

IX. The Resumption of Hostilities after the Caudine Forks

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Modern scholars generally agree, and I share their opinion, that the peace treaty which the Samnite, Gavius Pontius, imposed upon the Romans after his success in the Caudine Forks in 321 B.C. did actually come into effect, no matter what a later, patriotic Roman tradition may say about its being promptly repudiated. Modern scholars also generally agree, and once again I share their opinion, as to the terms of this *Pax Caudina*, to employ the expression repeatedly used by Livy (9.1.1; 7.4; 8.1; 12.3): in essence they were that the Romans should evacuate not only such Samnite territory as they had occupied but also the fortresses, and in particular Fregellae and Luceria,¹ which they had established near the borders of Samnium. Most scholars likewise generally agree, and here too I share their opinion, as to when the Caudine Peace broke down and hostilities were resumed: viz. the year which under the conventional Varronian chronology we would call 316 B.C. Finally, there is not only general but so far as I can see universal agreement among scholars that it was at Saticula, a Samnite town near the borders of Campania, that the rupture came; in this instance, however, I find myself quite unable to subscribe to the common opinion. For a variety of reasons Saticula could not have been the scene of the Roman-Samnite clash in 316 B.C. That clash must have occurred somewhere else, and it is the purpose of this paper to show that the Liris valley is the only possible alternative.

In this connection the communications between Roman and Samnite territory are of obvious and immediate relevance. Precisely which route or routes are there along which the forces of one side could move to attack the other? On the western side of Italy there are two: viz. the route along the valley of the River Liris, in effect the Via Latina, which was dominated by Fregellae; and the route along the coast to Campania and thence inland, in effect the line of the later Via Appia, which was dominated by Capua. Be-

¹ Both these towns were in Samnite hands after 321 B.C.: Livy 9.12.9; 13.4; cf. Diod. 19.72.8 (for Luceria); Livy 9.12.5; cf. Diod. 19.101.3 (for Fregellae).

sides these, there is a route on the eastern side of Italy: the Romans could get at the Samnites by making a long detour around the north of their territory and approaching it from the Adriatic side. This northern detour would follow the line of the later Via Valeria, and throughout the Second Samnite War the Romans demonstrated that they thoroughly appreciated its strategic possibilities: which is hardly surprising, seeing that Samnium is physically much more easily accessible from the Adriatic, than from the Tyrrhenian, side.

There were, then, three possible choices which for the sake of convenience we can call respectively the Via Latina route, the Via Appia route, and the Via Valeria route, even though it is certain that the two last-named roads, and possibly the first as well, were only constructed after the events which are here under scrutiny. Obviously these three routes did not all possess the same military value. Neither Romans nor Samnites could use the long, roundabout Via Valeria route unless assured in advance of the cooperation of the peoples through whose territories it passed. The Via Appia route for its part also labored under a distinct strategic disadvantage; it was not really safe for either side to move armies along it without first securing absolute control of the Via Latina route. A tenuous communications line along the coast of Latium could be threatened, and even severed, by a force from the Liris valley thrusting southwards from the vicinity of Fregellae. In 316 B.C., it should be remembered, there were no colonies at Minturnae, Sinuessa and Suessa Aurunca to "cover" the route. The route, therefore, that offered the real possibilities was the one along the Via Latina:² the side that firmly controlled and dominated it could menace the territory of the other in the most deadly fashion. It is like a double-headed arrow aimed directly at Latium in the one direction and at Samnium in the other. (See Plate I.)

This being the state of the communications between Latium and Samnium, the statement of Livy (9.21.2) and indirectly of Diodorus (19.72.4), our only ancient sources of information, that the operation which led to the resumption of hostilities between Rome and Samn-

² Significantly, this was the route used by the allied forces for their advance up the Tyrrhenian side of Italy in World War II. Centuries earlier Hannibal, too, had realized that the Via Latina route was the one that mattered: cf. Livy 22.13.5: *ipse (sc. Hannibal) imperat duci ut se in Agrum Casinatem ducat, edoctus a peritis regionum, si eum saltum occupasset, exitum Romano ad opem ferendam sociis interclusurum*.

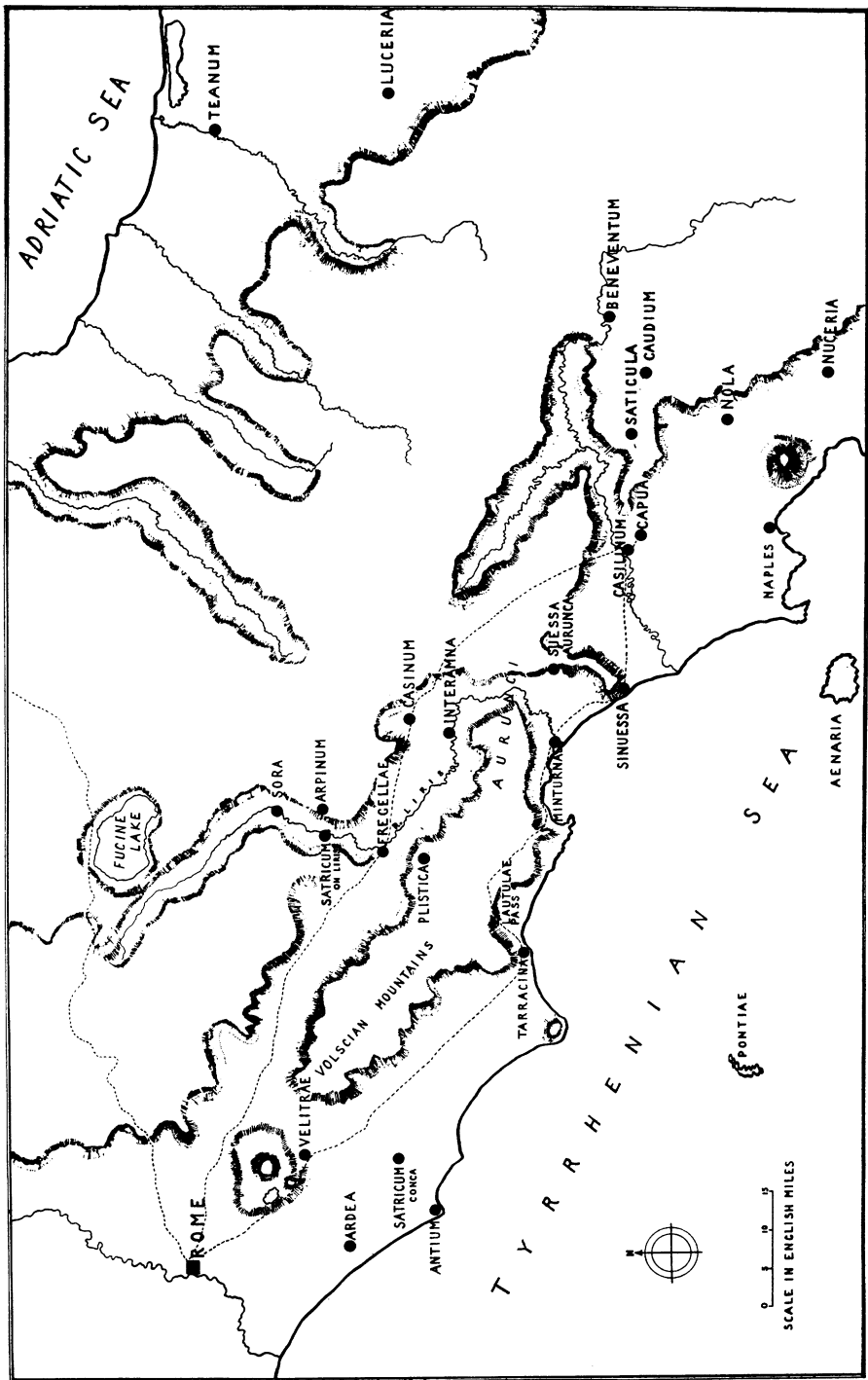


PLATE I. Latium, the Liris Valley and Sannium.

ium in 316 B.C.³ was a Roman assault on Saticula immediately becomes suspect. The exact site of Samnite Saticula near the border of Campania has not, it is true, been positively and unequivocally revealed by epigraphic finds, but there is no real doubt that the town occupied the site of the modern Sant'Agata dei Goti, where an ancient cemetery was unearthed in the eighteenth century:⁴ in other words, it was some twenty miles NNE of Naples and some fifteen miles WSW of Beneventum. Any Roman force that appeared here must have proceeded, and subsequently been maintained, along either the Via Latina route or the Via Appia route. With Fregellae in Samnite hands, however, as a result of the Caudine Peace, the Via Latina is clearly out of the question; and this also rules out the Via Appia route as well, since the Romans lacking control of the Via Latina route would not have dared to use the one nearer the Tyrrhenian coast. For if they did a Samnite force could only too easily swoop down from the region of the Liris valley and cut them off.⁵ For the Romans to attack a town of the Samnites without first assuring themselves of control of the Liris valley does not make strategic sense, especially at a time when their simultaneous operations in Apulia meant that their forces were widely dispersed. On military grounds alone a Roman siege of Saticula is out of the question.

Nor is this all. Livy's references to Saticula at this point in his narrative will certainly strike anyone who bears in mind that in 316 B.C. Saticula was still a Samnite town (Festus p. 458 L.) as curious, to say the least. Thus, Livy says that by attacking Saticula the Romans gave the Samnites a pretext for renewing the war: which sounds like the height of disingenuousness. He goes on to say that by besieging the town the Romans exposed themselves to a double peril, since they were attacked on the one side by the Saticulani and on the other by the Samnites who had mustered a large army to relieve their beleaguered allies (9.21.2-6). Evidently Livy is under the impression that the town the Romans were assaulting was not a Samnite town at all: in other words Livy cannot mean the place which stood where Sant'Agata dei Goti now stands, even though our editions of his text do give its name as Saticula.

³ Under the system of chronology followed by Diodorus the year would be 314 B.C.: but throughout this paper I give the so-called Varronian dates.

⁴ A. Zazo in *Samnium* 7 (1934) 235.

⁵ Such a Samnite force could have used the route taken by Highway No. 82 today.

Suspicion becomes certainty when we look, not at the modern editions, but at the mss of Livy. The town which the latter record is *Satricula* and its inhabitants are variously styled as *Satriculani* or *Satricani*. It was Sigonius almost exactly four hundred years ago who emended the name to Saticula, being influenced of course by the fact that Satricula is otherwise unknown and that the text of Diodorus (19.72.4) names Saticula as the town in question.

The other places mentioned by both Livy and Diodorus in connection with the operations around "Saticula" are not irrelevant. These other places are: Sora (Diod. 19.72.3; Livy 9.23.1), the Lautulae Pass (Diod. 19.72.7; Livy 9.23.4), and a town variously named as Plistica, Plistia, Philistia or Postia in the mss of Livy (9.21.6; 22.2; 22.11) and as Pleistikê or Plestikê in those of Diodorus (19.72.3); from the time of Sigonius onwards scholars have usually called it Plistica, since this form although found at only one of the three Livy references (and actually in only one ms) comes closest to being common to both of our sources. Now, the sites of Sora and the Lautulae Pass are quite positively and certainly known. Sora, a flourishing town in the valley of the River Liris, still exists under the same name, while the Lautulae Pass is close to Terracina and therefore also fairly close to the Liris valley.⁶ Manifestly neither can be reckoned as in the vicinity of Saticula (Sant'Agata dei Goti). That leaves "Plistica." As Livy seems to imply the proximity of this town to Saticula, Nissen decided that it ought to be sought somewhere near Sant'Agata dei Goti, and, like others before him, he triumphantly discovered that near Sant'Agata there still exists a hamlet named Prestia.⁷ Whether, however, Prestia is sufficiently close to any of the forms of the name that occur in the mss of Livy and Diodorus may well seem doubtful to others besides myself. Furthermore, Diodorus appears to place "Plistica" in the vicinity of Sora, in other words in the Liris valley, rather than near Saticula; and this seems to me overwhelmingly probable. I suggest that "Plistica" is to be identified with the modern village of Pastena (some six miles due south of the site of Fregellae), where ancient remains can still be seen.

As a matter of fact, if the name Saticula had not somehow crept

⁶ It is separated from the valley of the Liris by the Volscian Hills (Monti Lepini): but they are not very difficult to negotiate at this point. Cf. Livy 2.39.3: inde (sc. from the coastal region) in Latinam viam transversis tramitibus transgressus.

⁷ H. Nissen in *Rheinisches Museum* 25 (1870) 30.

into the record of events in 316 B.C., not only would no one dream of looking for "Plistica" anywhere else than in the Liris valley, but also there would be no reason for placing any of the non-Apulian military operations of that year outside of the Liris area. The conclusion is inescapable: the assault which Livy and Diodorus describe the Romans as making on "Saticula" must have been made on some town in the Liris valley which somehow came to be confused with Saticula. Nor is it very difficult to decide which town it was: it must have been Satricum. This is not the famous Satricum, the former Latin colony, occupying the well-known site at Conca, about midway between Antium and Velitrae, which was excavated years ago.⁸ Satricum-Conca had been wiped off the face of the earth in 346 B.C. (Livy 7.27.8),⁹ and any subsequent references to Satricum must be to the other town of the same name, a rather obscure place near Fregellae in the Liris valley: for the sake of convenience we can call it Satricum-on-Liris. Cicero mentions it in a letter to his brother (*ad Q. Fr.* 3.1.4) and, as natives of neighboring Arpinum, both the Ciceros must have been well acquainted with it. Its site is to be sought either at Bauco or at Monte San Giovanni, some ten miles above Fregellae, on the right bank of the Liris.¹⁰

From the fact that Diodorus' text has Saticula and Livy's Satricula, where both alike must mean Satricum, it appears highly probable that the person, or persons, responsible for this case of mistaken urban identity was one or more of the post-Gracchan annalists upon whom they both depended.¹¹ That Satricum should be confused with Saticula is not in itself surprising. Casinum and Casilinum afford a pretty exact analogy: in their case, too, it was

⁸ J. Beloch, *Röm. Geschichte* (Berlin 1926) 360, seems unusually perverse in insisting that Satricum-Conca must be the town mentioned in the operations after the Caudine Forks disaster.

⁹ Satricum-Conca was never rebuilt after 346 B.C.: Mommsen, *CIL* 10.661; *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin 1910) 5.70.

¹⁰ H. Nissen, *Italische Landeskunde* (Berlin 1902) 2.674. *CIL* 10.5779 possibly comes from there.

¹¹ The old view that Diodorus' source for the Roman items he inserts into his history is older and more undefiled than Livy's should be abandoned: see, e.g., J. Wolski, "La prise de Rome par les Celtes et la formation de l'annalistique romaine" (in *Historia* 5 [1956] 24-52). Diodorus' account, no less than Livy's, is essentially post-Gracchan: it gives the impression of being purer, partly because it is so succinct and partly because it is derived in all probability from only one annalist instead of several. Livy clearly used several, and it is the rhetorical embellishments and occasional contradictions resulting from this *contaminatio* which have caused scholars to think that he preserves a much more recent tradition than his Sicilian contemporary.

easy, quite literally fatally easy, to mistake one of the towns for the other owing to the similarity of their names (Hannibal discovered this to his chagrin in 217 B.C.: Livy 22.13.6).

Once it is realized that Saticula has nothing to do with the events of 316 B.C. (significantly, it is not mentioned in the Triumphal Fasti), it is possible to reconstruct with logic and confidence the events immediately following the imposition of the Caudine Peace by the Samnites.

Satricum (-on-Liris), according to Livy (9.16.2), possessed Roman citizenship at the time of the Second Samnite War, and there is no reason to disbelieve this. The town, like the other Volscian communities in that area, must have obtained the citizenship, *sine suffragio* of course, in the settlement at the end of the Latin War (Livy 8.14 = 338 B.C.). Needless to say, it by no means follows that the Satricani were well pleased at their forcible incorporation into the Roman state with the status of depressed citizens. Unquestionably they must have been eager to revolt at the first opportunity. That opportunity came with the Roman reverse in the Caudine Forks: the Satricani rebelled the next year, 320 B.C. And they were not alone. The shattering Caudine setback was bound to cause defections among Rome's allies (Livy 9.16.3). The Campanians, it is true, appear to have remained generally loyal (Livy 9.6.5; 7.1-5), but Samnite control of Luceria (Rome's "good and faithful ally": Livy 9.2.5) undoubtedly led to anti-Roman movements among the Apulians, in the same way that the cession of Fregeallae encouraged the Volscians to sever their connections with Rome.

The Romans, without transgressing the terms of the Caudine Peace, at once set to work to reestablish a network of alliances.¹² But they had to move warily. A move by them pointed directly from Latium and unmistakably at Samnium was bound to be treated as a *casus belli* by the Samnites. Accordingly, at first, they behaved very circumspectly indeed in the Liris valley, a highly sensitive area for the Samnites: Livy's tale (9.16.2) of their re-subjugation of Satricum in 319 B.C., as we shall see, is an anticipation of the events of 316 B.C. They prudently adopted the more indirect, but for them traditional, approach of establishing alliances in the rear of the potential enemy: in other words, they at first made their main effort in

¹² Evidently so did the Samnites: witness the cases of Satricum-on-Liris (noted above) and Nuceria Alfaterna (Diod. 19.65.7 = 316 B.C.; cf. Livy 9.41.3).

Apulia. Expeditions sent thither, presumably by way of the Via Valeria route, forced Canusium back into alliance with them in 318 B.C. (Diod. 19.10.2; Livy 9.20.4) and Teanum Apulum in 317 B.C.¹³ Encouraged by these successes and naturally burning with impatience to recover the prestige lost at the Caudine Forks, they widened the scope of their activities the next year. They not only had a force in Apulia then, which captured Ferentum¹⁴ and was no doubt also intended to recover, if possible, Luceria, the most important point in Apulia (Diod. 19.72.8), but they also now felt sufficiently strong to venture on a move in the Liris valley. They sent a force via the Via Latina route to recover Satricum-on-Liris, now an ally of the Samnites.¹⁵ The latter recognized this Roman move for the challenge which it undoubtedly was: as Livy puts it (9.21.2), they had a pretext for renewing the war. Hostilities between Rome and Samnium accordingly now broke out afresh: the Caudine Peace was at an end.

The Samnites mobilized their full strength (Diod. 19.72.5) and quickly showed that the attempted Roman resurgence was perhaps premature. Their attempt to relieve Satricum, it is true, failed (Livy 9.21.6), but they gained successes in Campania in 316 B.C., where Nuceria repudiated its alliance with Rome and joined the Samnites (Diod. 19.65.7; cf. Livy 9.41.3), and in the Liris valley in 315 B.C., where they more than offset the fall of Satricum to the Roman besieging force (Diod. 19.72.4; Livy 9.22.11) by inducing Sora (Diod. 19.72.3) and "Plistica" (Diod. *ibid.*; Livy 9.22.11) to massacre their Roman garrisons and throw in their lot with themselves. These last-named Samnite successes occurred in the area which points like a dagger at the heart of Latium, and in alarm the Romans hurriedly appointed a dictator Q. Fabius Rullianus, whose

¹³ Livy 9.20.7: failing to realize that the Teates are the inhabitants of Teanum Apulum he conflates two of his sources and records the subjugation of the Teates separately from that of their city, which he assigns to the previous year.

¹⁴ Diod. 19.65.7 (he calls the town Ferenté); Livy (9.20.9) gives 317 B.C. as the date for its capture but this is clearly a doublet of 9.16.1, where Livy assigns the subjugation of Ferentum to 319 B.C. As he, however, synchronizes it with the Roman move to recover Satricum-on-Liris and as the move against Satricum undoubtedly belongs to 316 B.C., Diodorus must be right in placing the capture of Ferentum in this latter year.

¹⁵ Livy 9.21.2, where Satricula must mean Satricum. Livy's earlier account of the recovery of Satricum (9.16.2 = 319 B.C.) has long been recognized as an anticipation of the actual event: see, e.g., F. E. Adcock in *CAH* 7 (1928) 602, who however seems to me wrong in assigning it to 313 B.C. (also, to judge from the entry in the index, he is thinking of the wrong Satricum).

magister equitum was Q. Aulius Cerretanus, to cope with the situation (Diod. 19.72.6; Livy 9.22.1).¹⁶ Fabius and Aulius took command of the forces in the Liris valley and met the enemy in battle at the Lautulae Pass. After a bitter fight, in which Aulius himself fell, the Romans were defeated with heavy loss. At least, that is the version given by Diodorus (19.72.7). According to Livy (9.23.4), the battle at Lautulae was "indecisive."¹⁷ But that Diodorus is right is proved by the following facts. First, Livy (9.23.5) virtually admits that it was only patriotism that kept him from giving the same account as Diodorus. Secondly, Lautulae was at once followed by a Samnite invasion of Campania, designed to provoke revolts and anti-Roman movements against Rome's allies there (Livy 9.25); and the loyalty most Campanians had displayed towards Rome after the Caudine Forks surrender was not proof against this second disaster; many of them hastened to join what appeared to be the winning side and those who did not faced extirpation at the hands of the Samnites (Diod. 19.76.1). And thirdly, it was now, apparently, that the Samnites made their famous plundering expedition into Latium, which is recorded but not dated by Strabo (5.3.5 p. 232; 5.4.11 p. 249) and which penetrated as far as Ardea, perilously close to Rome itself.¹⁸ The year 315 B.C. must have been one of the blackest in the annals of the Roman Republic, relieved only by the feats of the garrison in newly recovered Satrium and of the colonists in strategic Tarracina: these managed to hold out.¹⁹

Proverbially, however, it is always blackest just before the dawn. In 314 B.C. the tide began to turn. By strenuous efforts, including resort once more to the dictatorship (Diod. 19.76.3; Livy 9.26; 28), the Romans succeeded in involving the Samnites in two-front war.

¹⁶ In addition they may also have recalled some of their troops from Apulia: cf. Livy 9.23.1.

¹⁷ Livy (9.22–23) makes Aulius lose his life at a fictitious recapture of Sora in this year.

¹⁸ See A. Boethius in *Atti del 5° Congresso di Studi Romani* 2 (1940) 235.

¹⁹ For the effect of a garrison holding out in Tarracina see Cic. *ad Att.* 8.11B.1. Possibly the Romans also scored some successes in Apulia in this year (315 B.C.). Diodorus (19.72.8) implies that they did and we ought perhaps to infer as much also from Livy's rhetorical account (9.12.9–9.14.13) of an Apulian campaign by the consuls for 320 B.C., who significantly are identical with those of 315 B.C. Nevertheless, even though the exploits attributed to L. Papirius Cursor and Q. Publilius Philo in 320 B.C. more probably belong in 315 B.C., they have undoubtedly been embroidered to elaborate the tale of a revenge expedition after the Caudine surrender and far transcend anything that this pair of consuls may have achieved in fact in the latter year.

Their forces in Apulia, after stern fighting, established a Latin colony at Luceria,²⁰ and their forces on the Tyrrhenian side of Italy managed to defeat the Samnites in a great battle near Tarracina²¹ and to reduce some of their rebellious allies, and in particular the Aurunci (Diod. 19.76.3; Livy 9.25.9), to submission.

In 313 B.C. the Romans really got the upper hand, by recapturing Fregellae (Diod. 19.101.3; Livy 9.28.3). Fregellae was the key point: it assured the Romans of control of the Via Latina route, and this in its turn made freedom of movement possible for them along the Via Appia route as well. What possession of Fregellae meant was immediately revealed. In this same year, 313 B.C., the Romans proceeded to purge Campania of its pro-Samnite elements (Diod. 19.101.3; Livy 9.28.5) and to establish Latin colonies which ensured that Campania would never again be cut off from Latium: Saticula (Festus p. 458 L.; Diod. 19.101.3?) and Suessa Aurunca (Livy 9.28.7) safeguarded the communications by land and Pontiae (Diod. *ibid.*; Livy *ibid.*) those by sea.²²

In the next year, 312 B.C., thanks once again to their control of Fregellae, the Romans were able to push the fighting back up the valley of the Liris to the vicinity of Sora: the Fasti record a triumph *de Samnitibus Soranisque* and Interamna was established as a Latin colony in the Liris valley in that year (Diod. 19.105.5; Livy 9.28.8). Hard, and at times desperate, fighting still lay ahead: Sora, for instance, changed hands more than once before it, too, could be firmly established as a Latin colony in 303 B.C. (Livy 9.43.1 = 306 B.C.; 9.44.15 = 305 B.C.; 10.1.1 = 303 B.C.). But the Roman recovery of Fregellae in 313 B.C. had really sealed the issue: in the words of Livy (9.29.1), "war with the Samnites was practically ended." The pro-Samnite interventions of the Etruscans and Umbrians did indeed delay the issue for a number of years, but they were "the last remnants of the war" (Livy 9.29.3). From 312 B.C. on, all the heroic valour of the Samnites could not prevent their fortunes from gradually sinking.

²⁰ Livy 9.26.1. Diodorus (19.72.8) appears to assign the colony at Luceria to 315 B.C., but he may only mean that it was in that year that the Romans began their direct assault on the town proper.

²¹ Diod. 19.76.2: accepting Burger's *Tarracina* for *cinna*. Livy (9.27) places the battle at Caudium, a geographical impossibility, in my opinion, so long as Fregellae remained in Samnite hands.

²² Velleius Paterculus (1.14.4) also records the planting of these colonies (except the one at Pontiae), but he dates them about ten years earlier. Probably his text is faulty: G. De Sanctis, *Storia dei Romani* (Turin 1907) 2.327.

The fact that the Latin colonies which the Romans planted in 313 B.C. included Saticula is worth emphasizing since it helps to explain how the post-Gracchan annalists came to mistake Satricum for Saticula in 316 B.C. Doubtless it was only too easy for them to confuse the two places in any case owing to the resemblance of names; but, when both places played a significant role in the hostilities which ensued on the breakdown of the Caudine Peace the confusion was not merely easy but almost inevitable. And once it had occurred the annalists naturally could not avoid garbling their accounts of what transpired after the Caudine capitulation. More than that: the substitution of Saticula for Satricum, as much as anything, enabled them to elaborate the legend that the Senate and People repudiated the Caudine Peace, which the consuls had signed, and continued the Second Samnite War without interruption.

Livy was hardly the man to unscramble the garbled accounts which he found in his annalistic sources. Never very adept at disentangling the variant systems of chronology which he found in the annalists, he on this occasion found himself faced also with a difference of names, to puzzle him still further. Small wonder is it, therefore, that the event which really precipitated the resumption of hostilities, viz. the Roman assault on Satricum, actually appears twice in his pages: in the one place (9.16.2) he gets the date wrong, in the other (9.21.2) the name.