

HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

THE YOUNG
CARTHAGINIAN: A STORY
OF THE TIMES OF
HANNIBAL

George Henty

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Story of The Times of Hannibal**

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G. A. Henty

The Young Carthaginian: A Story of The Times of Hannibal

PREFACE

MY DEAR LADS,

When I was a boy at school, if I remember rightly, our sympathies were generally with the Carthaginians as against the Romans. Why they were so, except that one generally sympathizes with the unfortunate, I do not quite know; certainly we had but a hazy idea as to the merits of the struggle and knew but little of its events, for the Latin and Greek authors, which serve as the ordinary textbooks in schools, do not treat of the Punic wars. That it was a struggle for empire at first, and latterly one for existence on the part of Carthage, that Hannibal was a great and skilful general, that he defeated the Romans at Trebia, Lake Trasimenus, and Cannae, and all but took Rome, and that the Romans behaved with bad faith and great cruelty at the capture of Carthage, represents, I think, pretty nearly the sum total of our knowledge.

I am sure I should have liked to know a great deal more about this struggle for the empire of the world, and as I think that most of you would also like to do so, I have chosen this subject for my story. Fortunately there is no lack of authentic material from which to glean the incidents of the struggle. Polybius visited all the passes of the Alps some forty years after the event, and conversed with tribesmen who had witnessed the passage of Hannibal, and there can be no doubt that his descriptions are far more accurate than those of Livy, who wrote somewhat later and had no personal knowledge of the affair. Numbers of books have been written as to the identity of the passes traversed by Hannibal. The whole of these have been discussed and summarized by Mr. W. J. Law, and as it appears to me that his arguments are quite conclusive I have adopted the line which he lays down as that followed by Hannibal.

In regard to the general history of the expedition, and of the manners, customs, religion, and politics of Carthage, I have followed M. Hennebert in his most exhaustive and important work on the subject. I think that when you have read to the end you will perceive that although our sympathies may remain with Hannibal and the Carthaginians, it was nevertheless for the good of the world that Rome was the conqueror in the great struggle for empire. At the time the war began Carthage was already corrupt to the core, and although she might have enslaved many nations she would never have civilized them. Rome gave free institutions to the people she conquered, she subdued but she never enslaved them, but rather strove to plant her civilization among them and to raise them to her own level. Carthage, on the contrary, was from the first a cruel mistress to the people she conquered. Consequently while all the peoples of Italy rallied round Rome in the days of her distress, the tribes subject to Carthage rose in insurrection against her as soon as the presence of a Roman army gave them a hope of escape from their bondage.

Had Carthage conquered Rome in the struggle she could never have extended her power over the known world as Rome afterwards did, but would have fallen to pieces again from the weakness of her institutions and the corruption of her people. Thus then, although we may feel sympathy for the failure and fate of the noble and chivalrous Hannibal himself, we cannot regret that Rome came out conqueror in the strife, and was left free to carry out her great work of civilization.

Yours sincerely,
G. A. Henty

CHAPTER I: THE CAMP IN THE DESERT

It is afternoon, but the sun's rays still pour down with great power upon rock and sand. How great the heat has been at midday may be seen by the quivering of the air as it rises from the ground and blurs all distant objects. It is seen, too, in the attitudes and appearance of a large body of soldiers encamped in a grove. Their arms are thrown aside, the greater portion of their clothing has been dispensed with. Some lie stretched on the ground in slumber, their faces protected from any chance rays which may find their way through the foliage above by little shelters composed of their clothing hung on two bows or javelins. Some, lately awakened, are sitting up or leaning against the trunks of the trees, but scarce one has energy to move.

The day has indeed been a hot one even for the southern edge of the Libyan desert. The cream coloured oxen stand with their heads down, lazily whisking away with their tails the flies that torment them. The horses standing near suffer more; the lather stands on their sides, their flanks heave, and from time to time they stretch out their extended nostrils in the direction from which, when the sun sinks a little lower, the breeze will begin to blow.

The occupants of the grove are men of varied races, and, although there is no attempt at military order, it is clear at once that they are divided into three parties. One is composed of men more swarthy than the others. They are lithe and active in figure, inured to hardship, accustomed to the burning sun. Light shields hang against the trees with bows and gaily painted quivers full of arrows, and near each man are three or four light short javelins. They wear round caps of metal, with a band of the skin of the lion or other wild animal, in which are stuck feathers dyed with some bright colour. They are naked to the waist, save for a light breastplate of brass. A cloth of bright colours is wound round their waist and drops to the knees, and they wear belts of leather embossed with brass plates; on their feet are sandals. They are the light armed Numidian horse.

Near them are a party of men lighter in hue, taller and stouter in stature. Their garb is more irregular, their arms are bare, but they wear a sort of shirt, open at the neck and reaching to the knees, and confined at the waist by a leather strap, from which hangs a pouch of the same material. Their shirts, which are of roughly made flannel, are dyed a colour which was originally a deep purple, but which has faded, under the heat of the sun, to lilac. They are a company of Iberian slingers, enlisted among the tribes conquered in Spain by the Carthaginians. By them lie the heavy swords which they use in close quarters.

The third body of men are more heavily armed. On the ground near the sleepers lie helmets and massive shields. They have tightly fitting jerkins of well-tanned leather, their arms are spears and battleaxes. They are the heavy infantry of Carthage. Very various is their nationality; fair skinned Greeks lie side by side with swarthy negroes from Nubia. Sardinia, the islands of the Aegean, Crete and Egypt, Libya and Phoenicia are all represented there.

They are recruited alike from the lower orders of the great city and from the tribes and people who own her sway.

Near the large grove in which the troops are encamped is a smaller one. A space in the centre has been cleared of trees, and in this a large tent has been erected. Around this numerous slaves are moving to and fro.

A Roman cook, captured in a sea fight in which his master, a wealthy tribune, was killed, is watching three Greeks, who are under his superintendence, preparing a repast. Some Libyan grooms are rubbing down the coats of four horses of the purest breed of the desert, while two Nubians are feeding, with large flat cakes, three elephants, who, chained by the leg to trees, stand rocking themselves from side to side.

The exterior of the tent is made of coarse white canvas; this is thickly lined by fold after fold of a thin material, dyed a dark blue, to keep out the heat of the sun, while the interior is hung with silk,

purple and white. The curtains at each end are looped back with gold cord to allow a free passage of the air.

A carpet from the looms of Syria covers the ground, and on it are spread four couches, on which, in a position half sitting half reclining, repose the principal personages of the party. The elder of these is a man some fifty years of age, of commanding figure, and features which express energy and resolution. His body is bare to the waist, save for a light short sleeved tunic of the finest muslin embroidered round the neck and sleeves with gold.

A gold belt encircles his waist, below it hangs a garment resembling the modern kilt, but reaching halfway between the knee and the ankle. It is dyed a rich purple, and three bands of gold embroidery run round the lower edge. On his feet he wears sandals with broad leather lacings covered with gold. His toga, also of purple heavily embroidered with gold, lies on the couch beside him; from one of the poles of the tent hang his arms, a short heavy sword, with a handle of solid gold in a scabbard incrustated with the same metal, and a baldrick, covered with plates of gold beautifully worked and lined with the softest leather, by which it is suspended over his shoulder.

Two of his companions are young men of three or four and twenty, both fair like himself, with features of almost Greek regularity of outline. Their dress is similar to his in fashion, but the colours are gayer. The fourth member of the party is a lad of some fifteen years old. His figure, which is naked to the waist, is of a pure Grecian model, the muscles, showing up clearly beneath the skin, testify to hard exercise and a life of activity.

Powerful as Carthage was, the events of the last few years had shown that a life and death struggle with her great rival in Italy was approaching. For many years she had been a conquering nation. Her aristocracy were soldiers as well as traders, ready at once to embark on the most distant and adventurous voyages, to lead the troops of Carthage on toilsome expeditions against insurgent tribes of Numidia and Libya, or to launch their triremes to engage the fleets of Rome.

The severe checks which they had lately suffered at the hands of the newly formed Roman navy, and the certainty that ere long a tremendous struggle between the two powers must take place, had redoubled the military ardour of the nobles. Their training to arms began from their very childhood, and the sons of the noblest houses were taught, at the earliest age, the use of arms and the endurance of fatigue and hardship.

Malchus, the son of Hamilcar, the leader of the expedition in the desert, had been, from his early childhood, trained by his father in the use of arms. When he was ten years old Hamilcar had taken him with him on a campaign in Spain; there, by a rigorous training, he had learned to endure cold and hardships.

In the depth of winter his father had made him pass the nights uncovered and almost without clothing in the cold. He had bathed in the icy water of the torrents from the snow clad hills, and had been forced to keep up with the rapid march of the light armed troops in pursuit of the Iberians. He was taught to endure long abstinence from food and to bear pain without flinching, to be cheerful under the greatest hardships, to wear a smiling face when even veteran soldiers were worn out and disheartened.

“It is incumbent upon us, the rulers and aristocracy of this great city, my son, to show ourselves superior to the common herd. They must recognize that we are not only richer and of better blood, but that we are stronger, wiser, and more courageous than they. So, only, can we expect them to obey us, and to make the sacrifices which war entails upon them. It is not enough that we are of pure Phoenician blood, that we come of the most enterprising race the world has ever seen, while they are but a mixed breed of many people who have either submitted to our rule or have been enslaved by us.

“This was well enough in the early days of the colony when it was Phoenician arms alone that won our battles and subdued our rivals. In our days we are few and the populace are many. Our armies are composed not of Phoenicians, but of the races conquered by us. Libya and Numidia, Sicily, Sardinia, and Spain, all in turn conquered by us, now furnish us with troops.

“Carthage is a mighty city, but it is no longer a city of Phoenicians. We form but a small proportion of the population. It is true that all power rests in our hands, that from our ranks the senate is chosen, the army officered, and the laws administered, but the expenses of the state are vast. The conquered people fret under the heavy tributes which they have to pay, and the vile populace murmur at the taxes.

“In Italy, Rome looms greater and more powerful year by year. Her people are hardy and trained to arms, and some day the struggle between us and her will have to be fought out to the death. Therefore, my son, it behooves us to use every effort to make ourselves worthy of our position. Set before yourself the example of your cousin Hannibal, who, young as he is, is already viewed as the greatest man in Carthage. Grudge no hardship or suffering to harden your frame and strengthen your arms.

“Some day you too may lead armies in the field, and, believe me, they will follow you all the better and more cheerfully if they know that in strength and endurance, as well as in position, their commander is the foremost man in his army.”

Malchus had been an apt pupil, and had done justice to the pains which his father had bestowed upon him and to the training he had undergone. He could wield the arms of a man, could swim the coldest river, endure hardship and want of food, traverse long distances at the top of his speed, could throw a javelin with unerring aim, and send an arrow to the mark as truly as the best of the Libyan archers.

“The sun is going down fast, father,” the lad said, “the shadows are lengthening and the heat is declining.”

“We have only your word for the decline of the heat, Malchus,” one of the younger men laughed; “I feel hotter than ever. This is the fifteenth time that you have been to the door of the tent during the last half hour. Your restlessness is enough to give one the fever.”

“I believe that you are just as eager as I am, Adherbal,” the boy replied laughing. “It’s your first lion hunt as well as mine, and I am sure you are longing to see whether the assault of the king of beasts is more trying to the nerves than that of the Iberian tribesmen.”

“I am looking forward to it, Malchus, certainly,” the young man replied; “but as I know the lions will not quit their coverts until after nightfall, and as no efforts on my part will hasten the approach of that hour, I am well content to lie quiet and to keep myself as cool as may be.”

“Your cousin is right,” the general said, “and impatience is a fault, Malchus. We must make allowances for your impatience on the present occasion, for the lion is a foe not to be despised, and he is truly as formidable an antagonist when brought to bay as the Iberians on the banks of the Ebro—far more so than the revolted tribesmen we have been hunting for the past three weeks.”

“Giscon says nothing,” Adherbal remarked; “he has a soul above even the hunting of lions. I warrant that during the five hours we have been reclining here his thoughts have never once turned towards the hunt we are going to have tonight.”

“That is true enough,” Giscon said, speaking for the first time. “I own that my thoughts have been of Carthage, and of the troubles that threaten her owing to the corruption and misgovernment which are sapping her strength.”

“It were best not to think too much on the subject, Giscon,” the general said; “still better not to speak of it. You know that I lament, as you do, the misgovernment of Carthage, and mourn for the disasters which have been brought upon her by it. But the subject is a dangerous one; the council have spies everywhere, and to be denounced as one hostile to the established state of things is to be lost.”

“I know the danger,” the young man said passionately. “I know that hitherto all who have ventured to raise their voices against the authority of these tyrants have died by torture—that murmuring has been stamped out in blood. Yet were the danger ten times as great,” and the speaker had risen now from his couch and was walking up and down the tent, “I could not keep silent. What have our tyrants brought us to? Their extravagance, their corruption, have wasted the public funds and

have paralyzed our arms. Sicily and Sardinia have been lost; our allies in Africa have been goaded by their exactions again and again into rebellion, and Carthage has more than once lately been obliged to fight hard for her very existence. The lower classes in the city are utterly disaffected; their earnings are wrung from them by the tax gatherers. Justice is denied them by the judges, who are the mere creatures of the committee of five. The suffetes are mere puppets in their hands. Our vessels lie unmanned in our harbours, because the funds which should pay the sailors are appropriated by our tyrants to their own purposes. How can a Carthaginian who loves his country remain silent?”

“All you say is true, Giscon,” the general said gravely, “though I should be pressed to death were it whispered in Carthage that I said so; but at present we can do nothing. Had the great Hamilcar Barca lived I believe that he would have set himself to work to clear out this Augean stable, a task greater than that accomplished by our great hero, the demigod Hercules; but no less a hand can accomplish it. You know how every attempt at revolt has failed; how terrible a vengeance fell on Matho and the mercenaries; how the down trodden tribes have again and again, when victory seemed in their hands, been crushed into the dust.

“No, Giscon, we must suffer the terrible ills which you speak of until some hero arises—some hero whose victories will bind not only the army to him, but will cause all the common people of Carthage—all her allies and tributaries—to look upon him as their leader and deliverer.

“I have hopes, great hopes, that such a hero may be found in my nephew, Hannibal, who seems to possess all the genius, the wisdom, and the talent of his father. Should the dream which he cherished, and of which I was but now speaking to you, that of leading a Carthaginian army across the Ebro, over the Apennines, through the plains of lower Gaul, and over the Alps into Italy, there to give battle to the cohorts of Rome on their own ground,—should this dream be verified I say, should success attend him, and Rome be humbled to the dust, then Hannibal would be in a position to become the dictator of Carthage, to overthrow the corrupt council, to destroy this tyranny—misnamed a republic—and to establish a monarchy, of which he should be the first sovereign, and under which Carthage, again the queen of the world, should be worthy of herself and her people. And now let us speak of it no more. The very walls have ears, and I doubt not but even among my attendants there are men who are spies in the pay of the council. I see and lament as much as any man the ruin of my country; but, until I see a fair hope of deliverance, I am content to do the best I can against her enemies, to fight her battles as a simple soldier.”

There was silence in the tent. Malchus had thrown himself down on his couch, and for a time forgot even the approaching lion hunt in the conversation to which he had listened.

The government of Carthage was indeed detestable, and was the chief cause both of the misfortunes which had befallen her in the past, and of the disasters which were in the future to be hers. The scheme of government was not in itself bad, and in earlier and simpler times had acted well. Originally it had consisted of three estates, which answered to the king, lords, and commons. At the head of affairs were two suffetes chosen for life. Below them was the senate, a very numerous body, comprising all the aristocracy of Carthage. Below this was the democracy, the great mass of the people, whose vote was necessary to ratify any law passed by the senate.

In time, however, all authority passed from the suffetes, the general body of the senate and the democracy, into the hands of a committee of the senate, one hundred in number, who were called the council, the real power being invested in the hands of an inner council, consisting of from twenty to thirty of the members. The deliberations of this body were secret, their power absolute. They were masters of the life and property of every man in Carthage, as afterwards were the council of ten in the republic of Venice. For a man to be denounced by his secret enemy to them as being hostile to their authority was to ensure his destruction and the confiscation of his property.

The council of a hundred was divided into twenty subcommittees, each containing five members. Each of these committees was charged with the control of a department—the army, the navy, the finances, the roads and communications, agriculture, religion, and the relations with the

various subject tribes, the more important departments being entirely in the hands of the members of the inner council of thirty.

The judges were a hundred in number. These were appointed by the council, and were ever ready to carry out their behest, consequently justice in Carthage was a mockery. Interest and intrigue were paramount in the law courts, as in every department of state. Every prominent citizen, every successful general, every man who seemed likely, by his ability or his wealth, to become a popular personage with the masses, fell under the ban of the council, and sooner or later was certain to be disgraced. The resources of the state were devoted not to the needs of the country but to aggrandizement and enriching of the members of the committee.

Heavy as were the imposts which were laid upon the tributary peoples of Africa for the purposes of the state, enormous burdens were added by the tax gatherers to satisfy the cupidity of their patrons in the council. Under such circumstances it was not to be wondered at that Carthage, decaying, corrupt, ill governed, had suffered terrible reverses at the hands of her young and energetic rival Rome, who was herself some day, when she attained the apex of her power, to suffer from abuses no less flagrant and general than those which had sapped the strength of Carthage.

With the impetuosity of youth Malchus naturally inclined rather to the aspirations of his kinsman Giscon than to the more sober counsels of his father. He had burned with shame and anger as he heard the tale of the disasters which had befallen his country, because she had made money her god, had suffered her army and her navy to be regarded as secondary objects, and had permitted the command of the sea to be wrested from her by her wiser and more far seeing rival.

As evening closed in the stir in the neighbouring camp aroused Malchus from his thoughts, and the anticipation of the lion hunt, in which he was about to take part, again became foremost.

The camp was situated twenty days' march from Carthage at the foot of some hills in which lions and other beasts of prey were known to abound, and there was no doubt that they would be found that evening.

The expedition had been despatched under the command of Hamilcar to chastise a small tribe which had attacked and plundered some of the Carthaginian caravans on their way to Ethiopia, then a rich and prosperous country, wherein were many flourishing colonies, which had been sent out by Carthage.

The object of the expedition had been but partly successful. The lightly clad tribesmen had taken refuge far among the hills, and, although by dint of long and fatiguing marches several parties had been surprised and slain, the main body had evaded all the efforts of the Carthaginian general.

The expedition had arrived at its present camping place on the previous evening. During the night the deep roaring of lions had been heard continuously among the hills, and so bold and numerous were they that they had come down in such proximity to the camp that the troops had been obliged to rise and light great fires to scare them from making an attack upon the horses.

The general had therefore consented, upon the entreaties of his nephew Adherbal, and his son, to organize a hunt upon the following night. As soon as the sun set the troops, who had already received their orders, fell into their ranks. The full moon rose as soon as the sun dipped below the horizon, and her light was ample for the object they had in view.

The Numidian horse were to take their station on the plain; the infantry in two columns, a mile apart, were to enter the mountains, and having marched some distance, leaving detachments behind them, they were to move along the crest of the hills until they met; then, forming a great semicircle, they were to light torches, which they had prepared during the day, and to advance towards the plain shouting and dashing their arms, so as to drive all the wild animals inclosed in the arc down into the plain.

The general with the two young officers and his son, and a party of fifty spearmen, were to be divided between the two groves in which the camps were pitched, which were opposite the centre of the space facing the line inclosed by the beaters. Behind the groves the Numidian horse were

stationed, to give chase to such animals as might try to make their escape across the open plain. The general inspected the two bodies of infantry before they started, and repeated his instructions to the officers who commanded them, and enjoined them to march as noiselessly as possible until the semicircle was completed and the beat began in earnest.

The troops were to be divided into groups of eight, in order to be able to repel the attacks of any beasts which might try to break through the line. When the two columns had marched away right and left towards the hills, the attendants of the elephants and baggage animals were ordered to remove them into the centre of the groves. The footmen who remained were divided into two parties of equal strength. The general with Malchus remained in the grove in which his tent was fixed with one of these parties, while Adherbal and Giscon with the others took up their station in the larger grove.

“Do you think the lions are sure to make for these groves?” Malchus asked his father as, with a bundle of javelins lying by his side, his bow in his hand, and a quiver of arrows hung from his belt in readiness, he took his place at the edge of the trees.

“There can be no certainty of it, Malchus; but it seems likely that the lions, when driven out of their refuges among the hills, will make for these groves, which will seem to offer them a shelter from their pursuers. The fires here will have informed them of our presence last night; but as all is still and dark now they may suppose that the groves are deserted. In any case our horses are in readiness among the trees close at hand, and if the lions take to the plains we must mount and join the Numidians in the chase.”

“I would rather meet them here on foot, father.”

“Yes, there is more excitement, because there is more danger in it, Malchus; but I can tell you the attack of a wounded lion is no joke, even for a party of twenty-five well armed men. Their force and fury are prodigious, and they will throw themselves fearlessly upon a clump of spears in order to reach their enemies. One blow from their paws is certain death. Be careful, therefore, Malchus. Stir not from my side, and remember that there is a vast difference between rashness and bravery.”

CHAPTER II: A NIGHT ATTACK

The time seemed to Malchus to pass slowly indeed as he sat waiting the commencement of the hunt. Deep roars, sounding like distant thunder, were heard from time to time among the hills. Once or twice Malchus fancied that he could hear other sounds such as would be made by a heavy stone dislodged from its site leaping down the mountain side; but he was not sure that this was not fancy, or that the sound might not be caused by the roaring of lions far away among the hills.

His father had said that three hours would probably elapse before the circuit would be completed. The distance was not great, but the troops would have to make their way with the greatest care along the rocky hills through brushwood and forest, and their advance would be all the more slow that they had to take such pains to move noiselessly.

It was indeed more than three hours after the column had left the camp when the sound of a distant horn was heard far up the hillside. Almost instantaneously lights burst out in a great semicircle along the hillside, and a faint confused sound, as of the shouting of a large body of men, was heard on the still night air.

"That is very well done," the general said in a tone of satisfaction. "I had hardly expected it to be so well managed; for the operation on such broken and difficult ground was not easy to carry out, even with the moon to help them."

"But see, father!" Malchus said, "there are many patches of darkness in the line, and the lions might surely escape through these."

"It would not be possible, Malchus, to place the parties at equal distances over such broken ground. Nor are the lions likely to discover the gaps in the line; they will be far too much terrified by the uproar and sudden blaze of light to approach the troops. Hark, how they are roaring! Truly it is a majestic and terrible sound, and I do not wonder that the wild natives of these mountains regard the animals with something of the respect which we pay to the gods. And now do you keep a sharp eye along the foot of the hills. There is no saying how soon the beasts may break cover."

Slowly the semicircle of light was seen to contract as the soldiers who formed it moved forward towards the foot of the hill; but although Malchus kept his eyes strained upon the fringe of trees at its foot, he could see no signs of movement.

The roaring still continued at intervals, and it was evident that the beasts inclosed in the arc had descended to the lower slopes of the hill.

"They may be upon us sooner than you expect, Malchus. Their colour well nigh matches with that of the sand, and you may not see them until they are close upon us."

Presently a Numidian soldier standing behind Malchus touched him on the shoulder and said in a whisper: "There they are!" pointing at the same time across the plain.

Malchus could for a time see nothing; then he made out some indistinct forms.

"There are six of them," the general said, "and they are making for this grove. Get your bows ready."

Malchus could now clearly see the lions approaching. They were advancing slowly, turning occasionally to look back as if reluctant to quit the shelter of the hills; and Malchus could hardly resist a start of uneasiness as one of them suddenly gave vent to a deep, threatening roar, so menacing and terrible that the very leaves of the trees seemed to quiver in the light of the moon under its vibrations. The lions seemed of huge dimensions, especially the leader of the troop, who stalked with a steady and majestic step at their head. When within fifty yards of the grove the lions suddenly paused; their leader apparently scented danger. Again the deep terrible roar rose in the air, answered by an angry snarling noise on the part of the females.

"Aim at the leader," the general whispered, "and have your brands in readiness."

Immediately behind the party a fire was burning; it had been suffered to die down until it was a mere pile of glowing embers, and in this the ends of a dozen stakes of dried wood were laid. The glow of the fire was carefully hidden by a circle of sticks on which thick cloths had been hung. The fire had been prepared in readiness in case the lions should appear in numbers too formidable to be coped with. The leading lion was within twenty-five paces of the spot where the party was standing when Hamilcar gave the word, and a volley of arrows shot forth from their hiding place.

The lion gave a roar of rage and pain, then, crouching for a moment, with a few tremendous bounds he reached the edge of the wood. He could see his enemies now, and with a fierce spring threw himself upon them. But as soon as they had discharged their arrows the soldiers had caught up their weapons and formed in a close body, and the lion was received upon the points of a dozen spears.

There was a crashing of wood and a snarling growl as one of the soldiers was struck dead with a blow of the mighty paw of the lion, who, ere he could recover himself, received half a dozen javelins thrust deep into his flanks, and fell dead.

The rest of the troop had followed him as he sprang forward, but some of the soldiers, who had been told off for the purpose, seized the lighted brands and threw them over the head of the leader among his followers. As the glowing brands, after describing fiery circles in the air, fell and scattered at their feet, the lions paused, and turning abruptly off dashed away with long bounds across the front of the grove.

"Now, Malchus, to horse!" Hamilcar exclaimed. And the general and his son, leaping upon their steeds, dashed out from the grove in pursuit of the troop of lions. These, passing between the two clumps of trees, were making for the plain beyond, when from behind the other grove a dark band of horsemen rode out.

"Let them pass," Hamilcar shouted; "do not head them back."

The cavalry reined up until the troop of lions had passed. Hamilcar rode up to the officer in command.

"Bring twenty of your men," he said; "let the rest remain here. There will doubtless be more of them yet."

Then with the twenty horsemen he rode on in pursuit of the lions.

The chase was an exciting one. For a time the lions, with their long bounds, kept ahead of the horsemen; but the latter, splendidly mounted on their well bred steeds, soon began to gain. When they were within a hundred yards of them one of the lions suddenly faced round. The Numidians, well accustomed to the sport, needed no orders from their chief. They scattered at once and broke off on each flank so as to encircle the lion, who had taken his post on a hummock of sand and lay couched on his haunches, with his tail lashing his sides angrily, like a great cat about to make his spring.

The horsemen circled round him, dashing up to within five-and-twenty yards, discharging their arrows, and then wheeling away. Each time the lion was struck he uttered a sharp, angry growl, and made a spring in the direction of the horsemen, and then fell back to his post.

One of the soldiers, thinking that the lion was now nearly crippled, ventured to ride somewhat closer; he discharged his arrow, but before he could wheel his horse the lion with two tremendous springs was upon him.

A single blow of his paw brought the horse to the ground. Then the lion seized the soldier by the shoulder, shook him as a cat would a mouse, and throwing him on the sand lay with his paw across him. At this moment Malchus galloped past at full speed, his bow drawn to the arrow head and fixed. The arrow struck the lion just behind its shoulder. The fierce beast, which was in the act of rising, sank down quietly again; its majestic head drooped between its forepaws on to the body of the Numidian, and there it lay as if overtaken with a sudden sleep. Two more arrows were fired into it, but there was no movement.

"The brave beast is dead," Malchus said. "Here is the arrow with which I slew it."

"It was well done, Malchus, and the hide is yours. Let us set off after the others."

But the stand which the lion had made had been sufficiently long to enable the rest of the troop to escape. Leaving two or three of their comrades to remove the body of the soldier, the horsemen scattered in various directions; but although they rode far over the plain, they could see no signs of the troop they had pursued.

After a time they gave up the pursuit and rode back towards the camp. When they reached it they found that another troop of lions, eight in number, had approached the other grove, where two had been killed by the party commanded by Adherbal and Giscon, and the rest of the cavalry were still in pursuit of the others. They presently returned, bringing in four more skins; so that eight lions in all had fallen in the night's work.

"Well, Malchus, what do you think of lion hunting?" Adherbal asked as they gathered again in the general's tent.

"They are terrible beasts," Malchus said. "I had not thought that any beast could make so tremendous a roar. Of course I have heard those in captivity in Carthage, but it did not seem nearly so terrible as it sounded here in the stillness of the desert."

"I own that it made my blood run cold," Adherbal said; "and their charge is tremendous—they broke through the hedge of spears as if they had been reeds. Three of our men were killed."

"Yes," Malchus agreed; "it seemed almost like a dream for a minute when the great beast was among us. I felt very glad when he rolled over on to his side."

"It is a dangerous way of hunting," Hamilcar said. "The chase on horseback in the plains has its dangers, as we saw when that Numidian was killed; but with proper care and skill it is a grand sport. But this work on foot is too dangerous, and has cost the republic the loss of five soldiers. Had I had nets with me I would have adopted the usual plan of stretching one across the trees ten paces in front of us. This breaks the lion's spring, he becomes entangled in its meshes, and can be destroyed with but little danger. But no skill or address avails against the charge of a wounded lion. But you are wounded, Giscon."

"It is a mere nothing," Giscon said.

"Nay," Hamilcar replied, "it is an ugly scratch, Giscon; he has laid open your arm from the shoulder to the elbow as if it were by the cut of a knife."

"It served me right for being too rash," Giscon said. "I thought he was nearly dead, and approached with my sword to give him a finishing thrust. When he struck viciously at me I sprang back, but one of his claws caught my shoulder. A few inches nearer and he would have stripped the flesh from my arm, and perhaps broken the limb and shoulder bone."

While he was speaking a slave was washing the wound, which he then carefully bandaged up. A few minutes later the whole party lay down to sleep. Malchus found it difficult to close his eyes. His pulse was still throbbing with excitement, and his mind was busy with the brief but stirring scene of the conflict.

Two or three hours passed, and he felt drowsiness creeping over him, when he heard a sudden challenge, followed instantly by a loud and piercing yell from hundreds of throats. He sprang in an instant to his feet, as did the other occupants of the tent.

"To arms!" Hamilcar cried; "the enemy are upon us."

Malchus caught up his shield and sword, threw his helmet on his head, and rushed out of the tent with his father.

A tremendous din had succeeded the silence which had just before reigned in the desert, and the yells of the barbarians rose high in the air, answered by shouts and loud words of command from the soldiers in the other grove. The elephants in their excitement were trumpeting loudly; the horses stamped the ground; the draught cattle, terrified by the din, strove to break away.

Large numbers of dark figures occupied the space some two hundred yards wide between the groves. The general's guards, twenty in number, had already sprung to their feet and stood to arms;

the slaves and attendants, panic stricken at the sudden attack, were giving vent to screams and cries and were running about in confusion.

Hamilcar sternly ordered silence.

“Let each man,” he said, “take a weapon of some kind and stand steady. We are cut off from the main body and shall have to fight for our lives. Do you,” he said to the soldiers, “lay aside your spears and shoot quickly among them. Fire fast. The great object is to conceal from them the smallness of our number.”

Moving round the little grove Hamilcar posted the slaves at short distances apart, to give warning should the enemy be attempting an attack upon the other sides, and then returned to the side facing the other grove, where the soldiers were keeping up a steady fire at the enemy.

The latter were at present concentrating their attention upon their attack upon the main body. Their scouts on the hills during the previous day had no doubt ascertained that the Carthaginian force was encamped here, and the occupants of the smaller grove would fall easy victims after they had dealt with the main body. The fight was raging furiously here. The natives had crept up close before they were discovered by the sentries, and with a fierce rush they had fallen upon the troops before they had time to seize their arms and gather in order.

The fight raged hand to hand, bows twanged and arrows flew, the light javelins were hurled at close quarters with deadly effect, the shrill cries of the Numidians mingled with the deeper shouts of the Iberians and the yells of the natives. Hamilcar stood for a minute irresolute.

“They are neglecting us,” he said to Adherbal, “until they have finished with the main body; we must go to their assistance. At present our men are fighting without order or regularity. Unless their leaders are with them they are lost, our presence will encourage and reanimate them. Bring up the elephants quickly.”

The three elephants were at once brought forward, their drivers mounted on their necks. Four soldiers with their bows and arrows took their places on the back of each, the general with the rest of the fighting men followed closely behind.

At the orders of their drivers the well trained animals broke into a trot, and the party advanced from the shadow of the grove. The natives scattered between it and the wood fired a volley of arrows and then broke as the elephants charged down upon them. Trained to warfare the elephants dashed among them, catching some up in their trunks and dashing them lifeless to the ground, knocking down and trampling upon others, scattering terror wherever they went, while the archers on their backs kept up a deadly fire. As soon as the way was open Hamilcar led the little party on foot at full speed towards the wood.

As he entered it he ordered his trumpeter to blow his horn. The well known signal revived the hopes and courage of the sorely pressed troops, who, surprised and discouraged, had been losing ground, great numbers falling before the arrows and javelins of their swarming and active foes. The natives, surprised at the trumpet sound in the rear, paused a moment, and before they could turn round to face their unexpected adversaries, Hamilcar with his little band burst his way through them and joined his soldiers, who, gathered now in a close body in the centre of the grove, received their leader with a shout of welcome.

Hamilcar's measures were promptly taken. He saw that if stationary his band must melt away under the shower of missiles which was being poured upon them. He gave the command and the troops rapidly formed into three groups, the men of each corps gathering together. Adherbal, who was in command of the Numidians, placed himself at their head, Giscon led the Iberians, and Hamilcar headed the heavily armed troops, Malchus taking his place at his side. Hamilcar had already given his orders to the young officers. No response was to be made to the fire of the arrows and javelins, but with spear, sword, and battleaxe the troops were to fall upon the natives.

“Charge!” he shouted in a voice that was heard above the yells of the barbarians. “Clear the wood of these lurking enemies, they dare not face you. Sweep them before your path.”

With an answering shout the three bodies of men sprang forward, each in a different direction. In vain the natives poured in volleys of arrows and javelins; many fell, more were wounded, but all who could keep their feet rushed forward with fury upon their assailants.

The charge was irresistible. The natives, fighting each for himself, were unable for a moment to withstand the torrent, and, vastly superior in numbers as they were, were driven headlong before it. When they reached the edge of the wood each of the bodies broke into two. The Numidians had directed their course towards their horses, which a party of their own men were still defending desperately against the attacks of a large body of natives. Through these they cut their way, and springing upon their steeds dashed out into the plain, and sweeping round the grove fell upon the natives there, and cut down the parties of men who emerged in confusion from its shelter, unable to withstand the assaults of Hamilcar and his infantry within.

The heavy infantry and the Iberians, when they gained the edge of the wood, had swept to the right and left, cleared the edge of the grove of their enemies until they met, then joining they again plunged into the centre. Thus they traversed the wood in every direction until they had completely cleared it of foes.

When the work was done the breathless and exhausted troops gathered outside, in the light of the moon. More than half their number had fallen; scarce one but was bleeding from wounds of arrow or javelin. The plain beyond was thickly dotted to the foot of the hills with the bodies of the natives who had been cut up by the Numidian horse or trampled by the elephants, while the grove within was thickly strewn with their bodies.

As there was no fear of a renewal of the attack, Hamilcar ordered the men to fall out of ranks, and the hours until daybreak were passed in extracting arrows and binding up wounds, and in assisting their comrades who were found to be still living in the grove. Any natives still breathing were instantly slain.

Hamilcar found that a party of the enemy had made their way into his own camp. His tent had been hastily plundered, but most of the effects were found in the morning scattered over the ground between the groves and the hills, having been thrown away in their flight by the natives when the horsemen burst out of the wood in pursuit. Of the slaves and attendants several had been killed, but the greater portion had, when Hamilcar left the grove with the troops, climbed up into trees, and remained there concealed until the rout of the assailants.

It was found in the morning that over one hundred and fifty of the three hundred Carthaginian troops had fallen, and that four hundred of the natives had been slain either in the grove or in the pursuit by cavalry.

The following day two envoys arrived from the hostile tribe offering the submission of their chief.

As pursuit in the hills would be useless Hamilcar offered them comparatively easy terms. A heavy fine in horses and cattle was to be paid to the republic, and ten of the principal members of the tribe were to be delivered up as hostages for their future good behaviour. The next day the hostages were brought into the camp with a portion of the ransom; and Hamilcar, having thus accomplished the mission he had been charged to perform, marched away with his troops to Carthage.

As they approached the coast the whole character of the scenery changed. The desert had been left behind them, and they entered a fertile tract of country which had been literally turned into a garden by the skill and industry of the Carthaginian cultivators, at that time celebrated throughout the world for their knowledge of the science of agriculture. The rougher and more sterile ground was covered with groves of olive trees, while rich vineyards and orchards of fig and other fruit trees occupied the better soil. Wherever it was possible little canals leading water from reservoirs and dammed up streams crossed the plains, and every foot of the irrigated ground was covered with a luxuriant crop.

The villages were scattered thickly, and when the troops arrived within a day's march of Carthage they came upon the country villas and mansions of the wealthy inhabitants. These in the richness of their architecture, the perfection and order of their gardens, and the beauty and taste of the orchards and grounds which surrounded them, testified alike to the wealth and taste of their occupants.

Fountains threw their water into the air, numerous waterfalls splashed with a cool, soothing sound over artificial rocks. Statues wrought by Greek sculptors stood on the terraces, shady walks offered a cool retreat during the heat of the day, the vine, the pomegranate, and the fig afforded refreshment to the palate as well as pleasure to the eye. Palm trees with their graceful foliage waved gently in the passing breezes. All the countries with which the Carthaginians traded had supplied their contingent of vegetation to add to the beauty and production of these gardens, which were the admiration and envy of the civilized world.

Crossing the brow of a low range of hills the detachment came in sight of Carthage. The general and his three companions, who were riding in the rear of the column, drew in their horses and sat for a while surveying the scene. It was one which, familiar as it might be, it was impossible to survey without the deepest feeling of admiration.

In the centre stood the great rock of Byrsa, a flat topped eminence with almost perpendicular sides rising about two hundred feet above the surrounding plain. This plateau formed the seat of the ancient Carthage, the Phoenician colony which Dido had founded. It was now the acropolis of Carthage. Here stood the temples of the chief deities of the town; here were immense magazines and storehouses capable of containing provisions for a prolonged siege for the fifty thousand men whom the place could contain. The craggy sides of the rock were visible but in few places. Massive fortifications rising from its foot to its summit defended every point where the rock was not absolutely perpendicular. These walls were of enormous thickness, and in casemates or recesses in their thickness were the stables for the elephants, horses, and cattle of the garrison.

Round the upper edge of the rock extended another massive wall, above which in picturesque outline rose the temple and other public edifices. At the foot of this natural citadel stretched the lower town, with its crowded population, its dense mass of houses, its temples and forum. The style of architecture was peculiar to the city. The Carthaginians abhorred straight lines, and all their buildings presented curves. The rooms were for the most part circular, semicircular, or oval, and all exterior as well as interior angles were rounded off. The material used in their construction was an artificial stone composed of pieces of rock cemented together with fine sand and lime, and as hard as natural conglomerate. The houses were surmounted by domes or cupolas. Their towers were always round, and throughout the city scarce an angle offended the eye of the populace.

Extending into the bay lay the isthmus, known as the Tana, some three miles in length, communicating with the mainland by a tongue of land a hundred yards wide.

This was the maritime quarter of Carthage; here were the extensive docks in which the vessels which bore the commerce of the city to and from the uttermost parts of the known world loaded and unloaded. Here were the state dockyards where the great ships of war, which had so long made Carthage the mistress of the sea, were constructed and fitted out. The whole line of the coast was deeply indented with bays, where rode at anchor the ships of the mercantile navy. Broad inland lakes dotted the plain; while to the north of Byrsa, stretching down to the sea and extending as far as Cape Quamart, lay Megara, the aristocratic suburb of Carthage.

Here, standing in gardens and parks, were the mansions of the wealthy merchants and traders, the suburb presenting to the eye a mass of green foliage dotted thickly with white houses. Megara was divided from the lower town by a strong and lofty wall, but lay within the outer wall which inclosed Byrsa and the whole of Carthage and stretched from sea to sea.

The circumference of the inclosed space was fully twenty miles; the population contained within it amounted to over eight hundred thousand. On the north side near the sea, within the line of the outer

fortifications, rose a low hill, and here on the face which sloped gently down to the sea was the great necropolis—the cemetery of Carthage, shaded by broad spreading trees, dotted with the gorgeous mausoleums of the wealthy and the innumerable tombs of the poorer families, and undermined by thousands of great sepulchral chambers, which still remain to testify to the vastness of the necropolis of Carthage, and to the pains which her people bestowed upon the burying places of their dead.

Beyond all, from the point at which the travellers viewed it, stretched the deep blue background of the Mediterranean, its line broken only in the foreground by the lofty citadel of Byrsa, and far out at sea by the faint outline of the Isle of Zinbre.

For some minutes the party sat immovable on their horses, then Hamilcar broke the silence:

“‘Tis a glorious view,” he said; “the world does not contain a site better fitted for the seat of a mighty city. Nature seems to have marked it out. With the great rock fortress, the splendid bays and harbours, the facilities for commerce, the fertile country stretching away on either hand; give her but a government strong, capable, and honest, a people patriotic, brave, and devoted, and Carthage would long remain the mistress of the world.”

“Surely she may yet remain so,” Adherbal exclaimed.

“I fear not,” Hamilcar said gravely, shaking his head. “It seems to be the fate of all nations, that as they grow in wealth so they lose their manly virtues. With wealth comes corruption, indolence, a reluctance to make sacrifices, and a weakening of the feeling of patriotism. Power falls into the hands of the ignorant many. Instead of the destinies of the country being swayed by the wisest and best, a fickle multitude, swayed by interested demagogues, assumes the direction of affairs, and the result is inevitable—wasted powers, gross mismanagement, final ruin.”

So saying Hamilcar set his horse in motion and, followed silently by his companions, rode with a gloomy countenance after his little columns towards the capital.

CHAPTER III: CARTHAGE

Carthage was at that time divided between two factions, the one led by the relatives and friends of the great Hamilcar Barca and known as the Barcine party. The other was led by Hanno, surnamed the Rich. This man had been the rival of Hamilcar, and the victories and successes of the latter had been neutralized by the losses and defeats entailed upon the republic by the incapacity of the former. Hanno, however, had the support of the greater part of the senate, of the judges, and of the lower class, which he attached to himself by a lavish distribution of his vast wealth, or by the common tie of wholesale corruption.

The Barcine party were very inferior in numbers, but they comprised among them the energy, the military genius, and the patriotism of the community. They advocated sweeping reforms, the purification of the public service, the suppression of the corruption which was rampant in every department, the fair administration of justice, the suppression of the tyranny of the committee, the vigorous prosecution of the struggle with Rome. They would have attached to Carthage the but half subdued nations round her who now groaned under her yoke, ground down to the dust by the enormous tribute necessitated by the extravagance of the administration of the state, the corruption and wholesale speculation of its officials.

Hamilcar Barca had been the founder of the party; in his absence at the seat of war it had been led at Carthage by his son-in-law Hasdrubal, whose fiery energy and stirring eloquence had rendered him a popular idol in Carthage. But even the genius of Hamilcar and the eloquence of Hasdrubal would not have sufficed to enable the Barcine party to make head against the enormous power of the council and the judges, backed by the wealth of Hanno and his associates, had it not been for the military successes which flattered the patriotic feelings of the populace.

The loss of Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily had been atoned for by the conquest of the greater portion of Spain by Hamilcar, and that general might eventually have carried out his plans for the purification of the government of Carthage had he not fallen in a battle with the Iberians. This loss was a terrible blow to the Barcine faction, but the deep feeling of regret among the population at the death of their great general enabled them to carry the election of Hasdrubal to be one of the suffetes in his place, and to obtain for him the command of the army in Spain.

There was the less difficulty in the latter appointment, since Hanno's party were well content that the popular leader should be far removed from the capital. Hasdrubal proved himself a worthy successor of his father-in-law. He carried out the policy inaugurated by the latter, won many brilliant victories over the Iberians, fortified and firmly established Carthage as a port and city which seemed destined to rival the greatness of its mother city, and Carthage saw with delight a great western settlement growing in power which promised to counterbalance the influence of the ever spreading territory of her great rival in Italy.

After seeing his detachment safely lodged in the barracks Hamilcar and his companions rode along the streets to the Barcine Syssite, or club, one of the grandest buildings in Carthage. Throwing the reins of their horses to some slaves who stood in readiness at the foot of the steps, they entered the building. As they rode through the streets they had noticed that the population appeared singularly quiet and dejected, and the agitation which reigned in the club showed them that something unusual had happened. Groups of men were standing talking excitedly in the great hall. Others with dejected mien were pacing the marble pavement. As Hamilcar entered, several persons hurried up to him.

"Welcome back again!" they exclaimed; "your presence is most opportune at this sad moment."

"What has happened?" Hamilcar asked; "I have but this moment arrived, and rode straight here to hear the news of what has taken place in my absence."

"What! have you not heard?" they exclaimed; "for the last four days nothing else has been talked of, nothing else thought of—Hasdrubal has been assassinated!"

Hamilcar recoiled a step as if struck.

“Ye gods!” he exclaimed, “can this be so? Hasdrubal the handsome, as he was well called, the true patriot, the great general, the eloquent orator, the soul of generosity and patriotism, our leader and hope, dead! Surely it cannot be.”

“It is too true, Hamilcar. Hasdrubal is dead—slain by the knife of an Iberian, who, it seems, has for months been in his service, awaiting the chance for revenge for some injuries which his family or people have suffered from our arms.

“It is a terrible blow. This morning a swift sailing ship has arrived with the news that the army of Spain have with one voice acclaimed the young Hannibal as their general, and that they demand the ratification of their choice by the senate and people. Need I tell you how important it is that this ratification should be gained? Hanno and his satellites are furious, they are scattering money broadcast, and moving heaven and earth to prevent the choice falling upon Hannibal, and to secure the appointment for Hanno himself or one of his clique. They say that to appoint a youth like this to such a position would be a thing unheard of, that it would bring countless dangers upon the head of the republic. We know, of course, that what they fear is not the youth and inexperience, but the talent and genius of Hannibal.

“Young though he is, his wonderful abilities are recognized by us all. His father, Hamilcar, had the very highest hopes of him, Hasdrubal has written again and again saying that in his young kinsman he recognized his superior, and that in loftiness of aim, in unselfish patriotism, in clearness of judgment, in the marvellous ascendancy he has gained over the troops, in his talent in administration, and in the greatness of his military conceptions, he saw in him a genius of the highest order. If it be in man to overthrow the rising greatness of Rome, to reform our disordered administration, to raise Carthage again to the climax of her glory and power, that man is Hannibal.

“Thus, then, on him our hopes rest. If we can secure for him the command of the army in Spain, he may do all and more than all that Hamilcar and Hasdrubal have done for us. If we fail, we are lost; Hanno will be supreme, the official party will triumph, man by man we shall be denounced and, destroyed by the judges, and, worse than all, our hopes of saving Carthage from the corruption and tyranny which have so long been pressing her into the dust are at an end. It is a good omen of success that you have returned from your expedition at such a critical moment. All has gone well with you, I hope. You know the fate that awaits an unsuccessful general here.”

“Ay, I know,” Hamilcar said bitterly; “to be judged by a secret tribunal of civilians, ignorant of even the rudimentary laws of war, and bent not upon arriving at the truth, but of gratifying their patrons and accomplices; the end, disgrace and execution.

“No, my success has been complete, although not brilliant. I have obtained the complete submission of the Atarantes, and have brought with me ten of their principal chiefs as hostages; but my success narrowly escaped being not only a failure but a disaster. I had in vain striven to come to blows with them, when suddenly they fell upon me at night, and in the desperate combat which followed, well nigh half my force fell; but in the end we inflicted a terrible chastisement upon them and completely humbled their pride.”

“So long as you succeeded in humbling them and bringing home hostages for their good behaviour, all is well; the lives of a few score of soldiers, more or less, matters little to Carthage. We have but to send out an order to the tribes and we can replace them a hundred fold in a week; ‘tis only a failure which would be fatal. Carthage has suffered such terrible disasters at the hands of her tributaries that she trembles at the slightest rising, for its success might be the signal for another general insurrection. If you have humbled the Atarantes, all is well.

“I know the council have been anxiously expecting news of your expedition. Our opinion here has been from the first that, from the small force they placed at your command, they purposely sent you to disaster, risking the chance of extended trouble in order to obtain a ground of complaint by which they could inflame the minds of the populace against our party. But now, I recommend you

to take some refreshment at once after your journey. The inner council of the club will meet in an hour, and their deliberations are likely to be long as well as important, for the whole future of our party, and of Carthage itself, depends upon the issue.”

“Malchus,” Hamilcar said, “do you mount your horse and ride out at once and tell your mother that all has gone well with us, but that I am detained here on important business, and may not return until nightfall.”

“May I come back here, father, after I see my mother? I would fain be of some use, if I may. I am known to many of the sailors down at the port; I might go about among them trying to stir them up in favour of Hannibal.”

“You may come back if you like, Malchus; your sailors may aid us with their voices, or, should it come to anything like a popular disturbance, by their arms. But, as you know, in the voting the common people count for nothing, it is the citizens only who elect, the traders, shopkeepers, and employers of labour. Common people count for no more than the slaves, save when it comes to a popular tumult, and they frighten the shopkeeping class into voting in accordance with their views. However, we will leave no stone unturned that may conduce to our success. Do not hurry away from home, my boy, for your mother would think it unkind after three months’ absence. Our council is likely to last for some hours; when it is at an end I will look for you here and tell you what has been determined upon.”

Malchus mounted his horse and rode out through the narrow streets of the lower city, through the gateway leading into the suburb, then he loosed the rein and the horse started at a gallop along the broad road, lined with stately mansions, and in a quarter of an hour stopped in front of the villa of Hamilcar.

Throwing his bridle to a slave he ran up the broad steps of the portico and entered the hall. His mother, a stately woman, clad in a long flowing garment of rich material embroidered in gold, arms and neck bare, her hair bound up in a knot at the back of her head, which was encircled by a golden fillet, with pendants of the same metal encrusted with gems falling on her forehead, rose eagerly to meet him, and his two sisters, girls older than himself, clad in white robes, confined at the waist with golden belts, leaped to their feet with a cry of gladness.

“Welcome back, my own son,” his mother said; “all is well, I hope, with your father; It is so, I am sure, for I should read evil news in your face.”

“He is well, mother, well and victorious, though we had a rare fight for it, I can tell you. But he is kept at the Barcine Syssite on matters connected with this terrible business of the death of Hasdrubal. He bade me give you his love, and say he would be back here as soon as he could get away.”

“It is terrible news indeed, Malchus. The loss is a grievous blow to Carthage, but especially to us who are his near kinsfolk; but for the moment let us set it aside and talk of your doings. How the sun has bronzed your face, child! You seem to have grown taller and stouter since you have been away.

“Yes,” one of the sisters laughed, “the child is growing up, mother; you will have to choose another name for him.”

“I think it is about time,” Malchus said, joining in the laugh, “considering that I have killed a lion and have taken part in a desperate hand-to-hand fight with the wild Atarantes. I think even my mother must own that I am attaining the dignity of youth.”

“I wonder your father let you take part in such strife,” the mother said anxiously; “he promised me that he would, as far as possible, keep you out of danger.”

“Why, mother,” Malchus said indignantly, “you don’t suppose that my father was going to coddle me as he might do one of the girls here. You know he has promised that I shall soon enter the Carthaginian guard, and fight in the next campaign. I think it has been very hard on me not to have had a chance of distinguishing myself as my cousin Hannibal did when he was no older than I am.”

“Poor boy,” his sister laughed, “he has indeed been unfortunate. Who can say but that if he had only had opportunities he would have been a general by this time, and that Rome would have been trembling at the clash of his armour.”

Malchus joined heartily in the laugh about himself.

“I shall never grow to be a general,” he said, “unless you get me some food; it is past midday, and I have not broken my fast this morning. I warn you that I shall not tell you a word of our adventures until I have eaten, therefore the sooner you order a meal to be served the better.”

The meal was speedily served, and then for an hour Malchus sat with his mother and sisters, giving them a history of the expedition. There was a little playful grumbling on the part of his sisters when he told them that he was going to return to the Syssite to hear what had been determined by the conclave.

“Surely you can wait until our father returns here, Malchus,” Thyra, the elder, said.

“Yes; but I may be useful,” Malchus replied. “There will be lots to be done, and we shall all do our utmost.”

“Listen to him, mother,” Anna, the younger sister, said, clapping her hands; “this comes of slaying lions and combating with the Atarantes; do not let us hinder him; beg the slaves to bring round a horse instantly. Carthage totters, let Malchus fly to its support. What part are you thinking of taking, my brother, do you mean to harangue the people, or to urge the galley slaves to revolt, or to lead the troops against the council?”

The two girls burst into a peal of merry laughter, in which Malchus, although colouring a little, joined heartily.

“You are too bad, Anna; what I want is, of course, to hear what has been done, and to join in the excitement, and really I am not such a boy as you girls think me, just because you happen to be two or three years older than I am. You persist in regarding me as a child; father doesn’t do so, and I can tell you I may be more good than you think.”

“Well, go along, Malchus, do not let us keep you, and don’t get into mischief and remember, my boy,” his mother added, “that Carthage is a place where it is well that no one should make more enemies than he can help. A secret foe in the council or among the judges is enough to ruin the strongest. You know how many have been crucified or pressed to death without a shadow of pretext, save that they had foes. I would not see you other than your father’s son; you will belong, of course, to the Barcine party, but there is no occasion to draw enmity and hate upon yourself before you are in a position to do real service to the cause. And now ride off with you; I know all our words are falling on deaf ears, and that willful lads will go their own way.”

A few minutes later and Malchus was on his way back to the club. On his arrival there he found that the sitting of the inner council was not yet finished. The building was thronged with the adherents of the party waiting to ascertain what course was determined upon. He presently came across Adherbal and Giscon. The former, as usual, was gay, light hearted, and disposed to view matters in a humorous light; Giscon was stern and moody.

“So, here you are again, Malchus,” Adherbal said. “I thought you would soon be back. I am glad you have come, for Giscon here grows monotonous as a companion. Nature in making him forgot to give him that spice of humour which is to existence what seasoning is to meat. I am ready to fight if it comes to fighting, to orate if talking is necessary, and to do anything else which may be within the limits of my powers, but I can’t for the life of me take matters as if the existence of the state depended on me alone. I have already heard that all is well with you at home. I shall ride out there and see your mother when this business is over. What they can find to talk about so long I can’t make out.

“The question is a simple one, surely. Will it be better for Carthage at large, and our party in particular, for Hannibal to stay at the head of the army in Spain, or to come home and bring the influence of his popularity and reputation to bear upon the populace? There is the question put in a

nutshell, and if they can't decide upon it let them toss up. There is virtue, I am ready to maintain, in an appeal to dame Fortune.

"Look round now, Malchus, is it not amusing to study men's characters. Look at little Philene going about among the groups, standing on tiptoe to whisper into the ear first of one and then of another. He prides himself on his knowledge of affairs, and in his heart believes that he is shamefully wronged inasmuch as he is not already on the secret committee.

"Look at Bomilca leaning against that pillar and lazily pulling his mustache, an easygoing giant, who looks upon the whole thing as a nuisance, but who, if he received orders from the conclave, would put himself at the head of the Libyans, and would march to storm Hanno's house, and to slaughter his Numidian guard without a question.

"Look at Magon's face of importance as he walks about without speaking to anyone. He is trying to convey to all the impression that he knows perfectly well what is going on inside, and could if he chose tell you what the decision will be. There is Carthalon, who is thinking at present, I warrant, more of the match which he has made of his Arab steed against that of his comrade Phano, than of the matter in hand. But see, there is a stir, the curtains are drawing aside at last, the meeting is over."

As he spoke the heavy curtains which shut off an inner room from the hall were drawn aside, and the council of the Syssite came out. Each was speedily surrounded by a group of the members of his own family, or those who specially looked up to him as a leader. Malchus and the two young officers were among those who gathered round Hamilcar.

"It has been decided," the general said, "that Hannibal shall be retained in his command. Therefore, now let all set to work, each in his own sphere. The populace must be stirred up. We have a small majority in the council, but the middle class, the men who will vote, are with Hanno. Some have been bought with his gold, some of the weak fools dream that Carthage can be great simply as a trading power without army or navy, and think only of the present advantage they would gain by remission of taxation. It is these we have to fear, and we must operate upon them by means of the populace.

"If the people gather in the streets and shout for Hannibal, these cowards will hesitate. They are accessible only in their moneybags, and rather than risk a riot they would vote for the destruction of Moloch's temple. Giscon and Adherbal, do you go to the barracks, get as many of your comrades together as are of our way of thinking, talk to the soldiers of the glories of Hamilcar Barca, of the rich booty they won under him, of the glory of their arms when he led them, tell them that in Hannibal they have their old commander revived, and that Hanno and his companions seek only to have him removed, because they fear that the luster of his deeds will overshadow them.

"Urge that he is the elect of the army of Spain, that the voice of the soldiers has acclaimed him, and that the troops here should join their voices to those of their comrades in Spain. They too may ere long have to take share in the war, and would it not be far better for them to be led by a soldier like Hannibal than by Hanno, whose incapacity has been proved a score of times, and who is solely chosen because he is rich, and because he has pandered to the fat traders and lazy shopkeepers?

"Do you, Stryphex, go to the weavers' quarter; you have influence there. Work upon the men, point out to them how, since Hamilcar and Hasdrubal have conquered Spain, and the gold and silver from the mines have poured into Carthage, their trade has flourished. Before that gold was scarce known in the city, none could purchase their choice productions, their wages would scarce keep the wolf from the door. Show them that under Hanno disaster will be sure to befall our arms, that the Iberians will reconquer their soil, that the mines will be lost, and we shall have to return to the leather money of twenty years back."

So one by one Hamilcar despatched the groups round him on various missions, until Malchus alone remained.

"You, Malchus, can, as you suggested, go down to the port; ask the sailors and fishermen what will become of their trade were the Roman galleys cruising in our bay. Point out that our conquests

in Spain have already caused the greatest alarm in Rome, and that under Hannibal our arms will so flourish that Rome will be glad to come to terms with us, and to leave us free to trade with the world.

“Point out how great is the trade and commerce which Carthagera has already produced. Ask them if they are willing that all this shall be hazarded, in order that Hanno may gratify his personal ambition, and his creatures may wring the last penny from the over taxed people of Carthage. Don’t try too much, my boy. Get together a knot of men whom you know; prime them with argument, and send them among their fellows. Tell them to work day and night, and that you will see that their time is well paid. Find out if there are any men who have special influence with their fellows, and secure them on our side. Promise them what they will; the Syssite will spend money like water to carry its object. Be discreet, Malchus; when you have lit the fire, and see that it is well on its way, withdraw quietly.”

Malchus hurried off, and in half an hour was down by the port. Through the densely packed district which lay behind the lofty warehouses crammed with goods brought by sea from all parts of the world, he made his way until he reached the abode of a fisherman, in whose boat he often put to sea.

The old man, with three or four grownup sons, was reclining on a pile of rushes.

“Welcome back, my lord Malchus,” he said; “glad am I to see you safely returned. We have often talked of you, me and my sons, and wondered when you would again go out for a night’s fishing with us. You have come back at the right time. The tunny are just entering the bay, and in another week we shall have rare sport.”

“I shall be glad, indeed, of another sail with you,” Malchus said; “but at present I have other matters in hand. Hanno and his friends have determined to oppose the appointment of Hannibal to the army in Spain.” The fisherman gave a grunt, which signified that the matter was one of which he knew nothing, and which affected him not in the slightest.

“Don’t you see the importance of this?” Malchus said. “If Hannibal doesn’t get the command our troops will be beaten, and we shall lose all our trade with Spain.” The fisherman still appeared apathetic.

“My sons have all taken to fishing,” he said indifferently, “and it matters nothing to them whether we lose the trade of Spain or not.”

“But it would make a difference,” Malchus said, “if no more gold and silver came from Spain, because then, you know, people wouldn’t be able to pay a good price for fish, and there would be bad times for you fishermen. But that is not the worst of it. The Romans are so alarmed by our progress in Spain that they are glad to keep friends with us, but if we were driven out from there they would soon be at war again. You and your sons would be pressed for the ships of war, and like enough you might see the Roman fleets hovering on our coasts and picking up our fishing boats.”

“By Astarte,” the fisherman exclaimed, “but that would be serious, indeed; and you say all this will happen unless Hannibal remains as general in Spain?”

“That is so,” Malchus nodded.

“Then I tell you what, my boys,” the fisherman said, rising and rubbing his hands, “we must put our oars into this business. You hear what my lord Malchus tells us. Get up, there is work to be done. Now, sir, what is the best way to stop this affair you tell us of? If it’s got to be done we will do it, and I think I can answer for three or four thousand fishing hands here who ain’t going to stand by any more than I am and see the bread taken out of their mouths. They know old Calcon, and will listen to what he says. I will set about it at once.”

“That is just what I want,” Malchus said. “I want you and your sons to go about among the fishermen and tell them what is proposed to be done, and how ruinous it will be for them. You know how fond of fishermen I am, and how sorry I should be to see them injured. You stir them up for the next three or four days, and get them to boiling point. I will let you know when the time comes. There are other trades who will be injured by this business, and when the time comes you fishermen

with your oars in your hands must join the others and go through the streets shouting ‘Hannibal for general! Down with Hanno and the tax gatherers!’”

“Down with the tax gatherers is a good cry,” the old fisherman said. “They take one fish of every four I bring in, and always choose the finest. Don’t you be afraid, sir; we will be there, oars and all, when you give the word.”

“And now I want you to tell me the names of a few men who have influence among the sailors of the mercantile ships, and among those who load and discharge the cargoes; their interest is threatened as well as yours. I am commissioned to pay handsomely all who do their best for the cause, and I promise you that you and your sons shall earn as much in four days’ work as in a month’s toiling on the sea. The Barcine Club is known to be the true friend of Carthage, the opponent of those who grind down the people, and it will spare no money to see that this matter is well carried out.”

The fisherman at once went round with Malchus to the abodes of several men regarded as authorities by the sailors and stevedores. With these, partly by argument, but much more by the promises of handsome pay for their exertions, Malchus established an understanding, and paved the way for a popular agitation among the working classes of the waterside in favour of Hannibal.

CHAPTER IV: A POPULAR RISING

Day after day Malchus went down to the port. His father was well pleased with his report of what he had done and provided him with ample funds for paying earnest money to his various agents, as a proof that their exertions would be well rewarded. He soon had the satisfaction of seeing that the agitation was growing.

Work was neglected, the sailors and labourers collected on the quays and talked among themselves, or listened to orators of their own class, who told them of the dangers which threatened their trade from the hatred of Hanno and his friends the tax collectors for Hannibal, whose father and brother-in-law had done such great things for Carthage by conquering Spain and adding to her commerce by the establishment of Carthage and other ports. Were they going to stand tamely by and see trade ruined, and their families starving, that the tyrants who wrung from them the taxes should fatten at ease?

Such was the tenor of the orations delivered by scores of men to their comrades on the quays. A calm observer might have noticed a certain sameness about the speeches, and might have come to the conclusion that the orators had received their instructions from the same person, but this passed unnoticed by the sailors and workmen, who were soon roused into fury by the exhortations of the speakers. They knew nothing either of Hannibal or of Hanno, but they did know that they were ground down to the earth with taxation, and that the conquest of Spain and the trade that had arisen had been of enormous benefit to them. It was, then, enough to tell them that this trade was threatened, and that it was threatened in the interest of the tyrants of Carthage, for them to enter heart and soul into the cause.

During these four days the Barcine Club was like the headquarters of an army. Night and day the doors stood open, messengers came and went continually, consultations of the leading men of the city were held almost without a break. Every man belonging to it had his appointed task. The landed proprietors stirred up the cultivators of the soil, the manufacturers were charged with the enlightenment of their hands as to the dangers of the situation, the soldiers were busy among the troops; but theirs was a comparatively easy task, for these naturally sympathized with their comrades in Spain, and the name of the great Hamilcar was an object of veneration among them.

Hanno's faction was not idle. The Syssite which was composed of his adherents was as large as its rival. Its orators harangued the people in the streets on the dangers caused to the republic by the ambition of the family of Barca, of the expense entailed by the military and naval establishments required to keep up the forces necessary to carry out their aggressive policy, of the folly of confiding the principal army of the state to the command of a mere youth. They dilated on the wealth and generosity of Hanno, of his lavish distribution of gifts among the poor, of his sympathy with the trading community. Each day the excitement rose, business was neglected, the whole population was in a fever of excitement.

On the evening of the fourth day the agents of the Barcine Club discovered that Hanno's party were preparing for a public demonstration on the following evening. They had a certainty of a majority in the public vote, which, although nominally that of the people, was, as has been said, confined solely to what would now be called the middle class.

Hitherto the Barcine party had avoided fixing any period for their own demonstration, preferring to wait until they knew the intention of their opponents. The council now settled that it should take place on the following day at eleven o'clock, just when the working classes would have finished their morning meal.

The secret council, however, determined that no words should be whispered outside their own body until two hours before the time, in order that it should not be known to Hanno and his friends

until too late to gather their adherents to oppose it. Private messengers were, however, sent out late to all the members to assemble early at the club.

At nine o'clock next morning the Syssite was crowded, the doors were closed, and the determination of the council was announced to the members, each of whom was ordered to hurry off to set the train in motion for a popular outbreak for eleven o'clock. It was not until an hour later that the news that the Barcine party intended to forestall them reached Hanno's headquarters. Then the most vigorous efforts were made to get together their forces, but it was too late. At eleven o'clock crowds of men from all the working portions of the town were seen making their way towards the forum, shouting as they went, "Hannibal for general!" "Down with Hanno and the tax gatherers!"

Conspicuous among them were the sailors and fishermen from the port, armed with oars, and the gang of stevedores with heavy clubs. Hanno and a large number of his party hurried down to the spot and tried to pacify the crowd, but the yells of execration were so loud and continuous that they were forced to leave the forum. The leaders of the Barcine party now appeared on the scene, and their most popular orator ascended the rostrum. When the news spread among the crowd that he was a friend of Hannibal and an opponent of Hanno, the tumult was stayed in order that all might hear his words.

"My friends," he said, "I am glad to see that Carthage is still true to herself, and that you resent the attempt made by a faction to remove the general of the army's choice, the son of the great Hamilcar Barca. To him and to Hasdrubal, his son-in-law, you owe the conquest of Spain, you owe the wealth which has of late years poured into Carthage, you owe the trade which is already doing so much to mitigate your condition. What have Hanno and his friends done that you should listen to him? It is their incapacity which has lost Carthage so many of its possessions. It is their greed and corruption which place such burdens on your backs. They claim that they are generous. It is easy to be generous with the money of which they have plundered you; but let them know your will, and they must bend before it. Tell them that you will have Hannibal and none other as the general of your armies, and Spain is secure, and year by year your commerce with that country will increase and flourish."

A roar of assent arose from the crowd. At the same instant a tumult was heard at the lower entrance to the forum, and the head of a dense body of men was seen issuing from the street, with shouts of "Hanno forever!" They were headed by the butchers and tanners, an important and powerful body, for Carthage did a vast trade in leather.

For a time they bore all before them, but the resistance increased every foot they advanced. The shouts on both sides became louder and more angry. Blows were soon exchanged, and ere long a pitched battle was raging. The fishermen and sailors threw themselves into the thick of it, and for ten minutes a desperate fight raged in the forum. Soon the battle extended, as bodies of men belonging to either faction encountered each other as they hurried towards the forum.

Street frays were by no means unusual in Carthage, but this was a veritable battle. Hanno had at its commencement, accompanied by a strong body of his friends, ridden to Byrsa, and had called upon the soldiers to come out and quell the tumult. They, however, listened in sullen silence, their sympathies were entirely with the supporters of Hannibal, and they had already received orders from their officers on no account to move, whosoever might command them to do so, until Hamilcar placed himself at their head.

The general delayed doing this until the last moment. Hannibal's friends had hoped to carry their object without the intervention of the troops, as it was desirable in every way that the election should appear to be a popular one, and that Hannibal should seem to have the suffrages of the people as well as of the army. That the large majority of the people were with them they knew, but the money which Hanno's friends had lavishly spent among the butchers, skimmers, tanners, and smiths had raised up a more formidable opposition than they had counted upon.

Seeing that their side was gaining but little advantage, that already much blood had been shed, and that the tumult threatened to involve all Carthage, Hamilcar and a number of officers rode to the

barracks. The troops at once got under arms, and, headed by the elephants, moved out from Byrsa. Being desirous to avoid bloodshed, Hamilcar bade his men leave their weapons behind them, and armed them with headless spear shafts, of which, with all other things needed for war, there was a large store in the citadel. As the column sallied out it broke up into sections. The principal body marched toward the forum, while others, each led by officers, took their way down the principal streets.

The appearance of the elephants and troops, and the loud shouts of the latter for Hannibal, quickly put an end to the tumult. Hanno's hired mob, seeing that they could do nothing against such adversaries, at once broke up and fled to their own quarters of the city, and Hanno and his adherents sought their own houses. The quiet citizens, seeing that the fight was over, issued from their houses, and the forum was soon again crowded.

The proceedings were now unanimous, and the shouts raised that the senate should assemble and confirm the vote of the army were loud and strenuous. Parties of men went out in all directions to the houses of the senators to tell them the people demanded their presence at the forum. Seeing the uselessness of further opposition, and fearing the consequences if they resisted, Hanno and his friends no longer offered any opposition.

The senate assembled, and, by a unanimous vote the election of Hannibal as one of the suffetes in place of Hasdrubal, and as commander-in-chief of the army in Spain, was carried, and was ratified by that of the popular assembly, the traders and manufacturers of Hanno's party not venturing to oppose the will of the mass of mechanics and seafaring population.

"It has been a victory," Hamilcar said, when, accompanied by a number of his friends, he returned to his home that evening, "but Hanno will not forget or forgive the events of this day. As long as all goes well in Spain we may hope for the support of the people, but should any disaster befall our arms it will go hard with all who have taken a prominent part in this day's proceedings. Hanno's friends have so much at stake that they will not give up the struggle. They have at their back all the moneys which they wring from the people and the tributaries of Carthage, and they will work night and day to strengthen their party and to buy over the lower classes. We are the stronger at present; but to carry the popular vote on a question which would put a stop to the frightful corruption of our administration, to suppress the tyranny of the council, to sweep away the abuses which prevail in every class in the state—for that we must wait till Hannibal returns victorious. Let him but humble the pride of Rome, and Carthage will be at his feet."

The party were in high spirits at the result of the day's proceedings. Not only had they succeeded in their principal object of electing Hannibal, but they had escaped from a great personal danger; for, assuredly, had Hanno and his party triumphed, a stern vengeance would have been taken upon all the leading members of the Barcine faction.

After the banquet, while Hamilcar and his companions reclined on their couches at tables, a Greek slave, a captive in war, sang songs of his native land to the accompaniment of the lyre. A party of dancing girls from Ethiopia performed their rhythmical movements to the sound of the tinkling of a little guitar with three strings, the beating of a small drum, the clashing of cymbals, and the jingling of the ornaments and little metal bells on their arms and ankles. Perfumes were burned in censers, and from time to time soft strains of music, played by a party of slaves among the trees without, floated in through the casements.

Malchus was in wild spirits, for his father had told him that it was settled that he was to have the command of a body of troops which were very shortly to proceed to Spain to reinforce the army under Hannibal, and that he should allow Malchus to enter the band of Carthaginian horse which was to form part of the body under his command.

The regular Carthaginian horse and foot formed but a very small portion of the armies of the republic. They were a corps d'elite, composed entirely of young men of the aristocratic families of Carthage, on whom it was considered as almost a matter of obligation to enter this force. They had

the post of honour in battle, and it was upon them the Carthaginian generals relied principally to break the ranks of the enemy in close battle. All who aspired to distinguish themselves in the eyes of their fellow citizens, to rise to power and position in the state, to officer the vast bodies of men raised from the tributary nations, and to command the armies of the country, entered one or other of these bodies. The cavalry was the arm chosen by the richer classes. It was seldom that it numbered more than a thousand strong. The splendour of their armour and appointments, the beauty of their horses, the richness of the garments of the cavaliers, and the trappings of their steeds, caused this body to be the admiration and envy of Carthage. Every man in it was a member of one of the upper ranks of the aristocracy; all were nearly related to members of the senate, and it was considered the highest honour that a young Carthaginian could receive to be admitted into it.

Each man wore on his wrist a gold band for each campaign which he had undertaken. There was no attempt at uniformity as to their appointments. Their helmets and shields were of gold or silver, surmounted with plumes or feathers, or with tufts of white horsehair. Their breastplates were adorned with arabesques or repousse work of the highest art. Their belts were covered with gold and studded with gems. Their short kilted skirts were of rich Tyrian purple embroidered with gold.

The infantry were composed of men of good but less exalted families. They wore a red tunic without a belt. They carried a great circular buckler of more than a yard in diameter, formed of the tough hide of the river horse, brought down from the upper Nile, with a central boss of metal with a point projecting nearly a foot in front of the shield, enabling it to be used as an offensive weapon in a close fight. They carried short heavy swords similar to those of the Romans, and went barefooted. Their total strength seldom exceeded two thousand.

These two bodies constituted the Carthaginian legion, and formed but a small proportion indeed of her armies, the rest of her forces being entirely drawn from the tributary states. The fact that Carthage, with her seven hundred thousand inhabitants, furnished so small a contingent of the fighting force of the republic, was in itself a proof of the weakness of the state. A country which relies entirely for its defence upon mercenaries is rapidly approaching decay.

She may for a time repress one tributary with the soldiers of the others; but when disaster befalls her she is without cohesion and falls to pieces at once. As the Roman orator well said of Carthage: "She was a figure of brass with feet of clay"—a noble and imposing object to the eye, but whom a vigorous push would level in the dust. Rome, on the contrary, young and vigorous, was a people of warriors. Every one of her citizens who was capable of bearing arms was a soldier. The manly virtues were held in the highest esteem, and the sordid love of wealth had not as yet enfeebled her strength or sapped her powers. Her citizens were men, indeed, ready to make any sacrifice for their country; and such being the case, her final victory over Carthage was a matter of certainty.

The news which afforded Malchus such delight was not viewed with the same unmixed satisfaction by the members of his family. Thyra had for the last year been betrothed to Adherbal, and he, too, was to accompany Hamilcar to Spain, and none could say how long it might be before they would return.

While the others were sitting round the festive board, Adherbal and Thyra strolled away among the groves in the garden.

"I do not think you care for me, Adherbal," she said reproachfully as he was speaking of the probabilities of the campaign. "You know well that this war may continue in Spain for years, and you seem perfectly indifferent to the fact that we must be separated for that time."

"I should not be indifferent to it, Thyra, if I thought for a moment that this was to be the case. I may remain, it is true, for years in Spain; but I have not the most remote idea of remaining there alone. At the end of the first campaign, when our army goes into winter quarters, I shall return here and fetch you."

“That’s all very well,” the girl said, pouting; “but how do you know that I shall be willing to give up all the delights of Carthage to go among the savage Iberians, where they say the ground is all white in winter and even the rivers stop in their courses?”

Adherbal laughed lightly. “Then it is not for you to talk about indifference, Thyra; but it won’t be so bad as you fear. At Carthage you will have all the luxuries of Carthage. I do not say that your villa shall be equal to this; but as you will have me it should be a thousand times dearer to you.”

“Your conceit is superb, Adherbal,” Thyra laughed. “You get worse and worse. Had I ever dreamed of it I should never have consented so submissively when my father ordered me to regard you as my future husband.”

“You ought to think yourself a fortunate girl, Thyra,” Adherbal said, smiling; “for your father might have taken it into his head to have done as Hamilcar Barca did, and married his daughters to Massilian and Numidian princes, to become queens of bands of nomad savages.”

“Well, they were queens, that was something, even if only of nomads.”

“I don’t think that it would have suited you, Thyra—a seat on horseback for a throne, and a rough tent for a palace, would not be in your way at all. I think a snug villa on the slopes of the bay of Carthage, will suit you better, not to mention the fact that I shall make an infinitely more pleasant and agreeable master than a Numidian chief would do.”

“You are intolerable, Adherbal, with your conceit and your mastership. However, I suppose when the time comes I shall have to obey my father. What a pity it is we girls cannot choose our husbands for ourselves! Perhaps the time may come when we shall do so.”

“Well, in your case, Thyra,” Adherbal said, “it would make no difference, because you know you would have chosen me anyhow; but most girls would make a nice business of it. How are they to know what men really are? They might be gamblers, drunkards, brutal and cruel by nature, idle and spendthrift. What can maidens know of a man’s disposition? Of course they only see him at his best. Wise parents can make careful inquiries, and have means of knowing what a man’s disposition and habits really are.”

“You don’t think, Adherbal,” Thyra said earnestly, “that girls are such fools that they cannot read faces; that we cannot tell the difference between a good man and a bad one.”

“Yes, a girl may know something about every man save the one she loves, Thyra. She may see other’s faults clearly enough; but she is blind to those of the man she loves. Do you not know that the Greeks depict Cupid with a bandage over his eyes?”

“I am not blind to your faults,” Thyra said indignantly. “I know that you are a great deal more lazy than becomes you; that you are not sufficiently earnest in the affairs of life; that you will never rise to be a great general like my cousin Hannibal.”

“That is all quite true,” Adherbal laughed; “and yet you see you love me. You perceive my faults only in theory and not in fact, and you do not in your heart wish to see me different from what I am. Is it not so?”

“Yes,” the girl said shyly, “I suppose it is. Anyhow, I don’t like the thought of your going away from me to that horrid Iberia.”

Although defeated for the moment by the popular vote, the party of Hanno were not discouraged. They had suffered a similar check when they had attempted to prevent Hannibal joining Hasdrubal in Spain.

Not a moment was lost in setting to work to recover their lost ground. Their agents among the lower classes spread calumnies against the Barcine leaders. Money was lavishly distributed, and the judges, who were devoted to Hanno’s party, set their machinery to work to strike terror among their opponents. Their modes of procedure were similar to those which afterwards made Venice execrable in the height of her power. Arrests were made secretly in the dead of night. Men were missing from their families, and none knew what had become of them.

Dead bodies bearing signs of strangulation were found floating in the shallow lakes around Carthage; and yet, so great was the dread inspired by the terrible power of the judges, that the friends and relations of those who were missing dared make neither complaint nor inquiry. It was not against the leaders of the Barcine party that such measures were taken. Had one of these been missing the whole would have flown to arms. The dungeons would have been broken open, and not only the captives liberated, but their arrest might have been made the pretext for an attack upon the whole system under which such a state of things could exist.

It was chiefly among the lower classes that the agents of Hanno's vengeance operated. Among these the disappearance of so many men who were regarded as leaders among the rest spread a deep and mysterious fear. Although none dared to complain openly, the news of these mysterious disappearances was not long in reaching the leaders of the Barcine party.

These, however, were for the time powerless to act. Certain as they might be of the source whence these unseen blows descended, they had no evidence on which to assail so formidable a body as the judges. It would be a rash act indeed to accuse such important functionaries of the state, belonging, with scarcely an exception, to powerful families, of arbitrary and cruel measures against insignificant persons.

The halo of tradition still surrounded the judges, and added to the fear inspired by their terrible and unlimited power. In such an attack the Barcine party could not rely upon the population to side with them; for, while comparatively few were personally affected by the arrests which had taken place, the fear of future consequences would operate upon all.

Among the younger members of the party, however, the indignation aroused by these secret blows was deep. Giscon, who was continually brooding over the tyranny and corruption which were ruining his country, was one of the leaders of this section of the party; with him were other spirits as ardent as himself. They met in a house in a quiet street in the lower town, and there discussed all sorts of desperate projects for freeing the city of its tyrants.

One day as Giscon was making his way to this rendezvous he met Malchus riding at full speed from the port.

"What is it, Malchus, whither away in such haste?"

"It is shameful, Giscon, it is outrageous. I have just been down to the port to tell the old fisherman with whom I often go out that I would sail with him tomorrow, and find that four days ago he was missing, and his body was yesterday found by his sons floating in the lagoon. He had been strangled. His sons are as much overpowered with terror as by grief, they believe that he has suffered for the part he took in rousing the fishermen to declare for Hannibal a fortnight since, and they fear lest the terrible vengeance of Hanno should next fall upon them.

"How it happened they know not. A man arrived late in the evening and said that one of their father's best customers wanted a supply of fish for a banquet he was to give next day, and that he wanted to speak to him at once to arrange about the quantity and quality of fish he required. Suspecting nothing the old man left at once, and was never heard of afterwards. Next morning, seeing that he had not returned, one of his sons went to the house to which he had been fetched, but found that its owner knew nothing of the affair, and denied that he had sent any message whatever to him. Fearing that something was wrong they searched everywhere, but it was not until last night that his body was, as I have told you, found.

"They are convinced that their father died in no private feud. He had not, as far as they know, an enemy in the world. You may imagine how I feel this; not only did I regard him as a friend, but I feel that it was owing to his acting as I led him that he has come to his death."

"The tyrants!" Giscon exclaimed in a low voice. "But what can you do, Malchus?"

"I am going to my father," Malchus replied, "to ask him to take the matter up."

"What can he do?" Giscon said with a bitter laugh. "What can he prove? Can he accuse our most noble body of judges, without a shadow of proof, of making away with this unknown old fisherman.

No, Malchus, if you are in earnest to revenge your friend come with me, I will introduce you to my friends, who are banded together against this tyranny, and who are sworn to save Carthage. You are young, but you are brave and full of ardour; you are a son of General Hamilcar, and my friends will gladly receive you as one of us.”

Malchus did not hesitate. That there would be danger in joining such a body as Giscon spoke of he knew, but the young officer’s talk during their expedition had aroused in him a deep sense of the tyranny and corruption which were sapping the power of his country, and this blow which had struck him personally rendered him in a mood to adopt any dangerous move.

“I will join you, Giscon,” he said, “if you will accept me. I am young, but I am ready to go all lengths, and to give my life if needs be to free Carthage.”

CHAPTER V: THE CONSPIRACY

Giscon led his companion along the narrow lanes until he reached the back entrance of the house where the meetings were held. Knocking in a particular way it was opened at once and closed behind them. As they entered a slave took Malchus' horse without a word and fastened it to a ring in the wall, where four or five other horses were standing.

"I rather wonder you are not afraid of drawing attention by riding on horseback to a house in such a quarter," Malchus said.

"We dare not meet secretly, you know. The city is full of spies, and doubtless the movements of all known to be hostile to Hanno and his party are watched, therefore we thought it best to meet here. We have caused it to be whispered as a secret in the neighbourhood, that the house has been taken as a place where we can gamble free from the presence of our elders. Therefore the only comments we excite is, 'There go those young fools who are ruining themselves.' It is only because you are on horseback that I have come round to this gate; had you come on foot we should have entered by the front. Fortunately there are among us many who are deemed to be mere pleasure seekers—men who wager fortunes on their horses, who are given to banquets, or whose lives seem to be passed in luxury and indolence, but who at heart are as earnest in the cause of Carthage as I am. The presence of such men among us gives a probability to the tale that this is a gambling house. Were we all of my stamp, men known to be utterly hostile to Hanno and his party, suspicion would fall upon our meetings at once. But here we are."

As he spoke he drew aside some heavy curtains and entered a large room. Some ten or twelve young men were assembled there. They looked up in surprise as Giscon entered followed by his companion.

"I have brought a recruit," Giscon said, "one whom all of you know by repute if not personally; it is Malchus, the son of General Hamilcar. He is young to be engaged in a business like ours, but I have been with him in a campaign and can answer for him. He is brave, ready, thoughtful and trustworthy. He loves his country and hates her tyrants. I can guarantee that he will do nothing imprudent, but can be trusted as one of ourselves. Being young he will have the advantage of being less likely to be watched, and may be doubly useful. He is ready to take the oath of our society."

As Giscon was the leading spirit of the band his recommendation was taken as amply sufficient. The young men rose and formed in a circle round Malchus. All drew their daggers, and one, whom Malchus recognized with a momentary feeling of surprise as Carthalon, whom Adherbal had pointed out at the Barcine Club as one who thought only of horse racing, said:

"Do you swear by Moloch and Astarte to be true to this society, to devote yourself to the destruction of the oppressors of Carthage, to carry out all measures which may be determined upon, even at the certain risk of your life, and to suffer yourself to be torn to pieces by the torture rather than reveal aught that passes within these walls?"

"That I swear solemnly," Malchus said.

"I need not say," Carthalon said carelessly, "that the punishment of the violation of the oath is death. It is so put in our rules. But we are all nobles of Carthage, and nobles do not break their oaths, so we can let that pass. When a man's word is good enough to make him beggar himself in order to discharge a wager, he can be trusted to keep his word in a matter which concerns the lives of a score of his fellows. And now that this business is arranged we can go on with our talk; but first let us have some wine, for all this talking is thirsty work at best."

The young men threw themselves upon the couches around the room and, while slaves brought round wine, chatted lightly with each other about horses, the play presented the day before, the respective merits of the reigning beauties of Carthage, and other similar topics, and Malchus, who was impressed with the serious nature of the secret conspiracy which he had just sworn to aid, could

not help being surprised at the careless gaiety of the young men, although engaged in a conspiracy in which they risked their lives.

It was not until some minutes after the slaves had left the apartment that the light talk and banter ceased, as Giscon rose and said:

“Now to business. Malchus has told me that an old fisherman, who took a lead in stirring up his fellows to declare for Hannibal, has been decoyed away from his home and murdered; his body has been found floating in the lake, strangled. This is the nineteenth in the course of a week. These acts are spreading terror among the working classes, and unless they are put a stop to we can no longer expect assistance from them.

“That these deeds are the work of the officials of the tribunals we have no doubt. The sooner we strike the better. Matters are getting ripe. I have eight men sworn into my section among the weavers, and need but two more to complete it. We will instruct our latest recruit to raise a section among the fishermen. The sons of the man just murdered should form a nucleus. We agreed from the first that three hundred resolute men besides ourselves were required, and that each of us should raise a section of ten. Malchus brings up our number here to thirty, and when all the sections are filled up we shall be ready for action.

“Failure ought to be impossible. The houses of Hanno and thirty of his party will be attacked, and the tyrants slain before any alarm can be given. Another thirty at least should be slain before the town is fairly aroused. Maybe each section can undertake three if our plans are well laid, and each chooses for attack three living near each other. We have not yet settled whether it will be better to separate when this is done, content with the first blow against our tyrants, or to prepare beforehand for a popular rising, to place ourselves at the head of the populace, and to make a clean sweep of the judges and the leaders of Hanno’s party.”

Giscon spoke in an ordinary matter-of-fact tone, as if he were discussing the arrangements of a party of pleasure; but Malchus could scarcely repress a movement of anxiety as he heard this proposal for the wholesale destruction of the leading men of Carthage. The council thus opened was continued for three hours. Most of those present spoke, but, to the surprise of Malchus, there was an entire absence of that gloom and mystery with which the idea of a state conspiracy was associated in his mind.

The young men discussed it earnestly, indeed, but in the same spirit in which they would have agreed over a disputed question as to the respective merits of two horses. They laughed, joked, offered and accepted wagers and took the whole matter with a lightness of heart which Malchus imitated to the best of his power, but which he was very far from feeling; and yet he felt that beneath all this levity his companions were perfectly in earnest in their plans, but they joked now as they would have joked before the commencement of a battle in which the odds against them were overwhelming and great.

Even Giscon, generally grave and gloomy, was as light hearted as the rest. The aristocracy of Carthage were, like the aristocracy of all other countries, from tradition, training, and habit, brave to excess. Just as centuries later the noblesse of France chatted gaily on the tumbril on their way to execution, and offered each other their snuff boxes on the scaffold, so these young aristocrats of Carthage smiled and jested, though well aware that they were risking their lives.

No decision was arrived at, for this could only be decided upon at a special meeting, at which all the members of the society would be present. Among those now in council opinions were nearly equally divided. The one party urged that, did they take steps to prepare the populace for a rising, a rumour would be sure to meet the ears of their opponents and they would be on their guard; whereas, if they scattered quickly after each section had slain two of their tyrants, the operation might be repeated until all the influential men of Hanno’s faction had been removed.

In reply to these arguments the other party urged that delays were always dangerous, that huge rewards would be offered after the first attempts, that some of the men of the sections might turn traitors, that Hanno’s party would be on their guard in future, and that the judges would

effect wholesale arrests and executions; whereas, were the populace appealed to in the midst of the excitement which would be caused by the death of Hanno and his principal adherents, the people would rise and finish with their tyrants.

After all who wished to speak on the subject had given their opinions, they proceeded to details; each gave a statement of the number of men enrolled in his section, with a few words as to the disposition of each. Almost without an exception each of these men was animated with a sense of private wrong. Some had lost near relatives, executed for some trifling offence by the tribunals, some had been ruined by the extortion of the tax gatherers. All were stated to be ready to give their lives for vengeance.

“These agents of ours, you see, Malchus, are not for the most part animated by any feeling of pure patriotism, it is their own wrongs and not the injuries of Carthage which they would avenge. But we must take them as we find them; one cannot expect any deep feeling of patriotism on the part of the masses, who, it must be owned, have no very great reason to feel any lively interest in the glories of the republic. So that they eat and drink sufficiently, and can earn their living, it matters not very greatly to them whether Carthage is great and glorious, or humbled and defeated. But this will not always be so. When we have succeeded in ridding Carthage of her tyrants we must next do all we can so to raise the condition of the common people that they may feel that they too have a common interest in the fate of our country. I should not, of course, propose giving to them a vote; to bestow the suffrage upon the ignorant, who would simply follow the demagogues who would use them as tools, would be the height of madness. The affairs of state, the government of the country, the making of the laws, must be solely in the hands of those fitted for the task—of the men who, by education, by birth, by position, by study and by leisure have prepared their minds for such a charge. But the people should share in the advantages of a good government; they should not be taxed more than they could reasonably pay, and any tax gatherers who should extort a penny beyond the legal amount should be disgraced and punished.

“The courts should be open to all, the judges should be impartial and incorruptible; every man should have his rights and his privileges, then each man, feeling an interest in the stability of the state, would be ready to bear arms in its defence, and Carthage, instead of being dependent entirely upon her tributaries and mercenaries, would be able to place a great army in the field by her own unaided exertions.

“The barbarian tribes would cease to revolt, knowing that success would be hopeless. And as we should be strong at home we should be respected abroad, and might view without apprehension the rising power of Rome. There is plenty of room for both of us. For us, Africa and Spain; for her all the rest of Europe and as much of Asia as she cares to take. We could look without jealousy at each other’s greatness, each secure in his own strength and power. Yes, there may be a grand future before Carthage yet.”

The meeting now broke up.

“Where are you going, Malchus?” Giscon asked the lad as they went out into the courtyard; “to see the sacrifices? You know there is a grand function today to propitiate Moloch and to pray for victory for our arms.”

“No,” Malchus said with a shudder. “I don’t think I am a coward, Giscon, but these terrible rites frighten me. I was taken once by my father, and I then swore that never again, unless it be absolutely necessary for me in the performance of public office, will I be present at such a scene. For weeks afterwards I scarcely slept; day and night there was before me that terrible brazen image of Moloch. If I fell off to sleep, I woke bathed in perspiration as I heard the screams of the infants as they were dropped into those huge hands, heated to redness, stretched out to receive them. I cannot believe, Giscon, that the gods are so cruel.

“Then there was the slaughter of a score of captives taken in war. I see them now, standing pale and stern, with their eyes directed to the brazen image which was soon to be sprinkled with

their blood, while the priests in their scarlet robes, with the sacrificial knives in hand, approached them. I saw no more, for I shut my eyes till all was over. I tell you again, Giscon, I do not believe the gods are so cruel. Why should the gods of Phoenicia and Carthage alone demand blood? Those of Greece and Rome are not so bloodthirsty, and yet Mars gives as many victories to the Roman arms as Moloch does to ours.”

“Blaspheme not the gods, Malchus,” Giscon said gloomily; “you may be sure that the wreath of a conquering general will never be placed around your brow if you honour them not.”

“If honouring them means approval of shedding the blood of infants and captives, I will renounce all hopes of obtaining victory by their aid.”

“I would you had spoken so before, Malchus; had I known that you were a scorner of the gods I would not have asked you to join in our enterprise. No good fortune can be expected to attend our efforts unless we have the help of the gods.”

“The matter is easily mended, Giscon,” Malchus said calmly. “So far I have taken no step towards carrying out your plans, and have but listened to what you said, therefore, no harm can yet have been done. Strike my name off the list, and forget that I have been with you. You have my oath that I will say nought of anything that I have heard. You can well make some excuse to your comrades. Tell them, for example, that though I fear not for myself, I thought that, being the son of Hamilcar, I had no right to involve his name and family in such an enterprise, unless by his orders.”

“Yes, it were better so,” Giscon said after a pause; “I dare not continue the enterprise with one who condemns the gods among us; it would be to court failure. I did not dream of this; who could have thought that a lad of your age would have been a spurner of the gods?”

“I am neither a condemner nor a spurner,” Malchus said indignantly; “I say only that I believe you worship them wrongfully, that you do them injustice. I say it is impossible that the gods who rule the world can have pleasure in the screams of dying infants or the groans of slaughtered men.”

Giscon placed his hand to his ears as if to shut out such blasphemy, and hurried away, while Malchus, mounting his horse, rode out slowly and thoughtfully to his father’s villa. He was not at heart sorry that he was freed from this association into which, without knowing the measures by which it intended to carry out its aims, he had rashly entered. He was ready for armed insurrection against the tyrants of Carthage, but he revolted from the thought of this plan for a midnight massacre—it was not by such means that he would have achieved the regeneration of his country. He felt, too, that the reason which he had given Giscon was a valid one. He had no right, at his age, to involve his family in such a conspiracy. Did it fail, and were he found to be among the conspirators, Hanno and his associates would be sure to seize the fact as a pretext for assailing Hamilcar. They would say that Malchus would never have joined in such a plot had he not known that it had the approval of his father, and that he was in fact but the representative of his family in the design for overthrowing the constitution of the republic.

Fortunately for Malchus, a few days later orders were given for the instant embarkation of a portion of the reinforcements destined for Hannibal. Hamilcar was to proceed in command of them, and, busied with his preparation for the start, Malchus thought little more of the conspiracy which was brewing. Thirty large merchant ships were hired to convey the troops, who numbered six thousand. These were principally Libyan footmen. The main body, with the Numidian horse, were to follow shortly. At last the day for embarkation arrived, and the troops defiled through the temple of Moloch, where sacrifices were offered up for the success of the enterprise.

Malchus, under the pretense that something was not ready, at the last moment lingered at home, and only joined his comrades, a hundred young men of the Carthaginian horse, on the quays. This body, all composed of young men of the best families of Carthage, were to sail in the same ship which carried Hamilcar. The scene was a busy one—the docks of Carthage were extensive, and the ships which were to convey the expedition lay in deep water by the quays, so that the troops could

march on board. A great crowd of the populace had assembled to view the embarkation. These were with difficulty kept from crowding the troops and impeding their movement by a cordon of soldiers.

As the troops marched on to the quay they were formed up in parties by the side of the ships which were to convey them. Very different was the demeanour of the men of the different nationalities. The Libyans were stern and silent, they were part of the contingent which their state was bound to furnish to Carthage, and went unwillingly, cursing in their hearts the power which tore them from their homes to fight in a war in which they had neither concern nor interest.

Near them were a body of Garamantes, wrapped in the long bernous which then as now was the garb of the children of the desert. Tall, swarthy figures these, lissome and agile, with every muscle standing out clear through the brown skin. Strange as must have been the scene to them, there was no wonder expressed in the keen glances which they shot around them from underneath their dark eyebrows. Silent and taciturn, scarce a word was to be heard among them as they stood awaiting the orders to embark; they were there unwillingly, and their hearts were far away in the distant desert, but none the less would they be willing to fight when the time came. Terrible foes these would be in a night attack, with their stealthy tiger-like tread, their gleaming, vengeful eyes, and their cruel mouths.

Very different were the band of Ethiopians from the distant Soudan, with their cloaks of lion skin, and the gaudy feathers fastened in a fillet round their heads. Their black faces were alive with merriment and wonder—everything was new and extraordinary to them. The sea, the ships, the mighty city, the gathered crowd, all excited their astonishment, and their white teeth glistened as they chatted incessantly with a very babel of laughter and noise.

Not less light hearted were the chosen band of young nobles grouped by the general's ship. Their horses were held in ranks behind them for the last time by their slaves, for in future they would have to attend to them themselves, and as they gathered in groups they laughed and jested over the last scandal in Carthage, the play which had been produced the night before at the theatre, or the horse race which was to be run on the following day. As to the desperate work on which they were to be engaged—for it was whispered that Hannibal had in preparation some mighty enterprise—it troubled them not at all, nor the thought that many of them might never look on Carthage again. In their hearts perhaps some of them, like Malchus, were thinking sadly of the partings they had just gone through with those they loved, but no signs of such thoughts were apparent in their faces or conversation.

Presently a blast of trumpets sounded, and the babel of voices was hushed as if by magic. The soldiers fell into military order, and stood motionless. Then Hamilcar walked along the quays inspecting carefully each group, asking questions of the captains of the ships as to their store of provisions and water, receiving from the officers charged with that duty the lists of the war machines and stores which were stored away in the hulls; and, having assured himself that everything was in order, he gave the signal to his trumpeter, who again blew a long and piercing blast.

The work of embarkation at once commenced. The infantry were soon on board, but the operation of shipping the horses of the cavalry took longer. Half of these were stored away in the hold of the general's ship, the rest in another vessel. When the troops were all on board the soldiers who had kept back the crowd were withdrawn, and the Carthaginians thronged down on to the quay. A small space was still kept clear on the wharf by whose side the admiral's ship was lying, and here was gathered a throng of the aristocracy of the city to see the last of their sons and relatives of the guard.

Having seen their horses safely stowed below the young men crowded to the side of the ship to exchange adieus with their friends. The parting was a brief one, for the wind was fair, and the general anxious to be well out of the bay before nightfall. Therefore the signal was hoisted. Numbers of slaves seized the hawsers of the ships and towed them along through the narrow passage which connected the docks with the sea. A shout of adieu rose from the crowd, the sails were hoisted, and the fleet proceeded on its way.

The arrangements for the comfort of the troops at sea were simple and primitive. Each man shifted for himself. The whole space below was occupied by cargo or horses. The troops lived and

slept on deck. Here, on wide flat stones, they cooked their meals, whiled away the day by games of chance, and slept at night on skins or thick rugs. Fortunately the weather was fair. It was early in March, but the nights were not cold.

The fleet hugged the coast, anchoring at night, until the northern shores stood out clear and well defined as Spain stretched down towards Africa. Then they crossed and cruised along until they arrived at Carthage. Short as was the time which had elapsed since the foundation of that city, its aspect was already imposing and extensive. It lay at the head of a gulf facing south, about a mile in depth and nearly double that width. Across the mouth of this bay was an island, with but a narrow passage on each side, protecting it from the southern winds, and forming with it a magnificent harbour.

On a bold hill at the head of the harbour stood the town. This hill rose from a wide lagoon, which communicated on one side with the sea, and was on the other separated from it only by a strip of land, four hundred yards wide. Through this a wide channel had been dug. Thus the hill, which was of considerable extent, rugged and precipitous, was isolated, and could only be attacked by sea.

The town was built in a sort of amphitheatre facing the sea, and was surrounded by a strong fortification two miles and a half in circumference, so that even should an assailant cross the lagoon, which in summer was nearly dry, he would have before him an almost impregnable defence to carry. Here, in buildings whose magnitude surprised the newcomers, acquainted as they were with the buildings of Carthage, were stored the treasures, the baggage, the ammunition of war, and the provisions of the army.

It had been the aim of the great Hamilcar, and of Hasdrubal after him, to render the army of Spain as far as possible independent of the mother country. They well knew how often the treasury of Carthage was empty owing to the extravagance and dishonesty of her rulers, and how impossible it would be to obtain thence the supplies required for the army. Therefore they established immense workshops, where arms, munitions of war, machines for sieges, and everything required for the use of the army were fabricated.

Vast as were the expenses of these establishments, the revenues of Iberia were amply sufficient not only to defray all the cost of occupation, but to transmit large sums to Carthage. These revenues were derived partly from the tribute paid by conquered tribes, partly from the spoils taken in captured cities, but most of all from the mines of gold and silver, which were at that time immensely rich, and were worked by the labour of slaves taken in war or of whole tribes subdued.

Some idea of the richness of these mines may be formed by the fact that one mine, which Hannibal had inherited from his father, brought in to him a revenue of nearly a thousand pounds a day; and this was but one of his various sources of wealth. This was the reason that Hamilcar, Hasdrubal, and Hannibal were able to maintain themselves in spite of the intrigues of their enemies in the capital. Their armies were their own rather than those of the country.

It was to them that the soldiers looked for their pay, as well as for promotion and rewards for valour, and they were able, therefore, to carry out the plans which their genius suggested untrammelled by orders from Carthage. They occupied, indeed, a position very similar to that of Wallenstein, when, with an army raised and paid from his private means, he defended the cause of the empire against Gustavus Adolphus and the princes of the Protestant league. It is true that the Carthaginian generals had always by their side two commissioners of the senate. The republic of Carthage, like the first republic of France, was ever jealous of her generals, and appointed commissioners to accompany them on their campaigns, to advise and control their movements and to report on their conduct; and many of the defeats of the Carthaginians were due in no small degree to their generals being hampered by the interference of the commissioners. They were present, as a matter of course, with the army of Hannibal, but his power was so great that their influence over his proceedings was but nominal.

The war which was about to break out with Rome is called the second Punic war, but it should rather be named the war of Hannibal with Rome. He conceived and carried it out from his own

resources, without interference and almost without any assistance from Carthage. Throughout the war her ships lay idle in her harbour. Even in his greatest need Carthage never armed a galley for his assistance. The pay of the army came solely from his coffers, the material for the war from the arsenals constructed by his father, his brother-in-law, and himself. It was a war waged by a single man against a mighty power, and as such there is, with the exception of the case of Wallenstein, nothing to resemble it in the history of the world.

Passing through the narrow passage into the harbour the fleet sailed up to the end of the bay, and were soon alongside the spacious quays which had been erected. A large quantity of shipping already lay there, for the trade of Carthage with the mother city and with the ports of Spain, Africa, and the East already rivaled that of Carthage. A group of officers were gathered on the quay as Hamilcar's ship, which was leading the fleet, neared it, and Hamilcar exclaimed, "There is Hannibal himself!"

As the ship moored alongside the quay Hannibal came on board and warmly embraced his cousin, and then bestowed a cordial greeting upon Malchus.

"Why, cousin Malchus," he said, "though it is but a year since I was in Carthage, I should scarce have known you, so much have you grown. I see you have entered the cavalry. That is well. You cannot begin too early to accustom yourself to war."

Then turning, he went among the young men of the guard, to all of whom he was personally known, greeting them with a cordiality and kindness which greatly gratified them. Malchus gazed at him with admiration. Fortunately an accurate description of Hannibal has come down to us. He was one who, even at first sight, won all hearts by his lofty and noble expression, by the kindness and sincerity which his face expressed. The Carthaginians, as a race, were short, but Hannibal was very tall, and his great width of shoulders testified to his immense strength.

The beauty of the Carthaginian race was proverbial, but even among them he was remarkable. His head was well placed on his shoulders; his carriage was upright and commanding; his forehead lofty; his eye, though soft and gentle at ordinary times, was said to be terrible in time of battle. His head was bare. His hair, of a golden brown, was worn long, and encircled by a golden band. His nose was long and straight, forming, with the forehead, a perfect profile. The expression of the mouth was kind but firm. His beard was short. The whole contour of the face was noble in the extreme.

In battle he wore a helmet of bronze closely fitting the head, behind which projected a curved metal plate covering his neck. A band of gold surrounded the helmet; in front were five laurel leaves in steel; at the temples two leaves of the lotus of the same metal. On the crest, rising from an ornament enriched with pearls, was a large plume of feathers, sometimes red and sometimes white. A tuft of white horsehair fell from the plate behind. A coat of mail, made of a triple tissue of chains of gold, covered his body. Above this he wore a shirt of the finest white linen, covered to the waist by a jerkin of leather overlaid with gold plates. A large mantle of purple embroidered with gold hung from his shoulders. He wore sandals and leggings of red morocco leather.

But it was only on special occasions that Hannibal was thus magnificently clad. On the march he dressed generally in a simple blouse like that worn by his soldiers. His arms were borne behind him by an esquire. These consisted of his shield, of Galatian manufacture. Its material was bronze, its shape circular. In the centre was a conical, sharply pointed boss. The face of the shield was ornamented with subjects taken from the history of Carthage in relief. The offensive arms were a sword, a lance, and a bow with arrows. But it was not to the splendour of his appearance that Hannibal owed the enthusiasm by which he was regarded by his troops. His strength and skill were far superior to those of any man in his army. His food was as simple as that of his soldiers, he was capable of going for days without eating, and it was seldom that he broke his fast until the day's work was over. When he ate it would be sitting on horseback, or as he walked about seeing to the needs of the soldiers.

At night he slept among them, lying on a lion skin without covering. He was indifferent to heat and cold, and in the heaviest tempest of wind and rain would ride bareheaded among his troops, apparently unconscious of the tempest against which he was struggling. So far as was known he was

without a vice. He seldom touched wine. His morals were irreproachable. He never gave way to anger. His patience under trials and difficulties of all sorts was illimitable.

In the midst of the greatest trials and dangers he preserved his cheerfulness, and had ever an encouraging word for his soldiers. Various as were the nationalities of the troops who followed him, constrained as most of them had been to enter the service of Carthage, so great was their love and admiration for their commander that they were ready to suffer all hardships, to dare all dangers for his sake. It was his personal influence, and that alone, which welded this army, composed of men of various nationalities and tribes, into one whole, and enabled it to perform the greatest military exploits in the world's history, and for years to sustain a terrible struggle against the whole power of Rome.

CHAPTER VI: A CAMPAIGN IN SPAIN

Among the young officers who had followed Hannibal on board were some who had left Carthage only a few months before and were known to Malchus. From them he learned with delight that the troops would take the field at once.

“We are going on a campaign against the Vacaei,” one of them said. “The army marched out two days since. Hannibal has been waiting here for your arrival, for a fast sailing ship which started a few hours after you brought the news that you were on your way, and you will set off to join the rest without delay. It is going to be a hard campaign.”

“Where is the country of the Vacaei?” Malchus asked.

“A long way off,” the other replied. “The marches will be long and tiresome. Their country lies somewhat to the northwest of the great plateau in the centre of Iberia. We shall have to ascend the mountains on this side, to cross the plateau, to follow the rivers which flow to the great ocean.”

The Vacaei, in fact, dwelt in the lands bordered by the upper Duero, their country comprising a portion of old Castille, Leon, and the Basque provinces. The journey would indeed be a long and difficult one; and Hannibal was undertaking the expedition not only to punish the turbulent Vacaei, who had attacked some of the tribes which had submitted to Carthage, but to accustom the troops to fatigues and hardships, and to prepare them for the great expedition which he had in view. No time was indeed lost, for as soon as the troops were landed they were formed up and at once started on their march.

“This is more than we bargained for,” Trebon, a young guardsman whose place in the ranks was next to Malchus, said to him. “I thought we should have had at least a month here before we set out. They say the city is as gay as Carthage; and as I have many friends here I have looked forward to a month of jollity before starting. Every night when I lay down on the hard planks of the deck I have consoled myself with the thought that a soft bed awaited me here; and now we have to take at once to the bare ground, with nothing but this skin strapped on the pommel of my saddle to sleep on, and my bernous to cover me. It is colder already a great deal than it was at Carthage; and if that is so here, what will it be on the tops of those jagged mountains we see before us? Why, as I live, that highest one over there is of dazzling white! That must be the snow we have heard of—the rain turned solid by cold, and which they say causes a pain to the naked limbs something like hot iron. Fancy having to sleep in such stuff!”

Malchus laughed at the complaints of his comrade.

“I confess I am glad we are off at once,” he said, “for I was sick of doing nothing but idling away my time at Carthage; and I suppose it would be just the same here. How busy are the streets of the town! Except for the sight of the mountains which we see through the breaks of the houses, one might believe one’s self still at home.”

The aspect of Carthagera, indeed, closely resembled that of the mother city, and the inhabitants were of the same race and blood.

Carthagera had in the first place been formed by a great colony of Libyans. The inhabitants of that province inhabiting the seaports and coasts near Carthage were a mixture of Phoenician and native blood. They were ever impatient of the supremacy of Carthage, and their rebellions were frequent and often dangerous. After the suppression of these insurrections, Carthage, sensible of the danger arising from the turbulence of her neighbours, deported great numbers of them to form colonies. Vast numbers were sent up into the Soudan, which was then one of the most important possessions of the republic. The most extensive, however, of these forced emigrations was the great colony sent to found Carthagera, which had thus in a very few years, under the fostering genius of the great Hamilcar, become a great and prosperous city.

Carthage itself had thus suddenly sprung into existence. After many internal troubles the democracy of Tyre had gained the upper hand in that city; and finding their position intolerable, the whole of the aristocracy decided to emigrate, and, sailing with a great fleet under their queen Dido or Elisa—for she was called by both names—founded Carthage. This triumph of the democracy in Tyre, as might be expected, proved the ruin of that city. Very rapidly she fell from the lofty position she had held, and her place in the world and her proud position as Queen of the Seas was very speedily taken by Carthage.

The original Libyan colony of Carthagera had been very largely increased by subsequent emigration, and the populace presented an appearance very similar to that of the mother city, save that instead of the swarthy desert tribesmen, with their passive face and air of proud indifference, mingling with the population of the town, there was in Carthagera a large admixture of native Iberians, who, belonging to the tribes first subdued by Carthage, had either been forced to settle here to supply manual labour needed for the rising city, or who had voluntarily abandoned their wandering life and adopted the more settled habitudes and more assured comforts of existence in a great town.

Skirting the lower part of the city, Hamilcar's force marched along the isthmus and crossed the bridge over the canal cut through it, and was soon in the country beyond. The ground rose gradually, and after marching for six miles the brigade was halted at a spot to which Hannibal had, when the fleet was first discerned approaching along the coast, despatched some bullocks and other provisions for their use. The march was a short one, but after a week's confinement on board ship the men were little fitted for a long journey. The bullocks and other rations were served out to the various companies, and the work of preparing the repast began. Malchus was amused, although rather disgusted at his first experience in a real campaign. When with Hamilcar on the expedition against the Atarantes he had formed part of his father's suite and had lived in luxury. He was now a simple soldier, and was called upon to assist to cut up the bullock which had fallen to the share of the Carthaginian cavalry.

Some of the party went out to cut and bring in wood for the fires and cooking; others moistened the flour and made dough for the flat cakes which would be baked in the hot embers and eaten with the meat. Loud shouts of laughter rose as the young soldiers worked at their unaccustomed tasks, superintended by the officers, who, having all made several campaigns, were able to instruct them as to their duties. From a culinary point of view the meal could not be pronounced a success, and was, indeed, a contrast to the food to which the young nobles were accustomed. The march, however, and the keen bracing air had given them good appetites, and the novelty and strangeness of the experience gave a zest to the food; and in spite of the roughness of the meal, all declared that they had never dined better. Many fires were now lit; and round these, as the evening closed in, the men gathered in groups, all closely wrapped in their bernouses, which were worn alike by officers and men of the whole of the nationalities serving in the Carthaginian army, serving as a cloak by day and a blanket at night. Presently a trampling of horses was heard, and Hannibal and his personal staff rode into the encampment.

He had not started until several hours after them, when, having given his last orders and made all final arrangements for the management of affairs during his absence, he had ridden on to join the army. Dismounting, he went at once on foot among the troops, chatting gaily with them and inquiring how they fared. After visiting all the other detachments he came to the bivouac of the Carthaginian horse, and for an hour sat talking by their fires.

"Ah!" he said as he rose to go, "the others will sleep well enough tonight; but you sybarites, accustomed to your soft couches and your luxuries, will fare badly. I remember my first night on the hard ground, although 'tis now sixteen years back, how my limbs ached and how I longed for morning. Now, let me give you a hint how to make your beds comfortable. Mind, this is not for the future, but till your limbs get accustomed to the ground you may indulge in luxuries. Before you try to go off to sleep note exactly where your hip bones and shoulders will rest; take your daggers and

scoop out the earth at these points so as to make depressions in which they may lie. Then spread your lion skins above them and lie down. You will sleep as comfortably as if on a soft couch.”

Many of the young soldiers followed Hannibal’s advice; others, among whom was Malchus, determined to accustom themselves at once to the hard ground. Malchus was not long in getting to sleep, his last thought being that the precaution advised by Hannibal to ensure repose was altogether unnecessary. But he changed his opinion when, two or three hours later, he woke up with acute pains in his hip and shoulder. After trying vainly, by changing his position, again to go off to sleep, he rose, rolled up the skin, and set to work to make the excavations recommended by the general. Then spreading out the skin again he lay down, and was astonished to find how immense was the relief afforded by this simple expedient.

At daybreak the party were in motion. Their march was a long one; for Hannibal wished to come up with the main army as soon as possible, and no less than thirty miles were encompassed before they halted for the night. They were now far up on the slopes of the Sierras. The latter part of the journey had been exceedingly toilsome. The route was mostly bare rock, which sorely tried the feet of the soldiers, these being in most cases unprotected even by sandals. Malchus and his mounted companions did not of course suffer in their feet. But they were almost as glad as the infantry when the camping place was reached, for nothing is more fatiguing to a horseman than to be obliged to travel in the saddle for ten hours at the pace of footmen. The halting place this time was near the upper edge of the forest which then clothed the lower slopes of the mountains.

Enough meat had been killed on the previous evening for three days’ rations for the troops, and there was therefore no loss of time in preparing the meal. Wood, of course, was in abundance, and the pots were soon hanging from thick poles placed above the fires. The night was exceedingly cold, and the soldiers were grateful for the shelter which the trees afforded from the piercing wind which blew across the snow covered peaks of the higher range of mountains.

“What is that noise?” Malchus asked one of the officers as, after the meal was finished and silence began to reign in the camp, a deep sound was heard in the forest.

“That is the howling of a pack of wolves,” the officer said. “They are savage brutes, and when in company will not hesitate to attack small parties of men. They abound in the mountains, and are a scourge to the shepherds of the plains, especially in the cold weather, when they descend and commit terrible damage among the flocks.”

“I thought I did not know the sound,” Malchus said. “The nights were noisy enough sometimes at the southern edge of the desert. The packs of jackals, with their sharp yelping cry, abounded; then there was the deeper note of the hyenas, and the barking cry of troops of monkeys, and the thundering roar of the lions. They were unpleasant enough, and at first used to keep one awake; but none of them were so lugubrious as that mournful howl I hear now. I suppose sometimes, when there is nothing else to do, we get up hunting parties?”

“Yes,” the officer replied; “it is the chief amusement of our garrisons in winter among the wild parts of the country. Of course, near Carthagera these creatures have been eradicated; but among the mountains they abound, and the carcass of a dead horse is sure to attract plenty of them. It is a sport not without danger; and there are many instances where parties of five or six have gone out, taking with them a carcass to attract the wolves, and have never returned; and a search has resulted in the discovery of their weapons, injured and perhaps broken, of stains of blood and signs of a desperate struggle, but of them not so much as a bone has remained behind.”

“I thought lion hunting was an exciting sport but the lions, although they may move and hunt in companies, do not fight in packs, as these fierce brutes seem to do. I hope some day to try it. I should like to send back two of their heads to hang on the wall by the side of that of the lion I killed up in the desert.”

“Next winter you may do so,” the officer said. “The season is nearly over now, and you may be sure that Hannibal will give us enough to do without our thinking of hunting wolves. The Vacaei are fierce enough. Perhaps two of their heads would do instead of those of wolves.”

“I do not think my mother and sisters would approve of that,” Malchus laughed; “so I must wait for the winter.”

The night did not pass so quietly as that which had preceded it. The distant howling of the wolves, as they hunted in the forest, kept the horses in a tremor of terror and excitement, and their riders were obliged over and over again to rise and go among them, and by speaking to and patting them, to allay their fear. So long as their masters were near them the well trained horses were quiet and tractable, and would at a whispered order lie down and remain in perfect quiet; but no sooner had they left them and again settled to sleep than, at the first howl which told that the pack were at all approaching, the horses would lift their heads, prick their ears in the direction of the sound, and rise to their feet and stand trembling, with extended nostrils snuffing the unknown danger, pawing the ground, and occasionally making desperate efforts to break loose from their picket ropes.

The work of soothing had then to be repeated, until at last most of the riders brought their lions' skins and lay down by the prostrate horses, with their heads upon their necks. The animals, trained thus to sleep with their riders by their side, and reassured by the presence of their masters, were for the most part content to lie quiet, although the packs of wolves, attracted by the scent of the meat that had been cooked, approached close to the camp and kept up a dismal chorus round it until morning.

Day by day the march was continued. The country was wild and rugged, foaming torrents had to be crossed, precipices surmounted, barren tracts traversed. But after a week's hard marching the column had overcome the greater part of the difficulty, had crossed the Sierras and gained the plateau, which with a gradual fall slopes west down to the Atlantic, and was for the most part covered with a dense growth of forests. They now to their satisfaction overtook the main body of the army, and their marches would be somewhat less severe, for hitherto they had each day traversed extra distances to make up for the two days' loss in starting. Here Malchus for the first time saw the bands of Gaulish mercenaries.

The Spanish troops had excited the admiration and astonishment of the Carthaginians by their stature and strength; but the Gauls were a still more powerful race. They belonged to the tribes which had poured down over the Apennines, and occupied the northern portion of Spain long anterior to the arrival of the Carthaginians. Their countenances were rugged, and as it seemed to Malchus, savage. Their colour was much lighter than that of any people he had yet seen. Their eyes were blue, their hair, naturally fair or brown, was dyed with some preparation which gave it a red colour.

Some wore their long locks floating over their shoulders, others tied it in a knot on the top of their heads. They wore a loose short trouser fastened at the knee, resembling the baggy trousers of the modern Turks. A shirt with open sleeves came halfway down their thighs, and over it was a blouse or loose tunic decorated with ornaments of every description, and fastened at the neck by a metal brooch. Their helmets were of copper, for the most part ornamented with the horns of stags or bulls. On the crest of the helmet was generally the figure of a bird or wild beast. The whole was surmounted by immense tufts of feathers, something like those of our Highland bonnets, adding greatly to the height and apparent stature of the wearers.

The Gauls had a passion for ornaments, and adorned their persons with a profusion of necklaces, bracelets, rings, baldricks, and belts of gold. Their national arms were long heavy pikes—these had no metal heads, but the points were hardened by fire; javelins of the same description—these before going into battle they set fire to, and hurled blazing at the enemy—lighter darts called *mat ras saunions*, pikes with curved heads, resembling the halberds of later times; and straight swords. Hannibal, however, finding the inconvenience of this diversity of weapons, had armed his Gaulish troops only with their long straight swords. These were without point, and made for cutting only, and were in the hands of these powerful tribesmen terrible weapons. These swords were not those they

had been accustomed to carry, which were made of copper only, and often bent at the first blow, but were especially made for them in Carthage of heavy steel, proof against all accident.

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