

George Alfred Henty

*The Young
Carthaginian*

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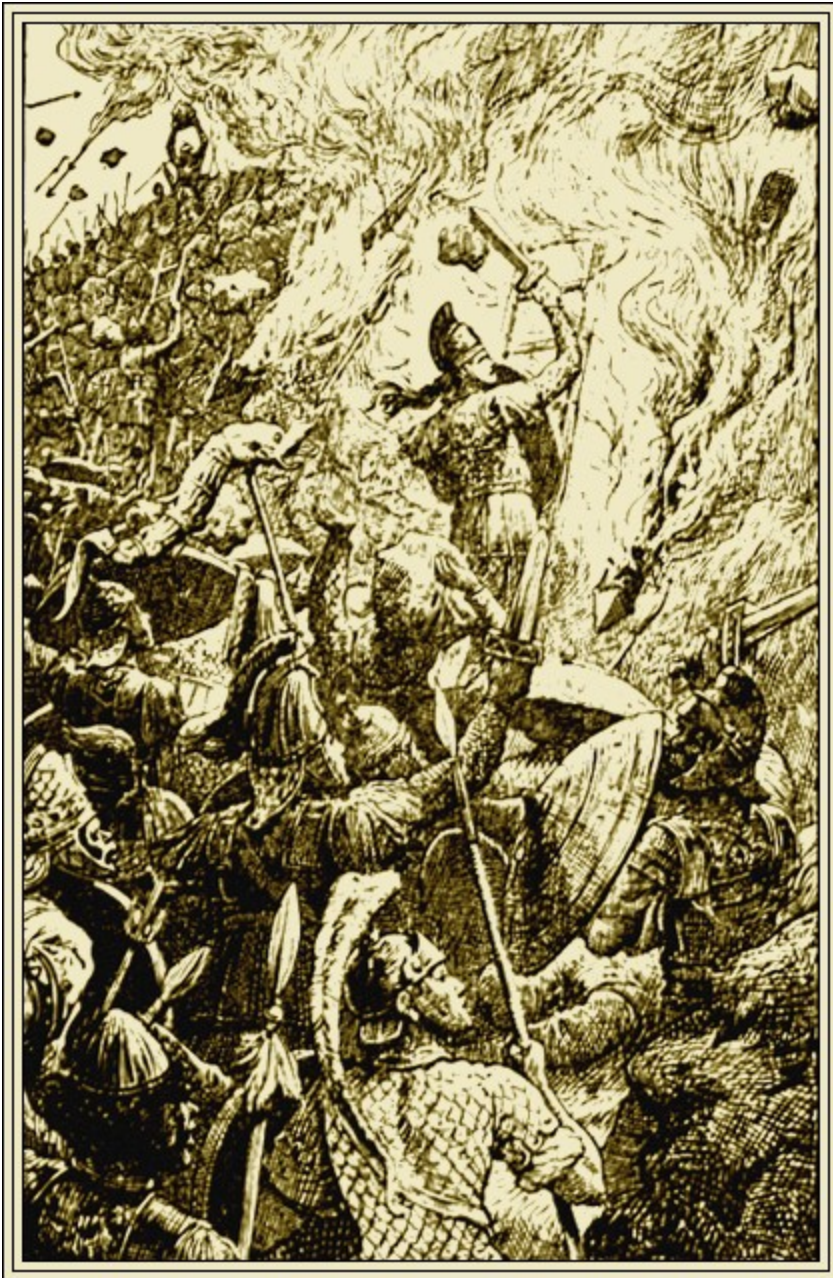
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Frontispiece: Hannibal's assault at Saguntum.

PREFACE.

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MY DEAR LADS,

When I was a boy at school, if I remember rightly, our sympathies were generally with the Carthaginians as against the Romans. Why they were so, except that one generally sympathizes with the unfortunate, I do not quite know; certainly we had but a hazy idea as to the merits of the struggle and knew but little of its events, for the Latin and Greek authors, which serve as the ordinary textbooks in schools, do not treat of the Punic wars. That it was a struggle for empire at first, and latterly one for existence on the part of Carthage, that Hannibal was a great and skilful general, that he defeated the Romans at Trebia, Lake Trasimenus, and Cannae, and all but took Rome, and that the Romans behaved with bad faith and great cruelty at the capture of Carthage, represents, I think, pretty nearly the sum total of our knowledge.

I am sure I should have liked to know a great deal more about this struggle for the empire of the world, and as I think that most of you would also like to do so, I have chosen this subject for my story. Fortunately there is no lack of authentic material from which to glean the incidents of the struggle. Polybius visited all the passes of the Alps some forty years after the event, and conversed with tribesmen who had witnessed the passage of Hannibal, and there can be no doubt that his descriptions are far more accurate than those of Livy, who wrote somewhat later and had no personal knowledge of the affair. Numbers of books have

been written as to the identity of the passes traversed by Hannibal. The whole of these have been discussed and summarized by Mr. W. J. Law, and as it appears to me that his arguments are quite conclusive I have adopted the line which he lays down as that followed by Hannibal.

In regard to the general history of the expedition, and of the manners, customs, religion, and politics of Carthage, I have followed M. Hennebert in his most exhaustive and important work on the subject. I think that when you have read to the end you will perceive that although our sympathies may remain with Hannibal and the Carthaginians, it was nevertheless for the good of the world that Rome was the conqueror in the great struggle for empire. At the time the war began Carthage was already corrupt to the core, and although she might have enslaved many nations she would never have civilized them. Rome gave free institutions to the people she conquered, she subdued but she never enslaved them, but rather strove to plant her civilization among them and to raise them to her own level. Carthage, on the contrary, was from the first a cruel mistress to the people she conquered. Consequently while all the peoples of Italy rallied round Rome in the days of her distress, the tribes subject to Carthage rose in insurrection against her as soon as the presence of a Roman army gave them a hope of escape from their bondage.

Had Carthage conquered Rome in the struggle she could never have extended her power over the known world as Rome afterwards did, but would have fallen to pieces again from the weakness of her institutions and the corruption of her people. Thus then, although we may feel sympathy for

the failure and fate of the noble and chivalrous Hannibal himself, we cannot regret that Rome came out conqueror in the strife, and was left free to carry out her great work of civilization.

Yours sincerely,

G. A. Henty

I. — THE CAMP IN THE DESERT

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IT is afternoon, but the sun's rays still pour down with great power upon rock and sand. How great the heat has been at midday may be seen by the quivering of the air as it rises from the ground and blurs all distant objects. It is seen, too, in the attitudes and appearance of a large body of soldiers encamped in a grove. Their arms are thrown aside, the greater portion of their clothing has been dispensed with. Some lie stretched on the ground in slumber, their faces protected from any chance rays which may find their way through the foliage above by little shelters composed of their clothing hung on two bows or javelins. Some, lately awakened, are sitting up or leaning against the trunks of the trees, but scarce one has energy to move.

The day has indeed been a hot one even for the southern edge of the Libyan desert. The cream coloured oxen stand with their heads down, lazily whisking away with their tails the flies that torment them. The horses standing near suffer more; the lather stands on their sides, their flanks heave, and from time to time they stretch out their extended nostrils in the direction from which, when the sun sinks a little lower, the breeze will begin to blow.

The occupants of the grove are men of varied races, and, although there is no attempt at military order, it is clear at once that they are divided into three parties. One is composed of men more swarthy than the others. They are lithe and active in figure, inured to hardship, accustomed to the burning sun. Light shields hang against the trees with

bows and gaily painted quivers full of arrows, and near each man are three or four light short javelins. They wear round caps of metal, with a band of the skin of the lion or other wild animal, in which are stuck feathers dyed with some bright colour. They are naked to the waist, save for a light breastplate of brass. A cloth of bright colours is wound round their waist and drops to the knees, and they wear belts of leather embossed with brass plates; on their feet are sandals. They are the light armed Numidian horse.

Near them are a party of men lighter in hue, taller and stouter in stature. Their garb is more irregular, their arms are bare, but they wear a sort of shirt, open at the neck and reaching to the knees, and confined at the waist by a leather strap, from which hangs a pouch of the same material. Their shirts, which are of roughly made flannel, are dyed a colour which was originally a deep purple, but which has faded, under the heat of the sun, to lilac. They are a company of Iberian slingers, enlisted among the tribes conquered in Spain by the Carthaginians. By them lie the heavy swords which they use in close quarters.

The third body of men are more heavily armed. On the ground near the sleepers lie helmets and massive shields. They have tightly fitting jerkins of well-tanned leather, their arms are spears and battleaxes. They are the heavy infantry of Carthage. Very various is their nationality; fair skinned Greeks lie side by side with swarthy negroes from Nubia. Sardinia, the islands of the Aegean, Crete and Egypt, Libya and Phoenicia are all represented there.

They are recruited alike from the lower orders of the great city and from the tribes and people who own her sway.

Near the large grove in which the troops are encamped is a smaller one. A space in the centre has been cleared of trees, and in this a large tent has been erected. Around this numerous slaves are moving to and fro.

A Roman cook, captured in a sea fight in which his master, a wealthy tribune, was killed, is watching three Greeks, who are under his superintendence, preparing a repast. Some Libyan grooms are rubbing down the coats of four horses of the purest breed of the desert, while two Nubians are feeding, with large flat cakes, three elephants, who, chained by the leg to trees, stand rocking themselves from side to side.

The exterior of the tent is made of coarse white canvas; this is thickly lined by fold after fold of a thin material, dyed a dark blue, to keep out the heat of the sun, while the interior is hung with silk, purple and white. The curtains at each end are looped back with gold cord to allow a free passage of the air.

A carpet from the looms of Syria covers the ground, and on it are spread four couches, on which, in a position half sitting half reclining, repose the principal personages of the party. The elder of these is a man some fifty years of age, of commanding figure, and features which express energy and resolution. His body is bare to the waist, save for a light short sleeved tunic of the finest muslin embroidered round the neck and sleeves with gold.

A gold belt encircles his waist, below it hangs a garment resembling the modern kilt, but reaching halfway between the knee and the ankle. It is dyed a rich purple, and three bands of gold embroidery run round the lower edge. On his

feet he wears sandals with broad leather lacings covered with gold. His toga, also of purple heavily embroidered with gold, lies on the couch beside him; from one of the poles of the tent hang his arms, a short heavy sword, with a handle of solid gold in a scabbard incrustated with the same metal, and a baldrick, covered with plates of gold beautifully worked and lined with the softest leather, by which it is suspended over his shoulder.

Two of his companions are young men of three or four and twenty, both fair like himself, with features of almost Greek regularity of outline. Their dress is similar to his in fashion, but the colours are gayer. The fourth member of the party is a lad of some fifteen years old. His figure, which is naked to the waist, is of a pure Grecian model, the muscles, showing up clearly beneath the skin, testify to hard exercise and a life of activity.

Powerful as Carthage was, the events of the last few years had shown that a life and death struggle with her great rival in Italy was approaching. For many years she had been a conquering nation. Her aristocracy were soldiers as well as traders, ready at once to embark on the most distant and adventurous voyages, to lead the troops of Carthage on toilsome expeditions against insurgent tribes of Numidia and Libya, or to launch their triremes to engage the fleets of Rome.

The severe checks which they had lately suffered at the hands of the newly formed Roman navy, and the certainty that ere long a tremendous struggle between the two powers must take place, had redoubled the military ardour of the nobles. Their training to arms began from their very

childhood, and the sons of the noblest houses were taught, at the earliest age, the use of arms and the endurance of fatigue and hardship.

Malchus, the son of Hamilcar, the leader of the expedition in the desert, had been, from his early childhood, trained by his father in the use of arms. When he was ten years old Hamilcar had taken him with him on a campaign in Spain; there, by a rigorous training, he had learned to endure cold and hardships.

In the depth of winter his father had made him pass the nights uncovered and almost without clothing in the cold. He had bathed in the icy water of the torrents from the snow clad hills, and had been forced to keep up with the rapid march of the light armed troops in pursuit of the Iberians. He was taught to endure long abstinence from food and to bear pain without flinching, to be cheerful under the greatest hardships, to wear a smiling face when even veteran soldiers were worn out and disheartened.

"It is incumbent upon us, the rulers and aristocracy of this great city, my son, to show ourselves superior to the common herd. They must recognize that we are not only richer and of better blood, but that we are stronger, wiser, and more courageous than they. So, only, can we expect them to obey us, and to make the sacrifices which war entails upon them. It is not enough that we are of pure Phoenician blood, that we come of the most enterprising race the world has ever seen, while they are but a mixed breed of many people who have either submitted to our rule or have been enslaved by us.

"This was well enough in the early days of the colony when it was Phoenician arms alone that won our battles and subdued our rivals. In our days we are few and the populace are many. Our armies are composed not of Phoenicians, but of the races conquered by us. Libya and Numidia, Sicily, Sardinia, and Spain, all in turn conquered by us, now furnish us with troops.

"Carthage is a mighty city, but it is no longer a city of Phoenicians. We form but a small proportion of the population. It is true that all power rests in our hands, that from our ranks the senate is chosen, the army officered, and the laws administered, but the expenses of the state are vast. The conquered people fret under the heavy tributes which they have to pay, and the vile populace murmur at the taxes.

"In Italy, Rome looms greater and more powerful year by year. Her people are hardy and trained to arms, and some day the struggle between us and her will have to be fought out to the death. Therefore, my son, it behooves us to use every effort to make ourselves worthy of our position. Set before yourself the example of your cousin Hannibal, who, young as he is, is already viewed as the greatest man in Carthage. Grudge no hardship or suffering to harden your frame and strengthen your arms.

"Some day you too may lead armies in the field, and, believe me, they will follow you all the better and more cheerfully if they know that in strength and endurance, as well as in position, their commander is the foremost man in his army."

Malchus had been an apt pupil, and had done justice to the pains which his father had bestowed upon him and to the training he had undergone. He could wield the arms of a man, could swim the coldest river, endure hardship and want of food, traverse long distances at the top of his speed, could throw a javelin with unerring aim, and send an arrow to the mark as truly as the best of the Libyan archers.

"The sun is going down fast, father," the lad said, "the shadows are lengthening and the heat is declining."

"We have only your word for the decline of the heat, Malchus," one of the younger men laughed; "I feel hotter than ever. This is the fifteenth time that you have been to the door of the tent during the last half hour. Your restlessness is enough to give one the fever."

"I believe that you are just as eager as I am, Adherbal," the boy replied laughing. "It's your first lion hunt as well as mine, and I am sure you are longing to see whether the assault of the king of beasts is more trying to the nerves than that of the Iberian tribesmen."

"I am looking forward to it, Malchus, certainly," the young man replied; "but as I know the lions will not quit their coverts until after nightfall, and as no efforts on my part will hasten the approach of that hour, I am well content to lie quiet and to keep myself as cool as may be."

"Your cousin is right," the general said, "and impatience is a fault, Malchus. We must make allowances for your impatience on the present occasion, for the lion is a foe not to be despised, and he is truly as formidable an antagonist when brought to bay as the Iberians on the banks of the

Ebro—far more so than the revolted tribesmen we have been hunting for the past three weeks."

"Giscon says nothing," Adherbal remarked; "he has a soul above even the hunting of lions. I warrant that during the five hours we have been reclining here his thoughts have never once turned towards the hunt we are going to have tonight."

"That is true enough," Giscon said, speaking for the first time. "I own that my thoughts have been of Carthage, and of the troubles that threaten her owing to the corruption and misgovernment which are sapping her strength."

"It were best not to think too much on the subject, Giscon," the general said; "still better not to speak of it. You know that I lament, as you do, the misgovernment of Carthage, and mourn for the disasters which have been brought upon her by it. But the subject is a dangerous one; the council have spies everywhere, and to be denounced as one hostile to the established state of things is to be lost."

"I know the danger," the young man said passionately. "I know that hitherto all who have ventured to raise their voices against the authority of these tyrants have died by torture—that murmuring has been stamped out in blood. Yet were the danger ten times as great," and the speaker had risen now from his couch and was walking up and down the tent, "I could not keep silent. What have our tyrants brought us to? Their extravagance, their corruption, have wasted the public funds and have paralyzed our arms. Sicily and Sardinia have been lost; our allies in Africa have been goaded by their exactions again and again into rebellion, and Carthage has more than once lately been obliged to

fight hard for her very existence. The lower classes in the city are utterly disaffected; their earnings are wrung from them by the tax gatherers. Justice is denied them by the judges, who are the mere creatures of the committee of five. The suffetes are mere puppets in their hands. Our vessels lie unmanned in our harbours, because the funds which should pay the sailors are appropriated by our tyrants to their own purposes. How can a Carthaginian who loves his country remain silent?"

"All you say is true, Giscon," the general said gravely, "though I should be pressed to death were it whispered in Carthage that I said so; but at present we can do nothing. Had the great Hamilcar Barca lived I believe that he would have set himself to work to clear out this Augean stable, a task greater than that accomplished by our great hero, the demigod Hercules; but no less a hand can accomplish it. You know how every attempt at revolt has failed; how terrible a vengeance fell on Matho and the mercenaries; how the down trodden tribes have again and again, when victory seemed in their hands, been crushed into the dust.

"No, Giscon, we must suffer the terrible ills which you speak of until some hero arises—some hero whose victories will bind not only the army to him, but will cause all the common people of Carthage—all her allies and tributaries—to look upon him as their leader and deliverer.

"I have hopes, great hopes, that such a hero may be found in my nephew, Hannibal, who seems to possess all the genius, the wisdom, and the talent of his father. Should the dream which he cherished, and of which I was but now speaking to you, that of leading a Carthaginian army across

the Ebro, over the Apennines, through the plains of lower Gaul, and over the Alps into Italy, there to give battle to the cohorts of Rome on their own ground,—should this dream be verified I say, should success attend him, and Rome be humbled to the dust, then Hannibal would be in a position to become the dictator of Carthage, to overthrow the corrupt council, to destroy this tyranny—misnamed a republic—and to establish a monarchy, of which he should be the first sovereign, and under which Carthage, again the queen of the world, should be worthy of herself and her people. And now let us speak of it no more. The very walls have ears, and I doubt not but even among my attendants there are men who are spies in the pay of the council. I see and lament as much as any man the ruin of my country; but, until I see a fair hope of deliverance, I am content to do the best I can against her enemies, to fight her battles as a simple soldier."

There was silence in the tent. Malchus had thrown himself down on his couch, and for a time forgot even the approaching lion hunt in the conversation to which he had listened.

The government of Carthage was indeed detestable, and was the chief cause both of the misfortunes which had befallen her in the past, and of the disasters which were in the future to be hers. The scheme of government was not in itself bad, and in earlier and simpler times had acted well. Originally it had consisted of three estates, which answered to the king, lords, and commons. At the head of affairs were two suffetes chosen for life. Below them was the senate, a very numerous body, comprising all the aristocracy of

Carthage. Below this was the democracy, the great mass of the people, whose vote was necessary to ratify any law passed by the senate.

In time, however, all authority passed from the suffetes, the general body of the senate and the democracy, into the hands of a committee of the senate, one hundred in number, who were called the council, the real power being invested in the hands of an inner council, consisting of from twenty to thirty of the members. The deliberations of this body were secret, their power absolute. They were masters of the life and property of every man in Carthage, as afterwards were the council of ten in the republic of Venice. For a man to be denounced by his secret enemy to them as being hostile to their authority was to ensure his destruction and the confiscation of his property.

The council of a hundred was divided into twenty subcommittees, each containing five members. Each of these committees was charged with the control of a department—the army, the navy, the finances, the roads and communications, agriculture, religion, and the relations with the various subject tribes, the more important departments being entirely in the hands of the members of the inner council of thirty.

The judges were a hundred in number. These were appointed by the council, and were ever ready to carry out their behest, consequently justice in Carthage was a mockery. Interest and intrigue were paramount in the law courts, as in every department of state. Every prominent citizen, every successful general, every man who seemed likely, by his ability or his wealth, to become a popular

personage with the masses, fell under the ban of the council, and sooner or later was certain to be disgraced. The resources of the state were devoted not to the needs of the country but to aggrandizement and enriching of the members of the committee.

Heavy as were the imposts which were laid upon the tributary peoples of Africa for the purposes of the state, enormous burdens were added by the tax gatherers to satisfy the cupidity of their patrons in the council. Under such circumstances it was not to be wondered at that Carthage, decaying, corrupt, ill governed, had suffered terrible reverses at the hands of her young and energetic rival Rome, who was herself some day, when she attained the apex of her power, to suffer from abuses no less flagrant and general than those which had sapped the strength of Carthage.

With the impetuosity of youth Malchus naturally inclined rather to the aspirations of his kinsman Giscon than to the more sober counsels of his father. He had burned with shame and anger as he heard the tale of the disasters which had befallen his country, because she had made money her god, had suffered her army and her navy to be regarded as secondary objects, and had permitted the command of the sea to be wrested from her by her wiser and more far seeing rival.

As evening closed in the stir in the neighbouring camp aroused Malchus from his thoughts, and the anticipation of the lion hunt, in which he was about to take part, again became foremost.

The camp was situated twenty days' march from Carthage at the foot of some hills in which lions and other beasts of prey were known to abound, and there was no doubt that they would be found that evening.

The expedition had been despatched under the command of Hamilcar to chastise a small tribe which had attacked and plundered some of the Carthaginian caravans on their way to Ethiopia, then a rich and prosperous country, wherein were many flourishing colonies, which had been sent out by Carthage.

The object of the expedition had been but partly successful. The lightly clad tribesmen had taken refuge far among the hills, and, although by dint of long and fatiguing marches several parties had been surprised and slain, the main body had evaded all the efforts of the Carthaginian general.

The expedition had arrived at its present camping place on the previous evening. During the night the deep roaring of lions had been heard continuously among the hills, and so bold and numerous were they that they had come down in such proximity to the camp that the troops had been obliged to rise and light great fires to scare them from making an attack upon the horses.

The general had therefore consented, upon the entreaties of his nephew Adherbal, and his son, to organize a hunt upon the following night. As soon as the sun set the troops, who had already received their orders, fell into their ranks. The full moon rose as soon as the sun dipped below the horizon, and her light was ample for the object they had in view.

The Numidian horse were to take their station on the plain; the infantry in two columns, a mile apart, were to enter the mountains, and having marched some distance, leaving detachments behind them, they were to move along the crest of the hills until they met; then, forming a great semicircle, they were to light torches, which they had prepared during the day, and to advance towards the plain shouting and dashing their arms, so as to drive all the wild animals inclosed in the arc down into the plain.

The general with the two young officers and his son, and a party of fifty spearmen, were to be divided between the two groves in which the camps were pitched, which were opposite the centre of the space facing the line inclosed by the beaters. Behind the groves the Numidian horse were stationed, to give chase to such animals as might try to make their escape across the open plain. The general inspected the two bodies of infantry before they started, and repeated his instructions to the officers who commanded them, and enjoined them to march as noiselessly as possible until the semicircle was completed and the beat began in earnest.

The troops were to be divided into groups of eight, in order to be able to repel the attacks of any beasts which might try to break through the line. When the two columns had marched away right and left towards the hills, the attendants of the elephants and baggage animals were ordered to remove them into the centre of the groves. The footmen who remained were divided into two parties of equal strength. The general with Malchus remained in the grove in which his tent was fixed with one of these parties,

while Adherbal and Giscon with the others took up their station in the larger grove.

"Do you think the lions are sure to make for these groves?" Malchus asked his father as, with a bundle of javelins lying by his side, his bow in his hand, and a quiver of arrows hung from his belt in readiness, he took his place at the edge of the trees.

"There can be no certainty of it, Malchus; but it seems likely that the lions, when driven out of their refuges among the hills, will make for these groves, which will seem to offer them a shelter from their pursuers. The fires here will have informed them of our presence last night; but as all is still and dark now they may suppose that the groves are deserted. In any case our horses are in readiness among the trees close at hand, and if the lions take to the plains we must mount and join the Numidians in the chase."

"I would rather meet them here on foot, father."

"Yes, there is more excitement, because there is more danger in it, Malchus; but I can tell you the attack of a wounded lion is no joke, even for a party of twenty-five well armed men. Their force and fury are prodigious, and they will throw themselves fearlessly upon a clump of spears in order to reach their enemies. One blow from their paws is certain death. Be careful, therefore, Malchus. Stir not from my side, and remember that there is a vast difference between rashness and bravery."

II. — A NIGHT ATTACK

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THE time seemed to Malchus to pass slowly indeed as he sat waiting the commencement of the hunt. Deep roars, sounding like distant thunder, were heard from time to time among the hills. Once or twice Malchus fancied that he could hear other sounds such as would be made by a heavy stone dislodged from its site leaping down the mountain side; but he was not sure that this was not fancy, or that the sound might not be caused by the roaring of lions far away among the hills.

His father had said that three hours would probably elapse before the circuit would be completed. The distance was not great, but the troops would have to make their way with the greatest care along the rocky hills through brushwood and forest, and their advance would be all the more slow that they had to take such pains to move noiselessly.

It was indeed more than three hours after the column had left the camp when the sound of a distant horn was heard far up the hillside. Almost instantaneously lights burst out in a great semicircle along the hillside, and a faint confused sound, as of the shouting of a large body of men, was heard on the still night air.

"That is very well done," the general said in a tone of satisfaction. "I had hardly expected it to be so well managed; for the operation on such broken and difficult ground was not easy to carry out, even with the moon to help them."

"But see, father!" Malchus said, "there are many patches of darkness in the line, and the lions might surely escape through these."

"It would not be possible, Malchus, to place the parties at equal distances over such broken ground. Nor are the lions likely to discover the gaps in the line; they will be far too much terrified by the uproar and sudden blaze of light to approach the troops. Hark, how they are roaring! Truly it is a majestic and terrible sound, and I do not wonder that the wild natives of these mountains regard the animals with something of the respect which we pay to the gods. And now do you keep a sharp eye along the foot of the hills. There is no saying how soon the beasts may break cover."

Slowly the semicircle of light was seen to contract as the soldiers who formed it moved forward towards the foot of the hill; but although Malchus kept his eyes strained upon the fringe of trees at its foot, he could see no signs of movement.

The roaring still continued at intervals, and it was evident that the beasts inclosed in the arc had descended to the lower slopes of the hill.

"They may be upon us sooner than you expect, Malchus. Their colour well nigh matches with that of the sand, and you may not see them until they are close upon us."

Presently a Numidian soldier standing behind Malchus touched him on the shoulder and said in a whisper: "There they are!" pointing at the same time across the plain.

Malchus could for a time see nothing; then he made out some indistinct forms.

"There are six of them," the general said, "and they are making for this grove. Get your bows ready."

Malchus could now clearly see the lions approaching. They were advancing slowly, turning occasionally to look back as if reluctant to quit the shelter of the hills; and Malchus could hardly resist a start of uneasiness as one of them suddenly gave vent to a deep, threatening roar, so menacing and terrible that the very leaves of the trees seemed to quiver in the light of the moon under its vibrations. The lions seemed of huge dimensions, especially the leader of the troop, who stalked with a steady and majestic step at their head. When within fifty yards of the grove the lions suddenly paused; their leader apparently scented danger. Again the deep terrible roar rose in the air, answered by an angry snarling noise on the part of the females.

"Aim at the leader," the general whispered, "and have your brands in readiness."



Malchus at the lion hunt.

Immediately behind the party a fire was burning; it had been suffered to die down until it was a mere pile of glowing embers, and in this the ends of a dozen stakes of dried wood were laid. The glow of the fire was carefully hidden by a circle of sticks on which thick cloths had been hung. The fire had been prepared in readiness in case the lions should

appear in numbers too formidable to be coped with. The leading lion was within twenty-five paces of the spot where the party was standing when Hamilcar gave the word, and a volley of arrows shot forth from their hiding place.

The lion gave a roar of rage and pain, then, crouching for a moment, with a few tremendous bounds he reached the edge of the wood. He could see his enemies now, and with a fierce spring threw himself upon them. But as soon as they had discharged their arrows the soldiers had caught up their weapons and formed in a close body, and the lion was received upon the points of a dozen spears.

There was a crashing of wood and a snarling growl as one of the soldiers was struck dead with a blow of the mighty paw of the lion, who, ere he could recover himself, received half a dozen javelins thrust deep into his flanks, and fell dead.

The rest of the troop had followed him as he sprang forward, but some of the soldiers, who had been told off for the purpose, seized the lighted brands and threw them over the head of the leader among his followers. As the glowing brands, after describing fiery circles in the air, fell and scattered at their feet, the lions paused, and turning abruptly off dashed away with long bounds across the front of the grove.

"Now, Malchus, to horse!" Hamilcar exclaimed. And the general and his son, leaping upon their steeds, dashed out from the grove in pursuit of the troop of lions. These, passing between the two clumps of trees, were making for the plain beyond, when from behind the other grove a dark band of horsemen rode out.

"Let them pass," Hamilcar shouted; "do not head them back."

The cavalry reined up until the troop of lions had passed. Hamilcar rode up to the officer in command.

"Bring twenty of your men," he said; "let the rest remain here. There will doubtless be more of them yet."

Then with the twenty horsemen he rode on in pursuit of the lions.

The chase was an exciting one. For a time the lions, with their long bounds, kept ahead of the horsemen; but the latter, splendidly mounted on their well bred steeds, soon began to gain. When they were within a hundred yards of them one of the lions suddenly faced round. The Numidians, well accustomed to the sport, needed no orders from their chief. They scattered at once and broke off on each flank so as to encircle the lion, who had taken his post on a hummock of sand and lay couched on his haunches, with his tail lashing his sides angrily, like a great cat about to make his spring.

The horsemen circled round him, dashing up to within five-and-twenty yards, discharging their arrows, and then wheeling away. Each time the lion was struck he uttered a sharp, angry growl, and made a spring in the direction of the horsemen, and then fell back to his post.

One of the soldiers, thinking that the lion was now nearly crippled, ventured to ride somewhat closer; he discharged his arrow, but before he could wheel his horse the lion with two tremendous springs was upon him.

A single blow of his paw brought the horse to the ground. Then the lion seized the soldier by the shoulder, shook him

as a cat would a mouse, and throwing him on the sand lay with his paw across him. At this moment Malchus galloped past at full speed, his bow drawn to the arrow head and fixed. The arrow struck the lion just behind its shoulder. The fierce beast, which was in the act of rising, sank down quietly again; its majestic head drooped between its forepaws on to the body of the Numidian, and there it lay as if overtaken with a sudden sleep. Two more arrows were fired into it, but there was no movement.

"The brave beast is dead," Malchus said. "Here is the arrow with which I slew it."

"It was well done, Malchus, and the hide is yours. Let us set off after the others."

But the stand which the lion had made had been sufficiently long to enable the rest of the troop to escape. Leaving two or three of their comrades to remove the body of the soldier, the horsemen scattered in various directions; but although they rode far over the plain, they could see no signs of the troop they had pursued.

After a time they gave up the pursuit and rode back towards the camp. When they reached it they found that another troop of lions, eight in number, had approached the other grove, where two had been killed by the party commanded by Adherbal and Giscon, and the rest of the cavalry were still in pursuit of the others. They presently returned, bringing in four more skins; so that eight lions in all had fallen in the night's work.

"Well, Malchus, what do you think of lion hunting?" Adherbal asked as they gathered again in the general's tent.

"They are terrible beasts," Malchus said. "I had not thought that any beast could make so tremendous a roar. Of course I have heard those in captivity in Carthage, but it did not seem nearly so terrible as it sounded here in the stillness of the desert."

"I own that it made my blood run cold," Adherbal said; "and their charge is tremendous—they broke through the hedge of spears as if they had been reeds. Three of our men were killed."

"Yes," Malchus agreed; "it seemed almost like a dream for a minute when the great beast was among us. I felt very glad when he rolled over on to his side."

"It is a dangerous way of hunting," Hamilcar said. "The chase on horseback in the plains has its dangers, as we saw when that Numidian was killed; but with proper care and skill it is a grand sport. But this work on foot is too dangerous, and has cost the republic the loss of five soldiers. Had I had nets with me I would have adopted the usual plan of stretching one across the trees ten paces in front of us. This breaks the lion's spring, he becomes entangled in its meshes, and can be destroyed with but little danger. But no skill or address avails against the charge of a wounded lion. But you are wounded, Giscon."

"It is a mere nothing," Giscon said.

"Nay," Hamilcar replied, "it is an ugly scratch, Giscon; he has laid open your arm from the shoulder to the elbow as if it were by the cut of a knife."

"It served me right for being too rash," Giscon said. "I thought he was nearly dead, and approached with my sword to give him a finishing thrust. When he struck viciously at