

XVII.—*Further Observations on the Landing of Cæsar, in connection with the Correspondence between the Society of Antiquaries and the Admiralty.* By THOMAS LEWIN, Esq. M.A., F.S.A.

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Read February 12th, 1863.

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As probably many of those who have heard the Correspondence with the Admiralty read have not made the subject of Cæsar's Invasion their particular study, it may be useful to state the precise question which the recent survey by the Admiralty was intended to settle. It is well known that the first invasion was in the year B.C. 55, and in the harvest month at the south of England, *i.e.* in August, and it is mentioned incidentally by Cæsar that the *full moon occurred on the fourth day after his arrival*. The expression is "*post diem quantum quam est in Britanniam ventum*" (Bell. Gall. iv. 28); and this, according to the Latin idiom, would mean the fourth day, not exclusive but inclusive of the day of arrival, as in the familiar passage of Cicero, "*Neque te illo die, neque postero vidi . . . post diem tertium veni.*" (Cicero, Philip, ii. 35.) The full moon here referred to has been ascertained by exact calculation to have occurred on the night of the 30th August, B.C. 55. The day of Cæsar's arrival therefore was on Sunday, 27th August. He tells us that he reached Britain himself at 10 A.M. and waited for the rest of his fleet until 3 P.M. when he advanced eight miles, *with the tide in his favour*, "*et ventum et æstum uno tempore nactus secundum.*" (Bell. Gall. iv. 23); so that, assuming him to have anchored off the cliffs between Dover and Sandgate, if he sailed with the flood-tide he would go eastward towards Deal, and if with the ebb tide he would go westward towards Hythe. According to the tide-tables published by the Admiralty it is high tide at Dover on the fourth day before the full moon, about 8 A.M., and the eastward or flood tide continues to run about four hours after high water, and then turns westward, and runs so for the next six hours; so that on 27th August, B.C. 55 (being the fourth day before the full moon), it was high water at Dover about 8 A.M., and the flood-tide continued to run up channel for the next four hours, or until noon, and then turned westward, and ran in that direction until

about 6 P.M. It is evident that if these tables can be relied upon as applicable to the question, Cæsar, if he sailed with the tide at 3 P.M. on 27th August B.C. 55, must have gone westward, towards Hythe, and not eastward, towards Deal. But to this the late Dr. Cardwell, the Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford, took the following objection: that the tide-tables published by the Admiralty were founded on the survey of the channel by Sir William Beechey, and that all his observations were made at the distance of *a mile and a half* from the shore; but that Cæsar must have anchored at about *half a mile* from the shore; and that, according to local information, the *inshore* tide was very different from the *offshore* tide; that in short, though the tide at 3 P.M. on 27th August B.C. 55 might have been running down channel at the distance of *a mile and a half* from the shore, it might still have been running up channel at a point within the limits of the *inshore tide*.

In order to solve this problem, and at the same time to supply an omission in their tables, the Admiralty, at the request of the Society, consented to make a survey of the tides at Dover within the limits of the one and a half mile which had before been neglected. This duty was entrusted to Surveyor Calver, whose report is before the Society; and it appears that the survey extended four miles in length, viz. from the South Foreland to Shakespeare's Cliff, and a mile and a half in breadth. Observations were made in favourable weather in the three consecutive months of August, September, and October. In August the observations extended to three different stations within the limits mentioned, and were made on the *fifth day* before the full moon, and in September observations were also made at three different stations on the *fifth day* before the full moon; and this day was probably selected for some of the observations for the benefit of those (if any) who might be inclined to place the arrival of Cæsar on the fifth, instead of the fourth, day inclusive before the full. It is, however, very generally admitted that the day of Cæsar's arrival was the *fourth day* inclusive before the full, and attention is therefore to be chiefly directed to that day. No observations on the *fourth day* before the full were made in the month of August; but observations were made on the fourth day before the full at two different stations in the month of September, and at three different stations in the month of October, and the results are these:—On the fourth day before the full in the month of September it was high water at Dover at 8h. 17m. A.M. and the tide or current ran eastward until 1h. 15m. P.M. at the one station, and until 1h. 30m. P.M. at the other station, when it turned westward, and ran in that

direction until 5h. 53m. P.M. In the month of October on the fourth day before the full it was high water at Dover at 8h. 13m. A.M., and the tide or current ran eastward until 12h. 50m. at one station, and until 1h. 0m. P.M. at another station, and until 1h. 7m. P.M. at the third station, when it turned westward. The *duration* of the westward current or ebb-tide was made the subject of two observations only; and according to one of them it ran for 6h. 10m., and according to the other for 5h. 53m. The general result as stated by Surveyor Calver himself was this, viz. that on the fourth day before the full, assuming high water at Dover to have been even so early as 7h. 31m. A.M., the tide would turn westward at 12h. 19m. and would run so until 6h. 34m. The recent survey therefore by the Admiralty proves conclusively that there is no substantial distinction between the inshore tide and the offshore tide, and that with high water at Dover at 7h. 31m. A.M. (and it could not be placed earlier, but was probably much later, viz. at 8 A.M.), the tide or current ran eastward towards Deal until between 12 and 1 P.M. and then ran westward until between 6 and 7 P.M.

Although, however, the set of the tides as now ascertained by the Admiralty is the most important element, and may be considered by many as decisive of the question, yet other arguments are not to be lost sight of which equally favour the hypothesis that Cæsar landed at Hythe, and are opposed to the hypothesis that he landed at Deal. The learned D'Anville, for instance, placed the disembarkation at Hythe on the strength of the following argument, and it certainly appears conclusive:—Cæsar on the second invasion started *from* the same port in Gaul *for* the same port in Britain, as in the previous year. He set sail with a south-west wind (the most favourable for a passage from Boulogne) at sunset, but at midnight the wind dropped, and he was drifted out of his course by the current, and at break of day saw Britain on his left hand. “*Leni Africo provectus mediâ circiter nocte, vento intermisso, cursum non tenuit, et longius delatus æstu, ortâ luce, sub sinistrâ Britanniam relictam conspexit.*” (Bell. Gall. v. 8.) Was this drift up channel, or down channel? Whether the vessel was under sail or merely drifting, the broadside would be to the current, and the head turned to the north. Supposing, therefore, that in mid-channel he was carried to the west, he would see Britain in the morning immediately before him; but if, when he was halfway across, the tide carried him some twelve or fifteen miles up channel to the east, the phenomenon observed by Cæsar would actually occur, that is, he would then be off the South Foreland, and, with the head of the vessel turned northward, he would on his left hand see the high cliffs

between Dover and Sandgate, but on his right hand he would discern nothing but the ocean.

Again, on discovering at break of day how far he had been carried out of his course by the drift, what was the step taken? Had he been making for Deal he would in drifting up channel have been advancing in the right direction, but on finding himself off the South Foreland he waited, he says, *until the change of the current*, and then *turned back again with it*, and by dint of rowing reached the landing-place of the year before about noon. “*Tum rursus æstûs commutationem secutus remis contendit, ut eam partem insulæ caperet, quâ optimum esse egressum superiore æstate cognoverat.*” (Bell. Gall. v. 8.) As the tide had carried him up channel, the turn of the tide, or the ebb, was of course down channel. If Deal had been his object, he would have steered across, if not even against, the current; but instead of doing so he went *along with it*, or down channel, and the port he was in search of must therefore have been westward, in the same direction as the tide, and not eastward towards Deal.

Another observation arising out of the same part of the narrative is this: Cæsar had with him on this second invasion a fleet (including tenders) of 800 vessels, and, when in the morning he found himself off the South Foreland, he was close to the Goodwin Sands, and, if it were *low water*, it is scarcely possible that so vast an armament could have escaped wreck upon the Goodwins. Have we then the means of ascertaining whether at that time it was low water or not? Cæsar states that he waited, before he moved, until the *turn of the tide*, that is, until the current which had carried him up channel turned down channel. This change occurs off Dover *at four hours after high water*; and as Cæsar, after weighing anchor, was many hours on the passage before he reached the port at noon, he must, on the supposition that he landed at Deal, have carried his whole fleet at low water over the Goodwins. If, on the other hand, he made for Hythe, he would, on turning back with the tide off the South Foreland, have altogether avoided the Goodwins; and as no allusion is made to any risks upon that dangerous bank, the inference is that he went westward in the direction for Hythe.

Again, how far does the nature of the shore where he landed correspond with the coast of Deal? The shore at the landing-place is described as shelving so gradually that the vessels could not approach the beach, insomuch that the Britons rushed into the water, and assailed the Romans in their ships, and when eventually the legions leaped into the sea, they had to wade a considerable distance before

they reached the shore. (Bell. Gall. iv. 24 *et seq.*) This answers minutely to the coast at Hythe, where the shore shelves so very gradually that even colliers cannot come up to the beach; but at Deal, on the contrary, you go at once into deep water, so that vessels of considerable burthen can almost touch the beach, and those on board may leap at once upon the shore.

What also was the nature of the *land* where the disembarcation was effected? It is described by Cæsar as open, “*apertum*,” and *flat*, “*planum*” (Bell. Gall. iv. 23), and the marsh at Hythe is a perfect flat; and indeed the marshes on the south coast are commonly called Flats. But this description does not agree with the part about Deal, for the chalk cliffs reach all the way from the South Foreland to Walmer; and between Walmer and Deal, though there are no cliffs, the ground is uneven, and cannot be called a flat.

It is also remarkable that Cæsar, Dion Cassius, Plutarch, and Valerius Maximus, all with one voice refer to the *marshes* at the place of landing, and marshes would of course be found in the tract which was called, *par excellence*, “The Marsh.” They would in particular be found about Hythe, where was the port which was then kept open by the streams at the back of Hythe, since diverted into the military canal. But who has heard of a marsh at Deal? Even those who advocate Deal, as Halley, are obliged to admit that all there is “firm and dry ground,” and are driven to the conjecture (not supported by any evidence) that the coast in that part *might* have totally altered its character since the time of Cæsar.

Again, the last-mentioned writer, Valerius Maximus, speaks of *two small islands* at the landing-place; for he relates (Valer. Max. lib. iii. c. 2) that one Scæva with a few others were posted as vedettes on one of these islands, and that the Britons as the tide ebbed rushed across the estuary to attack them, when all fled but Scæva, and that he gallantly defended himself for some time, and then threw himself into the sea, and swam to the camp. It was never yet suggested that islands did exist or could have existed at Deal; but at Hythe not only is it highly probable that islands might have been found in the marsh, but the identical islands referred to by the historian have been recently discovered. They were close together, either near to or in the ancient port of Hythe, and both of them several feet above high-water mark. They are depicted on old maps, but when the port was drained they continued as eminences, or knolls. Mr. Elliott, who has been the engineer of the marsh for the last quarter of a century, informed me that a few years since he carted away these

eminences, once islands, for the purpose of filling up the adjacent hollows, little dreaming at the time that he was removing important landmarks for determining the true place of Cæsar's landing.

I may mention in conclusion a circumstance which is curious as a fact, whatever may be its weight as an argument. Mr. Elliott tells me that in the triangular flat between Hythe and Sandgate, but at the Hythe end, wherever you dig you come upon the bones of persons apparently slain in battle, *i.e.* the bones are those of adults, and the bodies must have been interred promiscuously, without the least order, and at very little depth below the surface. These may be the bones of Saxons or of Danes, but they may also be the bones of the combatants who fell in the conflict between the Romans and Britons at Cæsar's first invasion; at all events, it proves that this spot was at some time or other selected as the landing-place of an invading army.