

THE LUSITANIANS WINS AGAINST ROMANS

BEYOND THE PYRENEES

WE have seen how Carthage, expelled from the islands that belonged to Italy, found compensation in the iberian península. When the issue of the Second Punic War was decided against her, and her domains were limited to Africa, iberian península passed into Roman hands. Much of the country, however, had never acknowledged the rule of either power, and it required two centuries of effort before it became what it was for the first three centuries of our era, the most completely Latinized of all the Roman provinces.

The Carthaginians were finally driven from iberian península in 206. We may pass quickly over the next fifty years. By degrees the Roman power advanced till the whole peninsula, some mountainous regions in the north and centre excepted, became subject to it. Rebellions were free quent, for the Roman system was to change the provincial governors almost from year to year, and some of these officials were cruel and extortionate. As I am not writing a history either of Rome or of Lusitania, I must limit myself to the most important and representative persons and events.

Viriathus was a native of Lusitania [Lorica, in the Herminius mountains], a region nearly corresponding to what

is now called Portugal. His hatred of the Romans came from a shameful act of treachery from which his countrymen suffered at the hands of one of the Roman generals. This man had expressed his pity for the poverty of their country, which drove them, he said, into robbing their neighbours. He would give them, if they would trust him, lands better worth cultivating. What he did was to massacre them in detachments, one detachment being kept in ignorance of the fate of those who had gone before. Viriathus was one of the few who escaped.

It was not for some time that he secured the complete confidence of his countrymen, or was able to collect an army with which he could meet his adversaries in the field. His first great success was won in 147 B.C., when the proprietor Vetilius was drawn into an ambush and defeated.

Vetilius was taken prisoner and killed by his captors, who, seeing only a "very fat old man," did not recognise his value. Two-fifths of the army of ten thousand perished at the same time. Another disaster happened in the year following. Plautius, the Roman general, was deceived by a pretended retreat, and suffered a heavy loss of men. Affairs seemed to be in so serious a condition that the authorities at Rome resolved on sending a large force and as able a commander as they could find to the seat of war. The man they chose was Fabius, the brother of the younger Scipio, and a son therefore of the famous conqueror of Macedonia. Before Fabius could reach the scene of war another Roman army had been almost destroyed. Fabius himself for a time could do but little. He had to content himself with getting his forces, all of them newly recruited, into order. In his second year of command, however, he inflicted a severe defeat on Viriathus and compelled him to evacuate the Roman territory.

The war was carried on with varying fortunes for four years. In 141 B.C. It seemed to have been brought to a conclusion highly favourable to the Lusitanians and their gallant leaders. Viriathus surprised a Roman army that was investing one of the Lusitanian towns, and inflicted upon it so heavy a loss that it was compelled to raise the siege. In their retreat the Romans became entangled in a narrow pass, and were compelled to surrender. Viriathus was moderate in his demands. Lusitania was to be independent, and its people recognised as allies and friends of Rome. This treaty was ratified at Rome. But the ambition of a Roman general and the bad faith of the Senate brought this arrangement to an end. Servilius Cæpio was disappointed to find that the war had been brought to an end, and obtained permission from the Senate, which had not the effrontery to cancel the treaty, to make private war upon Viriathus. Before long something happened that gave the desired pretext, and Viriathus was declared a public enemy. He sent envoys to the Roman camp to arrange, if it were possible, terms of peace. Cæpio persuaded them by promises of great rewards to murder their chief. This they did, stabbing him in the neck as he lay asleep in his tent fully armed. The blow was so skillfully given that he died without a groan, and the murderers were able to escape to the Roman camp. From Cæpio, however, they received nothing but the remark that the Romans did not approve of and could not reward soldiers who slew their own general. One is glad to record the disappointment of such villains, but it is not easy to understand the unblushing assurance with which Roman historians inveigh against the "Punic faith," as they are pleased to call it, of Hannibal. The war was carried on for a time, but the Lusitanians could find no competent successor to Viriathus and were compelled to submit.

But península was not yet subdued. The scene of war was transferred to Numantia (now Garay on the upper waters of the Douro). Though not a walled town, it was a very strong place, environed with woods, situated on steep cliffs, and protected by two rivers. The one accessible side was strongly entrenched. The fighting force which it could muster was small, numbering not more than eight thousand, but there were no better fighting-men in all iberian península. General succeeded general in the Roman camp, but no advance was made. At last the people of Rome waxed impatient. There had been, they said, the same disappointment and mismanagement at Carthage, and they must employ the same man to put an end to them. Scipio Africanus was accordingly elected. He declined to take any men from the muster roll. There were soldiers enough, he thought, in the iberian península. And there was no lack of volunteers attracted by his remarkable prestige, among them a company of

five hundred to which he gave the name of the "Company of Friends." Even these he left to follow him while he hurried on to do for the besieging army at Numantia what he had done ten years before at Carthage. He cleared it of an idle and dissolute multitude, among whom soothsayers are specially mentioned, perpetually consulted, says the historian, by a soldiery demoralised by fear. A spit, a brass pot, and a single drinking-cup were all that was allowed for mess furniture; the rations were cut down to flesh, boiled or roasted (bread we may presume, though it is not mentioned). In short, every luxury was banished, some of them seeming, certainly, a little strange, bath attendants, for instance. "Your mules," he said, "want rubbing down, for they have no hands, but you have." This purification effected, he proceeded to harden his men by exercise, avoiding battle till he thought they were fit for it. It is interesting to find that in the winter of this year he was joined by a contingent of African troops under the command of Jugurtha, a grandson of the old king Masinissa.

The Romans had an overwhelming superiority in numbers, and it was only a matter of time for a patient and skillful commander such as was Scipio to make resistance impossible. The river, which the besieged had found very useful as a method of communicating with the outer world and replenishing their supplies, was closed against them by elaborate contrivances. The whole town, which had a compass of fifteen miles, was closely invested, while a system of signals for the protection of the siege works from sudden attack was organised. Thirty thousand men were on constant duty in guarding the turrets and ramparts; twenty thousand more were held in readiness to deliver an assault wherever and whenever Scipio might see fit, and there was a further reserve of ten thousand. Every man of the whole number had his place, which he was not permitted to leave except under express orders. The besieged did not give up the hope of damaging the siege works, and made frequent attacks, but they contended in vain against a system so elaborately complete, one, too, which received the unwearying attention of the man who had contrived it. Not a day or a night passed, we are told, without Scipio visiting the whole circle of the investment. After all, it was by the pressure of famine not by superior strength that Numantia fell. An embassy was sent to ask for terms. Scipio, who knew from the deserters how desperate was the condition of the city, demanded an unconditional surrender. The unhappy men who carried back this unwelcome reply were slain by their infuriated countrymen. But there was no other alternative, except death. That was the choice of the great majority; a few hundreds came out to the conqueror, such a miserable spectacle, so squalid, so emaciated, and withal so savage as none had ever seen before. Scipio chose fifty of the poor wretches to adorn his triumph; the rest he sold as slaves. It must be admitted that the Romans were not generous enemies, for Scipio was conspicuous among his countrymen for humanity and culture. Yet this was the best treatment he could bring himself to accord to foes so brave that he had never ventured an assault on their city.

Sertorius is a remarkable, one might say, an admirable figure, but the story of the long struggle between him and the generals of Rome scarcely belongs to my subject. Yet it is not wholly unconnected with it. Political life at Rome did not habitually run into the excesses which were so lamentably common in the Greek states. When the aristocrat Coriolanus led the Volscian armies against his own country the act was exceptional. Sertorius was a democratic Coriolanus.

Sertorius won considerable distinction as a soldier in the campaigns against the Cimbri and Teutones. When the Consul Cæpio was defeated he narrowly escaped with his life, swimming across the Rhone in full armour; he fought at Aquæ Sextiæ, having done good service by entering the camp of the Teutones as a spy. When the Civil War broke out he declared for the democratic party. After various changes of fortune the aristocrats were victorious, and then Sertorius found himself in a most difficult position.

The democratic leaders had given him a command in península, as much to get rid of him, for he was too honourable to suit them, as for any other reason. By degrees he drifted into the position of an enemy. He opposed the march of a Consular army sent across the Pyrenees by the Roman government, crossed to Africa when he could no longer remain in península, and came back again to take command of the Lusitanians when this tribe rebelled against Rome. Here he was joined by other adherents of the democratic party, the most important of whom was a certain Perpenna, who brought with him a considerable force, and became his second-in-command.

All this time, though waging war with Roman consuls and proconsuls, he claimed to be the Roman governor of Lusitania, establishing, for instance, a Senate into which no one but Roman citizens were admitted. In 77 B.C. Pompey, who was already famous as a soldier—he had enjoyed the honour of a triumph at the age of twenty-five—was sent into península. But Pompey found his task more than he could perform. He won, it is true, victories over Sertorius' lieutenants, but he could not claim any decided success over the great man himself. In a great battle fought on the banks of the Sucro he was routed with the loss of six thousand men. Nor during the three years that followed did he make much way. What really happened during this time it is not easy to say. By some accounts Sertorius became self-indulgent and arbitrary; according to others, his Roman colleagues in command, many of them of better birth than their superior, were jealous of him. What is certain is that it was by a Roman hand that he fell. In 72 B.C. he was assassinated by the orders of Perpenna. Perpenna was wholly unequal to the position which he hoped to attain by the death of his chief. He was defeated in the first battle which he fought with the Roman armies, and was taken prisoner. To save his life he offered to put into Pompey's hands the private letters of Sertorius. Many of them had been sent from Rome, and would probably have compromised various persons of distinction. Pompey ordered the letters to be burnt and Perpenna to be

executed.

One celtiberian people, the Cantabri, represented by the modern Basques, still retained their independence. They were not finally subdued till fifty years after the death of Sertorius, and even then they had to be watched and kept in order. Lusitania, however, as a whole became the most thoroughly Italian in manners and speech of all the provinces of Rome.