ABSTRACT

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BATTLE OF THE METAURUS

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The Rise of Rome to world dominance is attributed to a myriad of circumstances, some less obvious because of their sublety, and others more easily interpreted and universally acknowledged because of their general acceptance by historians as having been significant to world history.

A paper concentrating on the political and social institutions of the Roman State, reinforced by a scientific examination of the economic atmosphere in which Rome developed, would perhaps present a more convincing analysis of the reasons behind Rome's unprecedented ascendancy to world leadership than would a work that is dependent upon the interpretation of ancient sources for its validity. While the efficacy of these factors, as presented by the former, cannot be denied, the singular nature of armed conflicts, as narrated by the latter, has drawn me irresistibly to the examination of the physical encounters between two of the great states of antiquity.

I have chosen to expound upon a theme proposed by Sir Edward Creasy nearly a century and a half ago. Creasy contended that the Battle of the Metaurus River in 207 B.C. was the decisive

event in the second Punic War. I will attempt to illustrate the historical superfluity of the battle by describing the events leading up to it, and giving a disposition of the relative strengths of the antagonists.

I seek not so much to disparage the work of Creasy, whom history has shown to be an extremely entertaining popularizer, but rather to put the battle in its proper perspective. By studying the events preceding the Metaurus, I hope to prove that the result of the second Punic War was decided long before this battle, which Creasy has so conclusively declared to be decisive. The inequality of the resources at the disposal of Rome and Carthage was to be the determinant in the war and the outcome of one battle did not dictate the course that history would take in the centuries to follow.

It is not my purpose to prove that the outcome of the Punic Wars was predetermined, although if I succeed in my presentation of the facts, that may be the logical conclusion. By questioning the decisiveness of the battle, I seek to reveal certain critical aspects of the war that Creasy omitted in his thesis. Roman advantages, such as manpower, the relatively uncontested control of the seas, and the ability to manipulate their Italian allies while maintaining partial control of the Iberian peninsula, made their defeat a virtual impossibility, certainly not dependent upon the result of one battle as late in the war as 207 B.C.

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CHAPTER I

In 1851 Edward Shepard Creasy authored a book entitled The Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World, in which he examined certain military conflicts up to 1815 A.D. and the single decisive event which, according to Creasy, determined their outcome. Creasy served on the faculty of London University from 1840 as a professor of modern and ancient history, and was also an active member of the Bar until 1860. He was an assistant judge of the Westminster Sessions Court, previous to being appointed Chief Justice of Ceylon and knighted. He served in Ceylon for a decade. His enduring fame and popularity is attributed to his literary accomplishments, along with his distinguished career in public service. He wrote voluminously, primarily on historical subjects, but the one work that has earned him lasting fame and has become one of the most often read histories of military engagements is his Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World.[1]

In this instance Creasy utilized criteria suggested by Henry Hallam, an 18th century English Historian, to decide both the battle to be analyzed and the reasons for its subsequent inclusion in his book. Hallam, for instance, commented upon the Battle of Tours by saying, "It may justly be reckoned among those few battles of which a contrary event would have essentially varied the drama of the world

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[1]E.S. Creasy, Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World (From Marathon to Waterloo). New York: American Book Exchange, 1887.

in all its subsequent scenes."[2] Creasy was to include the Battle of Tours in his original fifteen decisive battles, and among his other battles was the Metaurus.[3]

The appeal that armed conflicts held for Creasy is found in his introduction: "There is undeniable greatness in the disciplined courage in the lover of honor, which makes the combatants confront agony and destruction."[4] Creasy added his own definition to that of Hallam's when he wrote:

> There are some battles also which claim our attention independently of the moral worth of the combatants, on account of their enduring importance and by reason of the practical influence on our own social and political condition, which we can trace up to the results of those engagements. They have for us an abiding and actual interest, both while we investigate the chain of causes, and effects, by which they have helped to make us what we are, and also while we speculate on what we probably should have been, if any of those battles had come to a different termination.[5]

Further justification for a battle's significance is left to the readers themselves and is open to a broad degree of personal interpretation.

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[2] Ibid. Preface, iv.

[3] Ibid. Table of Contents. Creasy included in his original fifteen battles the Battles of Marathon 490 B.C., Syracuse 413 B.C., Arbella 331 B.C., Metaurus 207 B.C., the Tuetorburgh Wald 9 A.D., Chalons 451 A.D., Tours 732 A.D., Hastings 1066 A.D., Orleans 1429 A.D., the Defeat of the Spanish Armada 1588 A.D., Blenheim 1704 A.D., Poltova 1709 A.D., Saratoga 1777 A.D., Valmy 1792 A.D., and Waterloo 1815 A.D. Later additions were made by other historians who sought to comply with the standards Creasy set for decisiveness.

[4] Ibid. Introduction, iii.

[5] Ibid. iv.

The impulse to choose the most spectacular battles or those made significant by the number of casualties suffered, was resisted by Creasy in a number of instances (i.e. Battle of Tours as opposed to the numbers involved in the conflicts between the Asiatic rulers). It is the effect of the battle on overall historical development that determines how it must be judged.

It must be remembered that to label a battle as decisive after a lapse of a decade, as Polybius would have done had he been inclined to view the Metaurus as such, is quite different from such a judgement rendered 2,058 years after the battle was fought. Relative to the positions one assumes, one is either benefited or hindered by the vast amount of historical knowledge available to him that was unavailable to his earliest predecessors.

The bulk of available information about the Metaurus came from the Greek historian Polybius, who himself was not a contemporary of the Second Punic War, however. He was born in Mezalopolis, about 204 B.C. and came to Rome after the defeat of Macedonia in 168 B.C. as a prisoner. The Latin historian Livy, or Titus Livius was active a century later than Polybius (59 B.C. to 17 A.D.) and utilized the histories of Polybius as his primary source. Plutarch, another Greek, was born in Chaeoronea in the first century A.D. and wrote almost a century after Livy. The other sources are derivatives of Polybius and are marginal at best.[6]

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[6]Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. XI, 1970 edition. In addition to Polybius, Plutarch, and Livy, I also utilized Appian, a 2nd Century A.D. Greek Historian who later became a Roman citizen and Dio's Roman History with an English translation by Ernest Cary, Ph.D. London: William Heimen, New York: MacMillan Co. Dio was born in 150 A.D. and died in 235 A.D. He was a Roman administrator and historian.

The incontestable data about the Metaurus is as follows: In the spring of 207 B.C., Hasdrubal,[7] brother of Hannibal, after extricating himself from the Roman forces in Spain, traversed the Alps and appeared in Northern Italy. He had previously commanded the Carthaginian armies in Spain with sporadic success and varying fortune. In 209 B.C. the Punic fortress of New Carthage was captured by Publius Cornelius Scipio, and Hasdrubal, apparently despairing of the situation in Spain, escaped Scipio's pursuit and succeeded in crossing over the Pyrenees into Gaul in 208 B.C. Hasdrubal then continued his march over the Alps. The journey must have been considerably less hazardous than that of his brother's due to the latter's success in Italy and his previous contracts with the mountain tribes. Hasdrubal then advanced upon Italy with an army that had gathered strength, as opposed to that of his brother's, that had suffered losses due to the crossing. His defeat at the hands of Nero and Livius will be described in detail later in the narrative.

Creasy does not include in his essays details of the war from 217 B.C. to 207 B.C., aside from assigning particular significance to Hannibal's spectacular victories at Lake Trasimene in 217 B.C. and Cannae in 215 B.C. This was probably done to emphasize the seriousness of the war and the worthiness of Hannibal's armies. Having established this, Creasy apparently felt that the rest of his thesis would follow to what was, to him, its logical conclusion, that being the decisiveness of the Battle of Metaurus. Creasy did not compare

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[7] Appian's Roman History, p. 145. English translation by Horace White, Leob Classical Library. Hasdrubal was a common Phoenician name. The Hasdrubal I refer to here, is Hasdrubal Barca, son of Hamilcar and brother of Hannibal.

Hasdrubal to Hannibal. Had he done so, the dissimilarities of the two brothers would have detracted from the seriousness of the challenge presented Hasdrubal.

The leadership qualities of Carthaginian commanders had always been suspect. With the exception of Xanthippus,[8] who was a Greek, the only Carthaginian commanders to merit the plaudits of the ancient sources were Hamilcar,[9] in the first Punic War and his son Hannibal in the second. The former was to prevent the fall of Carthage during the revolt of the mercenaries following the first Punic War, and the latter was to prolong Carthage's place of importance in the world arena. In evaluating the Metaurus, Creasy uses the ideas of Thomas Arnold[10] to support his thesis promoting the immediacy of the circumstances surrounding the battle itself. Arnold, perhaps inadvertently, best summarized the proportions that the Punic Wars assumed when he wrote, "Twice has there been witnessed the struggle of the highest individual genius against the resources and institutions of a great nation, and in both cases the nation has been victorious."[11]

Creasy draws parallels between Napoleon and Hannibal to rein-

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[8]Polybius, The Histories. English translation by W.R. Paton. Vol. II, Book I, p. 89. Xanthippus was a Spartan mercenary in the service of Carthage early in the first Punic War. He was responsible for the defeat and capture of the Roman Commander, Regulus.

[9]Ibid. Book II, p. 25.

[10]Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. XL, 1970 Edition. Thomas Arnold (1795-1842) Headmaster and Reformer of Rugby School. Father, Matthew Arnold.

[11]E.S. Creasy, Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World. p. 80. Also found in the writing of Thomas Arnold, Vol. III, p. 82.

force Arnold's statement. The parallels are not entirely unfounded, but a closer look will reveal incontestable differences between the forces available to the two men. Napoleon had at his command the most formidable military machine yet assembled.[12] His army was comprised primarily of French Nationals embued with the spirit fostered by the revolution and commanded by some of the most worthy generals that France would ever produce. Hannibal's forces were comprised of a conglomeration of Spaniards, Numidians, Latin exiles, Italian non-confederates, and Gallic tribesmen, all speaking different languages and owing no allegiance to a cause other than their own personal gratification through the spoils of war.

Arnold's comments on the importance of the Metaurus closely resemble those of Creasy. He writes:

> Scipio at Zama trampled in the dust the power of Carthage, but that power had been irreparably shattered on another field, where neither Scipio nor Hannibal commanded. When the Metaurus witnessed the defeat and death of Hasdrubal, it witnessed the ruin of the scheme by which alone Carthage could hope to organize decisive success--the scheme of enveloping Rome at once from the north and south of Italy by two chosen armies led by the sons of Hamilcar.[13]

From this statement, supported by his own findings, Creasy draws the following conclusion: "That battle was the determining crisis of the contest, not merely between Rome and Carthage, but between the two great families of the world, which then made Italy the arena of their renewed contest for pre-eminence."[14]

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[12]Herbert Butterfield, Napoleon. P. 34. Collier Books, New York, 1968.

[13]E.S. Creasy, Fifteen Decisive Battles, p. 81.

[14]Ibid.

Creasy's contentions are made unmistakably clear by the previous statement. The two great families that he mentions are the Indo-European and the Semitic, and the battle he was referring to was that of the Metaurus River in 207 B.C. The actual result of the battle can be adduced from the almost identical accounts of the ancient historians who recorded it. The battle's significance is relative, however, to the judgements of the later historians, and whether or not it was decisive should only be determined after a close analysis of the situation preceding and following its occurrence.

Creasy sees the Metaurus as having not only determined the strife between Rome and Carthage, but having insured Rome two centuries more of almost unchanged conquest. The diffusion of power that resulted after Alexander the Great's death enabled the Western Mediterranean states to develop in a quasi vacuum. The defeat of Alcibiades removed the last serious threat to the Greek colonies in Italy and Sicily.[15] Consequently, the political development of the western Mediterranean states was to progress independently of the older eastern states. After the defeat of Hannibal, the great military republic of the ancient world would meet in her career of conquests no other serious competitor.

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[15] Cambridge Ancient History, Volume VIII. Page 93 (Rome and the Mediterranean) 218 to 133 B.C. Alcibiades' defeat at Syracuse was also considered by Creasy to be a battle that affected the course of history and consequently, he was to include it among his fifteen decisive battles.

CHAPTER II

Although Creasy may have overstated the importance of the Battle of the Metaurus, the Punic Wars themselves were very significant to the progress of history. The French historian Michelet understood this when he wrote:

> It is not without reason that so universal and vivid a remembrance of the Punic Wars has dwelt in the memories of men. They formed no mere struggle to determine the lot of two cities or two empires; but it was strife, on the event of which depended the fate of two races of mankind, whether the dominion of the world should belong to the Indo-Germanic or to the Semitic family of nations. Bear in mind that the first of these comprises, beside the Indians and the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Germans. In the other are ranked the Jews and the Arabs, the Phoenicians and the Carthaginians. On the one side is the genius of heroism of art, and legislation; on the other is the spirit of industry, of commerce, and navigation. The two opposite races have everywhere come into contact, everywhere into hostility.[16]

As with most generalizations, upon close examination, Michelet's attempt to categorize the psychological tendencies of the two families could be questioned in several respects. Historians shun concepts such as national characteristics because of the racial implications attached to such methodology in the past century. By generalizing the French as lovers, the Germans as followers and militants, and the Jews as traders and merchants, bigots are afforded convenient labels. Such lapses wittingly or not have even seeped into the writing of History. John Bury, a former Regius Professor

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[16]E.S. Creasy, Fifteen Decisive Battles, p. 81.

of History and Fellow of King's College in the University of Cambridge, has himself fallen victim to such pitfalls. In his History of Greece he exhibits a tendency that is unbecoming to a legitimate historian. In his attempts to describe the Phoenician intercourse with Greece he writes:

> They were the traders of the city-states of Sidon and Tyre on the Syrian Coast, men of that Semitic stock to which Jew, Arab and Assyrian alike belonged. These coast-landers, born merchants like the Jews, seem to have migrated to the shores of the Mediterranean from an older home on the shores of the Red Sea.[17]

While different values did exist among different people, no legitimate historians today would ascribe instinctive propensities to such people.

Thus Carthage may have been the last bastion of purely Semitic institutions but it was hardly the enemy of civilization that it has been painted. Ancient Greek and Roman sources depicted the Carthaginians as "perfidious, cruel and overwheening."[18] Plutarch records them as being a people "full of bitterness and surely, submissive to rulers, tyrannical to those they rule, abject in fear, fierce when provoked, unshakeable in resolve, and so strict as to dislike all humor and kindness."[19] It must be remembered that the history of the Carthaginians

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[17] J.B. Bury, "A History of Greece (To the Death of Alexander the Great)" London, MacMillan and Company Ltd. St. Martin Press 1956, p. 77.

[18] B.H. Warmington, History of Carthage. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, p. 20.

[19] The Phoenicians, "Sea Lords of Antiquity". National Geographic, Aug. 1974, Vol. 146 #2.

was written by their national enemies, and the bulk of that history concerns events that transpired during the Punic Wars. To accept this literally would be to ignore the effect that national prejudices would have in disturbing the facts to justify actions that might adversely affect the national consciousness.

That history is always written by the victors is an established shortcoming that must be overcome by the historians in his search to find out where the truth lies. Failing this he must sift the probable from the improbable. Interpreting a history of the Punic wars is doubly troublesome. First, data available to the ancient sources is suspect at best. Secondly, the distortions which may have resulted from unreliable information would have been considerable, disregarding the national affinities of the narrator.

That the first Punic War was decided in favor of Rome is irrefutable. Michelet acknowledges the effect of Carthage's defeat in the first and second wars as he continued his discourse.

> The Greek supplants the Phoenician in all his factories, all his companies in the East. Soon will the Roman come, and do likewise in the West. Alexander did far more against Tyre than Salmanasar or Nebuchadnessar had done. Not content with crushing her, he took care that she should never revive; for he founded Alexandria as her substitute, and changed forever the track of commerce of the world. There remained Carthage--the great Carthage, and her mighty empire--mighty in a far different degree than Phoenicia had been. Rome annihilated it. Then occurred that which had no parallel in history--an entire civilization perished at one blow--vanished, like a falling star. The Periplus of Hanno, a few coins, a score of lines in Plautus, and lo, all that remains of the Carthaginian world.[20]

The most telling result of Rome's victory in the first Punic War, however, was not her acquisition of Sardinia or bases on Sicily.

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[20]Creasy, p. 81.

Rather, it was the irreparable destruction of Carthaginian seapower. The Punic navy was so decimated at Mylae, Economus and the Aegetas Islands, that this arm, which was once the strongest in the world, was to be of little or no consequence in the second Punic War.[21] The revolt of the mercenaries in 238 B.C. had threatened the very existence of Carthage.[22] Hamilcar Barca was successful in quelling the revolt, but chose to establish a new empire in Spain, as opposed to re-establishing Carthage's position as the world's foremost maritime power operating from Africa.[23] The revolt also ruptured what little harmony existed between Carthage and the Numidian tribes of the interior. This was to have far reaching consequences which proved to be disastrous in the second Punic War.

Polybius realized the importance the war would have as early as the second century B.C. He writes:

> For it was owing to their defeat of the Carthaginians in the Hannibalic War that the Romans, feeling the chief and most essential step in their schemes of universal aggression had now been taken, were first emboldened to reach out their hands to grasp the rest and to cross with an army to Greece and the continent of Asia.[24]

Carthaginian aspirations were much more limited, due to their inability

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[21]J.H. Thiel, History of Roman Sea Power Before the Second Punic War. Amsterdam North-Holland Publishing Co. 1954. p. 68-69, 78-79.

[22]Polybius, The Histories. English Translation, W.R. Paton, Vol. I Cambridge Mass Harvard University Press William Heinman Ltd, p. 227.

[23]Ibid. Vol. II, p. 27.

[24]Ibid. Vol. I, p. 9.

to maintain a large land army and fleet simultaneously, as illustrated in the first Punic War. Hannibal sought not to destroy Rome, which he recognized as a task even beyond his capabilities, but simply to re-establish the balance of power in the Mediterranean. To do this he had to alienate Rome from its allies by destroying the latter's confidence in Rome's ability to police the Italian peninsula. Hannibal attempted to destroy the Roman land forces by inflicting a series of crushing defeats aimed at reducing Roman manpower and eventually dismembering the Latin League.[25] That he almost succeeded in doing this is discernable from a study of the events in Italy from 218 B.C. to 214 B.C.

Hannibal's unprecedented crossing of the Alps took fifteen days. The hardships and deprivations his army was to suffer on this march resulted in the loss of over one-half of the entire force. As was previously mentioned, the Carthaginian army was composed of multi-national and multi-lingual mercenaries, recruited from Africa, Spain, and Celtiberia. Polybius reports that he took the same passage over the Alps that Hannibal did in the spring of 218 B.C.[26]

This stroke of military genius came more out of necessity than plan. An amphibious invasion of Italy would undoubtedly have been executed at a much lower cost in men and supplies.

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[25] Ibid, Vol. II, p. 250-295.

[26] Sir Gavin DeBeer. Alps and Elephants, Hannibal's March London, Geoffre Bles, 1955. p. 9. Polybius was definite in describing the places and routes that he had seen and taken, while in Italy. His description of the route taken by Hannibal can be found in his Histories. Vol. II, p. 141.

The Tyrrhenian Sea, however, had become literally a Roman lake. There is no record of Carthage's inclination to supply Hannibal with the ships necessary to undertake such a project. This inability or unwillingness, on the part of Carthage, to support Hannibal at this early stage, indicates the uncertain approach that Carthage brought to the war. The Carthaginian suffetes vacillated on critical issues at times when immediate action was required to propitiate their cause.[27] The opposition party, led by Hanno, continued to condemn the war even after the great victory at Trasimene.[28] It was this lack of resolve on the part of the mother city that was to have a disastrous effect on Hannibal's campaign in Italy. The general spirit of the senate and people of Rome stood in direct contrast to that of Carthage. Polybius wrote of the Romans, "For the Romans, both in public and private, are most to be feared when they stand in real danger."[29] It was this vastly different national attitude that proved to be the deciding factor in the first Punic War and would also enable Rome to endure defeats which would have caused less resolute nations to sue for peace in the second war.

Hannibal staked all on this invasion. As Polybius wrote: "For as regards the future, he did not trouble himself about the pack animals, upon reaching the enemy country. He would, if defeated, have

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[27]Polybius, Histories. p. 130-135.

[28]Heinrich Graetz, Histories of the Jews, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia 5717-1956 Vol. II, p. 57.

[29]Polybius, Vol. II, p. 187.

no need of provision."[30] A further reason, other than necessity, for his crossing the Alps, was his hope of causing an insurrection among the Gallic tribes of Cisalpine Gaul.[31] By doing this he also sought to enlist new recruits in his badly depleted army.

The superiority of Hannibal's tactics, along with the combative experience gained by his mercenaries in Spain, prior to their crossing the Alps, enabled them to win relatively easy victories at the Ticinius and Trebia Rivers.[32] At this time (early winter of 217 B.C.), the atmosphere in Rome was one of uncertainty due to the distorted reports of the battles. The defeated commanders of Roman legions grossly exaggerated the results of the two battles, in order to make it appear that only inconclusive, minor engagements had taken place, and that the total defeat of the enemy was imminent.[33] Once the news of the true proportions of the defeat suffered reached Rome, the attitude changed from one of indifference to immediate dread. The consular elections proceeded as usual, however, and the new consuls elected were Gnaeus Servilius and Gauis Flaminus.

Even at this early stage, with Carthage greatly superior, by having seized the initiative, Rome was still able to send an army to Spain and to seriously contemplate sending Longus to Carthage with

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[30] Ibid, p. 193.

[31] Ibid, p. 161-165, with particular reference to p. 163.

[32] Ibid, p. 179-185.

[33] Ibid, p. 185.

a fleet to conclude the war in Africa.[34] Thus, it was evident at this stage that Rome was able to field both armies, in Italy and abroad, while maintaining naval superiority in the Mediterranean.

While the Romans were experiencing difficulties in Italy in the winter of 217 B.C., the pro-consul Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio had arrived in Spain with combined naval and land forces. It was apparent that Rome was not contemplating fighting a defensive war.[35]

Spain, the Punic stronghold in Europe, was to be the scene of numerous engagements until Scipio's defeat of Hasdrubal, son of Gisgo, at Ilipa in 206 B.C. The Roman presence in Spain caused Carthage to maintain garrisons of men, who would have otherwise been employed for service in Italy. Hasdrubal (Barca), as early as 216 B.C., received orders to march from Spain to Italy.[36] He wrote back to Carthage, protesting such a move, declaring that it was only his presence in Spain that prevented the Iberian peninsula from going over to Rome. He proceeded to request that additional troops be sent to Spain. However, his request was apparently ignored, for Livy records him as having been defeated in a great battle in Spain, thus preventing his march to Italy. (It occurred nine years later.)[37]

The Romans were naturally more concerned with the threat presented by Hannibal, who continued to march through Northern Italy

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[34]Polybius, Vol. II, p. 93. Also found in Livy, The War with Hannibal, Books XXI-XXX translated by Aubrey deSelincourt Penquin Classics, 1965.

[35]Livy, p. 86.

[36]Ibid, p. 201.

[37]Ibid.

relatively unmolested. The significance that the presence of the legions in Spain was to have on the outcome of the war was not immediately apparent. The new consuls, Flaminus and Servilus, had begun their consulship in March of 217 B.C. Flaminus was to command the legions in the North and Servilus in the South. Their strategy was to catch Hannibal between their two armies and destroy him at one fell swoop. The genius of Hannibal was not to be denied, however, and he surprised Flaminus at Lake Trasimene and almost completely annihilated his legions.[38] The death of the consul caused as much consternation in Rome as the loss of fifteen thousand men. (This was the first time a consul was killed since the Gallic Wars.) The Senate's reaction to this defeat was to appoint Fabius Maximus as dictator and delegate to him emergency powers to deal with the situation.

Hannibal, hoping to divest Rome of its Italian allies, marched through Umbria to Spoletum, where he suffered the first noticeable setback in a previously irresistible march. While attempting an assault upon the town, he was repulsed with heavy losses. Livy wrote: "A reverse which, judged by the strength of one small settlement he failed to take, gave him some idea of what the power and resources of Rome itself might be."[39-40]

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[38] Ibid, p. 101.

[39] Ibid, p. 103.

[40] To conduct a successful siege as Alexander did at Tyre a large number of men had to be employed at various positions along the wall simultaneously. By diverting the defenders' attention with feigned attacks at various points along the wall and amassing a large number of men for a concentrated assault at one point the wall could be scaled. Hannibal did not have the men to attempt such a project. After Spoletum he was reluctant even to attempt a siege and sought to gain entry into towns through diplomacy.

The appointment of Fabius as dictator came at a time when Rome was most vulnerable to internal and external pressures, which if exerted at a critical point, might have proven too great for even such a well-organized and administered state as Rome. Fabius instituted a "scorched earth" policy intending to deprive Hannibal of his supplies.[41] He was also aware that Rome could ill-afford another defeat at a time when national morale was so low. He, therefore, contented himself with simply shadowing Hannibal's army, while avoiding a major clash.

> He steadily refused to stake all on a general engagement, but at the same time minor skirmishes, of no great moment, on favorable ground, and with a safe refuge within reach, gradually accustomed his men, shaken as they were by their previous defeats, at last to feel fewer doubts about either their fighting spirit or their luck.[42]

At this time, Hannibal's attempts at destroying Roman manpower had not been too successful. Fabius was able to raise fresh legions to serve in Servilus' army and also to move the inhabitants of unfortified towns into towns defended by Roman troops or those of her allies. Fabius' tactics of avoiding conflict until an opportune moment presented itself, almost bore immediate fruit when Hannibal was trapped in Casilinum between the dictator's army and that of Minicuis, his master of horse. Hannibal was forced to use a ruse to escape with this army intact.[43]

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[41]Livy, p. 107.

[42]Ibid, p. 107-108.

[43]Ibid, p. 113, also found in Plutarch, The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, translated by John Dryden and revised by Arthur Hugh Clough. New York: The Modern Library. First Publ. 1864, p. 217.

Once the memory of the defeat of Lake Trasimene had dimmed, there arose rumblings of discontent in Rome against Fabius' defensive policies. The Plebeians felt that the Roman nobility had wanted war for years and were deliberately prolonging it by refusing to engage the enemy in a conclusive battle. The election of Gauis Terentus Varro as the Plebeian consul signified the institution of a new aggressive policy. The delayed effect of Fabius' tactics had begun to cause discord in Hannibal's army.

> The troops had begun by grumbling; then had come loud and open complaints over arrears of pay, insufficient food, and finally actual starvation; rumor spread that the mercenaries, especially the Spanish mercenaries, had planned to go over to the Romans and it is said that even Hannibal himself had sometimes debated the wisdom of retiring into Gaul, leaving his infantry behind and making a mad dash with his cavalry.[44]

This aggressive policy of Varro led him to confront Hannibal at Cannae in 216 B.C. Results of that confrontation have been recorded by military analysts as one of the clearest examples of a smaller force defeating a larger force by the tactic of double envelopment.[45]

At a single stroke Hannibal had re-established his dominance over the Italian peninsula. He was also well on his way to accomplishing three of his previously mentioned objectives: (1) the decimation of Roman manpower (Polybius gives the number of Roman dead to be seventy thousand), (2) the alienation of Rome from her Italian allies, and (3) money enough to pay the arrearage and to insure that the war could be financed for some time to come. The seriousness of the defeat can be determined from the actions of Rome's allies

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[44]Livy, p. 143.

[45]Polybius, Vol. II, p. 287-289.

immediately following it: "Before that fatal day their loyalty had remained unshaken; now it began to waiver for the simple reason that they despaired of the survival of Roman power."[46]

Hannibal had won the following people over to the Carthaginian cause: Atellani, Calantini, Hurpini, some of the Apulians, all the Samnites except the Fentri, the Brutti, the Lucaninas, the Uzentini, and nearly all the Greek settlements on the coast, namely Tarentum, Metapontin, Croton, and Locii, and all the Gauls on the Italian side of the Alps.

The truly significant aspect illustrated by this disaster was not the military consequences it was to have. The resolution of the senate and the people of Rome was never more tenaciously displayed than when they were confronted with the true dimensions of this defeat.

> But neither the defeats they had suffered, nor the subsequent defection of all these allied peoples, moved the Romans ever to breath a word about peace, either before Varro's arrival in Rome, or when his presence in the city had brought home to them afresh the fearful calamity which had befallen them.[47]

Whatever hope Hannibal had of Rome sueing for peace was never realized. Cannae was unquestionally the high water mark of Carthaginian success in Italy. The following years saw the fortunes of both sides fluctuate. What was most apparent now was Rome's refusal to negotiate under any circumstances, while an enemy force was in Italy. There was still opposition in Carthage even after the

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[46]Livy, p. 165.

[47]Ibid.

battle of Cannae.[48] Reinforcements commenced in a slow and dilatory manner, which further illustrated the Carthaginians' unwillingness to make personal sacrifices. It was at this time that Hasdrubal received his orders to march from Spain to Italy. The lack of manpower, however, precluded his doing this, and he was defeated in Spain, as was previously mentioned.

By 215 B.C. Rome had brought almost all the Spanish tribes back to her allegiance.[49] The alliance with Syracuse was also renewed following the assasination of Hiero's son, Hieronymus. Hannibal's attempt to unite with Phillip of Macedon failed when Phillip's envoys were intercepted by the Roman navy in the Adriatic.

Two years after the battle of Cannae, Rome was able to place in the field eighteen legions, a further example of the inexhaustible manpower at its disposal.[50-51] The attitude of the Roman people was in direct contrast to that of the Carthaginians, who preferred to let foreign soldiers fight their battles. Livy writes, "After 214 B.C., no cavalryman or centurian accepted pay, and if any did, he

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[48] Ibid, p. 181.

[49] Ibid, p. 229.

[50] Guglielmo Ferrero Corrado Barbagallo, A Short History of Rome ("from the Foundation of the City to the Death of Julius Ceasar 754 B.C. - 44 B.C.") Capricorn Books, New York: 1964. p. 162-163.

[51] Edward Gibbon stated that there were 250,000 citizens of age to bear arms at the start of the war. Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Vol. 2. New York: Washington Square Press, 1972, p. 545.

was contemptuously called a mercenary."[51]

In 213 B.C. Carthage's fortunes continued to wane when Syphax, a Numidian prince, turned against Carthage and admitted a Roman military advisor to train Numidian forces in Africa.[52] By 212 B.C. Livy recorded that Rome had twenty-three legions, more than at any other time previous to Cannae.[53] There are no exact figures as to the number of troops that Hannibal had in service at this time. They most certainly could not have exceeded forty thousand, which was roughly the number he had commanded at Cannae, as there was no record of his receiving any further support directly from Carthage after 215 B.C. He did gain the services of most of the Campanian cities, when Capua, the leading city, declared for him after the Battle of Cannae. The aid he received from Rome's ex-allies was negligible. The terms of peace that Hannibal concluded with them were, by necessity, benevolent:

> Firstly, no Carthaginian military or civil officer should have jurisdiction over any Campanian in the army or in any other capacity against his will. Secondly, that Capua should have her own magistrates. Thirdly, that Hannibal should hand over to the Campanian three hundred selected Roman prisoners, for whom they would exchange the Campanian cavalryman serving in Sicily.[54]

The generosity of such terms was due to the fact that Hannibal had not the men necessary to garrison the towns that declared for him, so he had to rely on the faithfulness of a people who were for-

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[51]Livy, p. 253.

[52]Ibid, p. 289-290.

[53]Polybius, p. 265. Vol. II. Polybius had recorded that the Roman legion was comprised of 4,000 feet and 300 horses.

[54]Livy, p. 173.

merly his enemies and who would once again turn against him. More precisely, Hannibal controlled only the ground upon which his army stood. The Roman navy, under the command of Titus Octacilius, conducted raids off the coast of Africa in sight of Carthage's sister-city, Utica. They remained uncontested masters of the sea throughout the Second Punic War.

In Spain the situation had now become quite different. The Romans hitherto had been content with preventing Hasdrubal from going to Italy;[55] now ultimate victory was in Rome's grasp. Although Livy's narration has both Scipio's suffering defeat and death in Spain in 212 B.C., he quickly adds that Lucius Marcius rallied the Roman forces and inflicted a similarly crushing defeat on the Punic forces.[56]

By 211 Rome had begun to regain military equality in Italy itself. Hannibal had been denied the opportunity of engineering another great victory, which he so badly needed. Rome recaptured Capua through a siege which Hannibal was unable to lift. Hannibal feigned an attack on Rome in hopes that the consuls would transfer their forces from Capua once they saw that Rome was in peril.[57] The consuls were aware, however, that no real threat to Rome existed, as Hannibal had neither the men, nor the siege machinery necessary to attempt such an ambitious project.

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[55] Ibid, p. 339.

[56] Ibid, p. 344-345.

[57] Ibid, p. 364.

In 210 B.C. the pro-consul, Laevinus, addressed the senate and advised them to remove the legions from Greece, as they were no longer needed there.[58] Hannibal suffered an irreparable loss in Salapia when his garrison of Numidian cavalry was destroyed by treachery. Livy observed, "Never after this was he superior to the Romans in cavalry, the arm in which by far his greatest strength had lain."[59]

Carthaginian forces in Spain suffered irretrievable damages with the fall of their capital, New Carthage. The Spanish tribes were aware of Hasdrubal's inability to cope with the Roman expeditionary force, led by Publius Cornelius Scipio, and more tribes openly declared for Rome.[60] Hasdrubal, in an attempt to re-establish his dominance over Spanish tribes in Southern Spain, confronted Scipio at Baecula.[61] His army was thrown into a panic, however, and was subsequently defeated. Spain was now irreclaimably lost to Carthage. It was after this battle that Hasdrubal decided to cross the Alps and attempt a juncture with his brother in Italy.

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[58] Ibid, p. 392.

[59] Ibid, p. 404-405.

[60] Ibid, p. 416-417.

[61] Ibid, p. 455.

CHAPTER III

It was understandable that Hasdrubal's entry into Italy should have incited a panic in Rome. The memory of Hannibal's invasion had not yet been erased, but the real threat presented by Hasdrubal's forces was greatly exaggerated. Livy summed up the true situation when he wrote: "Fear, in short, looked always on the darker side and everyone believed the enemy's strength to be greater and their own less than in fact they were."[62] Rome was never better prepared militarily. Total military strength at the time of the Metaurus was twenty-five legions, fifteen of which were in Italy. One defended Capua and two were needed for the defense of Rome itself, leaving twelve legions divided into six armies, of which six legions were given to the northern force, under the command of the consul, Marcus Livius, and six to Nero in the south.

Hannibal occupied the extreme south of Italy where he was awaiting news from his brother. He had been campaigning in the peninsula for more than a decade and his army at that time could not have numbered much over thirty thousand. As a result he could not contemplate assuming the offensive against Nero until he knew which road Hasdrubal would take to join him.

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[62]Livy, p. 487.

A premature advance on Hannibal's part would have left his southern allies at the mercy of the Romans near Tarentum. In spite of this, Hannibal did move northward slowly in an attempt to reduce the distance between the two Carthaginian armies.

Hasdrubal, after abandoning the siege of Placentia, proceeded to march south to complete a juncture with his brother. It was at this point that he made his first and what proved to be a fatal error. The messengers that he sent to Hannibal were captured by the Romans and Hasdrubal's plan fell into Roman hands. Nero realized immediately the importance of the opportunity. He knew that Livius must have additional support if he was to defeat Hasdrubal. Nero took seven thousand men and advanced north to join secretly.Livius's army.

The entire population of the districts through which Nero passed flocked to the roadside with provisions for the soldiers. In seven days, they covered two hundred fifty miles, an incredible achievement at that time. Upon his arrival a council of war was held at which some advised that time should be given for the men to refresh themselves after the fatigue of such a march. Nero opposed such a delay, protesting that such a move would give Hannibal time to discover his movement and attack his weakened army in the south. His advice prevailed and the Roman army prepared for immediate battle.

Hasdrubal previously had been anxious to bring Livius to battle, but as he rode forward to reconnoiter his foe, he noticed that their numbers had increased and that some of the cavalry's horses looked as though they had just completed a long march. The trumpet also sounded twice, a signal that there were now two consuls in the

camp as opposed to one. Hasdrubal therefore refused battle that day and attempted to retreat under cover of darkness. This was his second and final mistake. Instead of trying to evade the Roman armies, as he had done to Scipio in Spain, or to remain in an entrenched position and await aid from Hannibal's army, Hasdrubal attempted to retreat. Due to the betrayal of his guides, his army was lost in the darkness and the morning found them with their backs to an unfordable river and confronted by the Roman cavalry with their infantry close behind.

Hasdrubal did all that could be expected from a commander in an actual battle. He placed his unreliable Gauls on the left where the river would prevent the Romans from achieving an encircling movement. In the center he formed his Ligurian infantry and on the right, the Spanish infantry.

His army did not fit the general pattern of the previous Carthaginian armies in that they had little cavalry and few native African troops. His veteran Spanish infantry, armed with helmets, shields, and short swords, was the best part of the army. This arrangement gave him the best chance of victory. Ten elephants were placed in advance of the center and right wing and each of their drivers was provided with a sharp iron spike to be used against the animal, if during the course of the battle, it became uncontrollable. Livy estimates the size of the army as forty thousand men and the Roman forces approximately fifty thousand.

The heavy infantry of the Roman legions consisted of three classes: (a) the Hastati, the first line troops, which were men between twenty-five and thirty years of age; (b) the second line was called the Princips, men between thirty and forty years of age; (c) Triari, or the

third line, veterans from forty-five years of age. The principal weapon of the Roman legionaire was the gladus, the terrible Roman sword, that may possibly have been the deadliest weapon in history, for it contributed to the death of millions of men.[63] It resembled the Spanish short sword in that it had a double-edged blade that could be used for both cutting and thrusting. The Hastati and Principes also carried two short spears for throwing. The Triari had a heavy lance from ten to twelve feet in length and several darts. The infantry wore leather helmets, breast plates, leg greaves, and a heavy wooden shield. Each one was responsible for a space of about five feet, twice that of the Greek Hoplite.

Such was the disposition of the forces at the battle of Metaurus. Nero commanded the right wing, opposite the Gauls, Livius the left, opposing the highly regarded Spanish infantry, and Portius faced the Ligurians in the center. Hasdrubal attacked Livius and made some headway, and then was halted as the fighting spread to the center. But Nero, due to unfavorable conditions of the terrain on which he was fighting, decided the battle by another stroke of military genius. Leaving the Hastati to hold the line against the Gauls, he completely circled the Roman rear with his cavalry and then struck at Hasdrubal's right flank. The result was as sudden as it was

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[63]The destructive potential of the sword cannot compare to that of the machine gun or atomic bomb, however, it was employed in the war for a 1,000 years, where as the latter two are primarily modern weapons. The atomic bomb resulted in the death of 110,000 people at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

successful. Greatly out-numbered, the Spanish and the Africans died, fighting to the last man. The Gauls, who played a little part in the role, were of no consequence in the battle, were then cut to pieces.

Hasdrubal, unwilling to survive the destruction of his army, flung himself headlong into the Roman line and died fighting. Practically the entire Carthaginian army was killed or captured, while the Roman losses numbered eight thousand. The first news Hannibal received of the disaster was the sight of his brother's severed head that had been hurled into his camp.[64]

Because the defeat at the Metaurus closed any possibility to Hannibal's ultimate success in Italy, Creasy argued that it was the decisive battle of the Second Punic War. The Carthaginian general could win battle after battle, and annihilate all Roman opponents and their forces for more than a decade, but with one defeat, his lines of supply were severed and all hope of relief was eliminated. Hannibal had now lost Italy. Once defeated in Italy the outcome of the struggle between the Indo-European and Semitic civilizations was sealed.

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[64]The description of the actual conduct of the battle at Metaurus was taken from a book by Lt. Gen. Joseph B. Mitchell Twenty Decisive Battles of the World. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1964. Disposition of the Roman Legions and their equipment was from F.E. Adcock's The Roman Art of War Under the Republic. p. 9-11. Martin Classical Lectures, Vol. VIII, New York: Barnes and Noble Inc. 1960.

CHAPTER IV

While Creasy may affix specific significance to the Metaurus, most contemporary scholars have taken a rather diffident attitude toward the battle. At first glance Arthur Boak, former Professor of Ancient History at the University of Michigan, seemed to support Creasy's thesis when he wrote, "With the battle, the doom of Hannibal's plan was sealed, and with them the doom of Carthage."[65] A closer look reveals that Boak viewed Hasdrubal's march into Italy not so much as a relief mission as an escape flight:

> Up to this time also the Roman activities in Spain had prevented any Carthaginian troops leaving the country, but after the fall of new Carthage and the subsequent success of Scipio, Hasdrubal, despairing of the situation there, determined to march to the support of his brother by the same route which the latter had taken. Scipio endeavored to bar his path. But although Hasdrubal was defeated in battle, he and ten thousand of his men cut their way through the Romans and crossed the Pyranees.[66]

If Boak is somewhat ambivalent on the nature of the Metaurus, M.L. Laistner is not. According to him, Rome was never seriously threatened, even at the height of Hannibal's greatest success.

> "Probably there was a general expectation that Hannibal would march on Rome. It is certain that he had neither the men nor the siege apparatus requisite for such a task".[67]

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[65] Arthur Boak, History of Rome, p. 85. New York, MacMillan Company, 1922.

[66] Ibid, p. 84.

[67] M.L.W. Laistner, A Survey of Ancient History (To the Death of Constantine.) p. 403 D.C. Heath & Company.

Rostovtzeff[68] supported Laistner's statement when he wrote, "It is probable that the utmost effort of Carthage could not have supplied such an army large enough for such a task."[69]

A more realistic look at what Carthage could best expect at the outbreak of the war is given by Laistner. He refutes the possibility of Hannibal's even intending to conquer Rome when he writes, "Indeed it is more than doubtful whether he harboured any such intentions at any time. His aim seemed rather to have been to break the power of Rome and Italy by causing her allies to break away from her en masse, but the wholesale defections did not take place."[70] This concerned events in 216 B.C., when the myth of Roman military supremacy had only recently been discarded, with the battle of Trebia, Trasimene, and Cannae.

By 207 B.C. the Romans had obtained absolute control of Sicily and were one battle away from wiping out the last vestiges of Carthaginian power in Spain. By Livy's admission they had regained at least military equality in Italy, while still maintaining naval supremacy. Under these circumstances it is possible for Laistner to

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[68]Dr. Michael Ivanovich Rostovtzeff (1870-1952) born in Kiev, professor of Ancient History, and Archeology at Yale University, Prof. of Roman History at St. Petersburg, Russia. He held numerous other positions in his long and distinguished career. He was the first to use archeological remains of Greece and Rome as a source for cultural history.

[69]Michael Rostovtzeff, A History of the Ancient World, p. 67 Oxford: The Claren Don Press.

[70]Laistner, p. 403.

propose that Livy over-dramatized the Battle of 207 B.C. Laistner writes:

> The chief event of 207 and the anxiety of the Roman people prior to and during the crisis, had been depicted by Livy in some of the finest chapters in his History. Yet it can scarcely be doubted that for the sake of dramatic effect, the danger threatening Rome at this point has been not a little exaggerated. Even if Hasdrubal had succeeded in joining his brother, it is impossible to believe that their combined armies would have forced the Romans, who had held their own against greater odds for almost a decade, to capitulate.[71]

It is therefore possible to accept as truth Livy's description of the anxiety caused by Hasdrubal's appearance in Italy, while at the same time discounting his and Creasy's estimation of the seriousness of the threat presented by such a union. Cary[72] goes even further in undermining Creasy's thesis by strongly suggesting that the outcome had really been decided in 215 B.C., eight years before the Metaurus.

> The stand made by the Romans after Cannae virtually decided the second Punic War. The two contingencies of which Hannibal's chances of success depended, the crippling of Roman manpower by losses of defections of allies, and the breaking of Roman morale under the impact of successive defeats, were not realized.[73]

Accepting the validity of the last statement, the impact of Rome's victory at the Metaurus would appear to have been over-stated by Creasy.

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[71] Ibid, p. 407

[72] Max Cary, Dr. of Lit., at Oxon College utilized F.E. Adcock and Michael Rostovtzeff's histories of the second Punic War, as important sources for his History of Rome.

[73] Max Cary, A History of Rome (Down to the Age of Constantine) p. 166. London, McMillan & Co., Ltd., New York: St. Martins Press.

H.G. Wells,[74] in his Outline of History, offered his assessment of the strengths of the contending powers:

> Italy under Rome was a republican country; Carthage was that much older a thing, a republican city. She had an "empire" as Athens had an "empire", of tributary states, which did not love her, and she had a great and naturally disloyal industrial slave population.[75]

Rome had a working federation of allies, the Latin League, bound to her by strong national ties, as well as other dependent Italian states bound as much by fear of military reprisal as anything else. This made her too formidable an opponent of the more aristocratic Carthage, which relied on an unpredictable mercenary army. Wells does not ascribe particular importance to the Battle of the Metaurus other than to say, "Thereafter Hannibal was blockaded into Calabria, the heel of Italy."[76]

J.F.C. Fuller[77] authored a scintilating book entitled A Military History of the Western World. His intention was to concentrate on what he believed to be the important battles fought between western people, in which he included the Metaurus. Such an inclusion would appear to support Creasy's thesis.[78] A closer examination reveals

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[74]H.G. Wells, 1866-1946, graduated from London University in 1888, English Novelist, journalist, socialist, and famous or infamous popularizer.

[75]H.G. Wells, The Outline of History, Vol. I, p. 431. Garden City, New York: Garden City Books, copyright 1948.

[76]Ibid, p. 440.

[77]J.F.C. Fuller, 1878-1966, British soldier, military analyst, one of the earliest of modern warfare.

[78]J.F.C. Fuller, A Military History of the Western World. Preface IX. Funk & Wagnall Co. New York Inc.

incompatible differences in the two men's evaluation of the importance of the battle. Creasy proposed that the history of the world would have assumed a different shape had the battle had a different outcome.[79] Fuller, more realistically, assessed it to be "Hannibal's least desparate hope of breaking the Roman hold on Italy."[80]

Fuller advances the theory that Hannibal's failure to march on Rome after Cannae was the truly decisive point in the war. He writes, "If it be a fact that after his victory at Cannae, Hannibal abandoned his advance on Rome because he believed that the encirclement of Italy would prove more profitable, after his brother's defeat on the Metaurus, he must have realized his mistake."[81] Fuller saw Carthage's only hope of victory to have been the storming of Rome after her armies had been destroyed at Cannae. He unintentionally dismisses that possibility when he offers his evaluation of Hannibal as a tactician; "Hannibal was a general who could adapt himself to every circumstance except one--siege warfare."[82]

The inability of Hannibal to break up Rome's alliances, coupled with the impossibility of capturing Rome itself, pre-determined the course that the war would take in the following years. In spite of Hannibal's super-human efforts in the previous nine years, Rome had once again, by 208, as she had done in the first Punic War,

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[79]Creasy, intro.

[80]Fuller, p. 137.

[81]Ibid.

[82]Ernest R. Dupay, and Trevor N. Dupay, The Encyclopedia of Military History from 3500 B.C. to the Present. p. 68, also found in Fuller, p. 127. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row.

recovered from her losses and was prepared to take the offensive in Italy. The real difficulty that confronted Rome at this time was not finding men to man her fleet and serve in her armies, but finding finances to pay these men once the war was over.[83]

Rome had adamantly refused to accept aid from, what she considered to be, her subordinates. The war in essence was being conducted primarily through credit. Although Rome was near bankruptcy and the people of Italy close to starvation, due to the lack of men to till the fields, she again had two hundred thousand troops in her service. Hannibal could barely muster forty thousand. Most of these were Italians and save for a few remaining veterans, the quality of his army was inferior to the legions.[84]

The Cambridge Ancient History mentions the Metaurus only to illustrate Rome's continued surge to final victory.[85] The Romans were content to play a waiting game, as it was initiated by Fabius in 216, but this plan was greatly improved by the availability of additional armies in Italy that could be successfully linked in times of an impending battle. Nero illustrated the merits of this plan at the Metaurus.[86] The Cambridge sees Rome as being content to await

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[83]"Galley Slaves in the Second Punic War." Jan M. Libourel Classical Philology Vol. LXVIII, No. 2.

[84]F.E. Adcock, The Roman Art of War, p. 11. Martin Classical Lectures, Vol. VIII.

[85]B.L. Hallward, "Scipio in Victory", Cambridge Ancient History, Vol. VIII, p. 93.

[86]Ibid, p. 95.

the return of the victorious Scipio from Spain. The senate's intentions were to defeat and remove Hannibal from Italy. Scipio's, however, were not dolely limited to the liberation of Italy, but to the conquest of Carthage itself.

The contemporaries, or near-contemporary sources that I have examined, do not appear to be at odds with the remark of Polybius that "Of all that befell the Romans and Carthaginians, good or bad, the cause was one man and one mind, Hannibal. So great and wonderful is the influence of a Man, and a mind, duly fitted by original constitution for any undertaking within the reach of human powers."[87]

Hannibal's tasks assume quixotic proportions, which Polybius further dramatized when he wrote:

> For sixteen continuous years Hannibal maintained the war with Rome and Italy without once releasing his army from service in the field, but keeping those vast numbers under control, like a good pilot, without any sign of disaffection toward himself or toward each other, though he had troops in his service, who, so far from being of the same tribe, were not even of the same race...yet the skill of the commander was such that these differences, so manifold and so wide, did not disturb the obedience to one word of command and to a single will.[88]

This then is the focusing point of the struggle. It was not the might of Rome against the equivalent might of Carthage, rather it was the combined strength of Rome, the Latin League, and the Italian confederates, aided at crucial times by Syracuse, not an inconsiderable power itself, against the resourcefulness of Hannibal, backed by an irresolute city and uncertain allies. Theodore Mommsen[89] added

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[87]Polybius, p. 92.

[88]Polybius, p. 92.

[89]Theodore Mommsen, (1817-1903), 19th Century German Classical Historian, awarded Nobel Prize of Literature, 1902.

to Polybius's estimate of Hannibal's worth when he wrote:

> He was particularly marked by that inventive craftiness which forms one of the leading traits of the Phoenician character; he was fond of taking singular and unexpected routes, ambushes and stratagems of all sorts were familiar to him; and he studied the character of his antagonists with unprecedented care. By an unrivaled system of espionage--he kept himself informed of the projects of the enemy; he himself was frequently seen wearing disguises and false hair in order to procure information on some point or another. Every page of the history of the period attests his genius as a general; and his gifts as a statesman... he was a great man; wherever he went he riveted the eyes of all.[90]

Creasy recognized that the fortunes of Carthage were entirely dependent on the fortunes of a single man. Rome, on the other hand, was far greater than the sum total of her armies. "Fabius, Marcellus, Cladius, Nero, even Scipio himself, are as nothing when compared to the spirit and wisdom and power of Rome."[91]

Throughout their long history, the Phoenician cities did not have the propensity to build an empire. They contented themselves with trading, while people such as the Egyptians, the Hittites, Persians, Greeks, and Romans struggled to dominate the ancient world. They had no territorial ambitions, and in the days of their greatest prosperity, were content with a strip of land some thirty miles long and one mile wide.[92]

The Phoenicians continued to prosper, regardless of who controlled the Levant coast by acknowledging the titular supremacy of whatever power had ascendancy at that time. They avoided conflicts

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[90]Theodore Mommsen, A History of Rome, Vol. II, p. 88. London: J.M. Dent & Son Ltd., New York; E.P. Dutton & Company, Inc.

[91]Creasy, p. 93.

[92]Donald Armstrong, The Reluctant Warriors, p. 7. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co. Est. 1824.

which destroyed other ancient civilizations. The Phoenicians seemed to have an intrinsic understanding of the transitory nature of military power in the course of history. They survived and prospered for centuries while mightier nations appeared and disappeared around them. R. Bosworth Smith,[93] an obvious admirer of the Phoenicians, wrote what could be used as a fitting epilogue to their history:

> We know well what the tiny territory of Palestine has done for the religions of the world, and what the tiny Greece had done for its intellect and art. But we are apt to forget that what the Phoenicians did for the development and intercommunication of the world was achieved by a state confined within a narrower boundary still.[94]

It has been speculated that even in Africa the Carthaginians looked upon themselves as tenants, rather than owners, and cheerfully paid rent to the African Berbers. The only place where they sought to be acknowledged as supreme was at sea. Strabo wrote that to be caught trespassing in the western Mediterranean meant death by drowning.[95] They viewed war as the last refuge of a frustrated mind, and finding it unable to avoid, they entrusted its prosecution to an army of paid mercenaries. Unlike Rome there is no evidence of Carthage having a recruiting system, even in times of extreme peril. This caused Michelet to remark, "The life of an industrious merchant,

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[93]R. Bosworth Smith, Assistant Master of Harrow School, author of numerous books concerning Republican Rome.

[94]R. Bosworth Smith, Rome and Carthage (The Punic Wars.) Vol. I, p. 3. Garden City, New York; Garden City Books.

[95]"Sea Lords of Antiquity," National Geographic Magazine Aug. 1974, Vol. 146, No. 2.

of a Carthaginian, was too precious to be risked, as long as it was possible to substitute advantagiously for it, that of a barbarian from Spain or Gaul."[96]

Rome was not then confronted by an aggressive foreign power seeking to dominate the world by destroying other nations; but rather by a loosely federated group of cities, possessing neither a national army nor an inclination to raise one. In contrast, Rome was a young, ambitious, and aggressive city, which used its energy to impose her imperium over the much older Etruscans, Samnites, and Sabines. It developed the tendency to empire that Carthage did not, and the fact that it entertained a desire to expand both east and west was illustrated by events in the Macedonian War that followed. While Thomas Arnold shared the opinion of Creasy that with the Metaurus the failure of Hannibal's plan in Italy was assured, he did not delegate to it the importance that Creasy did, when the latter proclaimed it to be a battle on which the future of mankind depended.

The results of the battle induced Hannibal to retire into the southeast corner of Italy. In spite of his precarious position, lack of supplies, and the knowledge that he could no longer hope for reenforcements, he was to remain there uncontested for four more years. In 201 B.C. Hannibal was summoned to Africa to conduct a defense of Carthage against the Roman expeditionary force, under the command of Publius Cornelius Scipio, later to be named "Africanus."

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[96]"Sea Lords of Antiquity" National Geographic Magazine, August, 1974.

CHAPTER V

The destruction of Carthage, that shameful event that later Roman historians dignified by the label of "Third Punic War,"[97] came as a direct consequence of the debacle in the Second Punic War. I maintain that it was not the Battle of the Metaurus that determined the outcome of the war. Even Hannibal's failure to end the war after his victory at Cannae must bear closer scrutiny before being declared as a turning point in the struggle.

The First Punic War illustrated that the military resources of Rome and Italy were far greater than those of any other Mediterranean state. This advantage was greater during the Second Punic War than during the first, for Rome had then gained mastery over the sea. The failure of Carthage to reconstruct its navy after the First Punic War, proved catastrophic, once the effects of Fabius Maximus's scorched earth policy began to take effect.

The problem of provisions must have been at least as vexing to Hannibal as that of reinforcement. Mercenary armies have never been noted for their willingness to endure hunger and privation, when

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[97]Carlton J.H. Hayes, and James H. Hanscom, Ancient Civilizations p. 370-373. McMillan Company; New York, Collier McMillan Ltd., London, 1968. Hayes of Columbia University and Hanscom of NYU offer as good an interpretation as any of the causes and results of the Third Punic War. Most of the secondary sources I have examined attempted to justify Rome's actions. Hayes and Hanscom closed their section of the Third Punic War thus: "The Romans dignified the whole treacherous and disgraceful episode with the name of the "Third Punic War." p. 373.

they were afforded other alternatives. Livy records Hannibal's mercenaries as having entertained ideas of desertion and defection in 216 B.C., after they had achieved resounding victory. It was no wonder that they should be disheartened after a minor setback, if they tended to be so, even after a great success.

Hannibal's only hope of success rested in his ability to maintain the momentum he had established at the Trebia. He was receiving little financial aid from Carthage and could only finance his campaign through his own endeavors. It was therefore essential that he force another major battle on Rome, in order to accumulate the spoils that a victory would give him. He must have realized by this time that it was impossible to destroy the huge reserves of manpower that Rome commanded. Fabius had recognized this and had not Varro played directly into Hannibal's hands by offering battle at Cannae, the war might conceivably have ended as early as 215 B.C. on an indecisive note.

I conjecture that had Fabius's policies continued as planned, there would not have been a Cannae, Metaurus, or a Zama, at least not in the third century B.C. The reinstitution of the delaying tactics after Cannae was indicative of the concern that Rome must have felt for its survival. Although a few of Rome's former allies did go over to Carthage after the battle, the wholesale defection that Hannibal had gambled on, never materialized, and his task was now compounded by having allies of his own to defend, as well as conducting an offensive war against Rome. The Roman refusal to give Hannibal a chance for another victory precluded any chance that Hannibal had of

promoting further Italian defections from Rome.[98]

By 215 B.C. the conditions in Italy had stabilized and in 211 B.C. Rome had regained Hannibal's biggest prize, Capua. After the loss of Capua, Hannibal could no longer hope to isolate Rome from its Italian confederates, and any chance he had of breaking up the Latin League was now nonexistent. The myth of his infallability had been broken, even though he had never been defeated in a pitched battle.[99]

Livy's accounts of the Punic army's deterioration from a highly efficient fighting machine to a morally corrupt and physically deficient mob during its stay in Capua in the winter of 216 B.C. was probably greatly exaggerated in his attempt to accent what the Romans believed to be the Punic tendency to overindulgence. They did, however, lose their momentum after the battle of Cannae and achieved nothing of consequence until the secession of Tarentum in 212 B.C. Even this was not accomplished through siege, however, but only through treachery.[100]

Hannibal's inability to conduct a successful siege has already been mentioned. His reluctance even to attempt one is commented on by Fuller, when he explains the reasons why the Italian cities did not revolt or surrender. "Not only because each was loyal to Rome, but because all were walled and connected by roads. They were not

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[98]T. Dorey, and Dr.R. Dudley, Rome Against Carthage, p. 27. London: Secker and Warburg.

[99]J.H. Thiel, p. 347-348.

[100]Livy, p. 604.

only safe against Hannibal's field armies, but they could readily be supplied."[101] The walled cities were an ideal complement to Fabius's policies. While Hannibal's forces were depleted by fruitless attacks on fortified positions, the Roman armies gained valuable field experience at low risk.

Hasdrubal most certainly did not have his brother's genius. His army had suffered a number of defeats in Spain, some caused by panic and disorganization. The threat presented by him was more psychological than physical. His march into Italy has been depicted as an escape flight from Spain. The moral effects of his defeat and death must have been tremendous. But aside from his prolonging the war in Italy a little longer, he could not have really succeeded in accomplishing anything of significance. The numerical superiority that Rome had maintained throughout the war was never greater than in 207 B.C. The caliber of the Roman legions and commanders had improved through the experience gained in twelve years of fighting. The Roman practice of annually changing commanders continued, but certain changes were made that enabled experienced men to remain in command as proconsuls. Politics played a lesser part in the Roman military system of 207 than it did in 216. Livius was recalled after being disgraced in 219 to assume command of the northern armies. Nero, who was in charge of the southern armies, proved himself to be one of the most ingenious military leaders of the war. It was a quite different army that these men commanded than did Varro and Paulus at Cannae.

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[101] Fuller, p. 219.

In Africa Carthage was faced with a revolt of the Numidian tribes of the interiors. It was from Numidia that Carthage had recruited its invaluable cavalry. Faced with this revolt, the ruling class was now concerned only with protecting its interests in Africa and decided to abandon the struggle in Italy. It would appear that the Barcid faction in Carthage had begun to lose power once it realized that victory would not come as cheaply as anticipated. Hanno must have been considerably more vociferous in his criticism of the war in 207 than he was in 215. Previously it was Italy that had been made to suffer the consequences of a protracted war. Now it was apparent that Africa would soon become a theater of operations. The danger to Carthage was greater in that she would have to face not only the power of Rome but that of her former subject states as well.

The size and distribution of the Roman army made it possible to exert continuous pressure at critical points throughout the course of the war. Rome's control of the sea and her vast resources of manpower enabled her to do this. Her willingness to withstand pressure in Italy without recalling legions from other theaters of war was also a deciding factor. The elder Scipio realized this in 217 B.C., when in spite of Hannibal's march into Italy, he refused to recall his fleet and army from Spain, realizing it was essential that he deny Hannibal supplies and reinforcements in this area. Scipio's appreciation of logistics was a vital factor not only in the success of Rome's military strategy, but the political philosophy of the Roman senate proved superior as well. This stood in direct contrast to Carthage which demanded Hannibal's return from Italy to defend her, once the invasion was imminent.

The numerical superiority that Rome held over Carthage dictated the latter's forced employment of mercenaries. It was not out of a sense of national crisis, however, that Carthage conducted the war with a mercenary army. Throughout her history, even in minor conflicts, she preferred to pay others to accomplish what might have been better achieved by a national army. The success of a mercenary force has always been contingent upon the resourcefulness and leadership qualities of the commander. Under Hannibal, they were highly effective, but under the rest of the Punic generals in the Second Punic War, their record was highly inconsistant and often times marked by disloyalty and cowardice.

The outcome of the Second Punic War was more conclusive than the first, as was evidenced in the century to follow. Carthage, although crippled after its defeat in the First War was left enough assets to recover in less than a decade. After her defeat in the Second, Carthage was subjugated and made a "Friend of Rome." The Carthaginian fortunes reached their military zenith under the Barcas. The disappearance of this faction after the Second Punic War signified the end of any hope that Carthage might have had of ever again challenging Rome.

The defeat of Carthage was not the result of a battle or a series of battles. It came as the preponderance of evidence illustrates, after Carthage realized the futility of the struggle. The incredible life-force that Rome possessed could not be extinguished. Creasy attests to the inequality of the struggle as he wrote, "But we can perceive how inferior Carthage was to her competitor in military resources." Carthage never had that life-force and its greatness was ephemeral, lasting only as long as the lives of Hamilcar and Hannibal.

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