

CHAPTER VII.

ROMAN HISTORY continued—War with the Samnites—Devotion of Decius—Disgrace of the Caudine Forks—Popular pretensions increase—The Plebeians admitted to the Priesthood—War with Pyrrhus, King of Epirus—His Defeat—Conquest of all Italy by the Romans—Incorporation of the conquered Nations—Manner in which the Rights of Citizenship were extended.

SOON after this time a war began with the people of Samnium, and it was this war which led the Romans to the conquest of all Italy. The Samnites inhabited a district to the south of the Roman territory, and separated from it by Latium. They had hitherto had no hostile interference with the Romans, and there was even a treaty of alliance subsisting between them; but the Latins, Hernici, Æqui, and Volsci, being now subdued, that is to say, so weakened that they were obliged either to become subjects or allies of the republic, the Romans now came to be the immediate neighbors of the Samnites, and of course their enemies. The city of Capua gave occasion to the war.

Capua was the principal city of Campania, one of the finest and most fertile countries of Italy. This city then was extremely opulent and luxurious. The Samnites, a poor but warlike people, were allured by the riches of their neighbors, and invaded Campania. The inhabitants of Capua, after some feeble attempts to resist the invaders, implored aid from the Romans. The senate answered, that their alliance with the Samnites prevented them from giving any thing else than their compassion. "If, then," said the Capuans, "you will not defend us, you will, at least, defend yourselves; and from this moment we give ourselves, our cities, our fields, and our gods, to the Romans, and become their subjects." The senate accepted the donation, and ordered the Samnites immediately to quit their territories. The necessary consequence was a war, in which the Romans were so successful, that in the third campaign the Samnites were glad to conclude a peace, and renew their treaty of alliance.

In the meantime, the Latins had recovered strength, and meditated to shake off the Roman yoke. A war was the consequence, memorable only for a singular instance of the most exalted patriotism in the consul Decius. This great man, together with his colleague, Torquatus, headed the Roman legions. It is said that both the consuls had had a dream, or seen a vision, which assured them that the infernal gods required that one of the contending

armies should be devoted to them, and one of the contending generals; and that the general who should have the heroism voluntarily to devote himself, would thus doom the army of the enemy to certain destruction. The two consuls agreed to make this heroic sacrifice; and it was resolved between them, as they commanded separate divisions of the army, that he whose division first gave way, should immediately devote himself to death. It was in the meantime strictly enjoined to the troops, that no soldier should, during the engagement, advance beyond his rank, as instances of frantic valor were then extremely common. The battle began; and Titus Manlius, the son of the consul Torquatus, being challenged by a Latin captain, accepted the summons, defeated his antagonist, and returned with his spoils to the main army. His father, with a true Roman severity, ordered his head to be struck off for disobedience. The division commanded by Decius having begun to give way, he caused the Pontifex Maximus to perform in haste the ceremony of consecration; then, girding himself closely with his robe, he spurred his horse with fury into the thickest of the enemies' battalions, where he was instantly cut to pieces. The Romans, now confident of success, rushed on, and the Latins were entirely defeated. The conquerors, by pursuing their success, might have annihilated the Latin name; but they chose to deal more humanely with the vanquished foe, and to preserve them in the character of allied states, on whom they imposed separate conditions of peace, according to the different degrees of merit or demerit which each had exhibited.

Meantime the war with the Samnites was renewed, and carried on for above ten years with various success; many of the other states of Italy taking a part in the quarrel. One event which much humbled the pride of the Romans, was the disgrace they underwent at Caudium. The Samnites, surprising them in a narrow defile near that town, (*Furcæ Caudinæ*.) had it in their power to cut them off to a man. Pontius, the general of the Samnites, made the whole Roman army, with the consuls at their head, naked and disarmed, pass under the yoke;—a scene described by Livy with great force of natural painting, in the beginning of the ninth book of his history. The historian relates, that when the consuls first informed the army of the fate which the enemy had decreed they should undergo, the soldiers vented their rage in execrations against their commanders, as the authors of this degradation, and were ready to tear them in pieces: but when the dreadful ceremony began, and when they saw the garments torn from the backs of the consuls, and those men whom they had been accustomed to regard with veneration, thus ignominiously treated, every one forgot his own calamity, and, filled with horror, turned aside his eyes, that he might not behold the miserable humiliation of the rulers of his country. It was evening when the Roman army was suffered to pass out of the defile; and when

night came on, naked and destitute of every thing, they threw themselves down in despair in a field near the city of Capua. The magistrates, senators, and chief men of the place, repaired to the spot where they lay, and endeavored to comfort and soothe their distress; but they spoke not a word, nor ever raised their heads from the ground. The next day they proceeded in the same melancholy dejection to Rome, where their disaster had occasioned the utmost consternation, and the whole city had gone into mourning.

By the treaty which the Romans signed after the disgrace of the *Furca Caudina*, they solemnly bound themselves no more to make war against the Samnites: but they fell upon a shameful device to elude the obligation. Posthumius, one of the consuls, advised that the Romans should pay no regard to the treaty: but that he himself, and all who were actively concerned in making it, should be delivered up to the enemy, who might wreak their vengeance on them as they chose. This strange proposal was agreed to. Posthumius, and the principal officers were sent in chains to Pontius, the general of the Samnites, who, with a generosity which their conduct had not merited, set them at liberty, though with a keen reproach of their shameful disregard of an obligation universally held most sacred.

We enter not into a minute detail of the war with the Samnites: it is to be found at large in Livy. It affords evidence of one fact of importance, that the Romans had now adopted the policy of exterminating, when they were desirous of securing a conquest. The *Æqui*, in the space of one campaign, lost forty towns, the greater part of which the Romans entirely demolished, and slaughtered the whole inhabitants.

The popular dissensions suffered very little intermission from these warlike enterprises. The priesthood was now the object of contest, and the pretence used by the patricians for excluding the inferior order from that dignity, was religious scruple: but it was not easy to convince the people, that the same rank which was adequate to the exercise of the highest offices of the state, would profane the priesthood; and a law was proposed, by two of the tribunes, and passed, which enacted that four new *pontifices* should be created, and five new augurs, and that both orders of the state should be equally eligible to those offices. Thus, all the dignities of the commonwealth were now open alike to both plebeians and patricians; and from this time, consequently, the sole nominal distinction was, that of *the senate and people of Rome*.

The Tarentines took part against the Romans in the war with the Samnites. This people, who were originally a Greek colony from Sparta, had acquired considerable wealth by commerce, and were of an indolent and luxurious character, very opposite to that of their parent state.* Alarmed at the progress of the Roman

* Justin, lib 20

arms, aware of their ambitious and domineering spirit, but unable to make any vigorous effort to resist them, they sought aid from Pyrrhus, the king of Epirus, and invited him, by a flattering deputation, to be the deliverer of Italy from its threatened yoke of servitude. Pyrrhus was one of the ablest generals of his age; but he possessed a restless spirit, and a precipitancy in forming projects of military enterprise, without a due attention to means, or a deliberate estimate of consequences. Cineas, his chief minister, to whom he imparted his design of invading Italy, and mentioned, with great confidence, a perfect assurance of its success, calmly asked him what he proposed after that design was accomplished. "We shall next," said Pyrrhus, "make ourselves masters of Sicily, which, considering the distracted state of that island, will be a very easy enterprise." "And what next do you intend?" said Cineas. "We shall then," replied Pyrrhus, "pass over into Africa. Do you imagine Carthage is capable of holding out against our arms?" "And supposing Carthage taken," said Cineas, "what follows?" "Then," said Pyrrhus, "we return with all our force, and pour down upon Macedonia and Greece." "And when all is conquered," replied Cineas, "what is then to be done?" "Why, then, to be sure," said Pyrrhus, "we have nothing to do but to enjoy our bottle, and take our amusement." "And what," said Cineas, "prevents you from enjoying your bottle now, and taking your amusement?" This dialogue, which is given by Plutarch, with great naïveté, presents us with a just delineation of the real views and sentiments of the greater part of those mighty conquerors who have disturbed the peace of the universe.

Pyrrhus brought to the aid of the Tarentines an army of 30,000 men. He was astonished that a war, in which they were a principal party, did not, in the least, interrupt the amusements of that frivolous and dissolute people. They gave him some magnificent festivals, and then purposed to leave him to fight, while they continued their entertainments.

This conduct, justly exciting both contempt and indignation, Pyrrhus ordered the theatres to be shut up, closed the public assemblies, where the Tarentines idly consumed the time in frivolous talk, and mustering the citizens, enjoined a continued and rigorous exercise to every man who was capable of bearing arms. So severely felt was this duty, that, it is said, a large number of the inhabitants actually fled from their country rather than suffer a deprivation of their usual pleasures.

Pyrrhus was, for some time, successful. The elephants in his army were a novel sight to the Romans, and, for awhile, gave him a great advantage. It is said, however, that this experienced general, the first time he came in sight of the Roman legions, was struck with their appearance, and with the military skill displayed in their arrangement. "The disposition of these barbarians," said

he, to one of his officers, "does not savor at all of barbarism. We shall presently see what they can perform." And, in fact, he very soon began to find that even his victories cost him so dear, that there was little room to hope for his ever achieving the conquest of Italy. The Romans soon became accustomed to his mode of fighting, and every campaign proved to him more and more unsuccessful. At length, wishing for an honorable pretext for dropping his enterprise, the Sicilians furnished it, by imploring his aid against the Carthaginians. Pyrrhus, accordingly, embarked his troops for Sicily, and during his absence for two years, the Romans reduced the Samnites, Tarentines, and their allies, to extremity. Pyrrhus returned, and made a last effort, near Beneventum, in the Samnian territory. He was totally defeated, lost 26,000 men, and taking the first opportunity of giving his allies the slip, he set sail for Epirus. The Samnites, the Tarentines, the Lucanians, Bruttians, and all the other states, submitted to the arms of the Romans; who were now, in the 480th year from the foundation of the city, masters of all Italy. It is to be observed, however, that, at this time, *Gallia Cisalpina*, or the country between the Apennines and Alps, was not comprehended under the name of Italy.

The policy of the Romans with regard to the nations which they conquered is worthy of some attention. The tribes into which the Roman citizens were divided were formerly, as we have seen, a local distinction. Matters were otherwise at this time. It had become a great exertion of political judgment to arrange the members of which the tribes were composed, as on that arrangement depended the issue of any measures to be carried by popular suffrage, or new laws to be enacted. It was the province of the censors to distribute the citizens in the different tribes. Now, when they formed new tribes from the inhabitants of the conquered countries, they composed these tribes chiefly of the ancient Roman citizens, and transported to Rome the principal men of the conquered nation, whom they ingrafted into the original urban, or rustic, tribes of the commonwealth. Thus two good purposes were at once served. The Roman citizens, who principally composed the new tribes, kept the provinces in order, and inspired them with an affection for the Roman government; while, on the other hand, the new citizens, dispersed among many of the ancient tribes, and constantly under the eye of Roman magistrates, could have little or no influence in the affairs of the commonwealth.

* See Livy, lib. ii. c. 23, where this incident is most eloquently related.

CHAPTER VIII.

CARTHAGE, a Phœnician Colony—Early History—Government—Wars—Early History of Sicily—Syracusan Government—Dionysius the Elder—Dionysius the Younger—Dion—Timoleon—Agathocles—Character of the Carthaginians and Romans compared.

As we are now arrived at that period when Rome, mistress of Italy, began to extend her conquests, and aim at foreign dominion, it is necessary, in order to prepare the mind of the student of history, to follow with advantage the detail of the progress of her arms, that he should have some acquaintance with the history of Carthage, and of Sicily.

Carthage, according to the most probable accounts, was founded by a colony of Tyrians, about seventy years before the building of Rome. The colony had the same language, the same laws, the same customs, and exhibited the same national character with the parent state. The early Carthaginian history is extremely uncertain; but from the vigorous industry of that people who were its founders, and their great progress in the arts, we may suppose that the Carthaginians made a rapid advancement. From the time of the elder Cyrus, their marine was formidable. One of the most ancient naval engagements recorded in history, is that in which the Carthaginian fleet, in conjunction with that of the Etruscans, fought against the Phocians of Iona, who were desirous of escaping the yoke of the Persian monarch.

The Carthaginians had by degrees extended their dominion along the whole African coast of the Mediterranean, from the confines of Egypt on the east, to the Pillars of Hercules, or the Straits of Gibraltar. Their capital, in the days of its splendor, that is, during the wars with the Romans, was one of the most magnificent and most populous cities in the universe. The number of its inhabitants is said to have amounted to 700,000; and it had under its sovereignty about three hundred towns along the Mediterranean coast.

We know nothing of the nature of the earliest government of the Carthaginians, that is, during the first four centuries from the foundation of their empire, and very little even of what it was in the latter periods preceding its dissolution. They are celebrated, however, by Aristotle,* as possessing one of the most perfect

* Aristotle, whose account of this republic is, on the whole, very obscure,