

POLYBIUS

## THE FIRST PUNIC WAR

circle Italy on every side and threaten every part of the country, and this was a prospect which the Romans dreaded. It seemed clear that this would be the fate of Sicily unless help were given to the Mamertines: for the Carthaginians had already subdued the greater part of the island, and once Messana had fallen into their hands it would not be long before they brought Syracuse under their domination as well. The Romans foresaw all these possibilities and considered it imperative that they should not abandon Messana, and thus allow the Carthaginians to secure a bridgehead for the invasion of Italy, and so they debated the question at length.<sup>1</sup>

### *The First Punic War*

II. Even after long consideration, the Senate did not approve the proposal to send help to Messana; they took the view that any advantage which could result from relieving the place would be counterbalanced by the inconsistency of such an action. However, the people, who had suffered grievously from the wars that had just ended and were in dire need of rehabilitation of every kind, were inclined to listen to the consuls. These men, besides stressing the national advantages I have already mentioned which Rome could secure if she intervened, also dwelt on the great gains which would clearly accrue to every individual citizen from the spoils of war, and so a resolution in favour of sending help was carried. When this decree had been passed by the people, one of the consuls, Appius Claudius, was appointed to command the expedition, and was given orders to cross to Messana. After this the Mamertines, partly through threats and partly by spreading false information, contrived to persuade the Carthaginian commander,<sup>2</sup> who had

1. It is doubtful whether Carthaginian power presented a serious threat to Italy at this date. More probably the wars with Pyrrhus had alerted the Romans to the dangers of foreign intervention in southern Italy and the Mamertines played upon these fears, as did the Massiliots before the Second Punic War.

2. His name was Hanno.

previously established himself in the citadel, to move out; they then invited Appius to enter and handed the city over to him. The Carthaginians crucified their general for what they regarded as his cowardice and lack of judgement in leaving the citadel. They then stationed their fleet near Cape Pelorias<sup>1</sup> and used their land forces to press the siege vigorously from the direction of Suneis. At this point it seemed to Hiero that the moment had come for the barbarians who had occupied Messana to be driven out of Sicily once and for all, and so he formed an alliance with the Carthaginians, marched out of Syracuse, and advanced upon Messana. He pitched his camp near the mountain of Chalcidicus on the opposite side to the Carthaginian lines, and so cut off this route of escape from the city as well. Meanwhile Appius, the Roman consul, performed the dangerous operation of crossing the straits by night and making his way into Messana. But he found that the enemy were pressing the siege vigorously from all sides, and since he considered it both dangerous and humiliating for him to be encircled in this way with the enemy in control equally of the sea and the land, he tried to come to terms with the Syracusans and the Carthaginians in the hope of taking the Mamertines out of the war. Both sides ignored his proposals, however, and at length he decided, out of sheer necessity, that he must risk a battle and that he would attack the Syracusans first. So he led out his troops and drew them up in battle order, whereupon Hiero eagerly followed suit and engaged him. There was a long and hard-fought struggle, but in the end Appius gained the upper hand and drove the whole of the opposing army back to their camp, after which he stripped the enemy's dead and returned to Messana. To Hiero this action gave a foreboding as to how the whole campaign was likely to end, and so he disengaged his troops under cover of darkness and retired with all speed to Syracuse.

12. The next day Appius was greatly encouraged when he learned of the outcome of the battle, and he decided to attack the Carthaginians without delay. He ordered his troops to stand to at an early hour and at first light led them out to battle. He engaged the enemy, killed large numbers of their troops, and forced the rest to retreat in disorder to the towns in the vicinity. These successes

1. A few miles north of the city.

enabled him to raise the siege of Messana and then to move over to the offensive, ravaging the territory of the Syracusans and their allies and scouring the country without meeting any resistance. Finally he turned the tables by encamping before Syracuse and laying siege to the city.

This, then, was the first occasion on which the Romans crossed the sea with an army, and it was for these reasons and in the context which I have described that they did so. It seemed to me that this was the most suitable point of departure for my whole narrative, and so it is upon these episodes that I have based my main theme, though I also went some way further back in summarizing the course of events, so that in my exposition of the general causes there should be no matters left in doubt. For those who desire a complete and comprehensive account of the development of Rome's present supremacy, it is vitally important, I believe, to trace this earlier phase of her history. In other words, they must acquaint themselves with the period and with the process whereby the Romans began to advance towards better fortunes after the defeat they had suffered on their own soil,<sup>1</sup> and with the details of how and when, after becoming the masters of Italy, they applied themselves to the conquest of countries further afield. My readers should not, therefore, be surprised if in the course of this work, I sometimes digress to explain some of the earlier history of the most famous states. I shall do this to give them a starting-point, and thus enable them to understand the origins and the circumstances from which each of these states reached its present position. In other words I shall use the same approach as I have adopted for the Romans.

13. After these explanations it is time to present my main theme, but first of all I must summarize the episodes which are dealt with in these introductory books. To mention these in order, we come first to the events of the war which was fought between Rome and Carthage for the possession of Sicily. There follows the war in Africa, and after that the achievements of the Carthaginians in Spain, first under Hamilcar and later under Hasdrubal; the latter campaigns coincide with the first incursion by the Romans into Illyria and that region of Europe, which was shortly followed by

1. The invasion by the Gauls in the early fourth century B.C.

their struggles within Italy against the Celts. At the same time the war named after Cleomenes, the King of Sparta, was being fought in Greece, and with this I shall conclude my general introduction and the second volume of my history.

There is no need for me to relate all these developments in detail, nor would this be useful to my readers; my plan does not require me to record them in full, but merely to refer to them in passing by way of introduction to those events which form my principal theme. I shall therefore do no more than recapitulate them briefly in due order so as to make the end of the introduction fit into the beginning of my history proper. In this way my narrative will follow an uninterrupted sequence, and it will be seen that I have good reason to touch upon certain matters even though others have already recorded them; at the same time this arrangement will make the approach to later events intelligible and easy to follow for the student of history. I shall, however, try to give a rather fuller account of the first war which was fought between Rome and Carthage for the possession of Sicily. This is because it would be difficult to find any contest which was longer in its duration, more intensively prepared for on both sides, or more unremittingly pursued once begun, or one which involved more battles or more decisive changes of Fortune. The two states concerned were still at that time uncorrupted in their customs and institutions, both received no more than moderate help from Fortune and both were equal in strength; in consequence we can form a more accurate picture of the national qualities and resources of each by comparing their conduct in this war than in any subsequent one.

14. There was also another reason, no less influential than those I have already mentioned, which persuaded me to pay especial attention to this war, namely the fact that Philinus and Fabius,<sup>1</sup> the historians who are reputed to be the most expert authorities on

1. Quintus Fabius Pictor, the oldest Roman historian, lived through the Hannibalic War. His history, which traced the story of Rome from the foundation of the city to his own time, was written in Greek and was aimed at justifying Roman policy to the Greeks. Philinus of Agrigentum lived during the First Punic War and wrote its history from a pro-Carthaginian standpoint. It is generally agreed that Fabius and Philinus are Polybius' exclusive sources for the First Punic War.

it, have failed, in my opinion, to report the truth as they should have done. Now, if we may judge by the lives and principles of these men, I do not suggest that they deliberately set out to mislead their readers; on the other hand both seem to me to have behaved in the way that men do when they are in love. Thus because of his partisan zeal and his persistent devotion to the one side Philinus insists that the Carthaginians acted with wisdom, virtue and courage on every occasion and that the Romans behaved in the contrary fashion, while Fabius gives us a diametrically opposite version. Now in other spheres of human life we should perhaps not rule out such partiality. A good man ought to love his friends and his country, and should share both their hatreds and their loyalties. But once a man takes up the role of the historian he must discard all considerations of this kind. He will often have to speak well of his enemies and even award them the highest praise should their actions demand this, and on the other hand criticize and find fault with his friends, however close they may be, if their errors of conduct show that this is his duty. For just as a living creature, if it is deprived of its eyesight, is rendered completely helpless, so if history is deprived of the truth, we are left with nothing but an idle, unprofitable tale. We must therefore not shrink from accusing our friends or praising our enemies, nor need we be afraid of praising or blaming the same people at different times, since it is impossible that men who are engaged in public affairs should always be in the right, and unlikely that they should always be in the wrong. We must therefore detach ourselves from the actors in our story, and apply to them only such statements and judgements<sup>1</sup> as their conduct deserves.

15. The truth of what I have just said is borne out by an example from one of these histories. At the beginning of his second book Philinus tells us that the Carthaginians and Syracusans made war against Messana and laid siege to the city; that the Romans then arrived by sea, entered the town, and promptly made a sortie to attack the Syracusans, but that after suffering heavy losses in the fighting, they fell back upon Messana. Next they marched out against the Carthaginians, and were not only repulsed but lost a large number of men who were taken prisoner. This is Philinus'

1. i.e. statements of facts, and judgements on matters of opinion.

account, but he then goes on to say that after the battle Hiero, the ruler of Syracuse, completely lost his head, that he not only set fire to his camp and his tents and hurried back to Syracuse the same night, but also abandoned all the forts which had been built to threaten the territory of Messana. In the same way he reports that the Carthaginians after their battle immediately evacuated their entrenchments, dispersed among the various towns of the neighbourhood, and made no attempt to contest the possession of the open country. He further tells us that the Carthaginian commanders, recognizing that their troops had become demoralized, decided not to put matters to the test of a battle, and that the Romans, following on their heels, ravaged both Carthaginian and Syracusan territory and proceeded to lay siege to Syracuse. This account, it seems to me, is a mass of inconsistencies and does not need to be examined in detail. The same troops whom Philinus describes at the outset as besieging Messana and as successful in all their operations are seen a little later as retreating in headlong rout, abandoning the open country, and finally as having become demoralized and encircled in their turn. On the other hand, the men whom he represented as defeated and beleaguered are suddenly reported as having broken out, pursued their enemies, taken control of the open country, and finally placed Syracuse under siege. It is impossible to reconcile the two versions of events, so it follows that either his account of the earlier or else of the later operations must be false. It is the former which is inaccurate. The Syracusans and the Carthaginians actually did abandon the open country, and the Romans immediately began to make war on Syracuse, and, as he says, on Echetla too, a town which lies between Syracusan and Carthaginian territory. We must therefore admit that the first part of Philinus' report is false, and that this historian represents the Romans as having been defeated in the fighting in front of Messana, whereas in fact they had been victorious. We shall find that this fault is repeated throughout Philinus' history, and the case is similar in that of Fabius, as I shall show when the occasion arises. At any rate I have made my point in respect of this digression, and shall now return to the matter in hand and do my utmost to give a true picture of this war, taking a short road and confining my narrative strictly to the order of events.

16. When the news of the victories won by Appius and his legions reached Rome, the people elected Manius Otacilius and Manius Valerius as consuls and dispatched the whole of their armed forces<sup>1</sup> and both these generals to Sicily. The Romans possess four legions in all which consist of full citizens, as distinct from the units provided by the allies. Each of the legions is enrolled annually and comprises 4,000 infantry and 300 cavalry. When these troops arrived in Sicily, most of the cities rose against the Carthaginians and Syracusans and came over to the Romans. Hiero took note of the mood of terror and dismay which had seized the Sicilians, and when he contrasted this with the numbers and the strength of the Roman forces, he concluded that the Romans' prospects were far brighter than those of the Carthaginians. So, since his reason urged him to take the side of the Romans, he sent messages to the consuls with a view to concluding peace and a pact of friendship with them. The Romans responded readily to his proposals especially in view of the problem of provisioning themselves, for since the Carthaginians commanded the sea, they were afraid of being cut off on all sides from their essential supplies; they remembered that their troops which had crossed to Sicily before had suffered badly from such shortages. They judged that Hiero could do them great service in this respect, and so they welcomed his offer of friendship.

A treaty was then drawn up according to the conditions of which the King undertook to hand over his prisoners to the Romans without a ransom and, in addition, to pay them 100 talents of silver. When these terms had been agreed, the Romans henceforth treated the Syracusans as friends and allies. For his part Hiero, once he had placed himself under the protection of the Romans, kept them provided at all times with their essential supplies, and for the rest of his life he reigned securely over the Syracusans, treating the Greeks with such consideration that he earned crowns and many other honours from them. He may fairly be regarded as one of the most outstanding of rulers, and as the one who enjoyed for the longest time the fruits of his own wisdom, both in particular cases and in general policy.

<sup>1</sup> The year was 263/2 B.C. The dispatch of both consular armies shows the gravity of the occasion: in all some 40,000 men were sent.

the terms of the agreement had been referred to Rome. The people had accepted and confirmed the treaty with Hiero, but the Romans decided not to maintain their whole army on the island. They decided to keep only two legions there. They calculated that with the Sicilians on their side the size of their commitment had decreased, and also that in this way their troops would be better supplied than before. The Carthaginians, on the other hand, when they understood that Hiero had become their enemy and that the Romans were becoming more and more deeply involved in Sicily, concluded that their own numbers must be reinforced if they were to be strong enough to confront their opponents and maintain control over Sicilian affairs. Accordingly they recruited mercenaries from across the sea, many of them Ligurians and Celts, and even larger numbers of Iberians, and dispatched them all to Sicily. They noted that Agrigentum possessed the greatest natural advantages for their preparations, and as it was also the most important city in their province, they concentrated their troops and supplies there, and decided to use it as a base for the war.

On the Roman side the consuls who had originally negotiated the treaty with Hiero had now left, and their successors in command, Lucius Postumius and Quintus Mamilius, had arrived in Sicily with their legions.<sup>1</sup> When they became aware of the plans of the Carthaginians and of the preparations they were making at Agrigentum, they decided to seize the initiative and attempt a bolder stroke. They broke off all other operations, concentrated their entire force for an advance against Agrigentum, encamped at a distance of about a mile from the city, and confined the Carthaginians within their walls. At that moment the harvest was at its height, and as the siege was expected to be a long one, the Roman soldiers began to gather the corn, showing rather more enterprise than prudence. The Carthaginians saw that their enemies were scattered about the countryside, made a sortie and attacked the foragers. They easily routed them, and then some of them pressed on to plunder the Romans' fortified camp, while others attacked the covering force. But here, as so often in the past, it was the excellence of their institutions that saved the Romans. According to their customs it is a capital offence for a man to desert his post or to

1. In 262 B.C.

retreat in any way when he is on guard duty. And so on this occasion, as on so many others, they gallantly stood their ground against opponents who far outnumbered them, and although they lost many men, they killed even more of the enemy. Finally they succeeded in surrounding the Carthaginians just as they were on the point of tearing up the palisade. They slaughtered many of them on the spot and pursued the rest back to the city, cutting them down as they fled.

18. After this action the Carthaginians were less inclined to be venturesome in launching any sorties, while the Romans took stricter precautions in their foraging. When the Roman generals found that the Carthaginians would not venture beyond skirmishing range, they divided their army into two bodies. One division remained in its original position near the temple of Asclepius outside the walls, while the other pitched camp on the side of the city which faces Heracleia. The Romans then fortified the ground between the two camps on each side of the city: they dug an inner trench to protect them against any sallies by the garrison, and an outer one to repel any attack from outside and also to prevent any men or supplies from being infiltrated into the city, as is often attempted during a siege. The spaces between the trenches that joined the camps were patrolled by pickets, which were protected by strong-points placed on suitable ground at some distance from one another. The food supplies and other stores were collected for the Romans by their Sicilian allies and brought to the town of Herbesus. As this city was conveniently close, they could visit it frequently to transport livestock and other provisions to the camp, and in this way they were well provided with all their necessities. For five months, then, a stalemate prevailed with neither side being able to obtain a definite advantage over the other, and scarcely any action took place apart from such minor successes as resulted from skirmishing. By this time, however, the Carthaginians were beginning to suffer from hunger, for there were at least 50,000 people shut up in the city. Hannibal<sup>1</sup> who had been placed in command of the besieged army, became seriously alarmed at this situation and

1. This general had accepted the offer of the Mamertines to instal a Carthaginian garrison in Messana, and had sent the Hanno who was subsequently crucified to command it (see p. 51).

dispatch after another to Carthage explaining his plight and begging for reinforcements. Thereupon the Carthaginian government embarked the fresh troops they had assembled, and their elephants, and sent them to Sicily to join Hanno, their other general on the island.<sup>1</sup> Hanno concentrated his troops and stores at Heracleia<sup>2</sup> and his first move was to make a surprise attack on Herbesus; the attempt succeeded, and he was able to capture the city and cut off the Romans from their essential supplies. In this way the Romans found themselves both besiegers and besieged at once, and they were reduced to such severe shortages and privations that they considered more than once the prospect of raising the siege. In fact in the end they would have done so but for the efforts of Hiero, who by using every possible resource and contrivance succeeded in providing them with a sufficient quantity of essential supplies.

19. At this point Hanno again took the initiative. He learned that the Romans had been weakened by disease as well as by hunger, since an epidemic had broken out amongst them. He felt confident that his own troops were strong enough to give battle, and so he mobilized his whole force, including the elephants, which numbered about fifty, and made a swift advance from Heracleia. He had sent out his Numidian cavalry as an advance guard, and they had orders when they approached the Romans' fortified camp to try to draw out their cavalry and lure them into action; once they had achieved this, they were to give way and fall back on the main body. The Numidians carried out these orders and rode up to one of the camps, whereupon the Roman cavalry at once made a sortie and boldly engaged them. The Libyans retreated according to plan until they reached Hanno's army; then they wheeled about; encircled the enemy, charged them, killed great numbers and pursued them back to their camp. After this action Hanno occupied the hill called Torus and pitched camp there at a distance of about ten furlongs from the enemy. For two months both sides remained in these positions without attempting anything more decisive than skirmishing actions every day. But all this while Hannibal was making fire-signals and sending messages to remind his colleague

1. He had made the alliance with Hiero (see p. 52).

2. This port was some twenty miles north-west of Agrigentum.

that the population could not endure the famine any longer, and that more and more of his men were deserting to the enemy for lack of food. At last the Carthaginian commander determined to risk a battle, while the Romans for the reasons which I have explained were no less eager, and so both armies advanced into the space between the camps and engaged. The fighting was long drawn-out, but in the end the Romans succeeded in driving back the front line of Carthaginian mercenaries, and as they retired on to the elephants and the other units stationed behind them, the whole Phoenician army was thrown into confusion. The rout became general and the greater part of the Carthaginians were slaughtered on the field, though some escaped to Heracleia. The Romans captured most of the elephants and all the baggage. But after darkness had fallen, the Romans, who were at once exultant and exhausted, failed to keep watch as strictly as usual. Then Hannibal, who up to that moment had despaired of his plight, suddenly saw his chance to save the situation, and at about the hour of midnight he broke out of the city with his mercenaries. He had the Roman entrenchments filled up with baskets that were tightly stuffed with straw, and managed to withdraw his force safely and unobserved. When day broke the Romans discovered what had happened; there was a brief skirmish with Hannibal's rearguard, and then the Romans advanced in full force to the gates. There they found nobody to resist them and so they burst into the city and sacked it, enslaving great numbers of the inhabitants<sup>1</sup> and taking huge quantities of booty of every description.

20. When the news of the events at Agrigentum was received in Rome, the Senate was almost beside itself with rejoicing. In this exultant mood their aspirations soared far above their original designs, and they were no longer content with having rescued the Mamertines nor with what they had gained in the fighting. They now cherished the hope that they could drive the Carthaginians out of Sicily altogether, and that once this goal was attained their own power would be greatly increased; accordingly they made this their prime objective and gave their whole attention to plans designed to bring it about.

So far as the war on land was concerned, they considered that

1. Diodorus estimates the number at 25,000.

their forces were achieving all that could be hoped for, as the consuls elected after those who had laid siege to Agrigentum, namely Lucius Valerius Flaccus and Titus Otacilius Crassus, were handling the operations in Sicily capably enough. But so long as the Carthaginians held unchallenged control of the sea, the issue of the war still hung in the balance. In the months that followed<sup>1</sup> many of the inland cities came over to the Romans for fear of their army now that they were in possession of Agrigentum, but at the same time many of the coastal cities deserted them because they were overawed by the Carthaginian fleet. So when the Romans saw that the balance of advantage continually oscillated from one side to another for this reason, and that while the Italian coasts were repeatedly raided and devastated those of Africa suffered no damage, they were filled with the desire to take to sea and meet the Carthaginians there.<sup>2</sup> It was this factor among others which persuaded me to describe the war at greater length than I would otherwise have done. I was anxious that my readers should not remain ignorant of an important initiative of this kind: that is, how and when and for what reasons the Romans first ventured upon the sea.

It was, therefore, because they saw that the war was dragging on that they first applied themselves to building ships – 100 quinqueremes and twenty triremes. They faced great difficulties because their shipwrights were completely inexperienced in the building of a quinquereme, since these vessels had never before been employed in Italy. Yet it is this fact which illustrates better than any other the extraordinary spirit and audacity of the Romans' decision. It was not a question of having adequate resources for the enterprise, for they had in fact none whatsoever, nor had they ever given a thought to the sea before this. But once they had conceived the idea, they embarked on it so boldly that without waiting to gain any experience in naval warfare they immediately engaged the Carthaginians, who had for generations enjoyed an unchallenged supremacy at sea. One piece of evidence of their extra-

1. 261 B.C.

2. Other evidence suggests that while the Romans' motives were no doubt mixed, the need for defensive measures to protect the Italian coasts was the first consideration.

ordinary daring, and of the truth of my account, is this. When they first ventured to transport their forces to Messina, not only had they no decked ships, but no warships at all, not so much as a single galley. They merely borrowed penteconters and triremes from the Tarentines, the Locrians and the people of Elea and Neapolis, and ferried the troops across at great risk. It was on this occasion that the Carthaginians sailed out to attack them as they were crossing the straits, and one of their decked ships, in their eagerness to overtake the transports, ventured too near the shore, ran aground, and fell into the hands of the Romans. It was this ship which they proceeded to use as a model, and they built their whole fleet according to its specifications; from which it is clear that but for this accident they would have been prevented from carrying out their programme for sheer lack of the necessary knowledge.

21. As it was, those who had been given the task of ship-building occupied themselves with the construction work, while others collected the crews and began to teach them to row on shore in the following way.<sup>1</sup> They placed the men along the rowers' benches on dry land, seating them in the same order as if they were on those of an actual vessel, and then stationing the *keleustes*<sup>2</sup> in the middle, they trained them to swing back their bodies in unison bringing their hands up to them, then to move forwards again thrusting their hands in front of them, and to begin and end these movements at the *keleustes*' word of command. When the crews had learned this drill, the ships were launched as soon as they were finished.<sup>3</sup> After this they spent a short time on rowing practice actually at sea, and then the ships cruised along the Italian coast as the consul had ordered them. The consul, Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio, who had been placed in command of the fleet, a few days previously had instructed the captains to make for the Straits of Messina as soon as the ships were fitted out. Meanwhile he himself had put to sea with seventeen vessels and sailed on ahead

1. This practice was necessary because the method of rowing a quinquereme (five men to each oar) is different from that of a trireme (one man per oar); the latter was the largest vessel of which the Romans hitherto had had any experience.

2. The *keleustes* called the time, and so regulated the pace and rhythm of the rowing.

3. Within sixty days, according to the tradition in Pliny.

to Messina, since he was anxious to obtain the stores and materials which the fleet urgently needed. While he was there, an opportunity presented itself of capturing the town of Lipara<sup>1</sup> by treachery. Scipio seized the chance with more haste than prudence, put to sea with the squadron I have mentioned, and anchored off the town. News of his movements reached the Carthaginian general Hannibal<sup>2</sup> at Panormus, and he dispatched Boödes, a member of the Carthaginian Senate, with a force of twenty ships. Boödes sailed to Lipara by night and trapped Scipio in the harbour. When it was daylight, the Roman crews abandoned their ships and fled ashore, while Scipio, who was seized by panic at this turn of events and was in any case powerless to act, surrendered to the enemy. The Carthaginians at once sailed off to join Hannibal, taking with them the captured ships and their commander. But only a few days later, even though the example of Scipio's blunder was so glaring and so recent, Hannibal himself very nearly fell into the same error with his eyes open. He had heard that the Roman fleet was close at hand on its voyage down the Italian coast, and as he was anxious to observe its numbers and dispositions, he shaped a course in their direction with a fleet of fifty ships. As he was rounding the Cape of Italy<sup>3</sup> he suddenly came upon the enemy, who were sailing in good order and formation. He lost most of his ships, but was able to make his own escape with the remainder; in the event this was more than he had either expected or hoped for.

22. Soon after, as the Romans neared the Sicilian coast, they learned of the disaster which had befallen Scipio; they immediately sent word to Gaius Duilius, the commander of the land forces in Sicily, and waited for his arrival. They also learned that the enemy's fleet was in the vicinity, and began to prepare for action. As their ships were poorly fitted-out and difficult to manoeuvre, it was suggested to them that they could obtain an advantage in fighting at sea by using the device which afterwards came to be known as the 'raven'. This was constructed as follows. A round pole about twenty-four feet high and ten inches in diameter was erected on the

proW of the ship. At the top of this pole was a pulley, and at its base a gangway four feet in width and thirty-six in length made of planks which were nailed across each other. Twelve feet from one end of the gangway an oblong slot was cut, into which the base of the pole was fitted, and each of the long sides of the gangway was protected by a rail as high as a man's knee. At the outboard end of the gangway was fastened an iron spike shaped like a pestle; this was pointed at one end and had a ring at the other, and looked like the appliance which is used for pounding corn. A rope was passed through the ring and thence through the pulley at the top of the pole. When the ship charged an opponent, the 'raven' would be hauled up by means of the pulley and then dropped on to the deck of the enemy vessel; this could either be done over the bows, or the gangway could be swivelled round if the two ships collided broadside on. As soon as the 'raven' was embedded in the planks of the deck and fastened the ships together, the soldiers would leap into the enemy vessel. If the two ships were alongside, they could board from all the way down the hull, but if they had collided bows on, the men stayed on the gangway and advanced down it two abreast. The leading pair then protected their front by holding their shields before them, while the files who followed guarded their sides by resting the rims of the shields on the top of the railing. So having adopted this device, they waited for their opportunity to engage at sea.

23. As soon as Gaius Duilius learned of the disaster which had befallen Scipio, he handed over the command of the legions in Sicily to the military tribunes and went to join the fleet. Then he received intelligence that the enemy were ravaging the region of Mylae,<sup>1</sup> and sailed there with his whole force. No sooner had the Carthaginians sighted him than they eagerly put to sea with their fleet of 130 sail; their spirits were high, for at this stage they felt nothing but contempt for the inexperience of the Romans. They steered straight for the enemy and thought they could risk an attack without keeping any formation, as though they were seizing a prize which was already theirs for the taking. They were com-

1. Situated on the island of that name, the largest of the Aeolian group; it was then in the hands of the Carthaginians.

2. The same general who had escaped from Agrigentum (see p. 61).

3. Possibly the modern Capo Vaticano, near the toe of Italy.

1. Mylae, the modern Milazzo, was situated on a promontory about twenty-five miles west of the north-eastern tip of Sicily; the battle took place in the summer of 260 B.C.

manded by the same Hannibal who had extricated his troops from Agrigentum by means of a withdrawal under cover of darkness, and whose flagship was a single-banked vessel with seven men to each oar, which had once belonged to King Pyrrhus. As they neared the enemy and saw the 'ravens' hoisted aloft in the bows of several ships, the Carthaginians at first did not know what to make of these devices, which were completely strange to them. However, as they still felt an utter contempt for their opponents, the leading ships attacked without hesitation. Then, as they came into collision, the Carthaginians found that their vessels were invariably held fast by the 'ravens', and the Roman troops swarmed aboard them by means of the gangways and fought them hand-to-hand on deck. Some of the Carthaginians were cut down and others were thrown into confusion by these tactics and gave themselves up, for the fighting seemed to have been transformed into a battle on dry land. The result was that they lost every one of the first thirty of their ships which engaged, crews and all. These included the flagship, but Hannibal himself, by means of a daring action and a stroke of good luck, managed to escape in the ship's pinnace. The rest of the Carthaginian fleet bore up as if to attack; but as they came close, they saw what had happened to their leading vessels, and so sheered away and avoided contact with the 'ravens'. Instead they relied on their speed and circled round the enemy, hoping that they could safely ram them either broadside on or from astern. But the Romans swung their gangways round so as to meet an attack from any direction and then dropped the 'ravens', so that any ship which came to close quarters found itself inescapably grappled. Then at last the Carthaginians turned and fled, for they were completely unnerved by these new tactics, and in all they lost fifty ships.

24. In this way the Romans, contrary to all expectations, had made good their hopes to win control of the sea, and their determination to continue the war was redoubled. For the present they made another descent on the Sicilian coast, raised the siege of Segesta, where the inhabitants were almost at their last gasp, and on their return captured the city of Macella by storm.

After the naval battle Hamilcar,<sup>1</sup> the Carthaginian general who

1. He succeeded Hanno in command after the fall of Agrigentum; he is not the Hamilcar Barca who was the father of Hannibal.

commanded the land forces and was stationed near Panormus, received a report that the Romans and their allies had quarrelled concerning the award of prizes and decorations for the fighting, and that the allies were encamped apart from the Romans between the town of Paropus and the hot springs of Himera.<sup>1</sup> He launched a surprise attack on them with his whole force while they were engaged in striking camp, and killed some 4,000 men. After this action Hannibal sailed away to Carthage taking with him those ships which had escaped capture at Mylae, and soon after crossed to Sardinia with a reinforced fleet, which included some of the best of the Carthaginian naval officers. A little later he was blockaded by the Romans in one of the island's harbours. He lost many of his ships, and was arrested on the spot by the surviving Carthaginians, who crucified him. I should explain that as soon as the Romans had begun to take an interest in the sea, they tried to gain control of Sardinia.

During the following year<sup>2</sup> the Roman troops in Sicily achieved no important success, but at the end of it, after the arrival of the consuls Aulus Atilius and Gaius Sulpicius who were to hold office in the following year, they took the offensive against Panormus, where the Carthaginians were in their winter quarters. The consuls took up position close to the city and offered battle with their whole army, but as the enemy did not come out to meet them, they marched away and attacked the town of Hippana, which they captured by storm. They also took Myttistratum, which had long resisted a siege because of the strength of its natural position, and Camarina, which had recently revolted from its allegiance to Rome; here they brought up siege engines and made a breach in the city wall. They went on to occupy Enna and a number of other fortresses belonging to the Carthaginians, and after completing these operations they laid siege to Lipara.

25. In the following year the consul Gaius Atilius Regulus, who commanded the fleet, was anchored off Tyndaris<sup>3</sup> when he sighted the Carthaginian fleet sailing past without any attempt to keep formation. He gave orders to his main body to follow the leading

1. On the north coast of Sicily, about thirty miles east of Panormus.

2. 259 B.C.

3. About fifteen miles west of Mylae; the date was 257 B.C.

ships, and himself sailed out ahead, taking an advance guard of ten ships which could all make an equal speed. The Carthaginians saw that some of the enemy were still only getting aboard, while others were already under way, and that the advance guard had far outdistanced the rest, and so they turned and engaged them. They surrounded the squadron, sank nine of them, and came near to capturing the consul's ship with its crew. This vessel, however, was both fast and well fitted-out, and was able to foil their hopes and escape from danger. Meanwhile the rest of the Roman fleet arrived and soon took up a close formation. Once they had formed a line they attacked the enemy, sank eight of them and captured ten ships with their crews. The rest of the Carthaginian fleet withdrew to the Liparean Islands.

The result of this battle was that both sides now considered themselves equally matched, and both threw themselves with redoubled energy into the task of building up their fleets and contesting the command of the sea. In the meanwhile the land forces achieved no decisive success, but spent their time upon such minor or random operations as chance threw in their way. Accordingly the Romans, as I have mentioned, once their naval preparations for the coming summer were complete, put to sea with a fleet of 330 decked warships<sup>1</sup> and touched at Messana. From there they resumed their voyage keeping Sicily on the starboard side, and after rounding Cape Pachynus sailed on to Ecnomus,<sup>2</sup> because their land forces were stationed there at that time. The Carthaginians, setting out with a fleet of 350 decked ships, put in at Lilybaeum and proceeding south-eastwards from there, came to anchor off Heracleia Minoa.<sup>3</sup>

26. Now the Romans' plan of campaign was to sail to Africa and shift the whole scene of operations to that country: they wished to make the Carthaginians feel that the war no longer threatened Sicily but their own territory. The Carthaginians, on the other hand, were determined to prevent this. They knew that Africa was extremely vulnerable to attack, and that the population would offer

1. Modern estimates put the Roman strength at about 230 vessels and the Carthaginian at 200.

2. Midway along the southern coast, about twenty miles east of Agrigentum.

3. About twenty-five miles west of Agrigentum.

little resistance to any invader who succeeded in getting ashore; this was a situation which they could not allow to arise and they were eager to risk a battle at sea. Since the one side was determined to force a landing and the other to prevent one, it was clear that this inexorable clash of purposes would produce the struggle that followed.

The Romans had made preparations for both eventualities: that is, for a naval battle and for a sea-borne invasion of the enemy's territory. For the second they had chosen the pick of their land troops and organized the invading force into four divisions. Each of these had alternative titles, the first being known as the first legion or the first squadron and the others accordingly; the fourth, however, had a third title, that of the *triarii*, after the term used for that part of the army.<sup>1</sup> The whole force which was carried on the ships amounted to about 140,000 men, each vessel carrying 300 rowers and 120 marines. The Carthaginians, on the other hand, had made their preparations almost exclusively with the intention of fighting at sea, and to judge by the number of their ships, their manpower must have exceeded 150,000.<sup>2</sup> These figures are bound to strike not only an eye-witness but even the reader with amazement at the vast scale of the encounter and the enormous outlay and resources of the opposing states, if these are calculated from the numbers of men and ships; they must have been far more awe-inspiring to the eye-witnesses who could actually see the forces ranged against one another.

The Romans had to reckon with two difficulties: first that their course lay across the open sea, and secondly that their enemies possessed the faster vessels, and they therefore took great pains to devise a formation that would remain unbroken and would be difficult to attack. Their two largest galleys, in which the consuls

1. The Roman army was traditionally grouped into four classes, *velites*, the skirmishing troops, *hastati*, men in the flower of youth, *principes*, those in the prime of manhood, and *triarii*, the seasoned veterans. Here the *triarii* may have been a nickname for those to whom amphibious warfare was new, 'the oldsters' in other words.

2. Polybius' totals are based on his estimate of the ships present. This would give a manpower of nearly 100,000 rowers and 40,000 marines. But as there were only four legions in Sicily, the total of picked men must have been smaller, about 18,000 by modern estimates.

Marcus Atilius Regulus and Lucius Manlius were sailing and whose oars required six men apiece, were stationed in front of the convoy and alongside one another. Astern of each of these came a column of ships in single file; these were grouped in echelon, so that each successive vessel was further and further away from its opposite number in the column and had its bows pointing to the open sea. The first and second squadrons thus formed the two sides of a wedge, while the ships of the third squadron were stationed side by side in a straight line at the base. In this way the whole fleet presented the appearance of a triangle. Astern of the line which formed the base sailed the horse-transport, which were attached by tow-ropes to the ships of the third squadron. Finally in the rear of these they placed the fourth squadron, the *triarrii*. These ships were again positioned in a single line, which was extended so as to overlap the line in front of it at each end. When every ship had taken up position in the manner I have described, the whole order of battle had the shape of a wedge; the point of this was open, the base compact and strong, and the whole formation was effective and easy to maintain, but also difficult to break up.

27. At about the same time the Carthaginian commanders made short speeches to their men. They explained to them that if they were victorious in this battle, they would thenceforth be fighting for the control of Sicily, but that if they were defeated, they would be obliged to fight for their homeland and their possessions; and with these words they gave the order to embark. All the crews responded at once and boarded their vessels with alacrity, for their generals' message had given them a clear understanding of the alternatives which faced them, and so they put to sea with high spirits and in a fighting mood. Then the commanders, as soon as they could make out the enemy's order of battle, adapted their own to meet it. Three-quarters of their fleet were drawn up in a single line; all their vessels faced the Romans, but the right wing was extended towards the open sea so as to outflank the enemy. The remaining quarter of the fleet was posted so as to form a left wing which pointed towards the shore, at an angle to the main body and extending beyond it. The Carthaginian right wing was commanded by Hanno, the general who had been defeated in the

battle outside Agrigentum.<sup>1</sup> His squadron included beaked vessels which could ram the enemy and also the fastest of the quinqueremes, which had the speed required for an outflanking manoeuvre. The officer in charge of the left wing was Hamilcar,<sup>2</sup> who had commanded the Carthaginians in the sea-battle at Tyndaris, and as he also occupied the centre of the line, he used on this occasion a tactic which I shall now describe. The action began when the Romans, seeing that the Carthaginian line was only thinly held because of its great length, launched an attack on the centre.<sup>3</sup> The ships in this sector had orders to give ground immediately in the hope of breaking up the Roman formation, and so they retired at a brisk speed hotly pursued by the Romans. The result was that while the first and second Roman squadrons chased after the retreating enemy, the third and fourth became separated from them: the third was slowed up because it had to tow the horse-transport, and the *triarrii* because they remained with them and formed the reserve. When the Carthaginians judged that they had lured the first and second squadrons far enough away from the rest, a signal was hoisted on Hamilcar's flagship and the whole Carthaginian force swung round at once and engaged their pursuers. The battle that followed was fiercely fought. The Carthaginians' superior speed allowed them to sail round the enemy's flank as well as to approach easily or to beat a rapid retreat. But for their part the Romans were equally confident of victory; as soon as the vessels came to close quarters the contest became one of sheer strength, since their 'ravens' grappled every ship the moment it arrived within striking distance, and besides this they were fighting under the eyes of both their consuls, who were taking part in the battle in person. This at any rate was the state of affairs in the centre.<sup>4</sup>

28. Meanwhile Hanno, in command of the right wing, which had kept its distance when the Romans first attacked the centre,

1. See p. 61.

2. See p. 68.

3. The sea-battle of Ecnomus has been described as 'Cannae with the result reversed'. On this occasion the Punic centre proved too weak to hold the Romans.

4. The battle became a contest between one navy built for ramming and the other for boarding.

sailed across the open sea, attacked the squadron of the *triarii* and caused them much difficulty and distress. At the same time the Carthaginian left, which had been posted near the shore, abandoned their original formation, deployed into line with their bows facing the enemy, and attacked the Roman squadron which was towing the horse-transports, whereupon these ships cast off their tow-ropes and engaged the enemy. The battle had now resolved itself into three separate actions, each of which was being fought at a considerable distance from the others. Because of the disposition of the fleets at the outset the forces in each sector were fairly evenly matched, and so in each case the battles were fought on equal terms. The outcome of these engagements was much as might have been expected, given that the fleets opposed to each other were so similar in strength. Those who had first joined battle were also the first to break off, for Hamilcar's squadron was finally driven back and took to flight. Manlius then set about taking his prizes in tow, and Regulus, when he saw the struggle in which the *triarii* and the horse-transports were engaged, hurried to the rescue with all the ships of the second squadron that were still able to fight. As soon as he reached Hanno's squadron and joined in the action the *triarii* were immediately encouraged, and although they had by then suffered severely, they threw themselves with renewed spirit into the battle. It was then the Carthaginians' turn to find themselves hard-pressed. They were attacked both from the front and the rear and discovered to their surprise that they were being encircled by the relieving force, and so finally they gave way and retired towards the open sea. Meanwhile Manlius, who was now on his way back to the battle, saw that the third Roman squadron had been hemmed in by the Carthaginians close to the shore.<sup>1</sup> Both he and Regulus, who had by then left the *triarii* and the horse-transports in safety, made all speed to relieve the pressure on their comrades who were in great danger. They were surrounded as effectively as if they were besieged and would all have been destroyed long before, if the Carthaginians had not been afraid of the

1. Since it was the custom to hug the coast whenever possible, a decisive victory meant driving the enemy ashore. The arrival of the consuls' squadrons turned the tables on the Carthaginians, and of the sixty-four ships captured, fifty were from this Carthaginian left wing which could not escape to the open sea.

'ravens' and merely kept them penned in close to the land; as it was they made no attempt to ram for fear of being grappled. So the two consuls came up rapidly, surrounded the Carthaginians in their turn and captured fifty ships together with their crews; only a few succeeded in slipping away and escaping by keeping close inshore. This was how the various individual actions ended. The general outcome of the battle was in favour of the Romans. Twenty-four of their ships were sunk, but more than thirty of the Carthaginians'. Not a single Roman ship was captured with its crew, but sixty-four Carthaginian vessels suffered this fate.

29. After the battle the Romans revictualled their fleet, repaired the captured ships, and tended their own crews with the care that such a success deserved. Then they put to sea and continued their advance towards Africa. A squadron sent ahead of the main body made a landfall just below the promontory which is called the Hermaeum; this forms the eastern tip of the Gulf of Carthage and projects into the sea in the direction of Sicily.<sup>1</sup> There they waited for the rest of the ships to arrive, and when the whole fleet had joined them they sailed along the coast until they came to the city of Aspis. Here they disembarked, beached the ships and constructed a trench and a palisade to protect them. The garrison of the town refused to surrender, and so the Romans set about besieging it. Meanwhile the remnants of the Carthaginian fleet which had escaped from the battle arrived home. They thought it certain that the enemy must be full of confidence from their recent victory and would at once attack Carthage from the sea, and they therefore took men from both their land and their naval forces and organized a system of forward defences to guard the various approaches to the capital. However, when the news reached them that the Romans had landed safely and were besieging the city of Aspis, they abandoned these precautions for guarding against the approach of the fleet. Instead they united all their forces and concentrated their efforts upon the defence of the capital and its surroundings on the landward side.

Meanwhile the Romans had captured Aspis and posted a garrison to hold the town and the surrounding region. After this they sent envoys to Rome to report on the progress of the campaign and ask

1. The modern Cape Bon.

for instructions as to what action they should take next, and how they were to handle affairs in Carthaginian territory. They then made a swift advance with the whole army and set about plundering the country. They met no resistance, destroyed a number of luxuriously furnished houses and captured a large quantity of cattle; they also took more than 20,000 slaves whom they brought back to the ships. At this point messengers arrived from Rome with orders that one of the consuls should remain on the spot with a sufficiently strong force, while the other should return with the fleet. It was Regulus who remained, keeping a squadron of forty ships and an army of 15,000 infantry and 500 cavalry. Manlius then embarked the ships' crews and all the prisoners, sailed safely along the Sicilian coast, and in due course arrived in Rome.

30. The Carthaginians now saw that the Romans were preparing for a long occupation of their country. They therefore elected two generals from among their own citizens, Hasdrubal the son of Hanno, and Bostar, and sent a dispatch to Hamilcar at the Sicilian port of Heracleia ordering him to return forthwith. He arrived in Carthage with a force of 5,000 infantry and 500 cavalry and was appointed the third general. He then held a conference with Hasdrubal as to how they should deal with the immediate crisis. They decided that they should go to the help of those in the countryside and not allow it to be plundered without resistance. A few days later Regulus marched out on one of his marauding expeditions, storming and sacking the unwallied towns and laying siege to those which were fortified. When he reached Adys, a town of some size, he pitched camp around it and energetically set about investing it with siege-works. The Carthaginians were eager to relieve the town, and as they had decided to challenge the Romans for the control of the countryside, they led out their troops. They occupied some high ground which had the advantage of overlooking the enemy, but was otherwise unsuitable for their forces. Their principal advantage lay in their cavalry and their elephants, but by abandoning the level country and confining themselves to rocky and inaccessible ground, they ran the risk of showing their enemies how best to attack them, and this was exactly what happened. The Roman commanders' experience of war at once suggested to them that their enemies' most effective and formidable arm had

been rendered useless to them by their choice of ground. So they did not wait for the Carthaginians to come down and offer battle on the plain, but themselves seized the initiative and at first light advanced on the hill from both sides. In the battle which followed the elephants and the cavalry could play no part at all, but their mercenary troops delivered a gallant and vigorous charge, and forced the first legion to give ground and take to flight. But then the mercenaries advanced too far; they were encircled and routed by the Roman division which attacked from the other side of the hill, and the whole Carthaginian army was quickly driven out of its encampment. The cavalry and the elephants, once they had reached the plain, succeeded in withdrawing without loss. The Romans pursued the infantry for a short distance, but then broke off the chase, returned and destroyed the Carthaginian camp. After this battle they were free to overrun the country and sack the towns with impunity, and among these they captured the city named Tunis. This provided a useful starting-point for their raiding expeditions, and was also excellently placed to serve as a base for operations against the capital and its surroundings, and the Romans set up their headquarters there.

31. The Carthaginians now found themselves in a critical situation. They had suffered two major defeats, the first at sea and the second on land, and these had been brought about not through any lack of courage on the part of their fighting men, but rather through the inefficiency of their commanders. Apart from the misfortunes I have already described they also had to contend with an invasion from the Numidians. This people attacked them at the same time as the Romans and inflicted even more damage upon the countryside. The inhabitants fled in terror to the capital, where they found nothing but famine and despair, the first being caused by overcrowding and the second by the prospect of a siege. Regulus, on the other hand, had anxieties of a different kind. He knew that the Carthaginians had suffered crushing defeats both at sea and on land, and he counted on taking the city in a very short time, but he was afraid that his successor as consul might arrive from Rome before Carthage fell and thus deprive him of the glory of its capture, and so he invited the enemy to open negotiations. The Carthaginians were more than ready to listen to proposals and sent

out a delegation of their most prominent citizens to meet him. But when the conference took place, the envoys discovered that they were far from willing to meet the terms which Regulus offered; indeed the conditions were so harsh that they could hardly bring themselves even to listen to them.<sup>1</sup> Regulus took the attitude that he was already virtually master of the city, and hence that any concessions on his part must be regarded as a personal favour and an act of grace. The Carthaginians concluded that even if they became subjects of Rome, they could be no worse off than if they yielded to the present demands, and so they went home not only hostile to the terms he had proposed, but offended by the implacable attitude he had taken up. Thus although the Carthaginian Senate had almost abandoned any hope of deliverance, yet when the Roman commander's terms were reported to them they behaved with manly dignity and resolved that they would suffer any extremity and try every resource rather than submit to a settlement which was so ignoble and so unworthy of their past achievements.

32. At about this time one of the recruiting officers whom they had earlier dispatched to Greece returned to Carthage. He brought with him a large body of soldiers, and among them an officer named Xanthippus of Lacedaemon. This man had been brought up in the Spartan system of discipline and had gained a wide experience of war. When he learned of the defeats the Carthaginians had recently suffered and of the circumstances in which they had occurred, he carried out a review of the country's remaining resources and of their strength in cavalry and elephants. The conclusion which he quickly reached and which he confided to his friends was that these reverses must be attributed not to the superiority of the Romans but to the inexperience of the Carthaginians' own commanders. Because of the state of crisis which then prevailed, the gist of Xanthippus' remarks quickly spread among the people and became known to the generals, whereupon the government decided to send for him and question him. He appeared before

1. According to Dio (frag. 43.22-3) they required the payment of an indemnity, the surrender of Roman and the ransoming of Carthaginian prisoners, the evacuation of Sicily and Sardinia, the surrender of the entire navy except for one ship, and an undertaking to provide fifty vessels for Rome at any time upon demand.

them and reported his view of the situation, explaining the reasons why they were now suffering so many defeats. He went on to argue that if they would trust his advice and take advantage of the level country equally to march, to encamp and to engage the enemy, they would find it easy not merely to ensure their own safety but to defeat the Romans. The generals accepted his criticisms and decided to follow his advice, and thereupon placed their forces under his command.

Now even when Xanthippus' remarks on this subject had first been spread abroad they had caused a stir and given rise to hopeful rumours among the populace, and these impressions were confirmed as soon as he began to handle the troops. His decisive manner of leading out the army, drawing it up in regular formation in front of the city, manoeuvring the various detachments and giving his commands in the correct military terms, stood out in striking contrast to the inept performance of his predecessors. The soldiers demonstrated their feelings with loud cheers and showed themselves impatient to engage the enemy, for they were convinced that no harm could come to them so long as Xanthippus was in command. As soon as the generals noticed this extraordinary revival of spirit among their troops, they seized the moment to address them with words that matched the occasion, and a few days later they took the field.<sup>1</sup> Their army consisted of 12,000 infantry, 4,000 cavalry and nearly 100 elephants.

33. When the Romans noticed that the Carthaginian troops now always marched through the plains and encamped on level ground, they were surprised and a little alarmed by this change in strategy, but their prevailing desire was still to engage the enemy. So when the two armies had made contact, the Romans pitched camp on the first day a little over a mile away from the enemy. The next day the Carthaginian leaders held a council of war to decide what they should do in the present situation. At this the soldiers who were eager to chance a battle, collected in groups, began to shout out the name of Xanthippus, and demonstrated unmistakably that they wished him to lead them against the Romans at once. When it became clear to the generals that their troops were in high spirits and full of ardour, while at the same time Xanthippus urged them

1. Probably in May 255 B.C.

not to let the opportunity slip, they gave orders to prepare for action and entrusted to Xanthippus the power to conduct operations as he thought best. Xanthippus used this authority at once. He ordered the elephants forward and stationed them in a single line in front of the whole army, with the phalanx consisting of Carthaginian citizens<sup>1</sup> at a suitable distance behind them. He placed some of his mercenaries on the right wing, while those he considered most mobile were grouped with the cavalry in advance of both wings. The Romans, when they saw the enemy drawn up to offer battle, moved forward eagerly to meet them. They were alarmed by the prospect of a charge by the elephants, and so they stationed the *velites*<sup>2</sup> in the front line; behind them were drawn up the legionaries in a formation many maniples<sup>3</sup> deep, and the cavalry were divided between the two wings. These dispositions meant that the Roman line was at once shorter and deeper than usual. This order of battle was well enough designed as a defence against the elephants, but it failed to take sufficient account of the Carthaginian cavalry, which far outnumbered their own. At length all these arrangements were complete—both the general dispositions and the particular tactical groupings which best suited the operational plans of either side—and for the moment each held their formation, while they looked for a favourable opportunity to attack.

34. As soon as Xanthippus gave the order to the elephant-drivers to advance and break the enemy's line, and to the cavalry on each wing to perform an outflanking movement and charge, the Roman army also moved forward, clashing their shields and spears together, as is their usual custom, and shouting their battle-cry. The Roman cavalry, which was far outnumbered, was quickly routed on both wings. As for the infantry, those who were stationed on the left wing, partly to avoid the charge of the elephants and partly because they despised the mercenaries who opposed them,

1. These citizen levies were only mobilized when Carthaginian territory was invaded.

2. Light-armed troops, whose weapon was the throwing-javelin.

3. Originally the word *manipulus* meant 'a handful'; then, as in early days a pole with a handful of hay twisted round it was used as a standard, *manipulus* came to signify this, and hence a company of soldiers belonging to the same standard.

charged the Carthaginian right, drove it back and pursued it as far as the enemy's camp. Of the remainder of the Roman line which faced the elephants, the maniples in front fell back before the weight of the charge, were trampled underfoot and perished in heaps in the fighting, but the main body of the legionaries, because of its great depth, was able for a while to hold its formation unbroken. But at last the maniples in the rear were encircled on all sides by the cavalry and found themselves compelled to face about and engage them; on the other hand, those who had managed to force their way to the front through the elephants and regroup behind them were faced by the Carthaginian phalanx of heavy infantry, which was completely fresh and in unbroken order, and were cut to pieces. From this point the Romans came under terrible pressure from all sides. The greater number were trampled to death by the enormous weight of the elephants, while the rest were shot down in their ranks as they stood by the overwhelming numbers of the Carthaginian cavalry. Only a small body tried to save themselves by flight, and for these the only line of retreat lay across level ground. Some were dispatched by the elephants and the cavalry, while a body of about 500 who retreated with Regulus were soon afterwards captured, their commander with them.

The Carthaginians lost about 800 of their mercenaries, those who had faced the Roman left wing, while of the Romans only about 2,000 survived. These were the troops on the left who, as I have described above, pursued the mercenaries to their camp, and had thus moved out of range of the main battle. All the rest perished except for Regulus and those who fled with him. The surviving maniples escaped with remarkable good fortune to the town of Aspis. The Carthaginians stripped the corpses and marched back to the capital, exultant at this change in their fortunes and taking with them Regulus and the rest of the prisoners.

35. These events carry in them many lessons for those who can read them aright<sup>1</sup> and wish to be guided in the conduct of their lives. The disaster which befell Regulus offers us the clearest possible illustration of the principle that we should not rely upon the favours of Fortune, above all when we are enjoying success.

1. A prime example of the kind of lessons to which Polybius refers on p. 41.

Here we see the very man, who only a little while before had refused any pity or mercy to the vanquished, himself led captive and pleading before his victims for his own life. And that saying of Euripides,<sup>1</sup> which has long been acknowledged as just,

One wise head can outmatch a score of hands

is once more confirmed by the facts in this instance. One man and one brain overcame that host which until then had seemed invincible and capable of accomplishing anything, restored the fortunes of a state which had seemed irretrievably ruined, and raised up the spirits of its soldiers which had sunk to the depths of despair. I have recorded these events in the hope that the readers of this history may profit from them, for there are two ways by which all men may reform themselves, either by learning from their own errors or from those of others; the former makes a more striking demonstration, the latter a less painful one. For this reason we should never, if we can avoid it, choose the first, since it involves great dangers as well as great pain, but always the second, since it reveals the best course without causing us harm. From this I conclude that the best education for the situations of actual life consists of the experience we acquire from the study of serious history. For it is history alone which without causing us harm enables us to judge what is the best course in any situation or circumstance. Enough, then, on this subject.

36. Now that all the Carthaginians' hopes had been fulfilled, they indulged their feelings of joy to the limit, not only making thank-offerings to the gods but celebrating their victory and entertaining among themselves. It was of course Xanthippus who had been responsible for this extraordinary transformation and recovery in the fortunes of Carthage, but quite soon after the battle he sailed off home, and by this action proved that he was a man of rare wisdom and good sense; for the truth is that it is precisely the most brilliant and exceptional achievements which give rise to the most intense jealousies and the most poisonous slanders. A native citizen may be able to resist these for some time, if he enjoys the support of his kinsmen and possesses plenty of friends, but a foreigner will quickly succumb and find his position immediately

1. A fragment from Euripides' *Antiope*.

threatened. However there is yet another account which is sometimes given of Xanthippus' departure, and this I shall try to explain at a more suitable moment in my history.

When the news of this unexpected disaster reached the Romans, they at once began preparations to fit out a fleet to rescue what remained of their army in Africa. After their success the Carthaginians pitched camp before Aspis, since they were eager to capture the survivors of the battle, but these men defended the city with such courage and daring that the Carthaginians failed to capture it, and at length abandoned the siege. Then, when they learned that the Romans were preparing their fleet and intended to sail again to Africa, the Carthaginians set to work to repair the ships they still possessed and to construct new ones, and before long they had manned a fleet of 200 vessels. With these they put to sea and patrolled the coast against the arrival of the enemy.

By the beginning of the summer the Romans had launched 350 ships,<sup>1</sup> which they dispatched under the command of Marcus Aemilius and Servius Fulvius, and this fleet sailed along the coast of Sicily making for Africa. They met the Carthaginian fleet near the Hermaeum, attacked and easily routed them, and captured 114 ships with their crews. They then took on board from Aspis the remaining Roman troops in Africa and sailed again for Sicily.

37. They had safely crossed the straits and were off the Sicilian coast near Camarina when they ran into a fearful storm and suffered a disaster on a scale which almost beggars description. Of their 364 ships only eighty survived: the rest either foundered or were hurled by the waves against the rocks and headlands, where they broke up, leaving the shore heaped with corpses and wreckage. There is no record in all history of a greater catastrophe having taken place at sea on any one occasion, and for this it was not Fortune which was to blame so much as the commanders themselves. Time and again their pilots had tried to persuade them not to sail along the southern coast of Sicily where it faces the Libyan

1. This total is consistent with Polybius' figures as given on p. 69, these were derived from his sources for the battle of Ecnomus, and modern estimates have reduced them to about 200 ships. Allowing therefore for an over-estimate of about 100 and for the forty vessels left at Aspis, the relieving fleet would have numbered about 210 ships.

Sea,<sup>1</sup> as it is a rocky shore which possesses few safe anchorages. They had also warned them that of the two constellations which herald bad weather the one was not yet past and the other was close at hand, for the voyage had been begun between the rising of Orion and of Sirius.<sup>2</sup> In spite of this, the commanders completely disregarded their advice: they chose a course which was threatened by the full force of the open sea, because they hoped to overawe a number of the cities which lay along their route with the spectacular victory they had gained, and so win them over. At any rate these commanders, who for the sake of such a trivial advantage exposed themselves to such an overwhelming disaster, were compelled to recognize the folly of their action.

Now in general the Romans rely upon force in all their undertakings, and consider that having set themselves a task they are bound to carry it through, and similarly that nothing is impossible once they have decided to attempt it. It often happens that this spirit inspires them to succeed, but sometimes it involves them in total disaster, and this is especially the case at sea. The reason is that on land they are contending with other men and with the products of men's labour; hence they are usually successful because they are applying one kind of force against another which is essentially similar – although even here their efforts have on rare occasions miscarried. But when they are contending with the sea and the atmosphere and try to overcome these by force, they meet with crushing defeats. So it turned out on this occasion, and the process will no doubt continue until they correct these preconceptions about daring and force, which make them believe that they can sail and travel whenever they choose at any season of the year.

38. When the Carthaginians learned of the destruction of the Roman fleet, they decided that they were now a match for their enemies both on land, in the light of their recent success, and at sea, because of this disaster, and so they took heart and began to

1. By this Polybius means sailing anti-clockwise so as to round Cape Pachynus at the south-eastern extremity of Sicily. In fact the Roman commanders had no choice, given the ancient practice of hugging the coast, since the western ports were in Carthaginian hands.

2. 'Rising' signifies the date when the star becomes visible on the eastern horizon, before the rising sun makes it disappear. The rising of Orion is conjectured to have been on 4 July, that of Sirius on 28 July.

make more ambitious military and naval preparations. They at once ordered Hasdrubal to Sicily, and placed under his command not only the troops they had previously mobilized but also a force which had joined them from Heracleia, together with 140 elephants. After they had sent him on his way, they began to fit out 200 ships and to make all the other preparations necessary for a naval expedition. Hasdrubal, having safely made the crossing to Lilybaeum, at once began to train the elephants and the rest of his troops, and made it plain that he intended to challenge the Romans for the possession of the open country.

When the Romans learned the full extent of the catastrophe from the survivors, they took the news greatly to heart, but they were determined that on no account would they surrender, and so they resolved to lay down yet another 220 ships. The work was finished in three months, an almost incredible feat, and as soon as the new consuls Aulus Atilius and Gnaeus Cornelius had completed the fitting-out of the fleet, they once more put to sea.<sup>1</sup> As they passed through the straits they were joined at Messana by those vessels of the original fleet which had escaped shipwreck. Then, with a combined force of 300 sail, they descended on Panormus, the strongest city in the Carthaginian province of Sicily, and began an assault on it. They erected siege-works at two separate points, and after making the necessary preparations brought up their battering rams. The tower which stood by the sea shore was easily demolished, the soldiers forced an entry through the breach, and the quarter known as the New Town was carried by storm. Soon afterwards, since this success threatened the so-called Old Town, the inhabitants quickly surrendered it. The consuls took possession of the city, and after posting a garrison sailed back to Rome.

39. At the beginning of the summer of the following year<sup>2</sup> the new consuls Gnaeus Servilius and Gaius Sempronius again put to sea with their whole fleet, and after touching at Sicily crossed over to Africa. They sailed along the coast, landed at a number of places where they accomplished nothing of importance, and reached the legendary island of the Lotus Eaters, which is named Meninx and is not far from the Lesser Syrtes. Here, because of their ignorance of the coastal waters, they ran upon some shoals; the tide then

1. In the summer of 254 B.C.

2. 253 B.C.

retreated, the ships went aground and the whole fleet was in a position of great danger. However, after a while the tide unexpectedly flowed back, and by throwing overboard all their heavy belongings they succeeded with difficulty in lightening the ships. After this lucky deliverance their return voyage was more like an escape from disaster than anything else. They reached Sicily, and after rounding the promontory of Lilybaeum anchored at Panormus. But then, as they shaped their course for Rome, they rashly ventured across the open sea and once more encountered such a terrible storm that they lost 150 ships.

At this point the Roman government, in spite of their habitual and inflexible determination to succeed in all their undertakings, were compelled in view of the gigantic scale and the frequency of the disasters they had suffered to abandon the idea of building yet another fleet. They decided to rely exclusively upon their land forces, dispatched an army under the command of the consuls Lucius Caecilius and Gaius Furius, and manned no more than sixty ships, to serve as supply vessels for the legions. These reverses suffered by the Romans greatly improved the prospects of the Carthaginians. They now held unchallenged command of the sea, since the Romans had virtually withdrawn from it, and they had high hopes of their army. These expectations were not unfounded, for the reports of Xanthippus' victory in Africa had in due course reached the Romans, and they had then learned that the elephants had broken their line and killed the greater part of their troops. The news created such terror of these animals that for the next two years the Romans, although in the neighbourhood of Lilybaeum or Selinus they were often drawn up no more than five or six furlongs from the enemy, never dared to launch an attack; in fact they would not even descend to level ground to meet the enemy's infantry, so much did they dread a charge by the elephants. During this period their only successful actions were the reducing of the towns of Therma and Lipara by siege, and in these operations they clung to mountainous country and to ground that was difficult to cross. The Roman government could not fail to notice the timidity and lack of spirit which now prevailed in the army, and in the end they changed their minds and decided to try their fortunes once again at sea. Accordingly during the consulship of Gaius Atilius and

Lucius Manlius they built fifty ships, and threw every effort into the task of enrolling sailors and assembling a fleet.

40. Meanwhile Hasdrubal, the Carthaginian commander-in-chief, had noticed the lack of spirit which the Romans had shown in their encounters with the enemy. He discovered that one of the consuls had returned to Italy taking half the Roman army in Sicily with him, while Caecilius had been left at Panormus with the remainder to protect the corn crops of the allies, for the harvesting season was now at its height:<sup>1</sup> Hasdrubal therefore marched out his troops from Lilybaeum and pitched camp on the border of the territory of Panormus. Caecilius noticed Hasdrubal's evident confidence, and kept his troops inside the gates in the hope of luring him into making an attack. When Hasdrubal saw this, he was all the more encouraged, as he concluded that Caecilius was afraid to come out, so he boldly pressed on with his whole force and descended through the pass into the territory of Panormus. Caecilius continued to follow his plan and allowed Hasdrubal to ravage the crops right up to the walls, until he had drawn his opponent forward to cross the river which flows in front of the town. As soon as the Carthaginians had got their elephants and the rest of their army across, he began to harass them with light-armed troops until he had compelled them to deploy their whole force. Then, as he saw that his tactics were taking effect, he stationed some of his light-armed troops before the wall and the trench in front of the city. Their orders were to discharge their missiles against the elephants once they came within range; next, as they were driven back, they were to take refuge in the trench, and then again dart out and shoot at any elephants which charged them. He also arranged that the camp-followers drawn from the civil population should bring the missiles from the market-place and stack them at the foot of the wall; at the same time he himself with his maniples took up position at the gate which faced the enemy's left wing and sent frequent reinforcements to support the skirmishers.

As the action between the Carthaginians and the light-armed troops became more general, the drivers of the elephants were fired with the impulse to show off their prowess to Hasdrubal. They

1. The date of the ensuing battle was June 250 B.C.

were anxious to play the leading part in the victory, and so, charging the front ranks of the light-armed troops, they easily drove them back and pursued them to the trench. But when the elephants attacked this obstacle, they were at once wounded by the archers who were shooting at them from the wall, while at the same time volleys of spears and javelins were poured upon them from the fresh troops who were drawn up in front of the trench. The animals found themselves pierced and riddled with missiles and before long they stampeded. They turned on their own troops, trampling and killing them, breaking their ranks, and throwing them into utter confusion. As soon as Caecilius saw this he led out his force in a vigorous charge, attacking the enemy on the flank. His troops were fresh and well disciplined, the Carthaginians in disorder; the result was that he routed the enemy, killed many men and drove back the rest in headlong flight. He captured ten elephants with their Indian drivers and after the battle he succeeded in rounding up the remainder, who had thrown their mahouts, and capturing them all. By achieving this success it was generally agreed that he was responsible for restoring to the Roman troops the will to fight and to regain control of the open country.

41. When the news of this victory was received at Rome the people were overjoyed, not so much because of the reverse the enemy had suffered in the loss of their elephants, as because of the confidence their own troops had gained in overcoming them. The Romans were thus again encouraged to send out the consuls to campaign with a fleet and a naval force in accordance with their original plan, for they were anxious to use every means in their power to finish the war. When all the necessary preparations had been made, the consuls set sail for Sicily with a fleet of 200.<sup>1</sup> It was by then the fourteenth year of the war.<sup>2</sup> They dropped anchor off Lilybaeum, and joining forces with the army proceeded to blockade the city, for they calculated that with this port in their hands it would be easy to carry the war into Africa. On this point at least the Carthaginian leaders were of the same mind as the Romans and held a similar view of the importance of Lilybaeum. They therefore abandoned all other operations, concentrated their whole

1. Modern estimates give a figure of 120.

2. 250 B.C.

effort upon the relief of the city, and prepared themselves to accept any risk or sacrifice to this end; they knew that if it fell, no military base would be left to them in Sicily, since all the rest of the island except for Drepana was now in Roman hands.

The account I shall give of this campaign requires some knowledge of the topography of the island, and so I shall now try to give a brief explanation of the geographical position and the special advantages of the places with which we are concerned.

42. Sicily occupies a position in relation to Italy and her southern extremity similar to that of the Peloponnese towards the rest of Greece. The difference is that the first is an island, while the second is a peninsula, so that the communication with the former is by sea and with the latter by land. The shape of Sicily is a triangle, the points of each of the three angles taking the form of a cape. The cape which looks southwards and projects into the Sicilian Sea is called Pachynus. The northerly cape forms the western boundary of the Strait of Messina; the distance between it and the Italian coast is about a mile and a half, and it is called Pelorias. The third cape is turned towards Africa itself and is well situated as a base for attacking the promontories that protect Carthage, from which it is about 115 miles distant. This cape faces south-west, separates the Libyan from the Sardinian Sea and is named Lilybaeum; on it stands the city of the same name, to which the Romans were now laying siege. Lilybaeum is strongly protected not only by its walls and by the deep moat which encircles it,<sup>1</sup> but also by the lagoons which lie on the seaward side; it is a task demanding great skill and much practice to find the channel through these into the harbour.

The Romans built two camps, one on each side of the town, and fortified the space between them with a ditch, a palisade and a wall. They then began to move forward siege-works against the tower which was nearest to the sea on the Libyan side. They advanced slowly, adding a little at a time to their structures, and in this way they managed to extend their siege-works both forwards and sideways until they had demolished the six towers which adjoined the seaward one; at the same time they attacked all the other towers at

1. According to Diodorus, *History*, XXIV.I.2, this was ninety feet wide and sixty feet deep.

once with battering rams. By this time the siege was being pressed with tremendous energy and at an alarming speed. Each day saw some of the towers being shaken or reduced to rubble, while the Roman siege-works were pushed further and further towards the centre of the city. The result was that a mood of confusion and terror descended upon the whole besieged population, although there was a garrison of about 10,000 mercenaries<sup>1</sup> in the town. However, their general, Himilco, resisted the Romans by every means that was in his power, and by building a new wall behind the demolished towers and counter-mining the enemy's siege-works he caused them great difficulties. Every day he would make a sortie, attack the siege-engines and try to set them on fire; these counter-attacks were launched both by day and by night, and were pressed home with such bitter fighting that at times the losses were heavier than would normally be suffered in a pitched battle.

43. At about this time some of the senior officers of the mercenary force had discussed among themselves a plan to hand over the city to the Romans. They were convinced that the men under their orders would obey them, and so they stole out of the city by night to the Roman camp and put their proposals for surrender to the consul. Now on an earlier occasion the mercenaries of Syracuse had hatched a plot to betray the citizens of Agrigentum, but they had been saved by an Achaean named Alexon, and now again this man was the first to discover the conspiracy, which he reported to the Carthaginian commander. As soon as Himilco heard this, he at once summoned the remaining officers and appealed to them with all the eloquence he could command. He promised them lavish rewards and favours if they would stand by their engagement to him and not go over to those who had already left the city. The officers responded enthusiastically to his words, whereupon he ordered them to return at once to their men. He sent with them Hannibal, the son of the Hannibal who had been executed in Sardinia, to join the Celtic contingent, choosing this officer because the Celts had served under him and knew him well. Alexon was assigned to the other division of mercenaries, because he was both liked and trusted by them. The officers then called the whole mercenary force together and made an appeal to them.

1. It consisted of Celts and Greeks.

They pledged their word that every man would receive the reward the Carthaginian commander had promised, and in the end they easily prevailed upon the troops to remain loyal. The result was that when the officers who had gone over to the enemy approached the walls openly and tried to gain a hearing and explain the promises offered by the Romans, not only did they fail to make any impression, but the men would not even listen to them and drove them away from the walls with volleys of stones and other missiles. In this way the Carthaginians came very near to losing everything they had in Lilybaeum through the treachery of their mercenaries, and it was that same Alexon – whose loyalty had previously saved not only the territory and the city of the Agrigentines but also their constitution and their freedom – who was now responsible for rescuing the Carthaginians from complete disaster.

44. Meanwhile the Carthaginian authorities at home were quite unaware of these events. But they had in any case to consider the needs of a besieged city, and so they manned fifty ships, filled them with troops, and after giving instructions suitable to the operation in hand, dispatched them at once under the command of Hannibal, the son of Hamilcar, who was both a trierarch and the trusted colleague of Adherbal.<sup>1</sup> Hannibal's orders were that he should on no account delay but should seize the first opportunity to make a bold attempt at relieving the beleaguered city. Accordingly he put to sea with 10,000 troops on board, anchored off the Aegates Islands which lie between Lilybaeum and Carthage, and there waited for favourable weather. As soon as he had a good breeze from astern he hoisted all sail and running before the wind made straight for the mouth of the harbour, with his men drawn up on the decks armed and ready for action. The Romans were taken unawares by the sudden appearance of his fleet, and they were also afraid of being swept by the force of the wind into their enemies' harbour in the midst of a hostile force, and so they made no attempt to bar the entry of the relieving fleet; instead they remained standing out at sea, still half lost in amazement at the audacity of the Carthaginians.

1. It seems probable that Adherbal was the commander of the expedition and that he went on to Drepana (see p. 91), leaving Hannibal at the Aegates Islands to relieve Lilybaeum.

Meanwhile the whole population of Lilybaeum had crowded on to the walls. They were in an agony of anxiety for the outcome, yet at the same time overjoyed at the unexpected prospect of rescue; then, as the fleet sailed into the harbour they greeted it with loud cheers and clapping of their hands. Then Hannibal, having brought off this daring and risky feat of entering the harbour, dropped anchor and safely disembarked his troops. As for the citizens, they were overjoyed not so much at the fact that relief had arrived – although this did much to revive their hopes and increase their strength – as that the Romans had not dared to prevent the Carthaginians from sailing in.

45. Himilco, the commander of the garrison, saw that his whole force was now full of confidence and eager for action: the original garrison because of the presence of reinforcements, and the new arrivals because they were still unaware of the dangers that threatened them. He was anxious to take advantage of this fresh spirit which inspired both divisions of his army, and make another attempt to fire the enemy's siege-works. Accordingly, he paraded the whole army and appealed to them with a speech that matched the mood of the occasion. He stirred his listeners to a high pitch of enthusiasm by promising generous bounties to soldiers who performed individual acts of bravery, and he assured them that the whole army would be treated with favour and handsomely rewarded by the Carthaginian government. The troops applauded him as one man, and there were loud shouts that he should delay no longer but lead them straight into action. Himilco showed his pleasure at their response, and praised their spirit; then he dismissed them, ordering them to take an early rest and await their officers' instructions. Soon afterwards he sent for the commanders, assigned to each of them his place in the assault, and then gave out the password and the exact time for the attack. He ordered all the officers to have their units at full strength and in the assault positions at the morning watch.

His orders were carried out to the letter, and at first light he led out his troops and attacked the siege-works at several places simultaneously. The Romans had anticipated his intention, and were neither unprepared nor slow to respond. They instantly ran to defend the threatened points and resisted the enemy strongly.

In a short while the fighting became general and a desperate battle developed along the whole length of the walls, for the besieged had thrown 20,000 men<sup>1</sup> into the attack, and the Romans were even more numerous. The battle had been joined in an irregular fashion, with neither side taking up a strict formation, but each man using his weapons as his judgement directed; this made the struggle fiercer still, for the reason that even with such large numbers engaged, the fighting was carried out man against man or rank against rank, so that something of the spirit of single combat pervaded the whole battlefield. But it was above all round the siege-works that the noise of the battle was loudest and the action the hottest. Here was the heart of the fighting, since it was the prime task of the attackers to drive the enemy from the works and that of the defenders to hold them, and each side resisted with the utmost fury and determination, the former straining every nerve to dislodge their opponents, while the latter clung indomitably to their positions; in the end both sides fought themselves to a standstill and perished on the ground where they had first stood. At the same time other combatants mingled with the fighting men, bringing up torch-wood, tow and firebrands, and these auxiliaries attacked the siege-engines from every side, hurling their incendiary missiles with such daring that the Romans, who were unable to contain this assault, found themselves in a situation of great danger. But at this point the Carthaginian commander, recognizing that he was suffering heavy losses and had still not achieved his objective of carrying the siege-works by storm, ordered his trumpeters to sound the retreat. The Romans had come very near to losing their entire siege-train, but in the end they held their ground and remained in possession of the works.

46. As for Hannibal, he sailed out with his ships after the battle, unobserved by the enemy and while it was still dark, and made for Drepana to join the Carthaginian admiral Adherbal. Drepana is about fifteen miles from Lilybaeum and because of its convenient situation and the advantages of its harbour, the Carthaginians had always paid great attention to its defence.

1. This figure implies that the entire Carthaginian force was engaged, i.e. the original garrison of 10,000 (see p. 88) plus Hannibal's troops of the same number.

The Carthaginian government was anxious to find out what was happening at Lilybaeum, but had no means of receiving news, since their own forces were shut up in the town and the Romans were maintaining a strict blockade. Accordingly one of their leading citizens, a certain Hannibal who was nicknamed 'The Rhodian', volunteered to sail into Lilybaeum and make a full report at first hand. The authorities were very willing to listen to his proposal, but doubted whether he could succeed, since the Roman ships were moored outside the entrance to the port. However, Hannibal fitted out his own vessel, set sail and crossed to one of the islands lying off Lilybaeum. The next day he found the wind in the right quarter, and sailed straight through at about 10 o'clock in the morning in full view of the enemy, who were dumbfounded at his effrontery. On the following day Hannibal lost no time in making his ship ready to return. But meanwhile the Roman commander, who was determined to guard the harbour entrance more carefully, had fitted out overnight a patrol of ten of his fastest ships, while he himself watched from the land, where the whole army was drawn up waiting to see what would happen. The ten ships were lined up as close to the shoals as they could approach on either side of the harbour mouth; there they floated, their oars stretched out like wings, ready to strike the water, all prepared to run down and capture the ship which was about to sail out. 'The Rhodian' for his part got his ship under way in full view of the enemy, and so far surpassed the Romans both in speed and in the audacity of his manoeuvring, that he not only brought out his ship and its crew unscathed leaving his enemy standing, but then sailing a little way ahead he hove to and waited, without shipping his oars, as if to challenge the Romans. Then, as nobody ventured to advance and attack him because of the speed of his rowing, he made off, having successfully defied the entire Roman fleet with his single ship. After this he several times repeated the same exploit and performed a service that was of great value both to the government and the besieged city. He kept the Carthaginian authorities continually informed of the most urgent news and raised the spirits of the defenders, while at the same time his audacity served to dishearten the Romans.

47. The factor which contributed most to Hannibal's confidence

in these attempts was that he had accurately plotted from experience the course he should steer through the shallows, and discovered the landmarks for it. As soon as he had crossed the open sea and arrived in sight of the harbour, he would steer as though he were coming from Italy, keeping the seaward tower on his bows, so that it covered the whole line of the city's towers in the direction of Africa. It is only by steering along this course that a vessel sailing with the wind astern can make the mouth of the harbour. This display of daring on the part of 'the Rhodian' encouraged several others who had local knowledge of the coast to follow his example; these efforts were particularly galling to the Romans, who tried to counter them by filling up the mouth of the harbour. Most of their efforts in this direction failed completely: the sea was too deep at this point, and none of the material which they threw down would either stay in its place or hold together as a solid mass. The rubble, as they emptied it in, would be swept away and scattered by the waves and by the force of the current before it could reach the bottom. However, at one place where the sea-bed was shallow, they succeeded after immense labour in piling up a mound, and here a quadrireme ran aground one night as it was leaving the harbour and fell into the Romans' hands. The vessel was of exceptionally fine construction, and the Romans, after taking possession and manning her with a picked crew, kept a special watch for blockade runners and above all for 'the Rhodian'. It so happened that he had entered the harbour that very night, and later sailed out in his usual, deliberately open fashion. Then, when he saw the quadrireme put to sea at the same time, he recognized her and took fright. At first he made a spurt in an effort to pull away, but when he found that he was being overtaken by the greater rowing power of his pursuers, he was forced at last to turn and engage. When it came to boarding, his crew were no match for the marines, who were superior in numbers and were all picked men, and he was taken prisoner. The Romans found when they took possession of her that his ship was likewise exceptionally well-constructed; they fitted her out for these special duties, and thus put an end to the operations of all those who were daring enough to try to run the blockade of Lilybaeum.

48. Meanwhile the besieged garrison were still hard at work

building counter-fortifications, although they had abandoned hope of damaging or destroying the enemy's siege-engines. But while these efforts were still in progress, a steady wind arose, which blew with such violence and strength on the apparatus for moving the engines forward that it shook loose the penthouses<sup>1</sup> from their foundations and swept away the wooden towers which had been erected to cover them. As the gale continued, it occurred to some of the Greek mercenaries that this was a perfect opportunity to destroy the siege-works, and they explained their plan to the commander of the garrison. The Carthaginian seized upon the idea, and lost no time in making all the necessary preparations. The younger soldiers of the garrison gathered at three separate points and there threw lighted brands on to the siege-works. The whole apparatus was so old that it was highly inflammable, and with the strong wind blowing the conflagration directly against the towers and the siege-engines the flames took hold swiftly and with immediate effect, while the efforts of the Romans to check the blaze and save the works were made correspondingly difficult, in fact almost impossible. The would-be rescuers were so overwhelmed by the sudden outbreak that they could neither grasp nor properly see what was happening. They had to face flames, sparks, and dense clouds of smoke, which blew into their faces and blinded them; many of them were overcome by the fumes and collapsed, unable to come near enough to fight the fire. At the same time all the factors which hindered the Romans in their efforts to control the blaze, combined for the reasons I have mentioned to help the incendiaries. Anything which could obscure the vision or injure the Romans was blown towards them or thrust into their faces; but the defenders had a clear view of the space immediately in front of them, and so could take careful aim with the missiles which they discharged at the rescuers as they ran up, or with the brands which they hurled to destroy the works, and whatever they discharged at either target was made more destructive by the force of the wind behind. In the end the destruction was so complete that the very foundations of the towers and the beams of the battering rams were rendered useless by the flames. After this

1. These were sheds with sloping roofs, which protected the besiegers against missiles from above.

catastrophe the Romans abandoned the attempt to capture the town by means of siege-works. Instead they invested the place by digging a moat and building a stockade around it. At the same time they fortified their own camp with a surrounding wall and left further developments to time. For their part, the garrison of Lilybaeum re-built the sections of their walls which had been destroyed, and settled down in good heart to await the outcome of the siege.

49. The news duly reached Rome and was later confirmed from other quarters that the greater number of the crews of the fleet had lost their lives either through the fire or in the siege operations. The government made haste to enlist more sailors, and when they had recruited some 10,000, they sent them to Sicily; the men were ferried over the Straits of Messina, and from there they marched to the camp. Soon after their arrival the consul Publius Claudius Pulcher summoned a meeting of the military tribunes and told his audience that the time was ripe for the whole fleet to attack the Carthaginian base at Drepana. Adherbal, who was in command there, knew nothing, he explained, of the arrival of the fresh crews, and was convinced that the Roman fleet was incapable of putting to sea because of the losses of men it had suffered during the siege. The tribunes enthusiastically supported his plan, whereupon he at once embarked both the men who had already served in the fleet and the new arrivals. The marines were selected from the best troops in the army, who readily volunteered for the expedition, since the voyage was only a short one, and there were excellent prospects of picking up booty at the end of it.

After completing these preparations he put to sea unnoticed by the enemy at the hour of midnight, and for the first part of his voyage he sailed in close formation with the coast of Sicily on his starboard bow. By daybreak the leading ships of his fleet were sighted advancing on Drepana, and at first Adherbal was thoroughly disconcerted, as their appearance came as a complete surprise. But he quickly recovered his self-possession, grasped the meaning of his adversary's approach, and at once determined that he would make every effort and risk any danger rather than allow his force to be shut up by the blockade which now threatened him. He therefore immediately mustered his sailors on the beach and sent

out a proclamation to summon the mercenary troops from the city. When his force was assembled, he addressed them and strove to impress on their minds in a few words what an excellent chance of victory they would have if they risked a battle now, and what a certain prospect of hardship if they shrank from it and allowed themselves to be besieged. His men soon made it clear that they still possessed the spirit to fight at sea and they urged him with shouts of approval to lead them into action without delay. Adherbal thanked them for their response and praised their courage, then he ordered them to embark immediately, keep their eyes fixed on his ship, and follow in her wake. Once he had made these instructions clear, he got under way with all speed and led his fleet out to sea, steering close to the rocks on the opposite side of the harbour to that by which the Romans were entering it.

50. Pulcher, the Roman commander, had assumed that the enemy would be so dismayed by his arrival that they would avoid an action; but when he saw that on the contrary the Carthaginians were determined to fight and that some of his own vessels were by now inside the harbour, others in the entrance, and others still approaching it, he gave orders for the whole fleet to put about and make for the open sea. Because of the abruptness of the turn, the result of this manoeuvre was to cause some of the ships inside the harbour to foul those which were entering it; it also created great confusion among the crews, and a number of vessels had the blades of their oars snapped as they collided with one another. However, as soon as the ships had cleared the harbour, the captains were able to bring them into line and drew them up near the shore with their bows facing the enemy. Pulcher himself had originally sailed in the rear of the fleet, but now while the manoeuvre was still in progress he steered for the open sea, and took up position on the extreme left wing. At the same time Adherbal had succeeded in outflanking the Romans' left with five ships that were fitted with rams, and manoeuvred his own vessel into a position opposite the enemy and facing the shore. As each of the other four joined him he ordered them through his staff officers to take station alongside him, until all five were in line facing the enemy. When they all presented a united front, he gave the agreed signal to advance and bore down in line upon the Roman ships, which were still close

inshore, waiting to be joined by their comrades who were returning from the harbour. This position near the shore proved a great disadvantage to them in the action which followed.

51. As the two fleets drew closer the battle signals were hoisted on the flagships of both admirals, and the vessels engaged. At first the fighting was evenly balanced, since both sides had the pick of their land troops serving as marines. Gradually, however, the many advantages with which the Carthaginians had commenced the action began to tell in their favour. The construction of their ships and the superior training of their rowers made them much faster than the Romans, and the position they had chosen also helped them, since they had deployed their line in the open sea. This meant that if any of their ships were hard-pressed by the enemy, they could use their superior speed to retire in safety to open water. There they could put about and attack the foremost of their pursuers, either working round astern of them, or attacking them from the beam; the Romans were then obliged to turn, and were at once in difficulties because of the weight of their hulls and the inexperience of their rowers, whereupon the Carthaginians often rammed and sank many of them. If any of the Carthaginian ships were in danger, they could come to one another's rescue with no risk, since they could sail in open water and unmolested past the sterns of their own line. For the Romans the situation was exactly the opposite. Those who were in difficulties were too close to the land to have any room to retire, so that their ships, if they were hard-pressed by the enemy in front, either ran on to the shallows stern foremost, or made for the shore and went aground. One of the most effective manoeuvres in sea battles, that of sailing through the enemy's line and reappearing astern of ships which are already engaged with others, was ruled out for the Romans because of the weight of their vessels and the inferior training of their crews. And unlike the Carthaginians they could not sail round behind their own line to help their comrades, because they were hemmed in so close to the shore that there was no space left for the passage of a ship that wished to come to the rescue. This, then, was the adverse situation in which the Roman fleet found itself in every part of the battle, with some ships sticking fast in the shallows and others running aground, and when the Roman consul saw

what was happening he took to flight. He made his way out on the port side of the fleet, hugging the shore and accompanied by some thirty of the ships, which happened to be the nearest to him. The remaining ships of the fleet, which numbered ninety-three, were all captured by the Carthaginians together with their crews, except for those who ran their vessels ashore and managed to escape.

52. As a result of this action Adherbal won himself a high reputation at Carthage, since it was his foresight and daring which were credited with the success. Pulcher, on the other hand, fell into disgrace among the Romans and he was attacked on all sides for his conduct of the battle. It was felt that he had acted without due caution or judgement, and that so far as it lay within the power of one man he had brought a great disaster upon Rome. He was therefore put on trial, condemned, heavily fined and barely escaped the death penalty.

Yet despite this catastrophe such was the determination of the Romans to win the war that they in no way slackened the effort that was now required, but put in hand all the necessary measures to continue the campaign. It was now the time for the elections, and as soon as the new consuls had been appointed they sent one of them, Lucius Junius Pullus,<sup>1</sup> to take charge of a consignment of corn for the besiegers of Lilybaeum together with the provisions and stores required by the army, and manned sixty warships to escort the convoy. On arriving at Messina, Pullus added to his fleet a number of ships which had come from Lilybaeum and others from elsewhere in Sicily, and from there coasted with all speed to Syracuse; he now had a fleet of 120 warships to escort the 800 transports which were carrying the supplies. There he handed over to the quaestors half the transports and a number of warships and sent them ahead, as he was anxious that the supplies should be delivered to the army without delay. He himself remained at Syracuse waiting for the ships which had still to arrive from Messina and collecting further supplies of corn from Rome's allies inland.

53. Meanwhile Adherbal had sent the prisoners taken in the naval battle and the captured warships to Carthage. He then placed his colleague Carthalo in command of a fleet of thirty vessels in addition

<sup>1</sup>. Polybius' dating is incorrect. Pullus was the colleague of Publius Claudius Pulcher in 249, not his successor in 248.

to the seventy which he had brought to Drepana, and dispatched him with orders to make a surprise attack on the Roman fleet which was anchored off Lilybaeum, capture all he could, and set fire to the rest. Carthalo followed these orders, and carried out his attack at dawn; he set fire to some of the ships and had begun to tow away others, by which time his action had caused a tremendous commotion in the Roman camp. Then, as the soldiers rushed to rescue the ships, Himilco, who was on the watch inside Lilybaeum, was aroused by the noise. As day was now beginning to break, he could see what was happening, and sent out his mercenaries to attack the Romans from the landward side. The Romans were now threatened from every quarter and found themselves in no ordinary difficulty. However, the Carthaginian admiral, after towing away a few ships and breaking up others, soon afterwards left Lilybaeum; he then coasted along for some distance in the direction of Heracleia and there remained on the watch, since his real intention was to intercept the transports which were on their way to supply the army. When his look-outs reported that a large convoy of vessels of every variety was approaching and was already close at hand, he stood out to sea and sailed to meet them, for the success he had just gained had made him feel contemptuous towards the Romans, and he now felt eager to engage. In the same way the approach of the Carthaginian fleet was reported to the quaestors who had been sent on in advance from Syracuse by the light reconnaissance craft which normally cruise ahead of the fleet. As they did not reckon themselves strong enough to risk a battle at sea, they anchored off a small fortified town which was subject to the Romans; this place possessed no proper harbour, but had roadsteads enclosed by headlands which ran out from the coast and afforded some shelter. Here they disembarked, set up a number of catapults and mangonels which they obtained from the fort, and awaited the enemy's approach. The Carthaginians, when they neared the town, at first conceived the plan of blockading the enemy, as they assumed that the Romans would be frightened into withdrawing behind the defences and that they could then capture the ships without opposition. However, these hopes were disappointed, the Romans put up a determined resistance, and as the situation of the place presented them with a number of diffi-

culties they towed away a few of the ships which were laden with stores, sailed to a nearby river where they anchored, and lay in wait for the enemy to resume their voyage.

54. Meanwhile Pullus, the consul who had stayed behind in Syracuse, completed his business there, put to sea, and rounded Cape Pachynus on his way to Lilybaeum; all this time he knew nothing of what had happened to his advance force. The Carthaginian look-outs then once more reported to their commander that the enemy were in sight, whereupon the admiral put to sea and made with all speed towards the main body, as he was anxious to engage them as far away as possible from their comrades. Meanwhile Pullus had sighted the Carthaginian fleet from a considerable distance and had taken note of its strength; he did not dare to offer battle, but by then they were too close for him to escape. He therefore altered course, put in near a rock-bound and altogether dangerous part of the coast, and anchored there, for he thought it better to run any risk from the weather rather than to allow his entire force and its ships to fall into the enemy's hands. The Carthaginian admiral saw what he had done, and decided that he would not venture to approach such a dangerous shore; instead he gained the shelter of a nearby cape, anchored off it and remained on the alert between the two Roman fleets, keeping both under observation. Presently the weather worsened and it became clear that a heavy gale was blowing up from the open sea; at this the Carthaginian pilots, who from their familiarity with the locality and the weather signs could predict what was likely to happen, persuaded Carthalo to avoid the storm by rounding Cape Pachynus. He had the sense to listen to them, and after skirting the cape with great toil and difficulty, they were able to anchor in safety. The two Roman fleets, however, were caught by the storm off a stretch of coast which offered no shelter whatever and were annihilated, the destruction being so complete that not even one of the wrecks could be salvaged. In this totally unforeseen fashion, then, the Romans had both of their fleets put out of action.

55. The destruction of the Roman fleet put fresh heart into the Carthaginians and caused their hopes to revive once more. The Romans, on the other hand, although they had met with various partial misfortunes before, had never suffered such a total disaster.

The result was that they gave up any attempt to carry on naval operations and confined themselves to holding their positions ashore, while the Carthaginians not only enjoyed the complete mastery of the sea<sup>1</sup> but had by no means abandoned hope of winning back their possessions on land. Yet, although both the Roman people and their army at Lilybaeum were deeply disheartened by these reverses, they persisted in their determination to carry on the siege; the government continued without hesitation to send supplies by land, and the troops kept up as close a blockade as they could. After the wreck of the fleet the consul Pullus returned to the army and, tormented though he was by the catastrophe, he at once set himself to devise some new and effective venture to retrieve as best he could the ground that had been lost. He seized the first vestige of an opportunity that came his way by surprising and taking possession of Eryx, where he occupied both the town and the temple of Venus.

Eryx is a mountain<sup>2</sup> near the coast on the side of Sicily which faces Italy; it lies between Panormus and Drepana, but is closer to the latter, indeed it adjoins the boundaries of the city and is by far the largest mountain in Italy after Etna. On its flat summit stands the shrine of Venus Erycina,<sup>3</sup> which is without doubt the richest and most splendid of all the temples in Sicily. The city is spread out along the slopes below the crest, and the approach to it is both long and steep on every side. Pullus installed a garrison on the summit and also at the foot of the road which leads to Drepana. He kept a strict guard on both points, but especially on the latter, since he believed that by this means he could secure possession not only of the city of Eryx but of the whole mountain.

56. After this the Carthaginians appointed Hamilcar Barca as their commander and placed him in charge of naval operations. He began by ravaging the Italian coast in the eighteenth year of

1. The Carthaginians failed, however, to exploit this superiority, perhaps because their resources were weakened by the civil war in Africa.

2. The modern Erice near Trapani. It is some 2,250 feet high, and so neither the highest nor the largest mountain after Etna.

3. The temple was very ancient and maintained a system of temple prostitution which suggests an Eastern origin. The Phoenicians identified the goddess with Astarte; Roman legend attributed the foundation of the shrine of Venus to Aeneas.

the war. Then after devastating the territory of Locri<sup>1</sup> and the Brutti, he crossed to Sicily and descended with his whole fleet on the territory of Panormus. Here he took possession of the stronghold near Hercte<sup>2</sup> — both the hill and the fortress bear the same name. It is situated on the coast between Eryx and Panormus and was considered to possess the best situation in the whole region on which to establish a well-protected and permanent camp. The place consists of a hill, which rises to a considerable height from the surrounding plain, with steep slopes on every side. The top measures over twelve miles in circumference and the soil of this plateau provides good pasture and is also suitable for agriculture; it is well-protected against the sharp sea winds and entirely free of dangerous animals. Both to seaward and on the side facing inland the slopes are sheer and inaccessible; the other sides of the plateau require only a little work to fortify, and in the centre there is a knoll which serves both as an acropolis and as an observation post that provides an excellent view over the surrounding country. Hercte also commands a harbour, which is well-placed to receive ships sailing to Italy from Drepana or from Lilybaeum, and it possesses an abundant supply of water. There are only three approaches to the hill, two from the landward side and one from the sea, and all of them are difficult. Here, then, Hamilcar established his base, but in choosing it he was running great risks:<sup>3</sup> there was no city in the vicinity on which he could rely as an ally, and he had no prospect of help from elsewhere, but had planted himself in his enemies' midst. On the other hand his presence constituted a serious threat to the Romans, and eventually involved them in a whole series of difficulties and trials of strength. Before long he was to sail with his fleet from this port and ravage the coast of Italy as far as Cumae. Then, after the Romans had established a camp against him in front of Panormus and a little over half a mile from his own position, he harassed them by keeping up a variety of attacks and offensive patrols by land over a period of almost three years. How-

1. On the south-east coast of Bruttium, the modern Calabria.

2. Polybius' description of Hercte as lying between Panormus and Eryx is inaccurate; modern scholars identify the hill with the present Monte Castellaccio, some seven miles north-west of Palermo.

3. Hamilcar's arrival marks a new and more active phase in the war, his seizure of Hercte being a counterstroke to the Roman occupation of Eryx.

ever it is impossible for me to describe these operations in detail here.

57. Hamilcar's campaign in Sicily against the Romans might be compared to a boxing match in which two champions, both in perfect training and both distinguished for their courage, meet to fight for a prize. As the contest develops and the two exchange blow after blow, without a moment's pause, it is out of the question either for the combatants or the spectators to anticipate or to keep count of every attack and every hit; nevertheless it is possible from the general activity of the two and from the determination which they display to obtain a sufficiently clear impression of their skill, their strength and their courage. So it was with these two commanders. The various causes which prompted their daily operations and the tactical details of these are far too numerous for any writer to describe, and would prove both tedious and unprofitable to read, since every day brought its ambushes on the one side or the other, and its sorties and counter-attacks. But a general summing-up of the leadership of the two men and of the results of their rival efforts may provide a clearer picture of the facts. Certainly no stratagems were left untried — whether orthodox tactics, ruses occasioned by some local factor or pressure of circumstances, or the kind of operation which is inspired by a forceful and adventurous initiative. However, there were several reasons why the campaign could not be brought to a decisive issue.

In the first place, the forces on either side were equally matched; secondly their respective entrenchments were so strongly fortified as to be virtually impregnable; and lastly the two camps were pitched only a very small distance apart from one another. This was the main reason why the two armies, although they clashed repeatedly at certain places, never ventured a decisive battle. The losses in these actions were confined to the men who fell in hand-to-hand fighting. The troops who gave ground were accustomed to getting themselves immediately out of trouble by retiring behind their defences, from which they would later sally forth and resume the fighting.

58. But Fortune, like a good umpire<sup>1</sup> in the games, suddenly brought about an unexpected change in the contest: the theatre

1. i.e. in order to obtain a decision between two equally matched opponents.

of action was shifted from the locality I have just described, and confined to a narrower field, which rendered the struggle even more desperate. The Romans, as I have mentioned, occupied the mountain of Eryx with garrisons posted both on the heights and at the foot of the slope, but Hamilcar managed to capture the town which lay between these positions. The Romans who were holding the crest thus found themselves trapped, but endured the hardships and dangers of the ensuing siege with extraordinary courage. At the same time the Carthaginians, hemmed in between two Roman forces, also held out with a determination which almost passes belief; their supplies could only be brought up with great difficulty since they held only one outlet to the sea and a single road which connected it with their position. Here again both sides employed every resource, every stratagem and every effort that the siege demanded, endured every kind of hardship, and resorted both to pitched battles and every other variety of fighting. In the end, the contest was left drawn; this did not mean, however, that both sides were completely exhausted or demoralized, as Fabius Pictor has represented it, but rather that they left the field like two champions, still unbroken and unconquered. What happened was that before either side could overcome the other – and the contest in this theatre lasted for another two years – the war was decided by other means and in another place.

This was the state of affairs, then, at Eryx, so far as concerned the land forces. And in general the struggle between the two nations might be compared to a fight to the death between two game-cocks. It often happens that when the two birds have lost the use of their wings from sheer exhaustion, their courage remains high to the end, so that they go on striking blow after blow at one another, until at last without any intervention from outside they fall into a mortal grapple, and once this has happened one or the other will drop dead.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the situation of the Romans and the Carthaginians. They were worn out with the strain of an unbroken succession of hard-fought campaigns and were being driven to despair. Their

1. The metaphor is precisely worked out. The loss of the use of the birds' wings refers to the five-year duel on land, and the final grapple to the change in Roman strategy which culminated in the battle of the Aegates Islands.

strength was beginning to fail and their resources had been drained by taxes and military expenses which continued year after year.

59. And so, like the victorious fighting-cock, the Romans braced themselves for a final life or death effort. For the previous five years they had withdrawn completely from naval operations, partly because of the disasters they had suffered, and partly because of their belief that they could win the war by means of their armies alone. They now recognized that chiefly because of Hamilcar's daring leadership they were failing to achieve the results on which they had counted by land, and so they decided for the third time to risk their fortunes upon the sea. They believed that this strategy, if they could strike the enemy a mortal blow, offered the only prospect of finishing the war successfully. And this in fact they finally achieved. At their first attempt they had been forced to abandon the sea through sheer misfortune. The second time they had failed because of their defeat at the battle of Drepana. Now in their third effort they at last succeeded.

The naval victory at Aegusa enabled them to cut off the sea-borne supplies to the Carthaginian army at Eryx and eventually to finish off the war. Yet the effort sprang from sheer resolution rather than material resources. There were no funds in the treasury to finance the enterprise; but in spite of this, thanks to the patriotism and generosity of a number of leading citizens, the money was found. Single individuals or syndicates of two or three, according to their means, each undertook to build and fit out a quinquereme, which was fully equipped on the understanding that they would be repaid if the expedition was successful. In this way a fleet of 200 quinqueremes was quickly made ready, all of them constructed on the model of the ship originally captured from Hannibal, 'the Rhodian'. The Romans then appointed Gaius Lutatius to the command and sent him out at the beginning of the summer.<sup>1</sup> His sudden appearance off the coast of Sicily took the enemy completely by surprise. The whole Carthaginian fleet had sailed home, and he at once took possession of the harbour at Drepana and the roadsteads near Lilybaeum. He then erected siege-works around Drepana and made other preparations to blockade the city. But while he pursued these operations by every means in his

1. 242 B.C.

power, he foresaw that the Carthaginian fleet would return, and he never lost sight of the prime object of his expedition: namely that it was only by a victory at sea that the war as a whole could be decided. So he did not allow the time to be wasted or his men to be left unemployed. The crews were rehearsed and drilled every day in the manoeuvres that would be needed for the battle. He also paid particular attention to the training and discipline of his sailors, and by these methods he raised them in a very short time to the condition of trained athletes for the coming contest.

60. The news that the Romans had launched a fleet and were again preparing to fight for supremacy at sea came as a shock to the Carthaginians, but they at once fitted out their own ships, loaded them with corn and other provisions, and dispatched them to Sicily, for they were greatly concerned that the troops at Eryx should be kept well-supplied. This fleet was placed under the command of Hanno, who immediately set sail from Carthage and reached the so-called Holy Isle. His plan was to sail on as soon as possible to Eryx without the Romans' knowledge; there he would unload his stores and so lighten the ships, take on board those of the mercenary troops who were best trained to fight as marines – together with Hamilcar Barca himself – and then engage the enemy. However, Lutatius received intelligence of Hanno's arrival and anticipated his intentions. He too embarked the best troops in the Roman army to fight as marines, and sailed to the island of Aegusa which lies off Lilybaeum. There he made a speech to his troops that was well chosen for the occasion, and warned his captains that the battle was likely to take place the next day. At daybreak the next morning he saw that the strong breeze which was blowing up was favourable to the enemy, and that it would be difficult for his ships to beat up against the wind, as the sea had turned rough and boisterous. At first he could not decide what was the best course in these circumstances, but after a while he reflected that if he risked an attack now while the weather was stormy, at least he would be fighting Hanno and his sailors alone and before they had received any reinforcements. If he waited for calm weather and allowed the Carthaginians to cross to Eryx and link up with the land forces he would have to contend with ships that had been lightened and were

more manoeuvrable, with the pick of the Carthaginian troops, and above all with the aggressive presence of Hamilcar, which the Romans dreaded more than anything else. For these reasons he decided that he must not lose the present opportunity, and when he saw the enemy vessels under full sail, he at once put to sea. Thanks to their excellent condition his crews easily mastered the high sea that was running, and in a short while he had manoeuvred his fleet into a single line with the ships' prows facing the enemy.

61. When the Carthaginians saw that the Romans intended to oppose their crossing, they lowered their masts, and cheering one another on from each ship, they closed with the enemy. This time the state of preparation of each force was exactly the opposite of what it had been at the battle of Drepana, and since the conditions were the opposite, the results of the battle were the opposite. The Romans had reformed their methods of ship-building and had also removed all heavy equipment from their vessels, leaving only what was required for the battle. Their rowers worked in complete unison and gave excellent service, while their marines were all men selected from the legions for their indomitable spirit and thoroughly seasoned in battle. With the Carthaginians it was the reverse. Their vessels were heavily loaded and so difficult to manoeuvre in action, their crews had been enlisted for the emergency and were quite untrained, while their marines were raw recruits who were undergoing their first experience of hardship or dangerous service. The Carthaginians had assumed that the Romans would never again challenge their naval supremacy, and so in their contempt for their opponents they had neglected their own navy. The result was that immediately the battle was joined they were worsted at one point after another, and were swiftly put to flight: fifty ships were sunk outright and seventy captured with their crews. The remainder raised their masts and, running before the wind – which fortunately for them veered round in the nick of time to help their escape – they made their way back to the Holy Isle. The Roman consul sailed to Lilybaeum to join the army and there busied himself with disposing of the men and the ships he had captured; this was a large undertaking as the Romans had taken nearly 10,000 prisoners in the battle.

62. When they learned of this unexpected defeat, the Carthaginians, so far as resolution and the will to conquer were concerned, were still ready to fight on, but when it came to calculating their resources, they found themselves in an impasse. First of all, the enemy had now gained control of the sea, which made it impossible for them to supply their own troops in Sicily; secondly, if they were to abandon and as it were betray these forces, they would be left without either the men or the leaders to continue the war. Accordingly they immediately sent a message to Barca giving him full powers to handle the situation, whereupon Hamilcar acted like the good and prudent commander that he was. So long as there had been some reasonable chance of success, he had left no stratagem untried, however bold or dangerous it might seem, and if ever there was a general who tested every prospect of victory to the full, it was he. But when Fortune had turned against him and he was left with no other possibility of saving the troops under his command, he showed his good sense and practical capacity in yielding to the inevitable and sending a delegation to negotiate for peace; for it is after all the duty of a commander to know when he is beaten, no less than when he is victorious. Lutatius for his part readily agreed to negotiate, for he understood that the Romans were by this time worn out and exhausted by the war, and so he succeeded in putting an end to the hostilities by a treaty which was expressed in some such terms as the following:

‘There shall be friendship between the Carthaginians and the Romans on the following terms, provided that they are ratified by the Roman people. The Carthaginians shall evacuate the whole of Sicily; they shall not make war upon Hiero, nor bear arms against the Syracusans nor their allies. The Carthaginians shall give up to the Romans all prisoners without ransom. The Carthaginians shall pay to the Romans 2,200 Euboean talents of silver over a period of twenty years.’

63. However, when these terms were sent to Rome, the people did not accept them, but dispatched ten commissioners to examine the whole question. On their arrival they made no important changes in the terms, but introduced a few minor alterations which imposed more severe conditions on the Carthaginians. They reduced, for example, the time allowed for the payment of the

indemnity to ten years, added 1,000 talents to the total, and demanded that the Carthaginians should evacuate all the islands lying between Sicily and Italy.

So ended the war between the Romans and the Carthaginians, and such were the conditions upon which peace was concluded. It had lasted uninterruptedly for twenty-four years, and is the longest, the most continuous and the greatest war of which we have knowledge. Apart from all the other battles fought and preparations made which I have described in the earlier chapters of my history, there were two naval actions in which on the one occasion more than 500 quinqueremes took part, and on the other nearly 700.<sup>1</sup> In the course of this war, if we include those vessels destroyed by shipwreck, the Romans lost some 700 quinqueremes and the Carthaginians 500. Those who are impressed by the great sea battles of an Antigonus, a Ptolemy or a Demetrius<sup>2</sup> would doubtless be amazed, if they were to read the account of this war, at the vast scale of the operations which it involved. Again, if we consider the size of these quinqueremes compared with that of the triremes with which the Persians fought against the Greeks, and the Athenians and Spartans against each other, we shall find that never before in the history of the world have two such immense forces been ranged against one another at sea. These facts confirm the proposition which I put forward at the beginning of my history, namely that the supremacy of the Romans did not come about, as certain Greek writers have supposed, either by chance or without the victors knowing what they were doing. On the contrary, since the Romans deliberately chose to school themselves in such great enterprises, it is quite natural that they should not only have boldly embarked upon their pursuit of universal dominion, but that they should actually have achieved their purpose.

64. Why is it then, some of my readers may wonder, since the Romans are now the masters of the world and wield far more power than they did in the past, that they can no longer in our time man so many ships or put to sea with such large fleets? Those who

1. In the battles at C. Hermaea and Ecnomus respectively.

2. These were among the most prominent of the Macedonian commanders who inherited the empire of Alexander the Great, and fought to carve out Hellenistic kingdoms for themselves.

## BOOK I

are perplexed by this apparent contradiction will be able to understand the reason clearly when we come to describe Rome's political institutions. This subject forms a most important part of my work: it must not be treated cursorily by the writer, and it demands the full attention of the reader. It provides a noble spectacle, and yet one which until now has remained quite unfamiliar, thanks to the incompetence of the writers who have attempted the subject, some of whom have failed for lack of knowledge and others by giving a confused and quite useless account of it. As for the war of which we have just been speaking, it will be found, I believe, that so far as their scope of action was concerned, the two states were evenly matched in the enterprises they undertook, the lofty spirit which they displayed in pursuing them, and above all in their ambition to gain the upper hand. In respect of individual courage the Romans were far superior, but the general who must be acknowledged as the greatest on either side, both in daring and in genius, was Hamilcar, surnamed Barca. He was in fact the father of that Hannibal who later made war on the Romans.