

It so happened that a Carthaginian quinquereme was driven ashore on the coast of Italy, and the Romans, taking their model from the wreck, in two months built and launched two hundred such ships. While these ships were building, the Roman soldiers were constantly exercised in rowing, by being placed on benches on the shore, arranged as they would be in the ship. These quinqueremes carried three hundred rowers and one hundred and twenty soldiers. It was always the endeavor to pierce the foe with their brazen prows, and then settle the conflict by boarding. To facilitate this operation a long drawbridge, thirty-four feet long and four wide, with a low parapet on each side was attached to a mast. This bridge was let fall upon the enemy's ship, which it held fast by a strong iron spike fixed at the bottom of the platform or bridge, and which was driven home into the deck by the force of the fall.

Thus equipped, the Romans put to sea to contend with the strongest naval power then upon the globe. The expedition was commanded by one of the consuls, C. Duilius. He found the Carthaginian fleet not far from the straits of Messina, on the north coast of Sicily, ravaging the coast near Melazzo. The Carthaginians bore down upon the foe in full confidence of victory. But Roman prowess was triumphant. At the close of the fiercest strife for a few hours, the Carthaginians, having lost fifty ships taken or sunk, with three thousand men slain and seven thousand taken captive, retreated in a panic. The Romans, exceedingly exultant at this victory, landed, took Melazzo by storm, and now resolved to drive the Carthaginians, not only out of Sicily, but also out of Sardinia and Corsica.

But Carthage was altogether too powerful to be subdued by one victory. For three years war, with all its horrors, desolated the cities and plains of Sicily. At the same time expeditions were fitted out both against Sardinia and Corsica. As no decisive results were obtained, the Romans decided on an expedition hitherto unparalleled in any of their conflicts

They prepared a fleet of three hundred and thirty ships, which were manned by one hundred and forty thousand men, and resolved to carry the war into Africa. Carthage sent three hundred and fifty ships to meet the foe. The terrific encounter of more than three hundred thousand combatants took place on the coast of Sicily. Such another naval spectacle earth has perhaps never witnessed, as hour after hour these maddened legions struggled with demoniac fury. No war of the elements ever equaled this tempest of human passion.

But again Rome was triumphant. The Carthaginians, having lost ninety-four of their ships either captured or sunk, retreated in consternation to Carthage, to save the city, if possible, from the invaders. The passage to Africa was now unobstructed. The fleet pushed vigorously across the sea, and the troops were disembarked upon the African coast, a short distance from the headland of Cape Bon, in the bay of Tunis. The coast here runs nearly north and south, and the region presented an aspect of opulence, thrift, and beauty, such as has rarely been surpassed. The villas of the Carthaginian gentry, embowered in olive groves and vineyards, every where decorated the rural landscape. Cattle browsed upon the hills; villages were scattered over the plains, while the highest attainments of agriculture, aided by an African sun, spread over the whole country the bloom of an extraordinary verdure.

Into this inviting region the Romans plunged, with an army of fifteen thousand foot and five hundred horse. The Carthaginians, who had never even dreamed of such an invasion, were quite defenseless. The march of Regulus, the Roman general, was unimpeded, and he soon sent word to Rome that he had plundered over three hundred walled towns. Having arrived within twenty miles of Carthage, and not feeling sufficiently strong to storm the city, the Carthaginians having made the most extraordinary efforts for its

defense, Regulus threw up his intrenchments and went into winter quarters. Some of the interior African tribes, lured by the hope of plunder, joined the Romans. The Carthaginians sent to Greece to engage the assistance of renowned Grecian generals. Among others, a Spartan officer named Xanthippus, a man of much military experience and celebrity, espoused their cause. So much confidence did he inspire that he was intrusted with the direction of the Carthaginian forces.

Assembling a choice army of veterans, consisting of twelve thousand foot, four thousand cavalry, with one hundred elephants, Xanthippus marched from Carthage to attack the Romans in their encampment before they could receive reinforcements from Rome. The battle was very fierce and long continued, but finally the Romans were entirely routed, and their destruction was so entire that Regulus escaped from the field with but five hundred men. He was pursued, overtaken, and made prisoner, while every man of his guard was slain. Thus the Roman army was absolutely annihilated, with the exception of a small body of troops left in garrison at Clypea, an important town on the coast. The Carthaginian army returned to Carthage in triumph, leading, as a glorious trophy, Regulus, half naked and in chains.

The Roman senate, informed of the disaster, and unable immediately to attempt to repair it, sent an expedition to Clypea, to bring off the garrison, which was closely besieged. A very powerful armament was dispatched, which beat off the Carthaginian fleet advancing to repel them, and then succeeded in rescuing the garrison. But as they were returning home along the southern coast of Italy, a terrific storm arose, and two hundred and sixty ships were wrecked. The destruction of life was enormous, it being estimated that one hundred thousand men perished in this awful storm. The shore of Sicily for many leagues was covered with the fragments of ships and the bodies of the dead.

The Carthaginians, encouraged by this great disaster which had befallen their foes, sent an efficient general, Hasdrubal, with an army and one hundred and forty elephants to drive the Romans from those portions of Sicily of which they had taken possession. But Roman energy was invigorated, not paralyzed, by adversity. In three months a fleet of three hundred and twenty ships was fitted for sea, crossed the straits to the Sicilian shore, ravaged a large extent of country, extorting enormous ransom from their wealthy captives, and selling thirteen thousand prisoners, of the poorer class, as slaves. They then crossed the sea again to the African shore, and after loading their ships to their utmost capacity with plunder, commenced their return. But again they were overtaken by a storm, and one hundred and twenty of their ships were wrecked.

The Romans and Carthaginians now continued the struggle for two years, with ever varying success, on the plains of Sicily. About the middle of the third summer, the Romans obtained a signal victory, which placed the whole of the island of Sicily, with the exception of one town, Silybæum, in their hands. The Carthaginians, disheartened, sent an embassy to Rome with terms of peace, and their illustrious prisoner, the Roman general Regulus, was sent, it is said, with this embassy, first exacting from him the promise that he would return to Carthage, surrendering himself again to captivity should the negotiation fail. It was hoped that out of regard to his own safety he would urge the acceptance of the terms.

But Regulus, with heroism characteristic of his race, willing to sacrifice the short remainder of his life, he being aged and infirm, for the glory of his country, dissuaded the senate from making peace. He was present at the discussion, and vehemently urged that the question of his life should not be at all considered, while deliberating respecting the glory and power of Rome; and that the best interests of Rome required

that the Roman legions should spread triumphantly over the domains of Carthage. Seeing that the senate, influenced by the cruel death to which he would be subjected on his return to Carthage, still hesitated, he pretended that a slow poison had been administered to him, which would infallibly soon end his days. His arguments were effectual, and the treaty was rejected. Regulus tore himself from the embraces of his weeping friends and returned to Carthage, where he was put to death with the most dreadful tortures.

Such is the story of Regulus, which has, perhaps, obtained more renown than any other incident in ancient Roman history. It develops a trial of character so honorable to human nature, though, like pure gold embedded in quartz, it is surrounded with much alloy, that we could earnestly wish it to be true. But historical research does not confirm it. It is not alluded to by Polybius, the most ancient and trustworthy writer in those times; and there is much reason to suppose that it is pure fiction, invented by some eulogist to shed renown upon the illustrious consul and general, Regulus, who certainly perished in captivity in Carthage.

It was the great ambition of Rome to annex the island of Sicily to her domain. The next year, 250 B. C., another immense army was raised to drive the Carthaginians from Lilybæum, where they were strongly fortified. For two or three years the war raged with all of war's possible fury. There were sea-fights and land-fights, shipwrecks, gory battle-fields, defeats, victories, conflagrations, and miseries which no tongue can tell. At length, as the awful tragedy was progressing, there arose a Carthaginian general of extraordinary ability named Hamilcar. This illustrious man, father of the world-renowned Hannibal, was then thirty years of age. An extraordinary storm of disasters fell upon the Romans. Their armies were defeated, their camp burned up, their fleets wrecked. The Carthaginians, becoming thus supreme masters of the sea, besieged the Romans in their garrisons, and even

landed on the coast of Italy, and in ravaging the Roman towns, bitterly avenged the losses they had endured on their own shores.

Hamilcar, with great military genius, thwarted all the plans of the Roman generals, cut off their supplies, and while avoiding any general action, crippled all their movements. A single anecdote may be related to illustrate his noble character. After a severe action, in which Hamilcar was defeated and many of his men slain, he sent to the conqueror asking a truce, that he might bury his dead. The Roman consul haughtily replied that Hamilcar had better devote his attention to the living than to trouble himself about the dead. A short time after, in another conflict, Hamilcar was victorious, and many Romans fell. Hamilcar was now solicited for a truce, that the Roman dead might be buried. Scorning the vulgar spirit of retaliation, he replied that most willingly he consented, since he carried on war, not against the dead, but against the living only.

Rome was now convinced that Sicily could be conquered only by the most energetic efforts, and consequently the resources of the state were strained to the utmost in constructing a fleet of three hundred ships. With this vast squadron admirably manned, they attacked the Carthaginian fleet, captured sixty-three, sunk one hundred and twenty, and disposed the rest. In this conflict fourteen thousand Carthaginians were slain, and thirty-two thousand taken prisoners. This victory placed the Romans so decisively in the ascendancy that the Carthaginians sued for peace. Hamilcar with anguish yielded to the humiliating terms which Rome exacted. Sicily was surrendered to Rome. All the Roman prisoners were given up without ransom, and an immense sum of money was exacted from Carthage to pay the expenses of the war which Rome had commenced.

Thus terminated what is called the first Punic war. The losses on both sides, in both blood and treasure, were enor-

mous. The simple transference of the island of Sicily from the government of Carthage to that of Rome, cost Rome seven hundred ships of war, and Carthage five hundred. It is estimated that in this long struggle five hundred thousand men perished by sword, shipwreck, and pestilence. Carthage was humiliated, not crushed, and the Carthaginians burned with desires for vengeance. Rome, elated, was far from satisfied with this vast addition to her domain, and was only stimulated with still more intense desires for conquest. There was continually developed between these two great republics an instinctive hostility, which rendered it inevitable that conflicts would be incessantly renewed, until the one or the other should wholly perish.

CHAPTER V.

THE PASSAGE OF THE ALPS BY HANNIBAL.

FROM 241 B. C. TO 217 B. C.

INVASION OF SPAIN BY CARTHAGE.—WAR RENEWED BETWEEN ROME AND CARTHAGE.—NEW GAULISH INVASION.—ANNIHILATION OF THE GAULISH ARMY.—CONQUEST OF CISALPINE GAUL.—HANNIBAL CROSSES THE RHONE.—PASSAGE OF THE ALPS.—INVASION OF ITALY.—BATTLES ON THE TIGRINO AND THE PO.—DISCOMFITURE OF THE ROMANS.—HANNIBAL ENTERS TUSCANY.—GREAT BATTLE OF THRASYMENE.—ANNIHILATION OF THE ROMAN ARMY.—COMMEMORATED BY BYRON.

AFTER the close of the first Punic war there was peace with Carthage for twenty-two years. Rome was now undisputed mistress of the Italian peninsula, and of the island of Sicily. The early years of this period of peace were devoted to internal improvements. The island of Sardinia, which had for some time been in possession of Carthage, was in a state of revolt against that government. The insurgents entreated Rome to espouse their cause. She did so, and, hunting up some fancied grievances, declared war against Carthage. Hamilcar, not yet prepared to renew the strife, purchased peace by the surrender of Sardinia to Rome.

Hamilcar was at this time gathering his forces for a war-like expedition against Spain. In view of the enterprise solemn sacrifices were offered to propitiate the gods. As Hamilcar was performing these rights of superstition, he suddenly requested all the attendant officers to retire, and calling his little son Hannibal to his side, a boy then nine years of age, led him up to the altar, and offered to take him to Spain if he would give his solemn vow never, so long as he lived, to make peace with the Romans. Hannibal eagerly placed his hand upon the sacrifice and took the oath. Faithfully he