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## CAESAR AT THE RUBICON.

THE first few chapters of Caesar's *Bellum Civile* are notoriously untrustworthy. Much has been done by Nissen,<sup>1</sup> Schmidt<sup>2</sup> and others towards re-telling the story more truthfully, but our accounts are not yet fully satisfactory. Caesar's statement<sup>3</sup> that he met the tribunes only after crossing the Rubicon is at first sight startling and does not accord with the story as told by Plutarch<sup>4</sup> and Appian<sup>5</sup>; for both of these historians make much of the fact that Caesar exhibited the tribunes upon their arrival to his army, thus stirring the soldiers to action. Plutarch and Appian are evidently following Pollio,<sup>6</sup> who was with Caesar on the day of crossing: they ought therefore to furnish testimony of some weight. Suetonius<sup>7</sup> makes no direct statement about the matter, but the order of events as given by him seems to place him in agreement with the statement of the *Bellum Civile*. We have therefore Pollio, Plutarch (twice), and Appian against the words of the *Bellum Civile* and Suetonius; or, more simply, Pollio against Caesar, both of whom were eye-witnesses of what occurred that day. Pollio,<sup>8</sup> moreover, is the critic who questions the veracity of these very commentaries. Our acceptance of one side or the other can, therefore, hardly depend upon preponderance of authority. It will be a question of probability and probability I think we shall find resting with Plutarch and Appian. The only objection against adopting this conclusion at once, is that it seems to assume that Caesar has falsified to his own disadvantage. Why should Caesar, who pleads and apologizes, suppresses and falsifies so skilfully throughout these chapters, make his own case worse than it actually was by stating that he had begun the civil war before the tribunes offered him a plausible excuse? The explanation, I believe, lies in the assumption that Antony, who was one of the tribunes in question, and who after Caesar's death probably had Caesar's manuscript in his possession, inserted the troublesome words: '*ibique tribunos plebis . . . convenit.*' I believe (1) with Plutarch and Appian, that the

<sup>1</sup> In *Syb. Hist. Zeit.*, N. F. x. pp. 71 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Cic. Briefwechsel.*

<sup>3</sup> *B.C.* ch. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Plut. Caes.* 31-2; *Ant.* 5 (Schmidt's statement in the footnote of p. 105 cites Plutarch incorrectly).

<sup>5</sup> Appian ii. 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Plut. Caes.* 32 πολλά δὲ καὶ τῶν φίλων τοῖς

παροῦσιν ὧν ἦν καὶ Πολλίων Ἀσίνιος συνδιηπόρησεν. Appian tells practically the same story as Plutarch regarding Caesar's hesitation at the Rubicon.

<sup>7</sup> *Suet. Jul.* 33.

<sup>8</sup> *Suet. Jul.* 56, Pollio Asinius parum diligenter parumque integra veritate compositos putat, etc.

tribunes came to Ravenna; and (2) that Antony finding it so stated in Caesar's manuscript, changed it. Let us discuss the second point first.

Scholars, basing their arguments upon Pollio's criticism and upon the actual condition of the commentaries, are well-nigh agreed that the MS. of the *Bellum Civile* was not published till after Caesar's death. If so, it probably fell into Antony's<sup>1</sup> hand with the other papers of Caesar. Antony, who took such liberties in changing the other papers and in forging new ones, would hardly permit the publication of any statement in the *Bellum Civile* that would prove derogatory to himself. During this very time Cicero<sup>2</sup> was abusing him as the cause of the civil war, for by making his theatrical escape to Caesar he had furnished his master a fair excuse for invading Italy. It was an easy matter for Antony to make Caesar's own book refute Cicero, to publish the *Bellum Civile* with a statement that the tribunes arrived only after Caesar had taken the most daring step. There is therefore nothing unreasonable in the assumption.

Let us then examine the probabilities of the main question. It is now usually believed that Caesar crossed the Rubicon on the night of January the tenth.<sup>3</sup> It could not have been difficult for Antony and Curio to reach Ravenna by the morning of that day, if we may judge from<sup>4</sup> previous rapid journeys over the same road. Again the probability that Antony came to Ravenna is strengthened by the fact that the five cohorts over which he was placed marched from Ravenna<sup>5</sup> and not from Ariminum as Caesar implies, and must have set out on the tenth. The strongest argument however lies in the unanimous testimony that Caesar addressed his soldiers at the beginning of his campaign, and that the speech as given would have little excuse or point unless made at Ravenna and in the presence of the tribunes.

It must be evident to all that Caesar is not ready to meet Pompey at once. He has but one legion with him and had but very recently sent for reinforcements stationed some six hundred miles away. These and the new Gallic levy could not arrive within a month at least. Pompey had some four legions at hand and the garrisons of Italy. In fact, even after his startling invasion, Caesar dallies for three weeks<sup>6</sup> near the northern boundary, until, in fact, the twelfth legion arrives. This is indication enough that he was taken unawares and that he crossed the boundary on a sudden decision before he was prepared to advance. What

<sup>1</sup> App. ii. 125 τὰ χρήματα . . . καὶ τὰ ὑπομνήματα τῆς ἀρχῆς; Vell. Pat. 2. 60. 4 commentariis; Plut. *Ant.* 15 ἔλαβε δὲ καὶ τὰ βιβλία τοῦ Καίσαρος.

<sup>2</sup> Cic. *Phil.* ii. 53 Tu, tu, inquam, M. Antoni, princeps C. Caesari omnia perturbare cupienti causam belli contra patriam inferendi dedisti; 55 Vt Helena Troianis, sic iste huic rei publicae causa pestis, quoted by Plut. *Ant.* 6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Nissen and Schmidt. This is probably true, though scholars have been too ready to base all their chronology of this period upon a casual statement made by Cicero almost two weeks later. (*Fam.* xvi. 12. 2.)

<sup>4</sup> Curio had made it in three days, and Roscius asked for only six days to make the journey, discuss the proposed terms with Caesar, and return to the senate. *B.C.* 3.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Schmidt, *Briefw.* p. 105 f.n. end; Drumann-Groebe iii. p. 386 f.n. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Caesar would have us believe that he is spending this time peacefully at Ariminum in deference to the peace negotiations. This is not quite true. Miss Peaks, *Class. Rev.* 1904, p. 346, makes it clear that Caesar employs the time in strengthening his position.

made him take this sudden step was the arrival at camp of the disguised and much-offended tribunes. He suddenly saw in their apparent dishonour a pretext for the daring move, and, though not yet ready, he felt that he could not afford to let so fair a chance slip. Even assuming as some do that the tribunes stopped at Ariminum and that Caesar was notified of their plight by special messengers, we have to face even more questions: why should Caesar have been in such haste to cross a day before he could make the best of his exhibit when he knew he must move slowly for several weeks to come? Or what would be the point of haranguing the soldiers after the vital step was taken? Or what would be the use of exhibiting the tattered tribunes on the day after the invasion, after they had been resting at Ariminum for a day in safety? These are my reasons for adopting the account of Plutarch and Appian and for attributing to Antony the phrase in the *Bellum Civile* which contradicts their statements.

TENNEY FRANK.

*Bryn Mawr.*