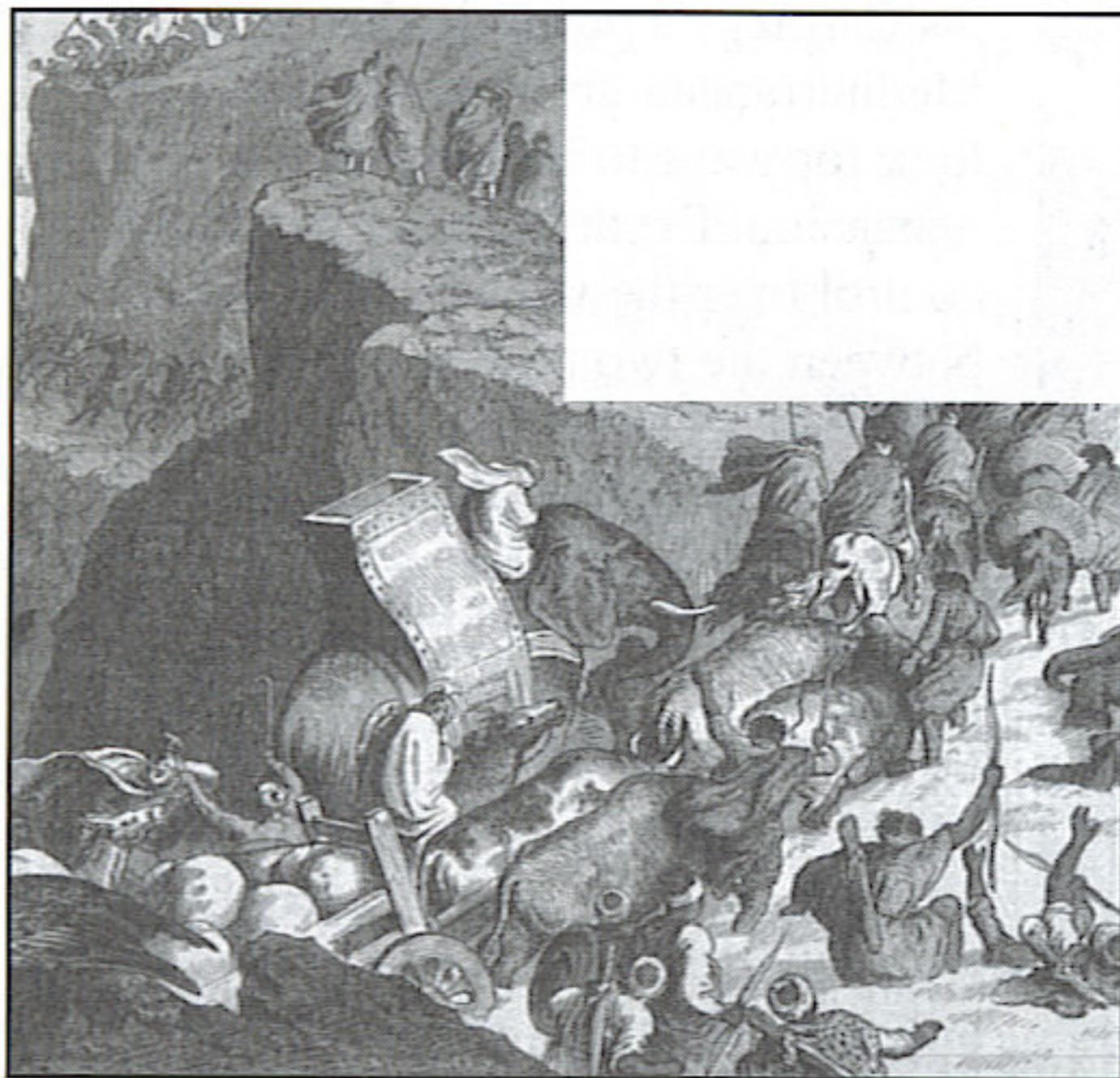


Event C: The Beginning of the Second Punic War



During the 20 years following the end of the First Punic War, both Rome and Carthage worked to increase their power and influence. Rome continued its expansion by conquering the Po Valley in northern Italy and Illyria, a region on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea. Carthage, too, increased its strength through the efforts of Hamilcar Barca (pronounced HAM-il-kar BAR-kah). Hamilcar believed that if he created a strong Carthaginian colony in Spain, he would have a place from which to attack Rome and avenge the humiliating defeat his country had suffered during the First Punic War. In 237 B.C.E. he organized an army and prepared to conquer the Spanish peninsula.

Accompanying him on his expedition was his teenage son, Hannibal (pronounced HAN-ih-bul), who shared his father's hatred of Rome and his desire for revenge.

Shortly after Hamilcar drowned in an accident in 229 B.C.E., Hannibal—although only 26 years old—took command of the Carthaginian forces in Spain. The troops were devoted to Hannibal. Even after he became a general, Hannibal ate with his men, dressed like them, and slept on the same hard ground at night. He had a combination of reckless bravery and wise judgment. According to the Roman historian Livy, “he was the first to enter battle and the last to leave it.”

Hannibal was determined to draw the Romans into war so he could repay them for the way they had treated Carthage. In 218 B.C.E. he attacked Saguntum (pronounced sah-GUN-toom), a city in Spain that was a Roman ally. After an eight-month siege, the city fell. When the Romans heard of the defeat of Saguntum, they declared war on Carthage and prepared to send a fleet to capture Hannibal. This action marked the beginning of the Second Punic War. Rather than defend Saguntum, Hannibal decided that his best chance to defeat the Romans would be to attack Italy itself. Hannibal believed that, once in Italy, he could encourage and lead a rebellion among the various Italian peoples Rome had conquered. Such an attack on their homeland would catch the Romans completely by surprise, since the Romans knew Hannibal had no fleet with which to transport his soldiers from Spain to Rome.

What happened next? How do you think Hannibal moved his army into Italy?

Notes about the outcome of the event: