



THE WAR WITH HANNIBAL

ADVISORY EDITOR: BETTY RADICE

TITUS LIVIUS was born in 59 BC at Patavium (Padua) but later moved to Rome. He lived in an eventful age but little is known about his life, which seems to have been occupied exclusively in literary work. When he was aged about thirty he began to write his *History of Rome*, consisting of 142 books of which thirty-five survive. He continued working on it for over forty years until his death in AD 17.

AUBREY DE SÉLINCOURT, scholar and translator, translated Livy's *The Early History of Rome* (Books I–V) and *The War With Hannibal* (Books [XXI–XXX](#)), *The Histories* of Herodotus and *The Campaigns of Alexander* by Arrian, all for the Penguin Classics. He was born in 1896 and educated at Rugby, and University College, Oxford. A schoolmaster of genius for twenty-six years, he retired in 1947 to the Isle of Wight where he lived until his death in 1962.

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LIVY

THE WAR WITH HANNIBAL

Books XXI–XXX of
The History of Rome from its Foundation

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Translated by
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Edited with an Introduction by
BETTY RADICE

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INTRODUCTION

*Put Hannibal in the scales: how many pounds will that peerless
General mark up today? This is the man for whom Africa
Was too small a continent, though it stretched from the surf-beaten
Ocean shores of Morocco east to the steamy Nile
To tribal Ethiopia, and new elephants' habitats.
Now Spain swells his empire, now he surmounts
The Pyrenees. Nature sets in his path
High Alpine passes, blizzards of snow: but he splits
The very rocks asunder, moves mountains with vinegar.
Now Italy is his, yet still he forces on:
'We have accomplished nothing,' he cries, 'till we have stormed
The gates of Rome, till our Carthaginian standard
Is set in the City's heart.' A fine sight it must have been,
Fit subject for caricature – the one-eyed commander
Perched on his monstrous beast! Alas, alas for glory,
What an end was here: the defeat, the ignominious
Headlong flight into exile, everyone gawping at
The once-mighty Hannibal turned humble hanger-on,
Sitting outside the door of a petty Eastern despot
Till His Majesty deign to wake. No sword, no spear,
No battle-flung stone was to snuff the fiery spirit
That once had wrecked a world: those crushing defeats,
Those rivers of spilt blood were all wiped out by a
Ring, a poisoned ring. On, on, you madman, drive
Over your savage Alps, to thrill young schoolboys
And supply a theme for speech-day recitations!*

Juvenal, *Satire X*, lines 147–67

(TRANSLATED BY PETER GREEN)

All military commanders who have been masters of strategy and great leaders of men have left their legends to inspire or to intimidate later generations, and something unforgettable about Hannibal could fire the imagination of the Romans whenever they thought of their historic past. Even Juvenal, an embittered satirist writing on the vanity of human wishes, cannot stifle a grudging admiration for the enemy at the gates of Rome three centuries before his own day.

Hannibal ad portas became part of the tradition as a nursery threat or a rallying-cry, much as Boney's name was used in nineteenth-century homes and survives in sea-shanties. For a comparable episode in English history which retains its power to stir public sentiment, we must go back to the defeat of the Spanish Armada, though those of us who remember the

years 1939–45 can surely recognize the moment when a Hannibal stood at our gates and there seemed nothing to hold him but the obstinacy of the people's refusal to accept defeat.

Ten books out of Livy's *History of Rome* were devoted to the seventeen years of the second war between Rome and Carthage, and these ten have come down to us practically intact among the thirty-five survivors of the original 142. Livy's plan for the whole grouped the books in fives,¹ and we are fortunate in having these two groups which form a single unit. The first five (Books [xxi](#)–[xxv](#)) cover the rising tide of Carthaginian successes, and the Roman disasters of the Ticinus, Trebia, Lake Trasimene, and Cannae, culminating in a crippling defeat for the Roman armies in Spain. Then the tide turns, Rome takes the initiative, and [Book xxx](#) ends with the victory over Hannibal at Zama.

Livy was born at Patavium (Padua) in 59 B.C., moved to Rome and started on his history about the age of thirty, and continued to work on it for over forty years until his death in A.D.17. Little is known of his life; like Virgil and Horace he was inspired by deep patriotic feeling and gratitude to Augustus for the security he enjoyed after the civil wars. Tacitus (*Annals* IV: 34) says he was friendly with Augustus, who appreciated his objectivity as well as his eloquence, and Suetonius (*Claudius* 41) mentions how he encouraged the Emperor Claudius in his own attempts to write a History of Rome. Quintilian more than once quotes the gibe of Livy's contemporary, the critic Asinius Pollio, about his *patavinitas*, his provincialism (*Instit Orat.* I: 5, 56; VIII 1, 3). This refers probably to the north-Italian accent and idiom which offended the Roman purist, though it may also indicate a certain lack of sophistication and a simplicity of judgement. But Pliny's story of the Spaniard who came to Rome only to have one look at Livy (*Letters* II: 3) suggests that he was well known in the capital as a literary figure. His position as a writer was soon firmly established; by Martial's day the History existed in 'potted' as well as in its complete form (*Epigrams* XIV: 190), and Livy was the main source used by Silius Italicus for his mammoth epic on the second Punic war. A book of Livy kept Pliny reading at Misenum instead of going to see the eruption of Vesuvius – a fact which has provoked incredulous comment in classrooms ever since.

It was presumably from the use of Livy in the schools that the teachers of rhetoric quoted by Juvenal chose Hannibal as a stock subject for debate: the pupil must discuss 'whether Hannibal should make straight for the City from the field of Cannae or play safe after the rain and thunder and lead around his cohorts, all dripping after the storm' (Juvenal *Sat.* VII: 161). Elsewhere Juvenal compares the pampered ladies of his times with the women whose hands were hardened with spinning wool when 'Hannibal was near the City and their husbands stood to arms at the Colline Gate' (*Sat.* VI: 290); and his famous denunciation of military ambition quoted above is his answer to Livy's emotional patriotism.

Along with Plutarch (who was himself indebted to Livy), Seneca, and Cicero, Livy was an inspiration to the European scholars who welcomed the humanism of the classical world. The dramatic episode of the gold rings taken from the dead after Cannae was something Dante remembered from '*Livio.. che non erra*' (quoted on p. [180](#)). The names of Livy's heroes, including that of Hannibal himself, appear among the classical references in Petrarch's *Sonnet* (see especially [103](#), [104](#), and [186](#)), and Petrarch always hoped to discover some of the lost books of Livy; one of his Latin letters to the illustrious dead is addressed to Livy to tell him so. Less happily, he wrote a Latin epic (*Africa*) on Scipio Africanus. By the middle of the

sixteenth century Livy was translated into French, Italian, Spanish, and German; Philemon Holland's celebrated English version appeared in 1600. Montaigne, as one would expect, found a wealth of material in Roman history to illustrate his arguments, and though he says more than once that his favourite authors are Plutarch and Seneca, he quotes Livy on the Punic wars as well as on the early legends of Rome. The complex characters of both Scipio and Hannibal interest him, and on the latter he quotes Livy with Petrarch and Silius Italicus. Livy's imaginative descriptions of certain episodes in the war are reproduced almost as Livy wrote them: the bitterly cold weather at the time of the battle of the Trebia, and Hannibal's measures to lessen its effects on his men, and the grim scene of the dead at Cannae who had buried their heads in the earth to end their sufferings, (pp. 81 and 151).¹

The romantic episode of Sophonisba's marriage and death ([Book xxx](#)) provided a subject for one of the earliest Italian renaissance tragedies (Trissino's *Sofonisba*, 1515) and later for several playwrights during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, among them Corneille, Nathaniel Lee, and James Thomson.² Political writers as far removed in time and thought as Machiavelli and Montesquieu have found illustrations for their arguments in *The History of Rome. Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* was published in 1513 as a preliminary to *The Prince*; while Montesquieu wrote against the tyranny of princes, and Livy's early books were the basis of *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* which he wrote in 1734. Later on Rousseau made his own translation of speeches selected from Livy, and these were used, with Cicero and Plutarch, as models by the idealist speakers in the French Revolution, who found inspiration in the history of the republics of Greece and Rome.

In this country Livy has always been read in the schools and still is, though his difficulties of style have not always endeared him to the young. For the nineteenth-century reformists his heroes must have embodied all the virtues of their public school ideal – patriotism, public spirit, dignity, and self-control. These are not amongst the more popular virtues today but Livy remains a great writer whose themes can still appeal; if proof is needed it lies in the success of an excellent popular book on Hannibal,¹ published in 1960 and inspired by a rereading of Dr Arnold of Rugby's *The Second Punic War*.

As a historian Livy has never ranked high since Niebuhr drew the distinction between first and second-hand information; it has long been accepted that a historian writing long after the events he describes cannot be taken at his face value, but every effort must be made to penetrate through his statements to his sources. For Livy's early history this is practically impossible. It is scarcely credible now that Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* were intended to be read as a reconstruction of the ballad-sources which Macaulay believed the 'man of fine imagination' drew upon,² though the *Lays* themselves remain a supreme example of a fine imagination at work and can never lose their appeal for anyone who enjoys a stirring poem. But for his account of the war with Hannibal, Livy could have used good first-hand sources. There were the records of senatorial decrees, kept in the Treasury, and the *annales maximi*, the annual records of state elections, ceremonies, festivals, portents, visits of ambassadors, and the like, gathered into eighty books by Publius Mucius Scaevola in 115 B.C. from the lists put up each year by the *pontifex maximus*. There is, however, no evidence that Livy ever consulted them. He preferred to follow the later annalists such as Claudius Quadrigarius and Valerius Antias, cited eight times in Books [xxv](#)–[xxx](#); Coelius Antipater, author of a monograph

on the Second War; Quintus Fabius Pictor, senator and historian who took an active part in the war himself (see pp. [101](#) and [157](#)) and wrote a history of Rome in Greek; and above all, the Greek historian Polybius, whose *Universal History* in forty books starts with the war with Hannibal. Polybius was born about 203 B.C. and died in 120, and he must have spoken to people who took part in the war. He had had political and military experience in Greece and moved in the cultured circle surrounding the Scipios in Rome. He was widely travelled and observant, and luckily for us, that part of his history which Livy follows closely for the second half of the war has survived in great part for comparison.

Livy is only following the general practice of ancient historians when he does not cite his authorities except where they conflict. But he can reasonably be charged with an unscientific approach to them and a sad lack of ability to judge their relative merits. On p. 62 he quotes varying estimates of the size of Hannibal's army, including that of Polybius who had actually seen the figures on the temple of Juno near Croton, but Livy does not refer to this nor imply that Polybius's total is most likely to be reliable.¹ He also has an irritating trick of following one source almost to the end of an episode and then casting doubt on it by mentioning alternative possibilities; the scientific approach would be to evaluate the sources first. This makes for great confusion in the chronology of the campaigns in Spain: for example, in his account of the siege of Saguntum Livy apparently follows Coelius Antipater and only afterwards (p. [38](#)) states that there is a conflicting version of the date – in fact that of Polybius, though he is not named. Again, on p. 465 Livy says that Coelius alone has three different accounts of the death of Marcellus: but Livy himself does not feel he might try to choose between them. And it is tantalizing to be told that the words of a poem by Livius Andronicus 'were no doubt good enough for those rude and uncultivated days, but were I to quote them now they would sound unpleasing and graceless.' (p. 479.)

The annalistic method of approach determines the structure of Livy's history; every year has its elections, prodigies observed, disposal of the armed forces, and the events in each sphere – Italy, Spain, Greece, and North Africa. This is not always the clearest way of setting out a logical sequence of events; the reader sometimes feels as though he were reading a serial novel by Dickens, where several groups of characters all have to have their quota in each new instalment, and he must keep turning back to remind himself how things stood. Sometimes we cannot see the wood for the trees, and wonder if Livy himself grasped clearly that the endless marchings to and fro in central Italy after Cannae were part of a deliberate policy of Hannibal's to wear down the Romans by detaching the Italian cities, instead of risking a naval defeat by having troops sent over from Carthage: meanwhile the home government was to pursue the war actively in Spain, Sardinia, Sicily, and the Dlyrian coast through the alliance with Philip V of Macedon. (In this Hannibal miscalculated the temper of the Italian cities – some were won over, but most saw little advantage in exchanging allegiance to Rome, however unwilling, for submission to a Semitic intruder. But it took many years of Fabian tactics followed by Scipionic strategy for this policy to be defeated.)

Again, in his annual records of elections Livy never says explicitly that the appointment of a dictator with military authority and of a master of Horse lapsed after Cannae, as a direct result of the impossible situation before the battle when Minucius Rufus, as master of Horse claimed equal powers with the dictator. Henceforth a dictator was appointed only for special

work as censor to hold elections, and the office was abolished in 200. A historian with a firmer grasp of historical trends would also have pointed out the effects of the war on constitutional practice; since the popular assemblies were too clumsy and infrequent for urgent decisions, the power of the tribune became less effective and the Senate ruled as a supreme war council – an oligarchy based on its prestige, then at its highest. As the statutory five praetors and two consuls were not enough for all the necessary commands, the constitutional interval between offices was dropped and commands could also be retained by a proconsul or propraeor. So Fabius Maximus was consul in 215, 214, and 209, and Marcellus commanded continuously in Sicily from 214 to 211. Scipio went out to Spain in 211 as a *privatus cum imperio*, and retained his command until 201. Nowhere does Livy say there was anything extraordinary in these deviations from the normal.

Nor is Livy a military historian; the tactics described in his battle scenes are rarely clear, and obviously not intended for a specialist reader. On p. 641 Mago is defeated somewhere ‘in Insubrian Gaul’ in a battle which suspiciously resembles an engagement in Spain described on pp. 498 ff. The site is never made clear; what interests Livy is the parley between the Roman leaders on the eve of battle and the dramatic entry of Mago’s elephants. His confused topography is notorious. On p. 569 Hippo Regius is cited in error for Hippo Diarrhytus, and on p. 514 a battle in Spain takes place between forces said earlier to be stationed more than a hundred miles apart. The route followed by Hannibal in his crossing of the Alps is still as fruitful a topic of debate as it was in Juvenal’s day.¹ Here, however, I think we must be careful not to criticize Livy unfairly as an ‘armchair historian’. Polybius claims to have crossed the Alps by Hannibal’s route, but his description is no clearer than Livy’s: and he has less justification.² Polybius of course travelled widely, first on state and military missions, and then under the patronage of Scipio Aemilianus. Livy on the other hand is the only Roman historian who never held any office of state which would take him abroad or enable him to move freely inside Italy. He knows Rome, and the river Po near his native Padua (p. 73) but the Romans did not travel for the mere pleasure of sightseeing, and Livy’s youth was spent in an Italy torn by civil war. Trevelyan’s dictum that the historian needs better boots rather than better books would have been incomprehensible to him.

Livy’s aim in writing his history is clearly stated in his preface to the first book. He wishes to make a worthy contribution to the task of ‘putting on record the story of the greatest nation in the world’. Later on he emphasizes his moral purpose. ‘The study of history is the best medicine for a sick mind; for in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experience plainly set out for all to see: and in that record you can find for yourself and your country both examples and warnings: fine things to take as models, base things, rotten through and through, to avoid. I hope my passion for Rome’s past has not impaired my judgement; for I do honestly believe that no country has ever been greater and purer than ours or richer in good citizens and noble deeds; none has been free for so many generations from the vices of avarice and luxury; nowhere have thrift and plain living been for so long held in such esteem. Indeed, poverty with us went hand in hand with contentment. Of late years wealth has made us greedy, and self-indulgence has brought us, through every form of sensual excess, to be, if I may so put it, in love with death both individual and collective.’¹

Like Horace and Virgil he looks to the past for the moral standards which he found lacking

in Augustan Rome; 'I shall find antiquity a rewarding study, if only because, while I am absorbed in it, I shall be able to turn my eyes from the troubles which for so long have tormented the modern world...' This is his escape from the sophistication of the capital which Ovid and Propertius knew and loved; and in his country's triumph over Carthage he must have seen her finest hour. The defeat at Cannae left Rome 'without a force in the field, without a commander, without a single soldier, Apulia and Samnium in Hannibal's hands, and now nearly the whole of Italy overrun. No other nation in the world could have suffered so tremendous a series of disasters, and not been overwhelmed' (p. 154). This is written from the heart with a right and proper pride. It was not so much superior generalship which won the war as the stubborn determination of Romans and loyal allied Italians, fighting together with confidence in their constitution and hopes for the future.

Paradoxically, Livy's sense of the dramatic leads him sometimes to talk loosely of 'all the Italians' going over to Hannibal. In fact, only the Bruttians were Hannibal's allies from the start, in hope of plundering the Greek cities in their midst; but Rhegium was always loyal to Rome, and Petelia was only brought over after an eleven-month siege (p. 204). Hannibal had been disappointed in the Cisalpine Gauls, and Mago had only lukewarm Gallic support in 209 (p. 572). And against the list of defections after Cannae must be set the fact that Hannibal failed to win over the Latins; Latin prisoners were liberated without ransom after Hannibal's victory at Lake Trasimene (p. 101) and he tried in vain to induce the citizens of Nuceria to join his army (p. 184). Yet after nine years' fighting only twelve of the thirty Latin colonies refused further help to Rome, and their punishment was simply to be ignored. 'They were punished by silence – a silence which was felt to be most in accord with the dignity of Rome' (p. 440). Five years later their position was brought up again in the Senate and the towns duly taxed to make up their arrears in money and men. By contrast, seven towns in Etruria voluntarily contributed equipment for Scipio's expedition to Sicily and Africa in 205 (p. 562).

The next century was to see Italian hopes belied, the decay of the small Italian farmer and the drift to the towns, the emergence of a Roman plutocracy, and the growing dissatisfaction of the Italians with their burdens of taxation and military service. Livy himself was only one generation removed from the cruel war in which Italian 'allies' fought to gain full political equality with Roman citizens, and his romantic patriotism, coupled with his political conservatism, naturally led to nostalgia for a time when Romans and Italians were truly united in a common cause.

Impartiality is rare in a historian of strong feeling, and Livy's admiration for his ideal Roman-Italian type has led one critic at least to declare roundly that 'his main fault is a too uncritical patriotism.'¹ He is not particularly interested in racial types – he has neither Herodotus's lively curiosity for human vagaries nor Tacitus's ability to investigate a primitive people. The Celtic temperament of the Gauls for him is always unreliable and deficient in stamina, the Carthaginians are treacherous, the Numidians amorous and the Campanians proud and sybaritic. Nor can he see, as Thucydides and Sallust did, that war in itself corrupts, that reprisals follow atrocities, and that ultimately neither combatant can be free from guilt. He is unwilling to censure any Roman leader, even for brutality like that of Marcellus in Sicily; he concludes a harrowing description of the appalling massacre at Henna with what reads like a conscious parrying of criticism: 'Thus Henna was held – by a criminal act or a

necessary one, call it what you will' (p. 279). Pleminius may be condemned for the Roman atrocities at Locri (p. 588), but Scipio is exonerated from blame although he leaves Pleminius in command (p. 596). Masinissa is another of Livy's heroes, all that a noble ally should be: Livy treats him tenderly over the affair with Sophonisba, and produces a remarkable argument in justification of his desertion from Carthage in 207: 'The reason for his sudden change of sides was not, at the time, entirely clear; but that he had acted, even then, on reasonable grounds, was proved later by his unswerving loyalty to Rome down to his extreme old age' (p. 519).

Livy is in fact a romantic historian. He sees the war with Carthage largely as a conflict of personalities – on the one side his Roman heroes, on the other Hannibal. It could even be argued that Hannibal is the true romantic hero. Certainly he dominates the stage from first to last, and no one on the Carthaginian side approaches him in stature; we watch him pitting his resources against one Roman commander after another, Sempronius at the Trebia, Flaminius at Lake Trasimene, Paullus at Cannae, Marcellus at Nola – until the young Scipio is ready to meet him in the field at Zama. At one point (p. 512) Livy pays high tribute to his personal magnetism, and one cannot help feeling that he was fascinated by the personality of this alien, un-Roman figure, his country's arch enemy who was possessed of qualities which the sober historian is impelled to admire. So perhaps may Virgil in the later books of the Aeneid have found himself making Turnus a more compelling romantic personality than his true hero Aeneas.

But Livy's highest conscious admiration is for Scipio – like Aeneas, the *fatalis dux*, the man destined to command from the moment of his passionate outburst among the survivors of Cannae (p. 153). Five years later he offered himself for the command in Spain after the disaster in which both his father and his uncle had been killed. He was then twenty-four, and from then on the issue of the war and the fate of Hannibal were in his hands. As we follow his fortunes in Spain, Sicily, and Africa, we are held by the spell of his personal charm, which could captivate 'not only the barbaric Syphax... but even his bitterest enemy Hasdrubal' (p. 521), make the volatile Numidian Masinissa his devoted follower, quell mutinous troops, and compel a reluctant Senate of older men to let him carry out his bold strategy of taking the war out of Italy.

Livy certainly disapproves of Scipio's practice of working on credulous minds by representing himself as divinely inspired (p. 379), and he may have thought the long hair and unconventional dress of his hero another unnecessary affectation, but he is convinced of Scipio's powers, his energy and resourcefulness, his imagination and ability to learn from his opponent, qualities which Livy takes pains to display in the speeches he gives Scipio at dramatic moments in the war. The most telling of these are Scipio's reply to the personal attack on him in the Senate by the old Fabius Maximus (p. 556), and the words spoken at his meeting with Hannibal before the battle of Zama (p. 657). Here Livy succeeds in making his readers feel that the real conflict lies in this last fatal interview; the victory after the battle, the peace terms, and Scipio's triumph are historical events which round off the action, but this exchange is the true climax of the drama of the war.

Livy's faults as a scientific historian do not detract from his greatness as a writer, but they prompt the question whether he should have been writing history at all. His gifts are positiv

and original; but would they have had better scope if he had written at a time when the historical novel was a popular accepted form?

Like a novelist he subordinated historical precision to the demands of character and plot. He indulged freely in invention and imagination in order to present a living picture. He would have disclaimed the title of a 'historian' in the modern sense. He had no wish to spend long years burrowing for irrefutable but trivial facts and to secure himself against criticism by burying them again in unreadable monographs. Like Scott, he wanted to be read, and he wanted the public to enjoy reading him. His success was immediate and universal; he became a classic.¹

As R. M. Ogilvie points out, the heyday of the historical novel is to be found in periods when there is 'a widespread interest in the past, unaccompanied by widespread or specialized learning'. Today popular interest has shifted to imaginative historical biography, or to psychological novels where historical characters and their motives are subjected to detailed analysis. In these fields one thinks of Rex Warner on Caesar, Robert Graves on Claudius, *Memoirs of Hadrian*, and *The Sword of Pleasure*. There are excellent novels of action written for young people; but no one writes today as Scott and Livy did, with the conviction that there are lessons to be learned from history and that the rise or downfall of their characters provides practical examples for the conduct of our daily lives. Perhaps Kipling was the last person to do so when, out of his love of Sussex, he created *Puck of Pook's Hill* to teach the continuity of history. It may be that a touch of *patavinitas* is essential for writing of this kind.

If we compare *The War with Hannibal* with the old serious-minded historical novels, such as *Romola*, *The Cloister and the Hearth*, and *Salammbô*, it is clear that Livy's power to relive the past is remarkable. He never falls into the error of trying to create atmosphere by lifting pages from Baedeker – George Eliot and Lord Lytton earnestly did their best with Florence and Pompeii, but the dead stones never speak. Instead, he keeps description to a minimum and recreates the spirit of Rome by entering into the feelings of the people of the time, so that his readers can share the panic as Hannibal approaches Rome, the wild rejoicing after the victory of the Metaurus, and even the overheard comments of the bystanders at the triumph of Livius and Nero (p. 508). He can make us feel what it is like to suffer a long siege, to lie on a battlefield wounded and dying, to be trapped in a panic-stricken crowd, and to face action cold and wet and hungry. All his great battle-accounts are memorable for some individual reaction or mass emotion. So it is impossible to think of Cannae without seeing the consul Paullus, sitting on a stone, bleeding from his wounds and refusing the offer of a horse and at Lake Trasimene there is the horror of fighting in the fog with mud and water underfoot until 'at last the heat of the sun dispersed the mist, and in the clear morning light hills and plain revealed to their eyes the terrible truth that the Roman army was almost totally destroyed' (p. 100). We can forgive Livy his inaccuracies over the crossing of the Alps when we remember the scenes he has described – the elephants crossing the river, the stumbling horses, the terrible descent over the newly-fallen snow, and Hannibal's unremitting efforts to hearten his exhausted men. This is imaginative writing of the highest order, and there is not a book amongst the ten without scenes of similar power placed with masterly skill at strategic points in the narrative.

Individual episodes too are selected for a purpose; the survivors of Cannae are compelled to break away by the sheer personality of a junior officer, Publius Sempronius Tuditanus, and when they reach safety in Canusium they are provided with food and clothing and money by a wealthy Apulian woman, Busa, whom the Senate afterwards honoured. In 212, 'with all Spain apparently lost and both armies wiped out, one man restored the shattered fortunes of Rome' – Lucius Septimius, who took over the command of the remnant. These are names Livy wishes to be remembered and admired.

Finally, no one can fail to be impressed by the solid achievement of a constitutional government; whatever the stresses of war, annual elections and the periodic census are held, levies for the army organized, and claims for exemption given a fair hearing. Taxes are collected in due order and only one case of profiteering is reported and prosecuted (p. 296). At the outbreak of the war in 218 Rome had six legions; the following year there were eleven, and in 211, despite the estimated loss of 50,000 Romans and allies at Cannae, there were twenty-three legions serving. The financial strain was immense, but the country's credit was maintained. In 215 private companies undertook to supply the army in Spain for deferred payment, and even before the end of the war, one third of the money borrowed from individual citizens six years previously was repaid (pp. 402 and 586). In this record of courage and constancy Livy saw the continuity which he could not express clearly in his year-by-year report of the war's detailed progress, and this is what gives *The War with Hannibal* a true dramatic unity. The theme was there for Livy, in the records of his predecessors, but what he made of it was his own.

When Aubrey de Sélincourt died he had almost finished translating *The War with Hannibal*. Some of it was in typescript, some in manuscript; the last twelve chapters were not translated, and none of the work was revised. I have completed the translation, added footnotes to the few he left, and supplied maps and a chronological index. In revising the translation to make it conform with the Oxford Text of Walters and Conway I have done no more than remove the ambiguities and inconsistencies he would have removed himself had he lived, so that this translation can be read essentially as he left it, in the freely-moving, eloquent prose he wrote with wonderful ease. The manuscripts he left in his clear handwriting were almost entirely free from after-thoughts and corrections; he could read a half-page of Livy, carry it in his head and put the translation down on paper in its finished form. This suggests to me a real affinity with his subject; neither de Sélincourt nor Livy would suffer the forward surge of the narrative to be held up by details like the exact spelling of a disputed Spanish place-name. Both were masters of prose style, both were humanists and scholars, and this translation should do something to restore Livy's reputation as the 'man of fine imagination' who was an inspiration to European learning in the past. Perhaps Aubrey de Sélincourt would also have wished it to help the teacher to 'remember the purpose of his duties, and impress upon his pupil the qualities of Hannibal and Scipio rather than the date of the fall of Carthage, and not so much where Marcellus died as why it was inconsistent with his duty that he should die there. Let him be taught not so much the facts of history as how to judge them.' ¹

I should like to thank Mrs de Sélincourt for her confidence in my ability to edit her husband's work, Dr E. V. Rieu for his constant encouragement, Sir Gavin de Beer and Mr R.

M. Ogilvie for permission to quote their views, Dr Peter Green for a quotation from his forthcoming translation of Juvenal's *Satires*, my husband and Thomas Radice for advice, and Mr E. F. Watling for invaluable help with proofs.

B.F

Highgate, 1963

The reprint of 1972 includes a comprehensive index prepared by Jean Maund. Her task was not easy, as Aubrey de Sélincourt often reduced three Roman names to one, to keep the narrative moving; these are all now indexed in full under the names used in the translation. I should like to extend my thanks to Mrs Maund for her contribution. It is her speed and accuracy, plus her determination not to be defeated by the multiplicity of Hannos, Hasdruba and Magos in the Carthaginian forces, that have made this index useful and informative for students of Livy.

B.F

1972

1. Most historians have prefaced their work by stressing the importance of the period they propose to deal with; and I may well, at this point, follow their example and declare that I am now about to tell the story of the most memorable war in history: that, namely, which was fought by Carthage under the leadership of Hannibal against Rome.

A number of things contributed to give this war its unique character: in the first place, it was fought between peoples unrivalled throughout previous history in material resources, and themselves at the peak of their prosperity and power; secondly, it was a struggle between old antagonists, each of whom had learned, in the first Punic War, to appreciate the military capabilities of the other; thirdly, the final issue hung so much in doubt that the eventual victors came nearer to destruction than their adversaries. Moreover, high passions were at work throughout, and mutual hatred was hardly less sharp a weapon than the sword on the Roman side there was rage at the unprovoked attack by a previously beaten enemy; on the Carthaginian, bitter resentment at what was felt to be the grasping and tyrannical attitude of their conquerors. The intensity of the feeling is illustrated by an anecdote of Hannibal's boyhood: his father Hamilcar, after the campaign in Africa, was about to carry his troops over into Spain, when Hannibal, then about nine years old, begged, with all the childish arts he could muster, to be allowed to accompany him; whereupon Hamilcar, who was preparing to offer sacrifice for a successful outcome, led the boy to the altar and made him solemnly swear, with his hand upon the sacred victim, that as soon as he was old enough he would be the enemy of the Roman people. Hamilcar was a proud man and the loss of Sicily and Sardinia was a cruel blow to his pride; he remembered, moreover, that Sicily had been surrendered too soon, before the situation had become really desperate, and that Rome taking advantage of internal troubles in Africa, had tricked Carthage into the loss of Sardinia and then had added insult to injury by the imposition of a tribute. 2. All this rankled in his mind, and his conduct of affairs during the five years of the war in Africa, following hard upon the signature of peace with Rome, and subsequently during the nine years he spent in extending Carthaginian influence in Spain, made it clear enough that his ultimate object was an enterprise of far greater moment, and that if he had lived the invasion of Italy would have taken place under Hamilcar's leadership, instead of, as actually happened, under Hannibal's. That the war was postponed was due to Hamilcar's timely death and the fact that Hannibal was still too young to assume command.

The interval between father and son was filled by Hasdrubal, who commanded the Carthaginian armies for some eight years. Gossip had it that as a very young man he had won the personal favour and affection of Hamilcar, who in course of time and in recognition of his other qualities had married him to his daughter; and that he obtained command of the army on the strength of the relationship thus established, against the wishes of the leading men in Carthage, but strongly supported by the Barca¹ faction whose influence both with the army and the common people was very great. His policy aimed at peaceful expansion rather than conquest; avoiding the direct use of force he preferred to extend Carthaginian power by establishing friendly relations with local princes and thus winning the support of the various peoples under their control. A pacific policy, however, did not save him from a violent end, for he was murdered by a native in revenge for his master whom Hasdrubal had killed. The

murderer was seized by the bystanders but showed no sign either of fear or remorse; even under torture the expression on his face never changed, and one might have imagined that triumph had so far subdued his pain that he was actually smiling.

It was with Hasdrubal, because of his extraordinary flair for exercising influence upon the Spanish peoples and thus bringing them under Carthaginian sway, that the Romans had renewed the treaty of peace, fixing the river Ebro as the boundary between their respective spheres and establishing the neutrality of Saguntum as a sort of buffer state.

3. The question of Hasdrubal's successor was quickly decided. The military vote was in favour of the young Hannibal, who was at once escorted to headquarters, where he was unanimously and enthusiastically acclaimed, and there is little doubt that the army's choice was supported by the mass of the people in Carthage. Years before, when Hannibal was little more than a boy, Hasdrubal had written home to request his presence with the troops, and the propriety of the request had been debated in the Carthaginian Senate. The Barca party was in favour of granting it, urging the wisdom of accustoming the young man to active service, with a view to his ultimate succession to his father's position, but the opposite view was taken by their opponents. 'I think,' said Hanno, the leader of the anti-Barca faction, 'that Hasdrubal's request is a fair one – but, at the same time, that it ought not to be granted.' Such ambiguity made everyone stare, so Hanno went on to explain himself. 'Hasdrubal,' he said, 'sees in the matter nothing but the due payment of a debt: he himself surrendered the flower of his youth for the delectation of Hannibal's father; now he asks a similar favour from the son. What could be more just? But heaven forbid that under the veil of a military training we should subject our young men to the lusts of our generals. Moreover, we are surely not afraid of a little delay in allowing Hamilcar's son to see with his own eyes the excessive power his father wielded – a power not unlike that of a reigning monarch – or of being too slow to pay homage to the son of a king whose son-in-law was made heir to the command of our armies. No: my proposal is that this young fellow be kept at home, and be taught, in proper subjection to the law and its officers, to live on equal terms with his peers. Otherwise we may well find that this small spark may one day kindle a great fire.' 4. Most of the nobility supported Hanno; but they were few and, as usually happens, wisdom was forced to yield to numbers. Hannibal was sent to Spain, where the troops received him with unanimous enthusiasm, the old soldiers feeling that in the person of this young man Hamilcar himself was restored to them. In the features and expression of the son's face they saw the father once again, the same vigour in his look, the same fire in his eyes. Very soon he no longer needed to rely upon his father's memory to make himself beloved and obeyed: his own qualities were sufficient. Power to command and readiness to obey are rare associates; but in Hannibal they were perfectly united, and their union made him as much valued by his commander as by his men. Hasdrubal preferred him to all other officers in any action which called for vigour and courage, and under his leadership the men invariably showed to the best advantage both dash and confidence. Reckless in courting danger, he showed superb tactical ability once it was upon him. Indefatigable both physically and mentally, he could endure with equal ease excessive heat or excessive cold; he ate and drank not to flatter his appetites but only so much as would sustain his bodily strength. His time for waking, like his time for sleeping, was never determined by daylight or darkness: when his work was done, then, and then only, he rested, without need, moreover, of silence or a soft bed to woo sleep to his

eyes. Often he was seen lying in his cloak on the bare ground amongst the common soldiers on sentry or picket duty. His accoutrement, like the horses he rode, was always conspicuous but not his clothes, which were like those of any other officer of his rank and standing. Mounted or unmounted he was unequalled as a fighting man, always the first to attack, the last to leave the field. So much for his virtues – and they were great; but no less great were his faults: inhuman cruelty, a more than Punic perfidy, a total disregard of truth, honour, and religion, of the sanctity of an oath and of all that other men hold sacred. Such was the complex character of the man who for three years served under Hasdrubal's command, doing and seeing everything which could help to equip him as a great military leader.

5. From the very first day of his command Hannibal acted as if he had definite instructions to take Italy as his sphere of operations and to make war on Rome. Speed was of the essence of his plan. The premature deaths of Hamilcar and Hasdrubal reminded him that he was not himself immune from accident if he delayed. So without hesitation he determined to attack Saguntum. As an attack upon this town was certain to rouse Rome to action, he first invaded the territory of the Olcades, a tribe lying south of the Ebro, within the Carthaginian sphere of influence though not actually under Carthaginian control; by this move he hoped to distract attention from his real purpose and to give the impression that by the conquest of neighbouring tribes he had been led on, in an inevitable chain of events, to war with Saguntum. Carteia, the wealthy capital of the Olcades, was stormed and sacked: the lesser neighbouring settlements were scared into submission and forced to pay tribute, and the victorious army retired with its plunder to winter in New Carthage, where by a generous distribution of the captured material and prompt settlement of arrears of pay Hannibal further strengthened the bond between himself and his troops, both native and foreign.

At the beginning of the following spring operations were pushed forward against the Vaccaei, and their towns of Hermandica and Arbocala taken by assault, the latter after a protracted defence by the large and determined population. Fugitives from Hermandica joined forces with those of the Olcades who after the defeat of the previous summer had lost their homes, and together they stirred the Carpetani to action. Hannibal had returned from his expedition against the Vaccaei and was near the Tagus, when they set upon his column, encumbered as it was with loot, and threw it into confusion. Avoiding direct retaliation, Hannibal took up a position on the river bank and waited for dark; then, when all movement had ceased and there was no sound from the enemy's camp, he forded the river and took up a new position, constructing his defences in such a way as to leave the enemy an opportunity to follow him over. His intention was to attack them as they were crossing, and with this in view he instructed his mounted troops to set upon them as soon as they saw them in the water. His infantry and elephants (forty in number) he posted on the bank. The enemy force raised as it was by the addition of the fugitives to 100,000 men, would have been invincible in a straight fight on open ground; they were a proud and warlike people, so, relying upon their superiority in numbers and convinced not only that Hannibal's withdrawal was due to fear of defeat but also that nothing but the river barrier lay between themselves and victory they raised their war-cry and, without waiting for orders, plunged helter-skelter into the water. A strong contingent of Carthaginian cavalry promptly dashed in to meet them, and battle was joined in midstream. It was an unequal struggle, for the unmounted Spaniards, unable to get a firm foothold in the treacherous shallows, would have been an easy prey to

the confident assault of a mounted trooper, even had he been unarmed, while the cavalymen, for their part, with full command over their movements and their weapons, sitting firm on their mounts even where the stream ran strongest, set effectually to work with both javelins and swords. Many of the enemy were drowned; some, swept downstream by the powerful current, were trampled to death by the elephants, while the remainder tried to save themselves by returning to their own bank of the river; but while they were still at sixes and sevens and doing what they could to collect their scattered units, Hannibal led his men in mass formation into the river, crossed, and before they could recover their breath drove them in disorder from the bank. He ravaged the countryside, and a few days later the Carpetani surrendered and were added to the list of conquered peoples. The whole of Spain south of the Ebro, with the exception of Saguntum, was now in Carthaginian hands.

6. Hannibal was not yet actually at war with Saguntum, but as a preliminary to it he was already beginning to sow seeds of discontent amongst the neighbouring tribes, notably the Turdetani. He soon presented himself to them as their supporter in the quarrel he had himself organized, and when it became obvious to the Saguntines that Hannibal intended not to negotiate but to resort to force, they sent representatives to Rome to ask for assistance in the war which was now clearly inevitable. The consuls of that year,¹ Publius Cornelius Scipio and Tiberius Sempronius Longus, brought the Saguntine envoys before the Senate and opened the debate; the decision was taken to send envoys to Spain with instructions to look into the situation of their allies, and, if circumstances seemed to warrant it, to make a formal demand to Hannibal to keep his hands off Saguntum; they were then to cross to Africa and lay before the government in Carthage the first complaints of Rome's allies in Spain. But before the Roman envoys had had time even to start on their mission, news came that operations against Saguntum had begun. No one had expected this decisive move so soon.

The Senate met to reconsider the situation. Opinions were divided. Some proposed that Spain and Africa should be allotted to the consuls as their respective spheres of operation and that total war, by sea and land, should be undertaken; others preferred to concentrate wholly against Hannibal in Spain; others, again, expressed the view that it would be wiser to await the return of the envoys from Spain, as so serious a step as war with Carthage ought not to be taken without full deliberation. It was this last, and most cautious, proposal which was adopted, and hastened the despatch of Publius Valerius Flaccus and Quintus Baebius Tamphilus to Saguntum with instructions to approach Hannibal and then, if he refused to stop his operations against the town, to proceed to Carthage and demand the surrender of the Carthaginian commander on the charge of a breach of the treaty between the two powers.

7. Meanwhile, during these discussions and preparations in Rome, the assault upon Saguntum was proceeding with all the means at Hannibal's command. The town, situated about a mile from the sea, was by far the most prosperous settlement south of the Ebro. The inhabitants are said to have come originally from the island of Zacynthus, with a certain admixture of Rutulians from Ardea; but in any case the place had rapidly risen to its present importance by the qualities of its people, building their prosperity partly upon the produce of the sea and of the soil, partly upon the increase of their numbers, partly, again, upon the reverence for principle which was the essence of their training, and which led them to remain loyal to an ally even if such loyalty should involve their own destruction.

Hannibal, having invaded Saguntine territory and done wholesale damage to growing crops, launched a triple assault on the town. In one section of the defences there was a slope down into a comparatively broad and level stretch of ground, and it was here that Hannibal determined to bring up his 'mantlets' under the protection of which the battering-rams might be brought into action against the walls. The ground at some little distance from the walls was, indeed, level enough to enable the mantlets to be moved into position; nevertheless the manoeuvre was by no means successful when it came to the point of action. There were several reasons for its failure: first, the menace in that sector of a fortified tower of great height and strength; secondly, the fact that the wall itself had been raised to a greater height than elsewhere to protect a spot otherwise susceptible of attack, and, lastly, the more vigorous resistance of the picked troops which had been detailed to undertake the most difficult and dangerous tasks in the defence. For a time they kept the attackers at bay by missile weapons, and left no place safe for their pioneers, but soon, no longer content only with the flash of spears in defence of the tower and walls, they were moved to make a series of sorties against the enemy posts and assault works. In the skirmishes which ensued the losses on each side were about equal, but the situation quickly changed when Hannibal, rashly riding up to within range of the wall, was severely wounded in the thigh by a javelin. At this all the troops in his vicinity wavered and broke and the various assault-machines came near to being abandoned altogether. 8. For the following few days operations quietened down into something resembling a siege, to give Hannibal's wound time to heal; the hand-to-hand encounters stopped, though there was no slackening on either side in the preparation of means for assault or defence. Thus the struggle soon began afresh with greater vigour than before; and in a number of sectors, often at spots where the ground did not admit the construction of siege-works, battering-rams were moved up under the protection of mantlets. Numerically the Carthaginians were at a great advantage, the evidence suggesting that the army amounted to 150,000 men; the town's defenders, on the contrary, found themselves stretched beyond reasonable limits by the multifarious calls upon their energies, and were hardly sufficient for their tasks. Already the rams were in action and doing serious damage in many sectors; one section of the wall had been so far breached by continuous falls of masonry that a way had been opened into the town. Soon afterwards three towers together with the stretch of wall between them had crashed to the ground. For a moment the Carthaginians had thought that the town was theirs, and troops of both sides dashed forward through the breach, as if the now vanished wall had screened not the defenders only, but the attackers too. The fight which ensued bore no resemblance to the sort of tip-and-run affairs which in the course of protracted siege-operations one side or the other often seeks a chance of bringing on: it was a pitched battle, a major engagement such as might have been fought in the open field, though in fact the combatants were pinned between the fallen masonry of the wall and the near-by buildings of the town. Hope on the one side, the courage of despair on the other, were raised to the highest pitch, Hannibal's men confident that one final push would deliver the town into their hands, the Saguntines stoutly resisting the threat to their now defenceless home, while not a man of them would give an inch of ground lest an enemy soldier should press forward into the place where he had stood. Casualties increased as the fighting grew hotter; so closely were the men on either side pressed together that no missile could miss its mark. The Saguntines included in their armoury a sort of javelin called *falarica*

it had a rounded shaft of fir and an iron head. Just below the head the shaft was square, as in the Roman *pilum*. Round this portion of the shaft they bound tow smeared with pitch. The iron head of this weapon, being three feet long, was capable of going through a man's body, armour and all; but the most alarming thing about it was, that even when it stuck in a man's shield without penetrating his flesh, the blazing tow and pitch, lighted before it was hurled, and fanned by its motion through the air to a fiercer flame, compelled the victim to drop his weapons and so left him exposed and defenceless against its successors.

9. For a long time the struggle was indecisive. The Saguntines drew courage from the fact that the defence of the town had been more successful than they had dared to hope, while their adversaries, robbed of the expected victory, felt themselves beaten. In these circumstances the defenders suddenly raised a cheer and thrust the invader back amongst the ruins of the wall; here the Carthaginian force found itself in difficulties, lost its cohesion, and was finally flung out, completely overpowered, and compelled to seek the protection of its own camp.

Meanwhile news came that the envoys from Rome had arrived, and they were met on the coast by a party sent by Hannibal to warn them of the danger of proceeding any farther inland: for the numerous tribes were both highly incensed and up in arms, and Hannibal, moreover, had no time in his present difficult circumstances to give audience to a delegation. When it became clear that the envoys, refused a hearing at Saguntum, were determined to go on to Carthage, Hannibal forestalled them by writing to the leaders of his party there and urging them to prepare the minds of his supporters and prevent them from allowing the opposing faction to make any conciliatory gesture towards Rome.

10. As a result of this, though the delegation was at least granted an audience, it proved as fruitless and ineffectual as the previous one. In the Carthaginian senate the only man to speak for the existing treaty was Hanno: the other members were solidly against him, and he was listened to in dead silence – not indeed the silence of assent, but the silence due to his personal position and importance. In the name of the gods who protect the sanctity of treaties he begged them not to provoke a Roman as well as a Saguntine war. He had solemnly warned them not to allow a son of Hamilcar to go out to the Carthaginian armies. Had he not said that the very ghost of that man, let alone his son, was incapable of living in peace, and that never, so long as a single heir of the name and blood of the Barcas survived, could the treaty with Rome be safe from peril? 'Yet you,' he continued, 'sent to join our troops this dangerous and ambitious man, hot with the desire for power and seeing but one way to its acquisition – a life in arms amongst the soldiery, spent in provoking an endless succession of wars. The fire was there, and you fed it; yes, you piled fuel on the flames which are burning you now. By the terms of our treaty with Rome, Saguntum is a neutral town, and your armies are besieging it; soon Roman legions will be besieging Carthage, led by those same gods who in the former war blessed their revenge for the rupture of the terms of peace. Are you so ignorant of Rome – and of Carthage – of the portion fate has decreed for them and for ourselves? Envoys who came from one allied people, and on behalf of another, your truly admirable Commander-in-Chief, in defiance of international law, refused to admit to his presence. Denied the reception which the representatives even of an enemy can expect to be granted, they have come here to you, asking for satisfaction according to the treaty between

our two nations. They demand the surrender of the man responsible for a criminal act. Their demands are mild, their first steps slow and cautious; but for that very reason I fear that once they set their hands to work, their resentment against us will be the more bitter and prolonged. Remember Hamilcar's defeat off the Aegates islands and afterwards at Eryx, and the miseries you suffered through twenty-four years of warfare by land and sea. Then it was not this boy who commanded our armies, but his father Hamilcar – that second Mars, as his friends like to think him. None the less, though the terms of the treaty excluded us from Italy, we did not keep our hands off Tarentum, just as now history is repeating itself at Saguntum. Because of that act the gods themselves shared in the victory, and the technical question of who it was that broke the treaty was decided by the result of the war, which, like a just judge, gave victory to those who had right on their side. It is against Carthage that Hannibal is now moving his engines of war; it is our own walls he is battering with his rams. The ruins of Saguntum – would I were a false prophet! – will fall upon our own heads, and the war we started with Saguntum will have to be fought against Rome.

‘Shall we then surrender Hannibal? My opinion, I know, will carry little weight, because my father and I were always bitterly opposed. I was glad when Hamilcar died – and why? because if he lived, war with Rome was inevitable; and this son of his, with the devil in his heart and the torch in his hand to kindle its flames, I hate and abhor. I do indeed demand his surrender, to atone for the treaty he broke; nay more, if there were no question of giving him up, I should demand his removal to the remotest corner of the world, his banishment to some spot from which no word of him – not even the sound of his name – could ever reach us, nor he himself ever again disturb our peace.

‘This, then, is my proposal: that representatives be sent immediately to Rome with instructions to satisfy the Senate's demands; that a second delegation should approach Hannibal with our orders to withdraw from Saguntum, and then deliver his person to the Romans in accordance with the treaty; and, finally, that a third delegation should be entrusted with reparations to the people of Saguntum.’

11. When Hanno had ended, there was no need for anyone to refute his arguments, as the senate was almost unanimously on Hannibal's side; indeed the feeling was that he had spoken like an enemy of his country even more than the Roman envoy, Valerius Flaccus. The reply of the Roman delegation, therefore, was to fix the blame for hostilities not upon Hannibal but upon the Saguntines, and to add that Rome would be acting improperly if she let her concern for Saguntum take precedence over her long-standing treaty of friendship with Carthage.

In all this diplomatic activity the Romans were letting time slip by. Hannibal, however, was by no means altogether idle. His men were exhausted by their recent fighting and engineering labours in the field, so he allowed them a few days' rest, having posted parties to guard the various operational devices. But all the time he was working on their morale, fanning in them the flames of wrath against the enemy, or rousing their greed with the hope of rich rewards; to this he put the finishing touch in an address, in which he announced his intention of turning over to the troops everything of value they could find when the town should be taken. The effect of the announcement was electric: if at that moment the signal for assault had been given, nothing could have stood against them. The Saguntines, meanwhile, were using the pause in the fighting to the best possible effect: during the several days which

passed without a move by either side, they worked day and night to rebuild the section of wall, the destruction of which had laid the town open to the enemy.

But the lull was soon over, and the next assault was a more violent one. This time, the din of battle seemed to be everywhere at once, so that the defenders hardly knew where first, or best, to concentrate their defence. Hannibal in person was urging his men to fresh efforts at a point where they were bringing into action a mobile tower higher than any section of the fortifications of the town. This machine was dragged up; by means of the catapults and stone throwers with which each storey was equipped, the walls were cleared of defenders and Hannibal seized the opportunity of sending a party of some 500 African troops armed with picks to undermine the wall. It was not a difficult task, as the wall was of old-fashioned construction, the stones not being cemented but set in clay, and for this reason portions of it fell for some distance on both sides of the actual point of impact, so that columns of men were enabled to enter the town over the fallen rubble. They occupied an elevated point within the walls, and brought their artillery into position; then they built defences round the point they had seized, thus giving themselves a sort of fort, or stronghold, in the heart of the town from which to threaten the inhabitants. The Saguntines replied by constructing a fresh wall farther in, to protect the as yet uncaptured portion of the town. On both sides operations both offensive and defensive were carried on with the greatest vigour, but the difficulties of the Saguntines were growing: their efforts to save the central portions of the town from the enemy's advance gradually diminished what of it they could still control; at the same time supplies were running low, and hope of succour from outside, with the Romans, on whom alone they could rely, still far away and all the neighbouring country in enemy hands, was day by day growing less.

Their gloomy forebodings were temporarily relieved by the sudden departure of Hannibal on an expedition against the Oretani and Carpetani. These two peoples, in surprise and anger at the severity of Hannibal's demand for troops, had seized and retained the officers in charge of recruitment, thus giving reason to fear that they might be contemplating rebellion. But Hannibal was too quick for them, and, taken by surprise, they abandoned all thought of resistance.

12. Actually, however, there was no relaxation of the pressure on the town, for Maharbal, son of Himilco, whom Hannibal had left in command, carried on offensive operations with such vigour that Hannibal's absence was hardly noticed by anyone – friend or foe. This officer fought a number of successful actions, destroyed a further stretch of wall by employing three rams, and was able to show Hannibal on his return widespread devastation and much newly tumbled masonry amongst the town's defences. Without further delay Hannibal pressed forward right up to the central stronghold; there was a savage struggle with heavy losses on both sides, and a portion of the stronghold fell into his hands.

At this juncture two men, Alco of Saguntum and a Spaniard named Alorcus, attempted to end hostilities, though the hope was a slender one. The former, thinking that an appeal for mercy might have some effect, without the knowledge of his compatriots, slipped out of the town under cover of darkness and presented himself before Hannibal. But his tears were of no avail, so when he found the victorious general obdurate and the terms of surrender cruel and harsh, he changed his tactics, and, without further pleading, remained with the Carthaginians.

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