

73 Slave revolt in Italy under Spartacus defeats several Roman forces.

72 Quintus Sertorius assassinated. Germans under Ariovistus invade Gaul.

71 Marcus Licinius Crassus defeats Spartacus at the Silarus R. ending the Third Servile War.

69 Lucullus defeats Tigranes of Armenia at Tigranocerta. Parthia allies with Rome.

67 Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey the Great) defeats pirates in naval battle of Coracesium, bringing naval tranquility to Mediterranean; Pompey given dictatorial powers in east to defeat Mithridates.

66 Pompey defeats Mithridates at Lycus.

63 Pompey again defeats Mithridates who commits suicide. Pompey takes Jerusalem, and creates province of Syria.

63 Consul Marcus Tullius Cicero uncovers Conspiracy of Catiline. Lucius Sergius Catilina flees Rome and raises rebellion.

62 Catilina defeated by Marcus Petreius at Pistoria.

60 Gaius Julius Caesar, Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, and Marcus Licinius Crassus form the First Triumvirate.

58 Caesar is made Proconsul of Gaul, defeats the Helvetii along the Arar (Saône) River and again at **Bibracte**. At request of Aedui and Sequani he defeats Germans under Ariovistus at the **Rhine R.**

57 Caesar defeats the Belgae at Axona River, and the Nervii at the **Sabis (Sambre) R.**

56 Caesar's fleet defeats the Veneti on the **Bay of Biscay**. Publius Crassus defeats Sotiates at **Sos** and conquers the **Aquitani**.

55 Caesar raids Germania and the **Coast of Kent**.

54 Caesar returns to Britannia and defeats Cassivellaunus. Gallic Revolt under Ambiorix slaughters **XIV Legion** under Sabinus. Quintus Cicero besieged in his **Winter Camp**.

53 Caesar devastates Ambiorix' tribe, raids into Germania.

52 Celts revolt under Vercingetorix, are defeated

Cyzicus.

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OVERSHADOWED BY A PHRASE: PYRRHUS

By David W. Tszanz

Legend states that long after the "clash of the giants" on the plain of Zama, Scipio Africanus again confronted his old adversary, Hannibal— this time at Ephesus, but not in battle. It was just a meeting of two old adversaries, one in exile, the other in disgrace, for purported financial irregularities.

Comfortably settled in Hannibal's apartments, Scipio Africanus asked the Carthaginian a typical question when military men compare notes. "Who were the three greatest generals of all time?"

Hannibal answered the Roman without hesitation. At the top of his list he placed Alexander the Great, the Macedonian youth who had conquered Persia, invaded India and seemed on his way to conquest of the entire known world before he died of "swamp fever." In third place Hannibal named himself. Between himself and Alexander, Hannibal placed Pyrrhus of Epirus.

Modern militarists might be surprised to see Pyrrhus included in a list of the great generals of antiquity. They would be shocked to see him ranked above Hannibal—and flabbergasted that the placement was by the great Carthaginian himself. Pyrrhus, one of the ancient world's most esteemed generals, has been overshadowed by the phrase, "Pyrrhic victory," denoting a tactical success so debilitating to the victor that it amounts to a strategic defeat.

However, Hannibal had good reasons for his choice. "He (Pyrrhus) was the first to teach the art of laying out a camp. Besides that, no one has ever shown nicer judgment in choosing his ground, or in disposing his forces. He also had the art of winning men to his side; so that the Italian people

preferred the overlordship of a foreign king to that of the Roman people."

COURTS OF POWER

Pyrrhus was born *circa* 319 BC, the heir to the throne of Epirus, a small kingdom on the west coast of modern Greece. His childhood was not typical. A few months after his birth an internal dynastic struggle led to his father's assassination. The infant Pyrrhus' life was declared forfeit. Still in diapers, he found himself a fugitive. Retainers carried him across a roaring river in the dead of night to the relative safety of the court of the king of Illyria.

When Pyrrhus was 12, the Illyrian king Glaucias invaded and conquered Epirus. Pyrrhus was placed on his father's throne and settled down to the task of governing a kingdom so backward that it still had a Royal Goatherd. Then in 303, Pyrrhus— still a teenager—was deposed in a bloodless coup while attending the wedding of one of Glaucias' sons in Illyria.

The coup, seemingly a personal disaster, had the effect of thrusting him to the forefront of politics in the Greek-speaking world. The Hellenistic world had been in political turmoil since the death in 323 BC of Pyrrhus' second cousin, Alexander the Great. In the quarter century after Alexander's demise, strife and warfare occupied his chief generals (the Diadochi), who contended for control of the pieces of his once vast empire. The deposed Pyrrhus attached himself to Demetrius *I Poliorcetes* ("the besieger"), his brother-in-law. Demetrius was also the son of Antigonus I, one of Alexander's better generals. Antigonus, nearly 80, controlled most of modern Turkey and Greece with



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his power extending into the Balkans.

Assigned command of a cavalry contingent, Pyrrhus fought with Antigonus at Ipsus in 301 BC. Antigonus was slain and lost the battle to Seleucus, Lysimachus and Cassander. However, Pyrrhus gained a reputation as a tactical genius when his cavalry unit completely annihilated the opposing force. Demetrius and Pyrrhus escaped the battle with their lives.

Demetrius put Pyrrhus in charge of a few Greek cities, during the reconquest of Greece and Macedon. In 300, Pyrrhus was sent as a hostage to seal a treaty between Demetrius and Ptolemy I, another of Alexander's old generals, now master of Egypt. While in Egypt, Pyrrhus became one of Ptolemy's favorites. A story is told that, when asked who might someday succeed Alexander as the world's ranking military genius, Ptolemy put his arm around Pyrrhus and said, "perhaps this young man here." Pyrrhus was wed to one of Ptolemy's step-daughters and in 297 BC, with a considerable assist from his father-in-law, regained the throne of Epirus for a second time.

KING, AGAIN

Having been exposed to the world's courts of power, Pyrrhus endeavored to make Epirus more than a mere backward kingdom. For the next sixteen years he never missed a campaign season. Conquering in every direction, he defeated every army he encountered—including one under Demetrius composed of Macedonian phalanxes—heretofore thought invincible.

Yet, Pyrrhus suffered from a fatal flaw. He lacked persistence. He rarely consolidated what he had conquered. As a result, his victories were fleeting, his conquests temporary. Annexing a territory in the east, he would lose it the next season while campaigning in the west. Demetrius' father Antigonus compared Pyrrhus to a dice player who consistently rolls sevens but doesn't know how to use them.

Pyrrhus also advanced the military art. As Hannibal pointed out, it was Pyrrhus who first developed the

fortified encampment the Romans later were to borrow or develop independently. He wrote several commentaries on strategy and tactics. In fact, he was obsessed with military affairs. At a banquet, after a concert had been performed by two flute players, Python and Casphias, he was asked which he preferred. "Polyperchon is a good general," he answered. He hadn't been listening. When one of his sons asked him to which of his children Pyrrhus would leave the throne, he replied, "To him that has the sharpest sword."

His men loved him. They called him "Eagle" because, they claimed, with him at their head they soared. He returned the compliment, calling them his wings, without which he could not fly. He also lacked the streak of cruelty common to many kings and commanders of the era. When two men were hauled before him for having made some aspersions on his character while drunk, he asked them if they had said it. "Yes," answered one of them, "all of it,

King, and we would have said worse if we had had more wine." Pyrrhus only laughed and ordered them released. Similarly, when encouraged to banish a detractor named Ambracio, who had been speaking harshly against him, he dismissed the idea. "Let him speak against me here, where there are only a few to listen, rather than banish him so he can tell the whole world."

His true meeting with destiny began in 280 BC, when the city of Tarentum appealed to him for aid against a new and unwelcome power to the north—Rome.

TURN TO THE WEST

Collectively, southern Italy and Sicily were known as Magna Graecia because of the large number of Dorian, Ionian and Achaean colonies established there since the eighth century BC. The region was Greek in character, language and culture—not Latin or Italian.

The most important of the Greek cities on the Italian mainland was Tarentum (modern Taranto). The city lay astride an isthmus at the heel of Italy's boot, between a shallow protected bay and a tidal lagoon, and

by Caesar at Avaricum. Labienus defeats Parisii at **Lutetia**. Caesar defeated in assault on Gergovia. Celts defeated in siege of Alesia.

50 Pompey becomes sole Consul. Senate recalls Caesar and orders him to disband his army.

49 Civil War between Caesar and Senate under Pompey. Pitched battle at the **Rubicon**. Siege at Corfinium. Pompey flees to Greece; Caesar made Dictator, moves against Pompeians in Spain.

Afranius and Petreius spring trap at **Sicoris R.**, but Caesar prevails at **Ilerda**, Spain.

46 Caesar crosses to Africa where Senate forces are gathering; he's defeated at **Ruspina**, but victorious at **Thapsus**.

45 Senate forces regroup in Spain under Pompey the Younger, but are crushed at **Munda**. Caesar appoints himself Dictator for Life, creates the Julian Calendar, and plans Parthian campaign to recover the Eagles of Crassus.

44 Caesar assassinated.

43 Marcus Antonius (Marc Antony) attempts to take Caesar's place; besieges Octavian, Caesar's heir, at Mutina. Antonius defeats one Consul at Forum Gallorum, but loses to the other. Defeated again at Mutina, Antonius joins Octavian and Marcus

Aemilius Lepidus to form the Second Triumvirate. Sextus Pompeius forms a quasi-pirate nation in opposition to the Triumvirate.

42 Marcus Antonius executes Cicero the Orator.

38 Gallic revolt defeated by Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa. Sextus Pompeius defeats Octavian at naval battles of Cumae and Messana.

36 Sextus Pompey's fleet defeated by Agrippa at Mylae and **Naulochus**. Lepidus deposed from Triumvirate, but reconciles with Octavian.

48 Caesar crosses to Illyria, is defeated by Pompey at **Dyrhachium** and **Lesnika**. Withdraws to Thessaly, regroups, and decisively defeats Pompey at **Pharsalus**. Pompey flees and is murdered in Egypt.

47 Caesarian fleet defeats Pompeians at **Tauris Is.** Caesar defeats Ptolemy XIII in Alexandrian War. Cleopatra VII made Queen. Pharnaces of Pontus defeats Caesar's legate Calpurnius at **Nicopolis**. Caesar defeats Pharnaces at **Zela**; "Veni, Vidi, Vici."



42 Cassius, leading Senatorial forces in Syria, defeats Dolabella at Laodicea. Brutus and Cassius defeat Lycian and Rhodian fleets at Myndus and Rhodes. Caesar's assassins defeated by Octavian and Antonius (Marc Antony) at Philippi.

39-38 Antonius sends Ventidius to wage war on Parthians.

37 Antonius establishes King Herod in Jerusalem.

36 Antonius attempts to conquer Parthia, but must abandon siege of Phraaspa.

34 Antonius annexes Armenia; donates all lands of Alexander the Great to Cleopatra.

29	Octavian granted title of <i>imperator</i> inaugurating <i>pax romana</i> .	29	Antoni and Cleopatra at Actium .
27	Octavian founds the Principate (Empire) with himself as Augustus.	20	Romans capture son of the Parthian king and Augustus exchanges him for the Eagles captured from Crassus and Antonius.
16-9	Subjugation of western Germania accomplished under Drusus and Tiberius.	4	Death of Herod the Great.
AD 9	Several German tribes revolt under Arminius, wiping out Three Roman Legions in the Teutoberg Forest .		
14	Tiberius becomes Emperor. Sends Germanicus Caesar to Germania.		
16	Germanicus defeats Arminius and the Cherusci at Idistaviso .		
37	Caligula becomes Emperor.		
43	Emperor Claudius launches invasion of Britannia. Caractacus defeated at Medway R.		
51	Caractacus defeated by Scapula at Caer Caradoc, ending his resistance in Wales .		
56	Vologases of Parthia invades Roman protectorate of Armenia, places brother Tiridates on throne.		
58	Gn. Domitius Corbulo liberates Artaxata.		
59	Corbulo invades Mesopotamia. Armistice leaves Armenia evacuated.		
61	Revolt of the Iceni under Queen Boudicca defeated by Paulinus.	62	Tiridates defeats Romans at Rhandaia.
63	Corbulo, restored as commander, defeats Tiridates to re-establish sovereignty over Armenia. A jealous Nero forces Corbulo to commit suicide in 67.	63	Corbulo, restored as commander, defeats Tiridates to re-establish sovereignty over Armenia. A jealous Nero forces Corbulo to commit suicide in 67.
68	Disgust at excesses of Nero led Senate to declare him a public enemy; he commits suicide.	66-73	Revolt in Judea results in siege of Jerusalem (69) by Titus, son of emperor Vespasian, and ends with siege at Masada (72-73).
69	Year of the Four Emperors.		



boasted an almost impregnable fortress. At the time of its appeal to Pyrrhus, Tarentum may have been larger than Rome. A prosperous port, Tarentum derived most of its income from a combination of the wool from its hinterland and the purple dye derived from the murex mussels in its harbor. The port itself was, and still is, the safest and largest on the Italian coast. Through its narrow entrance passed the extremely valuable purple dyed wool and grain from its farmland.

Tarentum, like most of the Greek cities, had had only fleeting contact with Rome. With the Republic's victory in the Third Samnite War, the territory of Rome's subject allies extended south through the Samnite highlands to the borders of Magna Graecia.

In 282, the Tarantines attacked and destroyed a Roman fleet that had rounded the toe of Italy and entered the harbor of Thurii. Tarentum charged that the Romans had violated a treaty from the previous century forbidding the presence of Roman warships in the Ionian Sea. When the Senate informed Tarentum that, far from being cowed, they were now in a state of war, Tarentum appealed for outside help to supplement its citizen militia. Envoys were sent to Pyrrhus.

At first reluctant, the Epirote king was finally won over by flattery. He had his own unfulfilled ambitions as well. Asked by his chief advisor Cineas what he would do if he defeated the Romans, Pyrrhus answered he would take Italy. And after Italy? Sicily. "And after Sicily?" queried Cineas. "Why, there is Libya and Carthage," came the answer.

His first act was to dispatch Cineas and a contingent of 3,000 troops across the Adriatic to bolster Tarentum's already wavering resolve. Pyrrhus moved his main force in 280. His rival kings, no doubt happy to see him leave, hastened his departure by providing ships, mercenaries and war elephants (introduced as a result of Alexander's forays into India).

Luck was not with him, however, and Pyrrhus was shipwrecked on the Italian coast. Recovering from the

disaster, he gathered the bulk of his army, and entered Tarentum with 22,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry and 20 of the precious war elephants. Upon entering the city, he realized the Tarentines were willing to resist the Romans only to the last drop of Epirote blood! In anger, he shut down all public entertainment—bath houses, festivals, theaters and taverns—and insisted the Tarentine militia take up arms. It was the beginning of a constant tension between the Tarentine populace and the King.

The Roman Consul, Publius Valerius Laevinus, boldly marched south with a consular army of some 40,000 men, pillaging Lucania along the way. The Romans reached the Gulf of Tarentum to the west of the little city of Heraclea, where, Pyrrhus, who did not want his army besieged inside Tarentum, met them.

Pyrrhus' initial tactic was to avoid a battle with the Romans and content himself with positioning his troops along the Siris River to block their progress. In the ensuing standoff, he gathered allies from the other Greek city-states, while harassing Laevinus' supply lines.

In the political atmosphere of Magna Graecia, any delay in a Roman attack on Tarentum would be perceived as a moral victory. Laevinus understood this as well, but he had intelligence that the fractious Italian Greek cities were unhappy with Tarentum's leadership and unlikely to send troops voluntarily. He had no intention of avoiding battle with Pyrrhus. He intended to push the upstart Epirote back into Tarentum and lay siege to the city. All that stood between him and his goal were the river and the army on the opposite bank.

H ERACLEA

Laevinus drew up his troops in battle array along the riverbank. Pyrrhus matched his move to oppose the crossing. Though outnumbered 40,000 to 30,000, Pyrrhus drove them back with a furious barrage from his slingers and archers. The Romans withdrew, to the cheers of the Epirotes, leaving only pickets along the river. The skirmish concluded,

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Pyrrhus returned his forces to their encampment, leaving only a small guard of cavalry to watch the river. He had beaten off the Romans, or so he thought.

Laevinius' retreat was a mere ruse. The next day, a group of Roman horsemen was ordered to splash across the Siris, making as much noise as possible. Pyrrhus' sentries rode off to meet the threat. As the guards withdrew, other Roman forces charged the river directly across from Pyrrhus' camp and forded it. Pyrrhus ordered his men into line of battle.

For the first time in history, a Roman general confronted a Greek general, and, for the first time in history, the Macedonian phalanx met the Roman legion. It was a study in opposites.

The legion was composed of Roman citizens drawn from Rome and allied cities. They formed a closely coordinated unit requiring much training and drill. The tactical unit of the time was the maniple, which contained two centuries (of about 80 men each). This comparatively high degree of articulation, albeit rudimentary, gave the legion significant advantages in maneuverability in battlefield environments.

The maniple came in four types—armed with a variety of javelins, pikes and swords. The legion relied tactically on close-in fighting to gain ground while other Roman forces and the cavalry kept the infantry free from harassment.

By contrast, the phalanx required little or no training, particularly in the interior positions, since it was simply a massive 16-man deep formation. The phalanx's principal weapon was the sarissa—a sixteen foot pike wielded with both hands. The phalanx simply pushed an opposing force off the field. Its great weakness was in its inability to maneuver once started. Further, because it could only turn with difficulty, its flanks were extremely vulnerable. The phalanx was formidable and, when combined with cavalry charges, Alexander had used it to defeat every enemy he met.

Pyrrhus also had elephants. A number of military historians (and wargamers) tend to view them as little more than a "gimmick." The reality was that an elephant was a living heavy tank. Except at very close range, their hides were essentially impervious to spears, and their earth-shaking charges had to have been psychologically unnerving. If their utility seems questionable, imagine being armed with a short sword and a pilum and facing a charging elephant. Their one drawback, which the Romans were quick to learn and exploit—after their initial shock—was that wounded elephants had no loyalties and would attack anyone near them.

Pyrrhus also made an interesting tactical use of elephants. While most doctrine of the era called for their placement in the infantry line, Pyrrhus used his laterally, as part of the cavalry charge.

As the battle began, Pyrrhus rushed forward with his cavalry, hoping to catch the Romans while they were still crossing the river. They were too late. The Roman cavalry, screening the infantry's fording, rode out to meet Pyrrhus' force. In the ensuing melee, Pyrrhus' horse was killed from underneath him.

The shaken king was hustled to the relative safety of the infantry, now fully formed, while his attacker was killed. Pyrrhus exchanged armor with Megacles, one of his companions, and continued to direct the battle from the infantry ranks. The ensuing melee was bitterly contested. One account records that there were seven changes in the tide of the battle as Greek and Roman struggled in hand-to-hand combat.

The battle was nearly lost when Megacles was killed. Thinking Megacles was Pyrrhus, the morale of the Greeks plummeted, and the line wavered. Pyrrhus then mounted a horse and rode up and down his line shouting that he lived.

As the battle continued, it appeared that Laevinius' longer line of swords and shield would envelop Pyrrhus' phalanxes. Then, Pyrrhus called for a cavalry charge from the wings. The accompanying elephants turned the

tide of battle. Charging into and through the Roman cavalry, they left it in disarray (mostly because the horses broke at the sight, smell and sound of the beasts). With the Roman screening force collapsed on both sides, the elephants crashed into the infantry's flanks. The Greek phalanxes drove forward simultaneously and pushed the legions back to the river. A general slaughter was averted when a Roman legionnaire named Municius jumped from the line and sliced off an elephant's trunk. In addition to proving that the creatures were not supernatural, it had another effect. The Greeks had to deal with a crazed, wounded elephant in their ranks. The Roman's courageous act cost the Greeks the opportunity for pursuit, and the remnant of Laevinius' army was able to escape.

Pyrrhus had won at Heraclea, but it was a costly victory. Fifteen thousand Romans were killed, while thirteen thousand Greeks lay on the battlefield.

MARCH ON ROME

Having defeated the only consular army in front of him, Pyrrhus marched on Rome. Flocking to him came the Samnites and Lucanians, Italians with no love for Rome. Lacking a siege train, Pyrrhus could not hope to take the city. When he was but thirty-seven miles from the Servilian walls, he sent Cineas as his ambassador to offer the Romans peace terms. All he demanded was a guarantee from the Romans that they would not attack Tarentum. In exchange he offered a return of prisoners without ransom, and his assistance to the Romans for a conquest of the rest of Italy.

The Romans almost accepted. The proposal was thwarted by the blind excensor Appius Claudius Caecus (builder of the Appian Way), who shamed the Romans for their cowardice. In response to his request for an answer, Cineas was told that Rome would never make peace while their enemy was in Italy. Pyrrhus, in an attempt to win some favor with the Senate, released his prisoners back to Rome on the condition that if the Senate still insisted on war they be returned to him two weeks later.

When the Senate refused to consider peace, every man returned to Pyrrhus' custody.

The Romans returned Pyrrhus' chivalry not too long afterwards. A letter was delivered to the consuls from Pyrrhus' physician with an offer to poison the King in exchange for a reward proportional to the deed. The consuls, Gaius Fabricius and Quintus Aemilius, sent a message to Pyrrhus, along with the physician's letter, advising him of the treachery. Pyrrhus executed the physician and released all his prisoners. The Romans, in a characteristic move, released an equal number of Tarentines and Samnites. Cineas returned to the city, anticipating a softening in the Roman position. "Go home," the Senate told him, "and then we'll talk."

ANOTHER "VICTORY"

The next summer (of 279 BC), Pyrrhus again began to march on Rome, but was met by the Romans in Apulia at Ausculum. The battle raged for two days. On the first, both armies fought themselves to standstill. The terrain was disadvantageous for Pyrrhus to use either his cavalry or his elephants because of the wooded country and the nearby river. Both armies found themselves engaged in an infantry slugging match where neither could gain an advantage.

The second day, Pyrrhus gathered his men and advanced in a close and well-ordered body on the Romans on the plain below. It was the Romans' turn to stand and fight, and they did. Eventually the Roman line faltered and broke opposite the point where Pyrrhus was leading his men and where the elephants struck the Roman front. Plutarch's account describes the impact of the elephants in the line "as an eruption of the sea or an earthquake." The Romans retreated to their camp. On the field lay the bodies of some fifteen thousand men, two-thirds Roman. Meanwhile, the Samnites, anticipating a Pyrrhic defeat, plundered the Greek camp.

At the conclusion of the battle, Pyrrhus, who had been wounded by a pilum, was congratulated by one of

his generals on the victory. Looking about the field he replied, "Another victory like this over the Romans and we are undone." Pyrrhus could not replace his losses, but the Romans seemed to have an inexhaustible well of manpower. A war of attrition could never be won and he knew it. Twice Pyrrhus had defeated Roman armies in Italy, but conquest alluded him.

SICILIAN TOUR

A new venture offered itself. The Sicilian cities of Syracuse, Agrigentum and

Leontini offered him their fealty in exchange for his aid in driving out another upstart city state—Carthage.

In Sicily, Pyrrhus enjoyed his usual unbroken string of military successes over the Carthaginians. However, he changed—his character and actions became more despotic, his actions more ruthless. He executed one of the men who had invited him to Sicily on trumped-up charges of treachery. Finally, after three years he left. On departure he looked back at the island, and said "Sicily! What a fine arena we are leaving to the Romans and the Carthaginians." The First Punic War was only little more than a decade away.

RETURN OF THE KING

Pyrrhus returned in Tarentum and immediately moved against the Romans, who had formed an alliance with the Carthaginians against him. At Beneventum in 275, he fought another consular army, this time to a draw. However, southern Italy was tired of war and tired of him, and the alliance was withdrawn. Pyrrhus left for Epirus, leaving behind a small garrison in Tarentum. The Romans had learned as well. As long as Pyrrhus lived they never made a move against Tarentum.

Pyrrhus' end came in 272 BC while on campaign in Argos. Hard pressed



in the high-walled narrow streets of the city, a hostile army without and fierce partisans within, he removed his helmet. A few moments later, he was struck on the head by a stone,

dislodged by a woman who wanted to get a better view of the legendary commander in action. Dazed and bleeding in the street, Pyrrhus was unable to put up any resistance when set upon by an enemy soldier. His head was hacked off by the Argive and taken to the enemy commander Antigonus—the grandson of Antigonus I.

Pyrrhus was an enigma. A clever and brilliant tactician, he lacked persistence and long-term concentration. As a general he embarked on too many mutually inconsistent projects and oscillated between excessive optimism and gloom. Yet, on the field of battle he had no peer in his time. And if Hannibal is to be credited, only one other man surpassed Pyrrhus at the ancient art of war.

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