

CHAPTER XII.

FOREIGN CONQUEST.

ROME AND CARTHAGE.—FIRST PUNIC WAR. (264-241.)¹¹

While Rome was gradually enlarging her territory from Latium to the Straits of Messána, on the other shore of the Mediterranean, opposite Italy and less than one hundred miles from Sicily, sprang up, through industry and commerce, the Carthaginian power.

Like Rome, Carthage had an obscure beginning. As in the case of Rome, it required centuries to gain her power.

It was the policy of Carthage to make a successful revolt of her subdued allies an impossibility, by consuming all their energies in the support of her immense population and the equipment of her numerous fleets and armies. Hence all the surrounding tribes, once wandering nomads, were forced to become tillers of the soil; and, with colonies sent out by herself, they formed the so called Libyo-Phoenician population, open to the attack of all, and incapable of defence. Thus the country around Carthage was weak, and the moment a foreign enemy landed in Africa the war was merely a siege of its chief city.

The power of Carthage lay in her commerce. Through her hands passed the gold and pearls of the Orient; the famous Tyrian purple; ivory, slaves, and incense of Arabia; the silver of Spain; the bronze of Cyprus; and the iron of Elba.

¹¹ The word "Punic" is derived from *Phoenici*. The Carthaginians were said to have come originally from PHOENICIA, on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. Their first ruler was Dido. The Latin student is of course familiar with Virgil's story of Dido and Aeneas.

But the harsh and gloomy character of the people, their cruel religion, which sanctioned human sacrifice, their disregard of the rights of others, their well known treachery, all shut them off from the higher civilization of Rome and Greece.

The government of Carthage was an ARISTOCRACY. A council composed of a few of high birth, and another composed of the very wealthy, managed the state. Only in times of extraordinary danger were the people summoned and consulted.

Rome had made two treaties with Carthage; one immediately after the establishment of the Republic, in 500, the other about 340. By these treaties commerce was allowed between Rome and its dependencies and Carthage and her possessions in Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. But the Romans were not to trade in Spain, or sail beyond the Bay of Carthage.

In leaving Sicily, Pyrrhus had exclaimed, "What a fine battle-field for Rome and Carthage!" If Carthage were mistress of this island, Rome would be shut up in her peninsula; if Rome were in possession of it, "the commerce of Carthage would be intercepted, and a good breeze of one night would carry the Roman fleets to her walls".

At this time the island was shared by three powers,—HIERO, king of Syracuse, the CARTHAGINIANS, and the MAMERTINES, a band of brigands who came from Campania. The latter, making Messána their headquarters, had been pillaging all of the island that they could reach. Being shut up in Messána by Hiero, they asked aid of Rome on the ground that they were from Campania. Although Rome was in alliance with Hiero, and had but recently executed 300 mercenaries for doing in Rhegium what the Mamertines had done in Sicily,—she determined to aid them, for Sicily was a rich and tempting prey.

Meanwhile, however, through the intervention of the Carthaginians, a truce had been formed between Hiero and the brigands, and the siege of Messána was raised. The city itself was occupied by a fleet and garrison of Carthaginians under HANNO, The Romans, though the Mamertines no longer needed their aid, landed at Messána and dislodged the Carthaginians,

Thus opened the FIRST PUNIC WAR. The Romans at once formed a double alliance with Syracuse and Messána, thus gaining

control of the eastern coast of Sicily and getting their first foothold outside of Italy.

The most important inland city of Sicily was AGRIGENTUM. Here the Carthaginians the next year (262) concentrated their forces under HANNIBAL, son of Cisco. The Romans besieged the city, but were themselves cut off from supplies by Hanno, who landed at Heracléa in their rear. Both besieged and besiegers suffered much. At last a battle was fought (262), in which the Romans were victorious, owing to their superior infantry. Agrigentum fell, and only a few strongholds on the coast were left to the Carthaginians.

The Romans now began to feel the need of a fleet. That of Carthage ruled the sea without a rival: it not only controlled many of the seaports of Sicily, but also threatened Italy itself. With their usual energy, the Romans began the work.¹² A wrecked Carthaginian vessel was taken as a model, and by the spring of 260 a navy of 120 sail was ready for sea.

The ships were made the more formidable by a heavy iron beak, for the purpose of running down and sinking the enemy's vessels; a kind of hanging stage was also placed on the prow of the ship, which could be lowered in front or on either side. It was furnished on both sides with parapets, and had space for two men in front. On coming to close quarters with the enemy, this stage was quickly lowered and fastened to the opposing ship by means of grappling irons; thus the Roman marines were enabled to board with ease their opponents' ship, and fight as if on land.

Four naval battles now followed: 1st, near LIPARA (260); 2d, off MYLAE (260); 3d, off TYNDARIS (257); 4th, off ECNOMUS (256).

In the first of these only seventeen ships of the Romans were engaged under the CONSUL GNAEUS CORNELIUS SCIPIO. The fleet with its commander was captured.

In the second engagement, off Mylae, all the Roman fleet under GAIUS DUILIUS took part. The Carthaginians were led by Hannibal, son of Gisco. The newly invented stages or boarding-bridges of the Romans were found to be very effective. The enemy could not approach near without these bridges descending with

¹² In 259, three years previous to the battle of Ecnomus, the Romans under Lucius Scipio captured Blesia, a seaport of Corsica, and established there a naval station.

their grappling irons and holding them fast to the Romans. The Carthaginians were defeated, with the loss of nearly half their fleet.

A bronze column, ornamented with the beaks of the captured vessels, was erected at Rome in honor of this victory of Duilius. The pedestal of it is still standing, and on it are inscribed some of the oldest inscriptions in the Latin language.

The third engagement, off Tyndaris, resulted in a drawn battle.

In the fourth engagement, off Ecnomus, the Carthaginians had 350 sail. Thirty Carthaginian and twenty-four Roman vessels were sunk, and sixty-four of the former captured. The Punic fleet withdrew to the coast of Africa, and prepared in the Bay of Carthage for another battle. But the Romans sailed to the eastern side of the peninsula which helps to form the bay, and there landed without opposition.

MARCUS ATILIUS REGULUS was put in command of the Roman forces in Africa. For a time he was very successful, and the Carthaginians became disheartened. Many of the towns near Carthage surrendered, and the capital itself was in danger. Peace was asked, but the terms offered were too humiliating to be accepted.

Regulus, who began to despise his opponents, remained inactive at Tunis, near Carthage, neglecting even to secure a line of retreat to his fortified camp at Clupea. The next spring (255) he was surprised, his army cut to pieces, and he himself taken prisoner. He subsequently died a captive at Carthage.

The Romans, learning of this defeat, sent a fleet of 350 sail to relieve their comrades who were shut up in Clupea. While on its way, it gained a victory over the Carthaginian fleet off the Herméan promontory, sinking 114 of the enemy's ships.

It arrived at Clupea in time to save its friends. The war in Africa was now abandoned. The fleet, setting sail for home, was partly destroyed in a storm, only eighty ships reaching port.

Hostilities continued for six years without any great results. Panormus was taken in 254; the coast of Africa ravaged in 253; Thermae and the island of Lipara were taken in 252, and Eryx in 249.

DREPANA and LILYBAEUM were now the only places in Sicily, held by Carthage. A regular siege of Lilybaeum was decided

upon, and the city was blockaded by land and sea; but the besieging party suffered as much as the besieged, its supplies were frequently cut off by the cavalry of the Carthaginians, and its ranks began to be thinned by disease.

The Consul, Publius Claudius, who had charge of the siege, determined to surprise the Carthaginian fleet, which was stationed at Drepana (249). He was unsuccessful, and lost three fourths of his vessels. Another fleet of 120 sail sent to aid him was wrecked in a violent storm.

The Romans were now in perplexity. The war had lasted fifteen years. Four fleets had been lost, and one sixth of the fighting population. They had failed in Africa, and the two strongest places in Sicily were still in the enemy's hands. For six years more the war dragged on (249-243).

A new Carthaginian commander, HAMILCAR BARCA (Lightning), meanwhile took the field in Sicily. He was a man of great activity and military talent, and the Romans at first were no match for him. He seemed in a fair way to regain all Sicily. The apathy of the Senate was so great, that at last some private citizens built and manned at their own expense a fleet of 200 sail.

GAIUS LUTATIUS CATALUS, the Consul in command, surprised the enemy and occupied the harbors of Drepana and Lilybaeum in 242. A Carthaginian fleet which came to the rescue was met and destroyed off the AEGÁTES INSULAE in 241. Hamilcar was left in Sicily without support and supplies. He saw that peace must be made.

Sicily was surrendered. Carthage agreed to pay the cost of the war,—about \$3,000,000,—one third down, and the remainder in ten annual payments. Thus ended the First Punic War.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROME AND CARTHAGE BETWEEN THE FIRST AND SECOND PUNIC WARS (241-218).

Twenty-three years elapsed between the First and Second Punic Wars. The Carthaginians were engaged during the first part of this time in crushing a mutiny of their mercenary troops.

Rome, taking advantage of the position in which her rival was placed, seized upon SARDINIA and CORSICA, and, when Carthage objected, threatened to renew the war, and obliged her to pay more than one million dollars as a fine (237).

The acquisition of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica introduced into the government of Rome a new system; viz. the PROVINCIAL SYSTEM.

Heretofore the two chief magistrates of Rome, the Consuls, had exercised their functions over all the Roman possessions. Now Sicily was made what the Romans called a *provincia*, or PROVINCE. Sardinia and Corsica formed another province (235).

Over each province was placed a Roman governor, called Proconsul. For this purpose two new Praetors were now elected, making four in all. The power of the governor was absolute; he was commander in chief, chief magistrate, and supreme judge.

The finances of the provinces were intrusted to one or more QUAESTORS. All the inhabitants paid as taxes into the Roman treasury one tenth of their produce, and five per cent of the value of their imports and exports. They were not obliged to furnish troops, as were the dependants of Rome in Italy.

The provincial government was a fruitful source of corruption. As the morals of the Romans degenerated, the provinces were

plundered without mercy to enrich the coffers of the avaricious governors.

The Adriatic Sea at this time was overrun by Illyrican pirates, who did much damage. Satisfaction was demanded by Rome of Illyricum, but to no purpose. As a last resort, war was declared, and the sea was cleared of the pirates in 229.

"The results of this Illyrican war did not end here, for it was the means of establishing, for the first time, direct political relations between Rome and the states of Greece, to many of which the suppression of piracy was of as much importance as to Rome herself. Alliances were concluded with CORCÝRA, EPIDAMNUS, and APOLLONIA; and embassies explaining the reasons which had brought Roman troops into Greece were sent to the Aetolians and Achaeans, to Athens and Corinth. The admission of the Romans to the Isthmian Games in 228 formally acknowledged them as the allies of the Greek states."

The Romans now began to look with hungry eyes upon GALLIA CISALPÍNA. The appetite for conquest was well whetted. There had been peace with the Gauls since the battle of Lake Vadimónis in 283. The *ager publicus*, taken from the Gauls then, was still mostly unoccupied. In 232 the Tribune Gaius Flaminius¹³ carried an agrarian law, to the effect that this land be given to the veterans and the poorer classes. The law was executed, and colonies planted. To the Gauls this seemed but the first step to the occupation of the whole of their country. They all rose in arms except the Cenománi.

This contest continued for ten years, and in 225 Etruria was invaded by an army of 70,000 men. The plans of the invaders, however, miscarried, and they were hemmed in between two Roman armies near TELAMON in 222, and annihilated. The Gallic king was slain at the hands of the Consul MARCUS CLAUDIUS MARCELLUS. PAGE 61 Rome was now mistress of the whole peninsula of Italy, excepting some tribes in Liguria, who resisted a short time longer.

Three *military* (Latin) colonies were founded to hold the Gauls in check; PLACENTIA and CREMÓNA in the territory of the

13 Gaius Flaminius, by his agrarian laws gained the bitter hatred of the nobility. He was the first Governor of Sicily, and there showed himself to be a man of integrity and honesty, a great contrast to many who succeeded him.

Insubres, and MUTINA in that of the Boii. The *Via Flaminia*, the great northern road, was extended from SPOLETIUM to ARIMINUM.¹⁴

Meanwhile Carthage was not idle. After subduing the revolt of the mercenaries in 237, she formed the project of obtaining SPAIN as compensation for the loss of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. Hamilcar Barca, by energetic measures, established (236-228) a firm foothold in Southern and Southeastern Spain.

At his death, his son-in-law, Hasdrubal, continued his work. Many towns were founded, trade prospered, and agriculture flourished. The discovery of rich silver mines near Carthago Nova was a means of enriching the treasury. After the assassination of Hasdrubal, in 220, the ablest leader was Hannibal, son of Hamilcar. Although a young man of but twenty-eight, he had had a life of varied experience. As a boy he had shown great courage and ability in camp under his father. He was a fine athlete, well educated in the duties of a soldier, and could endure long privation of sleep and food. For the last few years he had been in command of the cavalry, and had distinguished himself for personal bravery, as well as by his talents as a leader.

Hannibal resolved to begin the inevitable struggle with Rome at once. He therefore laid siege to Saguntum, a Spanish town allied to Rome. In eight months the place was compelled to capitulate (219).

When Rome demanded satisfaction of Carthage for this insult, and declared herself ready for war, the Carthaginians accepted the challenge, and the Second Punic War began in 218.

14 During this period the *Comitia Centuriata* was reorganized on the basis of tribes (35) instead of money.