

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

BOOK XXXVIII

1. HASDRUBAL, the general of the Carthaginians, was a vain ostentatious person, very far from possessing real strategic ability. There are numerous proofs of his want of judgment. In the first place he appeared in full armour in his interview with Gulussa, king of the Numidians, with a purple dyed robe over his armour fastened by a brooch, and attended by ten bodyguards armed with swords; and in the next place, having advanced in front of these armed attendants to a distance of about twenty feet, he stood behind the trench and palisade and beckoned the king to come to him, whereas it ought to have been quite the other way. However, Gulussa, after the Numidian fashion, being not inclined to stand on ceremony, advanced towards him unattended, and when he got near him asked him "Whom he was afraid of that he had come in full armour?" And on his answering, "The Romans," Gulussa remarked: "Then you should not have trusted yourself to the city, when there was no necessity for your doing so. However, what do you want, and what do you ask me to do?" To which Hasdrubal replied: "I want you to go as our ambassador to the Roman commander, and to undertake for us that we will obey every injunction; only I beg of you both to abstain from harming this wretched city." Then said Gulussa: "Your demand appears to me to be quite childish! Why, my good sir, what you failed to get by your embassies from the Romans, who were then quietly encamped at Utica, and before a blow had been struck,—how can you expect to have granted you now, when you have been completely invested by sea and land, and have almost given up every hope

The siege of Carthage, B.C. 147.
Coss. P. Cornelius Scipio Africanus Aemilianus, C. Livius Donstus.

Interview between Hasdrubal and King Gulussa.

of safety?" To which Hasdrubal replied that "Gulussa was ill informed; for they still had good hopes of their outside allies,"—for he had not yet heard about the Mauretani, and thought that the forces in the country were still unconquered,¹—"nor were they in despair as to their own ultimate safety. And above all, they trusted in the support of the gods, and in what they might expect from them; for they believed that they would not disregard the flagrant violation of treaty from which they were suffering, but would give them many opportunities of securing their safety. Therefore he called on the Roman commander in the name of the gods and of Fortune to spare the city; with the distinct understanding that, if its inhabitants failed to obtain this grace, they would be cut to pieces to the last man sooner than evacuate it." After some more conversation of the same sort, these men separated for the present, having made an appointment to meet again on the third day from that time.

2. On Gulussa communicating to him what had been said, Scipio's scorn of Scipio remarked with a laugh: "Oh, then, it the proposal, was because you intended to make this demand B.C. 147. that you displayed that abominable cruelty to our prisoners!"² And you trust in the gods, do you, after violating even the laws of men?" The king went on to remind Scipio that above all things it was necessary to finish the business speedily; for, apart from unforeseen contingencies, the consular elections were now close at hand, and it was only right to have regard to that, lest, if the winter found them just where they were, another Consul would come to supersede him, and without any trouble get all the credit of his labours. These words induced Scipio to give directions to offer Hasdrubal safety for himself, his wife and children, and ten families of his friends and relations, and permission to take ten talents of

¹ The task of subduing the country in B.C. 147 was entrusted to the consul Culpurnius Piso, while Scipio was engaged in completing the investment of Carthage. Appian, *Pun.* 113-126.

² After the capture of Megara, the suburban district of Carthage, by Scipio, Hasdrubal withdrew into the Byrsa, got made commander-in-chief, and bringing all Roman prisoners to the battlements, put them to death with the most ghastly tortures. Appian, *Pun.* 118.

his private property and to bring out with him whichever of his slaves he chose. With these concessions therefore Gulussa went to his meeting with Hasdrubal on the third day, who again came forward with great pomp and at a dignified step, clothed in his purple robe and full suit of armour, so as to cast the tyrants of tragedy far into the shade. He was naturally fat, but at that time he had grown extremely corpulent, and had become more than usually red from exposure to the sun, so that he seemed to be living like fat oxen at a fair; and not at all like a man to be in command at a time of such terrible miseries as cannot easily be described in words. When he met the king, and heard the offer of the Consul, he slapped his thigh again and again, and appealing to the gods and Fortune declared that "The day would never come on which Hasdrubal would behold the sun and his native city in flames; for to the nobly-minded one's country and its burning houses were a glorious funeral pile." These expressions force us to feel some admiration for the man and the nobility of his language; but when we come to view his administration of affairs, we cannot fail to be struck by his want of spirit and courage; for at a time when his fellow-citizens were absolutely perishing with famine, he gave banquets and had second courses put on of a costly kind, and by his own excellent physical condition made their misery more conspicuous. For the number of the dying surpassed belief, as well as the number who deserted every day from hunger. However, by fiercely rebuking some, and by executing as well as abusing others, he cowed the common people: and by this means retained, in a country reduced to the lowest depths of misfortune, an authority which a tyrant would scarcely enjoy in a prosperous city. Therefore I think I was justified in saying that two leaders more like each other than those who at that time directed the affairs of Greece and Carthage it would not be easy to find. And this will be rendered manifest when we come to a formal comparison of them. . . .

3. My thirty-eighth book embraces the summation of the misfortunes of Greece. For though Greece as a whole, as well as separate

The selfish and tyrannical conduct of Hasdrubal.

Comparison between Hasdrubal and Diaeus.

The ill-luck which occasioned the fall of Greece.

parts of it, has on several occasions sustained grave disasters, yet to none of her previous defeats could the word "misfortune" be more properly applied, than to those which have befallen her in our time. For it is not only that the *sufferings* of Greece excite compassion: stronger still is the conviction, which a knowledge of the truth of the several occurrences must bring, that in all she undertook she was supremely unfortunate. At any rate, though the disaster of

Carthage is looked upon as of the severest kind, yet one cannot but regard that of Greece as not less, and in some respects even more so. For the Carthaginians at any rate left something for posterity to say on their behalf; but the mistakes of the Greeks were so glaring that they made it impossible for those who wished to support them to do so. Besides, the destruction of the Carthaginians was immediate and total, so that they had no feeling afterwards of their disasters: but the Greeks, with their misfortunes ever before their eyes, handed down to their children's children the loss of all that once was theirs. And in proportion as we regard those who live in pain as more pitiable than those who lose their lives at the moment of their misfortunes, in that proportion must the disasters of the Greeks be regarded as more pitiable than those of the Carthaginians,—unless a man thinks nothing of dignity and honour, and gives his opinion from a regard only to material advantage. To prove the truth of what I say, one has only to remember and compare the misfortunes in Greece reputed to be the heaviest with what I have just now mentioned.

4. Now, the greatest alarm that fortune ever brought upon the Greeks was when Xerxes invaded Europe: for at that time all were exposed to danger though an extremely small number actually suffered disaster. The greatest sufferers were the Athenians: for, with a prudent foresight of what was coming, they abandoned their country with their wives and children. That crisis then caused them damage; for the Barbarians took Athens and laid it waste with savage violence: but it brought them no shame or disgrace. On the contrary, they gained the highest

Comparison between the fall of Greece under the Romans with

the Persian invasion, B. C. 480.

glory in the eyes of all the world for having regarded everything as of less importance, in comparison with taking their share in the same fortune as the other Greeks. Accordingly, in consequence of their exalted conduct, they not only immediately recovered their own city and territory, but soon afterwards disputed the supremacy in Greece with the Lacedaemonians. Subsequently, indeed, they were beaten by the Spartans in war, and forced to submit to the destruction of their own city walls: but even this one might assert to be a reproach to the Lacedaemonians, for having used the power put into their hands with excessive severity, rather than to the Athenians. Then the Spartans once more, being beaten by the Thebans, lost the supremacy in Greece, and after that defeat were deprived of their outside rule and reduced to the frontiers of Laconia. But what disgrace was there in having retired, while disputing for the most honourable objects, to the limits of their ancestral dominion? Therefore, these events we may speak of as failures, but not as misfortunes in any sense. The Mantineans again were forced to leave their city, being divided out and scattered into separate villages by the Lacedaemonians; but for this all the world blamed the folly, not of the Mantineans, but of the Lacedaemonians. The Thebans, indeed, besides the loss of their army, saw their country depopulated at the time when Alexander, having resolved on the invasion of Asia, conceived that by making an example of Thebes he should establish a terror that would act as a check upon the Greeks, while his attention was distracted upon other affairs: but at that time all the world pitied the Thebans as having been treated with injustice and harshness, and no one was found to justify this proceeding of Alexander.

5. Accordingly after a short time they obtained assistance, and once more inhabited their country in security. For the compassion of foreigners is no small benefit to those who are unjustly dispossessed; since we often see that, with the change of feeling among the many, Fortune also changes; and even the conquerors themselves repent, and make

The defeat of
the Athenians at
Aegospotami,
B.C. 405,

of the Spartans
at Leuctra,
B.C. 371.

The destruction
of Mantinea,
B.C. 362,

and of Thebes,
B.C. 335.

good the disasters of those who have fallen under undeserved misfortunes. Once more, at certain periods the Chalcidians

The tyranny of the later kings of Macedonia, and Corinthians and some other cities, owing to the advantages of their situation, were attacked by the kings of Macedonia, and had garrisons imposed on them: but when they were thus enslaved all the world were eager to do their best to liberate them, and loathed their enslavers and regarded them continually as their enemies. But above all, up to this time it was generally single states that were depopulated, and in single states that reverses were met with, in some cases while disputing for supremacy and empire, and in others from the treacherous attacks of despots and kings: so that, so far from their losses bringing them any reproach, they escaped even the name of misfortune. For we must look on all those who meet with

incalculable disasters whether private or public as the victims of losses, and those only to be embittered by the fact that it came from the folly of the Greeks themselves "unfortunate," to whom events through their own folly bring dishonour. Instances of this last are the Peloponnesians, Boeotians, Phocians, . . . and Locrians, some of the dwellers on the Ionian gulf, and next to these the Macedonians, . . . who all as a rule did not merely suffer loss, but were "unfortunate," with a misfortune of the gravest kind

and for which they were themselves open to reproach: for they displayed at once want of good faith and want of courage, brought upon themselves a series of disgraces, lost all that could bring them honour, . . . and voluntarily admitted into their towns the Roman fasces and axes. They were in the utmost panic, in fact, owing to the extravagance of their own wrongful acts, if one ought to call them their own; for I should rather say that the peoples as such were entirely ignorant, and were beguiled from the path of right: but that the men who *acted* wrongly were the authors of this delusion.

6. In regard to these men, it should not be a matter of surprise if we leave for a while the ordinary method and spirit of our narrative to give a clearer and more elaborate exposition of their character. I am aware that some may

be found, regarding it as their first duty to cast a veil over the errors of the Greeks, to accuse us of writing in a spirit of malevolence. But for myself, I conceive that with right-minded persons a man will never be regarded as a true friend who shrinks from and is afraid of plain speech, nor indeed as a good citizen who abandons the truth because of the offence he will give to certain persons at the time. But a writer of public history above all deserves no indulgence whatever, who regards anything of superior importance to truth. For in proportion as written history reaches larger numbers, and survives for longer time, than words spoken to suit an occasion, both the writer ought to be still more particular about truth, and his readers ought to admit his authority only so far as he adheres to this principle. At the actual hour of danger it is only right that Greeks should help Greeks in every possible way, by protecting them, veiling their errors or deprecating the wrath of the sovereign people,—and this I genuinely did for my part at the actual time: but it is also right, in regard to the record of events to be transmitted to posterity, to leave them unmixed with any falsehood: so that readers should not be merely gratified for the moment by a pleasant tale, but should receive in their souls a lesson which will prevent a repetition of similar errors in the future. Enough, however, on this subject. . . .

In the autumn of B.C. 150 the corrupt Menalchidas of Sparta was succeeded as Achaean Strategus by Diaeus, who, to cover his share in the corruption of Menalchidas, induced the league to act in the matter of some disputed claim of Sparta in a manner contrary to the decisions of the Roman Senate. The Spartans wished to appeal again to Rome; whereupon the Achaeans passed a law forbidding separate cities to make such appeals, which were to be only made by the league. The Lacedaemonians took up arms: and Diaeus professing that the league was not at war with Sparta, but with certain factious citizens of that city, named four of its chief men who were to be banished. They fled to Rome, where the Senate ordered their restoration. Embassies went from Achaia and from Sparta to Rome to state their respective cases; and on their return gave false reports,—Diaeus

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