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Appian, The Punic Wars 26

Appian of Alexandria (c.95-c.165): one of the most underestimated of all Greek historians, author of a *Roman History* in twenty-four books.

Although only Appian's books on the *Roman Civil Wars* survive in their entirety, large parts of the other books, devoted to Rome's foreign wars, have also come down to us. The parts on the **Punic wars**, the **wars in Iberia**, and the **Mithridatic Wars** are very important historical sources. This is also true for Appian's account of the Third Punic War, the second part of the conflict presented on these pages, which is one of our main sources for this conflict.

Because these texts have to be reconstructed from several medieval manuscripts, not all editions of Appian's account of Rome's foreign wars are numbered in the same way. On these pages, the separate units of a book are counted strictly chronologically.

The translation was made by Horace White; notes by Jona Lendering.

The Third Punic War (cont'd)

[126] At the beginning of winter, Scipio^{note} resolved to sweep away the **Carthaginian** power in the country, and the allies from whom supplies were sent to them. Sending his captains this way and that he moved in person to Nepheris against Diogenes, who held that town as **Hasdrubal**'s successor, going by the lake while sending Gaius Laelius by land.

When he arrived he encamped at a distance of 350 meter from Diogenes. Leaving **Gulussa** to keep Diogenes unceasingly employed, he hastened back to Carthage, after which he kept passing to and fro between the two places overseeing all that was done. When two of the spaces between Diogenes' towers were demolished Scipio came and stationed 1,000 picked soldiers in ambush in the enemy's rear, and 3,000 more, also carefully selected for bravery, in his front, to attack the demolished rampart. They did not make the attack en masse, but by divisions in close order, following each other, so that if those in front were repulsed they could not retreat on account of the weight of those coming behind. The attack was made with loud shouts, and the Africans were drawn thither. The 1,000 in ambush, unperceived and unsuspected, fell boldly upon the rear of the camp, as they had been ordered, and tore down and scaled the palisade. When the first ones entered the Africans were panic-stricken and fled, thinking that the numbers of the new assailants were much greater than they were. Gulussa pursued them with his **Numidian** cavalry and elephants and made a great slaughter, some 70,000, including non-combatants, being killed. Ten thousand were captured and about 4,000 escaped.

In addition to the camp the city of Nepheris was taken also, after a siege of twenty-two days, prosecuted by Scipio with great labor and suffering on account of the severity of the weather. This success contributed much to the taking of Carthage, for provisions were conveyed to it by this army, and the people of Africa were in good courage as long as they saw this force in the field. As soon as it was captured the remainder of Africa surrendered to Scipio's lieutenants or was taken without much difficulty. The supplies of Carthage now fell short, since none came from Africa or from foreign parts, navigation being cut off in every direction by the war and the storms of winter.

[127] When spring returned,^{note} Scipio laid siege to Byrsa and to the harbor of *Cothon*.^{note} Hasdrubal one night set fire to that part of Cothon which is in the form of a quadrangle. But Laelius, still expecting Scipio to make the attack, and while the Carthaginians were turned to that quarter, without being observed, mounted the other part of Cothon, which was in the form of a circle.

A shout went up as though a victory had been gained, the Carthaginians became alarmed, while the Romans mounted on all sides, despising the danger, and filled up the vacant spaces with timbers, engines, and scaffolding, the guards making only a feeble resistance because they were weak from hunger and downcast in spirit.

The wall around Cothon being taken, Scipio seized the neighboring forum. Being unable to do more, as it was now nightfall, he and his whole force passed the night there under arms. At daylight he brought in 4,000 fresh troops. They entered the temple of Apollo,^{note} whose statue was there, covered with gold, in a shrine of beaten gold, weighing 1,000 talents, which they plundered, chopping it with their swords, disregarding the commands of their officers until they had divided it among themselves, after which they returned to their duty.

[128] Now Scipio hastened to the attack of Byrsa, the strongest part of the city, where the greater part of the inhabitants had taken refuge. There were three streets ascending from the forum to this fortress, along which, on either side, were houses built closely together and six stories high, from which the Romans were assailed with missiles. They were compelled, therefore, to possess themselves of the first ones and use those as a means of expelling the occupants of the next.

When they had mastered the first, they threw timbers from one to another over the narrow passageways, and crossed as on bridges. While war was raging in this way on the roofs, another fight was going on among those who met each other in the streets below. All places were filled with groans, shrieks, shouts, and every kind of agony. Some were stabbed, others were hurled alive from the roofs to the pavement, some of them alighting on the heads of spears or other pointed weapons, or swords. No one dared to set fire to the houses on account of those who were still on the roofs, until Scipio reached Byrsa. Then he set fire to the three streets all together, and gave orders to keep the passageways clear of burning material so that the army might move back and forth freely.

[129] Then came new scenes of horror. As the fire spread and carried everything down, the soldiers did not wait to destroy the buildings little by little, but all in a heap. So the crashing grew louder, and many corpses fell with the stones into the midst. Others were seen still living, especially old men, women, and young children who had hidden in the inmost nooks of the houses, some of them wounded, some more or less burned, and uttering piteous cries. Still others, thrust out and falling from such a height with the stones, timbers, and fire, were torn asunder in all shapes of horror, crushed and mangled.

Nor was this the end of their miseries, for the street cleaners, who were removing the rubbish with axes, mattocks, and forks, and making the roads passable, tossed with these instruments the dead and the living together into holes in the ground, dragging them along like sticks and stones and turning them over with their iron tools. Trenches were filled with men. Some who were thrown in head foremost, with their legs sticking out of the ground, writhed a long time. Others fell with their feet downward and their heads above ground. Horses ran over them, crushing their faces and skulls, not purposely on the part of the riders, but in their headlong haste. Nor did the street cleaners do these things on purpose; but the tug of war, the glory of approaching victory, the rush of the soldiery, the orders of the officers, the blast of the trumpets, tribunes and centurions marching their cohorts hither and thither - all together made everybody frantic and heedless of the spectacles under their eyes.

[130] Six days and nights were consumed in this kind of fighting, the soldiers being changed so that they might not be worn out with toil, slaughter, want of sleep, and these horrid sights. Scipio alone toiled without rest, hurrying here and there, without sleep, taking food while he was at work, until, utterly fatigued and relaxed, he sat down on a high place where he could overlook the work.

Much remained to be ravaged, and it seemed likely that the carnage would be of longer duration, but on the seventh day some supplicants presented themselves to Scipio bearing the sacred garlands of Aesculapius, whose temple was much the richest and most renowned of all in the citadel.

These, taking olive branches^{note} from the temple, besought Scipio that he would spare the lives of all who might wish to depart from Byrsa. This he granted to all except the deserters. Forthwith there came out 50,000 men and women together, a narrow gate in the wall being opened, and a guard furnished for them.

The Roman deserters, about 900 in number, despairing of their lives, betook themselves to the temple of Aesculapius with Hasdrubal and his wife and their two boys. Here they might have defended themselves a long time although they were few in number, on account of the height and rocky nature of the place, which in time of peace was reached by an ascent of sixty steps. But, finally, overcome by hunger, want of sleep, fear, toil, and approaching dissolution, they abandoned the enclosures of the temple and fled to the shrine and roof.

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