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VERCINGETORIX.

By COLONEL G. B. MALLESON, C.S.I., F.R.Hist.S.

(*Read* March 17, 1887.)

THE knowledge possessed by the general public of the conquest of Gaul by Julius Cæsar rests mainly on the famous Commentaries, the eternal monument to the genius and literary ability of their author. That the writer of the campaigns which had for their object the subjugation of a great country, inhabited by tribes warlike and loving freedom, should have been likewise the planner and executor of those campaigns, and that his story should be practically the only story, are circumstances which, whilst allowing posterity to see the hero as he wished posterity to see him, have tended to obscure the merits, sometimes even to darken unjustly the characters, of the patriots who struggled, often with temporary success, against him. Not only has the greater glory of the conqueror effaced the achievements, in some cases almost equally illustrious, of the conquered, but the heroism of their aims, their noble patriotic rage, have either been passed over in silence or cruelly travestied. They have been made to speak as the conqueror wished them to speak, to think as the conqueror desired them to think, even sometimes to act as he would have had them act. The glory of

Caius Julius, the gratification of his ambition, were the aims of the joint conqueror and historian. Before those aims every other consideration had to give way, even consideration of the character and virtues of those patriotic chiefs who were most nearly thwarting him.

But Time, 'which brings all things,' has gradually vindicated those illustrious men. The researches of modern writers—I may mention particularly those of Thierry, in his 'Histoire des Gaulois'; of Henri Martin, in his 'Histoire de France' and in his 'Vercingétorix'; of Francis Monnier, in his biographical sketch of the same chieftain; and of De Noirmont, in the 'Revue Britannique'—have cast a flood of light on events which had been more or less obscure. France, too, has awakened to the political obligation under which she is to perpetuate the memory of those famous Gauls, who loved their country with a passionate love, and defended it with the resolution of despair.

Of the Gallic heroes there are many; but amongst them there is one who especially possesses for posterity, alike by reason of his noble and unselfish character, his ardent patriotism, his splendid achievements, and his untimely end, a supreme and living interest. He it is, the embodiment of manly grace and of martial virtue, who is the hero of the French writers I have referred to; he it is to whom Napoleon III. erected, in 1865, on Mont-Auxois, a colossal statue in bronze, bearing a fitting inscription taken from the Commentaries of his conqueror; he it is to whom Republican France, not to be surpassed in patriotic zeal by an Emperor, is about to render similar homage; he it is to whose memory and to whose deeds I propose to devote these pages.

Before I speak of the principal personage, or, perhaps, it would be more proper to say, of the more interesting of the two principal personages, of this narrative, it is necessary to go back a little to the period a few years anterior to the nomination of Cæsar to the government of Cisalpine Gaul and Illyria. That nomination was made in the year 58 B.C. At that time, Transalpine Gaul, the government of the Roman

portion of which was added by a decree of the senate to Cæsar's charge, comprehended, speaking generally, the country of which the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the sea were the boundaries. The portion of this territory to which I have referred as the Roman portion was bounded on the north by Lake Lemman and the Swiss mountains, ran on the south to the Mediterranean, and, to the west, half across the neck of land which joins Spain to the continent of Europe.

But it is of the other portion of Gaul, of the independent Gaul, the Gaul outside the Roman province, that I desire to speak. That vast territory was occupied by a number of self-governing tribes, each tribe divided into cantons, and each canton subdivided into communes. Each of these tribes, occupying territories almost analogous in extent to the provinces of pre-revolutionary France, had its constitution, each alike to the other. Royalty, exercised by a member of one particular family, whether by selection or by right of birth, constituted in all the unit basis. Each had a senate, numerically very strong, and a popular assembly, which, comprising all the free members of the tribe, exercised a preponderating authority.

When Cæsar was nominated to his government this system still generally prevailed amongst the tribes of the northern provinces. But amongst the powerful tribes of the centre and of the south-east, amongst the Arverni (occupying the modern Auvergne), the Ædui (the modern Burgundians, dwelling between the Loire and the Saône), the Sequani (dwellers in Franche Comté), the Helvetii (inhabiting the country between Mount Jura, Lake Lemman, the Rhone, and the Rhine as far as Lake Constance), an important revolution had occurred shortly before. The aristocracy had overturned the monarchy, and had replaced the king by a council of magistrates bearing a title equivalent to that of grand-judges. These grand-judges governed under the authority of the senate, composed of the high nobility or knights. This nobility, very limited in number, and composed probably of

the descendants of ancient royal families, united amongst themselves by marriage or by common interests, concentrated in its hands all the powers of the State, whether military, financial, or political, and forced the free men, burthened with taxes and become hopelessly involved, to be the vassals of the heads of the several families. Despite occasional attempts made to overthrow this tyranny, and to re-establish the monarchical constitution, a sentiment of patriotism animated the breasts of all classes of the community: they had aspirations, vague and undefined it is true, but still aspirations, after national union; and it is possible that had the several tribes been undisturbed by foreign invasion the sentiment might have in course of time become a reality. What they wanted was time.

But time was the one thing which the new proconsul was resolved not to allow them. The five years for which the government of his province had been granted to him were to be spent in enterprises which should pave the way to the attainment of supreme power. Before he quitted Rome, Cæsar had decided how to open the campaign which he had mentally matured. To divide, to conquer by dividing, to foment jealousies amongst the tribes, to assist the weak against the strong, in order the more easily to devour both, and thus gradually to conquer all—this was the plan which has always succeeded, and always will succeed, against a divided nation, much more easily against a number of independent tribes, which, though of one nationality, had not as yet become a nation.

I have said that before he quitted Rome Cæsar had settled his plan. The Helvetii, moved by reasons relating entirely to the increasing difficulty of supporting themselves in the barren tracts which they inhabited, had resolved to migrate to the more fertile plains of Gaul. Their journey would take them across a corner of the Roman province. They applied therefore to Cæsar for permission to cross that corner. In that application Cæsar saw his opportunity. The Helvetii had accompanied the Cimbri and Teutones in that invasion

of Italy which had been foiled by the skill and energy of Marius. Here was an opportunity to destroy an enemy who had struck Rome with terror. Cæsar, then, parried the request until he had in hand a sufficient number of troops ; then he refused it. He granted the applicants, however, permission to traverse the country of the Sequani ; by this means enlisted for himself the friendship of the Ædui ; waited till three-fourths of the Helvetian emigrants had crossed the river Saône ; then fell upon, and, after a bloody and long doubtful battle, completely defeated them. Not content with that, he forced the survivors back upon the country they had abandoned, upon the homes they had burned, and the fields they had devastated before they quitted it. This was the first lesson. In future operations, the Helvetii, more than two-thirds of whom he had destroyed, would not count for much against him.

Not long did he wait for the second opportunity. He had selected the Ædui for his special patronage, they constituting, alike from their importance and flexible character, the lever which he could best work against their rivals, the Arverni and the Sequani. Trusting probably to their friendship with the great Roman, the Ædui began at this period to press their rivals very hard. The Arverni and the Sequani then invoked the assistance of Ariovistus, king of the Suevi, inhabiting the country on the further bank of the Rhine. The aid of Ariovistus enabled the Sequani and the Arverni to recover their position, and in their turn the Ædui are pressed. The Ædui then, as Cæsar had foreseen, implore the aid of Cæsar. Cæsar responds ; attacks Ariovistus, and, after some very hard fighting, drives him and the remnant of his Suevi across the Rhine. Thus is eliminated another enemy, one who might have seriously interfered with his designs.

The year 57 B.C. was equally utilised by Cæsar. Enlisting on his side the Remi, a powerful tribe of Belgian Gaul, he subdued in turn the Belgæ, the Suessiões, the Bellováci, the Ambiáni, and then, after a fiercely contested and long doubtful battle, the Nervii. Terrified by the fate

of the powerful Nervii, the Aduatici submit, though their submission does not save them from being slaughtered. In every quarter the great Cæsar is victorious, and the close of the year 57 sees the Romans masters of the country represented by the modern towns of Trèves, Amiens, Arras, Beauvais, Soisson, Noyons, Lille, Namur, a portion of the Ardennes, and the entire territory from the Scheldt to the Bay of Biscay.

The year 56 was not less propitious to the fortunes of the conqueror. The Venëti, a tribe powerful in ships, who dwelt in the country represented now by the department of the Morbihan, had dared to refuse to send corn to Crassus, and had even detained the ambassadors sent to them by that young general. Cæsar, who was on the point of setting out for his Illyrian province when the information reached him, makes instant preparations for the subjugation of that daring tribe. Sending his lieutenants respectively to the countries of the Treviri, to the banks of the Rhine, into Aquitania, and into northern Brittany and Normandy, to maintain order in, or to conquer, those parts, he marches himself into the territory of the Veneti, whilst his loved and trusted lieutenant, Decimus Brutus, attacks them on the element on which they are most powerful. Again does Cæsar triumph. He uses his victory *more suo*; that is, he beheads all the nobles as an example, and sells the people into slavery. Meanwhile, Aquitania is conquered by Crassus. Cæsar then winds up the year by an attempt on the country of the Morëni, occupying the territory represented now by Boulogne and Calais, and the Menapii, dwelling near the mouths of the Rhine and of the Scheldt. But here the weather and the season combine to foil him, so, after burning villages and laying waste fields, he puts his army into winter quarters in the country south of the Seine.

Defeated though they had been, neither the Gauls nor the Germans had been thoroughly subdued. Early in the following year, 55 B.C., the Usîpëtes and the Tenctëri, tribes which had been dispossessed by the Suevi, invaded the territories of the Menäpîi, surprised and massacred them, then

crossed the Rhine near its mouth and located themselves for the remainder of the winter in the lands on the left bank of the river. With these intruders Cæsar first negotiates, then attacks them, and literally drives them into the Rhine. According to his account we must conclude that 180,000 of them perished in the waters or on the banks of that famous river. Cæsar then crossed the river with his army, the first time it ever had been crossed by a regular army, ravaged the homes of the Sicambri, confirmed the friendship of the Ubii, and then, after a stay there of eighteen days, returned to the left bank. There being little left for him now to accomplish in Gaul, Cæsar devoted the short remainder of the fighting season to the invasion of Britain: lands on the island in the face of hostile cavalry; makes good his footing; obtains hostages; and returns. He concludes the year's operations by chastising the Morini, who had revolted, and by burning the homes of the Menapii.

The year following, 54 B.C., is devoted almost entirely to Britain. Cæsar lands, marches some way into the interior of the island, receives homage, and returns to Gaul (August-September). He had established his troops about a fortnight in their winter quarters, when the Eburones, a tribe which dwelt between the Rhine and the Maas, led by the younger of their two kings, Ambiorix, surprised the camp of his lieutenants, Sabinus and Cotta, at Aduatūca (probably the modern Tongres), and cut to pieces a legion and a half. Ambiorix and his army then join the Nervii and lay siege to the camp of another of Cæsar's lieutenants, Quintus Tullius Cicero, brother of the famous orator, at the modern Charleroi. Cicero was in imminent danger, for the roads communicating with Cæsar were carefully watched and guarded. He manages, however, to induce a Gaulish slave to convey a letter concealed in a dart to his chief. Cæsar acts with his usual promptitude: marches towards Charleroi with what troops he can make disposable; by the very rumour of his approach releases Cicero, and forces Ambiorix to raise the siege; intrenches himself at Mont Sainte-Aldegonde; by a



feigned timidity induces the Gauls to attack him, and completely defeats them. This timely victory prevents the impending revolt of the Treviri. In the course of this year his proconsulate was extended for another period of five years.

When the year 53 dawned, the position of Cæsar in Gaul was far from reassuring. There was not one tribe which did not feel most acutely the degradation of the Roman yoke or the Roman alliance. The formidable Nervii and the Eburónes, led by a chief remarkable alike for ruse and courage, were in arms ; the Treviri were waiting only for a favourable opportunity ; their success would ignite the whole of Gaul. Knowing this, Cæsar felt the necessity to strike quickly and to strike hard. The Nervii were his first victims. Upon these he pounces unexpectedly, whilst it is yet winter, and destroys them. The Senõnes and the Carnútes, who had agreed to make common cause with the Nervii, then bow their heads in submission. Then he attacks and completely disposes of the Menapii, burning their homesteads, taking their cattle, and making slaves of their men. Meanwhile his lieutenant, Labienus, has enticed into premature battle and made short work of the Treviri. Cæsar then crosses once more the Rhine, partly to punish the Germans for having sent aid to the Nervii, partly to intimidate them from sheltering Ambiorix. He does little there, however, so he recrosses and follows vigorously the trail of that much-hated chieftain. One of his lieutenants, Basilus, misses the prey by a hair's breadth ; but that miss is the last chance. Ambiorix, attended by a few, a very few, it is said only four, devoted followers, betakes himself to the then impenetrable forests of the Ardennes, and escapes the vengeance of the conqueror ; his brother-king, Cativolcus, poisons himself ; the homesteads and the fields of the Eburónes are burned and laid waste. Yet, despite the vigilance of the emperor, the Romans again nearly encountered a disaster. Whilst Cæsar was pursuing Ambiorix, the Sicambri crossed the Rhine to pick up what was to be gathered of the property of the scattered Eburónes. They learn that Cicero's camp at Aduatūca is feebly guarded.

They attempt to surprise the place ; almost, but not quite succeed ; the firm countenance of the Roman garrison forces them at last to beat a retreat ; they retire slowly, with their booty, towards the Rhine, and succeed in crossing it unmolested. It was perhaps as well for them that they failed ; for the ubiquitous Cæsar reached Aduatuca within twenty-four hours of their departure. The short remainder of the season was spent mainly in the fruitless pursuit of Ambiorix, and the devastation of the territory of the Eburónes. Having at length realised the fact that Ambiorix had escaped him, Cæsar placed his army in winter quarters.

The seventh year of Cæsar's government of Gaul introduces to us the hero of this article, the high-souled and gallant Vercingetorix. Before bringing him on to the stage I propose to give a short account of his family, his position, and his antecedents.

The Commentaries cast but a faint light upon these points. In them Cæsar speaks of Vercingetorix as a young man exercising considerable authority. He was, in fact, the son of Celtillus, a chief of the Arverni, the leading spirit of the national party in Gaul, and who, elected year after year to be the chief magistrate of his tribe, had caused their capital, Gergōvia (probably in the vicinity of the modern Clermont), to be regarded as the head-quarters of Gaulish politics. On the accusation of a brother, who was jealous of him, to the effect that he was aspiring to become king of all Gaul, Celtillus was tried, condemned to death, and burned alive. This occurred apparently in the year 60 B.C.

Vercingetorix was then twenty years old. The death of Celtillus had been the death likewise of the national party in the councils of the Arverni, and in these his uncle, a supporter of the Roman alliance, was now supreme. Vercingetorix had not shared the disgrace of his father, nor had that disgrace affected either his position or his claim on his father's death to the family estates. These he had inherited, and on these he lived quietly and undisturbed during the two years immediately following the event which made him an orphan.

But in the year 58 B.C. we find him attending, in his capacity of nobleman, the assembly of the Gauls which took place after the defeat of the Helvetii. There he first saw Cæsar, and there Cæsar attempted to gain him. He thought he had gained him, and he even took credit to himself for the generosity with which he treated him, that generosity being evidenced by his refraining from urging on the chiefs of the Arverni the spoliation, in favour of the uncle, of the family estates. But Vercingetorix was not gained. Possessing a nature thoroughly self-contained, a patriotism above and beyond all selfish considerations, and the prudence which proceeds ordinarily from experience, he endeavoured, in these early days, to make himself as much as possible effaced. Observing everything connected with the Romans with a critical and anxious eye, the discipline of their troops, their armament, their battle formation, and drawing his own conclusions as to the possibilities of the future, he kept his own counsel, and, in the debates of the assembly, sided neither with the party led by his uncle, which advocated an intimate alliance with Rome, nor with that led by the old friends of his father, who were for war at all cost. He was not at all moved, then, from the line he had marked out for himself when he saw that, as a consequence of Cæsar's victory over Ariovistus, the supremacy amongst the tribes of Gaul passed from the Arverni to the Ædui.

The victories of Cæsar in the years that followed, and, more than the victories, the terrible results which followed them, confirmed the patriotism whilst it steeled against the conqueror the heart of Vercingetorix. With consuming rage in his breast he saw, the year following, the powerful tribe of the Nervii, deemed by the Gauls invincible, almost exterminated; the Aduatici slaughtered under circumstances of the most revolting perfidy; the other tribes of the Belgæ subdued. Where and how, he asked himself, will it end? The next two years brought him but little encouragement. In 56 he beheld the reduction by the Romans of the western tribes of Gaul, in 55 the absorption of the province known to the

modern world as Aquitaine. In 54 the victory of Ambiorix over Sabinus and Cotta, and his subsequent attack on Cicero, brought a gleam of hope. It was but a gleam indeed. The balance of the year, despite its early promise, was against the Gauls. The relief of Cicero, followed by the defeat of Ambiorix, had restored to Rome her predominance.

If even one small scintilla of hope, based on the early success of Ambiorix, had still maintained its vitality at the close of 54, it was certainly most completely extinguished in 53. That year witnessed, as we have seen, the second and more complete destruction of the Nervii; the disappearance, as a hopeless fugitive, of Ambiorix; the slaughter and submission of the Treviri, and the almost complete effacement of the Eburones. But there was something more in the plans of the cold and calculating Cæsar than his method of warfare against the Gallic tribes which had arrested the attention of Vercingetorix. He had observed that whenever a Gaulish chief had displayed the smallest independence of thought or action he had been summarily made away with. Thus Dumnorix, the Æduan, who had moved off with the horsemen of his tribe rather than share in the second expedition to Britain, was promptly slain; Indutiomarus, the leader of the national party amongst the Treviri, had been killed as a measure of precaution, his son-in-law, who was in the Roman interest, having denounced him; and now, in this last year, in 53, Acco, chief of the Senones, accused of having incited to revolt that tribe and the Carnutes, was condemned and executed. We must always bear in mind that though each and all of these executions might easily be justified from a Roman standpoint, they would appear in a different light to a patriotic Gaul, who denied the right of the Romans to invade and occupy his country, and in whose eyes opposition to, or desertion of, the foreigner, after compulsory enlistment, was a sacred duty, the very reverse of treason.

Vercingetorix had little need, indeed, of these examples to convince him of the necessity of caution. He knew Cæsar well, and he was aware that in any scheme he might devise

to obtain the independence of Gaul he would play with his head. Self-contained and self-trusting as he was, he knew that a revolt, to be successful, must be general, that all Gaul must rise against the oppressor. He had, therefore, to make confidences. The first whom he trusted was Lucterius, chief of the Cadurci (whose capital was the modern Orleans), a 'man full of daring'; but others were soon added to the list, for Plutarch affirms that the conspiracy had for a long time been secretly prepared. That the confederates were well chosen is proved by the fact that the Romans did not obtain the smallest inkling of their designs.

Before I enter upon the details of the plan devised by the young Gaulish chief for the liberation of his country, I propose to bring him in person upon the stage, to show him exactly as he was, according to the testimony of those who had the best means of forming an opinion.

Vercingetorix had seen at this period twenty-eight summers. He was tall in stature. The expression of his face was noble and imposing, but very terrible in anger. He had the great gift of eloquence, and a voice to persuade as well as to command. The genius of war had been grafted in him at his birth, and he was of the dominant type which can impose its will upon feebler natures. He was a stern, even a severe disciplinarian; but it must be remembered that to combat with a chance of success against the Romans strict discipline was essential.

A great German writer, one who so believed in Cæsar that he claimed for him almost absolute perfection, and who was not therefore disposed to regard his opponents with favourable eyes, the illustrious Mommsen, has pronounced Vercingetorix to have been rather a paladin than a hero. The context of the judgment which concludes with this sentence plainly shows that Mommsen, whilst granting to the Gaulish chief the possession of many noble qualities, denied to him the gift of statesmanship. In other words, Vercingetorix had in his nature too little selfishness, too much self-sacrifice. 'As,' wrote Mommsen, 'after a stormy day, when the setting sun

disperses the clouds, so does destiny often bestow upon a decaying people one last great man. Thus Hannibal in the decline of Carthage, thus Vercingetorix in the last days of Gaul ; neither could save his country from the foreigner, but both saved it from the disgrace of succumbing without resistance. Like the Carthaginian, Vercingetorix had to struggle, without, against the enemy ; within, against the anti-national opposition of egotists and cowards, the invariable product of a decaying civilisation, and whose repose is always troubled by the convulsions of the supreme combat. History will accord to him a glorious place in its annals, not only for his great deeds in war, but specially because he knew how to constitute in his own person a centre of resistance for a nation falling into ruin, dislocated by *particularism*.

‘ And yet there could scarcely be a greater contrast than that between the austere citizen of the trading Phœnician republic, pursuing its grand aims with an indomitable energy for half a century, and the valiant Gaulish prince whose lofty deeds and magnanimous devotion are confined to the short space of one summer. Antiquity in its entirety does not know a man more chivalrous than Vercingetorix, alike in his character and his outward form ; but a man, especially a statesman, ought not to be chivalrous. He was a paladin, not a man, who refused to fly from Alesia, when his life was more precious for his people than were the lives of a hundred thousand ordinary warriors. He was a paladin, not a hero, who delivered himself up as a sacrifice, when that sacrifice imposed upon his nation the dishonour of abandoning their chief. . . . How different was the conduct of Hannibal in similar circumstances ! And yet it is not possible to part from the noble king of the Arverni without a profound sentiment of sympathy. . . . But it is a distinctive mark of the Celtic race that its greatest man was but a paladin.’

This criticism of a hostile author, of one who, I repeat, could see in the conqueror of Vercingetorix nothing but the absolutely perfect, testifies alike to the faults and to the merits of the young Gaulish hero. Who that possesses a generous

heart will deny that those faults were based upon virtues which are too rare, upon qualities which enlist sympathy and admiration ?

To return now to the narrative. The death of Acco, recorded in a preceding page, had roused amongst the Gaulish chiefs a feeling of bitter resentment. For them death on the battle-field was infinitely preferable to the lingering torture of living under the yoke of Rome, subjected to the reports of spies in her pay. More eagerly than ever were they awaiting the opportunity which always comes to those who wait, when information from Rome seemed to indicate that it was upon them. The death in Rome of Cæsar's trusted agent, Clodius, and the increased and increasing jealousy of Cæsar displayed by the senate, presaged a large diminution of the power and influence of the great proconsul. If the hour to strike had not arrived, at all events the time had come to conspire and to prepare. They had the later autumn and winter before them ; every hour of it must be utilised.

So, at least, thought Vercingetorix. During the days which followed the departure of Cæsar for Rome, after the close of the campaign of 53, he conspired, at first secretly, amongst all the tribes of Gaul. His object was to unite where the aim of Cæsar had been to divide. He despatched, then, emissaries to the several tribes of the west : to the Senõnes, the Pictõnes, the Turõni, the Aulerci, the Lemovices, and the Andecavi ; to prepare them for the coming struggle. By means of Lucterius, chief of the Cadurci, he was able to rally to the national cause not only that tribe but the Ruténi, the Gabáli, the Auscii, the Tarbelli, the Nitiobriges ; that is, all the tribes of Gallia Aquitania. The people of Gallia Narbonensis were likewise incited to hold themselves in readiness. The Belgæ, and the tribes on both banks of the Séquãna (Seine), hastened to offer their co-operation. Then, when the understanding is complete, Vercingetorix sends messengers to each tribal capital to bid the chiefs to hold themselves in readiness for the signal which he will give. Then, having failed to rally to the national cause the leading men of his own capital, Gergõvïa—the same

men who had killed his father—he proceeds with his adherents to a large oak forest near the modern Chartres ; meets there deputies from many of the confederate tribes ; delivers to them an impassioned harangue, in which he reminds them of their ancient liberties, and announces that he is ready to lead them to recover them. It was the end of December 53 ; the ground is covered with snow ; the Druids, giving to the occasion the sanctity of religion, wave aloft the national standard as all take the oath of fidelity, as all promise secrecy ; the Carnútes, countrymen of the murdered Acco, engage to begin the war.

This meeting is followed by others of a similar character, held in different parts of the country, and in this way the Gauls become familiarised with the hero whom they already begin to regard as their saviour. By degrees his eloquence, his earnest appeals, his strong and ardent character, subdue them. He assumes supreme authority over them, enacts laws of the most stringent severity, gives evidence that he intends to carry out those laws, to use them as a punishment for the false, and as a warning for the slack-hearted, and at length collects a large army. Suddenly the Carnutes make a dash on Genábum (Orleans), in which the Romans are the dominating party, gain the city, and communicate their success the same day to Vercingetorix. For him it is the passage of the Rubicon. At the head of his country levies he marches on Gergovia, expels thence the Roman party, despatches Lucterius into Gallia Narbonensis, and demands from the Gaulish cities already gained their several contingents. These, true to their compact, hasten in crowds to Gergovia, hail Vercingetorix as their chief, accept his discipline and his laws. A short period is then devoted to their better organisation, especially to the disciplining of the cavalry. This accomplished, Vercingetorix marches on Avaricum (Bourges), with the design to cut the route which Cæsar must follow.

The difficulties of Cæsar with the senate had been but adjusted, thanks to the efforts of Pompey, and he was actually



at Ravenna, when the news of the rising of the Gauls reached him. Raising on the spot all the levies upon whom he could lay hand, and continuing to raise others as he proceeded, he hurried on to Marseilles. There he found that he had altogether 10,000 men in hand. He had but one thought, and that was to reach Andomatúnium (Langres), the head-quarters of his army, and, uniting there all his legions, to fall upon the insurgent masses. To this end he resolved to force Vercingetorix from his position in central Gaul, then to return southwards to foil him should he attempt, as he probably would, to cut him off from his base at Marseilles. The plan displays, as much as any that Cæsar thought out in his life, the marvellous prevision of the great Roman.

It was the depth of winter. The slopes of the mountains were covered with snow, the passes were blocked up; to an ordinary man the way was impassable. But Cæsar did not hesitate. Marching by a double line of route he concentrates his little force in the country of the Helvi, neighbours of the Arverni, and separated from them only by the terrible Cevennes. Sheltered by its peaks and passes, by its glaciers and its avalanches, the Arverni had deemed themselves safe, on that side, from attack. But they are not safe from Cæsar. Neither the falling snow, the continuous frost, nor the buried paths, stop his progress. It is himself, almost always on foot, his head bare, his countenance full of confidence and resolution, who, scorning the weight of his fifty years, literally leads his men over these impassable barriers. At length the summit is reached, and, flanked on the right by the chain of the Vivarais, on the left by that of the Margeride, the legions descend, at the rapid rate of five leagues a day, into the valley of the Allier. In five days they can reach Gergovia.

The apparition of the Roman legions descending the mountain barriers which had promised protection against an invader roused all the apprehensions of the Arverni. Vercingetorix is recalled from the vicinity of Avaricum to defend the capital of his tribe. Reluctantly he obeys the summons.

But Cæsar has no immediate intention of marching on Gergovia. Rather will he hasten to Vienna (Vienne), on the Rhône, to pick up the cavalry cantoned at that place. Leaving, then, the camp which he has formed near Brivata (Brioude) in charge of the young Brutus, with orders to ravage all the country around, he gallops with but a small escort eastwards, and, again defying the difficulties of the road, reaches without obstacle the capital of the Allobroges. Taking with him the cavalry he found there, he hurries with all speed northwards, traverses the territories of the Segusiani, of the Insübres, and of the Ambarri, till he reaches, at length, the lands of the Ædui, whilom his allies, but not entirely trusted since the death of Dumnorix. Still hurrying onwards, Cæsar marches along the right bank of the river, the Saône, which separated the territory of the Ædui from that of the Sequani, to Andomatunum (Langres), where two legions were in winter quarters. With these and the troops he had brought with him he hastens to Agedicum (Sens), and joins to himself the four legions there under Labienus. He has now his entire army in hand, having made, in the depth of winter, and through hostile territories, one of the most astounding marches of which history makes record. It may be truly affirmed that it was that brilliant march which reconquered Gaul.

Meanwhile Vercingetorix, freed from his apprehensions regarding the capital of the Arverni, had undertaken the siege of the Gergovia of the Boii, a city which Cæsar had founded to serve as a Roman post in the heart of Gaul, with the view of enticing his antagonist to enter on a campaign during the winter in a denuded country. Willingly would Cæsar have deferred the campaign till the coming spring. But it was above all necessary to confirm the impression made by his wonderful march. He sets out from Agedicum with six legions, his cavalry, and the auxiliaries, and reaches Vellaunodunum (Château-Landon) the next day. Thence he falls upon, takes, and pillages Genabum (Orleans), and massacres

the inhabitants ; then marches on Noviodunum (Nouan-le-Fuselier), which surrenders to his summons.

But as the Roman soldiers are marching into Noviodunum an unexpected sight presents itself to their leader's gaze. This was the advanced guard, the cavalry of the Gaulish army, moving across the plain in the direction of Noviodunum. Instantly Cæsar tries to seize the opportunity : his light cavalry gallop forward to engage the enemy ; they are repulsed ; but the splendid German horsemen will succeed, so they are ordered to the front. But if Cæsar is there, so also is Vercingetorix ; and the young Gaul has no desire to risk the independence of his country on a single battle. His plans are formed. He has succeeded in drawing Cæsar into a winter campaign, and he will make him suffer the consequences. He draws back his advanced cavalry, then, and avoids the battle which Cæsar has tried to force on him.

The next day, at a council of war, Vercingetorix thus discloses his plans to the other Gaulish chiefs. It is to use their numerous cavalry to hover about the enemy, to cut off his supplies, to destroy his foraging parties in detail, to lay waste the country, even to burn the towns. 'We are secure,' he added ; 'our provisions are stored for us in the larger fortified towns ; and if Cæsar, starved as he will be, should attack any one of those, as, to save himself, he most assuredly will, we must not shrink from the last alternative, we must burn those also. Better any fate than to see our wives and children carried into captivity, and our nation enslaved.'

The words of the Gaulish chief are received with the wildest enthusiasm. With statesmanlike adroitness he seizes the propitious moment, and launches his horsemen, torch in hand, in every direction. In one day more than twenty towns of the Bituriges, they consenting, are burned to the ground. The neighbouring tribes, the Carnutes and others, show as much patriotism as the Bituriges, and in a few days the country about the Roman camp is one vast flame. It is the counter-blow of Vercingetorix to the marvellous march of Cæsar.

That great captain recognises in an instant the danger and the difficulty. With characteristic decision he hastens to manœuvre so as to minimise the first and to overcome the second. He marches then with the utmost speed upon Avaricum (Bourges), the best-supplied city in Gaul, hoping to reach it before it shall be burned. Vercingetorix, not less prescient than his enemy, detects the object of the hurried march, and rejoices to think that he is in a position to baffle it. He is nearer to Avaricum than is Cæsar, and he can burn it before Cæsar can arrive. But to do this he must have the consent of his chiefs. He calls then a second council of war. Before this council there present themselves deputies from the Bituriges, imploring with tears that this one place may be spared to them. They urge its strong position, accessible only on one point, and their capacity to defend it against any enemy. Their tears and their entreaties gain the other chiefs, but Vercingetorix remains firm. 'If we burn Avaricum,' he repeated, 'Gaul is freed.' But he stands alone in his resolve; and at last he, too, cannot resist the insistence of his own chiefs. In a fatal moment he gives way. To put it shortly and succinctly, to save Avaricum he risks all Gaul. And he knew that he risked it. Would Hannibal have acted thus? It was, undoubtedly, for weaknesses of this character that Mommsen pronounces the Gaul to have been only a paladin.

Cæsar sits down before Avaricum and besieges it. But his difficulties are enormous. The country around him has been scoured by the Gaulish horsemen, the cattle have been driven away; his Gaulish allies, the Ædui and the Boii, render him no efficient aid. And, to crown all, Vercingetorix takes up a position on a hill covered by a marsh, five leagues from Avaricum, where in the present day stands the hamlet of Sainte-Radegonde, and continues thence to disquiet his enemy. Vainly on one occasion did Cæsar attempt to surprise the Gauls in their position. He found their army drawn up behind its strong defence, ready to receive him. He, too, did not dare to risk a battle in which defeat would be destruction; so he returned to his camp before Avaricum.

In that camp his soldiers had a bad time of it. Often did a day pass without providing them with a meal; never did they have sufficient to appease their hunger. But they did not complain. They even insisted on continuing the siege when Cæsar, compassionating their sufferings, proposed to raise it. Their splendid pertinacity is at length rewarded. Under cover of a violent storm, Cæsar, after a siege which had lasted many days, stormed Avaricum. Out of a population of 40,000, only 800, he tells us, escaped to the Gaulish camp. The remainder he allowed to be slaughtered. So great was the terror engendered by the storm and its consequences that the rest of the tribe, the Bituriges, evacuated their devastated country, and stopped not till they reached the banks of the Garonne. There they halted; and there they founded the modern Bordeaux.

Meanwhile Vercingetorix has had his share of troubles. One party amongst his countrymen, terrified at the near vicinity of the Romans, has accused him of wishing to betray them to Cæsar. He easily disposes of this calumny, and continues his efforts to assist the besieged and to thwart Cæsar. When at last he is satisfied that every chance of successful defence has vanished, he sends orders, the night before the actual storming, for the quiet evacuation of the place. The besieged begin the evacuation, and might have succeeded but for the cries of the women, which betray their movement to the Romans, and these take advantage of it in the manner described. After the place has been stormed he is not discouraged. At a meeting which he convenes of his warriors he urges them not to be downcast, for that the art of besieging strong places is an art in which the Romans excel; that war is not unvarying success; that he had always opposed the defending of Avaricum, but had yielded to the prayers of the Bituriges. 'But,' he added, 'I shall soon repair this disaster by obtaining for you greater advantages. I shall rally to our cause the cities which have not yet joined us. I shall form a single Assembly for all Gaul, and when that shall have been accomplished the whole world itself will be unable to resist

it.' He then urged them to fortify their camp, and they carried out his orders with so much skill and vigour that in a few days it had become impregnable. He sends also offers to and receives assurances of support from other tribes of Gaul. The fall of Avaricum had really served to increase his influence. In a moment of disaster he had known how to inspire the hearts of his followers with hope, to reawaken their confidence. Thanks to these feelings, widely spread over the country, many tribes sent in their adhesion, and their contingents flocked rapidly into his camp.

Meanwhile Cæsar, with the largest army he had till then employed in Gaul, for, exclusive of cavalry and auxiliaries, it counted ten legions, passed the Gaulish camp without venturing to attack it, and marched to Decetia (Decize), a town of the Ædui, to influence the election of the chief magistrate of the tribe. There was a Roman candidate and there was a national candidate, and, naturally, after Cæsar had arrived, the former was preferred. At the great assembly of the tribe which followed Cæsar announced that he was going to subdue all Gaul, the territory of the Ædui excepted. To them he promised rewards and independence if they would remain firm to the alliance. Then, dividing his army into two divisions, he gave one to Labienus, with orders to compel the submission of the north; with the other he ascended the right bank of the Allier, and marched straight upon Gergovia, the capital of the Arverni.

Carefully had Vercingetorix watched every movement of his enemy. Divining, with the true instinct of a great commander, the aim of the march up the Allier, he broke up his camp at Sainte-Radegonde, and hurried to defend the capital. Under its walls, he felt, the fate of Gaul must be decided. Marching up the left bank of the river, the bridges across which he had taken care to destroy, on a line parallel to that of Cæsar on the right bank, he reached the town, which is on the left bank, before his rival. Cæsar, then, to attack the town, had to perform that most difficult operation, the passage of a rapid river, which at that season more resembled a

torrent, in the presence of an enemy and a hostile town. Even to him who had so often 'conquered the impossible' the task seemed too dangerous. He therefore resolved to try what a stratagem would effect. With this view he placed two legions in ambush in a wooded valley (known now as La Glacière), near the point where one of the bridges had been destroyed, sending the rest of his army forward, spread out so as to conceal the absence of the two legions. Having thus lulled the suspicions of the Gauls, he spends the night in repairing the broken bridge, crosses with his two legions before daybreak, and the remainder of his army the same morning. Vercingetorix, finding himself thus out-manceuvred, hastens to throw his army into Gergovia, and into the counterforts which cover the place. There he awaits placidly the approach of Cæsar.

Gergovia was situated on the summit of a lofty hill, 1,240 feet above the plain, forming a plateau 1,620 yards in length with a breadth of more than 540 yards. The northern and eastern slopes were so steep as to defy the most active assailant; those on the southern face were less difficult; on the west the hill is united by a narrow defile to another height, somewhat lower, that of Risolles; beyond, again, are the detached hills of Montrognon and Le Puy-Giroux; whilst opposite its southern slope, at the very foot of the hill, but separated from it, rises another steep hill called the Roche Blanche. All these points, excepting the last-named, had been strongly occupied and fortified by Vercingetorix.

The sight, then, which met the anxious gaze of Cæsar as he approached Gergovia was sufficient to make the boldest leader pause. Every defensible point was occupied, every approach was covered. In the midst of the Gaulish camp might be recognised the magnificent tent of Vercingetorix, the tent where he daily held council with the divisional commanders. Cæsar recognised on the instant that direct attack was out of the question. He marched on, however, across the plain at the foot of the Gaulish position and finally halted

and encamped in a plain between three and four miles beyond, covered by the waters of the Allier. Here he intrenched himself, and then proceeded to reconnoitre more thoroughly the enemy's position.

Cæsar soon recognised that the position was impregnable : that his only hope of taking it lay in the chance of a surprise. He therefore, from that moment, bent all his faculties to contrive one. First, in order to get nearer to the hostile position, he creeps up and seizes the Roche Blanche, the hill which Vercingetorix had neglected to occupy in force because he had felt he could not hold it permanently. The possession of this hill is important to the Romans, because it commands the pasturages of Chanonat and the waters of the Auzon, and offers a position whence to watch the enemy's movements. Cæsar occupies it with two legions, and begins to unite it by a double ditch, twelve feet deep, with his position covered by the Allier. Every day there occur between the two armies combats of cavalry in the plain, brought on mostly by the Gauls, Vercingetorix being anxious to accustom his warriors to look the formidable Romans in the face. In these combats the number and the position of the Gauls gave them generally the advantage. Never, however, did the Gaulish chief allow them to bring about a general engagement ; all his hopes, all his efforts, were directed to induce Cæsar to attack his position.

For the moment events seemed to help him. The Æduan chief, who, by the aid of Cæsar, had obtained the chief place in his tribe, had displayed a disposition to rally to the national cause, and Cæsar, to nip the revolt in its bud, had marched with all his cavalry and four legions towards the Æduan country. On this expedition he was absent four days. Those days were well employed by Vercingetorix. Descending from the hill with his most disciplined troops he attacks the larger camp of the Romans, that behind the Allier, and presses them so hard that their commander, Fabius, sends messenger after messenger to Cæsar to recall him. Cæsar returns, and, struck with the danger of his



position should there be, as seemed possible, a general rising of all Gaul, thinks for a moment of retreat. Further reflection convincing him, however, that such a movement would bring about the catastrophe he dreads, he changes his plans, and, learning from his spies that the Gauls, occupied mainly with the defence of the northern face of their position, had neglected the southern, resolves to beat them up on that side. The night following, then, making as though he had designs against the northern face, Cæsar directs his Æduan allies to turn Gergovia by the right, whilst he leads a legion which he had placed in ambush to the main assault. He surprises the outposts of the sleeping Gauls, and, with a bound, reaches the walls of the town (*oppidum*). For a moment the terrified inhabitants think that they are lost. The women rush to the ramparts, and, casting their richest stuffs to the assailants, implore their mercy. But the Romans are not stopped. A centurion named Fabius, who, excited by the tale of the richness of the place, had sworn to be the first into the town, mounts the rampart, followed by three of his men. All is apparently lost, when Vercingetorix, galloping through the town at the head of his cavalry, appears on the threatened spot. Instantly he throws himself on the assailants, and, reinforced constantly by fresh troops, compels the Romans to give ground. Cæsar, who, too, has received fresh supplies of men, asserts, in his Commentaries, that on the first appearance of Vercingetorix he ordered a retreat. But it was not the habit of Cæsar to be turned from a cherished project by the apparition of one man, if that project had any chance of success. No : it was not the mere appearance on the spot of Vercingetorix ; it was the valour and increasing numbers of the Gauls led by him, that baffled Cæsar. Another circumstance came, a few moments later, to render more certain his defeat. The daring men who had ascended the rampart had been hurled from it, or been killed ; and the Romans, discouraged, were already more than half inclined to think only of their own safety, when suddenly a body of fierce Gauls appeared on their left flank. Stricken by panic, the Romans did

not recognise these Gauls to be, as they were, their Æduan allies. Imagining themselves threatened in flank whilst they were attacked in front, for Vercingetorix had assumed a vigorous offensive, they gave way, and, pursued by the Gauls, descended into the plain. There they re-formed their broken ranks. But Vercingetorix will not compromise the success he has achieved. He returns to camp satisfied with having slain more than 700 Romans, with having repulsed, in the face of Gaul, the great Cæsar, who, his apologists admit, had that day brought to the decisive point all his legions but one.

In one respect the repulse sustained by Cæsar was decisive. It caused him to raise the siege of Gergovia. Believing that the news of his defeat would rouse all Gaul against him, he, after two days of skirmishing to encourage his men, retired precipitately, that is, by forced marches of thirty miles a day, into the territory of the Ædui. But there he finds cold comfort. Even the submissive Ædui have felt the influence of his defeat. Much harassed, and with great difficulty, he marches northwards to effect a junction with Labienus. Labienus, equally anxious for the union, is marching southwards. For though, by a series of skilful manœuvres, he had defeated the Parisii at Issy, the prospect of being surrounded by the insurgent Gauls had forced him to move towards Cæsar. The junction took place, in the opinion of Cæsar's imperial biographer, at Joviniacum (Joigny), near the right bank of the Yonne. Hitherto, for the Romans, the campaign had been a failure. Neither the commander-in-chief nor the lieutenant had made any impression on the revolted tribes.

Why did not Vercingetorix pursue Cæsar? Surely he did not refrain because he was 'only a paladin.' A leader who had been 'only a paladin' would have dashed after him, reckless of consequences. It may be admitted that if the illustrious Gaul had acted after that fashion he might, with the aid of the tribes revolted and revolting, have made it very unpleasant for Cæsar; might even, had there been unity in the Gaulish councils, have destroyed his army. But, shut up in Gergovia, Vercingetorix had, probably, but scanty

information as to the events occurring in other parts of Gaul, and he feared doubtless to compromise by a decisive battle the safety of the national cause. His conduct was that of a cautious, perhaps over-cautious, statesman rather than of a paladin. He gave time for the inevitable insurrection to break out rather than by too premature a movement to run the chance of a disaster which would have stifled it.

The double retreat of Cæsar and Labienus proved conclusively that all Gaul had risen. But with the rising of Gaul recommenced that contest for supremacy among the tribes which, seven years before, had so greatly facilitated the task of Cæsar. It had been the Ædui who had bartered their independence to dispossess their rivals. And, now that the success of Vercingetorix had regained the foremost place for the Arverni, it was the Ædui again who, the common oppressor still in their midst, began to intrigue to obtain it. The protracted siege of Gergovia had first come to shake the faith of the Ædui in the invincibility of the Romans; the retreat of Cæsar from before its walls had turned their doubt into a certainty. No sooner had the news of it reached them than their two chiefs, Eporedorix and Viridomarus, whom Cæsar had counted among his most trusted Gaulish friends, threw themselves upon Noviodunum, the place in which Cæsar had stored his supplies of corn, his treasure-chest, the baggage of the army, and a great part of his private baggage, and all his Gaulish hostages and spare horses; killed the weak Roman garrison and all the Romans found in the place, divided the booty, burned the town, and carried off the hostages to their chief town, Bibracté (Autun). Thence they and their colleagues despatched messengers to Vercingetorix, vaunting their 'glorious' exploit at Noviodunum, and requesting him to come to Bibracté, to arrange with them for the future conduct of the campaign.

Towards the end of May Vercingetorix quitted Gergovia for Bibracté, to respond to this call. There the very air smelt of war; every voice cried for the extermination of the Romans. At the head of the war-party were Eporedorix and Virido-

marus, and these chiefs had employed all the means they could employ to obtain from the several cities of Gaul and their deputies the nomination of themselves to the chief conduct of the campaign. They met Vercingetorix with a proposal to share with him the direction of the war. Convinced that success could be assured only by unity of command, Vercingetorix declined the proposed division. Upon this the Ædui threw off the mask and claimed the supreme direction. Vercingetorix replied that he had been chosen for the great work by the other tribes of Gaul, but that, allowing that choice to pass, he thought it would be well to convene there, at Bibracté, an assembly representative of all Gaul, so that one chief, with sole power to direct the war, might be elected. For himself, he was ready to serve loyally whom-ever they might elect. The Ædui, believing that such an assembly would confer upon them the coveted supremacy, accepted the proposal with alacrity, and summonses were at once despatched to convene at Bibracté a general assembly of the Gaulish nation.

To these summonses all the tribes, three only excepted, eagerly responded. The three exceptions were the Remi, not yet recovered from their fear of Cæsar, and the Lingones and Treviri, both engaged in deadly war with Germany. Practically, then, all Gaul was represented. This assembly unanimously conferred the chiefship upon Vercingetorix. The enthusiasm was tremendous. For a moment even the Ædui were carried away by it. But the awakening only increased their bitterness, and, dominated by petty jealousy rather than by patriotism, they despatched, secretly, an envoy to Cæsar to make renewed submission and ask pardon. Already, then, there were traitors in the Gaulish camp.

Vercingetorix, elected to supreme authority, began at once to mature his schemes for the enfranchisement of all Gaul. Even from the Romanised provinces, from Gallia Narbonensis, including Provincia and Massilia, he would expel the hated foreigner. Thither, in his distress, Cæsar had proceeded, and there it was necessary to seek him.

Directing, then, his tried comrade, Lucterius, to recommence, with the Cardurci and the Ruteni, his incursions into Provincia, Vercingetorix announces to the deputies of the several tribes assembled at Bibracté his intention of carrying on the war in the old fashion ; that was, to fight no pitched battle, but, sacrificing the towns, the harvests, the houses, whilst hanging on the flanks of, and harassing the Roman army, to compel submission or at least the evacuation of the country. 'It is by the loss of your property,' he concluded, 'that you will obtain for ever independence and liberty.' To carry out this plan he set out with an army, increased by new levies, to 80,000 men, to seek Cæsar.

That great captain, meanwhile, after his junction with Labienus, had crossed the Yonne and hurried by forced marches towards Vesuntio (Besancon). He had with him an army numbering from 100,000 to 110,000 men—not a man too many, he felt, to combat a Gaul really united. Upon his line of march Vercingetorix, leaving Bibracté at the end of July, struck at the village of Senailly, twelve miles north of Semur (en Auxois) and ten from the camp of Cæsar, who was at Montréal-sur-Serrain. There the Gaul, establishing himself on both banks of the Armançon, began to put in practice the plan he had announced.

First, the better to distract the enemy, he divided his army into three camps or divisions. One, which he commanded in person, he posted on the little hill of Quincy, not far from the left bank of the Armançon. Another, composed entirely of cavalry, he placed on some heights about three miles distant, with orders to dash upon Cæsar should he attempt the passage of the river. The third he posted on the route from the heights just mentioned, those of Quincerot-les-Montbard to Saint-Remy, nearer to this last place and winding round to Rouge-mont. The situations were well chosen for the purpose for which they were designed, whilst they were too distant from each other to encourage an ambitious commander to risk a general action.

No long time was to elapse before Vercingetorix would

have the opportunity of testing the value of his combinations. The very next morning Cæsar crossed the Armançon just above Viserny, and marched along the right bank of the river, taking the route which is now the road from Semur to Montbard. As soon as his legions reached the plain between Quincy and the heights of Quincerot, two corps of Gaulish cavalry attacked them on both flanks, whilst a third barred to them the road to Saint-Remy. Cæsar promptly, as was his wont, makes dispositions to meet the emergency. Forming his cavalry into three divisions, he directs each upon a point of attack. The legions, meanwhile, halt whilst the baggage is brought into the centre of the column. The cavalry-fight now engages with great fury. So fiercely do the Gauls combat that in a short time the Romans, hard-pressed, fall back before them; some even take refuge in flight. Vainly, for long, does the great Cæsar use every effort to rally his men. He is, himself, in the most imminent danger. According to the legends which have reached us, he was actually being carried off a prisoner by a gigantic Gaul, when the giant, misinterpreting a cry of a comrade, released him. At any rate he was in the very jaws of defeat when his German cavalry, which he had despatched to make a turning movement, dashes on the almost denuded camp of Quincerot, drives from it the Gauls who guard it, then charging the rear of the Gaulish cavalry engaged with the Romans, spreads among them consternation and dismay. In a moment the fate of the battle is changed: the Romans gain heart; the Gauls lose it; and Cæsar gains his Marengo. But Vercingetorix, though the departure from the rule he had laid down, never to fight a pitched battle, has resulted badly for him, is no Melas. He holds his infantry in hand to serve as a *point d'appui* on which his defeated cavalry may rally. And they do so rally.

Hoping to make easy terms with the conqueror, the Ædui, three of whose chiefs had been taken prisoners or had surrendered, quit the Gaulish camp. Vercingetorix, still not despairing, posts his rallied cavalry at Genay, to cover his

retreat from a position which has become untenable. That night he marches to Alesia, the oppidum of the Mandubii, on the summit of Mont-Auxois, and there he awaits with calmness the inevitable approach of Cæsar.

Mont-Auxois is an isolated hill, in the plain called 'La Plaine des Laumes.' It has a height of 1,365 feet above the sea, though only 525 above the surrounding plain; the summit has the form of an ellipse, 2,275 yards in length and 870 broad at its greatest breadth. The plateau thus formed has an area of 1,520,000 square yards. Two rivulets, the Oze and the Ozerain, bathe the foot of the hill on two opposite sides. To the west extends the plain already named, of which the hill forms a projection; on all other sides, at distances ranging from 1,200 to 1,750 yards, are hills of nearly equal height. It will thus be seen that the position was not very strong, in no respect equal to that which the Gaulish chief had held successfully against Cæsar at Gergovia.

But Vercingetorix devoted at once all his energies to render the oppidum defensible. On the west of the plateau were some rocks which formed a strong natural defence. Constituting that point as his citadel, he established himself with the bulk of his army at the opposite or eastern extremity, towards which the ground sloped gently the whole way. From this eastern end he prolonged his camp in both directions, so that the northern and southern faces were equally guarded. To be secure against a surprise, Vercingetorix covered the entire curve occupied by his troops with a stone wall and ditch, the wall having narrow openings to admit of exit.

Before this position Cæsar appeared the afternoon of the day following that on which the Gauls had reached it. A short reconnoissance enabled him to decide upon a plan: he resolved to establish a rigorous blockade. With this object he formed camps round the hill, connected by twenty-three palisaded redoubts, the whole covered by a double ditch. M. Monnier informs us that this line of circumvallation, which is in the

form of the letter M reversed, has been discovered intact, thanks to the labours of a joint committee of military and scientific men appointed to investigate the subject. 'The lines of demarcation,' he writes, 'are visible, without interruption, as they were eighteen centuries ago, and as they will be two thousand years hence.'

Vercingetorix used all the means at his disposal to defeat the purpose of his enemy. The very next day the Gaulish horsemen, descending into the plain, attacked the Roman cavalry, compelled them to give way, and forced Cæsar to bring his legions and German horse to their support. Then, in their turn, the Gauls are broken, and endeavour in confusion to thread their way back through the apertures in the stone wall. But the Germans are upon them, and press them so hardly that for a moment the hope of taking the place then and there by assault flutters before the mind of Cæsar. But Vercingetorix sees the danger; closes the apertures; and thus, whilst holding fast to his position, forces the cavalry, still outside, to combat vigorously for their lives. This they do so successfully that the Germans in their turn fall back.

Meanwhile the popularity of Vercingetorix was waning. His want of success, and the secret hostility of the Ædui, were changing the tone of his followers. Alesia, too, was virtually an Æduan town, for the Mandubii were the faithful followers of the Ædui. Every day made more apparent the decline of his influence. At Gergovia his very whisper had been obeyed: at Alesia his direct orders came to be disputed. Surveying, from the height of his position, the Roman works, hourly approaching completion, he began to despair. Of all that he had done and tried to do for Gaul what was there that remained? Nought but a half-mutinous army and a disaffected town. For himself he cared not, but the better part of the army must be saved for what might yet remain, after he had been sacrificed, of independent Gaul.

Full of such thoughts as these, the illustrious patriot drew up his cavalry, and telling them that he had provisions for the rest of the army for only thirty days, bade them depart,



each to his own town, there to incite every Gaul who could carry arms to enrol himself in a new army, which should advance rapidly and take the Roman lines in reverse. The Gauls set out that night, forced their way through the unfinished part of the Roman lines, after a fierce combat, of which Cæsar makes no mention, but the fact of which subsequent investigations have proved, and proceeded to carry out the orders of their chief. After their departure Vercingetorix continues to do all in his power, by repeated sorties, to harass the Romans.

It would take too long to describe the almost daily encounters between the besieged and the besiegers during the thirty days that followed the departure of the Gaulish cavalry. It must suffice to state that both parties displayed a fertility of resource, an energy, a power of overcoming difficulties, such as cannot fail to excite admiration. Cæsar was not at all over-confident. He knew that all Gaul was rising around him, and that unless he could subdue the obstacle in front of him his situation might again be full of danger. He had, therefore, whilst meeting the daily sallies of the besieged, thrown up behind his lines a wall covered by a ditch to check the relieving army. Vercingetorix, on his side, continued, despite the constant opposition of the Æduan nobles within the walls, to display those great qualities which had endeared him to the mass of his countrymen. He saw the ranks of the besiegers thinning daily, and he continued to hope much from the diversion he had directed.

Meanwhile, obedient to his summons, the Gauls were forming, at Bibracté, a relieving force formidable at least in numbers. Thither all the tribes, the Bellovaci excepted, sent large contingents, and even the Bellovaci sent 2,000 men. Cæsar states that the total number reached 8,000 horse and 240,000 foot. Unfortunately for the beleaguered chieftain the influence of the Ædúi was supreme, and his two personal enemies, Eporedorix and Viridomarus, were elected to command the relieving army; which at length started in the direction of Alesia.

Meanwhile the thirty days had expired, and famine was beginning to add to the evils of the besieged. Nor, at this crisis, were their spirits buoyed up by any news from outside. They could learn nothing regarding that army on the approach of which all their hopes depended. It is on such occasions that the secret enemies of a commander-in-chief raise their heads to render his task all the more difficult. Such enemies were not wanting in Alesia, and, it need scarcely be added, that in the crude conceptions of all of them Vercingetorix was to figure as the scapegoat. At length, to stop the increasing discontent, an Arvernian noble, Critognatus by name, makes, if we may believe Cæsar, a proposition too revolting even for that age. He urges that the fighting men should eat those incapable of bearing arms. But though this proposal is rejected, a modification of it, conveying equally death to the non-combatants, is adopted. These unfortunates are driven from out the walls towards the Roman camp. Naturally Cæsar refuses to receive them, and they perish.

For the moment the famine is stayed. Hope again revives. It rises even to supreme confidence, when, as he was preparing one morning a new sortie, Vercingetorix, lifting his eyes towards the horizon, beholds the neighbouring hills covered with innumerable battalions, and more advancing from the rear. It is the army of United Gaul which has come to put an end to all their miseries. It takes a position on the hills of Venarey and of Mussy-la-Fosse, rather less than a mile from the Roman lines, and forms there its camp.

The next day the cavalry of this great army makes its first attack on the Roman lines, whilst the garrison support it by a sortie with all its strength. Both are baffled by the genius of Cæsar. It is true that at one moment he believed the battle lost, as he admits it ought to have been lost. But he is ubiquitous, his presence is always there where it is wanted, and in the end, by a skilful use of his German horsemen, he puts to flight the mass of warriors opposed to him. One great object he had before him ere the flight began, and that was to prevent any junction, any communication even,

between the relieving army and Vercingetorix. And, in the most skilful manner, notwithstanding the exigencies of the fight, he carries out this programme. Vainly does the Arvernan do all that skill and courage can do to cut his way through the Roman lines: he fails. A night attack, made without combination with the Gauls outside, after seeming to promise success, fails likewise. Then comes the third and most terrible combat of all. This it is necessary to describe in more detail.

Commanding a strong division of the relieving army was Vergasillaunus, cousin of Vercingetorix. This division comprised the Arverni and other of the most warlike of the Gaulish tribes, and numbered some 60,000. Vergasillaunus had noted that one portion of the Roman lines, that which descended to the banks of the Oze, was dominated by the crest known as the Réa, and that if he could only seize that crest and establish his troops there unseen by the Romans, he would probably be able to break through their defences and open communication with the garrison.

That same night he proceeded to put his plan into operation. At nine o'clock he quitted his camp without noise and marched northwards. After a time he turned sharply towards the western slope of the Réa, and, climbing, rested his men below the crest, that is, on the side further from the Romans. There he remained in ambush till midday: then emerges, crowns rapidly the crest, and dashes thence with fury on the Roman camp. Similarly the Gaulish cavalry advance and threaten anew the points they had attacked the day before, whilst the remainder of their infantry come on in array of battle. Vercingetorix, whose vigilance never slumbered, observes these movements from the oppidum, and, collecting his warriors, makes a fierce counter-attack on the lines of circumvallation. At last the decisive battle, the battle which will decide the fate of Gaul, is engaged. For some time it seemed as though Gaul would be victorious. Vergasillaunus carries all before him, forces the outer defences, and presses on till he reaches the foot of the Roman rampart. To fill up the ditch which covers this, he has brought with him sacks full of earth;

his men rapidly use these for that purpose ; then mounting on each other's shoulders, they climb on to the parapet : the Romans stationed there make but a feeble defence, and the rampart is gained.

Meanwhile Vercingetorix, who had directed his advance so as to give a hand to his cousin, whose purpose he had divined, seeing that he was able to carry it through unassisted, turned rapidly towards the heights on the other flank to cooperate with the other division of the Gaulish army, composed mainly of the Ædui and their allies. Could he help them to victory the day was gained. Success crowns the efforts of his followers. They, too, force the Roman defences, and gain on that side also the summit of the rampart. The battle is gained if only the centre division of the Gauls, that commanded by Eporedorix and Viridomarus and composed of the Ædui and their adherents, will display a similar daring. But alas ! the whisper of jealousy stifles the dictates of patriotism. The Æduan chiefs cannot forget, even at this supreme hour of their country's fortunes, that the triumph of Gaul would be the triumph of Vercingetorix, and they hold back their men. Cæsar notes their backwardness on the instant, and, seeing Vercingetorix, so to speak, in the air, despatches 2,500 men, followed, after a short interval, by 3,000 more, to dislodge him. Simultaneously he orders Labienus to march with six cohorts to drive back Vergasillaunus. But, despite the fierce efforts of the Romans, the two Gaulish chiefs hold their own. There is yet a chance of victory if the Ædui will but come on. But, as they still hold back, Labienus ventures upon a manœuvre which their inactivity alone makes possible for him. Sending a messenger to warn Cæsar of his intention, and asking him to support him by a flank attack on the enemy, he takes forty-one cohorts from their position fronting the Ædui, and launches them against the Gaul by a front attack, whilst Cæsar, conspicuous from his purple mantle, menaces his flank with four cohorts, similarly withdrawn, and half the Roman cavalry. Vainly does Vergasillaunus employ all the means at his disposal to repulse this double attack : fruitlessly

does he turn his eyes towards the serried Gaulish masses to which not even his danger can impart action. Assailed in front, in flank, in rear, combating against numbers ever increasing, completely isolated from the rest of the Gaulish army, he maintains, nevertheless, for some hours, a glorious resistance : chief after chief falls, but still his sword waves encouragingly to his men. Soon, however, but few of these remain to respond to his call. The death which he courts eludes him. Then the Romans rush in and after a short struggle force the survivors to surrender. Amongst these is Vergasillaunus.

Throughout this fight Vercingetorix had been engaged in holding his own position against repeated attacks. These attacks had been so far useful to Cæsar in that they had pinned the Gaulish chief to an isolated point, whence he was unable to despatch assistance to any menaced quarter. But he had not failed to notice every move in Cæsar's game. The moment then that he saw that the position of his cousin had been forced, fearing lest the next movement of the conqueror should be upon Alesia, left denuded of warriors, he returns himself to the town ; then, as night approaches, slowly draws back his warriors. His last great effort to save his country had failed, less by reason of the genius of Cæsar, than of the jealousy and self-love of the other chiefs of Gaul, qualities which in modern days have been conspicuously manifest in the character of some of the most prominent of their descendants.

What, under the circumstances, was he to do ? Mommsen, who is his severest critic, assures us that Hannibal, similarly situated, would have quitted Alesia that night, to have maintained the cause in another part of the country, and he calls the action of Vercingetorix in surrendering to the conqueror the action of 'a paladin, not of a hero.' It seems to me impossible to dispute the justice of this criticism. In the interests of the country for which Vercingetorix had done so much, it was better that he should live, free and still influential, than, by surrendering, to live only to adorn the triumph of Cæsar. Here again we find a remarkable instance of the special quality, or rather characteristic, of a people who have,

in modern days, declared themselves ready to go to war for an idea. For it was an idea only which prompted Vercingetorix to surrender.

During the night which followed his defeat he thought out the situation in all its bearings. Flight was feasible ; the alternative was surrender. In a spirit of chivalrous exaltation he decided for the latter. He would sacrifice himself in the hope that such a sacrifice might procure better terms for his countrymen. Had he been in his right mind he must have known that to a conqueror who had not conquered for an idea but for very solid considerations, such a sacrifice would be vain. But it was the night after a lost battle, a night such as Napoleon had after Waterloo, when he multiplied all the difficulties of the situation and took no account of the battalions which had been saved. He knew himself to be surrounded by enemies ; that even in the council of Alesia there was a majority who would rejoice to be rid of him. Few men, under such circumstances, can think or reason soundly. Vercingetorix was not an exception. He came to the decision to surrender, not directly to Cæsar, but to the Alesian council, who might make terms with Cæsar by sacrificing him. After curtly announcing his intention to its members, he added, 'You can give satisfaction to the Romans either by putting me to death yourselves, or by delivering me alive into their hands.' The council accepted the sacrifice, and sent at once to treat with Cæsar.

His doom thus sealed, Vercingetorix possessed too strongly the spirit of the Gaul to await the Roman lictors in his tent. Putting on his richest suit of armour, and girding himself with his favourite sword, the sword of Gergovia, he mounted his charger, splendidly caparisoned, and galloped direct to the camp of Cæsar. He found the great proconsul seated on his tribunal, in front of his army, surrounded by his lieutenants, his tribunes, and his centurions. Having caused his horse to make three circles, in accordance with the Gaulish custom, he laid down his arms at the feet of the astonished Cæsar, saying, 'To thee belong now these arms. Very brave, thou hast con-

quered the brave.' Then, drawing himself up to his full height, he awaited with dignity the answer of Cæsar. Cæsar was not equal to the occasion. Frederic never displayed more brutality to a general who had failed, nor Napoleon more rudeness to a queen who had solicited a favour he cared not to grant, than did the Roman master of legions to the captive Gaul. He loaded him with reproaches, accused him of base ingratitude, and ordered the lictors to disarm him, to place him in confinement, and load him with irons. Vercingetorix had thus failed, entirely by his own fault—for he had entirely misjudged the character of Cæsar—to realise even the smallest of the objects the hope of gaining which had prompted him to surrender.

With this incident concludes the career of Vercingetorix. Sent, after a brief space, to Rome, he was cast into a miserable dungeon in the Mamertine prison. There, deprived of light and air, the last national hero of Gaul passed upwards of five years. To him those years must have been a living death, a perpetual torture. During that time Cæsar completed the conquest of Gaul, and, subduing the supporters of the old order at home, became at last master of the State. Then, in the year 46, fresh from his victory over the last remnants of the Pompeian army at Thapsus, and appointed dictator for ten years, he thought the moment opportune to celebrate, in four magnificent triumphs, the victories he had gained over the Gauls and over his own countrymen. The first day was devoted to the celebration of the conquest of Gaul. Standing up in his triumphal car, bearing a laurel crown, and clothed in purple, the first of the Cæsars was drawn by four white horses along the Via Sacra. In front of the car, his hands loaded with irons, was a prisoner no longer recognisable as the brilliant chief who had once forced the conqueror to retreat. For a moment the glance of Cæsar rests on the form of his whilom enemy. Then, as if struck by a sudden impulse, he makes a sign to the executioners. These remove Vercingetorix, and in a few brief minutes the head is severed from the body of the man 'whose great crime it was'—to quote the eloquent words of M. Monnier—to

have loved his country better than himself.' A great writer has said that, terribly cruel though Cæsar was, yet from bloodthirstiness he slaughtered none; all was done from policy. But surely, after Gaul was completely subdued, when Cæsar was absolute master at home, there was no policy in slaying an unarmed prisoner, bowed down and broken by nearly six years of solitary confinement. No; for the cause of the killing of Vercingetorix we must look to something entirely distinct from policy; we must look to the pride which could not forget, and would not forgive, the fact that this man had forced Cæsar to retreat! It is this fact, however, and the reflection that of all the Celtic chieftains Vercingetorix was the first to dream of a Gaul which should be entirely national and absolutely united, which have endeared his memory to the great, free, and united people who inhabit the country which he strove, with such noble ardour, to enfranchise. They believe, to quote again from M. Monnier, 'that with the progress of the human intellect the reputation of the conqueror will decrease in proportion as that of the conquered will increase;' that it will be recognised that whilst the one represents ambition and self-interest, the other is the type of patriotic devotion. 'After having inaugurated the great work of national unity, and having given to it the prestige of victory, he sealed it with his blood.' It is because he did these things, at a period of great national depression, that the descendants of the peoples who fought under him against Cæsar, and who are now but just recovering from a blow which wrested from them their two fairest provinces, are subscribing to erect, on the site of his greatest achievement, a bronze statue which shall keep for ever present in the minds of those who live now, and of those who may come after, the fact that the limits of Gaul, as Gaul was in the time of Cæsar, are not the limits of modern France; that it was for those limits that Vercingetorix strove, and, failing, died; and that to obtain them in the future, near or distant, no sacrifice can be too great, no burthen too heavy. The moral of the career of Vercingetorix is PATRIOTIC



DEVOTION. That is the sentiment which, it is hoped, the sight of the statue now about to be erected will foster and increase.

#### DISCUSSION.

Mr. HYDE CLARKE, in proposing thanks to Colonel Malleon, said they had the subject discussed with all the advantages of historical treatment, and with the due development of the military and political considerations. These were exhibited in the living light of the author's experience in our Indian empire. Indeed, without such knowledge it was impossible adequately to appreciate the real events. By such a writer the Commentaries were originally drawn up, and the conclusion must be that the narrative of Cæsar was on the whole authentic and truthful, doing justice to his enemy. It was, as Colonel Malleon said, to the victor that we owed our knowledge of Vercingetorix, and it was equally to the Romans we owed our knowledge of Arminius. For his own part, his sympathies were no further enlisted for Vercingetorix than in his individual capacity and his individual character. Our sympathies would rather be attracted to our kinsmen, the Germans, then and afterwards. The German horse, it was well remarked, was the determining force on each occasion, the German horses coming most likely from the pastures of the north, still so well known for horse-breeding. The political treatment of Colonel Malleon brought forcibly to his mind that it was a mistake to suppose that there was then a well-developed Celtic nationality in Gaul. Even the distribution of Gaul by Cæsar into three great divisions did not necessarily imply this. The basis of the population must have been what he had described in his own papers on the Aquitanians and the Belgians. The Gauls were still pushing their invasion, and had largely superseded the many local languages by the Celtic language, but the prevalence of languages and of race did not necessarily correspond. Vercingetorix had to contend with this uncemented ethnological basis, and it may be that the actual condition of France is much more influenced by this state of affairs than historians have allowed. Vercingetorix found all the jealousies and rivalries of discordant chiefs and tribes, and there was no real national unity to which he could appeal, but only a common hostility to the foreigner to be relied upon as a ground of union. It was this absence of compactness of concord and of harmony which favoured Cæsar, and Colonel Malleon graphically described the incidents which baffled Vercingetorix and aided the Roman, as in similar examples in our own Indian history. The Gauls were no more a nation than now the natives of India constitute a nation.