

**JULIUS CÆSAR; DID  
HE CROSS  
THE CHANNEL?**

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Julius Cæsar; did he cross the Channel? by Scott F. Surtees

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CHANNEL?

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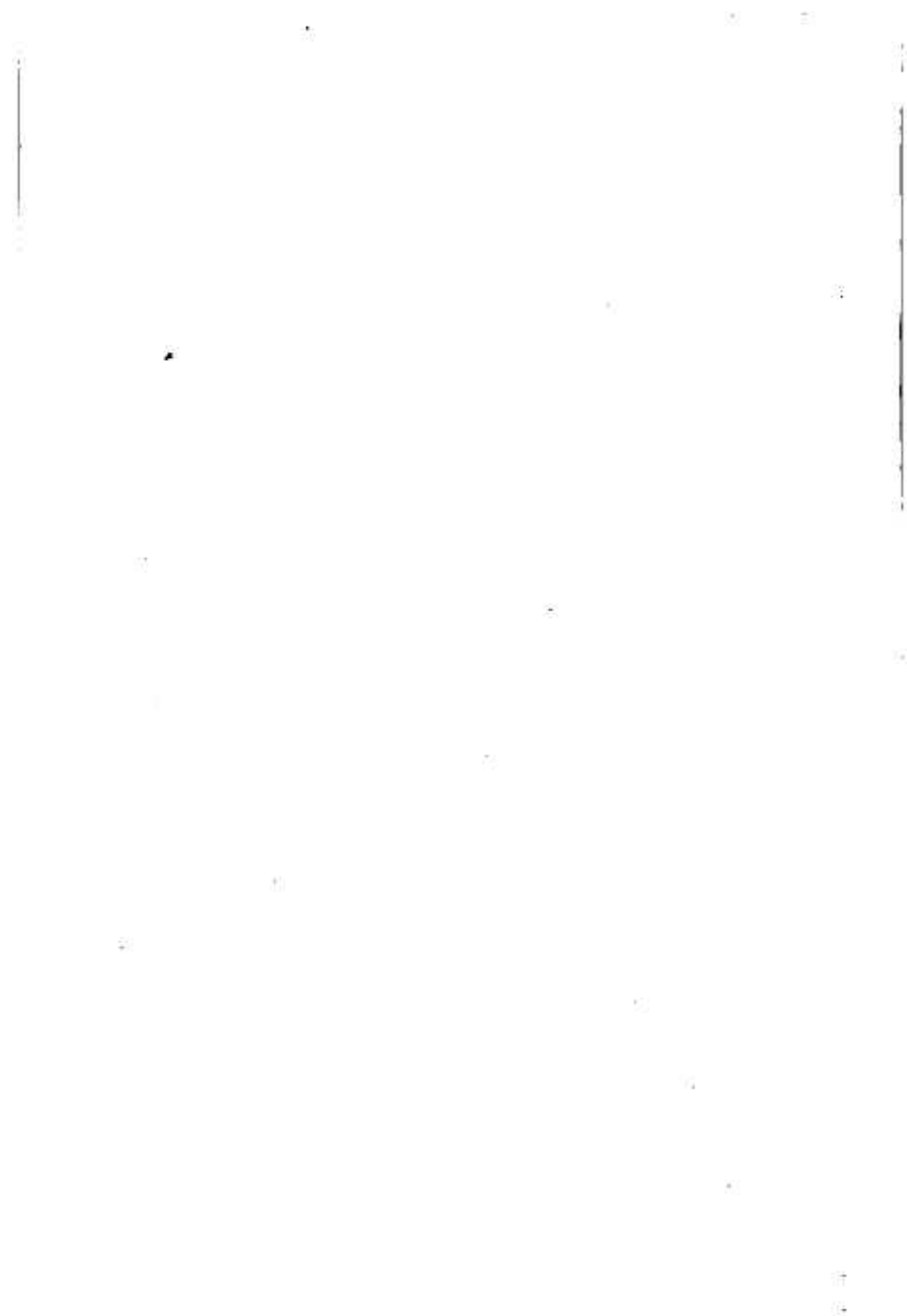


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## JULIUS CÆSAR :

### DID HE CROSS THE CHANNEL ?

#### CHAPTER I.

**D**ID Julius Cæsar cross the Channel? In giving an answer in the negative to the above question we ask for a fair and dispassionate hearing; and, in order to avoid circumlocution, pass at once our Rubicon, and propound, as capable of all proof, the following historical heresy, viz. : that Cæsar never set foot at Boulogne or Calais, never crossed the Channel, or set eyes on Deal or Dover, but that he sailed from some place in front of the mouths of the Rhine or Scheldt, most probably from a peninsula formerly the fore-shore of Walcheren, that he made the coast of Britain in his first expedition, off Cromer; that in his

second he purposed to make the land at or near Wells, and being carried a little beyond the point, found himself off Hunstanton and, pulling in to the shore at *Brancaster Bay*, fixed there his camp.

We have long held the conviction that thus it must be, and waited for the publication of the Emperor's "Life of Cæsar," in order to find out what would be said on the popular side of the question. Evidently, with all the care and minute research Louis Napoleon has employed upon the investigation of the subject, he is driven to great straits to make even a colourable case, and difficulties meet him at every turn.

First he is obliged to bring the Morini from the Scheldt and the mouths of the Rhine, where they were certainly situate, to occupy the whole length of the coast of Belgium, and the north-eastern coastline of France as far as Boulogne; yet we know from Cæsar (B. II. 4), that they were far from being the most populous of the Belgic tribes. Then the Veneti, who obviously occupied a position on that coast, are moved yet further down. Next he is obliged to fling over Cæsar's statement, viz., that he crossed at the shortest passage between the Continent and



Britain (*brevisimum*), and to take him to Boulogne, to find a harbour that would in any way answer the description, or from whence Cæsar could sail with a south-west wind. He makes him take ten hours for a run of thirty miles with a fair wind; he is obliged to picture a landing on a coast which is not situate in a corn-producing country, and where he could not send out, as he did, his legions to forage; he can find no shallows or flat ground covered with the tide, over which his ships could row round to the flank of the enemy; and when he returns he comes back to a district where there are no marshes in which the Morini could be sheltered.

In his second expedition he is necessitated to make Cæsar march, whilst he is waiting for his ships to rendezvous, from Boulogne to the Rhine and back, to campaign in the country of the Treveri, in an incredible short space of time; a march more suited to the means of locomotion in our day than to the slow tread of Cæsar's legions.

The Meldæ he must place, although he does it with reluctance, far from their "habitat" near the Scheldt. He can make nothing out of Cæsar "leaving Britain behind him" as he voyaged.

The little brook "Stour," which our school-boys would despise as a leap, is advanced to the dignity of a river. Deal, which he has selected as the point of disembarkation, he has forgotten must be the place of re-embarkation, and if it was indispensable, "in order to embark an army on board 800 ships, it should be at a point where there is sufficient space to allow ships to approach the banks so that all may be embarked at one tide," Deal will not fulfil these conditions, as Cæsar did re-embark all his troops and sail at one tide. Last, but not least, the Emperor fails in his nautical calculations, and is then himself altogether at sea!

Now Cæsar in his first expedition does not mention by name what port he sailed from, "he repaired to the country of the Morini, whence the passage from Gaul to Britain is the shortest." We feel almost ashamed of calling the attention of the student of history to the fact that the Morini and Menapii dwelt at or near the *mouths of the Rhine or Scheldt.*

Strabo tells us that Britain and the mouths of the Rhine were near enough to be in sight. He also informs us (Lib. IV.) that "those who sail

from the mouths of the Rhine sail from Ition, a port of the Morini,\* which the divine Cæsar used as a naval station when he crossed into Britain." Ptolemy and Pliny tell us that the port of the Morini was called Gessoriacum, or Gæsoriacum. Pomponius Mela says, "it was the best known port of the Morini." Pliny again (Lib. iv.) speaking of the mouths of the Rhine, says, "over against this tract lieth Britain." When next we hear of Britain after Cæsar's time (Dion Cassius, LX.), we find the soldiers under Plautius encouraged "by a meteor which, springing from the east, darted across to the west, whither they were navigating." Procopius, speaking of Brittia (he evidently means Brittania), says, "in the Northern Ocean lies the island Brittia, not far from the continent, right opposite the outlets of the Rhine." Dionysius Periegeta places the British Islands "αὐτῆς Πηλοῦ." Æthicus Ister also states "that the nearest shore of Britain is over against the country of the Morini and Menapii

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\* "Morini," from "Möre," "flat ground near the sea." It was from More in Norway that Rolf Ganger sailed to conquer Normandy.