

cuse and Rome was allowed to deal single handed with Carthage, her great rival in the western end of the Mediterranean.

To transport troops to Sicily, Rome was forced to borrow ships from the Tarentines, Eleates, Locrians and Neopolitans. At the beginning of the war the Carthaginians being masters of the sea ravaged the coasts of Italy, while their own country was safe from invasion.

The Romans resolved to build a powerful navy and in 260, B. C., Rome made her debut as a naval power with one hundred and twenty ships built from the models of captured Carthaginian vessels. Some of these ships ranged as many as five banks of oars.

Her first sea fight was like some of the present day. A portion of the fleet was blocked up in the harbor of Lipara, but instead of bottling them up or torpedoing them, as the Japs would do today, the Carthaginians just sailed boldly in, chased the Roman sailors ashore and captured their ships. The next engagement was more lucky for Rome, for her fleet fell in with fifty Carthaginian ships and captured nearly all of them. Later on, a general engagement of the whole fleets of both nations occurred and, like Bannockburn, Arbela and some other battles was a surprise to the world; for the untrained and outnumbered Romans completely defeated the superior fleet and unrivalled sailors of Carthage.

Duilius, the Roman commander, was totally unacquainted with the sea and was dependent on his own genius instead of experience to win his victory. He devised grappling irons and landing stages for his ships, innovations which incurred the derision of the old sailors of the Carthaginian fleet.

Grappling irons were invented by Nicias and used in 413, B. C., by the Athenians in their engagements with the Syracusians, but it is supposed that the Romans were ignorant of that invention. The Romans up to this war had carried on all their military operations by land and were now for the first time forced to undertake gigantic enterprises by sea. As might be expected they suffered terrible calamities on account of the inexperience of their commanders and the inefficiency of their ships.

In one storm, through the obstinacy of the consuls, who despised the advice of their pilots, three hundred and eighty-four ships were wrecked and nearly every one on board perished. In another storm every ship in a Roman fleet was destroyed while a Carthaginian fleet in the same waters made harbor in safety.

This war, known as the First Punic war, proved the stuff of which the Romans were made; for, when the treasury was exhausted, and their fleets smashed; the citizens, at their own expense, built two hundred ships. With this fleet the Romans defeated