

THE HISTORIES OF POLYBIUS

BOOK III. 47.5-48.2

5 μυχόν· ὡς τὸθ' ὑπεράρας Ἀννίβας ἀπὸ τῶν κατὰ τὸν Ῥοδανὸν τόπων ἐνέβαλεν εἰς Ἰταλίαν.

6 *Ἐνιοὶ δὲ τῶν γεγραφότων περὶ τῆς ὑπερβολῆς ταύτης, βουλόμενοι τοὺς ἀναγινώσκοντας ἐκπλήττειν τῇ περὶ τῶν προειρημένων τόπων παραδοξολογίᾳ, λανθάνουσιν ἐμπίπτουτες εἰς δύο τὰ πάσης ἱστορίας ἀλλοτριώτατα· καὶ γὰρ ψευδολογεῖν καὶ μαχόμενα γράφειν αὐτοῖς ἀναγκάζονται. ἅμα μὲν γὰρ τὸν Ἀννίβαν ἀμίμητόν τινα παραιοάγοντες στρατηγὸν καὶ τὸλμη καὶ προνοίᾳ τούτων ὁμολογουμένως ἀποδεικνύουσιν ἡμῖν ἀλογιστότατον, ἅμα δὲ καταστροφὴν οὐ δυνάμενοι λαμβάνειν οὐδ' ἔξοδον τοῦ ψεύδους θεοὺς καὶ θεῶν παῖδας εἰς πραγματικὴν ἱστορίαν παραιοάγουσιν. ὑποθέμενοι γὰρ τὰς ἐρυμνότητας καὶ τραχύτητας τῶν Ἀλπευνῶν ὄρων τοιαύτας ὥστε μὴ οἶον ἕππους καὶ στρατόπεδα, σὺν δὲ τούτοις ἐλέφαντας, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ πέζους εὐζώνους εὐχερῶς ἂν διελθεῖν, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὴν ἔρημον τοιαύτην τιμὰ περὶ τοὺς τόπους ὑπογράψαντες ἡμῖν ὥστ' εἰ μὴ θεὸς ἢ τις ἥρωσ ἀπαντήσας τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἀννίβαν ὑπέδειξε τὰς ὁδοὺς, ἔξαπορήσαντας ἂν καταφθαρήναι πάντας, ὁμολογούμενως ἐκ τούτων εἰς ἑκάτερον τῶν προειρημένων ἀμαρτημάτων ἐμπίπτουσι.

48. πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ἂν τίς φανείη στρατηγὸς ἀλογιστότερος Ἀννίβου τίς καὶ σκαιότερος ἡγεμῶν, ὃς τοσοῦτων ἡγούμενος δυνάμεων καὶ τὰς μεγίστας ἐλπίδας ἔχων ἐν τούτοις τοῦ κατορθώσειν τοῖς ὁλοῖς, οὔτε τὰς ὁδοὺς οὔτε τόπους, ὡς οὐτοὶ φασιν, οὔτε ποῦ

chain which Hannibal now crossed to enter Italy from the Rhone valley.

Some of the writers who have described this passage of the Alps, from the wish to impress their readers by the marvels they recount of these mountains, are betrayed into two vices ever most alien to true history; for they are compelled to make both false statements and statements which contradict each other. While on the one hand introducing Hannibal as a commander of unequalled courage and foresight, they incontestably represent him to us as entirely wanting in prudence, and again, being unable to bring their series of falsehoods to any close or issue they introduce gods and the sons of gods into the sober history of facts. By representing the Alps as being so steep and rugged that not only horses and troops accompanied by elephants, but even active men on foot would have difficulty in passing, and at the same time picturing to us the desolation of the country as being such, that unless some god or hero had met Hannibal and showed him the way, his whole army would have gone astray and perished utterly, they unquestionably fall into both the above vices.

48. For in the first place can we imagine a more imprudent general or a more incompetent leader than Hannibal would have been, if with so large an army under his command and all his hopes of ultimate success resting on it, he did not know the roads and the country, as these writers

- 3 πορεύεται τὸ παράπαν οὔτε πρὸς τίνας ἐγίνωσκε, τὸ δὲ πέρας οὐδ' εἰ καθόλου [τοῦναντίον] δυνατοῖς ἐπιβάλλεται
- 4 καὶ κατά πάντα τρόπον ἐξαποροῦντες οὐχ ὑπομένοντες, ὥστ' εἰς ἀπρονοήτους καθιέναι τόπους μετὰ δυνάμεως, τοῦτο περιτιθέασιν οἱ συγγραφεῖς Ἀννίβη τῷ τὰς μεγίστας ἐλπίδας ἀκεραίους ἔχοντι περὶ τῶν καθ' αὐτὸν πραγμάτων. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ τῆς ἐρημίας, ἔτι δ' ἐρυμνόγητος καὶ δυσχωρίας τῶν τόπων
- 5 ἔκδηλον ποιεῖ τὸ ψεύδος αὐτῶν. οὐχ ἰστορήσαντες γὰρ ὅτι συμβαίνει τοὺς Κελτοὺς τοὺς παρὰ τὸν Ῥοδανὸν ποταμὸν οἰκοῦντας οὐχ ἅπαξ οὐδὲ δις πρὸ τῆς Ἀννίβου παρουσίας, οὐδὲ μὴν πάλαι, προσφάτως δέ, μεγάλοις στρατοπέδοις ὑπερβάντας τὰς Ἄλλεις παρατετάχθαι μὲν Ῥωμαίους, συνηγωνίσθαι δὲ Κελτοὺς τοῖς τὰ περὶ τὸν Πάδον πεδία κατοικοῦσι, καθάπερ ἡμεῖς ἐν τοῖς πρὸ τούτων ἐδηλώσαμεν, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις οὐκ εἰδότες ὅτι πλείστον ἀνθρώπων φύλον κατ' αὐτὰς οἰκῆν συμβαίνει τὰς Ἄλλεις, ἀλλ' ἀγνοοῦντες ἕκαστα τῶν εἰρημένων ἤρω τινά φασιν ἐπιφάνετα συνυποδείξαι τὰς ὁδοὺς αὐτοῖς. ἐξ ὧν εἰκότως ἐμπίπτουσιν εἰς τὸ παραπλήσιον τοῖς τραγωδιγράφους. καὶ γὰρ ἐκείνοις πᾶσιν αἱ καταστροφαὶ τῶν δραμάτων προσδέονται θεοῦ καὶ μηχανῆς διὰ τὸ τὰς πρώτας ὑποθέσεις ψευδεῖς καὶ παραλόγους λαμβάνειν, τοὺς τε συγγραφεῖς ἀνάγκη τὸ παραπλήσιον πάσχειν καὶ ποιῆν ἥρωάς τε καὶ θεοὺς ἐπιφανομένους, ἐπειδὴν τὰς ἀρχὰς ἀπιθάνους καὶ ψευδεῖς ὑπο-

say,⁸⁷ and had absolutely no idea where he was marching or against whom, or in fact if his enterprise were feasible or not? What they would have us believe is that Hannibal, who had met with no check to diminish his high hopes of success, ventured on a course that no general, even after a crushing defeat and utterly at his wits' end, would take, to march, that is, into a country as to which he had no information. Similarly, in what they say about the loneliness, and the extreme steepness and difficulty of the road, the falsehood is manifest. For they never took the trouble to learn that the Celts who live near the Rhone not on one or on two occasions only before Hannibal's arrival but often, and not at any remote date but quite recently, had crossed the Alps with large armies and met the Romans in the field side by side with the Celts who inhabit the plain of the Po (as I narrated in an earlier Book) nor are they aware that there is a considerable population in the Alps themselves; but in entire ignorance of all this they tell us that some hero appeared and showed the road. The natural consequence is that they get into the same difficulties as tragic dramatists all of whom, to bring their dramas to a close, require a *deus ex machina*, as the data they choose on which to found their plots are false and contrary to reasonable probability. These writers are necessarily in the same straits and invent apparitions of heroes and gods, since the beginnings on which they build are false and improbable; for

87 P. states that some of the earlier writers said that Hannibal was not well prepared in advance for his march; see on 34. 1.

10 στήσανται. πῶς γὰρ οἶόν τε παραλόγοις ἀρχαῖς εὐ-
 λογον ἐπιθεῖναι τέλος; Ἀννίβας γε μὴν, οὐχ ὡς οὐτοὶ
 11 γράφουσι, λίαν δὲ περὶ ταῦτα πραγματικῶς ἐχρήτο
 ταῖς ἐπιβολαῖς. καὶ γὰρ τῆς χώρας ἀρετὴν, εἰς ἣν
 ἐπεβάλετο καθιέραι, καὶ τὴν τῶν ὄχλων ἀλλοτριότητα
 πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἐξητάκει σαφῶς, εἰς τε τὰς μεταξὺ
 12 δυσχωρίας ὁδηγοῖς καὶ καθηγεμόσιν ἐγχωρίους ἐχρή-
 το τοὺς αὐτῶν ἐλπίδων μέλλουσι κοινωνεῖν. ἡμέεις
 δὲ περὶ τούτων εὐθαρσῶς ἀποφαινόμεθα διὰ τὸ περὶ
 τῶν πράξεων παρ' αὐτῶν ἱστορηκέναι τῶν παρατετε-
 χότων τοῖς καιροῖς, τοὺς δὲ τόπους καταπτευκέναι καὶ
 τῇ διὰ τῶν Ἄλπεων αὐτοῖ κεχρησθαι πορείᾳ γνώσεως
 ἕνεκα καὶ θέας.

49. Οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ Πόπλιος μὲν ὁ τῶν Ῥωμαίων
 στρατηγὸς ἡμέρας ὕστερον τρισὶ τῆς ἀναζυγῆς τῆς
 τῶν Καρχηδονίων παραγεγόμενος ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ ποτα-
 2 μού διάβασιν, καὶ καταλαβὼν ὠρμηκότας τοὺς
 ὑπεναντίους, ἐξενίσθη μὲν ὡς ἐδέχεται μάλιστα, πε-
 πεισμένος οὐδέποτε ἂν αὐτοὺς τολῆσαι τῆδε ποιήσα-
 σθαι τὴν εἰς Ἰταλίαν πορείαν, διὰ τὸ πληθῆθος καὶ τὴν
 3 ἀθεσίαν τῶν κατοικούντων τοὺς τόπους βαρβάρων.
 θεωρῶν δὲ τετολμηκότας, αὐθις ἐπὶ τὰς ναὺς ἠπέειπε,
 4 καὶ παραγεγόμενος ἐνεβίβαζε τὰς δυνάμεις. καὶ τὸν
 μὲν ἀδελφὸν ἐξέπεμπε ἐπὶ τὰς ἐν Ἰβηρίᾳ πράξεις,
 αὐτὸς δὲ πάλιν ὑποστρέψας εἰς Ἰταλίαν ἐποιεῖτο τὸν
 πλοῦν, σπεύδων καταταχῆσαι τοὺς ὑπεναντίους διὰ
 5 Τυρρηνίας πρὸς τὴν τῶν Ἄλπεων ὑπερβολήν.
 Ἀννίβας δὲ ποιησάμενος ἐξῆς ἐπὶ τέτταρας ἡμέρας

how is it possible to finish conformably to reason what has
 been begun in defiance of it? Of course Hannibal did not
 act as these writers describe, but conducted his plans with
 sound practical sense. He had ascertained by careful in-
 quiry the richness of the country into which he proposed
 to descend and the aversion of the people to the Romans,
 and for the difficulties of the route he employed as guides
 and pioneers natives of the country, who were about to
 take part in his adventure. On these points I can speak with
 some confidence as I have inquired about the circum-
 stances from men present on the occasion and have per-
 sonally inspected the country and made the passage of the
 Alps⁸⁸ to learn for myself and see.

49. Now the Roman Consul Publius arrived at the
 crossing of the river three days after the departure of the
 Carthaginians, and finding the enemy gone was in the
 highest degree astonished, as he had been convinced that
 they would never venture to march on Italy by this route
 owing to the number and faithlessness of the native inhabi-
 tants. On seeing that they had done so he returned with all
 speed to his ships and began to embark his forces. Sending
 his brother to conduct the campaign in Spain, he himself
 turned back and made sail for Italy with the design of
 marching rapidly through Etruria and reaching the foot of
 the pass over the Alps before the enemy.

Hannibal, marching steadily from the crossing place

⁸⁸ The date of this passage is disputed, perhaps 151 or 150.