G. A. HENTY

BERIC THE BRITON

HISTORICAL NOVEL

G. A. Henty

Beric the Briton (Historical Novel)

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Karl Jennings

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Introduction

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At the charged frontier where an occupying empire tests its might and a native people guard their freedom, Beric the Briton unfolds as a drama of identity forged between worlds, asking how a young leader can honor his roots, learn from his rivals, and survive the harsh arithmetic of war, loyalty, and law while the fortunes of tribes and legions sway, forests and roads knit contested lands, and every lesson in discipline or mercy may become the difference between ruin and endurance in a landscape where courage must be tempered by judgment and belonging is constantly remade.

Written by G. A. Henty, Beric the Briton is a historical adventure novel set in Roman Britain during the uprising associated with the Iceni queen commonly known for leading a revolt against imperial rule. First issued in the late Victorian era, the book reflects Henty’s signature blend of instructive narration and brisk action designed for younger readers, while drawing on widely known episodes from early provincial Roman history. Readers encounter fortified camps, tribal councils, and Roman roads rather than anachronistic fantasy, and the plot situates personal development against the administrative and military structures that defined life in the province.

At the center stands Beric, a youth of a British tribe whose life brings him into close contact with Roman customs and command, forcing him to weigh admiration for discipline against allegiance to native traditions. Henty narrates in a clear, expository voice that pauses to explain terrain, tactics, and the daily routines of soldiers and

hunters, then accelerates into pursuit, skirmish, and escape. The tone is earnest and martial yet frequently pragmatic, emphasizing resourcefulness, self-control, and the costs of rashness. Dialogues are direct, descriptions functional, and scenes arranged to keep a steady march from apprenticeship to responsibility.

The initial movement of the story traces Beric’s formation amid the rites, obligations, and rivalries of his community, followed by sustained exposure to Roman methods that both attract and alarm him. He observes the orderliness of legionary life and the complex diplomacy that binds allies, while also witnessing the pressures imperial demands place on local autonomy. Travel through forests, marshes, and townships introduces the wider geography of the province, and encounters with scouts, traders, and commanders reinforce the sense that every decision carries public consequences. Gradually, trials of judgment require him to translate lessons into leadership.

Several themes converge with clarity: the tension between liberty and order; the uses and abuses of power; the education of character through hardship; and the possibility of respecting an opponent without abandoning one’s home. Henty emphasizes practical virtues—foresight, endurance, and fidelity—within a historically anchored tale of conquest and resistance. Although shaped by Victorian assumptions, the narrative admits complexity by showing how infrastructure, discipline, and law can secure safety even as they constrain. It also asks how tradition can adapt without surrender, suggesting that courage includes patience, prudence, and the humility to learn from methods first encountered as threats.

For contemporary readers, the book’s value lies not only in its momentum but in its prompt to examine empire,

resistance, and cultural translation through a narrative accessible to younger audiences. The story invites comparisons between administrative efficiency and communal freedom, between security and dignity, and between personal ambition and civic duty. It also benefits from reflective reading that situates the author’s attitudes within their nineteenth-century frame, turning the novel into a platform for discussing prejudice, propaganda, and historical memory. By presenting leadership under pressure, it offers case studies in decision-making that remain pertinent to classrooms, families, and civic life.

Approached with curiosity and context, Beric the Briton rewards readers who enjoy clear plotting, measured explanations of tactics and travel, and a steady rise from apprenticeship to command. Its reconstruction of early Roman Britain introduces road networks, fortified settlements, and tribal alliances without diluting the human drama at the center. Newcomers need not bring specialist knowledge, though awareness that viewpoints are Victorian can enrich engagement and invite dialogue with modern scholarship and archaeological findings. The result is a vigorous, thoughtful adventure whose questions about loyalty, discipline, and belonging continue to resonate long after its last muster and march.

Synopsis

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Beric the Briton, a historical novel by G. A. Henty, traces the fortunes of a young tribesman as Rome consolidates its hold over Britain in the first century. Written for young readers in the late nineteenth century, the book opens on a landscape of occupied forts, uneasy alliances, and simmering resentment among the island's clans. Beric, courageous and thoughtful, grows up amid competing pressures: pride in native customs and the blunt reality of Roman power. Henty frames this tension as both a personal trial and a political problem, establishing a story that balances battlefield spectacle with questions of leadership and loyalty.

As Beric comes of age, he develops a clear-eyed view of the forces shaping his homeland. He studies the discipline that underpins Roman success while remaining grounded in the traditions of his tribe. Trusted by peers yet scrutinized by elders, he learns to command small bands, scout the countryside, and weigh counsel from chieftains and priests. Henty uses these episodes to sketch daily life—hunts, councils, and training—alongside the creeping sense that compromise with the occupiers cannot hold. The young hero's skill and restraint set him apart, preparing him for choices that will test allegiance, prudence, and courage on a larger stage.

The rising storm breaks with the rebellion associated with Boudicca, as wrongs inflicted by imperial agents ignite a widespread uprising. Henty depicts the mobilization of tribal forces, the exhilaration of early successes, and the grim reprisals that follow. Beric, entrusted with responsibilities

beyond his years, tries to temper impetuous valor with order, urging discipline where rage threatens to overwhelm judgment. The campaign scenes emphasize contrasts—swift raids versus drilled formations, local knowledge against imperial logistics—while avoiding exhaustive technicalities. The narrative keeps its focus on Beric’s vantage point, presenting the rebellion as both a patriotic crusade and a crucible for character.

As Rome gathers its legions, the tide turns. Henty portrays the methodical recovery of the occupying power, whose cohesion on the field offsets its earlier misrule. Beric’s band is driven into difficult choices: preserve their people, protect noncombatants, and avoid annihilation without abandoning honor. In the aftermath of decisive clashes, he is taken captive and sent across the sea. The journey to the imperial center introduces a new arena of trial—vast, crowded, and exacting—where his prowess and self-command attract notice. The shift from forest strongholds to marble colonnades underscores the book’s theme of power expressed through order.

In Rome, Beric encounters the imperial court and the industries of spectacle that project authority to the populace. Placed under strict training for public displays and protective duties, he learns urban rhythms, legal rituals, and the etiquette of patrons and clients. Henty juxtaposes refinement with cruelty, pageantry with surveillance, showing how a world that venerates efficiency can also tolerate caprice. Beric’s integrity earns him allies, and his adaptability broadens his understanding of empire, even as nostalgia for home endures. The episodes in the capital deepen the central conflict: whether Roman methods can be reconciled with the freedom cherished in the provinces.

Opportunities and dangers gather as Beric’s reputation grows. Entrusted with tasks that require judgment as much as strength, he navigates rivalries, favors, and sudden turns of fortune. Circumstances eventually carry him from the heart of the empire back toward its edges, where frontier realities and old loyalties reassert their claim. The skills he acquired—organization, patience, and tactical sense—must now serve purposes he defines for himself. Henty sustains narrative momentum while keeping outcomes poised, letting the reader sense a resolution shaped less by chance than by character tested under very different kinds of rule.

Beric the Briton endures for its energetic reconstruction of a formative clash between local autonomy and imperial order. True to Henty’s historical-adventure approach, the novel combines battles, travel, and civic scenes with an instructive throughline about discipline, fairness, and responsibility. It offers young readers a guided tour of Roman and British life without reducing either side to caricature, and it probes the price of stability as well as the costs of resistance. Without dwelling on final outcomes, the book’s resonance lies in its question: how should a capable leader serve both justice and community when power is unevenly distributed?

Historical Context

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Beric the Briton takes place in mid-first-century Roman Britain, shortly after Claudius' invasion in AD 43, as imperial rule spreads across southeastern Britain. The province was governed by a senatorial legate commanding legions and an equestrian procurator managing finances. Major tribes, including the Iceni, Trinovantes, and Catuvellauni, negotiated shifting relationships with Rome through treaties, client kingship, and garrisons. Under Emperor Nero (r. 54–68), governors such as Suetonius Paulinus pressed military campaigns and administrative integration. Coloniae for veterans, like Camulodunum (Colchester), embodied Roman authority, while new roads—routes now called Watling Street and Ermine Street—facilitated troop movement, trade, and the projection of power.

Among the client peoples, the Iceni of eastern Britain retained nominal autonomy under King Prasutagus, who cooperated with Roman authorities. On his death around AD 60, his will—reportedly leaving his kingdom jointly to his daughters and the emperor—was disregarded. Tacitus records that the procurator Catus Decianus seized property, enslaved elites, and imposed harsh exactions; Cassius Dio adds that heavy loans, including those of Seneca, were suddenly called in. These actions, along with the presence of a veteran colony at Camulodunum and grievances against settlers' abuses, fueled resentment. The flogging of Prasutagus' widow, Boudica, and the assault of her daughters became a rallying point for revolt.

In AD 60/61, Boudica led a coalition—principally Iceni and Trinovantes—against Roman targets. The first blow fell on Camulodunum, where the temple of the deified Claudius symbolized imperial domination and drew resented taxes. The colonia, lightly defended, was overwhelmed; survivors fortified the temple but were killed after a siege. A detachment of Legio IX Hispana marching to relieve the town was destroyed, as Tacitus notes, with only the cavalry escaping. Archaeology at Colchester has revealed a destruction layer consistent with widespread burning. The revolt quickly expanded, cutting lines of communication and challenging the assumption that Romanization had pacified the province.

Governor Suetonius Paulinus had been campaigning against the druid stronghold on Mona (Anglesey), a strategic move to suppress religious and political leadership opposing Rome. He force-marched southeast, assessing that Londinium—then a thriving commercial hub without veteran colonists—could not be held with his limited forces. He evacuated those who could march and left the rest to fate. Both Londinium (London) and Verulamium (St Albans) were sacked and burned. Tacitus estimates that 70,000–80,000 civilians were killed in the destruction of the three towns. Excavations in London and St Albans have uncovered thick charred layers and debris dating to this mid-first-century catastrophe.

Paulinus gathered approximately 10,000 soldiers, including Legio XIV Gemina and detachments of Legio XX Valeria Victrix and auxiliaries, and chose ground along a constricted section near Watling Street that limited the Britons’ numbers. Tacitus describes a disciplined Roman line casting pila to break the charge, followed by a wedge advance and cavalry flanking. The Britons, hindered by

wagons placed behind their line, suffered devastating losses. The battle decisively ended the uprising and reasserted Roman control. In the aftermath, Nero considered withdrawing from Britain but retained the province; administrative reforms followed, and Catus Decianus reportedly fled to Gaul.

After the revolt, the new procurator Julius Classicianus and an imperial inquiry urged moderation, and Paulinus was replaced by Petronius Turpilianus. Roman Britain entered a period of consolidation: forts were strengthened, road networks extended, and towns such as Londinium were rebuilt with planned streets and public buildings. The province integrated local elites through municipal councils, taxation, and military service in auxiliary units. The suppression of druidic centers reduced organized resistance, while trade in wine, oil, and manufactured goods expanded links with Gaul and the wider empire. Archaeological evidence of villas, inscriptions, and imported artifacts illustrates this accelerating Romanization in the later first century.

The narrative unfolds under Nero’s principate, when imperial policy blended military pragmatism with court politics shaped by advisers such as Seneca and Burrus, then by more autocratic tendencies. The Praetorian Guard secured the emperor’s position, while provincial governors exercised significant autonomy within strategic directives. Public life in Italy and the provinces featured amphitheatrical spectacles, baths, and temples that articulated Roman prestige; purpose-built stone amphitheaters existed in many cities, though the Colosseum postdates Nero. The Great Fire of AD 64 and subsequent rebuilding projects, including parts of the Domus Aurea,

marked the era’s ambitions and anxieties that frame how contemporaries judged imperial authority.

Written for young readers in the late nineteenth century, G. A. Henty’s novel engages with events preserved in classical accounts—principally Tacitus (Annals, Agricola) and Cassius Dio—that underpin modern reconstructions of the revolt. It reflects Victorian imperial ideology by paralleling Roman expansion with Britain’s own empire, praising order, engineering, and martial discipline while admiring the valor of Britain’s tribal societies. The juxtaposition of Roman law and local custom invites reflection on the ethics of conquest. At the same time, the narrative underscores a recurring lesson in imperial history: abuses by officials and settlers can ignite revolt, threatening the stability empire claims to deliver.

Beric the Briton (Historical Novel)

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Preface

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MY DEAR LADS,

My series of stories dealing with the wars of England would be altogether incomplete did it not include the period when the Romans were the masters of the country. The valour with which the natives of this island defended themselves was acknowledged by the Roman historians, and it was only the superior discipline of the invaders that enabled them finally to triumph over the bravery and the superior physical strength of the Britons. The Roman conquest for the time was undoubtedly of immense advantage to the people--who had previously wasted their energies in perpetual tribal wars--as it introduced among them the civilization of Rome. In the end, however, it proved disastrous to the islanders, who lost all their military virtues. Having been defended from the savages of the north by the soldiers of Rome, the Britons were, when the legions were recalled, unable to offer any effectual resistance to the Saxons, who, coming under the guise of friendship, speedily became their masters, imposing a yoke infinitely more burdensome than that of Rome, and erasing almost every sign of the civilization that had been engrafted upon them. How far the British population disappeared under the subsequent invasion and the still more oppressive yoke of the Danes is uncertain; but as the invaders would naturally desire to retain the people to cultivate the land for them, it is probable that the great mass of the Britons were not exterminated. It is at any rate pleasant to believe that with the Saxon, Danish, and Norman blood in our veins, there is

still a large admixture of that of the valiant warriors who fought so bravely against Caesar, and who rose under Boadicea in a desperate effort to shake off the oppressive rule of Rome.

Yours truly,
G. A. Henty

Chapter I:
A Hostage

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"It is a fair sight**[1q]**."

"It may be a fair sight in a Roman's eyes, Beric, but nought could be fouler to those of a Briton. To me every one of those blocks of brick and stone weighs down and helps to hold in bondage this land of ours; while that temple they have dared to rear to their gods, in celebration of their having conquered Britain, is an insult and a lie. We are not conquered yet, as they will some day know to their cost. We are silent, we wait, but we do not admit that we are conquered."

"I agree with you there. We have never fairly tried our strength against them. These wretched divisions have always prevented our making an effort to gather; Cassivelaunus and some of the Kentish tribes alone opposed them at their first landing, and he was betrayed and abandoned by the tribes on the north of the Thames. It has been the same thing ever since. We fight piecemeal; and while the Romans hurl their whole strength against one tribe the others look on with folded hands. Who aided the Trinobantes when the Romans defeated them and established themselves on that hill? No one. They will eat Britain up bit by bit."

"Then you like them no better for having lived among them, Beric?"

"I like them more, but I fear them more. One cannot be four years among them, as I was, without seeing that in many respects we might copy them with advantage. They

are a great people. Compare their splendid mansions and their regular orderly life, their manners and their ways, with our rough huts, and our feasts, ending as often as not with quarrels and brawls. Look at their arts, their power of turning stone into lifelike figures, and above all, the way in which they can transfer their thoughts to white leaves, so that others, many many years hence, can read them and know all that was passing, and what men thought and did in the long bygone. Truly it is marvellous."

"You are half Romanized, Beric," his companion said roughly.

"I think not," the other said quietly; "I should be worse than a fool had I lived, as I have done, a hostage among them for four years without seeing that there is much to admire, much that we could imitate with advantage, in their life and ways; but there is no reason because they are wiser and far more polished, and in many respects a greater people than we, that they should come here to be our masters. These things are desirable, but they are as nothing to freedom. I have said that I like them more for being among them. I like them more for many reasons. They are grave and courteous in their manner to each other; they obey their own laws; every man has his rights; and while all yield obedience to their superiors, the superiors respect the rights of those below them. The highest among them cannot touch the property or the life of the lowest in rank. All this seems to me excellent; but then, on the other hand, my blood boils in my veins at the contempt in which they hold us; at their greed, their rapacity, their brutality, their denial to us of all rights. In their eyes we are but savages, but wild men, who may be useful for tilling the ground for them, but who, if troublesome, should be hunted down and slain like wild beasts. I admire them for what they can do; I respect

them for their power and learning; but I hate them as our oppressors."

"That is better, Beric, much better. I had begun to fear that the grand houses and the splendour of these Romans might have sapped your patriotism. I hate them all; I hate changes; I would live as we have always lived."

"But you forget, Boduoc, that we ourselves have not been standing still. Though our long past forefathers, when they crossed from Gaul wave after wave, were rude warriors, we have been learning ever since from Gaul as the Gauls have learned from the Romans, and the Romans themselves admit that we have advanced greatly since the days when, under their Caesar, they first landed here. Look at the town on the hill there. Though 'tis Roman now 'tis not changed so much from what it was under that great king Cunobeline**[2]**, while his people had knowledge of many things of which we and the other tribes of the Iceni knew nothing."

"What good did it do them?" the other asked scornfully; "they lie prostrate under the Roman yoke. It was easy to destroy their towns while we, who have few towns to destroy, live comparatively free. Look across at Camalodunum**[1]**, Cunobeline's capital. Where are the men who built the houses, who dressed in soft garments, who aped the Romans, and who regarded us as well nigh savage men? Gone every one of them; hewn down on their own hearthstones, or thrust out with their wives and families to wander homeless--is there one left of them in yonder town? Their houses they were so proud of, their cultivated fields, their wealth of all kinds has been seized by the Romans. Did they fight any better for their Roman fashions? Not they; the kingdom of Cunobeline, from the Thames to the western sea, fell to pieces at a touch and it was only among the wild

Silures that Caractacus[3] was able to make any great resistance."

"But we did no better, Boduoc; Ostorius crushed us as easily as Claudius crushed the Trinobantes. It is no use our setting ourselves against change. All that you urge against the Trinobantes and the tribes of Kent the Silures might urge with equal force against us. You must remember that we were like them not so many ages back. The intercourse of the Gauls with us on this eastern sea coast, and with the Kentish tribes, has changed us greatly. We are no longer, like the western tribes, mere hunters living in shelters of boughs and roaming the forests. Our dress, with our long mantles, our loose vests and trousers, differs as widely from that of these western tribes as it does from the Romans. We live in towns, and if our houses are rude they are solid. We no longer depend solely on the chase, but till the ground and have our herds of cattle. I daresay there were many of our ancestors who set themselves as much against the Gaulish customs as you do against those of the Romans; but we adopted them, and benefited by them, and though I would exult in seeing the last Roman driven from our land, I should like after their departure to see us adopt what is good and orderly and decent in their customs and laws."

Beric's companion growled a malediction upon everything Roman.

"There is one thing certain," he said after a pause, "either they must go altogether, not only here but everywhere--they must learn, as our ancestors taught them at their two first invasions, that it is hopeless to conquer Britain--or they will end by being absolute masters of the island, and we shall be their servants and slaves."

"That is true enough," Beric agreed; "but to conquer we must be united, and not only united but steadfast. Of course

I have learned much of them while I have been with them. I have come to speak their language, and have listened to their talk. It is not only the Romans who are here whom we have to defeat, it is those who will come after them. The power of Rome is great; how great we cannot tell, but it is wonderful and almost inconceivable. They have spread over vast countries, reducing peoples everywhere under their dominion. I have seen what they call maps showing the world as far as they know it, and well nigh all has been conquered by them; but the farther away from Rome the more difficulty have they in holding what they have conquered.

"That is our hope here; we are very far from Rome. They may send army after army against us, but in time they will get weary of the loss and expense when there is so little to gain, and as after their first invasions a long time elapsed before they again troubled us, so in the end they may abandon a useless enterprise. Even now the Romans grumble at what they call their exile, but they are obstinate and tenacious, and to rid our land of them for good it would be necessary for us not only to be united among ourselves when we rise against them, but to remain so, and to oppose with our whole force the fresh armies they will bring against us.

"You know how great the difficulties will be, Boduoc; we want one great leader whom all the tribes will follow, just as all the Roman legions obey one general; and what chance is there of such a man arising--a man so great, so wise, so brave, that all the tribes of Britain will lay aside their enmities and jealousies, and submit themselves to his absolute guidance?"

"If we wait for that, Beric, we may wait for ever," Boduoc said in a sombre tone, "at any rate it is not while we are

tranquil under the Roman heel that such a man could show himself. If he is to come to the front it must be in the day of battle. Then, possibly, one chief may rise so high above his fellows that all may recognize his merits and agree to follow him."

"That is so," Beric agreed; "but is it possible that even the greatest hero should find support from all? Cassivelaunus was betrayed by the Trinobantes. Who could have united the tribes more than the sons of Cunobeline, who reigned over well nigh all Britain, and who was a great king ruling wisely and well, and doing all in his power to raise and advance the people; and yet, when the hour came, the kingdom broke up into pieces. Veric, the chief of the Cantii, went to Rome and invited the invader to aid him against his rivals at home, and not a man of the Iceni or the Brigantes marched to the aid of Caractacus and Togodamnus. What wonder, then, that these were defeated. Worse than all, when Caractacus was driven a fugitive to hide among the Brigantes, did not their queen, Cartismandua, hand him over to the Romans? Where can we hope to find a leader more fitted to unite us than was Caractacus, the son of the king whom we all, at least, recognized and paid tribute to; a prince who had learned wisdom from a wise father, a warrior enterprising, bold, and indomitable--a true patriot?

"If Caractacus could not unite us, what hope is there of finding another who would do so? Moreover, our position is far worse now than it was ten years ago. The Belgae and Dumnonii in the southwest have been crushed after thirty battles; the Dobuni in the centre have been defeated and garrisoned; the Silures have set an example to us all, inflicting many defeats on the Romans; but their power has at last been broken. The Brigantes and ourselves have both

been heavily struck, as we deserved, Boduoc, for standing aloof from Caractacus at first. Thus the task of shaking off the Roman bonds is far more difficult now than it was when Plautius landed here twenty years ago. Well, it is time for me to be going on. Won't you come with me, Boduoc?"

"Not I, Beric; I never want to enter their town again save with a sword in one hand and a torch in the other. It enrages me to see the airs of superiority they give themselves. They scarce seem even to see us as we walk in their streets; and as to the soldiers as they stride along with helmet and shield, my fingers itch to meet them in the forest. No; I promised to walk so far with you, but I go no farther. How long will you be there?"

"Two hours at most, I should say."

"The sun is halfway down, Beric; I will wait for you till it touches that hill over there. Till then you will find me sitting by the first tree at the spot where we left the forest."

Beric nodded and walked on towards the town. The lad, for he was not yet sixteen, was the son of Parta, the chieftainess of one of the divisions of the great tribe of the Iceni, who occupied the tract of country now known as Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge, and Huntingdon. This tribe had yielded but a nominal allegiance to Cunobeline, and had held aloof during the struggle between Caractacus and the Romans, but when the latter had attempted to establish forts in their country they had taken up arms. Ostorius Scapula**[4]**, the Roman proprietor, had marched against them and defeated them with great slaughter, and they had submitted to the Roman authority. The Sarci, the division of the tribe to which Beric belonged, had taken a leading part in the rising, and his father had fallen in the defence of their intrenchments.

Among the British tribes the women ranked with the men, and even when married the wife was often the acknowledged chief of the tribe. Parta had held an equal authority with her husband, and at his death remained sole head of the subtribe, and in order to ensure its obedience in the future, Ostorius had insisted that her only son Beric, at that time a boy of eleven, should be handed over to them as a hostage.

Had Parta consulted her own wishes she would have retired with a few followers to the swamps and fens of the country to the north rather than surrender her son, but the Brigantes, who inhabited Lincolnshire, and who ranged over the whole of the north of Britain as far as Northumberland, had also received a defeat at the hands of the Romans, and might not improbably hand her over upon their demand. She therefore resigned herself to let Beric go.

"My son," she said, "I need not tell you not to let them Romanize you. You have been brought up to hate them. Your father has fallen before their weapons, half your tribe have been slain, your country lies under their feet. I will not wrong you then by fearing for a moment that they can make a Roman of you.

"You have been brought up to lie upon the bare ground, to suffer fatigue and hardship, hunger and thirst, and the rich food and splendid houses and soft raiment of the Romans should have no attraction for you. I know not how long your imprisonment among them may last. For the present I have little hope of another rising; but should I see a prospect of anything like unity among our people, I will send Boduoc with a message to you to hold yourself in readiness to escape when you receive the signal that the time has come. Till then employ your mind in gaining what good you may by your residence among them; there must

be some advantage in their methods of warfare which has enabled the people of one city to conquer the world.

"It is not their strength, for they are but pigmies to us. We stand a full head above them, and even we women are stronger than Roman soldiers, and yet they defeat us. Learn then their language, throw your whole mind into that at first, then study their military discipline and their laws. It must be the last as much as their discipline that has made them rulers over so vast an empire. Find out if you can the secret of their rule, and study the training by which their soldiers move and fight as if bound together by a cord, forming massive walls against which we break ourselves in vain. Heed not their arts, pay no attention to their luxuries, these did Cunobeline no good, and did not for a day delay the destruction that fell upon his kingdom. What we need is first a knowledge of their military tactics, so that we may drive them from the land; secondly, a knowledge of their laws, that we may rule ourselves wisely after they have gone. What there is good in the rest may come in time.

"However kind they may be to you, bear always in mind that you are but a prisoner among the oppressors of your country, and that though, for reasons of policy, they may treat you well, yet that they mercilessly despoil and ill treat your countrymen. Remember too, Beric, that the Britons, now that Caractacus has been sent a prisoner to Rome, need a leader, one who is not only brave and valiant in the fight, but who can teach the people how to march to victory, and can order and rule them well afterwards. We are part of one of our greatest tribes, and from among us, if anywhere, such a leader should come.

"I have great hopes of you, Beric. I know that you are brave, for single handed you slew with an arrow a great wolf the other day; but bravery is common to all, I do not think

56 The '7th Cohort of the Night Guard' denotes a specific urban watch unit responsible for night patrols and dealing with fires or thieves in Rome; a Roman cohort was a sizeable military or paramilitary unit, typically numbering in the hundreds.

57 'Funeral obsequies' means formal funeral rites or ceremonies; in Roman practice such observances could include public spectacles or games (including gladiatorial shows) held in honour of the deceased.

58 Latin plural of ludus; in Roman usage it could mean public games or, as in this chapter, the gladiatorial training schools where fighters lived and trained.

59 Retiarii (singular retiarius) were a class of lightly armored gladiators who fought with a net (rete) and a trident, relying on mobility and entangling techniques rather than heavy armor.

60 A balista was an ancient torsion-powered missile engine (similar to a large crossbow or catapult) used to hurl bolts or stones; here it is described being used to cast a stuffed lion-skin as a training device.

61 A lectica was a covered litter or sedan-chair carried by bearers in ancient Rome, used to transport individuals who could afford to be borne rather than walk; it functioned like a palanquin or enclosed sedan.

62 In this context ludus refers to a gladiatorial school (ludus gladiatorius) where fighters were trained and housed; in Latin the word more broadly also meant a school, game, or training place.

63 A rheda was a four-wheeled carriage or light chariot used in Roman times for passenger transport over roads, often drawn by horses and used for longer travels or by wealthier travelers.

64 A school of ancient philosophy (originating in Greece) that valued self-control, virtue, and simplicity; by the Roman Imperial period Stoicism influenced several statesmen and intellectuals who critiqued contemporary luxury.

65 Likely referring to Gaius Calpurnius Piso, a Roman senator who led a real plot against Emperor Nero in the mid-1st century AD (commonly dated to AD 65).

66 Titus Maccius Plautus was a Roman playwright of the 3rd–2nd centuries BC, famed for comedic plays; his name here reflects an appeal to classical Roman literary figures rather than a contemporary political actor.

67 Lucius Annaeus Seneca (Seneca the Younger) was a Roman Stoic philosopher, statesman, and former tutor to Nero, who was implicated and executed by the regime after the mid-1st century conspiracies.

68 Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (Lucan) was a Roman poet (early 1st century AD), nephew of Seneca, known for the epic Pharsalia and historically associated with opposition to Nero and the Piso affair.

69 In Roman usage a ludus was a school or training school for gladiators; the phrase names a particular ludus (training school) associated with an instructor or owner called Scopus, though specific historical details about that individual in this text are not given.

70 The plot led by Piso against Nero (commonly dated to AD 65), which was exposed and resulted in executions and forced suicides of several prominent Romans; historians treat it as a significant crisis in Nero's reign.

71 A Roman betrothal ceremony and legal engagement in which conditions were agreed and witnessed; sponsalia formalized intentions to marry though full matrimonial rites might follow later.

72 A Latin legal term meaning paternal or legal authority, especially the father's power (patria potestas) over members of his household and certain family decisions in Roman law.

73 Denarii were silver coins and a standard monetary unit in Rome; amounts like one thousand or three thousand denarii indicate substantial sums in the Roman economy of the early Empire.

74 The Alban Hills (Colli Albani) are a range of volcanic hills southeast of Rome in the ancient region of Latium, historically used as summer retreats and located roughly 10–20 miles (15–30 km) from the city.

75 Praeneste is an ancient town in Latium (the site of modern Palestrina) east of Rome, known in antiquity for its sanctuary of Fortuna; distances to Rome vary but it lies within a few dozen kilometres of the city.

76 A Roman-era town in central Italy (in modern Abruzzo) that at times served as a regional centre; it is historically notable for its role during the Social War (late 2nd/early 1st century BC).

77 An ancient place-name in central Italy mentioned as a locality near the hills; the exact modern identification is uncertain and may correspond to a lesser-known ancient settlement (sometimes written Marruvium or similar in sources).

78 The Roman name for the southernmost promontory of the Italian peninsula, a mountainous region now called Calabria; it was sparsely populated and wooded in antiquity, making it a refuge for fugitives.

79 Underground burial galleries around Rome used from the 2nd century AD onward by various communities, including early Christians, both as cemeteries and sometimes as places of assembly or refuge.

80 Roman emperor from AD 54 to 68, historically associated with autocratic rule and several political persecutions; traditional accounts also link his name to the repression of opponents and crises such as the Great Fire of Rome (AD 64).

81 A Thracian gladiator who led a large slave rebellion against Rome (the Third Servile War, c. 73–71 BC); after defeat many of his followers were executed, famously by crucifixion, in Roman practice.

82 The ancient port town at the mouth of the Tiber serving Rome’s maritime trade and passenger traffic; in Roman times it was a key harbour and customs point for the capital.

83 An ancient name for a river in southern Italy often identified with the modern Crati, which flows through the