HANNIBAL

[Illustrated & Engraved & Mapped]

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Jacob Abbott



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Ancient Italy in the Cartagian Age.

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PREFACE



THE author of this series has made it his special object to confine himself very strictly, even in the most minute details which he records, to historic truth. The narratives are not tales founded upon history, but history itself, without any embellishment or any deviations from the strict truth, so far as it can now be discovered by an attentive examination of the annals written at the time when the events themselves occurred. In writing the

narratives, the author has endeavored to avail himself of the best sources of information which this country affords; and though, of course, there must be in these volumes, as in all historical narratives, more or less of imperfection and error, there is no intentional embellishment. Nothing is stated, not even the most minute and apparently imaginary details, without what was deemed good historical authority. The readers, therefore, may rely upon the record as the truth, and nothing but the truth, so far as honest purpose and a careful examination has been effectual in ascertaining it.

THE FIRST PUNIC WAR

HANNIBAL was a Carthaginian general. He acquired his great distinction as a warrior by his desperate contests with the Romans. Rome and Carthage grew up together on opposite sides of the Mediterranean Sea. For about a hundred years they waged against each other most dreadful wars. There were three of these wars. Rome was successful in the end, and Carthage was entirely destroyed.

There was no real cause for any disagreement between these two nations. Their hostility to each other was mere rivalry and spontaneous hate. They spoke a different language; they had a different origin; and they lived on opposite sides of the same sea. So they hated and devoured each other.

Those who have read the history of Alexander the Great, in this series, will recollect the difficulty he experienced in besieging and subduing Tyre, a great maritime city, situated about two miles from the shore, on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Carthage was originally founded by a colony from this city of Tyre, and it soon became a great commercial and maritime power like its mother. The Carthaginians built ships, and with

them explored all parts of the Mediterranean Sea. They visited all the nations on these coasts, purchased the commodities they had to sell, carried them to other nations, and sold them at great advances. They soon began to grow rich and powerful. They hired soldiers to fight their battles, and began to take possession of the islands of the Mediterranean, and, in some instances, of points on the main land. For example, in Spain: some of their ships, going there, found that the natives had silver and gold, which they obtained from veins of ore near the surface of the ground. At first the Carthaginians obtained this gold and silver by selling the natives commodities of various kinds, which they had procured in other countries; paying, of course, to the producers only a very small price compared with what they required the Spaniards to pay them. Finally, they took possession of that part of Spain where the mines were situated, and worked the mines themselves. They dug deeper; they employed skillful engineers to make pumps to raise the water, which always accumulates in mines, and prevents their being worked to any great depth unless the miners have a considerable degree of scientific and mechanical skill. They founded a city here, which they called New Carthage—*Nova Carthago*. They fortified and garrisoned this city, and made it the center of their operations in Spain. This city is called Carthagena to this day.

Thus the Carthaginians did every thing by power of money. They extended their operations in every direction, each new extension bringing in new treasures, and increasing their means of extending them more. They had, besides the merchant vessels which belonged to private individuals, great ships of war belonging to the state. These vessels were called galleys, and were rowed by oarsmen, tier above tier, there being sometimes four and five banks of oars. They had armies, too, drawn from different countries, in various troops, according as different nations excelled in the different modes of warfare. For instance, the Numidians, whose country extended in the neighborhood of Carthage, on the African coast, were famous for their horsemen. There were great plains in Numidia, and good grazing, and it was, consequently, one of those countries in which horses and horsemen naturally thrive. On the other hand, the natives of the Balearic Isles, now called Majorca, Minorca, and Ivica, were famous for their skill as slingers. So the Carthaginians, in making up their forces, would hire bodies of cavalry in Numidia, and of slingers in the Balearic Isles; and, for reasons analogous, they got excellent infantry in Spain.

The tendency of the various nations to adopt and cultivate different modes of warfare was far greater in those ancient times than now. The Balearic Isles, in fact, received their name from the Greek word *ballein*, which means to throw with a sling. The youth there were trained

to perfection in the use of this weapon from a very early age. It is said that mothers used to practice the plan of putting the bread for their boys' breakfast on the branches of trees, high above their heads, and not allow them to have their food to eat until they could bring it down with a stone thrown from a sling.

Thus the Carthaginian power became greatly extended. The whole government, however was exercised by a small body of wealthy and aristocratic families at home. It was very much such a government as that of England is at the present day, only the aristocracy of England is based on ancient birth and landed property, whereas in Carthage it depended on commercial greatness, combined, it is true, with hereditary family distinction. The aristocracy of Carthage controlled and governed every thing. None but its own sons could ordinarily obtain office or power. The great mass of inhabitants were kept in a state of servitude and vassalage. This state of things operated then, as it does now in England, very unjustly and hardly for those who were thus debased; but the result was—and in this respect the analogy with England still holds good—that a very efficient and energetic government was created. The government of an oligarchy makes sometimes a very rich and powerful state, but a discontented and unhappy people.

Let the reader now turn to the map and find the place of Carthage upon it. Let him imagine a great and rich

city there, with piers, and docks, and extensive warehouses for the commerce, and temples, and public edifices of splendid architecture, for the religious and civil service of the state, and elegant mansions and palaces for the wealthy aristocracy, and walls and towers for the defense of the whole. Let him then imagine a back country, extending for some hundred miles into the interior of Africa, fertile and highly cultivated, producing great stores of corn, and wine, and rich fruits of every description. Let him then look at the islands of Sicily, of Corsica, and Sardinia, and the Baleares, and conceive of them as rich and prosperous countries, and all under the Carthaginian rule. Look, also, at the coast of Spain; see, in imagination, the city of Carthagena, with its fortifications, and its army, and the gold and silver mines, with thousands and thousands of slaves toiling in them. Imagine fleets of ships going continually along the shores of the Mediterranean, from country to country, cruising back and forth to Tyre, to Cyprus, to Egypt, to Sicily, to Spain, carrying corn, and flax, and purple dyes, and spices, and perfumes, and precious stones, and ropes, and sails for ships, and gold and silver, and then periodically returning to Carthage, to add the profits they had made to the vast treasures of wealth already accumulated there. Let the reader imagine all this with the map before him, so as to have a distinct conception of the geographical relations of the localities, and he will have a pretty correct idea of the Carthaginian power at the time it commenced its dreadful conflicts with Rome.

Rome itself was very differently situated. Rome had been built by some wanderers from Troy, and it grew, for a long time, silently and slowly, by a sort of internal principle of life and energy. One region after another of the Italian peninsula was merged in the Roman state. They formed a population which was, in the main, stationary and agricultural. They tilled the fields; they hunted the wild beasts; they raised great flocks and herds. They seem to have been a race—a sort of variety of the human species—possessed of a very refined and superior organization, which, in its development, gave rise to a character of firmness, energy, and force, both of body and mind, which has justly excited the admiration of mankind. The Carthaginians had sagacity—the Romans called it cunning—and activity, enterprise and wealth. Their rivals, on the other hand, were characterized by genius, courage, and strength, giving rise to a certain calm and indomitable resolution and energy, which has since, in every age, been strongly associated, in the minds of men, with the very word Roman.

The progress of nations was much more slow in ancient days than now, and these two rival empires continued their gradual growth and extension, each on its own side of the great sea which divided them, for *five hundred years*, before they came into collision. At last, however, the collision came. It originated in the following way:

By looking at the map, the reader will see that the island of Sicily is separated from the main land by a narrow strait called the Strait of Messina. This strait derives its name from the town of Messina, which is situated upon it, on the Sicilian side. Opposite Messina, on the Italian side, there was a town named Rhegium. Now it happened that both these towns had been taken possession of by lawless bodies of soldiery. The Romans came and delivered Rhegium, and punished the soldiers who had seized it very severely. The Sicilian authorities advanced to the deliverance of Messina. The troops there, finding themselves thus threatened, sent to the Romans to say that if they, the Romans, would come and protect them, they would deliver Messina into their hands.

The question, what answer to give to this application, was brought before the Roman senate, and caused them great perplexity. It seemed very inconsistent to take sides with the rebels of Messina, when they had punished so severely those of Rhegium. Still the Romans had been, for a long time, becoming very jealous of the growth and extension of the Carthaginian power. Here was an opportunity of meeting and resisting it. The Sicilian authorities were about calling for direct aid from Carthage to recover the city, and the affair would probably result in establishing a large body of Carthaginian troops within sight of the Italian shore, and at a point where it would be easy for them to make hostile incursions into the Roman territories. In a word, it was a case

of what is called political necessity; that is to say, a case in which the *interests* of one of the parties in a contest were so strong that all considerations of justice, consistency, and honor are to be sacrificed to the promotion of them. Instances of this kind of political necessity occur very frequently in the management of public affairs in all ages of the world.

The contest for Messina was, after all, however, considered by the Romans merely as a pretext, or rather as an occasion, for commencing the struggle which they had long been desirous of entering upon. They evinced their characteristic energy and greatness in the plan which they adopted at the outset. They knew very well that the power of Carthage rested mainly on her command of the seas, and that they could not hope successfully to cope with her till they could meet and conquer her on her own element. In the mean time, however, they had not a single ship and not a single sailor, while the Mediterranean was covered with Carthaginian ships and seamen. Not at all daunted by this prodigious inequality, the Romans resolved to begin at once the work of creating for themselves a naval power.

The preparations consumed some time; for the Romans had not only to build the ships, they had first to learn how to build them. They took their first lesson from a Carthaginian galley which was cast away in a storm upon the coast of Italy. They seized this galley, collected their carpenters to examine it, and set woodmen at work

to fell trees and collect materials for imitating it. The carpenters studied their model very carefully, measured the dimensions of every part, and observed the manner in which the various parts were connected and secured together. The heavy shocks which vessels are exposed to from the waves makes it necessary to secure great strength in the construction of them; and, though the ships of the ancients were very small and imperfect compared with the men-of-war of the present day, still it is surprising that the Romans could succeed at all in such a sudden and hasty attempt at building them.

They did, however, succeed. While the ships were building, officers appointed for the purpose were training men, on shore, to the art of rowing them. Benches, like the seats which the oarsman would occupy in the ships, were arranged on the ground, and the intended seamen were drilled every day in the movements and action of rowers. The result was, that in a few months after the building of the ships was commenced, the Romans had a fleet of one hundred galleys of five banks of oars ready. They remained in harbor with them for some time, to give the oarsmen the opportunity to see whether they could row on the water as well as on the land, and then boldly put to sea to meet the Carthaginians.

There was one part of the arrangements made by the Romans in preparing their fleets which was strikingly characteristic of the determined resolution which marked all their conduct. They constructed machines containing

grappling irons, which they mounted on the prows of their vessels. These engines were so contrived, that the moment one of the ships containing them should encounter a vessel of the enemy, the grappling irons would fall upon the deck of the latter, and hold the two firmly together, so as to prevent the possibility of either escaping from the other. The idea that they themselves should have any wish to withdraw from the encounter seemed entirely out of the question. Their only fear was that the Carthaginian seamen would employ their superior skill and experience in naval maneuvers in making their escape. Mankind have always regarded the action of the Romans, in this case, as one of the most striking examples of military courage and resolution which the history of war has ever recorded. An army of landsmen come down to the sea-shore, and, without scarcely having ever seen a ship, undertake to build a fleet, and go out to attack a power whose navies covered the sea, and made her the sole and acknowledged mistress of it. They seize a wrecked galley of their enemies for their model; they build a hundred vessels like it: they practice maneuvers for a short time in port; and then go forth to meet the fleets of their powerful enemy, with grappling machines to hold them, fearing nothing but the possibility of their escape.

The result was as might have been expected. The Romans captured, sunk, destroyed, or dispersed the Carthaginian fleet which was brought to oppose them. They

took the prows of the ships which they captured and conveyed them to Rome, and built what is called a *rostral pillar* of them. A rostral pillar is a column ornamented with such beaks or prows, which were, in the Roman language, called *rostra.* This column was nearly destroyed by lightning about fifty years afterward, but it was repaired and rebuilt again, and it stood then for many centuries, a very striking and appropriate monument of this extraordinary naval victory. The Roman commander in this case was the consul Duilius. The rostral column was erected in honor of him. In digging among the ruins of Rome, there was found what was supposed to be the remains of this column, about three hundred years ago.

The Romans now prepared to carry the war into Africa itself. Of course it was easy, after their victory over the Carthaginian fleet, to transport troops across the sea to the Carthaginian shore. The Roman commonwealth was governed at this time by a senate, who made the laws, and by two supreme executive officers, called consuls. They thought it was safer to have two chief magistrates than one, as each of the two would naturally be a check upon the other. The result was, however, that mutual jealousy involved them often in disputes and quarrels. It is thought better, in modern times, to have but one chief magistrate in the state, and to provide other modes to put a check upon any disposition he might evince to abuse his powers.

The Roman consuls, in time of war, took command of the armies. The name of the consul upon whom it devolved to carry on the war with the Carthaginians, after this first great victory, was Regulus, and his name has been celebrated in every age, on account of his extraordinary adventures in this campaign, and his untimely fate. How far the story is strictly true it is now impossible to ascertain, but the following is the story, as the Roman historians relate it:

At the time when Regulus was elected consul he was a plain man, living simply on his farm, maintaining himself by his own industry, and evincing no ambition or pride. His fellow-citizens, however, observed those qualities of mind in him which they were accustomed to admire, and made him consul. He left the city and took command of the army. He enlarged the fleet to more than three hundred vessels. He put one hundred and forty thousand men on board and sailed for Africa. One or two years had been spent in making these preparations, which time the Carthaginians had improved in building new ships; so that, when the Romans set sail, and were moving along the coast of Sicily, they soon came in sight of a larger Carthaginian fleet assembled to oppose them. Regulus advanced to the contest. The Carthaginian fleet was beaten as before. The ships which were not captured or destroyed made their escape in all directions, and Regulus went on, without further opposition, and landed his forces on the Carthaginian shore. He

encamped as soon as he landed, and sent back word to the Roman senate asking what was next to be done.

The senate, considering that the great difficulty and danger, viz., that of repulsing the Carthaginian fleet, was now past, ordered Regulus to send home nearly all the ships and a very large part of the army, and with the rest to commence his march toward Carthage. Regulus obeyed: he sent home the troops which had been ordered home, and with the rest began to advance upon the city.

Just at this time, however, news came out to him that the farmer who had had the care of his land at home had died, and that his little farm, on which rested his sole reliance for the support of his family, was going to ruin. Regulus accordingly sent to the senate, asking them to place some one else in command of the army, and to allow him to resign his office, that he might go home and take care of his wife and children. The senate sent back orders that he should go on with his campaign, and promised to provide support for his family, and to see that some one was appointed to take care of his land. This story is thought to illustrate the extreme simplicity and plainness of all the habits of life among the Romans in those days. It certainly does so, if it is true. It is, however, very extraordinary, that a man who was intrusted, by such a commonwealth, with the command of a fleet of a hundred and thirty vessels, and an army of a hundred and forty thousand men, should have a family

at home dependent for subsistence on the hired cultivation of seven acres of land. Still, such is the story.

Regulus advanced toward Carthage, conquering as he came. The Carthaginians were beaten in one field after another, and were reduced, in fact, to the last extremity, when an occurrence took place which turned the scale. This was the arrival of a large body of troops from Greece, with a Grecian general at their head. These were troops which the Carthaginians had hired to fight for them, as was the case with the rest of the army. But these were *Greeks*, and the Greeks were of the same race, and possessed the same qualities, as the Romans. The newly-arrived Grecian general evinced at once such military superiority, that the Carthaginians gave him the supreme command. He marshaled the army, accordingly, for battle. He had a hundred elephants in the van. They were trained to rush forward and trample down the enemy. He had the Greek phalanx in the center, which was a close, compact body of many thousand troops, bristling with long, iron-pointed spears, with which the men pressed forward, bearing every thing before them. Regulus was, in a word, ready to meet Carthaginians, but he was not prepared to encounter Greeks. His army was put to flight, and he was taken prisoner. Nothing could exceed the excitement and exultation in the city when they saw Regulus, and five hundred other Roman soldiers, brought captive in. A few days before, they had

been in consternation at the imminent danger of his coming in as a ruthless and vindictive conqueror.

The Roman senate were not discouraged by this disaster. They fitted out new armies, and the war went on, Regulus being kept all the time at Carthage as a close prisoner. At last the Carthaginians authorized him to go to Rome as a sort of commissioner, to propose to the Romans to exchange prisoners and to make peace. They exacted from him a solemn promise that if he was unsuccessful he would return. The Romans had taken many of the Carthaginians prisoners in their naval combats, and held them captive at Rome. It is customary, in such cases, for the belligerent nations to make an exchange, and restore the captives on both sides to their friends and home. It was such an exchange of prisoners as this which Regulus was to propose.

When Regulus reached Rome he refused to enter the city, but he appeared before the senate without the walls, in a very humble garb and with the most subdued and unassuming demeanor. He was no longer, he said, a Roman officer, or even citizen, but a Carthaginian prisoner, and he disavowed all right to direct, or even to counsel, the Roman authorities in respect to the proper course to be pursued. His opinion was, however, he said, that the Romans ought not to make peace or to exchange prisoners. He himself and the other Roman prisoners were old and infirm, and not worth the exchange;

and, moreover, they had no claim whatever on their country, as they could only have been made prisoners in consequence of want of courage or patriotism to die in their country's cause. He said that the Carthaginians were tired of the war, and that their resources were exhausted, and that the Romans ought to press forward in it with renewed vigor, and leave himself and the other prisoners to their fate.

The senate came very slowly and reluctantly to the conclusion to follow this advice. They, however, all earnestly joined in attempting to persuade Regulus that he was under no obligation to return to Carthage. His promise, they said, was extorted by the circumstances of the case, and was not binding. Regulus, however, insisted on keeping his faith with his enemies. He sternly refused to see his family, and, bidding the senate farewell, he returned to Carthage. The Carthaginians, exasperated at his having himself interposed to prevent the success of his mission, tortured him for some time in the most cruel manner, and finally put him to death. One would think that he ought to have counseled peace and an exchange of prisoners, and he ought not to have refused to see his unhappy wife and children; but it was certainly very noble in him to refuse to break his word.

The war continued for some time after this, until, at length, both nations became weary of the contest, and peace was made. The following is the treaty which was

signed. It shows that the advantage, on the whole, in this first Punic war, was on the part of the Romans:

"There shall be peace between Rome and Carthage. The Carthaginians shall evacuate all Sicily. They shall not make war upon any allies of the Romans. They shall restore to the Romans, without ransom, all the prisoners which they have taken from them, and pay them within ten years three thousand two hundred talents of silver."

The war had continued twenty-four years.