

Plut. Aem. 20.1 – 20.5, 21.3

Text Übersetzung:

20 [1] The Romans, when they attacked the Macedonian phalanx, were unable to force a passage, and Salvius, the commander of the Pelignians, snatched the standard of his company and hurled it in among the enemy. Then the Pelignians, since among the Italians it is an unnatural and flagrant thing to abandon a standard, rushed on towards the place where it was, and dreadful losses were inflicted and suffered on both sides. [2] For the Romans tried to thrust aside the long spears of their enemies with their swords, or to crowd them back with their shields, or to seize and put them by with their very hands; while the Macedonians, holding them firmly advanced with both hands, and piercing those who fell upon them, armour and all, since neither shield nor breastplate could resist the force of the Macedonian long spear, hurled headlong back the Pelignians and Marrucinians, who, with no consideration but with animal fury rushed upon the strokes that met them, and a certain death. [3] When the first line had thus been cut to pieces, those arrayed behind them were beaten back; and though there was no flight, still they retired towards the mountain called Olocrus, so that even Aemilius, as Poseidonius tells us, when he saw it, rent his garments. For this part of his army was retreating, and the rest of the Romans were turning aside from the phalanx, which gave them no access to it, but confronted them as it were with a dense barricade of long spears, and was everywhere unassailable. [4] But the ground was uneven, and the line of battle so long that shields could not be kept continuously locked together, and Aemilius therefore saw that the Macedonian phalanx was getting many clefts and intervals in it, as is natural when armies are large and the efforts of the combatants are diversified; portions of it were hard pressed, and other portions were dashing forward. Thereupon he came up swiftly; and dividing up his cohorts, ordered them to plunge quickly into the interstices and empty spaces in the enemy's line and thus come to close quarters, not fighting a single battle against them all, but many separate and successive battles. [5] These instructions being given by Aemilius to his officers, and by his officers to the soldiers, as soon as they got between the ranks of the enemy and separated them, they attacked some of them in the flank where their armour did not shield them, and cut off others by falling upon their rear, and the strength and general efficiency of the phalanx was lost when it was thus broken up; and now that the Macedonians engaged man to man or in small detachments, they could only hack with their small daggers against the firm and long shields of the Romans, and oppose light wicker targets to their swords, which, such was their weight and momentum, penetrated through all their armour to their bodies. They therefore made a poor resistance and at last were routed. [...]

21 [3] Finally, the three thousand picked men of the Macedonians, who remained in order and kept on fighting, were all cut to pieces; and of the rest, who took to flight, the slaughter was great, so that the plain and the lower slopes of the hills were covered with dead bodies, and the waters of the river Leucus were still mingled with blood when the Romans crossed it on the day after the battle. For it is said that over twenty-five thousand of their enemies were slain; while of the Romans there fell, according to Poseidonius, a hundred, according to Nasica, eighty.