

Source: The Histories of Polybius V2 by Polybius □
(translated by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh 1889)

BOOK XI

1. My reason for prefixing a table of contents to each book, rather than a preface, is not because I do not recognise the usefulness of a preface in arresting attention and rousing interest, and also giving facilities for finding any passage that is wanted, but because I find prefaces viewed, though from many inadequate reasons, with contempt and neglect. I therefore had recourse to a table of contents throughout my history, except the first six books, arranged according to Olympiads, as being as effective, or even more so, than a preface, and at the same time as less subject to the objection of being out of place, for it is closely connected with the subject-matter. In the first six books I wrote prefaces, because I thought a mere table of contents less suitable. . . .

After the battle at Baecula, Hasdrubal made good his passage over the Western Pyrenees, and thence through the Cevennes, B.C. 208. In the spring of B.C. 207 he crossed the Alps and descended into Italy, crossed the Po, and besieged Placentia. Thence he sent a letter to his brother Hannibal announcing that he would march southward by Ariminum and meet him in Umbria. The letter fell into the hands of the Consul Nero, who was at Venusia, and who immediately made a forced march northward, joined his colleague at Sena, and the next day attacked Hasdrubal. See above, 10, 39; Livy, 27, 39-49.

Much easier and shorter was Hasdrubal's journey into Italy. . . .¹

Never at any other time had Rome been in a greater state of excitement and terrified expectation of the result. . . .²

¹ See Livy, 27, 39.

² Livy, 27, 44.

None of these arrangements satisfied Hasdrubal. But circumstances no longer admitted of delay. He saw the enemy drawn out in battle array and advancing; and he was obliged to get the Iberians and the Gauls who were serving with him into line. He therefore stationed his ten elephants on the front, increased the depth of his lines, and so had his whole army covering a somewhat small ground. He took up a position himself in the centre of the line, immediately behind the elephants, and commenced an advance upon the Roman left, with a full resolution that in this battle he must either conquer or die. Livius advanced to meet the enemy with proud confidence, and having come to close quarters with him was fighting with great gallantry. Meanwhile Claudius, who was stationed on the right wing, found himself unable to advance and outflank the enemy, owing to the rough ground in front of him, relying on which Hasdrubal had directed his advance upon the Roman left: and being embarrassed by his inability to strike a blow, he promptly decided what the circumstances pointed out as the tactics to pursue. He withdrew his men from the right wing, and marched them on the rear of the field of battle; and, after passing the left of the Roman line, fell upon the flank of the Carthaginians who were fighting near the elephants. Up to this point the victory had been doubtful; for both sides fought with desperation, the Romans believing that all would be over with them if they failed, and the Iberians and Carthaginians holding exactly the same conviction for themselves. Moreover the elephants were being of disservice to both sides alike; for finding themselves between two forces, and exposed to a cross-fire of javelins, they kept throwing both the Carthaginian and Roman lines into confusion. But as soon as Claudius fell upon the rear of the enemy the battle ceased to be equal: for the Iberians found themselves attacked on front and rear at once, which resulted in the greater part of them being cut down on the ground. Six of the elephants were killed with the men on them, four forced their way through the lines and were afterwards captured, having been abandoned by their Indian drivers.

Battle of the
Metaurus,
B. C. 207.
Coss. C. Claudius
Nero, M. Livius
Salinator II.

2. Hasdrubal had behaved on this occasion, as throughout his whole life, like a brave man, and died fighting : and he deserves not to be passed over without remark. I have already stated that Hannibal was his brother, and on his departure to Italy entrusted the command in Iberia to him. I have also described his many contests with the Romans, and the many embarrassing difficulties with which he had to struggle, caused by the generals sent from Carthage to Iberia ; and how in all these matters he had supported these vicissitudes and reverses in a noble spirit worthy of a son of Barcas. But I will now speak of his last contest, and explain why he seems to me pre-eminently to deserve respectful attention and imitation. Most generals and kings, when entering upon decisive battles, place before their eyes the glory and advantages to be obtained from victory, and frequently consider and contrive what use they will make of every success ; but they do not go on to review the chances of failure, nor contemplate the plan to be adopted, or the action to be taken, in the case of reverse. Yet the former is obvious, the latter requires foresight. Therefore it is that most of them, though in many instances their soldiers have fought nobly, by their own folly and imprudence in this respect have added dishonour to defeat : have disgraced their previous achievements, and rendered themselves, during the remainder of their lives, objects of reproach and contempt. It is easy to see that many leaders make this fatal mistake, and that the difference between one man and another in these points is most signal ; for history is full of such instances. Hasdrubal, on the contrary, as long as there was reasonable hope of being able to accomplish anything worthy of his former achievements, regarded his personal safety in battle as of the highest consequence ; but when Fortune deprived him of all hopes for the future, and reduced him to the last extremities, though neglecting nothing either in his preparations or on the field that might secure him the victory, nevertheless considered how, in case of total overthrow, he might face his fate and suffer nothing unworthy of his past career.

These remarks are meant for those engaged in active operations, that they may neither dash the hopes of those who

Hasdrubal falls
in the battle.

rely upon them by a heedless seeking of danger, nor by an unworthy clinging to life add disgrace and shame to the catastrophes which befall them.

3. Having won the victory, the Romans began pillaging the enemy's camp; and killed a number of the Celts, as they lay stupefied with drunkenness in their beds, like unresisting victims. Then they collected the rest of the booty, from which more than three hundred talents were paid into the treasury. Taking Carthaginians and Celts together, not less than ten thousand were killed, and about two thousand Romans. Some of the principal Carthaginians were taken prisoners, but the rest were put to the sword. When the report reached Rome, people at first could not believe it, from the intensity of their wish that it might be true; but when still more men arrived, not only stating the fact, but giving full details, then indeed the city was filled with overpowering joy; every temple-court was decked, and every shrine full of sacrificial cakes and victims: and, in a word, they were raised to such a pitch of hopefulness and confidence, that every one felt sure that Hannibal, formerly the object of their chief terror, could not after that stay even in Italy. . . .

A speech of the legate from Rhodes¹ before an assembly of Aetolians at Heraclea in the autumn of B.C. 207 (see Livy, 28, 7), at the end of the summer campaign.

4. "Facts I imagine, Aetolians, have made it clear to you that neither King Ptolemy nor the community of Rhodes, Byzantium, Chios, or Mitylene, regard a composition with you as unimportant. For this is not the first or the second time that we have introduced the subject of peace to your assembly; but ever since you entered upon the war we have beset you with entreaties, and have never desisted from warning you on this subject; because we saw that its immediate result would be the destruction of yourselves and of Macedonia, and because

¹ There is nothing to show positively that a Rhodian is the speaker: but Livy mentions envoys from Rhodes and Ptolemy this year. For the special attempts of the Rhodians to bring about a peace between Philip and the Aetolians, see 5, 24, 100.

we foresaw in the future danger to our own countries and to that of all other Greeks. For as, when a man has once set a fire alight, the result is no longer dependent upon his choice, but it spreads in whatever direction chance may direct, guided for the most part by the wind and the combustible nature of the material, and frequently attacks the first author of the conflagration himself: so too, war, when once it has been kindled by a nation, sometimes devours the first those who kindled it; and soon rushes along destroying everything that falls in its way, continually gathering fresh strength, and blown into greater heat by the folly of the people in its neighbourhood, as though by the wind. Wherefore, men of Aetolia, considering that we, as representatives of the whole body of the islanders and of the Greek inhabitants of Asia, are here to beseech you to put an end to war and to choose peace, because the matter affects us as well as you, show your wisdom by listening to us and yielding to our entreaties. For if you were carrying on a war which, though profitless (and most wars are that), was yet glorious from the motive which prompted it, and the reputation likely to accrue from it, you might be pardoned perhaps for a fixed determination to continue it; but if it is a war of the most signal infamy, which can bring you nothing but discredit and obloquy,—does not such an undertaking claim considerable hesitation on your part? We will speak our opinion frankly; and you, if you are wise, will give us a quiet hearing. For it is much better to hear a disagreeable truth now and thereby be preserved, than to listen to smooth things now, and soon afterwards to be ruined yourselves, and to ruin the rest of the Greeks with you.

5. “Put then before your eyes your own folly. You profess to be at war against Philip on behalf of the Greeks, that they may escape from servitude to him; but your war is really for the enslavement and ruin of Greece. That is the tale told by your treaty with Rome, which formerly existed only in written words, but is now seen in full operation. Heretofore, though mere written words, it was a disgrace to you: but now your execution of it has made that disgrace palpable to the eyes of all the world. Moreover, Philip merely lends his name and serves as a pretext for the war: he is not

exposed to any attack : it is against his allies,—the majority of the Peloponnesian states, Boeotia, Euboea, Phocis, Locris, Thessaly, Epirus,—that you have made this treaty, bargaining

cp. 9. 39. that their bodies and their goods shall belong to the Romans, their cities and their territory to

the Aetolians. And though personally, if you took a city, you would not stoop to violate the freeborn, or to burn the buildings, because you look upon such conduct as cruel and barbarous ; yet you have made a treaty by which you have handed over all other Greeks to the barbarians, to be exposed to the most shameful violence and lawlessness. And all this was hitherto kept a secret. But now the fate of the people of Oreus, and of the miserable Aeginetans, has betrayed you to every one,—Fortune having, as though of set purpose, suddenly brought your infatuation before the scenes.

“So much for the origin of the war and its events up to now. But as to its result,—supposing everything to go to your wish,—what do you expect that to be? Will it not be the beginning of great miseries to all Greece?

6. “For I presume no one can fail to see that, if once the Romans get rid of the war in Italy,—and this is all but done, now that Hannibal has been confined to a narrow district in Bruttii,—they will direct their whole power upon Greece : professedly, indeed, in aid of the Boeotians against Philip, but really with the view of reducing it entirely under their own power. And if they design to treat it well when they have conquered it, theirs will be the honour and glory ; and if badly, theirs too will be the plunder from the states they destroy, and the power over those which they allow to survive : while you will be calling upon the gods to witness your wrongs, when no god will be any longer willing, nor any man be able to help you. Now, perhaps, you ought to have foreseen all this from the first, for that would have been your best course. But since the future often escapes human foresight, now, at any rate, that you have seen by actual experience what has happened, it must be your duty to take better measures for the future. In any case we have omitted nothing which it becomes sincere friends to say or do. We have spoken our opinion about the future with absolute frankness ; and you we

urge and entreat not to stand in the way of the freedom and safety of yourselves or of the rest of Greece."

This speaker having, as it seemed, made a considerable impression, he was followed by the ambassadors of Philip, who, without making a long speech, merely said that they were commissioned to do one of two things,—if the Aetolians chose peace, to accept it readily: if not, to call the gods and the ambassadors from Greece to witness that the Aetolians, and not Philip, ought to be held responsible for what happened thereafter, and so to depart. . . .

7. Philip loudly lamented his ill-fortune in having so narrowly missed getting Attalus into his hands. . . .

Attalus eludes Philip.
Livy, 28, 7, 8,
B.C. 207.

On his way to the lake Trichonis Philip arrived at Thermus, where there was a temple of Apollo; and there he once more defaced all the sacred buildings which he had spared on his former occupation of the town. In both instances it was an ill-advised indulgence of temper: for it is a mark of utter unreasonableness to commit an act of impiety against heaven in order to gratify one's wrath against man. . . .

Philip at Thermus. See 5, 6-18.

PHILOPOEMEN IN THE PELOPONNESE,
B.C. 207

8. There are three methods followed by those who wish to arrive at an intelligent knowledge of tactics. The first is by the study of history, the second by the use of scientific treatises composed by specialists, the third by actual experience on the field. But of all three of these methods the Achaean commanders were equally ignorant. . . .

Defects of the Achaean officers.

A very general fault in the men was an unfortunate rivalry, engendered by the ostentation and bad taste of the others. They were very particular about their attendants and their dress; and there was a show of splendour in this, kept up by the majority beyond their means. But to their arms they paid no attention whatever. . . .

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