

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

## BOOK XV

*A slight success on the part of the Carthaginian fleet at Utica (14, 10) had been more than outweighed by the capture of Syphax by Laelius [Livy, 39, 11]. Negotiations for peace followed, and an armistice, in the course of which occurred the incident referred to in the first extract of this book.*

1. THE Carthaginians having seized the transports as prizes of war, and with them an extraordinary quantity of provisions, Scipio was extremely enraged, not so much at the loss of the provisions, as by the fact that the enemy had thereby obtained a vast supply of necessaries; and still more at the Carthaginians having violated the sworn articles of truce, and commenced the war afresh. He therefore at once selected Lucius Sergius, Lucius Baebius, and Lucius Fabius to go to Carthage, to remonstrate on what had taken place, and at the same time to announce that the Roman people had ratified the treaty; for he had lately received a despatch from home to that effect. Upon their arrival in Carthage these envoys first had an audience of the Senate, and then were introduced to a meeting of the people. On both occasions they spoke with great freedom on the situation of affairs, reminding their hearers that "Their ambassadors who had come to the Roman camp at Tunes, on being admitted to the council of officers, had not been content with appealing to the gods and kissing the ground, as other people do, but had thrown themselves upon the earth, and in abject humiliation had kissed the feet of the assembled officers; and then, rising

Some transports under Cn. Octavius wrecked in the Bay of Carthage, and taken possession of by the Carthaginians in spite of the truce. Autumn of B.C. 203. See Livy, 30, 24.

Speech of the Roman envoys.

from the ground, had reproached themselves for breaking the existing treaty between the Romans and Carthaginians, and acknowledged that they deserved every severity at the hands of the Romans; but intreated to be spared the last severities, from a regard to the vicissitudes of human fortune, for their folly would be the means of displaying the generosity of the Romans. Remembering all this, the general and the officers then present in the council were at a loss to understand what had encouraged them to forget what they then said, and to venture to break their sworn articles of agreement. Plainly it was this—they trusted in Hannibal and the <sup>Hannibal leaves</sup> forces that had arrived with him. But they <sup>Italy, 23d June,</sup> were very ill advised. All the world knew <sup>B.C. 203.</sup> that he and his army had been driven these two years past from every part of Italy, and had retreated into the neighbourhood of the Lacinian promontory, where they had been so closely shut up and almost besieged, that they had barely been able to get safe away home. Not that, even if they had come back," he added, "as conquerors, and were minded to engage us who have already defeated you in two consecutive battles, ought you to entertain any doubt as to the result, or to speculate on the chance of victory. The certainty of defeat were a better subject for your reflections: and when that takes place, what are the gods that you will summon to your aid? And what arguments will you use to move the pity of the victors for your misfortunes? You must needs expect to be debarred from all hope of mercy from gods and men alike by your perfidy and folly."

2. After delivering this speech the envoys retired. Some few of the citizens were against breaking the <sup>Treachorous</sup> treaty; but the majority, both of the politicians and the Senate, were much annoyed <sup>attempt on the</sup> by its terms, and irritated by the plain speaking <sup>lives of the</sup> of the envoys; and, moreover, could not make up their minds to surrender the captured transports and the provisions which were on board them. But their main motive was a confident hope that they might yet conquer by means of Hannibal. The people therefore voted to dismiss <sup>Roman envoys.</sup> the envoys without an answer. Moreover, the political party, whose aim it was to

bring on the war at all hazards, held a meeting and arranged the following act of treachery. They gave out that it was necessary to make provision for conducting the envoys back to their camp in safety. They therefore at once caused two triremes to be got ready to convoy them ; but at the same time sent a message to the Navarch Hasdrubal to have some vessels ready at no great distance from the Roman camp, in order that, as soon as the convoys had taken leave of the Roman envoys, he might bear down upon their ships and sink them ; for the Carthaginian fleet was stationed at the time close under Utica. Having made this arrangement with Hasdrubal, they despatched the envoys, with instructions to the officers of the convoys to leave them and return, as soon as they had passed the mouth of the River Macara ; for it was from this point that the enemy's camp came into sight. Therefore, according to their instructions, as soon as they had passed this point, the officers of the convoys made signs of farewell to the Roman envoys and returned. Lucius and his colleagues suspected no danger, and felt no other annoyance at this proceeding than as regarding it as a mark of disrespect. But no sooner were they left thus alone, than three Carthaginian vessels suddenly started out to attack them, and came up with the Roman quinquereme. They failed, indeed, to stave her in, because she evaded them ; nor did they succeed in boarding her, because the men resisted them with great spirit. But they ran up alongside of the vessel, and kept attacking her at various points, and managed to wound the marines with their darts and kill a considerable number of them ; until at last the Romans, observing that their forage parties along the shore were rushing down to the beach to their assistance, ran their ships upon land. Most of the marines were killed, but the envoys had the unexpected good fortune to escape with their lives.

3. This was the signal for the recommencement of the war in a fiercer and more angry spirit than before. The Romans on their part, looking upon themselves as having been treated with perfidy, were possessed with a furious determination to conquer the Carthaginians ; while the latter, conscious of the consequences of what they had done, were ready to go all lengths to avoid

Renewal of  
hostilities.

falling under the power of the enemy. With such feelings animating both sides, it was quite evident that the result would have to be decided on the field of battle. Consequently everybody, not only in Italy and Libya, but in Iberia, Sicily, and Sardinia, was in a state of excited expectation, watching with conflicting feelings to see what would happen. But meanwhile Hannibal, finding himself too <sup>Hannibal's</sup> weak in cavalry, sent to a certain Numidian cavalry reinforced named Tychaeus, who was a friend of Syphax, <sup>by Tychaeus.</sup> and was reputed to possess the most warlike cavalry in Libya, urging him "to lend his aid, and not let the present opportunity slip; as he must be well aware that, if the Carthaginians won the day, he would be able to maintain his rule; but if the Romans proved victorious, his very life would be in danger, owing to the ambition of Massanissa." This prince was convinced by these arguments, and joined Hannibal with two thousand horsemen.

4. Having secured his fleet, Scipio left Baebius in command of it in his place, while he himself went a round of the cities. This time <sup>B.C. 202.</sup> he did not admit to mercy those who voluntarily surrendered, but carried all the towns by <sup>Scipio traverses</sup> force, and enslaved the inhabitants, to show his <sup>the Carthaginian</sup> anger at the treachery of the Carthaginians. <sup>territory, and</sup> To <sup>summons Mas-</sup> Massanissa he sent message after message, explaining to him how the Punic government had broken the terms, and urging him to collect the largest army he was able and join him with all speed. For as soon as the treaty had been made, Massanissa, as I have said, had immediately departed with his own army and ten Roman cohorts, infantry and cavalry, accompanied by some commissioners from Scipio, that he might not only recover his own kingdom, but secure the addition of that of Syphax also, by the assistance of the Romans. And this purpose was eventually effected.

It happened that just at this time the envoys from Rome arrived at the naval camp. Those of them <sup>Scipio orders</sup> who had been sent by the Roman government, <sup>the Carthaginian</sup> Baebius at once caused to be escorted to Scipio, while he retained those who were Car- <sup>envoys to be</sup> <sup>released.</sup> thaginians. The latter were much cast down, and regarded

their position as one of great danger; for when they were informed of the impious outrage committed by their countrymen on the persons of the Roman envoys, they thought there could be no doubt that the vengeance for it would be wreaked upon themselves. But when Scipio learnt from the recently-arrived commissioners that the senate and people accepted with enthusiasm the treaty which he had made with the Carthaginians, and were ready to grant everything he asked, he was highly delighted, and ordered Baebius to send the envoys home with all imaginable courtesy. And he was very well advised to do so, in my opinion. For as he knew that his countrymen made a great point of respecting the rights of ambassadors, he considered in his own mind, not what the Carthaginians deserved to have done to them, but what it was becoming in Romans to inflict. Therefore, though he did not relax his own indignation and anger at what they had done, he yet endeavoured, in the words of the proverb, "to maintain the good traditions of his sires." The result was that, by this superiority in his conduct, a very decided impression was made upon the spirits of the Carthaginians and of Hannibal himself.

5. When the people of Carthage saw the cities in their territory being sacked, they sent a message to Hannibal begging him to act without delay, to come to close quarters with the enemy, and bring the matter to the decision of battle. He bade the messengers in answer "to confine their attention to other matters, and to leave such things to him, for he would choose the time for fighting himself." Some days afterwards he broke up his quarters at Adrumetum, and pitched his camp near ZAMA, a town about five days' march to the west of Carthage. From that place he sent spies to ascertain the place, nature, and strength of the Roman general's encampment. These spies were caught and brought to Scipio, who, so far from inflicting upon them the usual punishment of spies, appointed a tribune to show them everything in the camp thoroughly and without reserve; and when this had been done, he asked the men whether the appointed officer had been careful to point out everything to them. Upon their replying that

Hannibal moves  
to Zama.

he had, he gave them provisions and an escort, and despatched them with injunctions to be careful to tell Hannibal everything they had seen. On their return to his camp, Hannibal was so much struck with the magnanimity and high courage of Scipio, that he conceived a lively desire for a personal interview with him. With this purpose he sent a herald to say that he was desirous of a parley to discuss the matters at issue. When the herald had delivered his message, Scipio at once expressed his consent, and said that he would himself send him a message when it suited him to meet, naming the time and place. The herald returned to Hannibal with this answer. Next day Massanissa arrived with six thousand infantry and about four thousand cavalry. Scipio received him with cordiality, and congratulated him on having added to his sway all those who had previously been subject to Syphax. Thus reinforced, he removed his camp to Naragara: selecting it as a place which, among other advantages, enabled him to get water within a javelin's throw.

Arrival of  
Massanissa.

6. From this place he sent to the Carthaginian general, informing him that he was ready to meet him, and discuss matters with him. On hearing this, Hannibal moved his quarters to within thirty stades of Scipio, and pitched his camp on a hill, which seemed a favourable position for his present purpose, except that water had to be fetched from a considerable distance, which caused his soldiers great fatigue.

Next day both commanders advanced from their camps attended by a few horsemen. Presently they left these escorts and met in the intervening space by themselves, each accompanied by an interpreter. Hannibal was the first to speak, after the usual salutation. He said that "He wished that the Romans had never coveted any possession outside Italy, nor the Carthaginians outside Libya; for these were both noble empires, and were, so to speak, marked out by nature. But since," he continued, "our rival claims to Sicily first made us enemies, and then those for Iberia; and since, finally, unwarned by the lessons of misfortune, we have gone so far that the one nation has en-

Meeting of Scipio  
and Hannibal.

Hannibal's  
speech.

dangered the very soil of its native land, and the other is now actually doing so, all that there remains for us to do is to try our best to deprecate the wrath of the gods, and to put an end, as far as in us lies, to these feelings of obstinate hostility. I personally am ready to do this, because I have learnt by actual experience that Fortune is the most fickle thing in the world, and inclines with decisive favour now to one side and now to the other on the slightest pretext, treating mankind like young children.

7. "But it is about you that I am anxious, Scipio. For you are still a young man, and everything has succeeded to your wishes both in Iberia and Libya, and you have as yet never experienced the ebb tide of Fortune; I fear, therefore, that my words, true as they are, will not influence you. But do look at the facts in the light of one story, and that not connected with a former generation, but our own. Look at me! I am that Hannibal who, after the battle of Cannae, became master of nearly all Italy; and presently advancing to Rome itself, and pitching my camp within forty stades of it, deliberated as to what I should do with you and your country; but now I am in Libya debating with you, a Roman, as to the bare existence of myself and my countrymen. With such a reverse as that before your eyes, I beg you not to entertain high thoughts, but to deliberate with a due sense of human weakness on the situation; and the way to do that is among good things to choose the greatest, among evils the least. What man of sense, then, would deliberately choose to incur the risk which is now before you. If you conquer, you will add nothing of importance to your glory or to that of your country; while, if you are worsted, you will have been yourself the means of entirely cancelling all the honours and glories you have already won. What then is the point that I am seeking to establish by these arguments? It is that the Romans should retain all the countries for which we have hitherto contended—I mean Sicily, Sardinia, and Iberia; and that the Carthaginians should engage never to go to war with Rome for these; and also that all the islands lying between Italy and Libya should belong to Rome. For I am persuaded that such a treaty will be at once safest for the

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