

B.C. 264-241.

THE FIRST PUNIC WAR.

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daring of the Romans, who, with ships thus hastily and clumsily built, and with crews imperfectly trained, sailed to attack the navy of the first maritime state in the world.

This was in the fifth year of the war (B.C. 260).

One of the Consuls, Cn. Cornelius, first put to sea with only 17 ships, but was surprised near Lipara, and taken prisoner with the whole of his squadron.

His colleague, C. Duilius, now took the command of the rest of the fleet.

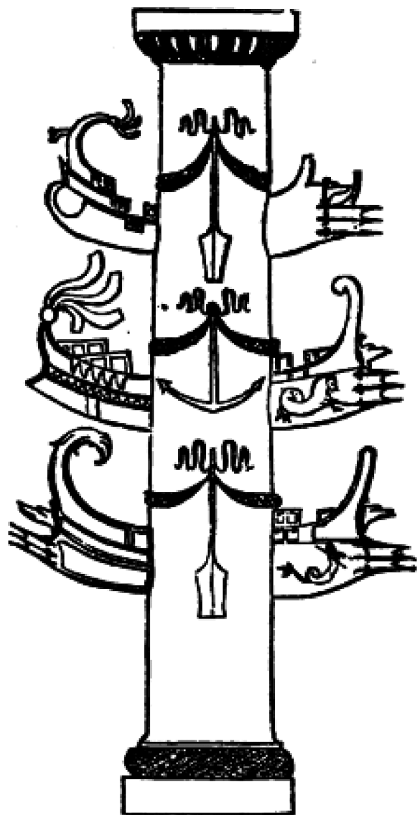
He saw that the only means of conquering the Carthaginians by sea was to deprive them of all the

advantages of manœuvring, and to take their ships

by boarding. For this purpose,

every ship was provided with a boarding-bridge 36 feet in length, which was pulled up by a rope and fastened to a mast in the fore part of the ship. As soon as an enemy's ship came near enough, the rope was loosened, the bridge fell down, and became fastened by means of an iron spike in its under side. The boarders then poured down the bridge into the enemy's ship. Thus prepared, Duilius boldly sailed out to meet the fleet of the enemy. He found them off the Sicilian coast, near Mylæ. The Carthaginians hastened to the fight as if to a triumph, but

their ships were rapidly seized by the boarding-bridges, and when it came to a close fight their crews were no match for the veteran soldiers of Rome. The victory of Duilius was complete. Thirty-one of the enemy's ships were taken, and fourteen



Columna Rostrata.

destroyed ; the rest only saved themselves by an ignominious flight. On his return to Rome, Duilius celebrated a magnificent triumph. Public honors were conferred upon him ; he was to be escorted home in the evening from banquets by the light of torches and the sound of the flute, and a column adorned with the beaks of the conquered ships, and thence called the Columna Rostrata, was set up in the forum.*

* The inscription is still preserved in

upon this column, or, at any rate, a very ancient the Capitoline Museum at Rome-

copy of it,