

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis

Robert Ellis  
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

*Books of enduring scholarly value*

### Classics

From the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, Latin and Greek were compulsory subjects in almost all European universities, and most early modern scholars published their research and conducted international correspondence in Latin. Latin had continued in use in Western Europe long after the fall of the Roman empire as the lingua franca of the educated classes and of law, diplomacy, religion and university teaching. The flight of Greek scholars to the West after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 gave impetus to the study of ancient Greek literature and the Greek New Testament. Eventually, just as nineteenth-century reforms of university curricula were beginning to erode this ascendancy, developments in textual criticism and linguistic analysis, and new ways of studying ancient societies, especially archaeology, led to renewed enthusiasm for the Classics. This collection offers works of criticism, interpretation and synthesis by the outstanding scholars of the nineteenth century.

### A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps

The controversy over the route taken by Hannibal, the Carthaginian army and his famous elephants in their crossing of the Alps to attack Rome in 218 BCE began within fifty years of the event and has continued for many centuries. A particular scholarly dispute emerged in the 1850s between Robert Ellis (1819/20–85) and William John Law (1786–1869), and was fought in the pages of the *Journal of Classical and Sacred Philology* and in books. Ellis, a classical scholar, had surveyed the Alpine passes in 1852 and again in 1853, when he published this work, claiming that the Little Mount Cenis route was the one used. Law responded immediately in the *Journal*, and later published his own theory, to which Ellis riposted in 1867 with *An Enquiry into the Ancient Routes between Italy and Gaul*, also reissued in this series. Modern scholarship doubts, however, that either man was right.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis

Robert Ellis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library and other partner libraries, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection brings back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis

Robert Ellis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps

*In which his Route Is Traced  
over the Little Mont Cenis*

ROBERT ELLIS



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis

Robert Ellis  
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.  
It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of  
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108075770](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108075770)

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2014

This edition first published 1853

This digitally printed version 2014

ISBN 978-1-108-07577-0 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect  
the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

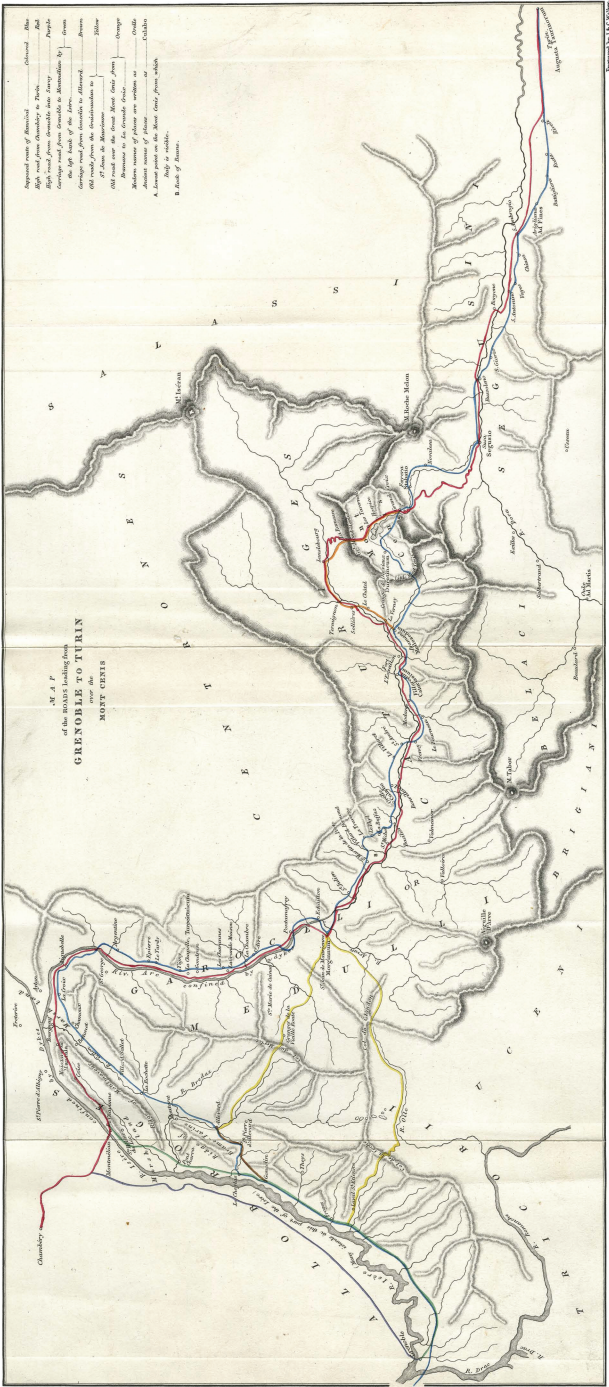
Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published  
by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with,  
or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

The original edition of this book contains a number of colour plates,  
which have been reproduced in black and white. Colour versions of these  
images can be found online at [www.cambridge.org/9781108075770](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108075770)

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route  
is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis  
Robert Ellis  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route  
is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis  
Robert Ellis  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)



The material originally positioned here is too large for reproduction in this reissue. A PDF can be downloaded from the web address given on page iv of this book, by clicking on 'Resources Available'.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route  
is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis

Robert Ellis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

A  
T R E A T I S E  
ON  
HANNIBAL'S PASSAGE OF THE ALPS  
IN WHICH HIS ROUTE IS TRACED OVER THE  
LITTLE MONT CENIS,

BY  
ROBERT ELLIS, B.D.,  
FELLOW OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

---

CAMBRIDGE: J. DEIGHTON.  
LONDON: JOHN W. PARKER AND SON.  
1853.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route  
is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis

Robert Ellis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis

Robert Ellis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## PREFACE.

---

IN the course of a series of excursions in the Alps, the attention of the Author had naturally been drawn to the subject of Hannibal's passage of those mountains. On a subsequent examination of Polybius' account of that expedition, it appeared almost certain that the prominent and distinguishing characteristics of the pass which Hannibal crossed could only be found on the pass of the Mont Cenis. A general acquaintance with the passes, by which it had been conjectured that Hannibal entered Italy, led at first to this conclusion. The close proximity to the plains of Piedmont of the summit of the pass which Hannibal crossed, the precipitous nature of the descent into Italy, and the immense losses which the Carthaginians incurred in consequence, all tended to identify this pass with that of the Mont Cenis. It was also beyond a doubt, that from neither the Great nor the Little St Bernard, nor from the Mont Genevre, was it possible to see the Italian plain. None of the roads over these passes, nor any accessible point in their neighbourhood, could command the view which the Carthaginian army saw from the crest of the Alps. The situation of the Mont Cenis, as might be judged from the map, rendered it, however, not improbable, that such a view might be obtained from the immediate neighbourhood of the road over its summit. As this route, then, had a considerable amount of *a priori* probability in its favour, a probability shared by no other pass, it seemed likely that an examination of it in detail might lead to its complete identification with the line of Hannibal's march into Italy. Accordingly, in the month of July, 1852, and in the months of April and May, 1853,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis

Robert Ellis

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

iv

## PREFACE.

the requisite examination was made. A period of nearly six weeks was, altogether, spent upon the investigation, some days being lost in consequence of unfavourable weather. A great quantity of snow was found upon the ground during the spring months, and rendered the character of the pass more in accordance with what it would have been at the time of Hannibal's passage of the Alps.

It is now, it may be said, universally admitted, that the great test, by which the claims of every pass must be tried, is the narrative of Polybius. The following investigation has, accordingly, been conducted on this principle. In the translation of Polybius, which accompanies it, the exact meaning of the historian, and his peculiarities of narration, have been preserved as far as possible. To gain this end, of the utmost importance in the present case, nothing beyond a merely literal version of the Greek has been attempted.

Less attention has been paid to Livy's narrative; but his evidence has not been neglected. An examination of the objections brought against the Mont Cenis, and an enquiry into the antiquity of that pass, conclude the investigation. The testimony of Polybius, and that of Livy, have been kept, almost entirely, distinct from one another; and the question of the old roads across the Alps has also been considered by itself, and a third and independent body of evidence deduced from its discussion.

The thanks of the Author are due to the Syndics of the Pitt Press for the liberality with which they have undertaken the printing of the present work.

ST JOHN'S COLLEGE,  
Dec. 23, 1853.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route  
is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis  
Robert Ellis  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.—Brief notice of Hannibal's march from New Carthage.—Polybius' estimation of the lengths of the different parts of the whole march from New Carthage to the plains of Italy.—A peculiarity in Polybius' mode of narration observed.—Division of the march from the passage of the Rhone to the country of the Insubrian Gauls into seven stages . . .	1

CHAPTER II.

Polybius' narrative of Hannibal's march, from the passage of the Rhone to the capture of Turin . . . . .	8
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---

CHAPTER III.

Discussion of the narrative of Polybius, from the passage of the Rhone to the commencement of the ascent of the Alps.—Identification of the <i>Scaras</i> of Polybius with the modern <i>Isère</i> .—The <i>Island</i> of Polybius the district between the Rhone and the <i>Isère</i> .—Polybius only partially acquainted with this district.—Conclusion drawn that Hannibal must have marched up the left bank of the <i>Isère</i> , and not up the Rhone, from the junction of the two rivers . . . . .	16
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

Discussion of the narrative of Polybius, from the commencement of the ascent of the Alps to the arrival at the summit of the pass.—The defile at the commencement of the ascent.—Conclusions drawn as to its nature and the character of the neighbouring country.—The 'strong white rock.'—Features of the country in its vicinity.—The 'rock' at a distance of many miles from the summit of the pass . . . . .	29
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

	PAGE
Discussion of Polybius' narrative of the events which took place at the summit of the pass and on the descent to Turin.—The plains of Italy visible from the summit of the pass.—Precipitous nature of the descent.—The path destroyed by a landslip.—Manner in which the path was re-constructed.—Hannibal arrives in the country of the Taurini.—Journal of the march from the confluence of the Rhone and Isère to the commencement of the plains of Italy.—Conditions for the determination of the pass which Hannibal crossed . . . . .	50

CHAPTER VI.

Improbability of Hannibal's having crossed the Alps by the Great or Little St Bernard, or by the Mont Genève.—Probability of his having crossed the Mont Cenis.—Determination of the point where Hannibal would have left the Isère.—The oldest line of road over the Mont Cenis traced and described.—The Little Mont Cenis selected as the pass which Hannibal crossed, in preference to the Great Mont Cenis . . . . .	68
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

Application of the conditions deduced from Polybius' narrative to the route of the Mont Cenis.—Accordance of the actual distances with those given by Polybius.—Identification of the defile at the commencement of the ascent of the Alps with the gorge of <i>Le Fay</i> .—Probable identity of the town of the Allobroges and the modern <i>Allevard</i> .—Identification of the "strong white rock" with the <i>rock of Baune</i> .—Arrival at the <i>Col of the Little Mont Cenis</i> . . . . .	89
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VIII.

Application of the conditions deduced from Polybius' narrative to the route of the Mont Cenis concluded.—Encampment of Hannibal on the <i>Plateau of the Little Mont Cenis</i> .—Point from which the plains of Italy were most probably seen.—Precipitous character of the descent from the Mont Cenis into Italy.—Probable situation of the place where the path was destroyed.—Arrival at the commencement of the plains of Italy.—Siege and capture of Turin . . . . .	114
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route  
is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis  
Robert Ellis  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

CONTENTS. vii

CHAPTER IX. PAGE

Livy's narrative of Hannibal's passage of the Alps.—Its character.  
—Use to be made of it.—Hannibal's line of approach to the  
Alps, as indicated by Livy.—His account of the events which  
took place on the summit of the pass.—The broken path.—  
Singular story connected with it.—Arrival of Hannibal in the  
country of the Taurini . . . . . 129

CHAPTER X.

Examination of objections brought against the Mont Cenis . . . 147

CHAPTER XI.

Antiquity of the pass of the Mont Cenis.—First mentioned by name  
in the year 755 A D.—Probably known in the sixth century.—  
Described by Ammianus Marcellinus in the fourth century.—The  
road over the Little Mont Cenis laid down in the Peutingerian  
table.—The Mont Cenis crossed by Julius Cæsar.—Probably  
mentioned by Strabo as *the pass through the country of the Tau-  
rini, which Hannibal crossed.*—Conclusion . . . . . 159

APPENDIX.

A. Note on the Roman roads from Italy, by the Little St Bernard,  
to Vienne and Geneva . . . . . 185  
B. Note on the position of *Ocelum*, and of *Scingomagus* . . . 187

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-07577-0 - A Treatise on Hannibal's Passage of the Alps: In which his Route  
is Traced Over the Little Mont Cenis  
Robert Ellis  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

*Directions for the insertion of the Maps and Plans.*

Map of the route of the Mont Cenis . . . . .	at the beginning of the book.
Map of the Roman roads . . . . .	at the end of the book.
Plan of the gorge of Le Fay . . . . .	to face p. 89
Country in the neighbourhood of the Rock of Baune . . . . .	112
Mountain-side on the descent from the Mont Cenis . . . . .	128
Part of the Peutingerian table . . . . .	159