CHAPTER IV.

ROME, GREECE, AND CARTHAGE.

FROM 318 B. C. TO 241 B. C.

THE DISASTER OF THE CAUDINE FORKS AVENGED.—PARTIES IN ROME.—DEMOCRACY OF APPIUS CLAUDIUS.—IGNOBLE TREATMENT OF PONTIUS.—STATE OF THE WORLD AT THIS TIME.—COALITION AGAINST ROME.—THE GREEKS JOIN THE COALITION.—PYRRHUS LANDS ON THE ITALIAN PENINSULA.—PROGRESS OF THE WAR.—EXPULSION OF THE GREEKS.—INVASION OF SICILY.—WAR WITH CARTHAGE.—INVASION OF AFRICA.—STORY OF REGULUS.—VICTORIES AND DEFEATS.—ROME TRIUMPHANT.—SICILY ANNEXED TO ROME.

ACCORDING to the Roman story, in which not much reliance can be placed, the Romans, the next year sent a powerful force under a renowned champion, L. Papirius Cursor, who severely chastised the Samnites for their audacity in conquering a Roman army. Cursor took, they say, one of the chief cities of the Samnites, recovered all the arms and banners they had taken, rescued the six hundred knights which had been surrendered to them, and conveyed them all safely to Rome. Thus boastfully, on paper, the disgrace of the Caudine Forks was effaced. It is, nevertheless, unquestioned, however little we may regard these boasts, that the war between the Romans and Samnites continued with increasing exasperation, and that the fortunes of war were decidedly in favor of Rome. At length the Samnites were crushed entirely, all their territory seized by the conquerors, and strong military colonies estab lished in different parts of the country to hold them in subjection. The Romans were now so powerful that no combination of tribes could successfully oppose them. They pushed their conquests eastward, over the Apennines, to the Adriatic, and north into the wilds of Etruria. A Roman navy was rapidly

rising into existence, and the energetic republic towered incontestably above all the surrounding nations.

The commonwealth of Rome was now composed of three leading parties. First there was the old aristocratic party, the ancient patricians; then came the middle class or commons, who had gradually, by wealth and intelligence, gained many political privileges. They were deemed Roman *citizens*, were entitled to vote, and were eligible to nearly all offices in the army, the church, and the state. Then came the third class, which consisted not of citizens but of *subjects*, freed slaves, and the inhabitants of conquered districts, who were brought under the dominion of Roman law, but were not entitled to the rights of citizenship. There was a fourth class, the slaves, which history scarcely deigns to notice. They were then probably few in number. The third class even, ancient annals would scarcely have noticed but for the fact that the nobles often called the brawny arms of these freed men and foreigners into requisition to enable them to resist the commons; just as in the French revolutions the nobles roused the blind energies of the mob, to overthrow constitutional liberty, intending upon the ruins to reërect the ancient despotism.

The middle party had now become the most powerful, embracing many of the most distinguished men of the times. Not a few of the patricians of noblest character were in sympathy with the commons, and supported their measures. The office of censor, in point of rank, was the highest office in the commonwealth. The censors had far more power than the consuls, and from their decision there was no appeal. Three hundred and thirteen years before Christ, Appius Claudius and C. Plautius, were elected censors. Plautius, from some chagrin, resigned, leaving the whole power for five years in the hands of his ambitious and energetic colleague, Appius. With the arts of a demagogue, Appius, whose duty it was to fill the vacancies which had occurred in the senate, placed on that list, to the utter scandal, not only of the patricians, but of

the commoners, who were now growing aristocratic, the names of men selected from the low popular party. These men, thus selected, though energetic in character and possessing wealth, were the sons of freedmen, and thus, in Roman parlance, the grandsons of nobody. Appius resorted to this measure in the same spirit in which a prime minister of England creates a batch of nobles from the commons, to strengthen his vote in the House of Lords. Though this measure was opposed so bitterly that for a time it was thwarted, Appius, unintimidated, persevered in the same line of policy and admitted a large number of freed slaves to the rights of citizenship, thus strengthening his party.

Appius having thus gained the support of the masses, in the enjoyment of kingly power, resolved to construct works of public utility, which should immortalize his name. As censor he was the treasurer of the public funds, and assuming the responsibility, without any authority from the senate, he applied immense sums to the construction of a military road from Rome to Capua, near Naples, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles. This magnificent road, called the Appian Way, was constructed of hexagonal stones, exactly fitted to each other, and portions of it still remain, having survived the ravages of two thousand years. He also constructed an aqueduct, which conveyed water, mostly underground, from a distance of eight miles to Rome. These two works were so expensive that they exhausted the revenues of the state. Though the regular term of the censor's office was but eighteen months, Appius, bidding defiance to law, retained his censorship for five years, and then succeeded in securing his election as consul, so that he continued in office until his works were completed.

Two hundred and ninety-four years before Christ, the Gauls in coöperation with many allies, and in such force as to give them great confidence of success, marched again upon Rome. The Romans, in two vast armies, advanced to meet them

The conflict took place on the plains of Sentinum. The Romans were signally victorious. The allied army was routed and dispersed, with the loss of twenty-five thousand of their best troops. Soon after this the Romans succeeded in the capture of C. Pontius, the renowned Samnite general, who had defeated the Roman legions so signally at the Caudine Forks, and who had treated his discomfited foe with such wonderful magnanimity. The victorious Roman consul, Q. Fabius, char ioted in splendor, made a triumphal entrance into Rome. Pontius was led a captive in chains to grace the festival. As the victor, in the procession, turned from the sacred way to ascend the Capitoline hill, Pontius was led aside into a dungeon beneath the hill, and beheaded. Thus infamously did Rome requite the magnanimity of a foe who had spared the lives of Roman armies left entirely in his power, and who had liberated unharmed, the generals Rome had surrendered as an expiation for her perfidy.

During the consulate of M. Curius Dentatus, a very energetic plebeian who worked his way to supreme power, crushing aristocratic opposition before him, Rome made such conquests in the north and south, that Dentatus enjoying two triumphal entries to Rome in one year, declared to the assembly of the people:

"I have conquered such an extent of country, that it must have been left a wilderness had the men whom I have made our subjects been fewer. I have subjected such a multitude of men, that they must have starved if the territory conquered with them had been smaller."

With these immense conquests came the impoverishment of the people, from the enormous expenses of the war, and Rome was overwhelmed with misery by one of those fearful pestilences which have ever, in past ages, been surging over the nations. In this emergence, Curius Dentatus resolved to appropriate the territory gained in these conquests for the relief of the public distress. He, therefore, proposed an agra-

rian law which should allot seven acres* of the public domain to every citizen. The proposition roused the most bitter hostility of the patricians, who, with deathless tenacity, were struggling to widen the gulf between the patricians and plebeians. It seems that the proposition of Curius Dentatus was in favor of the middle class, the *citizens*, who had the privilege of voting, not of the lower class, the *subjects*, who had no vote. At this time the slaves were so few as not to be taken into the account in any public measures. The patricians, in their madness, called in the aid of the mob; and tumults swept the streets of Rome. But the soldiers whom Curius had led to conquest rallied around him, and by their aid he triumphed over both the nobles and the *Jacobins*, as the same class of people were called in the somewhat similar conflicts of the French revolution.

While these conflicts were raging most fiercely, foreign foes, probably from Etruria, menaced the city. The immediate appointment of a dictator was deemed necessary, and Q. Hortensius, a man of opulent and even ancient plebeian family, was placed in office. He summoned an assemblage of the whole nation, without distinction of orders, in a place called the "Oak Grove," just without the walls of the city, and there proposed three radical laws. 1st, A general bankrupt law, releasing all poor debtors from their obligations; 2d, an agrarian law conferring seven acres of the *public domain* upon every *citizen;* and 3d, a law depriving the senate of its veto, and declaring the people, assembled in their tribes, to be a supreme legislative power. There were one or two other laws of minor importance also enacted. The passage of these laws secured comparative internal peace to Rome for a period of one hundred and fifty years. A census taken about this time gave a return of two hundred and seventy-two thousand

* The Roman acre, *jugera*, contained but three thousand two hundred square yards. The English acre contains four thousand eight hundred and forty.

three hundred and twenty-two *citizens;* but it is impossible from this to judge, with much accuracy, what was then the population of the republic,—about two hundred years before the birth of Christ.

One of the remarkable events of this period, was the sending an embassy to Greece to invite the god Æsculapius to Rome to arrest the plague, which had then been raging three years. They brought back the god in the form of a snake, and erected a temple for his worship upon an island in the Tiber.

Forty years after the death of Alexander the Great, Seleucus, the last survivor of his generals, then a man seventy-five years of age, and sovereign of Asia, returned to Greece. His vast realms, which he had inherited from the great conqueror, extended from the Hellespont to the Indies. He had but just landed on the Thracian Chersonesus, when he was assassinated by Ptolmy Ceraunus, who had seized upon the throne of Macedonia. Antiochus, the son of Seleucus, succeeded to the throne of Asia. Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, was now king of Egypt—having received this kingdom from Alexander, in the division of the Grecian empire. Such, in the main, was, at this time the fragmentary condition of that Grecian empire which, but half a century before, had held the mastery of the world.

About the year 281 B. C. commenced one of the most formidable coalitions against Rome which had yet been organized. The Gauls, with the northern nations, coöperating with the nations in the extreme south of the Italian peninsula, invited Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, a kingdom on the western shore of Greece, to send an army by sea, to act in concert with them for the destruction of Rome. Pyrrhus, ambitious of military renown which might promote his projects at home, sent an army across the sea from Greece, a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles, into the gulf of Tarentum, on the extreme southern point of Italy. He landed here at Taren

tum, twenty thousand foot soldiers, twenty-five thousand archers and slingers, and fifty elephants. In the spring of the year 280 before Christ, this formidable armament of veteran soldiers was prepared to take the field. The nations of Italy, hostile to Rome, were exceedingly elated, and rallied to coöperate with these powerful invaders. Rome was never before in so great peril, and vigorously the Romans prepared to encounter the enemy. An army consisting of thirty thousand foot and two thousand six hundred horse, under one of their consuls, Valerius Lævinus, advanced to meet the foe, and the forces encountered each other in the shock of battle near the shore of the gulf of Taranto, on a large plain, then called the plain of Heraclea, probably near the present site of Policoro.

A hand-to-hand fight, with clubs, spears, swords, arrows, and javelins ensued, in which physical strength alone mainly was to decide the issue. Pyrrhus, conscious that the safety of his army was dependent upon the preservation of his own life, and that every Roman warrior would seek to encounter him, not very chivalrously exchanged uniforms with one of the officers of his guard. The royal helmet and scarlet cloak attracted attack from every quarter, and Megacles, the guardsman, was soon struck down. His fall was received with shouts of triumph throughout the Roman lines, and while they were exulting over the helmet and mantle, which had been torn from the body of the slain, Pyrrhus rode along the ranks of his troops bare-headed, to satisfy them that he was still alive and well.

Seven times the triumphant Romans drove the troops of Pyrrhus in wild disorder over the plain. Seven times Pyrrhus, rallying his troops, in war's surging billow, swept back the foe. Each general endeavored to lure all the forces of the enemy into battle, holding back a reserve, which, in the hour of exhaustion, should come rushing fresh upon the field and settle the strife. At length Lævinus, believing that Pyrrhus

had brought forth his last reserve, marched his own upon the field from behind a curtain of hills. It was a chosen body of cavalry, and the plain trembled beneath their iron hoofs, as they came, with gleaming swords, thundering into the midst of the fray. But the wary Greek was not taken by surprise. A few trumpet blasts were heard, and instantly there emerged from their concealment fifty elephants. At a speed even surpassing that of the horses they came thundering upon the plain, and with their resistless momentum and heavy tramp crushed all before them.

The Roman horses, terrified by the unwonted spectacle, wheeled and fled from the monsters in resistless panic. The riders lost all control over them, and rushing through the lines of the foot soldiers, the whole army was thrown into disorder. Pyrrhus followed up his advantage by a vigorous charge, and the rout was entire and hopeless.

But for an event almost accidental the Roman army would have been annihilated. A soldier chanced to cut off with his sword the trunk of one of the elephants. The animal, terrified and thus rendered helpless, crying with torture, turned back upon the pursuing army. The other elephants, instinctively appalled by the cry, also turned, and in the midst of the confusion and dismay thus occasioned many of the Romans escaped. It is impossible now to ascertain the loss upon either side, but Pyrrhus remained complete master of the field. The loss of Pyrrhus was, however, so great that he said to one who congratulated him, "One more such victory and I should be obliged to return to Epirus without a single soldier."

The conqueror now pressed forward toward central Italy, at the same time sending an ambassador to Rome with terms of peace. Cineas, who was entrusted with this commission, was a Greek from Thessaly. It is said that in his early youth he heard Demosthenes speak, and the marvelous eloquence of the orator inspired him with the desire to emulate his power. The tongue of Cineas, it was said, won more cities than the

sword of Pyrrhus. He had cultivated his memory to so extraordinary a degree, that the first day after his arrival in Rome he could address all the senators and the citizens of the equestrian order by their proper names. The courtly Greek, thoroughly instructed in all the learning of his countrymen, attracted great attention. His wise sayings were treasured up and repeated from mouth to mouth, and the senate, beguiled by his address and flattered by his presents, were about to assent to terms of peace far from honorable to Rome.

In this emergence Appius Claudius, who was now in extreme old age, and who for several years had been blind and borne down by many bodily infirmities, was carried in a litter into the senate house. The profoundest silence reigned in the senate as the old man rose to speak. His eloquence recalled the senate to a sense of Roman honor; and at the close of his speech it was voted, almost by acclaim, that no peace should be concluded while the hostile Greeks remained in Italy, and that Cineas should be ordered to leave Rome that very day.

Pyrrhus, resolving to prosecute the war with all possible vigor, advanced with a large army, almost unopposed, as far as Capua, which city was unsuccessfully attacked. Relinquishing the siege of the city, he pressed on until he arrived within eighteen miles of Rome. From the hills upon which he encamped he could discern the towers of the city. During this long march Lævinus, with the wreck of his army, had hung upon the rear of the Greeks, ever carefully avoiding offering to him an opportunity for battle. Here he learned that Rome had made peace with the Etruscans and other northern nations, and was prepared to meet him with an overwhelming force Commencing a precipitate retreat, he soon in his ships reached Tarentum in safety.

The Romans sent to Tarentum to propose to Pyrrhus an exchange of prisoners. He refused either ransom or exchange, unless the Romans would accede to the terms of peace he had offered through Cineas; but with singular generosity he allowed

all the Roman prisoners to go to Rome to spend the holidays of the Saturnalia, exacting from them a solemn promise that they would return, unless the senate consented to peace. The senate refused peace, and denounced the punishment of death upon any prisoner who should remain in Rome after the day appointed for his return.

The next season the campaign was opened anew, and the two armies met on the plains of Asculum, near the present city of Ascoli. In the battle which ensued, Grecian discipline prevailed, and though Pyrrhus himself was wounded, the Romans retired, leaving six thousand upon the field of battle. The remainder of the season was passed in desultory and indecisive warfare, and as winter set in the Greeks retired again to Tarentum, while the Romans went into winter quarters in Apulia.

Pyrrhus was now quite disheartened as to the prospect of conquering Rome. It so happened that the island of Sicily was then engaged in war with Carthage, and a powerful Carthaginian army was besieging Syracuse. The Sicilians sent to Pyrrhus imploring his aid, and he accordingly, leaving a garrison in the citadel at Tarentum, embarked for Sicily. For two years he was engaged in war there, with very cruel and bloody, but indecisive results, when he received an embassage from his old allies in Italy, imploring his return. In the autumn of the year 276 B. C. his fleet again entered the harbor of Tarentum. But in the passage he was attacked by the Carthaginian fleet and seventy of his ships were sunk.

A Roman army was speedily on the march to meet the invaders. Pyrrhus attempted to surprise his foes in a midnight attack. By torchlight they commenced their march. The night was dark and windy; the distance longer than was anticipated; the torches were blown out, and the men lost their way. Thus the morning dawned before the Greeks, utterly exhausted, reached the hights which looked down upon the Roman camp. The Romans were prepared for them, and the

battle could not be delayed. The battle was short, but very bloody. The elephants, pierced with javelins, turned and trampled down the ranks of Pyrrhus, and the victory of the Romans was decisive and effectual. Pyrrhus retreated with the wreck of his army to his ships, and spreading sail returned to Epirus.

The Romans, after the expulsion of the Greeks, without difficulty extended their sway over all the nations of southern Italy. To complete the subjugation of these nations, strong colonies were planted in the midst of them. The Roman armies were equally successful in the north, and thus after a struggle of nearly five centuries the whole Italian peninsula came under the sway of Rome. The Roman colonies were, in reality, garrisons established in the most populous regions.

The renowned empire of Carthage was situated upon the coast of Africa, near the present site of Tunis, almost directly south from Rome. The Mediterranean is here about one hundred and fifty miles in breadth. But the island of Sicily, which is two hundred miles in length and one hundred and fifty in breadth, lies directly between Carthage and the extreme southern point, or toe of Italy; being separated from the African coast by a channel eighty miles in width, and from Italy by the narrow strait of Messina but two miles across.

The Carthaginian republic, which was, at this time, perhaps the most powerful nation on the globe, originated in a Phœnician colony which laid the foundation of Carthage about one hundred and forty years before the traditional assignment of the building of Rome. The Carthaginians had a large fleet and skillful seamen, which gave them the entire command of the sea. Their conquering armies had taken possession of the island of Sardinia, which was about one hundred miles north from Carthage, and their war ships were hovering around Sicily having brought nearly the whole island under their sway.

Ambitious Rome now turned her eyes to Sicily, and resolved to take possession of it. With the energy which thus far had characterized the nation, a fleet was soon built, and an army of twenty thousand men assembled at Reggia, the Italian port nearest to the Sicilian shore. Appius succeeded in transporting his troops, notwithstanding the vigilance of the Carthaginian ships, across the strait, and landing them, by night, on the Sicilian coast. Hanno, commander of the Carthaginian forces on the island, hastened to meet Appius, but was defeated in a pitched battle and retreated to Syracuse. The Romans, after plundering the surrounding country, followed the foe to Syracuse. Here the tide of war set against them. Sickness decimated their ranks, and after an unsuccessful battle, Appius retreated to Messina, pursued by the allied Syracusians and Carthaginians. Leaving a garrison there, Appius returned to Rome in his ships, which were mainly impelled by oars, that he might gather reënforcements for the continuation of the war.

In the spring of the year 263 B. C. two consular armies, amounting to thirty-five thousand men, crossed the straits, and landed at Messina. They swept all opposition before them, and speedily were in possession of sixty-seven towns. Many of the Sicilians now entered into an alliance with the Romans to drive out the Carthaginians. Between two such powerful and unscrupulous nations their independence was impossible, and they preferred subjection to Rome rather than to Carthage.

But while Rome was thus ravaging the cities of Sicily, the Carthaginian fleet, in command of the sea, was making continual descents upon the Italian towns, destroying and plundering without mercy. This led the Romans to resolve to meet the enemy on their own element. But the Carthaginians were far superior to the Romans in naval architecture, constructing line-of-battle ships, if we may so call them, with five banks of oars. These enormous structures were called quinqueremes. The Romans had thus far been able to construct only triremes, or ships with but three banks of oars.