.
109 De Oratore, II, 54.
110 De Legibus, I, 6.
111 De Oratore, II, 64.
consider two other passages in the Orator where Cicero speaks of
ornateness as a characteristic of the historical style. In one
of these passages, after describing the over-ornate style of the
Sophists, Cicero adds:

\[
\text{Huic generi historia finitima est. In qua et narratur ornate et regio saepe aut pugna des-}
\text{cribitur; interponuntur etiam contiones et hortationes. Sed in his tracta quaedam et}
\text{fluens expetitur, non haec contorta et acris oratio. Ab his non multo secus quam a poetis}
\text{haec eloquentia quam quaerimus sevocanda est.}\]

112

And speaking in another passage of the kind of narrative proper
to the oration, he says *narrationes credibiles nec historico sed*
*prope cotidiano sermone explicatae dilucide.* 113 Now just what
kind of orateness this implies it is hard to say. For it is
distinguished from the ornate style of political oratory as well
as from the legalistic style of the courtroom. Our difficulty
is increased when we find Cicero concluding his praise of Caes-
sar's Commentaries with the statement that *nihil est enim in*
*historia pura et illustri brevitate dulcius.* 114

There seems to be a contradiction here, but we think that
the following plausible interpretation will save Cicero's

112 *Orator*, 66.
114 *Brutus*, 262.
consistency. Whenever he speaks of ornamentation as a characteristic of the historical style, he is simply stating an established fact. But when it is a question of giving a positive recommendation of the style best suited to historical literature, he either omits mention of the need of ornament (as in the passage from the De Oratore just quoted) or at least he fails to stress it. For ornamentation was not so crying a need in Roman history as a certain rhythm and cadence and flow of language. What Cicero does stress, therefore, is the need of that smooth and flowing style which was his own contribution to Latin oratory and an improvement which he was probably anxious to introduce into Roman history as well. Provided this was obtained, he was probably indifferent to the presence or absence of ornamentation. Consider his praise of Caesar's Commentaries:

Valde, quidem, inquam probandos; nudi enim sunt, recti et venusti, omni ornatu orationis tamquam veste detracta. Sed dum voluit alios habere parata, unde aumerent qui vel­lent scribere historiam, ineptis gratum fortasse fecit, qui illa volent calamistris inurere, sanos quidem homines a scribendo deterruit... 115

How else may we explain his enthusiastic reception of this work in the same passage in which he remarks their terseness and bareness, except by saying that they fulfill his essential norm for

115 Ibid., 207.
fine historical composition - a smooth and flowing style? How often does he insist on this quality? His criticism of the history of Antipater is neque...tractu orationis leni et aequabili perpolivit illud opus. In our chief text from the De Oratore we again have the words genus orationis fusum atque tractum et cum lenitate quadam aequabiler profluens. In the Orator it is said of histories in his tracta quaedam et fluens expetitur. Later in the same work this recommendation is more explicitly stated in historia...placet omnia dici Isocrateo Theopompeoque more illa circumscriptione ambituque, ut tamquam in orbe inclusa currat oratio, quod insistat in singulis perfectis absolutisque sententiis. Undoubtedly, Cicero's main desire was this smooth and easy flow. Ornamentation was only incidental. Now let us show that this main desire was fulfilled by Caesar in the Gallic Wars.

Practically all the commentators praise this work for its terseness, purity of diction, and freedom from ornamentation. This is not surprising since Caesar was a member of the Atticist school - a group which made profession of these literary

116 De Oratore, II, 54.
117 Orator, 66.
118 Ibid., 207.
qualities. But it would be wrong to think that the presence of these characteristics \textit{eo ipso} demands the absence of rhythm. Such indeed was the common result in the products of inferior workmen of Caesar's own school. This is not true, however, of the author we are now considering. There is such a thing as the Caesarian period. While it is not, of course, as elaborate as that of Livy or of Cicero himself, it would more than satisfy the demands of the latter as they are expressed in his rhetorical works. Since there are various ways of attaining smoothness of style, Cicero, as a literary critic, would be the last to attempt to cast the diverse geniuses of men into the same mould. What, we may ask, were the particular devices of which Caesar made use in attaining smoothness in his own style?

Before answering this question let us first consider the nature of Caesar's problem. It is the same as that of every writer of historical narrative and is summed up very well for us by J.J. Schlicher: "One of the chief problems of historical writing is how to present the separate events or acts which make up a situation in such a way as to present their sequence in time and also to show their relations to one another and their relative importance." 119 So, as an advance over "the blunt and

monotonous sentences of the earlier annalists," prose writers in the half century preceding Caesar had added to a "dominant verb" various subordinate clauses or phrases to express the relations of the events contributing to the main action. We realize, then, that Caesar was not starting something new, but was consciously perfecting a development that had already begun.

According to Schlicher "in a total of about 2,530 narrative sentences in Caesar we find some 2,170 dominant verbs, each preceded by one or more phrases or clauses expressing preliminary or contemporary events or circumstances." As a particularly skillful example of this practice we might examine one of the periods found in Book II of the Gallic Wars. Some Gauls had deserted to the Nervii from Caesar's camp and had proposed to the former a plan of attacking Caesar's army while on the march.

Adiuvabat etiam eorum consilium qui rem deferrebat, quod Nervii antiquitus, cum equitatu nihil possent (neque enim ad hoc tempus ei rei student, sed quicquid possunt, pedestribus valent copiis), quo facilius finitimorum equitatum, si praedandi causa ad eos venissent, impedirent, teneris arboribus incisis atque inflexis crebrisque in latitudinem ramis enatis et rubis sentibusque interiectis effecerant, ut instar muri hae saepes munimenta praebarent quo non modo non intrari, sed ne perspici quidem posset. 122

120 Ibid.
121 Ibid., 212-213.
122 B.G., II, 17.
In this passage the dominant verb is effecerant, although it is not the main verb grammatically. What are some of the contributing circumstances expressed by the subordinate clauses? First of all, we are told that the proposal of the deserters was particularly favorable to the Nervii practice of ambuscade. Another clause tells us that the Nervii usually resorted to this method because of their weakness in cavalry. A short parenthesis comments on the continuance of this weakness among the armed forces of that tribe. Quo facilius...impedirent states the purpose of the particular ambush about to be described. The ablative absolute describes the construction of the camouflage. Quo non modo...posset states the final effect of the device of the enemy. All these facts Caesar has expressed in one sentence, made up of one substantive, one coordinate and six subordinate clauses, and one ablative absolute. When translating this sentence for the Loeb edition of the Gallic Wars, H.J. Edwards finds it necessary to use two sentences.

One of the dangers, however, in the use of this structure is that too many subordinate clauses tend to overwork a period and thus impede that very smoothness and even flow of words which they are intended to secure. Caesar, too, was conscious of this. As the work proceeds, there is an increase in the substitution of the participial construction. While this served the same essential purpose of expressing contributing
circumstances, it was more effective in securing Cicero's even flow than the more "self-sufficient subordinate clause or even the ablative absolute with its own subject and predicate elements." 123 Thus in a later book of the Gallic Wars we have the following passage:

Tandem Germani ab dextro latere summum iugum nacti hostes loco depellunt; fugientes usque ad flumen, ubi Vercingetorix cum pedestrībus copiis consederat, persequuntur compluresque interficiunt. 124

where Caesar uses two participles to express circumstances for which in the early books he might have employed a subordinate clause.

These are the chief means which Caesar uses in securing his smoothness of style. Of the use of the coordinating conjunction to divide the load of the period there are only two hundred and sixty five cases in all of Caesar; of the continuing relative clauses, one hundred and fifty three cases in the Gallic Wars; and of the cum circumstantial clause only about a dozen examples in each of his two works. 125 But in view of his mastery of the periodic sentence, the substitution of participles for

123 Schlicher, 219.
125 Again Schlicher is my authority for these figures, 219-21.
subordinate clauses, the frequent use of the ablative absolute,\textsuperscript{126} and at least the realization of the usefulness of other devices, we may say that Caesar not only showed signs of the progress of Latin historical style, but marked such an attainment in this line, that his work today is considered worthy of serving as a model for the young student of Latin in acquiring a command of a clear, elegant, and smooth prose style.

\textsuperscript{126} A frequent use of the ablative absolute in Caesar is after the dominant verb. Tacitus frequently uses this device.
CHAPTER V
THE FIRST ROMAN LITERARY HISTORY

Now that we have concluded testing the Gallic Wars according to the norms of Ciceronian criticism, we are prepared to state openly that which we only hinted at in the first chapter of this thesis. It is that this work of Caesar constitutes the first Roman literary history. A brief review of the steps leading to this conclusion will be helpful. We began the discussion by noting that progress in Roman historiography by the middle of the first century B.C. did not correspond with the developments in other literary fields. The brief review of Roman history which was contained in the second chapter showed that this neglect was due to both scientific and artistic neglect. We could, then, understand Cicero's discouragement and his reasons for proposing an ideal for historical composition. Our third chapter analyzed this ideal which demanded both artistic and scientific improvements, with more emphasis, however, on the former. Accordingly, the fourth chapter considered the credibility of the Gallic Wars and decided that the more probable conclusion is that it constitutes a fair and accurate account of a great Roman military venture. Next, the fifth chapter revealed that by a close (but probably unconscious) observance of Ciceronian norms for an effective presentation, Caesar had produced an
artistic history. Now then, unless we are prepared to say that these norms of Cicero do not form a worthy literary ideal, it follows that Caesar has been the first of the Romans to write a real history.

These norms, as has been said, do not present the highest literary ideal. Yet as the Gallic Wars proves, their observance would do much to remedy the unreliability and baldness of all the previous Roman attempts and would result in a production apt to attract more than the professional scholar. It is, therefore, no argument against this thesis to say that Sallust was a more artistic historian than Caesar. We did not state that Caesar was the most artistic historian among the Romans but rather the first artistic historian, because his work preceded the Bellum Catilinae and the Bellum Jugurthinum by at least ten years. Moreover, though we readily concede the palm to Sallust for his artistic merits, the opinion of his reliability is not at all as certain as it is in the case of Caesar. In the words of J.C. Rolfe:

Nevertheless, judged by modern standards, the Jugurtha is rather like an historical novel of the better class than like sober history. Chronology is to a great extent disregarded, and in place of exact dates we have such vague expressions as "interea," "iisdem temporibus," "paucos post annos," and the like. Sallust even ventures upon shifts in the sequence of events, in order to make a better rounded tale.
As a literary masterpiece the work takes high rank.¹

But we insist that accuracy is the more essential requirement in this branch of literature.² Therefore, since the work of Caesar meets the demands of both science and art, it conforms more perfectly to the norms of Cicero and, in fact, to all sensible estimation of historical worth. It is the first credible and artistic Roman history.

One difficulty remains. We said in the introductory chapter that we would not consider it a refutation of our position if Cicero failed to mention explicitly that the Commentaries were an answer to his hopes. Our reason for stating this, though only a conjecture, is very conformable to Cicero's character. The De Oratore in which he recalled the deficiencies of Roman history-writing and in which he established his own norms for the improvement of that branch, was published in 55. The Gallic Wars which conform closely to those norms was published about five years later. But in that part of the Brutus (written in 46) where Cicero enthusiastically praises Caesar's work, he

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¹ Sallust, Bellum Catilinae and Bellum Iugurthinum, ed. and transl. by J.C. Rolfe, Putnam's, New York, 1929, xv. (Italics mine).

² It is true that the modern trend is to give Sallust more credit for accuracy and objectivity than was formerly the case. Cf. T.R. Broughton, "Was Sallust Fair to Cicero?" TAPA, LXVII, (1936), 35.
fails to state that at last Roman history had met his requirements and definitely entered this field of literature. In view of his dejection at the poor performance of past historians, we would expect him to be only too glad to make this admission. This is our explanation of the omission. When Cicero established his norms in 55, he could not know that Caesar was to be the first Roman to conform to them. Now although Caesar was a friend of Cicero he was not only a literary rival but a member of the famous Atticists, a school diametrically opposed to Cicero's own teachings. That the only really worth-while representative of that school had produced a fine example of terse and elegant expression Cicero could not fail to recognize. Nor will anyone deny that he outdid himself in praising his rival's success. But perhaps he thought it beyond the bounds of strict justice or the requirements of courteous rivalry to go any further. In other words he would not explicitly admit that the norms which he had set down in 55 were first applied with success by a member of an opposing school. From the generous praise bestowed upon the author let others draw the very probable conclusion of his own mind which he felt under no obligation to express himself.

Now this is just what we have done in the thesis. We have made the inference which Cicero would not, we think, deny. And that inference is, we repeat, that the Commentaries on the Gallic Wars not only mark a literary advance but in themselves comprise
a masterpiece. It is, then, not a sentimental custom that has inflicted this work on the resisting schoolboy, but the well-founded opinion of students of Latin that with this work,

...we seem to see the transformation of a strictly professional account of warfare in which only the army and its achievements in the mass and the general's strategy were important, into something like history. 3

3 Schlicher, 224.
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The thesis submitted by Francis Xavier Dolan, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the
Department of Classics.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies
the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with refer-
ence to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Oct 10, 1948
Date

Signature of Adviser