

APPIAN AND PLUTARCH

Mithridates Against Rome

Source: William Stearns Davis, ed., *Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources*, 2 Vols. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1912-13), Vol. II: *Rome and the West*, pp. 118-120, 123-127. Scanned by: J. S. Arkenberg, Dept. of History, Cal. State Fullerton. Prof. Arkenberg has modernized the text.

In Mithridates, king of Pontus (reigned 120 to 63 BCE), the Romans found their most formidable enemy, save only Hannibal. That he was a foe worthy to contend with Sulla, Lucullus, and Pompey is testified to in the following selection from Appian. In conquering Mithridates the Romans, almost against their wish, were forced to conquer most of the nearer Orient---especially all of Asia Minor and Syria---and to come face to face with Parthia. When at last Mithridates had been overthrown the Romans called the victory over him "The Great Victory" and Pompey, his conqueror, Magnus, or "The Great"—on account of the magnitude and intensity of his achievement. Lucullus (died about 56 BCE) would have conquered Mithridates had not Pompey been sent out (in 66 BCE) to supersede him. As it was, he brought back from the East enough wealth for a magnificent triumph.

Appian, *Mithridatic Wars* 118-119

Many times Mithridates had over 400 ships of his own, 50,000 cavalry, and 250,000 infantry, with engines and arms in proportion. For allies he had the king of Armenia and the princes of the Scythian tribes around the Euxine and the Sea of Azov and beyond, as far as the Thracian Bosphorus. He held communication with the leaders of the Roman civil wars, which were then fiercely raging, and with those who were inciting insurrections in Spain. He established friendly relations with the Gauls for the purpose of invading Italy.

From Cilicia to the Pillars of Hercules he also filled the sea with pirates, who stopped all commerce and navigation between cities, and caused severe famine for a long time. In short, he left nothing within the power of man undone or untried to start the greatest possible movement, extending

from the Orient to the Occident, to vex, so to speak, the whole world, which was warred upon, tangled in alliances, harassed by pirates, or vexed by the neighborhood of the warfare. Such and so diversified was this one war against Mithridates, but in the end it brought the greatest gain to the Romans; for it pushed the boundaries of their dominion from the setting of the sun to the river Euphrates.

Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus*, xxxvii

The pomp [of Lucullus' triumph] proved not so wonderful or so wearisome with the length of the procession and the number of things carried in it, but consisted chiefly in vast quantities of arms and machines of the king's [i.e., Mithridates], with which he adorned the Flaminian circus, a spectacle by no means despicable.

In his progress there passed by a few horsemen in heavy armor, ten chariots armed with scythes, sixty friends and officers of the king's, and a hundred and ten brazen-beaked ships of war, which were conveyed along with a golden image of Mithridates six feet high, a shield set with precious stones, twenty loads of silver vessels, and thirty-two of golden cups, armor, and money, all carried by men. Besides which, eight mules were laden with golden couches, fifty-six with bullion, and a hundred and seven with coined silver, little less than two million seven hundred thousand pieces. There were tablets, also, with inscriptions, stating what moneys he gave Pompey for prosecuting the piratic war, what he delivered into the treasury, and what he gave to every soldier, which was nine hundred and fifty drachmas each [Arkenberg: about \$715 in 1998 dollars]. After all which he nobly feasted the city and adjoining villages.