

# THE GREATNESS AND DECLINE OF THE CELTS

## CHAPTER III (part 2)

### THE CELTS IN THE WEST. ITALY AND SPAIN

#### III

#### THE CELTS IN THE PUNIC WARS

At the time when the Punic wars commenced, the races of Spain were arranged as follows: in the centre on the plateau there had grown up a group of peoples of great military excellence which, though mainly Iberian, contained a large number of Celts, who enjoyed a certain standing. The collaboration of these two elements in Celtiberia was not unlike that of the Arabs and the Berbers in Algeria and Morocco before the European conquest.

In the first Punic War Carthage lost her Spanish colonies. After the war, in 237, the first generation of the great generals of the Barca family, Hamilcar and Hasdrubal, set out to reconquer the country, [Polyb., ii, 1, 16.] with the idea of extending the Carthaginian domain and making it a base for the war which they were preparing. The first operations among the Tartessians brought them into conflict with bodies of Celts. [Diod., xxv, 10, 1.] They next crossed the Sierra Morena and attacked the Celtiberians, whom Hannibal finally conquered in 221. [Schulten, *op. cit.*, i, p. 99; Jullian, i, p. 460.] From Cartagena to Burgos they had subdued the whole plateau. It would doubtless be more correct to say that they had concluded agreements with the Celtiberian tribes, which supplied them with mercenaries. In 218, the Lusitani are mentioned for the first time as soldiers of Hannibal. [Ibid., p. 109.]

The second Punic War began. Hannibal resumed or started negotiations with the Volcae, who lived on the northern slope of the Pyrenees. The envoys of the Roman Senate, returning from Carthage, where war had been decided on, landed on the coast of Languedoc, likewise with a view to negotiation. Livy [xxi, 20. Cf. Jullian, *op. cit.*, i, p. 460.] describes them addressing the assembly of armed Volcae. There they had to listen to all the complaints of the Gauls of Italy, which were possibly a genuine expression of public discontent but may have spread by the emissaries of Hannibal

## THE CELTS IN THE PUNIC WARS

preaching the cause of Celtic unity. The Volcae remained undecided. They went through the form of opposing the passage of the Carthaginian army at Ruscino, but they came to terms before there was any fighting. Hannibal passed without trouble through the land of the Volcae Tectosages, and then through that of the Arecomici. At the Rhone, the same undecidedness began again. An army of Volcae or Salyes was disposed along the east bank. Hannibal turned it and put it to flight, and then, instead of marching up the Durance and crossing by Mont Genève - perhaps in order to avoid observation by the army of Scipio, who had landed a body of cavalry by the mouth of the Rhone - he went up the east bank of the Rhone to the Isère, and passed without fighting through the country of the Allobroges, escorted by a king whose cause he had taken up. He probably took advantage of his march through these peoples to repair and renew the equipment of his force. [Ibid., 4, i, p. 475.] Leaving their territory, he entered the Maurienne, where another Gallic people, the Medulli, received him very ill. At Mont Cenis, yet another tribe, the Centrones, disputed his passage. After that there was Italy.

All this information about Hannibal's journey through Gaul is of the greatest interest. For the first time, it shows us Gallic peoples in Gaul, and places them. Although sometimes contradictory, it is all of good quality, and goes back to the Greek historians who accompanied the expedition, Silenos and others. [Ibid., p. 455.] The Volcae occupied Languedoc [Ibid., p. 459.] from the Pyrenees to the Rhone. Between that river and the Durance, Livy [Ibid., ii, p. 515.] mentions the Tricastini and the Vocontii. The valley of the Isère belonged to the Allobroges up to the Maurienne. [Ibid., i, p. 475.] North of the Rhone, Polybios [iii, 42, 8.] places the Ardyes, who are probably the Ædui. These positions are permanent, and we must conclude from them that, if there were large shiftings of peoples in Gaul, first before the earliest invasions of Italy and then at the time when the Belgæ made their appearance on the borders of the Celtic world, these movements were for the main part over by 218. Behind the Ædui must have been the Belgæ.

It is possible that the Celts missed their opportunity in Hannibal. He seems to have counted on a general Celtic invasion, but he did not succeed in bringing it about. The Gauls of Gaul were cool or hostile. Those of Italy, one nation of whom, the Boii, had summoned him, were hardly more enthusiastic. They made up their minds when the game was lost.

There was no general rising. All that Hannibal managed to do was to recruit Gallic mercenaries, whom he used skilfully to spare his Spanish troops. [Jullian, op. cit., i, p. 492.] But the Romans also had Gallic mercenaries. [Ibid.] They were able to

## THE GREATNESS AND DECLINE OF THE CELTS

maintain garrisons at Mutina and a small army of observation in Cisalpine Gaul, and to preserve their colonies at Placentia, Cremona, and Ariminum. [D'Arbois, CCXCIX, 182.] It is true that in 216, after Cannae, the Boii seem to have been tempted to do something. They cut down the little army of the Praetor L. Postumius in the Litana Forest. [Ibid.] But that victory led to nothing.

Hasdrubal, Hannibal's younger brother, came very near to succeeding where his elder brother had failed. Being placed in charge of operations in Spain, he managed to recruit troops north of the Pyrenees. [Jullian, op. cit., i, pp. 494 ff.] In 214, at the battle of Jean, two Gallic chiefs named Moenicaptus and Vismarus, who may have been Belgæ, are mentioned among the slain. [Livy, xxiv, 42, 8.] On his defeat in 208 Hasdrubal eluded the Romans who were waiting for him in the gorges of Roussillon by going round the west of the range [Jullian, op. cit., i, p. 496.] and travelled through Aquitaine and Languedoc, gathering a new army. Then he descended into Italy, where, after being better received than Hannibal, he was defeated with his Gauls on the banks of the Metaurus in 207. [Ibid., p. 498.] Two years later, another brother, Mago, renewed the attempt. He landed at Genoa and held the district for two years. Then, being driven back into Savoy, he re-embarked, taking with him part of his European troops. Hannibal took back others, so that at Zama half of his army was composed of Celts and Ligurians. [App., *Lib.*, 40, 44; Jullian, op. cit., i, p. 500.]

In Cisalpine Gaul, the Barcas had left a Carthaginian officer, Hamilcar, who succeeded in rousing the Cenomani, who had so long been allies of the Romans, and in taking Placentia. But he was defeated and killed before Cremona in 200. [Ibid., i, p. 501.]

The war went on with hard fighting and much bloodshed, and the Gallic peoples submitted one after another, the Cenomani in 197, [D'Arbois CCXCIX, p. 182.] the Insubres in 196. [Cic., *Pro Balbo*, 32.] The Romans gave them a *foedus* on good terms, and they became *civitates foederatae*. The Boii held out until 191; to them surrender brought the total destruction of their political organization. They had to give up half of their territory and three of their cities, Bononia (Bologna), which was made into a colony in 189, and Mutina and Parma in 183. Livy relates that only old men and children were left. [Livy, xxxvi, 40, 5.] It is also said that a body of Boii went back over the Alps into their old home. [Strabo, v, 1, 6, 10; Polyb., ii, 35, 4.] Of the Lingones nothing more is heard.

In 186 a new Gallic tribe appears in the north of Venetia. This was the Carni, [I, p. 460.] coming from Noricum, who settled in the country and vowed that their intentions were peaceful. A Roman army was sent against them in 183. They were

## THE CELTS IN THE PUNIC WARS

defeated, but they remained. A Roman colony was established at Aquileia in 187.

A story went about that Philip of Macedon intended to bring the Celts down on Italy. In 178 yet another small body of 8,000 Gauls appeared, asking for land. [Livy, xl, 53, 5 - 6.] They had to go. This was the last Celtic invasion of Italy down to the campaign of the Cimbri. Henceforward the Roman people regarded the Alps as the boundary of the Celtic world, and did not allow the Gauls to cross it. [Id., xxxix, 54, 11: proclamation of the Senate forbidding the Gauls to enter Italy.]

It was not long after these events that Polybios [ii, 15.] visited Cisalpine Gaul, of which he has left a very attractive picture: "Words fail," he says, "to describe the fertility of the country. Corn is so abundant that in our own time a Sicilian medimnus of wheat has more than once been seen to fetch only four obols, a medimnus of barley two obols, and a metretes of wine no more than a measure of barley. Millet and panic produce enormous crops. A single fact may give an idea of the quality of the acorns furnished by the oaks which grow at intervals on the plain [This is a feature of the landscape which has vanished.]: many pigs are slaughtered in Italy both for daily life and for the supply of camps, and it is from this district that most of them come. [Pig-breeding is still important in Emilia.] Lastly, here is conclusive proof of the cheapness and plenty prevailing there. Travellers stopping at the inns do not make terms over each item separately, but ask what the rate is per head; as a rule the innkeeper undertakes to give them all they want for a quarter of an obol, [Something under a halfpenny.] and this price is seldom exceeded. Need I speak of the enormous population of the country, of the stature and good looks of the people, and of their warlike spirit?"

The Gauls had their share in the prosperity of this bountiful land. Everything; down to the system of inns, can be put down to them, for there were inns in Ireland too. [The six Bruidne of Ireland. For inns in the Transpadane country, cf. Jullian, op. cit., i, p. 377.]

They had suffered much in the recent wars. In 197 and 196 alone the Insubres are said to have lost 75,000 men. These were great losses. But there were still Gauls left in Italy. The excavations at Ornavasso [CXLV, 1907, 101; 1908, 22.] and the neighbourhood of Como show that the Lepontii and Insubres remained distinct, with their civilization, down to Imperial times. This does not mean that they had given up their unruly ways for good.

The misfortunes of the Gauls were not yet quite at an end. But the Gallic wars were over, for one cannot describe the revolt of the slaves, chiefly Gauls, which embarrassed the Romans at the end of the century as a Gallic war.

Not only in Italy did the Celts retire before the Roman Republic, which

## THE GREATNESS AND DECLINE OF THE CELTS

henceforward was mixed up in everything that happened in the Mediterranean world. In Spain and in the East the Celtiberians and Galatians presently lost their independence.

While Hannibal was carrying the war into Italy, a fleet commanded by Publius Scipio as Consul and his father Cneius was making for Spain. Publius Scipio returned to Italy, to get beaten on the Ticinus, and Cneius continued on his way and landed at Emporion. [Jullian, *op. cit.*, i, pp. 510 ff.; Homo, CCCXLI, English, pp. 315 ff.] At first he found allies among the Celtiberians. But in 212 they returned to their alliance with Carthage. The two Scipios, who had been in command since 217, were defeated separately and killed within a month of each other. Young Publius Scipio, Africanus that was to be, quickly restored the situation in 211 and, having driven out Hasdrubal, made ready in Spain for the African campaign which brought the war to an end.

The Spanish campaigns of the Scipios form a parallel to that of the Barcas, and what the Barcas had done for Carthage the Scipios did for Rome. But they went further.

In 197 they attacked the Celtiberian positions on the plateau [Schulten, DXVII, p. 82.] and commenced a stubborn war which went on until 133, with a few years of respite between 178 and 154. The fall of Numantia [Id., DXIX.] brought the war to an end. The whole of Spain, except the Pyrenees and the free or federated cities of the coast, was organized as a Roman province.

From the rapid conquest of Gaul and the long resistance of the Celtiberians some have argued that there is no such thing as a Celtic character. The Gauls have left a name for quickly losing heart. Arguments of this kind, which do not take into account the circumstances on either side, are a fruitful source of error. Moreover, the Celts seem to have always had an idea of civilization which was quite opposed to their concern for their national independence, and led them to see a friend and guide where others saw an enemy. But, for all their wavering, their resistance, even in Italy, lasted over a hundred years.

In the Eastern Mediterranean the Romans found it necessary to intervene in Macedon and Greece. They were constantly finding Gallic colonies on their way. They had to make terms with those in Noricum which were determined to be left in peace, to be wary with the Celts of Illyria, and to hold the balance between the Galatians and the Kings of Pergamon.

One of the first consequences of the Punic War was that the Romans came into contact with the Galatians. After Zama, Hannibal had taken refuge with

## THE CELTS IN THE PUNIC WARS

Antiochos the Great, and finally with Prusias. Antiochos allowed himself to be won over. The Galatians took sides with him and shared his defeat at Magnesia on the Maeander. The Consul Manlius Vulso marched against them. [Jullian, *op. cit.*, i, p. 514.] The first to be attacked, the Tolistoboi, retired to a fortified position on Mount Olympos, where the Romans blockaded them and took over 40,000 prisoners. The Tectosages and Trocmi were likewise compelled to take up their position in another stronghold on Mount Magaba. It was taken by storm, Manlius's campaign was memorable for disgraceful pillage, [Livy, 45, 7.] but on the whole he dealt fairly generously with the vanquished, who were included in the general peace-treaty and allowed to keep their territory provided they did not come out of it. But the King of Pergamon seems to have now obtained a sort of protectorate, which had rather a disturbed history. The Galatians revolted several times. They were crushed in 166. But now the Romans intervened in their favour, and established their independence as a permanency. In 152 Attalos III of Pergamon bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans. The situation changed, though it is not possible to say exactly how, save that the Galatians were drawn into the wars against Mithradates [T. Reinach, *DLI*, p 74.] and that they thereby at first lost their independence. In 73 they succeeded in recovering it, and until the death of Mithradates they were faithful allies of Rome. At the end of the war, in 63, Pompey reorganized the Galatians in three principalities, one of which, reaching to the sea and including Trapezus, went to the famous Deiotarus. Deiotarus was not satisfied, and took advantage of the Civil War to intrigue between Pompey and Cæsar. He had to go to Rome to defend his conduct before Cæsar, and was defended by Cicero in 45 so successfully that he returned to Galatia as a king. By the favour of the Romans, the kingdom of his successors, Castor and Amyntas, was still further extended. But in 25 the whole kingdom was declared a Roman province.

The kingdom of Deiotarus had already ceased to be Celtic; it was a kind of large satrapy, devoid of any racial or national character. The fact was that the Galatians had merged into the population of Anatolia, just as, at the other end of the world, the Celts of Spain had merged into the Iberian peoples. The most conspicuous trace of themselves which they seem to have left in Asia Minor was their blood. Travellers have noted in the country a considerable number of blond types, in which some of the physical characteristics of the Celts doubtless reappear.

In Thrace the little kingdom of Cauaros had disappeared in 193. In 171 the Romans entered Illyria to defend the colony of Aquileia, which was threatened by the Iapodes. An army marched through their country, and probably also that of the

## THE GREATNESS AND DECLINE OF THE CELTS

Scordisci, to attack Perseus in Macedonia. It seems to have behaved very badly there, for the Consul C. Cassius on his return found an embassy of Istrians and Iapodes who had come to complain to the Senate. From the middle of the second century onwards, the Scordisci were constantly at war with the Romans, and twelve expeditions were sent against them. In 135 they were severely beaten south of Haemos, [Jullian, *op. cit.*, i, p. 515.] and they remained quiet for a time. In 110, in alliance with the Thracians, they threatened the Temple of Delphi, and they doubtless took part in the looting of 90. They were crushed by L. Scipio in 83 and planted on the other side of the Danube; nevertheless, we find them again, about 78, in Macedonia, allied with Mithradates and supplying him with most of his Gallic mercenaries, and also plotting with the Dacians.

On the Adriatic the Illyro-Celtic pirates were driven back into the interior in 135. With 129 began a series of small expeditions against the Iapodes, ending in a treaty in 56. They started again in 52, and only ended with the subjection of the country. In A.D. 8 the whole Celtic region on the Danube, including the territory of the Scordisci, was made into a Roman province.

At the end of this stage in history, we have to note that the Belgic contingents had no real success save in the East. In Spain they established themselves, but did not last. In Italy their appearance was transitory. Their advance to the south of the Mediterranean was stopped in the first half of the third century, and after that the settlements founded or reinforced by them declined. Decisive defeats in the first half of the second century set the seal on those of the third. The Celts in Spain began by yielding ground to the Iberians, and those of the East to the Thracians and Pergamenes. All, one after another, were crushed, or wiped out, or subdued by the Romans. Those who suffered least were still the Galatians. But, as we have seen, Galatia was by that time no more than an island, lost to the Celtic world. The kingdom of Deiotarus and his successors was Galatian in name alone. The Celtic states and tribes lost all their dominions, one after another. But everywhere they left traces, stocks of men. Nor does it seem that these lands which they had conquered were in any great danger while they held them.

Moreover, the Gallic conquerors, old and new, do not seem to have declined in quality. During those two hundred years they were defeated often and thoroughly, and won the esteem of their opponents. Also, they fought more often for others than on their own account, like the bodies of mercenaries which they lent on every hand. This is especially true of the Belgæ.

This account would, therefore, not be complete if it did not once more

## THE CELTS IN THE PUNIC WARS

mention the Gallic mercenaries, those roving bands which enormously extended the area covered by the Celts. As early as 307, Agathocles had taken Celts to Africa. [Diod., xx, 64, 2.] To the history of the Celts they added that of heroic, picturesque lands and they gained a great sum of individual experiences, which cannot all have been lost, in spite of the great slaughter of men involved.

Polybios [ii, 7, 6; Jullian, op. cit., i, p. 327.] tells a story of 3,000 Gauls who were enlisted by the Carthaginians in Italy in 263 and transported to Sicily. They were a difficult body to keep in hand; they looted Agrigentum and finally betrayed their employers. The Romans got rid of them as best they could. We find them later in Epeiros, about 800 in number, in the service of the city of Phoenice against the Illyrians, when they delivered up the city to the brigands. Thus we can follow them for thirty years.

Carthage had larger bodies of Gallic mercenaries in her service during the first Punic War, and it was one of their leaders, named Antarios (who, by the way, spoke Punic excellently, according to Polybios), who was responsible for the great mutiny of the mercenaries in 241 - 237. [Ibid., i, p. 326.]

Mercenary service was a regular Celtic industry, and a well paid one. [Ibid., p. 328.] The 10,000 horse and 10,000 foot enlisted by Perseus was commanded by a *regulus* and had all the appearance of a tribal army. It is, indeed, often very difficult in the Gallic wars to distinguish between large companies of mercenaries and belligerent armies.