

THE ALPS OF HANNIBAL.

PART I.

THE CONTROVERSY

CHAPTER I.

The Controversy : Progress and State of it.

SEVEN cities contended to be the birth-place of Homer. As many mountains contend to be the Alps of Hannibal. Great and good men have toiled to fix the death-hour of Alexander, and the landing-spot of Cæsar in Britain. There are who hold such labours to be vain and unprofitable : and it is true that, in the variety of objects which provoke curiosity and research, the interest which they excite is not regulated by their importance. But the value of the thing pursued is alone not a test of the merit of the pursuit : the scrutiny of a question which it hardly imports us to solve may nevertheless be deserving of praise : an examination of evidence, as in the case before us, can vindicate an interest far surpassing that of the thing to be proved ; and it is enough to say, that a subject which has engaged Letronne and Ukert and Arnold, bespeaks itself worthy to be explored. When we regard the various matters which such inquiries will embrace, we make better estimate of their value ; and see danger in a doctrine which, condemning them as useless, would confine our exercise of

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The Controversy :

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thinking to the exigencies of the passing day. Efforts of retrospect, even such as these, are conducive to the interests of society.

But in our subject is there need of effort? Remains there a question to discuss? Has not error been removed: and the evidence of truth been submitted to and confessed? There is no such acquiescence. The lamented Arnold, whose loss we cease not to deplore, studied the subject among the Alps themselves: in 1825 he was on the spot with Polybius in hand; in 1835 he wrote, "I have been working at Hannibal's passage of the Alps:" zealous in the tracing of military movements, he hardly reached a firm opinion on this subject, and to the last declared Polybius an unintelligible guide. Letronne and Ukert are among the later lights on geography and history; one invites us to the Genèvre, the other to the Cenis: while Arneth, director of the Museum at Vienna, has taught that the Carthaginians descended from the Simplon. So late as 1851, a savant of Savoy discovered their track through the Allée Blanche, hailing Mont Blanc as the *λευκόπετρον*; and Mr. Ellis in 1854 proclaims the Rock of Baune as the representative of that landmark, and the little Mont Cenis as laid down in the Chart of Pentinger. So long as there are such doubts and such difficulties among learned men, the question is not closed; truth is not established; search is still reasonable: *nec modus est ullus investigandi veri, nisi inveneris.*

Progress and State of the Controversy.

More than eighteen hundred years ago, Livy brought forward the course of Hannibal as a matter of controversy: and it is controverted to this day. In our own times books and pamphlets innumerable have been written upon it, exhibiting various degrees of labour and merit. The subject indeed has been agitated from time to time for the last three

hundred years, in works which the curious who have leisure may explore. A considerable list is given with Dr. Ukert's Dissertation, in his second volume, Part II. p. 563 ; and many are enumerated in a preface to the work of M. le Comte de Fortia d'Urban, 1821.

The earliest of modern authors, whose opinion I can quote, is Mr. Breval, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. In his Travels, published 1726,* he named the Little St. Bernard as the Pass of Hannibal. But, though he saw some essential points correctly, his suffrage is of no value ; for, referring to Polybius, he says that Hannibal passed the Rhone at Lyons. Then, doubting whether the site of that city between the Saône and the Rhône could represent the district called the Island, he finds relief in the work of Menetrier, the historian of Lyons, whose antiquarian researches had brought him acquainted with an old canal cut from one river to the other—which, says Mr. Breval, “ makes the third side of an island in every respect like that described by Polybius ! ”

Soon after Mr. Breval's short notice of the matter, the voluminous and wearisome commentaries of the Chevalier Folard appeared, encumbering the translation of Polybius by Dom Vincent Thuillier, which is in six quarto volumes ; our subject occurring in the fourth, published in 1728.

D'Anville's notions were, I believe, first shown in a map which he published in 1739 to illustrate the march of Hannibal. I saw it for the first time on the 31st December, 1863, at the British Museum : it is entirely founded on his apprehension of Livy, and there is nothing in correction of it in his “ Ancienne Gaule,” published 1760. The labour of interpreting Polybius does not appear to have been undertaken by him, nor the necessity of such a task recognised. The

* “ Remarks on several parts of Europe,” 2 vols. by J. Breval, Esq. late Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Vol. I. 228, and Vol. II. 2.

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remarks of Gibbon on the subject of our inquiry, which he states to be the result of his reading and careful reflection, are dated 1763 : they appear in his miscellaneous works, published since his death, (Vol. iv. pp. 355, 418). No man could be better qualified to solve such a question : he possessed every advantage ; nevertheless he made a poor business of it, and is without excuse for his abandonment of the question.

It was some years later that General Melville, on an investigation of the Alps made in 1775, came to a conclusion in favour of the Little St. Bernard. He did not publish his views on the subject, nor were they ever placed before the public till forty-three years after that date. It appears that Mr. Hampton, a translator of Polybius, must have already held the same opinion on the track ; for there was a third edition of his work, published in 1772, containing a map, where the march is traced in the very line which General Melville conceived. The author calls it "A map for the expedition of Annibal, engraved, with some difference in the route, from the map of Mr. D'Anville."

In 1794 came forth an elaborate work in favour of the Great St. Bernard, which exhibits, for some purpose or other, almost every old text that is applicable to the question. "The Course of Hannibal over the Alps Ascertained. By John Whitaker, B.D. Rector of Ruan Lanyhorne, Cornwall." 2 vols. 8vo. And in 1812 was produced the work of General Vaudoncourt, "Histoire des Campagnes d'Annibal en Italie. Par Frédéric Guillaume, Général de Brigade," 3 tomes 4to. Milan. I conceive that neither D'Anville in 1760, nor Vaudoncourt in 1812, were aware of the rival pretensions of the Little St. Bernard ; but the intermediate writer knew them well. Mr. Whitaker had the advantage of General Melville's notes ; but he did not condescend to be a copier ; his taste was to be original, and he took no benefit from the assistance.

Fortunately the General imparted his notes also to M. De Luc, of Geneva, who in 1818 laid the matter of them before the world in a very able and convincing manner. "Histoire du Passage des Alpes par Annibal. Par Jean André De Luc. Genève, 1818." There was a second edition in 1825. This writer also made a correction of General Melville's line, which is of the utmost importance, and essential to a just view of the subject. General Melville fixed the main pass of Alps. De Luc cleared the way for arriving at it.

From the time when M. De Luc's work appeared, this old controversy has been pushed with vigour: the learned in Germany and France, not without auxiliaries in England, have carried on a lively hostility against the Graian Alp, or Little St. Bernard. M. De Luc was first attacked by M. Letronne, in the "Journal des Savans," Janvier, 1819; and the same publication, in the following December, contained an answer from M. De Luc, with M. Letronne's reply to it. The theory was supported in 1820 by the Dissertation of my friends Wickham and Cramer,* who first came forth anonymously as "a member of the University of Oxford," and published a second edition in 1828. Their Dissertation ably elucidated the subject on many points, though in one matter I consider them to struggle against the juster interpretation of De Luc.

These are the two works which, in my opinion, support the truth. And yet, great as is their merit, adverse hypotheses have been insisted upon more strenuously than ever. That which, with these two works, I shall acknowledge as the line of march described by Polybius, is not advocated in any work since published on this particular subject; and our construc-

* Henry Lewis Wickham, Esq. late Chairman of the Board of Stamps and Taxes; and the Rev. John Antony Cramer, late Dean of Carlisle, and Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford.

tion of his text on the progress to the first Alps, which is perhaps the clearest point of any that are litigated, has been blinked by all other writers, without exception. I know not how numerous the hostile list may be. I have myself met with the following :—

Criticism by M. Letronne. *Journal des Savans.* Janvier 1819. P. 22.

Do. do. Décembre, 1819. P. 783.

Dissertation sur le Passage du Rhône et des Alpes par Annibal. Par M. le Comte de Fortia d'Urban. Paris, 1821.

Hannibal's Zug über die Alpen : in the *Jahrbücher der Literatur* for July, August, September, 1823. By Arneth, Director of the Museum, Vienna.

Histoire Critique du Passage des Alpes par Annibal. Par feu M. J. L. Larauza. Paris, 1826.

Hannibal's Passage of the Alps. By a Member of the University of Cambridge. London, 1830.

The March of Hannibal from the Rhone to the Alps. By Henry Lawes Long, Esq. London, 1831 (Author of "A Survey of the Early Geography of Western Europe," 1859).

Hannibal's Zug über die Alpen. By Dr. Fr. A. Ukert. In the Second Part of Second Volume of his work, *Geographie der Griechen und Römer*, p. 559. Weimar, 1832.

Notice sur le Passage des Alpes par Annibal, ou Commentaires du récit qu'en ont fait Polybe et Tite-Live. Par le Général St. Cyr Nugues. 1837.

Récherches sur l'Histoire du Passage d'Annibal d'Espagne en Italie, à travers les Alpes. Par M. Baudé de Lavalette. Montpellier, 1838.

Géographie Ancienne des Gaules. Par M. le Baron Walckenaer. Paris, 1839.

Note sur le Passage d'Annibal. Par Jacques Replat, Chambéry, 1851.

A Treatise 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, 1854.

Two papers by the same author. Journal of Classical and Sacred Philology. Vols. II. and III. Cambridge, 1856.

All these writers disclaim the scheme of march, as corrected by De Luc and the Oxford Dissertation, from the mouth of the Isère into Italy: for the partial acquiescence of my friend, H. L. Long, is not more acceptable to the truth of history than the full defiance of the rest. In this list of adversaries there is much of literary reputation, and in their zealous labours much that calls for a reply. Among them is an author of celebrity, enjoying the high commendation of one whose praise is strength. In an admirable work, unhappily not long continued, the "Philological Museum," the very learned Dr. Thirlwall, reviewing, in 1833, the Dissertation of Dr. Ukert, pronounces a deliberate eulogium on him as a geographer and a man of learning: and this is an antagonist whom I resist throughout. He is the champion too of the new doctrine—that the invaders crossed the Rhone at or near Tarascon; which is a matter of importance, in that it affects the construction of the Greek narrative from one end of the controverted line to the other. The sceptics on this head have appeared only since the last edition of the Oxford Dissertation; and they remain unanswered.

These persevering hostilities, to which let me add the gravely-expressed doubts of Dr. Arnold, may give excuse to the present attempt. In making the attempt, I abstain from the formula with which some modern commentators wind up

their preface. Seventy-two years ago the learned Whitaker proclaimed himself the source of "so clear a sunshine as no mistakes can veil, and no wilfulness can darken for ever again:" and among the newer theorists, my friend who sojourned at Grenoble stands convinced that his proofs "have set this long pending discussion at rest for ever." I am taught to resist the fond delusion. Seeing how the most learned have yielded to error, I cannot expect to extinguish a question that has proved so provoking to conjecture, and so seducing into paradox. Still there is hope: we are encouraged to look for the triumph of truth, if ever the causes of her confusion shall be exposed—*πολὺν χρόνον ἐπισκοτισθεῖσα, τέλος αὐτῇ δι' ἐαυτῆς ἐπικρατεῖ, καὶ καταγωνίζεται τὸ ψεῦδος.* Polyb. xiii. 5.

CHAPTER II.

The Subject proposed, and Method of treating it.

IN the year 218 before Christ, being the 536th year of Rome, Hannibal marched from Carthagenæ in the month of May; he crossed the Rhone towards the end of September; and, clearing the Alps, touched the plain of Italy at the end of October.

The dates rest on the following grounds. The Greeks, as we learn from Polybius and Strabo, used to mark the seasons by the rising and setting of the Pleias or Pleiades. When Polybius in his narrative has brought the Carthaginian army to the summit of the Alps, he remarks that the setting of the Pleias is at hand; which setting is known by a recognised calculation to have been in that year, on the 26th October. Accordingly, as they actually reached the plain of Italy

in five days from the summit, we must consider that crisis of the season to have passed, and may place their arrival in the plain at the very end of October.

The crossing of the Rhone was performed fully a month before they reached the plain; for the march proceeded on the second day after crossing the river; it lasted fourteen days to the Alps; and had occupied fifteen days in the Alps when they touched the plain. Accordingly the Rhone was crossed at the end of September.

In the same sentence where Polybius states the Alps to have been traversed in fifteen days, he says that the entire march from Carthagenæ was performed in five months; and, as it was completed at the end of October, we may place its commencement in the latter part of May. Moreover, the setting forth of the expedition is alluded to by Polybius in his introduction to the affairs of Greece at the beginning of the fifth book, where he draws attention to many contemporaneous events. Having said that the prætorship of the younger Aratus expired at about the rising of the Pleiades, he states that about the same time, as summer was coming on, Hannibal began his march.

Livy ascribes the expedition to the same season of the year; he states the same duration of the march, and gives the same date to the end of it. On the march through the Alps, he says, nearly in the terms of Polybius, that the summit was reached on the ninth day; that the encampment there was for two days; that the constellation of the Pleiades was then setting; that the passage of the Alps was completed on the fifteenth day; and that they arrived in Italy in the fifth month from Carthagenæ.

If a stranger to the subject should ask to be shortly informed upon the region which is principally concerned in the controversy, the answer might be this:—Imagine Hannibal with his army about half-way between Orange and Lyons,

near to the confluence of the Rhone and Isère; you have to trace him thence to the plain of Italy. Now you can hardly draw a line from that confluence to the Po, which has not been favoured as the line of the Carthaginian march. Almost every pass from Viso to the Simplon, with almost every route for reaching it, has found an advocate. The Chamouni valley has, I believe, escaped the views of criticism; not so the shores of Lago Maggiore, nor the Col de Bonhomme, nor the vale of Viu.

Such is the chief, but not the only question made on the track. In the march from the Pyrenees to the Rhone, all have been satisfied that it proceeded through Nîmes, excepting Mr. Whitaker, who carried it through Carcasone, Lodeve, Le Vigan and Anduse, coming upon the Rhone near Loriol, a place about nineteen miles below the influx of the Isère. In the period which has elapsed since that course was proposed, I believe that no one has adopted it, unless it was Mr. Tytler, who promptly published an eulogium of Mr. Whitaker's discoveries. When the history comes to be explained, that notion will appear inadmissible; although Mr. Whitaker considers it demonstrated, and performs the process with his usual accuracy of facts. All are now agreed, that the army passed through Nemausus, Nîmes.

But in the first movement from Nîmes there is matter for consideration. A new doctrine has lately been put forth, and supported by an authority much commended, as to the part where Hannibal, coming from Nîmes, effected the passage of the Rhone before he marched up to the Isère; so that our first business must be with his course from Nîmes to the Rhone. The crossing need not, indeed, have been effected from the point where the march first touched the river; nor is it quite necessary that the whole force should have proceeded from Nîmes to the river in one line. Still the question, where did Hannibal cross the Rhone, is not only interesting in