

## BOOK XXI I-48; 52-63

*After Hannibal's successful siege of Saguntum in Spain, Rome declared war on Carthage in 218 B.C.E. Hannibal marched across southern Gaul, and brought his army and its Gallic allies through the Alps into Italy. He defeated the Roman armies at the Trebia River in northern Italy.*

1. I consider myself at liberty to commence what is only a section of my history with a prefatory remark such as most writers have placed at the very beginning of their works, namely, that the war I am about to describe is the most memorable of any that have ever been waged, I mean the war which the Carthaginians, under Hannibal's leadership, waged with Rome. No states, no nations ever met in arms greater in strength or richer in resources; these Powers themselves had never before been in so high a state of efficiency or better prepared to stand the strain of a long war; they were no strangers to each other's tactics after their experience in the first Punic War; and so variable were the fortunes and so doubtful the issue of the war that those who were ultimately victorious were in the earlier stages brought nearest to ruin. And yet, great as was their strength, the hatred they felt towards each other was almost greater. The Romans were furious with indignation because the vanquished had dared to take the offensive against their conquerors; the Carthaginians bitterly resented what they regarded as the tyrannical and rapacious conduct of Rome. The prime author of the war was Hamilcar. There was a story widely current that when, after bringing the African War to a close, he was offering sacrifices before transporting his army to Spain, the boy Hannibal, nine years old, was coaxing his father to take him with him, and his father led him up to the altar and made him swear with his hand laid on the victim that as soon as he possibly could he would show himself the enemy of Rome. The loss of Sicily and Sardinia vexed the proud spirit of the man, for he felt that the cession of Sicily had been made hastily in a spirit of despair, and that Sardinia had been filched by the Romans during the troubles in Africa, who, not content with seizing it, had imposed an indemnity as well.

2. Smarting under these wrongs, he made it quite clear from his conduct of the African War which followed immediately upon the conclusion of peace with Rome, and from the way in which he strengthened and extended the rule of Carthage during the nine years' war with Spain, that he was meditating a far greater war than any he was actually engaged in, and that had he lived longer it would have been under his command that the Carthaginians effected the invasion of Italy, which they actually carried out under Hannibal. The death of Hamilcar, occurring as it did most opportunely, and the tender years of Hannibal delayed the war. Hasdrubal, coming between father and



son, held the supreme power for eight years. He is said to have become a favorite of Hamilcar's owing to his personal beauty as a boy; afterwards he displayed talents of a very different order, and became his son-in-law. Through this connection he was placed in power by the influence of the Barcine party, which was unduly preponderant with the soldiers and the common people, but his elevation was utterly against the wishes of the nobles. Trusting to policy rather than to arms, he did more to extend the empire of Carthage by forming connections with the petty chieftains and winning over new tribes by making friends of their leading men than by force of arms or by war. But peace brought him no security. A barbarian whose master he had put to death murdered him in broad daylight, and when seized by the bystanders he looked as happy as though he had escaped. Even when put to the torture, his delight at the success of his attempt mastered his pain and his face wore a smiling expression. Owing to the marvelous tact he had shown in winning over the tribes and incorporating them into his dominions, the Romans had renewed the treaty with Hasdrubal. Under its terms, the River Ebro was to form the boundary between the two empires, and Saguntum, occupying an intermediate position between them, was to be a free city.

3. There was no hesitation shown in filling his place. The soldiers led the way by bringing the young Hannibal forthwith to the palace and proclaiming him their commander-in-chief amidst universal applause. Their action was followed by the plebs. Whilst little more than a boy, Hasdrubal had written to invite Hannibal to come to him in Spain, and the matter had actually been discussed in the senate. The Barcines wanted Hannibal to become familiar with military service; Hanno, the leader of the opposite party, resisted this. "Hasdrubal's request," he said, "appears a reasonable one, and yet I do not think we ought to grant it." This paradoxical utterance aroused the attention of the whole senate. He continued: "The youthful beauty which Hasdrubal surrendered to Hannibal's father he considers he has a fair claim to ask for in return from the son. It ill becomes us, however, to habituate our youths to the lust of our commanders, by way of military training. Are we afraid that it will be too long before Hamilcar's son surveys the extravagant power and the pageant of royalty which his father assumed, and that there will be undue delay in our becoming the slaves of the despot to whose son-in-law our armies have been bequeathed as though they were his patrimony? I, for my part, consider that this youth ought to be kept at home and taught to live in obedience to the laws and the magistrates on an equality with his fellow-citizens; if not, this small fire will some day or other kindle a vast conflagration."

4. Hanno's proposal received but slight support, though almost all the best men in the council were with him, but as usual, numbers carried the day against reason. No sooner had Hannibal landed in Spain than he became a

favorite with the whole army. The veterans thought they saw Hamilcar restored to them as he was in his youth; they saw the same determined expression the same piercing eyes, the same cast of features. He soon showed, however, that it was not his father's memory that helped him most to win the affections of the army. Never was there a character more capable of the two tasks so opposed to each other of commanding and obeying; you could not easily make out whether the army or its general were more attached to him. Whenever courage and resolution were needed Hasdrubal never cared to entrust the command to any one else; and there was no leader in whom the soldiers placed more confidence or under whom they showed more daring. He was fearless in exposing himself to danger and perfectly self-possessed in the presence of danger. No amount of exertion could cause him either bodily or mental fatigue; he was equally indifferent to heat and cold; his eating and drinking were measured by the needs of nature, not by appetite; his hours of sleep were not determined by day or night, whatever time was not taken up with active duties was given to sleep and rest, but that rest was not wooed on a soft couch or in silence, men often saw him lying on the ground amongst the sentinels and outposts, wrapped in his military cloak. His dress was in no way superior to that of his comrades; what did make him conspicuous were his arms and horses. He was by far the foremost both of the cavalry and the infantry, the first to enter the fight and the last to leave the field. But these great merits were matched by great vices—inhuman cruelty, a perfidy worse than Punic, an utter absence of truthfulness, reverence, fear of the gods, respect for oaths, sense of religion. Such was his character, a compound of virtues and vices. For three years he served under Hasdrubal, and during the whole time he never lost an opportunity of gaining by practice or observation the experience necessary for one who was to be a great leader of men.

5. From the day when he was proclaimed commander-in-chief, he seemed to regard Italy as his assigned field of action, and war with Rome as a duty imposed upon him. Feeling that he ought not to delay operations, lest some accident should overtake him as in the case of his father and afterwards of Hasdrubal, he decided to attack the Saguntines. As an attack on them would inevitably set the arms of Rome in motion, he began by invading the Olcades, a tribe who were within the boundaries but not under the dominion of Carthage. He wished to make it appear that Saguntum was not his immediate object, but that he was drawn into a war with her by the force of circumstances, by the conquest, that is, of all her neighbors and the annexation of their territory. Cartala, a wealthy city and the capital of the tribe, was taken by storm and sacked; the smaller cities, fearing a similar fate, capitulated and agreed to pay an indemnity. His victorious army enriched with plunder was marched into winter quarters in New Carthage. Here, by a lav-

→ town in Spain



ish distribution of the spoils and the punctual discharge of all arrears of pay, he secured the allegiance of his own people and of the allied contingents.

At the beginning of spring he extended his operations to the Vaccaei, and two of their cities, Arbocala and Hermandica, were taken by assault. Arbocala held out for a considerable time, owing to the courage and numbers of its defenders; the fugitives from Hermandica joined hands with those of the Olcades who had abandoned their country—this tribe had been subjugated the previous year—and together they stirred up the Carpetani to war. Not far from the Tagus an attack was made upon Hannibal as he was returning from his expedition against the Vaccaei, and his army, laden as it was with plunder, was thrown into some confusion. Hannibal declined battle and fixed his camp by the side of the river; as soon as there was quiet and silence amongst the enemy, he forded the stream. His entrenchments had been carried just far enough to allow room for the enemy to cross over, and he decided to attack them during their passage of the river. He instructed his cavalry to wait until they had actually entered the water and then to attack them; his forty elephants he stationed on the bank. The Carpetani together with the contingents of the Olcades and Vaccaei numbered altogether 100,000 men, an irresistible force had they been fighting on level ground. Their innate fearlessness, the confidence inspired by their numbers, their belief that the enemy's retreat was due to fear, all made them look on victory as certain, and the river as the only obstacle to it. Without any word of command having been given, they raised a universal shout and plunged, each man straight in front of him, into the river. A huge force of cavalry descended from the opposite bank, and the two bodies met in mid-stream. The struggle was anything but an equal one. The infantry, feeling their footing insecure, even where the river was fordable, could have been ridden down even by unarmed horsemen, whereas the cavalry, with their bodies and weapons free and their horses steady even in the midst of the current, could fight at close quarters or not, as they chose. A large proportion were swept down the river, some were carried by cross currents to the other side where the enemy were, and were trampled to death by the elephants. Those in the rear thought it safest to return to their own side, and began to collect together as well as their fears allowed them, but before they had time to recover themselves Hannibal entered the river with his infantry in battle order and drove them in flight from the bank. He followed up his victory by laying waste their fields, and in a few days was able to receive the submission of the Carpetani. There was no part of the country beyond the Ebro which did not now belong to the Carthaginians, with the exception of Saguntum.

6. War had not been formally declared against this city, but there were already grounds for war. The seeds of quarrel were being sown amongst her neighbors, especially amongst the Turdetani. When the man who had sown

the seed showed himself ready to aid and abet the quarrel, and his object plainly was not to refer the question to arbitration, but to appeal to force, the Saguntines sent a deputation to Rome to beg for help in a war which was inevitably approaching. The consuls for the time being were P. Cornelius Scipio and Tiberius Sempronius Longus. After introducing the envoys they invited the senate to declare its opinion as to what policy should be adopted. It was decided that commissioners should be sent to Spain to investigate the circumstances, and if they considered it necessary they were to warn Hannibal not to interfere with the Saguntines, who were allies of Rome; then they were to cross over to Africa and lay before the Carthaginian council the complaints which they had made. But before the commission was dispatched news came that the siege of Saguntum had, to every one's surprise, actually commenced. The whole position of affairs required to be reconsidered by the senate; some were for assigning Spain and Africa as separate fields of action for the two consuls, and thought that the war ought to be prosecuted by land and sea; others were for confining the war solely to Hannibal in Spain; others again were of opinion that such an immense task ought not to be entered upon hastily, and that they ought to await the return of the commission from Spain. This latter view seemed the safest and was adopted, and the commissioners, P. Valerius Flaccus and Q. Baebius Tamphilus, were dispatched without further delay to Hannibal. If he refused to abandon hostilities they were to proceed to Carthage to demand the surrender of the general to answer for his breach of treaty.

7. During these proceedings in Rome the siege of Saguntum was being pressed with the utmost vigor. That city was by far the most wealthy of all beyond the Ebro; it was situated about a mile from the sea. It is said to have been founded by settlers from the island of Zacynthus, with an admixture of Rutulians from Ardea. In a short time, however, it had attained to great prosperity, partly through its land and sea-borne commerce, partly through the rapid increase of its population, and also through the maintenance of a high standard of political integrity which led it to act with a loyalty towards its allies that brought about its ruin. After carrying his ravages everywhere throughout the territory, Hannibal attacked the city from three separate points. There was an angle of the fortifications which looked down on a more open and level descent than the rest of the ground surrounding the city, and here he decided to bring up his vineae to allow the battering rams to be placed against the walls. But although the ground to a considerable distance from the walls was sufficiently level to admit of the vineae being brought up, they found when they had succeeded in doing this that they made no progress. A huge tower overlooked the place, and the wall, being here more open to attack, had been carried to a greater height than the rest of the fortifications. As the position was one of especial danger, so the resistance offered

→ large portable  
shelter made  
of wicker/  
twigs



by a picked body of defenders was of the most resolute character. At first they confined themselves to keeping the enemy back by the discharge of missiles and making it impossible for them to continue their operations in safety. As time went on, however, their weapons no longer flashed on the walls or from the tower, they ventured on a sortie and attacked the outposts and siege works of the enemy. In these irregular encounters the Carthaginians lost nearly as many men as the Saguntines. Hannibal himself, approaching the wall somewhat incautiously, fell with a severe wound in his thigh from a javelin, and such was the confusion and dismay that ensued that the vineae and siege works were all but abandoned.

8. For a few days, until the general's wound was healed, there was a blockade rather than an active siege, and during this interval, though there was a respite from fighting, the construction of siege works and approaches went on uninterruptedly. When the fighting was resumed it was fiercer than ever. In spite of the difficulties of the ground the vineae were advanced and the battering rams placed against the walls. The Carthaginians had the superiority in numbers—there were said to have been 150,000 fighting men—whilst the defenders, obliged to keep watch and ward everywhere, were dissipating their strength and finding their numbers unequal to the task. The walls were now being pounded by the rams, and in many places had been shaken down. One part where a continuous fall had taken place laid the city open; three towers in succession, and the whole of the wall between them fell with a tremendous crash. The Carthaginians looked upon the town as already captured after that fall, and both sides rushed through the breach as though the wall had only served to protect them from each other. There was nothing of the desultory fighting which goes on when cities are stormed, as each side gets an opportunity of attacking the other. The two bodies of combatants confronted one another in the space between the ruined wall and the houses of the city in as regular formation as though they had been in an open field. On the one side there was the courage of hope, on the other the courage of despair. The Carthaginians believed that with a little effort on their part the city would be theirs; the Saguntines opposed their bodies as a shield for their fatherland now stripped of its walls; not a man relaxed his foothold for fear of letting an enemy in through the spot which he had left open. So the hotter and closer the fighting became the greater grew the number of wounded, for no missile fell ineffectively amongst the crowded ranks. The missile used by the Saguntines was the phalarica, a javelin with a shaft smooth and round up to the head, which, as in the pilum, was an iron point of square section. The shaft was wrapped in tow and then smeared with pitch; the iron head was three feet long and capable of penetrating armor and body alike. Even if it only stuck in the shield and did not reach the body it was a most formidable weapon, for when it was discharged with the tow set

on fire the flame was fanned to a fiercer heat by its passage through the air, and it forced the soldier to throw away his shield and left him defenseless against the sword thrusts which followed.

9. The conflict had now gone on for a considerable time without any advantage to either side; the courage of the Saguntines was rising as they found themselves keeping up an un hoped-for resistance, whilst the Carthaginians, unable to conquer, were beginning to look upon themselves as defeated. Suddenly the defenders, raising their battle-shout, forced the enemy back to the debris of the ruined wall; there, stumbling and in disorder, they were forced still further back and finally driven in rout and flight to their camp. Meantime it was announced that envoys had arrived from Rome. Hannibal sent messengers down to the harbor to meet them and inform them that it would be unsafe for them to advance any further through so many wild tribes now in arms, and also that Hannibal in the present critical position of affairs had no time to receive embassies. It was quite certain that if they were not admitted they would go to Carthage. He therefore forestalled them by sending messengers with a letter addressed to the heads of the Barcine party, to warn his supporters and prevent the other side from making any concessions to Rome.

10. The result was that, beyond being received and heard by the Carthaginian senate, the embassy found its mission a failure. Hanno alone, against the whole senate, spoke in favor of observing the treaty, and his speech was listened to in silence out of respect to his personal authority, not because his hearers approved of his sentiments. He appealed to them in the name of the gods, who are the witnesses and arbiters of treaties, not to provoke a war with Rome in addition to the one with Saguntum. "I urged you," he said, "and warned you not to send Hamilcar's son to the army. That man's spirit, that man's offspring cannot rest; as long as any single representative of the blood and name of Barca survives our treaty with Rome will never remain unimperilled. You have sent to the army, as though supplying fuel to the fire, a young man who is consumed with a passion for sovereign power, and who recognizes that the only way to it lies in passing his life surrounded by armed legions and perpetually stirring up fresh wars. It is you, therefore, who have fed this fire which is now scorching you. Your armies are investing Saguntum, which by the terms of the treaty they are forbidden to approach; before long the legions of Rome will invest Carthage, led by the same generals under the same divine guidance under which they avenged our breach of treaty obligations in the late war. Are you strangers to the enemy, to yourselves, to the fortunes of each nation? That worthy commander of yours refused to allow ambassadors who came from allies, on behalf of allies, to enter his camp, and set at naught the law of nations. Those men, repulsed from a place to which even an enemy's envoys are not refused access, have



come to us; they ask for the satisfaction which the treaty prescribes; they demand the surrender of the guilty party in order that the State may clear itself from all taint of guilt. The slower they are to take action, the longer they are in commencing war, so much the more persistence and determination, I fear, will they show when war has begun. Remember the Aegates and Eryx, and all you had to go through for four-and-twenty years. This boy was not commanding then, but his father, Hamilcar—a second Mars as his friends would have us believe. But we broke the treaty then as we are breaking it now; we did not keep our hands off Tarentum or, which is the same thing, off Italy then any more than we are keeping our hands off Saguntum now, and so gods and men combined to defeat us, and the question in dispute, namely, which nation had broken the treaty, was settled by the issue of the war, which, like an impartial judge, left the victory on the side which was in the right. It is against Carthage that Hannibal is now bringing up his vineae and towers, it is Carthage whose walls he is shaking with his battering rams. The ruins of Saguntum—would that I might prove a false prophet—will fall on our heads, and the war which was begun with Saguntum will have to be carried on with Rome.

“‘Shall we then surrender Hannibal?’ some one will say. I am quite aware that as regards him my advice will have little weight, owing to my differences with his father, but whilst I was glad to hear of Hamilcar’s death, for if he were alive we should already be involved in war with Rome, I feel nothing but loathing and detestation for this youth, the mad firebrand who is kindling this war. Not only do I hold that he ought to be surrendered as an atonement for the broken treaty, but even if no demand for his surrender were made I consider that he ought to be deported to the farthest corner of the earth, exiled to some spot from which no tidings of him, no mention of his name, could reach us, and where it would be impossible for him to disturb the welfare and tranquillity of our State. This then is what I propose: ‘That a commission be at once dispatched to Rome to inform the senate of our compliance with their demands, and a second to Hannibal ordering him to withdraw his army from Saguntum and then surrendering him to the Romans in accordance with the terms of the treaty, and I also propose that a third body of commissioners be sent to make reparation to the Saguntines.’”

II. When Hanno sat down no one deemed it necessary to make any reply, so completely was the senate, as a body, on the side of Hannibal. They accused Hanno of speaking in a tone of more uncompromising hostility than Flaccus Valerius, the Roman envoy, had assumed. The reply which it was decided to make to the Roman demands was that the war was started by the Saguntines not by Hannibal, and that the Roman people would commit an act of injustice if they took the part of the Saguntines against their ancient allies, the Carthaginians. [Whilst the Romans were wasting time in dispatch-