

completed, thanks to the strenuous efforts of the soldiers, within a few days. Caesar left a strong garrison at the bridge among the Treveri to stop them causing sudden disturbances, and took the rest of his troops and the cavalry across. The Ubii had previously given him hostages and surrendered to him; to justify themselves they sent Caesar envoys who were to explain that no reinforcements had been sent from their state to the Treveri, nor had they broken their word. They begged and pleaded with him to spare them, and not to let a blanket hatred of Germans result in the innocent paying the penalty for the guilty. If he wanted more hostages, they promised to provide them. Caesar heard their explanation and learned that the reinforcements had been sent by the Suebi. He accepted the Ubii's excuse, and made careful inquiries as to the route of entry to the land of the Suebi.

(10) Meanwhile, after a few days the Ubii informed Caesar that the Suebi were mustering all their forces at a single location, and declaring to the peoples under their rule that they must send infantry and cavalry reinforcements. Once this was made known, Caesar secured the corn supply and selected a suitable place for a camp. He ordered the Ubii to bring their cattle and all their property from the fields into the towns, in the hope that the Suebi, who were ignorant barbarians, would be affected by the lack of food supplies and so could be drawn into fighting on unequal terms. He told them to send scouts to the Suebi at frequent intervals to find out what they were doing. They carried out his orders and after a few days' interval reported back—once reliable news of the Roman army arrived, all the Suebi, with all their own forces and the allied forces which they had mustered, had retreated deep into their most distant territory. There was a forest there of immense size, called the Bacenis: it extended far into their land and formed a natural barrier preventing the Cherusci and Suebi from raiding and inflicting damage on one another. On the edge of this forest the Suebi had decided to await the Romans' arrival.

(11) Since this point has now been reached, it seems not inappropriate to give an account of the customs of Gaul and Germany and the differences between these two nations.

Caes. 66. Bk. 6. - Hammond trans., Oxford UP
1996.

In Gaul there are factions,* not only in every state and every village and district but practically in each individual household as well. The leaders of these factions are the men who in the Gauls' judgement are thought to have the greatest authority; the conclusion of all actions and counsels is referred to their decision and judgement. And so it seems for this reason to be a long-established rule that no ordinary citizen should go without assistance against a man of higher rank and influence. No leader allows his own people to be oppressed and cheated, for if he does he cannot maintain his authority among them.

The same structure holds throughout Gaul as a whole: for all the states are grouped into two parties. (12) When Caesar came to Gaul the Aedui were the leaders of one faction and the Sequani the leaders of the other. From ancient times the Aedui had possessed the highest authority, and their dependants were very numerous, so when the Sequani became less strong in themselves they made an alliance with Ariovistus and the Germans and persuaded them on to their side by means of great expenditure and promises. Then they fought a number of successful battles and, once all the Aeduan aristocracy were dead, they so surpassed the Aedui in power as to win over a large number of their dependants and accept the sons of their leaders as hostages, forcing these men to swear publicly that they would never plot against the Sequani. They also forcibly occupied a section of the neighbouring territory which they had seized, and won supreme control of all Gaul.

This was the necessity which had forced Diviciacus to set off for Rome and the Senate to seek assistance, but he had returned without success. Caesar's arrival brought about a change in this state of affairs. The Aedui got their hostages back, the old relationships of patronage were restored, and new ones effected through Caesar, because those who had allied themselves in friendship with the Aedui saw that they enjoyed better terms and conditions of government, while in other respects their influence and prestige was increased. Thus the Sequani lost supreme control.

Their place was filled by the Remi. Once people realized that they were just as highly favoured by Caesar, those who

because of ancient feuds could not ally themselves with the Aedui declared themselves instead to be dependants under the Remi's patronage. The Remi took care to protect these people, and so held on to their new and suddenly acquired authority. At that time the state of affairs was such that the Aedui were considered by far the most important leaders, while the Remi came second in prestige.

(13) In the whole of Gaul two types of men are counted as being of worth and distinction. The ordinary people are considered almost as slaves: they dare do nothing on their own account and are not called to counsels. When the majority are oppressed by debt or heavy tribute, or harmed by powerful men, they swear themselves away into slavery to the aristocracy, who then have the same rights over them as masters do over their slaves. Of the two types of men of distinction, however, the first is made up of the druids, and the other of the knights.

The druids are involved in matters of religion. They manage public and private sacrifices and interpret religious customs and ceremonies. Young men flock to them in large numbers to gain instruction, and they hold the druids in great esteem. For they decide almost all disputes, both public and private: if some crime has been committed, if there has been murder done, if there is a dispute over an inheritance or over territory, they decide the issue and settle the rewards and penalties. If any individual or group of people does not abide by their decision, the druids ban them from sacrifices. This is their most severe punishment. Those who are banned in this way are counted among the wicked and criminal: everyone shuns them and avoids approaching or talking to them, so as not to suffer any harm from contact with them. If they seek help at law, they receive no justice, and they are never given positions of prestige. A chief druid rules over all the rest and has supreme authority among them. When such a man dies, if there is an outstanding druid among those remaining he succeeds to this position, but if there are a number of equal ability, they decide the leadership by a vote of all the druids, and sometimes even in armed combat. At a certain time of year they sit in judgement in a sacred spot in the territory of the

Carnutes, in an area right in the middle of Gaul. Everyone who has a dispute comes to this place from every region, and submits to their decisions and judgements. It is believed that this institution was discovered in Britain and transferred to Gaul; and nowadays those who want to understand these matters in more detail usually travel to Britain to learn about them.

(14) Druids are not accustomed to take part in war, nor do they pay taxes like the rest of the people. They are exempt from military service and from all obligations. Such great rewards encourage many to begin training, either of their own accord or sent by parents and relatives. There they are told to memorize a large number of lines of poetry, and so some spend twenty years in training. Nor do they think it proper to commit this teaching to writing, although for almost all other purposes, including public and private accounts, they use Greek characters. They seem to me to have adopted this practice for two reasons: first, they do not want their teaching spread abroad, and secondly, if those in training rely on written texts they concentrate less on memory. And in fact it does often happen that students who have writing as a safeguard abandon the effort to learn by heart and use their memory. The principal doctrine they attempt to impart is that souls do not die but after death cross from one person to another. Because the fear of death is thereby set aside, they consider this a strong inducement to physical courage. Besides this, they debate many subjects and teach them to their young men—for example, the stars and their movements, the size of the universe and the earth, the nature of things, and the strength and power of the immortal gods.*

(15) The second class is that composed of the knights. When necessity arises and some war flares up—which before Caesar's arrival used to happen almost every year, so that they were either on the offensive themselves or fending off attacks—they are all involved in the campaign. Each man has as many retainers* and dependants about him as is appropriate to his status in terms of his birth and resources. This is the sole form of power and influence they know.

(16) The whole of the Gallic nation is much given to religious practices. For this reason those who are afflicted with

serious illnesses and those who are involved in battles and danger either offer human sacrifice or vow that they will do so, and employ the druids to manage these sacrifices. For they believe that unless one human life is offered for another the power and presence of the immortal gods cannot be propitiated. They also hold state sacrifices of a similar kind. Some of them use huge images of the gods,* and fill their limbs, which are woven from wicker, with living people. When these images are set on fire the people inside are engulfed in flames and killed. They believe that the gods are more pleased by such punishment when it is inflicted upon those who are caught engaged in theft or robbery or other crimes; but if there is a lack of people of this kind, they will even stoop to punishing the guiltless.

(17) The god they worship most of all is Mercury. There are many images of him, and they say that he is the inventor of all the arts and the director of ways and journeys; they believe that he has greatest power over the pursuit of profit and matters of trade. After him they worship Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva.* They have practically the same views about these gods as other peoples do—Apollo wards off disease, Minerva imparts the principles of craft skills, Jupiter wields power over the heavens, and Mars controls wars. When they have decided to engage in battle it is to Mars that they will dedicate most of what they may take in the fight. When victorious, they sacrifice the animals they have captured and gather all the rest of the spoils in one place. In many states one may see mounds made out of such objects in holy places, and rarely does it happen that anyone defies the bounds of religion and dares to hide away his spoils at home, or steal them away once they are placed on the mound. The most serious penalty, including torture, is set down for such behaviour.

(18) The Gauls claim that they are all descended from one father, Dis,* and they say that this is the teaching of the druids. For this reason they define the passage of time by nights rather than days: they observe birthdays and the start of months and years in this way, with day coming after night.* As for their mode of life in other respects, they differ from other peoples in that they do not allow their own sons

to approach them in public until they have grown up and can undertake military duties: they consider it a disgrace for a son who is still only a boy to place himself publicly in his father's sight.

(19) After reckoning up the sum, a husband adds to whatever sum of money he has received from his wife as a dowry a similar amount from his own goods. An account is kept of this joint sum of money and the profits are saved. Then whichever partner survives the other receives the joint portion with the accrued profits of previous years. Men have the power of life and death over their wives as over their children. When the head of a noble family dies his kinsmen assemble and, if there is any suspicious circumstance surrounding his death, they interrogate his wives as they would slaves.* If anything is discovered, terrible tortures are inflicted and then they are put to death. By the standards of their civilization Gallic funerals are full of pomp and splendour: they throw on to the pyre everything which they believe was precious to the persons concerned during their lifetime, even living creatures. Indeed, not long before the era recorded in this account slaves and dependants who were thought to be dear to the departed were burned with them at the end of the funeral rites.

(20) The states which are thought to run their public affairs most judiciously have a legal ordinance that if anyone hears rumours or tidings affecting the state from neighbouring peoples, he is to report it to the magistrate and not to discuss it with anyone else.* This is because it is well known that often men who are impetuous and inexperienced are frightened by false rumours and driven into wrongdoing or making decisions about matters of great importance. The magistrates conceal information where it is expedient, and where they judge it appropriate they make it known to the people. It is not permitted to speak about the state except at an assembly.

(21) The customs of the Germans are very different from those of the Gauls. They have no druids to preside over religious matters, nor do they concern themselves with sacrifices. The only things which they count as gods are things

they can see and which clearly benefit them, for example, the Sun, Vulcan,* and the Moon. They have not even heard rumours of any others. They spend their whole life in hunting and military activity, and from childhood they are eager for hard work and endurance. Those who have remained chaste the longest win the highest praise among their own people: some believe that it makes them taller, others that it gives them greater strength and determination. They consider it a matter for shame to have sexual intercourse with a woman before reaching the age of 20—nor does the matter allow for concealment, for both sexes mingle together when they wash themselves in the rivers, and also they wear hides and skins which offer little protection, leaving most of the body naked.

(22.) They do not practise agriculture, and the majority of their food consists of milk, cheese, and meat. No one possesses a fixed area of land or estates of his own: rather, every year the magistrates and leading citizens assign each family and clan who have joined forces a tract of land of an appropriate size and location. Then after a year they oblige these men to move on. They cite many reasons for this practice: to prevent people either being ensnared by continuous habit and adopting agriculture in place of their enthusiasm for war; or trying to obtain large estates, the strong driving the weak out of their properties; or building too carefully with the intention of avoiding extreme cold and heat; or to stop the desire for money springing up, for from this arise factions and dissent; or finally, to keep the ordinary people content, since each man can see that his own possessions are equal to those of the men in power.

(23.) The highest praise among the German states goes to those who ravage their borders and so maintain the widest unpopulated area around themselves. They think it a true mark of bravery to drive neighbouring peoples from their land and force them to make way, so no one dares to dwell nearby. At the same time they think that this will make them safer by removing the threat of unexpected invasion. In warfare, either when a state wards off attack or when it goes on the offensive, magistrates are chosen to head the campaign and to have the power of life and death. They have no

overall magistrates in peacetime, but the leaders of individual districts and settlements dispense justice among their own people and settle disputes. There is no discredit attached to acts of robbery which take place outside the borders of each state: in fact, they claim that these take place to train their young men and reduce their laziness. And besides, when one of the leaders states at an assembly that he will take command, and that those who wish to support him must declare themselves, then the men who approve him and his cause rise up, pledge their assistance, and win praise from the people. Any who pledge assistance but then do not support him are considered deserters and traitors, and their word is distrusted in every respect from then on. They consider it wrong to violate the obligations of hospitality: they protect their guests from harm, whatever the reason for their presence among them, and treat them as sacrosanct. They open all their houses to such guests and share their food with them.

(24.) There was a time when the Gauls were more courageous than the Germans and took offensive military action against them. Because of their high population density and lack of land, they sent colonies across the Rhine. Thus the Volcae Tectosages seized the most fertile areas of Germany, around the Hercynian forest, and settled there. I understand that this forest was known by report to Eratosthenes and certain of the Greeks, but they called it the Orcynian forest.* This people still dwells in the same territory to this day, and has a fine reputation for justice and military glory. These days they endure the same state of poverty, privation, and hardship as the Germans, and have the same kind of food and clothing. The Gauls, on the other hand, live close to the Province and are familiar with imported goods, and this entails an abundant supply of items both luxurious and functional. The Gauls gradually grew accustomed to being defeated, and were beaten in many battles, so now they do not reckon themselves to be even equal in bravery to the Germans.

(25.) It takes nine days' march for someone to cross the Hercynian forest (which was mentioned above) travelling light. Its size cannot be described more accurately, for the Germans have no means of measuring units of distance. It begins in

the lands of the Helvetii, Nemetes, and Raurici, runs parallel to the straight course of the River Danube, and reaches to the lands of the Daci and Anartes. At this point it swings to the left in regions away from the river, and because of its great size extends to the borders of many peoples. No one in this part of Germany can claim to have reached its furthest edge—despite journeying for sixty days—or to have heard where it begins. It is agreed that many species of wild animal live there which are not found anywhere else: the most unusual of these, which deserve to be recorded, are described below.*

(26) There is an ox shaped like a stag. In the middle of its forehead a single horn grows between its ears, taller and straighter than the animal horns with which we are familiar. At the top this horn spreads out like the palm of a hand or the branches of a tree. The females are of the same form as the males, and their horns are the same shape and size.*

(27) There are also animals called elks.* Their shape and dappled coat are like those of goats, but they are rather larger, have stunted horns, and legs without joints. They do not lie down to sleep: if they are struck by some unexpected misfortune and fall down, they cannot raise themselves or get up again. They use trees as couches, leaning against them to secure a modicum of repose and so taking their rest. When hunters track their spoor and find their customary resting-place they either weaken the base of the trees there by digging the earth out from under them, or they cut through them—thus the impression is given that the trees are still standing. When the elks lean against the trees as usual, their weight knocks them over: elk and tree fall down together.

(28) A third species of animal is the wild ox.* They are slightly smaller than elephants, and in appearance, colour, and shape they resemble bulls. They are extremely fierce and swift-footed, and attack people and animals on sight. The Germans carefully trap them in pits, and then slaughter them. Such tasks make the young German men tough, and this type of hunting gives them training. Those who kill the most wild oxen display the horns in public as a proof, which wins them considerable acclaim. The oxen cannot grow accustomed to people; or become tame, even if they are caught when young.

The size, appearance, and shape of their horns are very different from the horns of our own cattle. These horns are much prized: the Germans give them a rim of silver and use them as drinking-vessels at magnificent feasts.

(29) Once Caesar learned from the Ubian scouts that the Suebi had retreated to the forest, he became anxious about the corn supply, because (as we explained above) the Germans hardly practise agriculture. So he decided not to proceed further.* None the less, to prevent the barbarians losing all fear of his return, and to hold up their reinforcements, he withdrew his army and broke up a 200-foot length of the bridge at its farthest end, which touched the bank in the territory of the Ubii. At the Gallic end of the bridge he set a four-storey tower and stationed a garrison of twelve cohorts to guard the bridge; he fortified the post with strong defences. He put the young Gaius Volcatius Tullus in charge of the station and garrison. When the corn began to ripen Caesar set off for the campaign against Ambiorix through the Ardennes forest. This forest is the largest in Gaul and stretches from the banks of the Rhine and the land of the Treveri to the Nervii: it is more than 460 miles across.* Caesar sent Lucius Minucius Basilus ahead with all the cavalry, to see if he could gain any advantage by marching swiftly and seizing an opportune moment. He told Basilus to forbid the lighting of fires in camp, so as to prevent any early warning of his approach, and said that he would follow up at once.

(30) Basilus did as he was ordered. Contrary to everyone's expectation the march was quickly completed and he caught many of the people off guard and still in the fields. Acting on their information he made straight for Ambiorix himself at the spot where he was said to be with a few of his cavalry. Fortune* is indeed powerful in all things, and especially in military affairs: for it was by purest chance that he came upon Ambiorix while he was off guard and unprepared. The first people knew of Basilus' arrival was when they saw it—they heard no report or tidings of it. It was equally the operation of fortune that after all his military equipment had been seized, and his horses and carriages captured, Ambiorix himself escaped death. This happened because the building