

Some things are asserted by all men, because they have been asserted once: it is thought Hannibal committed an egregious error in not laying siege to Rome after the battle of Cannae: it must be confessed, that the inhabitants of the former were at first seized with a panic; but then the surprize and dread of a martial people, which always turns to bravery, is not like that of a despicable populace, who are sensible to nothing but their weakness: a proof Hannibal would not have succeeded, is, that the Romans were still powerful enough to send succours where any were wanted.

It is also said, that Hannibal was greatly overseen, in marching his army to Capua, where his soldiers enervated themselves; but people who make these assertions should consider, that they do not go back to the true cause of it: would not every place have proved a Capua to a body of men, who had enriched themselves with the spoils of so many victories? Alexander, whose army consisted of his own subjects, made use, on the like occasion, of an expedient which Hannibal, whose army was composed wholly of mercenaries, could not employ; and this was, the setting fire to the baggage of his soldiers, and burning all their wealth and his own.

The very conquests of Hannibal began to change the fortune of the war: he did not receive any succours from Carthage, either by the jealousy of one party, or the too great confidence of the other. So long as he kept his whole army together, he always defeated the Romans; but when he was obliged to put garrisons into cities, to defend his allies, to besiege strong-holds, or prevent their being besieged, he then found himself too weak, and lost a great part