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An Analysis of Julius Caesar's Generalship as
Compared to Proper Generalship in Vegetius

A THESIS BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR DEPARTMENTAL HONORS IN CLASSICS

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ABSTRACT: Little is known about Vegetius, who wrote the military handbook *Epitoma Rei Militaris* (RM), most likely for Emperor Theodosius I during the late 3rd or early 4th century CE. His manuscript is extensive, examining a wide array of military practices and norms that a proper Roman army should follow. The RM covers specific tasks and responsibilities of a general, which Vegetius appears to have drawn from earlier Roman writers, mainly those from the late Republic and early Principate. Comparing Vegetius's writings to those of Julius Caesar, specifically to Caesar's own narrative of his actions in Book I of *De Bello Gallico* (BG), provides insight into how Roman ideals of good military leadership progressed through centuries of history. This paper argues that Caesar does exhibit proper generalship according to Vegetius, which is important because it demonstrates how Roman military culture of the late Republic was still important for that of the late Empire.

For me family, who have supported me my entire life, and

Lisa Roeder, who inspired me to pursue the Classics.

I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this work.

William Edward Carpenter

3 April 2020

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Introduction

After years of civil war during the 40s BCE, one man rose above the rest. Julius Caesar, born around 100 BCE and fatally assassinated by the senators of *Rome* in 44 BCE, died arguably as most famous man of his generation. It was appropriate to call each emperor after him, “Caesar,” representing the tremendous impact he had on the culture of ancient Rome. Known for his heroics in battle and generosity towards his soldiers, he canonized his deeds through his works *De Bello Gallico* (BG) and *De Bello Civili*.

Considering Caesar’s importance, specifically as a general, it is interesting to study his legacy after his death. Vegetius, a writer in the 4th or 5th century CE, crafted a military handbook for the current emperor Theodosius. His work mainly focused on military tactics and standards for an army like those of the late Republic and early Principate,¹ the time in which Caesar lived. Given the subject of Vegetius’s work, comparing his ideas to the deeds of Caesar would provide insight into the Roman standards of generalship and how they passed on through each generation. Focusing specifically on Book I of the BG, the question becomes simple: Does Caesar exemplify the traits of an ideal Roman general as outlined by Vegetius in the *Epitoma Rei Militaris* (RM)?

Review of Scholarship: Caesar

There is no lack of scholarship concerning Caesar. The past 2,000 years has produced seemingly endless works concerning his life, battles, policies, propaganda, etc. Scholars have also focused heavily on Caesar’s military campaigns, the makeup

of his army, and his generalship. Diving into all the available scholarship is a daunting task, but the following works are particularly useful for understanding Caesar and his military writings.

Many sources concerning Caesar focus on various aspects of his military campaigns, ranging from military concepts to specific episodes in his time as a general. A. G. Russell covered the events that unfold in Book I in his 1935 article “Caesar: De Bello Gallico, Book I, Cc. 1-41.” He explained who Caesar was facing in battle (the Helvetians and Ariovistus) and outlined the decision making process that led to his victories.² Focusing more specifically on the Helvetian campaign, Alvah Otis in 1914 described how other historians viewed Caesar’s actions and what took place during the campaign itself in her work “The Helvetian Campaign. Part II.”³ She reviewed the accounts from the historians Plutarch, Dio Cassius, Appian, and Suetonius and noted how all essentially approved of Caesar’s decision making concerning his actions when engaging the Helvetians.⁴ The terrain of Gaul played a key role in Caesar’s ability to gain victory over the Helvetians,⁵ as outlined in 1911 by Mark S. W. Jefferson in his article “Caesar and the Central Plateau of France.” He did not seek to analyze Caesar’s actions as much as he described how they were able to take place. To do so, he covered the geography of the area from Book I in which Caesar marched and how it affected the mobility of his enemies.⁶

Caesar had to deal with two mutinies throughout his career, occurring about a decade apart in the Gallic and Civil Wars. One occurred in 58 BC and is described in Book I, but another that is of particular interest occurred in 47 BC. Stefan G. Chrissanthos wrote “Caesar and the Mutiny of 47” in 2001, covering the mutiny and

how Caesar displayed himself as a leader in his own narration of the event.⁷ He took quite a critical approach towards Caesar, noting of how carefully Caesar portrays himself as the protagonist who can do no wrong.⁸ Although his work is at times “anti-Caesar,” it also includes helpful information on how Caesar recruited troops and his actions in leading men, as well as providing insight into how to understand Caesar’s handling of the mutiny in 58 BC.

Plenty of sources examine who Caesar was as a man, rather than the actions taking place in BG. For example, P. J. Cuff focused his 1957 article “Caesar the Soldier” on arguing that Caesar was a genius commander because of his ability to attract loyalty from men.⁹ He noted how Caesar starts his Gallic campaign with four legions and finished with at least ten,¹⁰ something only a skilled general could accomplish. This work is more pro Caesar than others, however. Nathan Rosenstein, although not entirely critical, seeks to understand Caesar in the context of the culture of Rome in “Caesar and Imperialist” in 2009. He notes that Caesar’s works were not at all objective, but that was because Caesar was writing for Rome and his manner of writing was what Romans expected from a general.¹¹ According to Rosenstein Caesar’s abilities and generalship were still superb, but he was not a hero as much as a product of the Roman culture he grew up in.¹²

At the time of Caesar’s proconsulship of Gaul, Rome was essentially an empire.¹³ Therefore, it is not wrong to understand Caesar’s actions as acting on behalf of an imperialist state. Sherwin-White’s 1957 article “Caesar as an Imperialist” viewed his attack on the Helvetians as his first step towards conquering all of Gaul,¹⁴ which is not what Caesar leads his readers to believe. Caesar seeks to justify his

actions in Book I with a pro-Roman style, and Sherwin-White wanted readers to understand that Caesar's intentions were clear from the start of his proconsulship.¹⁵ Christina Kraus would agree about Caesar being an imperialist, but her 2009 work "Bellum Gallicum" focused more on how Caesar portrays himself. She noted that Caesar does act for the Roman people and that Caesar promotes himself as a general who is responding to threats against his home,¹⁶ not so much as a commander driven by greed.

Some scholars such as Lukas de Blois take Caesar precisely at his word and approach understanding him in the manner which Caesar encouraged. In his 2017 essay "Caesar the General and Leader" De Blois determined that Caesar excelled at what he calls "routine matters" for a general.¹⁷ Specifically, Caesar had a great understanding of their importance of his troops and how their training and happiness directly led to his success.¹⁸ There is no doubt that Caesar was well-liked among his subordinates, and although De Blois's essay is unnecessarily pro-Caesar, his argument follows reliable evidence.

More specifically, two works concerning Caesar's generalship are of particular interest. In 2013, Michael Boring wrote his dissertation "The Generalship of Caesar in Gaul" focusing on how Caesar conducted his Gallic campaign. He considered Cicero's necessary qualities for a general: valor, authority, good fortune, and knowledge of military affairs, and how they are present in Caesar's account of the Gallic War.¹⁹ Kyle Johnson, writing a year earlier in 2012, did not focus on specific attributes of Caesar but rather how he differed from his enemy in his dissertation "Ethics of Leadership: Organization and Decision-Making in Caesar's

‘Bellum Gallicum.’”²⁰ He noted that Caesar excelled in communicated practices, relaying messages through his tribunes and centurions effectively, as well as winning over the Gallic tribes and his own soldiers through his speeches.²¹ Caesar always appears to be able to overcome any obstacle, terrain, army size, etc., and earn a victory over his opponents.²²

The scholarship on Caesar mainly focuses on his own work and how both Romans and previous scholars viewed it. Many analyze the battles and their outcomes, while others seek to rebuke his writings and take a more critical stance. While not all of it is relevant for the present work, examining new perspectives to gain a greater understanding of Caesar and his writings in general is always useful. Book I of *De Bello Gallico* offers much more to any reader than its surface presents. Conducting a proper analysis of the available scholarship allows us to become better acquainted with who he was and his importance.

Review of Scholarship: Vegetius

Military handbooks from the ancient world—manuscripts concerning military affairs such as strategies, armies, and importantly for this thesis, generalship—are in short supply for today’s classicists. Little remain from ancient Rome, perhaps the most notable being Frontinus’s *Strategemata*, written in the end of the first century AD. Although extensive, it is more a historical analysis rather than a serious study on how one should be a general.²³ Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus, writing in the late 4th century, however, created a work that focused on military affairs and Roman warfare, and it included comments on proper generalship. Although the scholarship

covering Vegetius is not as vast as that which covers Caesar, that does not make it any less important. Specifically, this thesis needs to understand what Vegetius deems necessary for a Roman general in order to form a definition of proper Roman generalship.

Brian Campbell described two categories for military handbooks in his 1987 article “Teach Yourself How to be a General:” precepts on strategy and tactics, and technical accounts of drill, formation, and weaponry.²⁴ The writings of Vegetius seem to address both of these categories, which strengthens the use of his manual as a valid source for what makes a general. Campbell noted how the RM focuses on the Roman army from before Vegetius’ time, that of the late Republic and early Principate.²⁵ This further justifies the use of RM here since it refers to an army that would have been similar to the one Caesar led. Charles Shrader, in his 1981 article, “The Influence of Vegetius’ *De Rei Militari*,” considered how Vegetius used previous sources for making his handbook, which would explain why Vegetius promoted the Roman army of the early Principate as an ideal version.²⁶ For Shrader, The RM as a military handbook was comparable to Cicero’s works on ethics and philosophy for Shrader.²⁷ He clearly rated it highly and justified its use as a standard for generalship.

Recruitment was an important topic in RM. In his 2010 article, “Unseemly Professions and Recruitment in Late Antiquity: *Piscatores* and Vegetius *Epitoma* 1.7-1-2,” Michael Charles took note of how Vegetius wanted a Rome that was protected by Romans again, arguing that even if numbers were smaller, the army would be superior to untrained hordes.²⁸ Much of Charles’ work, however, focused on the unfounded belief of Vegetius that *piscatores* should not be allowed to serve in his

version of the Roman army²⁹, which does not concern the argument this thesis seeks to make. Mackay covered recruitment during Caesar's time in *The Landmark Caesar* published in 2017, which more or less aligns with the beliefs of Vegetius concerning recruitment. He explained that most recruits during Caesar's time came from rural populations and were from the poorest citizens. They should be Roman citizens, or at least from the allied colonies.³⁰ He also covered the organization of the legions and their chain of command, making it easier to understand how Caesar describes his army in the BG.

Statement of Methodology

Vegetius's work is an extensive treatise regarding what he considered important for any military. Although he did not provide a direct definition of which qualities and actions he considered necessary for a Roman general, it is possible to form one based on his writings on the values and processes every Roman general should adhere to.

Books I and III of RM provide the most insight to forming such a definition. Book I focuses primarily on recruitment, something that a general would surely oversee. In the very first chapter of Book I, Vegetius states the importance of recruitment, explaining how Rome conquered so many people:

Sed adversus omnia profuit tironem sollerter eligere, ius, ut ita dixerim, armorum docere, cotidiano exercitio roborare quaecumque evenire in acie atque proeliis possunt, omnia in campestri meditatione praenoscerere, severe in desides vindicare.³¹

But what succeeded against all of them was careful selection of recruits, instruction in the rules, so to speak, of war, toughening in daily exercises,

prior acquaintance in field practice with all possible eventualities in war and battle, and strict punishment of cowardice.³²

This is the first task of a general and arguably the most important, since recruiting the right soldiers is essential for forming a well-trained army.

After recruitment, Vegetius discussed at length the logistical challenges a general must overcome in order to be successful. Specifically, training soldiers to be disciplined, marching their troops effectively, encouraging them to fight courageously, and keeping them fed were all necessary for a general.³³ Based on this, the welfare of the soldiers are the direct responsibility of the general. Vegetius also uses specific words to describe an ideal general, writing, *Dux itaque vigilans sobrius prudens*.³⁴ He writes that a general should be watchful, sober, and discreet, three oddly specific words, which seem to summarize how a general should conduct themselves before entering battle. Based on the information above, forming a definition of an ideal Roman general, in the eyes of Vegetius, becomes possible. A proper Roman general must be able to carry out all logistical challenges of running an army, such as recruiting the right soldiers, implementing discipline, and feeding troops, as well as positioning the army to win any battle, provide any needed encouragement, and remain sober, watchful, and discreet before battle. Adhering to these traits will result in a victory for the general.

The Argument

Caesar demonstrates exemplary generalship in BG, much of which corresponds to a definition of generalship based on Vegetius. This is not something that scholars have studied extensively. Roman history spans many centuries and

finding ways to connect different time periods adds insight to Roman culture. this work will prove that qualities of leadership and generalship demonstrated by Julius Caesar in Book 1 of BG correspond to the qualities that Vegetius describes as necessary for a Roman general in his RM, written 400 years later.

Analysis

The scholarship that covers Caesar mostly views him as an effective general. That which examines Vegetius is useful for gaining a better understanding of the RM, and thus aiding in the formation of a definition of generalship. Before explaining the content of the RM, we must first address Vegetius's sources. He produced his manuscript not from experience in military affairs, but from studying earlier Roman commentaries.³⁵ Although he does not mention Caesar by name, but considering he studied commenters on military affairs closely,³⁶ and thus was likely very aware of the context of Caesar's commentaries. Therefore, it follows logically that his descriptions of proper generalship correspond to the actions of Caesar.

This paper's analysis will contribute to Classical scholarship concerning both Caesar and Vegetius. If Vegetius modelled a general on Caesar, which he never claimed to do, it would also still enhance the knowledge surrounding Vegetius. Making connections to preceding authors is common for many ancient writers, and Vegetius displays the importance late Republican writers still carried even into the late Roman Empire. If Vegetius read Caesar, then he should model an ideal general on someone as accomplished as Caesar. This thesis will demonstrate that there are

clear connections between Caesar and the writing of Vegetius, which the author hopes will benefit the study of Classics whether Vegetius read Caesar or not.

Content of RM

In order to compare the leadership of Caesar to Vegetius's definition of leadership, a careful reading of the RM is necessary in order to bring to light what qualities are necessary for a Roman general. The first chapter itself emphasizes the need of a general to recruit adequate soldiers and train them properly. Vegetius states clearly that a well-trained group of soldiers will always be victorious over massive, inept hordes of men.³⁷ A general's focus should not be on the amount of people they have under their command, but rather who they have under their command. A well trained soldier will fight harder and demonstrate greater courage in battle,³⁸ and certainly that training must originate from the general.

Concerning what type of person a general recruits, however, Vegetius's statements are less clear. There are 28 chapters in Book I of RM, and 2-7 concern what type of person a general should recruit. For example, he says that soldiers who live closer to the sun will have less blood and therefore be more scared of an enemy soldier wounding them in battle.³⁹ A bizarre comment to say the least. Then there is the section where he states that fishermen, fowlers, pastrycooks, and weavers should "be banned far from camp."⁴⁰ Michael Charles tackled this issue in his article, and it appears that Vegetius formed this belief from reading the likes of Cicero, so there is some merit to the statement for the time period.⁴¹ Vegetius also claims to know that Roman soldiers during the early Principate needed to be about 5 ft. 11 in., and about 5

ft. 9 in. for the cavalry.⁴² He continues on to his point that the rural populace would make for better soldiers than the urban, but no general should turn away an urban citizen during a time of need.⁴³ Recruitment is the first task a general needs to accomplish for his army, and clearly it was an important aspect in the eyes of Vegetius.

Book III is the most important chapter of RM for the present definition of leadership. Chapter four concerns mutinies and how to ensure soldiers do not revolt against their general. Vegetius spends most of the chapter listing various means of punishment or drills that commanders can force upon their men in order to distract them from the idea of mutiny or revolt. But according to Vegetius, that is not sufficient enough for a great general. A general should not have to bestow fear among their soldiers in order to force them into submission. Discipline is key in controlling an army, and a general as is the one responsible for forming that discipline.

Marching is a crucial aspect of generalship, as Vegetius explained in chapter six of Book III. Less thought of than battle, the march is arguably just as important as any actual coordinated fighting, since a soldier is more vulnerable to attacks while marching, thus it is the responsibility of the general that they do not suffer any attacks or at minimum repel attacks without a loss.⁴⁴ This section is extensive, marking the importance of it in Vegetius's eyes. Certainly, a competent general must be able to manage his troops properly to march safely and efficiently in order to keep them safe and in the best position to win any battle.

Vegetius's writings on marching make it clear that the pre-battle preparation is important for any general to maintain. He continued in Book III to comment on the

knowledge required of a general in order to be successful in battle. For Vegetius, a general needs to be knowledgeable about the enemy, gathering all known information, from any subordinate who has information on the enemy.⁴⁵ This is vital for any general, as knowing qualities such as the size, arms, food supply, and courage of the enemy will influence any decision to enter battle. According to Vegetius, whether a general leads with cavalry or infantry, or prolongs the war or hastens through it, depends on his knowledge of the adversary.⁴⁶

According to Vegetius, the general is directly responsible for the attitudes of the soldiers. He is unambiguous in his writings concerning the general's role to raise the army's spirits. He wrote clearly that:

*Desperantibus autem crescit audacia adhortatione ducis et, si nihil ipse timere videatur, crescit animus.*⁴⁷

When the men despair, their courage is raised by an address from the general, and if he appears fearless himself, their spirits are raised.⁴⁸

A general must lead by example because if he cannot fight then how can he expect his soldiers to do so? No battle is without hardships, and it is the general's responsibility to motivate his men to overcome any difficulty or fear.

Less renowned but equally important to any other duty of a general is keeping his army well fed. This was no small task, considering Caesar's armies could have ranged anywhere from 20,000-40,000 men during his Gallic campaigns.⁴⁹ This necessity was not lost on Vegetius, who put it brilliantly that a general should consider

*Cui magis victus abundet aut desit; nam fames, ut dicitur, intrinsecus pugnat et vincit saepius sine ferro.*⁵⁰

Which side has more food or lacks it, for hunger, they say, fights from within and often conquers without a blow.⁵¹

A general must concern himself with much more than simply winning a battle. He is responsible for an entire army of men that needs to be fed properly or else they will face the consequences of malnutrition and in the worst cases death.

The final key points of Vegetius concern specific attributes a general must possess. Vegetius uses the adjectives *vigilans*, *sobrius*, and *prudens* to describe an ideal general.⁵² The words ordinarily translate as watchful, sober, and wise respectively. Watchful is understandable, since a general should be constantly aware of their surroundings and situation. But sober is more interesting. Vegetius most likely wanted to imply that a general needed to be calm in order to make the right decision. Considering *prudens*, N. P. Milner translated it as discreet, not wise. Perhaps Vegetius sought to describe the general's tone of speaking and wanted to convey the idea of addressing people in an endearing and respectable manner. Furthermore, a proper general will always concern themselves with the welfare of each and every one of their soldiers.⁵³ Whatever may happen to a soldier in war, the general must take responsibility for it.

Content of BG Book I

Book I of BG features some of Caesar's most notable experiences during his conquest of Gaul. Considering Caesar wrote this commentary himself, it is important to understand that his explanations of the events are favorable towards him and his goals. As Rosenstein explains, Caesar was in fact a product of the Roman world, he

was expected to earn victories and do so in an honorable fashion.⁵⁴ It is because of this that although the present argument will analyze Caesar's writings word for word in order to understand his leadership, it will do so with careful consideration of the purpose in writing. As previously stated on page 5, the ancient sources mostly agree that Caesar's retellings are just, and clearly the victories he earned were not imagined.

After an overview of Gaul, the first event in Book I is Caesar's battle with the Helvetians. According to Caesar, Roman allies in Gaul were having their villages ravaged by the Helvetians, which is what prompted Caesar to attack them.⁵⁵ He is careful not to fall for initial temptations to attack them, but instead carefully plans so that he can prevent further devastation to his allies and his army, while putting himself in the best possible position to gain victory. After rousing his soldiers with a speech, he gains his first victory in Gaul by defeating the Helvetians.⁵⁶ His leadership is already on display with his first victory, an ability to motivate his men, and his insurance of their safety.

Following this victory, Caesar introduced his readers to Ariovistus, his main adversary in Book I. Gallic chieftains express concern over Ariovistus and his army of Germany soldiers, which prompts Caesar to take action. His soldiers, however, are much less excited after learning not only of the number of soldiers under Ariovistus's command, but also how immense each individual soldier is compared to them.⁵⁷ This leads to the next episode in Book I: the near-mutiny of 58 BCE. Consequently, the reader also gains insight into the hierarchy of power in Caesar's army, since the soldiers complain up the chain of command. This scene is one of the most notable in all of the BG. Caesar gathers his centurions, informs them of previous victories,

reminds them of their abilities, and ignores their request by stating he will march with his tenth legion no matter their decision, but that they are to do what they think it right.⁵⁸ No punishments took place, no soldier was executed or exiled from Rome, Caesar simply reminded them of who they are and trusted his men to make the right decision. The centurions rallied their subordinates, and the army marched towards Ariovistus.

The final scene of Book I is the battle with Ariovistus. Like the battle with the Helvetians, Caesar's generalship is on top display in this engagement. He marches his army in order to keep them safe by not engaging in minor, meaningless skirmishes,⁵⁹ which inspired his army to keep fighting since they knew Caesar had their interests at heart. Eventually, Caesar organizes his army in the best position possible and engaged Ariovistus when he saw an opening. His troops attacked fiercely, Caesar wrote, and they drove off the German forces.⁶⁰ Before the summer finished, Caesar had completed two campaigns and held off a mutiny. Book I bears witness to some of Caesar's finest work as a general.

Battle with The Helvetians

Caesar's campaign against the Helvetians, his first of his eventual conquest of Gaul, came about as a reaction to their recent attacks on other Gallic tribes. Caesar explains that Roman allies in Gaul requested his aid after the Helvetians destroyed their villages, planning to settle in southern France.⁶¹ As a Roman general, Caesar needed to act with Rome's interest first, so plunging into a careless battle with Helvetians would not be in his best interest. In order for his term as Proconsul of

Transalpine Gaul to further his personal goals as a Roman politician, Caesar would need victories against worthwhile opponents. Since Rome had many allies in Gaul, protecting them was justifiable cause to attack the Helvetians, which he would do so cautiously.

The scholarship concerning this scene is more or less in agreement with Caesar. Overall, Caesar's actions bore a net positive for the Gallic tribes.⁶² The fact that there is essentially no disapproval of any critics that were closer than Vegetius to Caesar's time, including Plutarch (AD 46-c. 120), Dio Cassius (AD 150-235), Appian (c. AD 160), or Suetonius (born c. AD 70), further justify this.⁶³ Often, anyone writing during the time of a dictator will always view the person in charge favorably, but each of those historians wrote well after Caesar's death. Furthermore, the Helvetians acted spontaneously, as no agreement was made for them to pass through Gallic lands, let alone any justifiable motivation to destroy the villages as they passed through.⁶⁴ Concerning why the engagement took place, more than just for glory and loot, Caesar's actions follow accordingly with Roman ideology.

Caesar displays exceptional leadership during his campaign against the Helvetians. What is most clearly on display is not necessarily Caesar's fighting ability, but the planning and careful analysis that he uses before a battle. He does not fall for any temptations from the Helvetians to engage in worthless skirmishes, but rather focuses on preventing any further devastation to local villages.⁶⁵ He manages his army so that they are not only safe during their pursuit, but also focused on reaching their eventual goal of beating the Helvetians in battle.

Caesar's descriptions of the battle are brief and directly to the point. He does not write out his speech to his soldiers for the audience, nor does he explain in detail each and every scene from the battle. This is because Caesar was not in all places at once. He had a specific view of the battle, but all other views he needed to gather from his men. Lendon explains this as a type of art: Caesar needed to create descriptions for scenes he did not see and form them into a narrative that his readers could follow.⁶⁶ Any reader needs to consider this when trying to pick apart Caesar's writings in order to find answers to how he was able to be successful.

Based on Caesar, the most important reason for his victory was simply having better trained soldiers than the Helvetians. Caesar's descriptions of the battle are broad and do not single out any one person for heroism or even himself. Caesar instead provides events and numbers for his readers, allowing them to paint a picture in their mind of what is happening. He uses whole lines of soldiers or divisions of his army to describe the events of the battle, emphasizing the importance of all the soldiers under his command. Caesar set his infantry up on higher ground, withdrew himself and the cavalry so the Helvetians would think they are evenly matched, then his legionaries threw javelins and charged.⁶⁷ The battle begins around 7:00 AM and continues long into the night as the Helvetians retreat to a rearguard of 15,000 men, which still is not enough to hold back the Roman attack.⁶⁸

Considering the abilities of Caesar's soldiers, it is clear that he satisfies the need of a general to recruit the right soldiers based on the RM. These battles consisted of tens of thousands of soldiers for each side, making organization and training

crucial for the army to be productive. This importance is at the forefront of the RM, considering Vegetius begins the first chapter of Book I:

In omni autem proelio non tam multitudo et virtus indocta quam ars et exercitium solent praestare victoriam. Nulla enim alia re videmus populum Romanum orbem subegisse terrarum nisi armorum exercitio, disciplina castorum usuque militiae.⁶⁹

In every battle it is not numbers and untaught bravery so much as skill and training that generally produce the victory. For we see no other explanation of the conquest of the world by the Roman people than their drill-at-arms, camp-discipline and military expertise.⁷⁰

A well-trained army will always fair better than one only greater in number. Vegetius also notes that a true Roman army should consist of primarily Romans, which is something Caesar's initial forces followed. Indeed, Caesar himself does not leave out from his own writings the auxiliary troops he recruited in the province of Gaul. At the start of BG, he writes *Provinciae toti quam maximum potest militum munerum imperat*. Caesar requisitioned as many troops from Gaul as he could, which turned out to be about one legion.⁷¹ But most of his recruits did in fact come from Italy and her immediate allies.⁷² Caesar describes how he enrolled three legions out of winter quarters in Aquileia, which gave him five legions to march towards the Helvetians.⁷³

Caesar also spends a significant portion of this episode on the food supply for his soldiers. Before the main battle was fought, Caesar toils over the incompetence of the Aedui, one of the Gallic tribes, with supplying food for his army. After pressuring them to supply the promised food multiple times, he recognizes that something is wrong and carries out an investigation that leads him to condemning one of their leaders, Dumnorix,⁷⁴ for siding with the Helvetians and keeping grain from the Romans.⁷⁵ Although Caesar wants to punish Dumnorix, he spares his life out of

respect for his brother Diviacus, who was another leader of the Aedui that was instead very loyal to Rome.⁷⁶ His detective work complete, Caesar re-established the grain supply from the Aedui and once again proved himself as an adequate general in the eyes of Vegetius because of this.

Battle with Ariovistus and the Near Mutiny

Caesar's next campaign features two important demonstrations of his leadership: the mutiny of 57 BCE and his battle with Ariovistus. After his battle with the Helvetians, the Roman allies in Gaul expressed concern over an increasingly dangerous man, Ariovistus. Loyal to Roman allies, Caesar takes these concerns seriously and vowed to help alleviate their fear.⁷⁷ It appears that Caesar highly valued relationships. He did not try to raze the entire area of Gaul into submission, but rather worked with whom he could in order to establish a foundation in which the area could become a sound province of Rome.

His loyalty to the Gallic tribes that were allies with Rome becomes more clear through his letter to Ariovistus. Before setting his army out to seek battle, Caesar exchanged letters with Ariovistus in hope of reaching a middle ground that could avoid fighting and blood loss. This letter outlined requests such as the returning of hostages and permission for safe passage of the Aedui in land that was formerly theirs, all in return for a peaceful and beneficial relationship between Ariovistus and Rome.⁷⁸ What Caesar makes clear through this simple and unfortunately unsuccessful deliberation is his willingness to act on behalf of the Gallic tribes. Whether or not he

had their interests at heart, Caesar's considerations for the needs of the Gauls are important when understanding his campaigns and therefore his leadership.

The Mutiny of 48 BCE was the first test of Caesar's actual command over his army. The events in Book I of BG occur quickly, with the mutiny happening shortly after Caesar's victory over the Helvetians. Considering their convincing victory, why would Caesar's soldiers suddenly become skeptical of their leader and ability to earn victory over Ariovistus? Caesar explained it clearly:

*Ex percontatione nostrorum vocibusque Gallorum ac mercatorum, qui ingenti magnitudine corporum Germanos, incredibili virtute atque exercitatione in armis esse praedicabant.*⁷⁹

A panic arose from inquiries made by our troops and remarks uttered by Gauls and traders, who affirmed that the Germans were men of a mighty frame and an incredible valor and skill at arms.⁸⁰

The rumors of the Germans' might have warranted fear for any soldier. Surely, any rational person should refrain from marching towards imminent death, so why should Caesar's soldiers be any different?

Caesar's response to the mutiny demonstrates the greatness of his leadership. After receiving word that his soldiers, inundated with fear, began either signing their wills, asking Caesar's permission to leave, or simply stating they would disobey any command to continue marching, Caesar wasted no time in taking action.⁸¹ Having gathered his centurions, Caesar gave them an iconic speech, perhaps the most notable portion being the ending remark:

*Suam innocentiam perpetua vita, felicitatem Helvetiorum bello esse perspectam. Itaque se quod in longiorem diem collaturus fuisset repraesentaturum et proxima nocte de quarta vigilia castra monturum, ut quam primum intellegere posset, utrum apud eos pudor atque officium an timor valeret. Quod si praeterea nemo sequitur, tamen se cum sola decima legionem iturum,, de qua non dubitaret, sibi que eam praetoriam cohortem furturam.*⁸²

My own blamelessness has been clearly seen throughout my life, my good fortune in the Helvetian campaign. Accordingly I intend to execute at once what I might have put off to a more distant day, and to break camp in the fourth watch of this next night, to the intent that I may perceive at once whether honor and duty, or cowardice, prevail in your minds. Even if no one else follows, I shall march with the Tenth legion alone; I have no doubt of its allegiance, and it will furnish the commander's escort.⁸³

What is most noteworthy is that Caesar makes no soldier do anything. He trusts that his men will follow him because he believes they all value loyalty and courage.

Caesar displays the mark of a true general, leading by example and treating his trained soldiers as responsible men rather than raw recruits in need of discipline.

Caesar does not demonstrate many of the techniques Vegetius covers concerning what to do in the case of a mutiny. Vegetius does recommend generals learn of the true facts of the mutiny from higher ranks,⁸⁴ which Caesar does with gathering his centurions. But his ideas such as having soldiers practice basic skills, holding standards, cutting trees, or basically training them to exhaustion,⁸⁵ are not part of Caesar's strategy. Nor does Caesar separate his army in order to break them apart and make their combined force weaker, and he certainly does not punish any "ringleaders" of the mutiny through death in order to instill fear.

Caesar instead relies on the discipline he knows that he instilled in his men in order to overcome this fear. Vegetius's section on mutinies is nearly forsaken in the BG, with the exception of the last sentence:

Laudabiliores tamen duces sunt, quorum exercitum ad modestiam labor et usus instituit quam illi quorum milites ad oboedientiam suppliciorum formido conpellit.⁸⁶

However, those generals who have instilled discipline in their army through hard work and routine are more praiseworthy than those whose soldiers are forced into submission by fear of punishment.⁸⁷

It is evident that at no point Caesar forces his army into submission, but rather relies on his own trust of their courage in order to suppress the mutiny. Perhaps this is a reach, but Vegetius's value of discipline is indisputable, and once Caesar reminded his men of their accomplishments, they were quick to remember their abilities and training and rediscovered their trust of their general. It must have helped that he also gave praise towards the 10th legion, which could certainly have played at the competitiveness of his soldiers. Who would want to be outdone in courage and loyalty while Caesar, known for his generosity towards his troops, was watching?

The battle against Ariovistus would prove to be Caesar's greatest triumph in Book I of BG. Combined with his ability to suppress the mutiny, he displayed exemplary generalship during the whole sequence of events. His first task was to put his troops in the best position possible for battle. After Ariovistus moved his army six miles from Caesar's camp, he marched most of his soldiers, arming two of the three lines in case they were attacked, to a new location about 600 paces from the German camp.⁸⁸ This allowed him to keep his grain supply connected and also set up his soldiers in a more ideal location to enter battle. He understood the danger of marching closely to the enemy, taking the precaution of keeping his soldiers armed during the march and building of the new camp.

The courage of Caesar's soldiers won him a decisive victory over Ariovistus. After a few days of skirmishes while Caesar organized his army, he decided to lead his soldiers to the field of battle, he himself proceeding close to the enemy camp, in order to draw out Ariovistus's German army. Caesar placed a lieutenant in charge of each legion, and after taking command of one himself, his troops attacked.⁸⁹ His

description of what happened next is brief, but he signals out the bravery of his men, explaining:

Reperti sunt complures nostril milites, qui phalangas insilirent et scuta minibus revellerent et desuper vulnerarent.⁹⁰

Not a few of our soldiers were found brave enough to leap on to the masses of the enemy, tear the shields from their hands, and deal a wound from above.⁹¹

His once fearful men were willing to leap into the German masses, effectively too.

This, coupled with the quick reaction of P. Crassus to deploy his third line to a pressing German flank, caused the enemy to run away and retreat.⁹²

There are various qualities of a general that Caesar displays during this battle. Decision making lies at the base of Vegetius's beliefs for a general. A general should reasonably care about the welfare of each soldier and put them in the best position to win.⁹³ Caesar did this in two ways during his campaign against Ariovistus. First, he sets his army up in two camps, allowing him closer proximity to the enemy and better positioning them to set up for battle. Second, he forms his battle line first. This allowed him to decide the optimal moment to attack, which occurred when Caesar's close proximity to the German camp forced them to meet him on the field.⁹⁴ During this entire scene, Caesar evaluated his situation carefully and always puts his soldiers interests first. He understands that he cannot be successful if his men are not safe, which is why he focuses so much on putting them in the best position to be victorious in battle.

Although it does not receive as extensive coverage as it did with the Helvetians, Caesar again made it clear that the grain supply is important to him. He makes a quick note of securing the grain supply before he starts his initial pursuit of

Ariovistus, stopping at Vesontio for a few days to resupply.⁹⁵ Later, when Caesar moves his camp past that of Ariovistus, part of his reasoning is to secure the supply train of grain so that his army can be well-fed for battle.⁹⁶ Before any fighting takes place, Caesar again focused on his soldiers health, making sure that they are well fed and prepared for battle. During each main battle in Book I, Caesar notably included his concern for supplying his soldiers with food, displaying his care for the men and ability to set his army up in the best position to win.

Conclusion

There is clear evidence that the qualities that a general should possess based on RM are present in Caesar in Book I of BG. Although Vegetius is writing about 400 years after Caesar, it is possible to find connections within their writings. Vegetius was specific about everything a general needed to do in order to be effective. He hardly minced words concerning their responsibility to supply men with food, always to be cautious when marching their troops, and to acquire as much knowledge as possible about the enemy.

Book I of BG bears witness to one of his most notable enemies, Ariovistus, as well as two critical episodes in his career, the battle with the Helvetians and the mutiny in 48 BCE. These scenes provide excellent insight into how Caesar handled and planned for various situations. His ability to encourage men to fight coupled with the careful consideration for their well-being make Book I of BG a great example of his generalship. Caesar demonstrates through his writing how he was able to be such an effective general.

RM is an extensive treatise on military affairs; it covers far more than Caesar could have demonstrated in BG. But Caesar captured many its key aspects. His Gallic campaigns reshaped the geography of Rome, something that would not have been possible if he were an inadequate general. The connections he makes to Vegetius's handbook are important and display the power of his legacy.

End Notes

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- ¹ Campbell, Brian. "Teach Yourself How to Be a General." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 77 (1987): 13-29.
- ² Russell, A. G. "Caesar: De Bello Gallico, Book I, Cc. 1-41." *Greece & Rome* 5, no. 13 (1935): 12-21.
- ³ Otis, Alvah Talbot. "The Helvetian Campaign. Part II." *The Classical Journal* 9, no. 7 (1914): 292-300.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Mark S. W. Jefferson. "Caesar and the Central Plateau of France." *The Classical Weekly* 4, no. 21 (1911): 162-63.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Chrissanthos, Stefan G. "Caesar and the Mutiny of 47 B.C." *The Journal of Roman Studies* 91 (2001): 63-75.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Cuff, P. J. "Caesar the Soldier." *Greece & Rome* 4, no. 1 (1957): 29-35.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Rosenstein, Nathan. "General and Imperialist." *A Companion to Julius Caesar*. Edited by Miriam Griffin. Blackwell Publishing, 2009: 83-99.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Sherwin-White, A. N. "Caesar as an Imperialist." *Greece & Rome* 4, no. 1 (1957): 36-45.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Kraus, Christina. "Bellum Gallicum." *A Companion to Julius Caesar*. Edited by Miriam Griffin. Blackwell Publishing, 2009: 157-174.
- ¹⁷ De Blois, Lukas. "Caesar the General and Leader." *The Landmark Caesar*. Edited by Kurt A. Raaflaub. Anchor Books, New York, 2017: 102-108.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Boring, Michael. "The Generalship of Julius Caesar in Gaul" PhD. diss., Black Hills State University, 2009.

²⁰ Johnson, Kyle P. "Organization and Decision Making in Caesar's 'Bellum Gallicum'" PhD. diss., New York University, 2012.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Campbell, "Teach Yourself How to Be a General," pg. 13.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, 17.

²⁶ Shrader, Charles R. "The Influence of Vegetius' De Re Militari." *Military Affairs* 45, no. 4 (1981): 167-72.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Charles, Michael B. "unseemly professions and recruitment in late antiquity: piscatores and vegetius epitoma 1.7.1-2." *The American Journal of Philology* 131, no. 1 (2010): 101-20.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Mackay, Christopher S. "Appendix D." *The Landmark Caesar*. Edited by Kurt Raaflaub. Anchor Books, New York, 2017: 672-676.

³¹ Vegetius Renatus, Flavius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris*. Edited by Carolus Lang. Lipsiae: B.G. Teubner, 1869, Book 1.1.

³² Vegetius, *Epitome of Military Science*. Edited and Translated by N. P. Milner. Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press, 1993, Book 1.1.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, Book 3.9.

³⁵ Schrader, 168.

³⁶ Ibid.

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- ³⁷ Milner, Book 1.1.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Ibid, 1.2.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, 1.7.
- ⁴¹ Charles, “unseemly professions,” 108.
- ⁴² Milner, 1.5.
- ⁴³ Ibid, 1.3.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid, 3.6.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, 3.9.
- ⁴⁷ Vegetius Renatius, Edited by Carolus Lang, 3.9.
- ⁴⁸ Milner, 3.9.
- ⁴⁹ Rosenstein, Nathan. “Military Logistics.” *The Landmark Caesar: Web Essays*. Edited by Jurt Raaflaub. Anchor Books, New York, 2017: 92-96. Accessed April 3, 2020. http://thelandmarkcaesar.com/LandmarkCaesarWebEssays_5Jan2018.pdf
- ⁵⁰ Carolus Lang, 3.9.
- ⁵¹ Milner, 3.9.
- ⁵² Carolus Lang, 3.10.
- ⁵³ Milner, 3.10.
- ⁵⁴ Rosenstein, Nathan. “General and Imperialist.” *A Companion to Julius Caesar*. Edited by Miriam Griffin. Blackwell Publishing, 2009: 83-99.
- ⁵⁵ Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, Book 1.11.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid, 1.25-26.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid, 1.38.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid, 1.40.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 1.46.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 1.52.

⁶¹ Ibid, 1.10-11.

⁶² Otis, "The Helvetian Campaign," 294.

⁶³ Ibid, 293.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 295.

⁶⁵ Caesar, 1.15.

⁶⁶ Lendon, "The Rhetoric of Combat," 277.

⁶⁷ Caesar, 1.25.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Carolus Lang, 1.1.

⁷⁰ Milner, 1.1.

⁷¹ Caesar, 1.7.

⁷² Mackay, "Appendix D," 672.

⁷³ Caesar, 1.10.

⁷⁴ Dumnorix and Diviciacus were brothers and men of prominent importance within the Aedui tribe. Dumnorix wanted the Aedui to rule over their area of Gaul, which would be impossible if the Romans controlled the area. Diviciacus was always loyal to Caesar and the Romans, which is why Caesar decided to spare Dumnorix's life even though he could have justifiably executed him.

⁷⁵ Caesar, 1.18.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 1.33.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 1.33.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 1.38.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Caesar, 1.39.

⁸² Ibid, 1.40.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Milner, 3.4.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 3.4.

⁸⁶ Carolus Lang, 3.4.

⁸⁷ Milner, 3.4.

⁸⁸ Caesar, 1.49.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 1.52.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Milner, 1.10.

⁹⁴ Caesar, 1.51.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 1.38.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 1.48.

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Autobiography

I, William Edward Carpenter, was born on March 3, 1997 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to my father Alan and my mother Diane. I was raised in Windham, New Hampshire, where I graduated from Windham High School in 2016. I attended the University of Mary Washington where I pursued a B. A. in Classical Studies with a focus in Latin, graduating in the Spring of 2020. I will pursue an M. Ed. in secondary education from the graduate school at UMW. I hope to become a Latin teacher and to inspire students to learn the Classics. I owe many thanks to my family, who have supported all of my aspirations, Cade Nethercott, a friend and former teacher, Lisa Roeder, one of my High School Latin teachers, who inspired me to follow a career in Classics, and to the faculty at Mary Washington: Liane Houghtalin, Joe Romero, and Angela Pitts, whom I could never thank enough.