

*Quod erat demonstrandum.*¹

Literature 17



The Golden Fleece (3) and How Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Destroyed Carthage

1 Greece

Read “*The Golden Fleece (3)*” You will find it on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive in Volume 3, Classics, “Legends of Greece and Rome” by G. H. Kupfer, no. 28. The picture above shows a modern reconstruction of the Argo, the ship in which Jason sailed. You can watch a short clip of it under construction and under way here: <https://vimeo.com/154020647>.

2 Rome

Stories from Roman History Retold by Lena Dalkeith (1906)
“How Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Destroyed Carthage”

Cato the Censor, when he was an old man, always used to finish his speeches in the senate with these words:

'And I, for my part, think that Carthage should be destroyed!'

Thereupon without fail, Scipio Nasica, in his turn, would make answer:

'And I, for my part, think that Carthage should be left standing!'

Most of the senators agreed with Cato. They were afraid that Carthage, which was fast recovering the power it had lost after the defeat of Hannibal by the first Scipio Africanus, would rise up again to be a dangerous rival to Rome. Fear made them both cruel and unjust, and they decided to destroy the city.

An excuse was soon found for declaring war. The Carthaginians at once sent ambassadors to

¹ Usually abbreviated to Q.E.D. “What was to be demonstrated” or “What was to be shown,” sometimes translated less literally as “thus it has been demonstrated.” This Latin phrase, or more usually the abbreviation, is used at the end of mathematical or philosophical proofs. When my husband was young, having no knowledge of Latin but regularly encountering the initials Q.E.D. at the end of mathematical proofs, he thought it stood for Quite Easily Done!!

Rome to beg for mercy, but in vain; the Romans were merciless. They told these messengers that if they wished to save Carthage they must destroy all their ships, and deliver up their weapons of war to Rome.

The wretched Carthaginians, believing that if this were done peace would be made, obeyed the command, and straightway the treacherous senators broke all their promises by sending a large army to Utica – a town twelve miles from Carthage.

Soon messengers arrived there from the threatened city to ask why this had been done. They were told that Rome could not rest in peace while Carthage stood by the sea; therefore it was the will of the senate that the Carthaginians should leave their city and build another further inland.

When the messengers returned with this terrible answer, the Carthaginian senate held a meeting behind closed doors, but the citizens suspecting that all was not right, broke through the doors and demanded to know the whole truth. It was told to them.

Mad with rage and fear, they slew every Roman in the city. Then they rushed to the armoury for weapons; there was not one weapon to be found. They ran to the harbour to man the ships; there was not one ship to be seen. They wept and bewailed their misfortunes; they shrieked out curses upon those who had brought them to such a pass. The ambassadors fled for their lives from that city where nought was to be heard but sounds of woe, of anger and despair.

But their very despair gave the citizens courage; war was declared against the Romans; Hasdrubal, one of their generals, was given command of the troops outside the city, while another of the same name took charge of those within the walls.

Then day and night, night and day, men, women and children worked in the houses, in the shops, in the public buildings – even in the temples of the gods. They were making weapons for the coming struggle.

Every day 140 shields, 300 swords, 500 spears and javelins, besides many bolts and catapults, were finished. The women cut off their long hair and twisted it into strings for the catapults. Lead was taken from the roofs, iron from the walls. The fortifications were strengthened; the gates were closed; the slaves were set free so that they might fight with more goodwill, and when at last the Romans came marching to take what they thought was a defenceless city, they found to their great surprise that the Carthaginians were ready for them.

For two years the Romans besieged the gallant city, but without success. At last Scipio Aemilianus, made consul by the senate, took command of the troops, and the Carthaginians soon learned to fear the very sound of his name. He drove Hasdrubal to take refuge within the walls, and having captured the market-places and suburbs which gave food to the city, he made up his mind to starve the citizens into surrendering.

Carthage stood on a peninsula, and was joined to the mainland by a narrow isthmus. Across this strip of land Scipio caused trenches to be made, three miles long, and parallel with the walls. For their defence towers and fortifications were raised, so that when the work was done not a morsel of food could enter the city by land. Neither could anything reach it by sea, for across the harbour-mouth Scipio built a large embankment or mole of stone, and outside this lay the Roman ships.

The citizens in Carthage starved. Once they managed to capture a little food, but Hasdrubal, their own general, took it all for himself and his soldiers. Nevertheless they gave no sign of surrender at that time. Scipio attacked the walls, scaled them, and took the market-place and the splendid temple

of Apollo. But the hardest task of all was still to come – this was the capture of the citadel.

Three long streets lined with high six-storied houses led up to it. Every house, packed as it was with Carthaginian men-at-arms, had to be fought for, and captured, before the citadel itself could be attacked.

The Romans chased their enemies from floor to floor and from house to house. They fought with them on the stairs, on the flat roofs, on the narrow planks which were laid across to the opposite houses as a means of escape. There never was a more terrible fight. The houses had to be burned after they were captured, the fire lasted six days, and all that time Scipio scarcely eat or slept, so anxious was he.

On the seventh day he sat down to rest awhile, and as he rested a company of Carthaginians appeared before him. They offered to surrender if he would spare their lives. Upon Scipio agreeing, 5500 men and women marched out of the citadel through an opening in the wall. Hasdrubal, his wife and his children, together with 900 deserters from the Roman ranks, fled to the temple of Aesculapius, but very soon, mad with hunger and fear, they themselves set fire to the building.

Hasdrubal, turning coward, rushed out from the flames with an olive branch in his hand and fell at Scipio's feet to beg mercy. Scipio scornfully gave him his life. Then through the roar of the flames came the sound of a woman's voice, – the voice of Hasdrubal's wife.

'Scipio, I wish you nothing but happiness,' she cried, 'for all you have done has been according to the rules of war. But I charge you show no mercy to Hasdrubal, who has betrayed his country, his gods, his wife and his children.'

And having said this she flung herself into the flames.

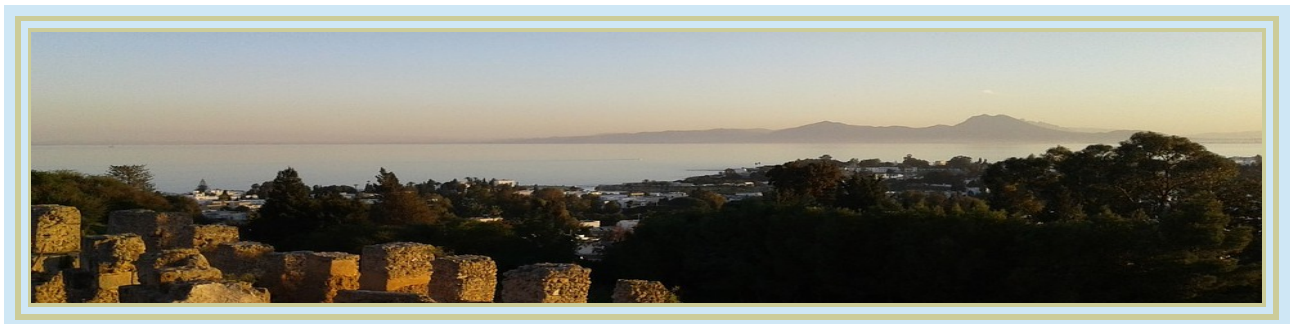
The city thus captured, Scipio had still another thing to do. It was the will of the senate that Carthage should be destroyed, and therefore the city must be burned to the ground.

Scipio wept as he watched the magnificent buildings fall one by one into the ashes.

'Assyria has fallen,' said he, 'and Persia and Macedonia; Carthage is burning, the day of Rome may come next.'

But he was too good a soldier not to obey orders. Every stone of the houses was levelled. A plough drawn by oxen was driven over the ground where Carthage once stood, as a sign that the city was to be left desolate for ever. Last of all Scipio spoke the curse over the ruins, forbidding any man whatsoever to build there again.

It was done. Rome had no more need to fear its ancient enemy. Carthage was no more.



The Ruins of Carthage in modern Tunisia.

Two more second declension neuter words for your notebook. They have similar but not identical meanings. Notice that the nominative, vocative and accusative singular of second declension neuter nouns end in *um* and the nominative, vocative and accusative plural end in *a* thus:

singular	plural
<i>bellum</i>	<i>bella</i>
<i>bellum</i>	<i>bella</i>
<i>bellum</i>	<i>bella</i>
<i>belli</i>	<i>bellorum</i>
<i>bello</i>	<i>bellis</i>
<i>bello</i>	<i>bellis</i>

bellum, belli war

This word is related to some English words although you may not know them: “bellicose” which means “aggressive” and “belligerent” which means “hostile,” if used as an adjective, and, if used as a noun, is an official term for a party or country engaged in a war. You may also hear the term “antebellum” which means “before the war” and is used to describe America in the period before the Civil War (1861-1865).

Bible example:

etenim si incertam vocem det tuba quis parabit se ad bellum? 1 Corinthians 14:8

Another useful little word for your notebook: *si*, which means “if.” *Det* is a form of *dat* which you know. *Etenim* means “for” and is not in the IGCSE vocabulary. However, it is made up of two Latin words in reality, *et* (which you know) and *enim* a little word which means “for.” I guess therefore that *Etenim* is a bit more emphatic than *enim* or is just linked to whatever come before more strongly. *Enim* is in the IGCSE list so add it to your notebook. *Vocem* is related to the word “voice” which is what it means; *tuba* you can leave as it is.² *Quis* (*qu* = “wh”) is a form of “who” and *parabit* you know and will get the tense from the ending if you think of your verb chants. *Se* is “himself.” Guess *incertam* – changing the first letter from “i” to “u” will help. I think you will be able to translate the verse yourself with this information. Look it up to check your answer.

proelium, proelii battle

Bible example:

et iratus est draco in mulierem et abiit facere proelium cum reliquis de semine eius qui custodiunt mandata Dei et habent testimonium Iesu Revelation 12:17

This text comes from the passage where John sees in his vision a dragon (the evil one) and a woman symbolizing the church. This is a bit too hard for you to translate without looking it up first but you might guess *draco*, and *testimonium*. Once you have looked it up you will see other words that are related to English words too. Notice that *proelium* and *bellum* are so close to each other in meaning that our Bible translates *proelium* here as “war.”

² There is a good example of a reconstructed Roman *tuba* (which was a military instrument used for signalling) here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIFCaFhm1Wk>. The video has every Roman musical instrument we know of and the *tuba* is in about the middle of the video. If you listen to this video bear in mind that we have absolutely no idea of what music was played on any of these instruments since no effective way of writing down music was invented until the later middle ages. What you are hearing in terms of tunes is complete guess-work.