

reëmbarking, sailed for Pisa, having sent a part of his force to attack Hasdrubal in Spain. It was his intention to meet Hannibal, when, exhausted with a long march, he should be descending the eastern declivities of the Alps.

The Carthaginians pressed rapidly forward, and in four days reached the mouth of the Isere, as it empties itself into the Rhone, about one hundred and fifty miles above the mouth of the latter river. The Isere, a majestic stream, fed by the inexhaustible glaciers of the Alps, enters the Rhone with a flood almost equal to that of the stream with which its waters mingle, and in which they lose their name. Following up the valley of the Isere, the Carthaginians marched north-east, directly toward the mountains. At this point the wild Gaulish tribes of what was called the Transalpine region, began to manifest hostility. They fortified the passes, and laid ambuscades; but Hannibal, with great energy and sagacity, baffled all their plans, and won his way through incessant battles. Among the gloomy defiles there were many awful scenes of confusion and carnage, the barbarians hurling rocks and stones from the cliffs, and fighting with the utmost desperation; but Carthaginian discipline and courage were invariably victorious.

In a march of nine days Hannibal led his army, from the plains of Dauphiné through the ascending defiles, to the summit of the central ridge of the Alps. It was near the end of October. The gorge through which he was passing, elevated many thousand feet above the level of the river, presented but one wide waste of barrenness and ice, while mountain peaks towered above them, glittering in eternal snow, or black in their rocky precipices and crags, swept by the storms of uncounted centuries. Exhausted by the toil of the ascent, the soldiers rested for two days in these wilds, until the stragglers could gain the encampment. A general feeling of weariness and discouragement pervaded the army. Hannibal alone

was firm. Assembling his soldiers, he pointed them to a distant descending valley, and said:

“That valley is Italy. It leads us to the country of our friends, the Gauls, and is our direct route to Rome.”

After two days' rest the army commenced the descent of the mountains on the Italian side. To their surprise they found the perils and difficulties of the descent greater than those of the ascent. The gorges were blocked up with snow. Fearful chasms were bridged over with the treacherous coverings of ice, and men and horses fell into fathomless gulfs. Avalanches had in places so swept the path, that all the skill of the Carthaginian engineers was requisite to render it possible for the army to advance. The elephants suffered terribly from cold and hunger, and from the rugged travel so foreign to their natures. Nearly all of these animals perished by the way. It was by the pass now called the Little Saint Bernard, that Hannibal surmounted the Alps, and descended into the valley of the Aosta. Fifteen days were consumed in the passage of the mountains, and five months had now elapsed since he commenced his march from Spain. By sickness, casualties, and battle, his army had now dwindled to twenty thousand foot and six thousand horse. Thirty-three thousand men had perished on this march.

But the Carthaginians had now entered into fertile valleys where flowers regaled the eye and fruits were abundant, and where they were received by the Cisalpine Gauls with hospitality as friends and allies. In the mean time Scipio had landed at Pisa, and crossing the Po at Placentia, had taken command of the pretor's army on the Ticino, near Pavia, and was marching forward to meet Hannibal, by slowly ascending the left bank of the Po. It was well known by both parties that the barbarian Gauls would join whichever army was victorious; for *love of the spoils* is by no means a modern invention. Hannibal had followed down the valley of the Aosta and the *Dors Baltea* to the Po, and was descending that

stream also by the left bank. A collision was, of course, inevitable, and both parties were pushing forward light troops for reconnoitering.

The two armies soon met in fierce battle. The Romans were routed, the consul, Scipio, severely wounded, and the army was saved from destruction only by a precipitate retreat. In their flight they crossed the Ticino, and so great was their hurry and confusion that they broke down the bridge, to arrest pursuit, leaving six hundred men thus cut off, who fell into the hands of the enemy. The discomfited Romans did not stop in their flight until they found refuge behind the walls of Placentia.

Hannibal now crossed the Po in boats, and descended unopposed the right bank of the stream. Two days' march brought him again in sight of the enemy at Placentia. As they declined his offer of battle, he took an important position and entrenched himself east of Placentia, cutting off the line of retreat and communications with Rome. Scipio, finding his road to Rome thus blocked up, abandoned Placentia, and marching directly westward, crossed the Trebbia, and strongly entrenching himself, soon gathered reinforcements, so that his army amounted to forty thousand men. Hannibal also obtained recruits from the Gauls, and with a force equal to that of the Romans, goaded them to battle. The emergency had recalled the consul Sempronius, who took command of the army, as his colleague Scipio was still suffering from his wounds.

It was now mid-winter. The Trebbia, which in summer is but a shallow and insignificant stream, was swollen by rain and melting snows. The Romans were on the left bank of the Trebbia, the Carthaginians on the right. The morning dawned lowering with clouds, and wind and snow mingled with rain swept the valley, when Sempronius, lured by a stratagem of Hannibal, led his troops across a ford of the river where the water was breast high, and made a fierce attack upon the lines

of the Carthaginians. He was so desirous of taking Hannibal by surprise that he led his soldiers to the assault in the early morning before they had taken any breakfast. Hungry and chilled by fording the icy river, they were but poorly prepared to meet the soldiers of Hannibal, who, anticipating the attack, which they by stratagem had enticed, had eaten their breakfasts in their tents, and had oiled their bodies and put on their armor quietly around their camp-fires.

The battle was long and bloody; but again Hannibal was victorious, and as the sun went down the Roman army was almost annihilated. A few had cut their way through the lines of the Carthaginians and had taken refuge in Placentia. A few others, exhausted and bleeding, plunged into the waves of the Trebbia, and escaped to the opposite shore, where the Carthaginians did not pursue them. This battle left Hannibal master of Cisalpine Gaul, and thus terminated his first campaign in Italy. The winds of winter now swept so fiercely over the ridges of the mountains that it was impossible any longer to keep the field, and Hannibal accordingly went into winter quarters.

The alarm at Rome was great, and the remainder of the winter was spent by both parties in vigorous preparation for the opening of the campaign in the spring. At the earliest practicable moment Hannibal was again upon the march. Crossing the Apennines by the valley of the Serchio, with apparent recklessness he left a powerful Roman army behind him at Arretium, and entered the plains of Italy. Two new consuls had now been elected, Flaminius and Geminus. The former had been placed in command of the army raised to arrest the march of Hannibal, while Geminus remained in the vicinity of Rome to enlist and forward new levies.

Flaminius, while quietly encamped at Arretium, learned to his astonishment that Hannibal had crossed the Apennines, and was marching triumphantly through Tuscany, then called Etruria. He immediately broke up his camp and pursued the

foe, sending in the mean time a messenger to inform his colleague of the movements of the Carthaginians. Hannibal cruelly devastated the country on his march, while carefully watching his pursuers and looking for a favorable opportunity to lead them into an ambushade.

On the northeast corner of Lake Pengia, then called Lake Thrasymene, near the present village of Passignano, there is a valley, entered from the north by a narrow defile, enclosed on all the remaining sides by the waters of the lake and by steep hills. Hannibal entered this defile and posted his troops in ambushade among the rocks and shrubs on the slopes of the hills which bounded the valley. The Romans incautiously, in eager pursuit, entered the trap just as the sun was going down. Hannibal had so thoroughly studied the ground that even in the darkness he could move his troops, and when the morning dawned Flaminius found himself surrounded by foes, who were posted in the most advantageous positions, and his retreat was entirely cut off.

The battle was immediately commenced with tremendous fury. A thick fog rose from the lake, which concealed from the Romans their foes. Hopeless of victory, they fought with the energies of despair, resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible. But they were overwhelmed. A storm of arrows and javelins descended upon them as from the clouds. Ponderous stones and rocks crushed whole companies with the resistless power of the avalanche. When the Romans were thus thrown into utter confusion, the terrible cavalry of Hannibal emerged from the mist, while at the same moment the heavily armed Gauls came rushing down the hills, and in co-operation they fell upon the bewildered, broken battalions, and hewed them down with enormous slaughter.

For a long time no quarter was granted. The whole Roman army, with the exception of about six thousand fugitives was either taken captive or destroyed. Flaminius himself fell, thrust through by the lance of a Gaul. The awful

deed of carnage was accomplished before the sun reached the meridian. It is related by Livy that the fury of the contest was such, that in the heat of the fight, a violent earthquake occurred, shaking the hills, rolling huge billows from the lake upon the shore, and destroying many cities; and yet this terrible phenomenon, shaking the earth, and whelming cities in the wave, was entirely unheeded by the combatants in the frenzy of the battle.

Such was the sanguinary and decisive battle of Thrasymene, which made Hannibal master of central Italy. Lord Byron, in *Childe Harold*, thus alludes to this event:

“ And such the storm of battle on this day,  
And such the frenzy whose convulsion blinds  
To all save carnage, that, beneath the fray,  
An earthquake reel'd unheedingly away !  
None felt stern nature rocking at his feet,  
And yawning forth a grave for those who lay  
Upon their bucklers for a winding sheet ;  
Such is the absorbing hate when warring nations meet.”