

App. Hisp. 95-98

Text Übersetzung:

(Horace White)

[95] The Numantines, being oppressed by hunger, sent five men to Scipio to ask whether he would treat them with moderation if they would surrender. Their leader, Avarus, discoursed much about the prestige and bravery of the Numantines, and said that even now they had done no wrong, but had fallen into their present misery for the sake of their wives and children, and for the freedom of their country. "Wherefore, O Scipio," he said, "it is worthy of you, as a man renowned for virtue, to spare a brave and honorable race and to extend to us terms dictated by humanity, which we shall be able to bear, now that we have at last experienced a change of fortune. It rests not with us but with you whether you receive the surrender of our city on fair terms, or allow it to perish in a last struggle." When Avarus had thus spoken, Scipio (who knew from prisoners the state of affairs inside) said merely that they must surrender their arms and place themselves and their city in his hands. When this answer was made known, the Numantines, who were previously savage in temper because of their absolute freedom and quite unaccustomed to obey the orders of others, and were now wilder than ever and beside themselves by reason of their hardships, slew Avarus and the five ambassadors who had accompanied him, as bearers of evil tidings, and perhaps thinking that they had made private terms for themselves with Scipio.

[96] Soon after this, all their eatables being consumed, having neither grain, nor flocks, nor grass, they began, as is frequently necessary in wars, to lick boiled hides. When these also failed, they boiled and ate the bodies of human beings, first of those who had died a natural death, chopping them in small bits for cooking. Afterwards being nauseated by the flesh of the sick, the stronger laid violent hands upon the weaker. No form of misery was absent. They were rendered savage in mind by their food, and their bodies were reduced to the semblance of wild beasts by famine, plague, long hair, and neglect. In this condition they surrendered themselves to Scipio. He commanded them the same day to bring their arms to a place designated by him, and on the following day to assemble at another place. But they put off the day, declaring that many of them still clung to liberty and desired to take their own lives. Wherefore they asked for a day to arrange for death. [...]

Many, directly after the surrender, killed themselves in whatever way they chose, some in one way and some in another. The remainder congregated on the third day at the appointed place, a strange and shocking spectacle. Their bodies were foul, their hair and nails long, and they were smeared with dirt. They smelt most horribly, and the clothes they wore were likewise squalid and emitted an equally foul odor. For these reasons they appeared pitiable even to their enemies. At the same time there was something fearful to the beholders in the expression of their eyes--an expression of anger, grief, toil, and the consciousness of having eaten human flesh.

[98] Having reserved fifty of them for his triumph, Scipio sold the rest and razed the city to the ground. So this Roman general overthrew two most powerful cities, -- Carthage, by decree of the Senate, on account of its greatness, its power, and its advantages by land and sea; Numantia, small and with a sparse population, the Romans knowing nothing about the transaction as yet. He destroyed the latter either because he thought that it would be for the advantage of the Romans, or because he was in a violent rage against the captives, or, as some think, in order to acquire the glory of two surnames from two great calamities. At any rate, the Romans to this day call him Africanus and Numantinus from the ruin he brought upon those two places. Having divided the territory of the Numantines among their near neighbors and transacted certain business in the other cities, threatening or fining any whom he suspected, he sailed for home.