

3. THE ACCOUNT OF DIO CASSIUS*

In the succeeding year the Romans became openly hostile to the Carthaginians, and the war, though of far shorter duration than the previous one, proved to be both greater and more baneful in its exploits and effects. It was brought on chiefly by Hannibal, general of the Carthaginians. This Hannibal was a child of Hamilcar Barca, and from his earliest boyhood had been trained to fight against the Romans. Hamilcar said he was raising all his sons like so many whelps to fight against them, but as he saw that this one's nature was far superior to that of the rest, he made him take an oath that he would wage war upon them, and for this reason he instructed the boy in warfare above all else when only fifteen years old. On account of this youthfulness Hannibal was not able, when his father died, to succeed to the generalship. But when Hasdrubal was dead, he delayed no longer, being now twenty-six years of age, but at once took possession of the army in Spain and after being acclaimed as leader by the soldiers brought it about that his right to lead was confirmed also by those in authority at home. After effecting this he needed a plausible excuse for his enterprise against the Romans, and this he found in the Saguntines of Spain. These people, dwelling not far from the river Iber and a short distance above the sea, were dependents of the Romans, and the latter held them in honor and in the treaty with the Carthaginians had made an exception of them. For these reasons, then, Hannibal began a war with them, knowing that the Romans would either assist the Saguntines or avenge them if they suffered injury. Hence for these reasons as well as because he knew that they possessed great wealth, which he particularly needed, and for various other causes that promised him

advantages against the Romans he made an attack upon the Saguntines.

Spain, in which the Saguntines dwell, and all the adjoining land is in the western part of Europe. It extends for a considerable distance along the inner sea, beside the Pillars of Hercules, and along the ocean; furthermore it occupies the upper part of the mainland for a very great distance, as far as the Pyrenees. THIS RANGE, BEGINNING AT THE SEA CALLED ANCIENTLY THE SEA OF THE BEBRYCES BUT LATER THE SEA OF THE NARBONENSES, REACHES TO THE GREAT OUTER SEA, AND CONFINES MANY DIVERSE NATIONALITIES; IT ALSO SEPARATES SPAIN FROM THE NEIGHBORING LAND OF GAUL. The tribes did not employ the same language nor carry on a common government. This resulted in their not having a single name. The Romans called them Hispanii, but the Greeks Iberians, from the river Iber.

These Saguntines, then, being besieged sent to those near them and to the Romans asking for aid. But Hannibal checked any local movement, and the Romans sent ambassadors to him bidding him not come near the Saguntines, and threatening in case he should not obey to sail to Carthage at once and lay accusations against him. When the envoys were now close at hand, Hannibal sent some of the natives who were to pretend that they were kindly disposed to them and were instructed to say that the general was not there but had gone some distance away into parts unknown; they advised the enemy, therefore (they were to say), to depart as quickly as possible and before their presence should be reported lest in the disorder prevailing because of the absence of the general they should lose their lives. The envoys accordingly believed them and set off for Carthage. An assembly being called some of the Carthaginians counseled maintaining peace with the Romans, but the party attached to Hannibal affirmed that the Saguntines

were guilty of wrong-doing and the Romans were meddling with what did not concern them. Finally those who urged them to make war won the day.

Meanwhile Hannibal in the course of his siege was conducting vigorous assaults. Many kept falling and many more were being wounded on Hannibal's side. One day the Carthaginians succeeded in shaking down a portion of the outer circuit and had been daring enough to enter through the breach, when the Saguntines made a sortie and scared them away. This gave the besieged strength and the Carthaginians fell back in dejection. They did not leave the spot, however, till they had captured the city, though the siege dragged on to the eighth month. Many unusual events happened in that time, one of which was Hannibal's being dangerously wounded. The place was taken in this manner. They brought to bear against the wall an engine much higher than the fortification and carrying heavy-armed soldiers, some visible, some concealed. While the Saguntines, therefore, were quite strenuously fighting against the men they saw, thinking them the only ones, those hidden had dug through the wall from below and found their way inside. The Saguntines overwhelmed by the unexpectedness of the event ran up to the citadel and held a conference to see whether by any reasonable concessions they might be preserved. But as Hannibal held out no moderate terms and no assistance came to them from the Romans, they begged for a cessation of the assaults until they should deliberate a little about their position. During this respite they gathered together the most highly prized of their treasures and cast them into the fire; then such as were incapable of fighting committed suicide, and those who were in their prime advanced in a body against their opponents and in a desperate struggle were cut down.

For their sakes the Romans and the Carthaginians embarked upon war. Hannibal after gaining numerous allies was

hastening toward Italy. The Romans on ascertaining this assembled in their senate-hall, and many speeches were delivered. Lucius Cornelius Lentulus addressed the people and said they must not delay but vote for war against the Carthaginians and separate consuls and armies into two detachments, and send the one to Spain and the other to Libya, in order that at one and the same time the land of the enemy might be desolated and his allies injured; thus neither would he be able to assist Spain nor could he himself receive assistance from there. To this Quintus Fabius Maximus rejoined that it was not so absolutely and inevitably necessary to vote for war, but they could first employ an embassy, and then if the Carthaginians persuaded them that they were guilty of no wrong, they should remain quiet, but if the same people were convicted of wrong-doing, they might thereupon wage war against them, "in order," he said, "that we may cast the responsibility for the war upon them." THE OPINIONS OF THE TWO MEN WERE SUBSTANTIALLY THESE. THE SENATE DECIDED TO MAKE PREPARATIONS, TO BE SURE, FOR CONFLICT, BUT TO DESPATCH ENVOYS TO CARTHAGE AND DENOUNCE HANNIBAL; AND IF THE CARTHAGINIANS REFRAINED FROM APPROVING THE EXPLOITS, THEY WOULD ARBITRATE THE MATTER, OR IF ALL RESPONSIBILITY WERE LAID UPON HIS SHOULDERS, THEY WOULD DEMAND HIS EXTRADITION, AND IF HE WERE NOT GIVEN UP, THEY WOULD DECLARE WAR UPON THE NATION.

The envoys set out and the Carthaginians considered what must be done. And a certain Hasdrubal, one of those who had been primed by Hannibal, counseled them that they ought to get back their ancient freedom and shake off by means of money and troops and allies, all welded together, the slavery imposed by peace, adding: "If you only permit Hannibal to act as he wishes, the proper thing will be done and you will have no trouble." After such words on his part the great Hanno,

* Dio Cassius, 8. 21-22, translated by H. B. Foster.

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opposing Hasdrubal's argument, gave it as his opinion that they ought not to draw war upon themselves lightly nor for small complaints concerning foreigners, when it was in their power to settle a part of the difficulty and divert the rest of it upon the heads of those who had been active in the matter. With these remarks he ceased, and the elder Carthaginians who remembered the former war sided with him, but those in robust manhood and especially all the partisans of Hannibal violently gainsaid him. INASMUCH, THEN, AS THEY MADE NO DEFINITE ANSWER AND SHOWED CONTEMPT FOR THE ENVOYS, MARCUS FABIVS THRUSTING HIS HANDS BENEATH HIS TOGA AND HOLDING THEM WITH PALMS UPWARD SAID: "HERE I BRING TO YOU, CARTHAGINIANS, BOTH WAR AND PEACE: DO YOU CHOOSE WHICHEVER OF THEM YOU WISH." UPON THEIR REPLYING THAT THEY CHOSE NEITHER, BUT WOULD READILY ACCEPT EITHER THAT THE ROMANS SHOULD LEAVE, HE IMMEDIATELY DECLARED WAR UPON THEM.

In this way, then, and for these reasons the Romans and the Carthaginians became involved in war for the second time. And

the Divinity beforehand indicated what was to come to pass. For in Rome an ox talked with a human voice, and another at the Ludi Romani threw himself out of a house into the Tiber and was lost, many thunderbolts fell, and blood in one case was seen coming from sacred statues whereas in another it dripped from the shield of a soldier, and the sword of another soldier was snatched by a wolf from the very midst of the camp. Many unknown wild beasts went before Hannibal leading the way, as he was crossing the Iber, and a vision appeared to him in a dream. He thought that the gods once, sitting in assembly, sent for him and bade him march with all speed into Italy and receive from them a guide for the way, and that by this guide he was commanded to follow without turning around. He did turn around, however, and saw a great tempest moving and an immense serpent accompanying it. In surprise he asked his conductor what these creatures were; and the guide said: "Hannibal, they are on their way to help you in the sack of Italy."