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A GREEK SHEPHERD, OLYMPIA.

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Historical Tales

The Romance of Reality

By

CHARLES MORRIS

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IN FIFTEEN VOLUMES

Volume X

Greek

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PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON

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GREEK.

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HOW TROY WAS TAKEN.

The far-famed Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta, was the most beautiful woman in the world. And from her beauty and faithlessness came the most celebrated of ancient wars, with death and disaster to numbers of famous heroes and the final ruin of the ancient city of Troy. The story of these striking events has been told only in poetry. We propose to tell it again in sober prose.

But warning must first be given that Helen and the heroes of the Trojan war dwelt in the mist-land of legend and tradition, that cloud-realm from which history only slowly emerged. The facts with which we are here concerned are those of the poet, not those of the historian. It is far from sure that Helen ever lived. It is far from sure that there ever was a Trojan war. Many people doubt the whole story. Yet the ancient Greeks accepted it as history, and as we are telling their story, we may fairly include it among the historical tales of Greece. The heroes concerned are certainly fully alive in Homer's great poem, the "Iliad," and we can do no better than follow the story of this stirring poem, while adding details from other sources.

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Mythology tells us that, once upon a time, the three goddesses, Venus, Juno, and Minerva, had a contest as to which was the most beautiful, and left the decision to Paris, then a shepherd on Mount Ida, though really the son of King Priam of Troy. The princely shepherd decided in favor of Venus, who had promised him in reward the love of the most beautiful of living women, the Spartan Helen, daughter of the great deity Zeus (or Jupiter). Accordingly the handsome and favored youth set sail for Sparta, bringing with him rich gifts for its beautiful queen. Menelaus received his Trojan guest with much hospitality, but, unluckily, was soon obliged to make a journey to Crete, leaving Helen to entertain the princely visitor. The result was as Venus had foreseen. Love arose between the handsome youth and the beautiful woman, and an elopement followed, Paris stealing away with both the wife and the money of his confiding host. He set sail, had a prosperous voyage, and arrived safely at Troy with his prize on the third day. This was a fortune very different from that of Ulysses, who on his return from Troy took ten years to accomplish a similar voyage.

As might naturally be imagined, this elopement excited indignation not only in the hearts of Menelaus and his brother Agamemnon, but among the Greek chieftains generally, who sympathized with the husband in his grief and shared his anger against Troy. War was declared against that faithless city, and most of the chiefs pledged themselves to take part in it, and to

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lend their aid until Helen was recovered or restored. Had they known all that was before them they might have hesitated, since it took ten long years to equip the expedition, for ten years more the war continued, and some of the leaders spent ten years in their return. But in those old days time does not seem to have counted for much, and besides, many of the chieftains had been suitors for the hand of Helen, and were doubtless moved by their old love in pledging themselves to her recovery.

Some of them, however, were anything but eager to take part. Achilles and Ulysses, the two most important in the subsequent war, endeavored to escape this necessity. Achilles was the son of the sea-nymph Thetis, who had dipped him when an infant in the river Styx, the waters of which magic stream rendered him invulnerable to any weapon except in one spot,—the heel by which his mother had held him. But her love for her son made her anxious to guard him against every danger, and when the chieftains came to seek his aid in the expedition, she concealed him, dressed as a girl, among the maidens of the court. But the crafty Ulysses, who accompanied them, soon exposed this trick. Disguised as a pedler, he spread his goods, a shield and a spear among them, before the maidens. Then an alarm of danger being sounded, the girls fled in affright, but the disguised youth, with impulsive valor, seized the weapons and prepared to defend himself. His identity was thus revealed.

Ulysses himself, one of the wisest and shrewdest of men, had also sought to escape the dangerous expedition. To do so he feigned madness, and when the messenger chiefs came to [Pg 10] seek him they found him attempting to plough with an ox and a horse yoked together, while he sowed the field with salt. One of them, however, took Telemachus, the young son of Ulysses, and laid him in the furrow before the plough. Ulysses turned the plough aside, and thus showed that there was more method than madness in his mind.

And thus, in time, a great force of men and a great fleet of ships were gathered, there being in all eleven hundred and eighty-six ships and more than one hundred thousand men. The kings and chieftains of Greece led their followers from all parts of the land to Aulis, in Bœotia, whence they were to set sail for the opposite coast of Asia Minor, on which stood the city of Troy. Agamemnon, who brought one hundred ships, was chosen leader of the army, which included all the heroes of the age, among them the distinguished warriors Ajax and Diomedes, the wise old Nestor, and many others of valor and fame.

The fleet at length set sail; but Troy was not easily reached. The leaders of the army did not even know where Troy was, and landed in the wrong locality, where they had a battle with the people. Embarking again, they were driven by a storm back to Greece. Adverse winds now kept them at Aulis until Agamemnon appeased the hostile gods by sacrificing to them his daughter Iphigenia,—one of the ways which those old heathens had of obtaining fair weather. Then the winds changed, and the fleet made its way to the island of Tenedos, in the vicinity of Troy. From [Pg 11] here Ulysses and Menelaus were sent to that city as envoys to demand a return of Helen and the stolen property.

Meanwhile the Trojans, well aware of what was in store for them, had made abundant preparations, and gathered an army of allies from various parts of Thrace and Asia Minor. They received the two Greek envoys hospitably, paid them every attention, but sustained the villany of Paris, and refused to deliver Helen and the treasure. When this word was brought back to the fleet the chiefs decided on immediate war, and sail was made for the neighboring shores of the Trojan realm.

Of the long-drawn-out war that followed we know little more than what Homer has told us, though something may be learned from other ancient poems. The first Greek to land fell by the hand of Hector, the Trojan hero,—as the gods had foretold. But in vain the Trojans sought to prevent the landing; they were quickly put to rout, and Cycnus, one of their greatest warriors and son of the god Neptune, was slain by Achilles. He was invulnerable to iron, but was choked to death by the hero and changed into a swan. The Trojans were driven within their city walls, and the invulnerable Achilles, with what seems a safe valor, stormed and sacked numerous towns in the neighborhood, killed one of King Priam's sons, captured and sold as slaves several others, drove off the oxen of the celebrated warrior Æneas, and came near to killing that hero himself. He also captured and kept as his own prize a beautiful maiden named Briseis, and was even granted, through the favor of the gods, an interview with the divine Helen herself. [Pg 12]

This is about all we know of the doings of the first nine years of the war. What the Greeks were at during that long time neither history nor legend tells. The only other event of importance was the death of Palamedes, one of the ablest Grecian chiefs. It was he who had detected the feigned madness of Ulysses, and tradition relates that he owed his death to the revengeful anger of that cunning schemer, who had not forgiven him for being made to take part in this endless and useless war.

Thus nine years of warfare passed, and Troy remained untaken and seemingly unshaken. How the two hosts managed to live in the mean time the tellers of the story do not say. Thucydides, the historian, thinks it likely that the Greeks had to farm the neighboring lands for food. How the Trojans and their allies contrived to survive so long within their walls we are left to surmise, unless they farmed their streets. And thus we reach the opening of the tenth year and of Homer's "Iliad."

Homer's story is too long for us to tell in detail, and too full of war and bloodshed for modern taste. We can only give it in epitome.

Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks, robs Achilles of his beautiful captive Briseis, and the invulnerable hero, furious at the insult, retires in sullen rage to his ships, forbids his troops to take part in the war, and sulks in anger while battle after battle is fought. Deprived of his mighty aid, the Greeks find the Trojans quite their match, and the fortunes of the warring hosts vary day by day. [Pg 13]

On a watch-tower in Troy sits Helen the beautiful, gazing out on the field of conflict, and naming for old Priam, who sits beside her, the Grecian leaders as they appear at the head of their hosts on the plain below. On this plain meet in fierce combat Paris the abductor and Menelaus the indignant husband. Vengeance lends double weight to the spear of the latter, and Paris is so fiercely assailed that Venus has to come to his aid to save him from death. Meanwhile a Trojan archer wounds Menelaus with an arrow, and a general battle ensues.

The conflict is a fierce one, and many warriors on both sides are slain. Diomedes, a bold Grecian chieftain, is the hero of the day. Trojans fall by scores before his mighty spear, he rages in fury from side to side of the field, and at length meets the great Æneas, whose thigh he breaks with a huge stone. But Æneas is the son of the goddess Venus, who flies to his aid and bears him from the field. The furious Greek daringly pursues the flying divinity, and even succeeds in wounding the goddess of love with his impious spear. At this sad outcome Venus, to whom physical pain is a new sensation, flies in dismay to Olympus, the home of the deities, and hides her weeping face in the lap of Father Jove, while her lady enemies taunt her with biting sarcasms. The whole scene is an amusing example of the childish folly of mythology.

In the next scene a new hero appears upon the field, Hector, the warlike son of Priam, and next to Achilles the greatest warrior of the war. He arms himself inside the walls, and takes an affectionate leave of his wife Andromache and his infant son, the child crying with terror at his glittering helmet and nodding plume. This mild demeanor of the warrior changes to warlike ardor when he appears upon the field. His coming turns the tide of battle. The victorious Greeks are driven back before his shining spear, many of them are slain, and the whole host is driven to its ships and almost forced to take flight by sea from the victorious onset of Hector and his triumphant followers. While the Greeks cower in their ships the Trojans spend the night in bivouac upon the field. Homer gives us a picturesque description of this night-watch, which Tennyson has thus charmingly rendered into English: [Pg 14]

> "As when in heaven the stars about the moon
> Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
> And every height comes out, and jutting peak
> And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
> Break open to their highest, and all the stars
> Shine, and the shepherd gladdens in his heart;
> So, many a fire between the ships and stream
> Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,
> A thousand on the plain; and close by each
> Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire;
> And, champing golden grain, the horses stood
> Hard by their chariots, waiting for the dawn."

Affairs had grown perilous for the Greeks. Patroclus, the bosom friend of Achilles, begged him to come to their aid. This the sulking hero would not do, but he lent Patroclus his armor, and permitted him to lead his troops, the Myrmidons, to the field. Patroclus was himself a gallant and famous warrior, and his aid turned the next day's battle against the Trojans, who were driven back with great slaughter. But, unfortunately for this hero of the fight, a greater than he was in the field. Hector met him in the full tide of his success, engaged him in battle, killed him, and captured from his body the armor of Achilles. [Pg 15]

THE PARTING OF HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE.

The slaughter of his friend at length aroused the sullen Achilles to action. Rage against the Trojans succeeded his anger against Agamemnon. His lost armor was replaced by new armor forged for him by Vulcan, the celestial smith,—who fashioned him the most wonderful of shields and most formidable of spears. Thus armed, he mounted his chariot and drove at the head of his Myrmidons to the field, where he made such frightful slaughter of the Trojans that the river Scamander was choked with their corpses; and, indignant at being thus treated, sought to drown the hero for his offence. Finally he met Hector, engaged him in battle, and killed him with a thrust of his mighty spear. Then, fastening the corpse of the Trojan hero to his chariot, he dragged it furiously over the blood-soaked plain and around the city walls. Homer's story ends with the funeral obsequies of the slain Patroclus and the burial by the Trojans of Hector's recovered body.

Other writers tell us how the war went on. Hector was replaced by Penthesileia, the beautiful and warlike queen of the Amazons, who came to the aid of the Trojans, and drove the Greeks from the field. But, alas! she too was slain by the invincible Achilles. Removing her helmet, the [Pg 16] victor was deeply affected to find that it was a beautiful woman he had slain.

The mighty Memnon, son of godlike parents, now made his appearance in the Trojan ranks, at the head of a band of black Ethiopians, with whom he wrought havoc among the Greeks. At length Achilles encountered this hero also, and a terrible battle ensued, whose result was long in doubt. In the end Achilles triumphed and Memnon fell. But he died to become immortal, for his goddess mother prayed for and obtained for him the gift of immortal life.

Such triumphs were easy for Achilles, whose flesh no weapon could pierce; but no one was invulnerable to the poets, and his end came at last. He had routed the Trojans and driven them within their gates, when Paris, aided by Apollo, the divine archer, shot an arrow at the hero which struck him in his one pregnable spot, the heel. The fear of Thetis was realized, her son died from the wound, and a fierce battle took place for the possession of his body. This Ajax and Ulysses succeeded in carrying off to the Grecian camp, where it was burned on a magnificent funeral pile. Achilles, like his victim Memnon, was made immortal by the favor of the gods. His armor was offered as a prize to the most distinguished Grecian hero, and was adjudged to Ulysses, whereupon Ajax, his close contestant for the prize, slew himself in despair.

We cannot follow all the incidents of the campaign. It will suffice to say that Paris was himself [Pg 17] slain by an arrow, that Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, took his place in the field, and that the Trojans suffered so severely at his hands that they took shelter behind their walls, whence they never again emerged to meet the Greeks in the field.

But Troy was safe from capture while the Palladium, a statue which Jupiter himself had given to Dardanus, the ancestor of the Trojans, remained in the citadel of that city. Ulysses overcame this difficulty. He entered Troy in the disguise of a wounded and ragged fugitive, and managed to steal the Palladium from the citadel. Then, as the walls of Troy still defied their assailants, a further and extraordinary stratagem was employed to gain access to the city. It seems a ridiculous one to us, but was accepted as satisfactory by the writers of Greece. This stratagem was the following:

A great hollow wooden horse, large enough to contain one hundred armed men, was constructed, and in its interior the leading Grecian heroes concealed themselves. Then the army set fire to its tents, took to its ships, and sailed away to the island of Tenedos, as if it had abandoned the siege. Only the great horse was left on the long-contested battle-field.

The Trojans, filled with joy at the sight of their departing foes, came streaming out into the plain, women as well as warriors, and gazed with astonishment at the strange monster which their enemies had left. Many of them wanted to take it into the city, and dedicate it to the gods as a mark of gratitude for their deliverance. The more cautious ones doubted if it was wise to accept [Pg 18] an enemy's gift. Laocoon, the priest of Neptune, struck the side of the horse with his spear. A hollow sound came from its interior, but this did not suffice to warn the indiscreet Trojans. And a terrible spectacle now filled them with superstitious dread. Two great serpents appeared far out at sea and came swimming inward over the waves. Reaching the shore, they glided over the land to where stood the unfortunate Laocoon, whose body they encircled with their folds. His son, who came to his rescue, was caught in the same dreadful coils, and the two perished miserably before the eyes of their dismayed countrymen.

There was no longer any talk of rejecting the fatal gift. The gods had given their decision. A breach was made in the walls of Troy, and the great horse was dragged with exultation within the stronghold that for ten long years had defied its foe.

Riotous joy and festivity followed in Troy. It extended into the night. While this went on Sinon, a seeming renegade who had been left behind by the Greeks, and who had helped to deceive the Trojans by lying tales, lighted a fire-signal for the fleet, and loosened the bolts of the wooden horse, from whose hollow depths the hundred weary warriors hastened to descend.

And now the triumph of the Trojans was changed to sudden woe and dire lamentation. Death followed close upon their festivity. The hundred warriors attacked them at their banquets, the returned fleet disgorged its thousands, who poured through the open gates, and death held [Pg 19] fearful carnival within the captured city. Priam was slain at the altar by Neoptolemus. All his sons fell in death. The city was sacked and destroyed. Its people were slain or taken captive. Few escaped, but among these was Æneas, the traditional ancestor of Rome. As regards Helen, the

cause of the war, she was recovered by Menelaus, and gladly accompanied him back to Sparta. There she lived for years afterwards in dignity and happiness, and finally died to become happily immortal in the Elysian fields.

But our story is not yet at an end. The Greeks had still to return to their homes, from which they had been ten years removed. And though Paris had crossed the intervening seas in three days, it took Ulysses ten years to return, while some of his late companions failed to reach their homes at all. Many, indeed, were the adventures which these home-sailing heroes were destined to encounter.

Some of the Greek warriors reached home speedily and were met with welcome, but others perished by the way, while Agamemnon, their leader, returned to find that his wife had been false to him, and perished by her treacherous hand. Menelaus wandered long through Egypt, Cyprus, and elsewhere before he reached his native land. Nestor and several others went to Italy, where they founded cities. Diomedes also became a founder of cities, and various others seem to have busied themselves in this same useful occupation. Neoptolemus made his way to Epirus, where he became king of the Molossians. Æneas, the Trojan hero, sought Carthage, whose queen Dido [Pg 20] died for love of him. Thence he sailed to Italy, where he fought battles and won victories, and finally founded the city of Rome. His story is given by Virgil, in the poem of the "Æneid." Much more might be told of the adventures of the returning heroes, but the chief of them all is that related of the much wandering Ulysses, as given by Homer in his epic poem the "Odyssey."

The story of the "Odyssey" might serve us for a tale in itself, but as it is in no sense historical we give it here in epitome.

We are told that during the wanderings of Ulysses his island kingdom of Ithaca had been invaded by a throng of insolent suitors of his wife Penelope, who occupied his castle and wasted his substance in riotous living. His son Telemachus, indignant at this, set sail in search of his father, whom he knew to be somewhere upon the seas. Landing at Sparta, he found Menelaus living with Helen in a magnificent castle, richly ornamented with gold, silver, and bronze, and learned from him that his father was then in the island of Ogygia, where he had been long detained by the nymph Calypso.

The wanderer had experienced numerous adventures. He had encountered the one-eyed giant Polyphemus, who feasted on the fattest of the Greeks, while the others escaped by boring out his single eye. He had passed the land of the Lotus-Eaters, to whose magic some of the Greeks succumbed. In the island of Circe some of his followers were turned into swine. But the hero overcame this enchantress, and while in her land visited the realm of the departed and had [Pg 21] interviews with the shades of the dead. He afterwards passed in safety through the frightful gulf of Scylla and Charybdis, and visited the wind-god Æolus, who gave him a fair wind home, and all the foul winds tied up in a bag. But the curious Greeks untied the bag, and the ship was blown far from her course. His followers afterwards killed the sacred oxen of the sun, for which they were punished by being wrecked. All were lost except Ulysses, who floated on a mast to the island of Calypso. With this charming nymph he dwelt for seven years.

Finally, at the command of the gods, Calypso set her willing captive adrift on a raft of trees. This raft was shattered in a storm, but Ulysses swam to the island of Phæacia, where he was rescued by Nausicaa, the king's daughter, and brought to the palace. Thence, in a Phæacian ship, he finally reached Ithaca.

Here new adventures awaited him. He sought his palace disguised as an old beggar, so that of all there, only his old dog knew him. The faithful animal staggered to his feet, feebly expressed his joy, and fell dead. Telemachus had now returned, and led his disguised father into the palace, where the suitors were at their revels. Penelope, instructed what to do, now brought forth the bow of Ulysses, and offered her hand to any one of the suitors who could bend it. It was tried by them all, but tried in vain. Then the seeming beggar took in his hand the stout, ashen bow, bent it with ease, and with wonderful skill sent an arrow hurtling through the rings of twelve axes set up [Pg 22] in line. This done, he turned the terrible bow upon the suitors, sending its death-dealing arrows whizzing through their midst. Telemachus and Eumæus, his swine-keeper, aided him in this work of death, and a frightful scene of carnage ensued, from which not one of the suitors escaped with his life.

In the end the hero, freed from his ragged attire, made himself known to his faithful wife, defeated the friends of the suitors, and recovered his kingdom from his foes. And thus ends the final episode of the famous tale of Troy.

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THE VOYAGE OF THE ARGONAUTS.

We are forced to approach the historical period of Greece through a cloud-land of legend, in which atones of the gods are mingled with those of men, and the most marvellous of incidents are

introduced as if they were everyday occurrences. The Argonautic expedition belongs to this age of myth, the vague vestibule of history. It embraces, as does the tale of the wanderings of Ulysses, very ancient ideas of geography, and many able men have treated it as the record of an actual voyage, one of the earliest ventures of the Greeks upon the unknown seas. However this be, this much is certain, the story is full of romantic and supernatural elements, and it was largely through these that it became so celebrated in ancient times.

The story of the voyage of the ship Argo is a tragedy. Pelias, king of Ioleus, had consulted an oracle concerning the safety of his dominions, and was warned to beware of the man with one sandal. Soon afterwards Jason (a descendant of Æolus, the wind god) appeared before him with one foot unsandalled. He had lost his sandal while crossing a swollen stream. Pelias, anxious to rid himself of this visitor, against whom the oracle had warned him, gave to Jason the desperate [Pg 24] task of bringing back to Locus the Golden Fleece (the fleece of a speaking ram which had borne Phryxus and Helle through the air from Greece, and had reached Colchis in Asia Minor, where it was dedicated to Mars, the god of war).

Jason, young and daring, accepted without hesitation the perilous task, and induced a number of the noblest youth of Greece to accompany him in the enterprise. Among these adventurers were Hercules, Theseus, Castor, Pollux, and many others of the heroes of legend. The way to Colchis lay over the sea, and a ship was built for the adventurers named the Argo, in whose prow was inserted a piece of timber cut from the celebrated speaking oak of Dodona.

The voyage of the Argo was as full of strange incidents as those which Ulysses encountered in his journey home from Troy. Land was first reached on the island of Lemnos. Here no men were found. It was an island of women only. All the men had been put to death by the women in revenge for ill-treatment, and they held the island as their own. But these warlike matrons, who had perhaps grown tired of seeing only each other's faces, received the Argonauts with much friendship, and made their stay so agreeable that they remained there for several months.

Leaving Lemnos, they sailed along the coast of Thrace, and up the Hellespont (a strait which had received its name from Helle, who, while riding on the golden ram in the air above it, had fallen and been drowned in its waters). Thence they sailed along the Propontis and the coast of [Pg 25] Mysia, not, as we may be sure, without adventures. In the country of the Bebrycians the giant king Amycus challenged any of them to box with him. Pollux accepted the challenge, and killed the giant with a blow. Next they reached Bithynia, where dwelt the blind prophet Phineus, to whom their coming proved a blessing.

Phineus had been blinded by Neptune, as a punishment for having shown Phryxus the way to Colchis. He was also tormented by the harpies, frightful winged monsters, who flew down from the clouds whenever he attempted to eat, snatched the food from his lips, and left on it such a vile odor that no man could come near it. He, being a prophet, knew that the Argonauts would free him from this curse. There were with them Zetes and Calias, winged sons of Boreas, the god of the north winds; and when the harpies descended again to spoil the prophet's meal, these winged warriors not only drove them away, but pursued them through the air. They could not overtake them, but the harpies were forbidden by Jupiter to molest Phineus any longer.

The blind prophet, grateful for this deliverance, told the voyagers how they might escape a dreadful danger which lay in their onward way. This came from the Symplegades, two rocks between which their ships must pass, and which continually opened and closed, with a violent collision, and so swiftly that even a bird could scarce fly through the opening in safety. When the Argo reached the dangerous spot, at the suggestion of Phineus, a dove was let loose. It flew with [Pg 26] all speed through the opening, but the rocks clashed together so quickly behind it that it lost a few feathers of its tail. Now was their opportunity. The rowers dashed their ready oars into the water, shot forward with rapid speed, and passed safely through, only losing the ornaments at the stern of their ship. Their escape, however, they owed to the goddess Minerva, whose strong hand held the rocks asunder during the brief interval of their passage. It had been decreed by the gods that if any ship escaped these dreadful rocks they should forever cease to move. The escape of the Argo fulfilled this decree, and the Symplegades have ever since remained immovable.

Onward went the daring voyagers, passing in their journey Mount Caucasus, on whose bare rock Prometheus, for the crime of giving fire to mankind, was chained, while an eagle devoured his liver. The adventurers saw this dread eagle and heard the groans of the sufferer himself. Helpless to release him whom the gods had condemned, they rowed rapidly away.

Finally Colchis was reached, a land then ruled over by King Æetes, from whom the heroes demanded the golden fleece, stating that they had been sent thither by the gods themselves. Æetes heard their request with anger, and told them that if they wanted the fleece they could have it on one condition only. He possessed two fierce and tameless bulls, with brazen feet and fire-breathing nostrils. These had been the gift of the god Vulcan. Jason was told that if he wished [Pg 27] to prove his descent from the gods and their sanction of his voyage, he must harness these terrible animals, plough with them a large field, and sow it with dragons' teeth.

Perilous as this task seemed, each of the heroes was eager to undertake it, but Jason, as the leader of the expedition, took it upon himself. Fortune favored him in the desperate undertaking. Medea, the daughter of Æetes, who knew all the arts of magic, had seen the handsome youth and fallen in love with him at sight. She now came to his aid with all her magic. Gathering an herb which had grown where the blood of Prometheus had fallen, she prepared from it a magical ointment which, when rubbed on Jason's body, made him invulnerable either to fire or weapons

of war. Thus prepared, he fearlessly approached the fire-breathing bulls, yoked them unharmed, and ploughed the field, in whose furrows he then sowed the dragons' teeth. Instantly from the latter sprang up a crop of armed men, who turned their weapons against the hero. But Jason, who had been further instructed by Medea, flung a great stone in their midst, upon which they began to fight each other, and he easily subdued them all.

Jason had accomplished his task, but Æetes proved unfaithful to his words. He not only withheld the prize, but took steps to kill the Argonauts and burn their vessel. They were invited to a banquet, and armed men were prepared to murder them during the night after the feast. Fortunately, sleep overcame the treacherous king, and the adventurers warned of their danger, [Pg 28] made ready to fly. But not without the golden fleece. This was guarded by a dragon, but Medea prepared a potion that put this perilous sentinel to sleep, seized the fleece, and accompanied Jason in his flight, taking with her on the Argo Absyrtus, her youthful brother.

The Argonauts, seizing their oars, rowed with all haste from the dreaded locality. Æetes, on awakening, learned with fury of the loss of the fleece and his children, hastily collected an armed force, and pursued with such energy that the flying vessel was soon nearly overtaken. The safety of the adventurers was again due to Medea, who secured it by a terrible stratagem. This was, to kill her young brother, cut his body to pieces, and fling the bleeding fragments into the sea. Æetes, on reaching the scene of this tragedy, recognized these as the remains of his murdered son, and sorrowfully stopped to collect them for interment. While he was thus engaged the Argonauts escaped.

But such a wicked deed was not suffered to go unpunished. Jupiter beheld it with deep indignation, and in requital condemned the Argonauts to a long and perilous voyage, full of hardship and adventure. They were forced to sail over all the watery world of waters, so far as then known. Up the river Phasis they rowed until it entered the ocean which flows round the earth. This vast sea or stream was then followed to the source of the Nile, down which great river they made their way into the land of Egypt.

Here, for some reason unknown, they did not follow the Nile to the Mediterranean, but were [Pg 29] forced to take the ship Argo on their shoulders and carry it by a long overland journey to Lake Tritonis, in Libya. Here they were overcome by want and exhaustion, but Triton, the god of the region, proved hospitable, and supplied them with the much-needed food and rest. Thus refreshed, they launched their ship once more on the Mediterranean and proceeded hopefully on their homeward way.

Stopping at the island of Ææa, its queen Circe—she who had transformed the companions of Ulysses into swine—purified Medea from the crime of murder; and at Corcyra, which they next reached, the marriage of Jason and Medea took place. The cavern in that island where the wedding was solemnized was still pointed out in historical times.

After leaving Corcyra a fierce storm threatened the navigators with shipwreck, from which they were miraculously saved by the celestial aid of the god Apollo. An arrow shot from his golden bow crossed the billows like a track of light, and where it pierced the waves an island sprang up, on whose shores the imperilled mariners found a port of refuge. On this island, Anaphe by name, the grateful Argonauts built an altar to Apollo and instituted sacrifices in his honor.

Another adventure awaited them on the coast of Crete. This island was protected by a brazen sentinel, named Talos, wrought by Vulcan, and presented by him to King Minos to protect his realm. This living man of brass hurled great rocks at the vessel, and destruction would have overwhelmed the voyagers but for Medea. Talos, like all the invulnerable men of legend, had his [Pg 30] one weak point. This her magic art enabled her to discover, and, as Paris had wounded Achilles in the heel, Medea killed this vigilant sentinel by striking him in his vulnerable spot.

The Argonauts now landed and refreshed themselves. In the island of Ægina they had to fight to procure water. Then they sailed along the coasts of Eubœa and Locris, and finally entered the gulf of Pagasæ and dropped anchor at Iolceus, their starting-point.

As to what became of the ship Argo there are two stories. One is that Jason consecrated his vessel to Neptune on the isthmus of Corinth. Another is that Minerva translated it to the stars, where it became a constellation.

So ends the story of this earliest of recorded voyages, whose possible substratum of fact is overlaid deeply with fiction, and whose geography is similarly a strange mixture of fact and fancy. Yet though the voyage is at an end, our story is not. We have said that it was a tragedy, and the denouement of the tragedy remains to be given.

Pelias, who had sent Jason on this long voyage to escape the fate decreed for him by the oracle, took courage from his protracted absence, and put to death his father and mother and his infant brother. On learning of this murderous act Jason determined on revenge. But Pelias was too strong to be attacked openly, so the hero employed a strange stratagem, suggested by the cunning magician Medea. He and his companions halted at some distance from Iolcus, while [Pg 31] Medea entered the town alone, pretending that she was a fugitive from the ill-treatment of Jason.

Here she was entertained by the daughters of Pelias, over whom she gained great influence by showing them certain magical wonders. In the end she selected an old ram from the king's flocks, cut him up and boiled him in a caldron with herbs of magic power. In the end the animal emerged

from the caldron as a young and vigorous lamb. The enchantress now told her dupes that their old father could in the same way be made young again. Fully believing her, the daughters cut the old man to pieces in the same manner, and threw his limbs into the caldron, trusting to Medea to restore him to life as she had the ram.

Leaving them for the assumed purpose of invoking the moon, as a part of the ceremony, Medea ascended to the roof of the palace. Here she lighted a fire-signal to the waiting Argonauts, who instantly burst into and took possession of the town.

Having thus revenged himself, Jason yielded the crown of Iolcus to the son of Pelias, and withdrew with Medea to Corinth, where they resided together for ten years. And here the final act in the tragedy was played.

After these ten years of happy married life, during which several children were born, Jason ceased to love his wife, and fixed his affections on Glauce, the daughter of King Creon of Corinth. The king showed himself willing to give Jason his daughter in marriage, upon which the faithless [Pg 32] hero divorced Medea, who was ordered to leave Corinth. He should have known better with whom he had to deal. The enchantress, indignant at such treatment, determined on revenge. Pretending to be reconciled to the coming marriage, she prepared a poisoned robe, which she sent as a wedding-present to the hapless Glauce. No sooner had the luckless bride put on this perilous gift than the robe burst into flames, and she was consumed; while her father, who sought to tear from her the fatal garment, met with the same fate.

Medea escaped by means of a chariot drawn by winged serpents, sent her by her grandfather Helios (the sun). As the story is told by Euripides, she killed her children before taking to flight, leaving their dead bodies to blast the sight of their horror-stricken father. The legend, however, tells a different tale. It says that she left them for safety before the altar in the temple of Juno; and that the Corinthians, furious at the death of their king, dragged the children from the altar and put them to death. As for the unhappy Jason, the story goes that he fell asleep under the ship Argo, which had been hauled ashore according to the custom of the ancients, and that a fragment of this ship fell upon and killed him.

The flight of Medea took her to Athens, where she found a protector and second husband in Ægeus, the ruler of that city, and father of Theseus, the great legendary hero of Athens.

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THESEUS AND ARIADNE.

Minos, king of Crete in the age of legend, made war against Athens in revenge for the death of his son. This son, Androgeos by name, had shown such strength and skill in the Panathenaic festival that Ægeus, the Athenian king, sent him to fight with the flame-spitting bull of Marathon, a monstrous creature that was ravaging the plains of Attica. The bull killed the valiant youth, and Minos, furious at the death of his son, laid siege to Athens.

As he proved unable to capture the city, he prayed for aid to his father Zeus (for, like all the heroes of legend, he was a son of the gods). Zeus sent pestilence and famine on Athens, and so bitter grew the lot of the Athenians that they applied to the oracles of the gods for advice in their sore strait, and were bidden to submit to any terms which Minos might impose. The terms offered by the offended king of Crete were severe ones. He demanded that the Athenians should, at fixed periods, send to Crete seven youths and seven maidens, as victims to the insatiable appetite of the Minotaur.

This fabulous creature was one of those destructive monsters of which many ravaged Greece in the age of fable. It had the body of a man and the head of a bull, and so great was the havoc it [Pg 34] wrought among the Cretans that Minos engaged the great artist Dædalus to construct a den from which it could not escape. Dædalus built for this purpose the Labyrinth, a far-extending edifice, in which were countless passages, so winding and intertwining that no person confined in it could ever find his way out again. It was like the catacombs of Rome, in which one who is lost is said to wander helplessly till death ends his sorrowful career. In this intricate puzzle of a building the Minotaur was confined.

Every ninth year the fourteen unfortunate youths and maidens had to be sent from Athens to be devoured by this insatiate beast. We are not told on what food it was fed in the interval, or why Minos did not end the trouble by allowing it to starve in its inextricable den. As the story goes, the living tribute was twice sent, and the third period came duly round. The youths and maidens to be devoured were selected by lot from the people of Athens, and left their city amid tears and woe. But on this occasion Theseus, the king's son and the great hero of Athens, volunteered to be one of the band, and vowed either to slay the terrible beast or die in the attempt.

There seem to have been few great events in those early days of Greece in which Theseus did

not take part. Among his feats was the carrying off of Helen, the famous beauty, while still a girl. He then took part in a journey to the under-world,—the realm of ghosts,—during which Castor and Pollux, the brothers of Helen, rescued and brought her home. He was also one of the heroes [Pg 35] of the Argonautic expedition and of an expedition against the Amazons, or nation of women warriors; he fought with and killed a series of famous robbers; and he rid the world of a number of ravaging beasts,—the Calydonian boar, the Crommyonian sow, and the Marathonian bull, the monster which had slain the son of Minos. He was, in truth, the Hercules of ancient Athens, and he now proposed to add to his exploits a battle for life or death with the perilous Minotaur.

The hero knew that he had before him the most desperate task of his life. Even should he slay the monster, he would still be in the intricate depths of the Labyrinth, from which escape was deemed impossible, and in whose endless passages he and his companions might wander until they died of weariness and starvation. He prayed, therefore, to Neptune for help, and received a message from the oracle at Delphi to the effect that Aphrodite (or Venus) would aid and rescue him.

The ship conveying the victims sailed sadly from Athens, and at length reached Crete at the port of Knossus, the residence of King Minos. Here the woful hostages were led through the streets to the prison in which they were to be confined till the next day, when they were to be delivered to death. As they passed along the people looked with sympathy upon their fair young faces, and deeply lamented their coming fate. And, as Venus willed, among the spectators were Minos and his fair daughter Ariadne, who stood at the palace door to see them pass.

The eyes of the young princess fell upon the face of Theseus, the Athenian prince, and her [Pg 36] heart throbbed with a feeling she had never before known. Never had she gazed upon a man who seemed to her half so brave and handsome as this princely youth. All that night thoughts of him drove slumber from her eyes. In the early morning, moved by a new-born love, she sought the prison, and, through her privilege as the king's daughter, was admitted to see the prisoners. Venus was doing the work which the oracle had promised.

Calling Theseus aside, the blushing maiden told him of her sudden love, and that she ardently longed to save him. If he would follow her directions he would escape. She gave him a sword, which she had taken from her father's armory and concealed beneath her cloak, that he might be armed against the devouring beast. And she provided him besides with a ball of thread, bidding him to fasten the end of it to the entrance of the Labyrinth, and unwind it as he went in, that it might serve him as a clue to find his way out again.

As may well be believed, Theseus warmly thanked his lovely visitor, told her that he was a king's son, and that he returned her love, and begged her, in case he escaped, to return with him to Athens and be his bride. Ariadne willingly consented, and left the prison before the guards came to conduct the victims to their fate. It was like the story of Jason and Medea retold.

With hidden sword and clue Theseus followed the guards, in the midst of his fellow-prisoners. They were led into the depths of the Labyrinth and there left to their fate. But the guards had [Pg 37] failed to observe that Theseus had fastened his thread at the entrance and was unwinding the ball as he went. And now, in this dire den, for hours the hapless victims awaited their destiny. Mid-day came, and with it a distant roar from the monster reverberated frightfully through the long passages. Nearer came the blood-thirsty brute, his bellowing growing louder as he scented human beings. The trembling victims waited with but a single hope, and that was in the sword of their valiant prince. At length the creature appeared, in form a man of giant stature, but with the horned head and huge mouth of a bull.

Battle at once began between the prince and the brute. It soon ended. Springing agilely behind the ravening monster, Theseus, with a swinging stroke of his blade, cut off one of its legs at the knee. As the man-brute fell prone, and lay bellowing with pain, a thrust through the back reached its heart, and all peril from the Minotaur was at an end.

This victory gained, the task of Theseus was easy. The thread led back to the entrance. By aid of this clue the door of escape was quickly gained. Waiting until night, the hostages left the dreaded Labyrinth under cover of the darkness. Ariadne was in waiting, the ship was secretly gained, and the rescued Athenians with their fair companion sailed away, unknown to the king.

But Theseus proved false to the maiden to whom he owed his life. Stopping at the island of Naxos, which was sacred to Dionysus (or Bacchus), the god of wine, he had a dream in which the [Pg 38] god bade him to desert Ariadne and sail away. This the faithless swain did, leaving the weeping maiden deserted on the island. Legend goes on to tell us that the despair of the lamenting maiden ended in the sleep of exhaustion, and that while sleeping Dionysus found her, and made her his wife. As for the dream of Theseus, it was one of those convenient excuses which traitors to love never lack.

Meanwhile, Theseus and his companions sailed on over the summer sea. Reaching the isle of Delos, he offered a sacrifice to Apollo in gratitude for his escape, and there he, and the merry youths and maidens with him, danced a dance called the Geranus, whose mazy twists and turns imitated those of the Labyrinth.

But the faithless swain was not to escape punishment for his base desertion of Ariadne. He had arranged with his father Ægeus that if he escaped the Minotaur he would hoist white sails in the ship on his return. If he failed, the ship would still wear the black canvas with which she had set out on her errand of woe.

The aged king awaited the returning ship on a high rock that overlooked the sea. At length it hove in sight, the sails appeared, but—they were black. With broken heart the father cast himself from the rock into the sea,—which ever since has been called, from his name, the Ægean Sea. Theseus, absorbed perhaps in thoughts of the abandoned Ariadne, perhaps of new adventures, had forgotten to make the promised change. And thus was the deserted maiden avenged on the treacherous youth who owed to her his life.

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The ship—or what was believed to be the ship—of Theseus and the hostages was carefully preserved at Athens, down to the time of the Macedonian conquest, being constantly repaired with new timbers, till little of the original ship remained. Every year it was sent to Delos with envoys to sacrifice to Apollo. Before the ship left port the priest of Apollo decorated her stern with garlands, and during her absence no public act of impurity was permitted to take place in the city. Therefore no one could be put to death, and Socrates, who was condemned at this period of the year, was permitted to live for thirty days until the return of the sacred ship.

There is another legend connected with this story worth telling. Dædalus, the builder of the Labyrinth, at length fell under the displeasure of Minos, and was confined within the windings of his own edifice. He had no clue like Theseus, but he had resources in his inventive skill. Making wings for himself and his son Icarus, the two flew away from the Labyrinth and their foe. The father safely reached Sicily; but the son, who refused to be governed by his father's wise advice, flew so high in his ambitious folly that the sun melted the wax of which his wings were made, and he fell into the sea near the island of Samos. This from him was named the Icarian Sea.

There is a political as well as a legendary history of Theseus,—perhaps one no more to be depended upon than the other. It is said that when he became king he made Athens supreme over Attica, putting an end to the separate powers of the tribes which had before prevailed. He is also said to have abolished the monarchy, and replaced it by a government of the people, whom he divided into the three classes of nobles, husbandmen, and artisans. He died at length in the island of Scyrus, where he fell or was thrown from the cliffs. Ages later, after the Persian war, the Delphic oracle bade the Athenians to bring back the bones of Theseus from Scyrus, and bury them splendidly in Attic soil. Cimon, the son of Miltiades, found—or pretended to find—the hero's tomb, and returned with the famous bones. They were buried in the heart of Athens, and over them was erected the monument called the Theseium, which became afterwards a place of sanctuary for slaves escaping from cruel treatment and for all persons in peril. Theseus, who had been the champion of the oppressed during life, thus became their refuge after death.

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THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES.

Among the legendary tales of Greece, none of which are strictly, though several are perhaps partly, historical, none—after that of Troy—was more popular with the ancients than the story of the two sieges of Thebes. This tale had probably in it an historical element, though deeply overlaid with myth, and it was the greatest enterprise of Grecian war, after that of Troy, during what is called the age of the Heroes. And in it is included one of the most pathetic episodes in the story of Greece, that of the sisterly affection and tragic fate of Antigone, whose story gave rise to noble dramas by the tragedians Æschylus and Sophocles, and is still a favorite with lovers of pathetic lore.

As a prelude to our story we must glance at the mythical history of Œdipus, which, like that of his noble daughter, has been celebrated in ancient drama. An oracle had declared that he should kill his father, the king of Thebes. He was, in consequence, brought up in ignorance of his parentage, yet this led to the accomplishment of the oracle, for as a youth he, during a roadside squabble, killed his father not knowing him. For this crime, which had been one of their own devising, the gods, with their usual inconsistency, punished the land of Thebes; afflicting that hapless country with a terrible monster called the Sphinx, which had the face of a woman, the wings of a bird, and the body of a lion. This strangely made-up creature proposed a riddle to the Thebans, whose solution they were forced to try and give; and on every failure to give the correct answer she seized and devoured the unhappy aspirant. Œdipus arrived, in ignorance of the fact that he was the son of the late king. He quickly solved the riddle of the Sphinx, whereupon that monster committed suicide, and he was made king. He then married the queen,—not knowing that she was his own mother.

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ŒDIPUS AND ANTIGONE.

This celebrated riddle of the Sphinx was not a very difficult one. It was as follows: "A being with four feet has two feet and three feet; but its feet vary, and when it has most it is weakest."

The answer, as given by Œdipus, was "Man," who

> "First as a babe four-footed creeps on his way,
> Then, when full age cometh on, and the burden of years weighs full heavy,
> Bending his shoulders and neck, as a third foot useth his staff."

When the truth became known—as truth was apt to become known when too late in old stories—the queen, Jocasta, mad with anguish, hanged herself, and Œdipus, in wild despair, put out his eyes. The gods who had led him blindly into crime, now handed him over to punishment by the Furies,—the ancient goddesses of vengeance, whose mission it was to pursue the criminal with stinging whips.

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The tragic events which followed arose from the curse of the afflicted Œdipus. He had two sons, Polynikes and Eteocles, who twice offended him without intention, and whom he, frenzied by his troubles, twice bitterly cursed, praying to the gods that they might perish by each other's hands. Œdipus afterwards obtained the pardon of the gods for his involuntary crime, and died in exile, leaving Creon, the brother of Jocasta, on the throne. But though he was dead, his curse kept alive, and brought on new matter of dire moment.

It began its work in a quarrel between the two sons as to who should succeed their uncle as king of Thebes. Polynikes was in the wrong, and was forced to leave Thebes, while Eteocles remained. The exiled prince sought the court of Adrastus, king of Argos, who gave him his daughter in marriage, and agreed to assist in restoring him to his native country.

Most of the Argive chiefs joined in the proposed expedition. But the most distinguished of them all, Amphiaraüs, opposed it as unjust and against the will of the gods. He concealed himself, lest he should be forced into the enterprise. But the other chiefs deemed his aid indispensable, and bribed his wife, with a costly present, to reveal his hiding-place. Amphiaraüs was thus forced to join the expedition, but his prophetic power taught him that it would end in disaster to all and death to himself, and as a measure of revenge he commanded his son Alkmæon to kill the faithless woman who had betrayed him, and after his death to organize a second expedition against Thebes.

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Seven chiefs led the army, one to assail each of the seven celebrated gates of Thebes. Onward they marched against that strong city, heedless of the hostile portents which they met on their way. The Thebans also sought the oracle of the gods, and were told that they should be victorious, but only on the dread condition that Creon's son, Menœceus, should sacrifice himself to Mars. The devoted youth, on learning that the safety of his country depended on his life, forthwith killed himself before the city gates,—thus securing by innocent blood the powerful aid of the god of war.

Long and strenuous was the contest that succeeded, each of the heroes fiercely attacking the gate adjudged to him. But the gods were on the side of the Thebans and every assault proved in vain. Parthenopæus, one of the seven, was killed by a stone, and another, Capaneus, while

furiously mounting the walls from a scaling-ladder, was slain by a thunderbolt cast by Jupiter, and fell dead to the earth.

The assailants, terrified by this portent, drew back, and were pursued by the Thebans, who issued from their gates. But the battle that was about to take place on the open plain was stopped by Eteocles, who proposed to settle it by a single combat with his brother Polynikes, the victory to be given to the side whose champion succeeded in this mortal duel. Polynikes, filled with hatred of his brother, eagerly accepted this challenge. Adrastus, the leader of the assailing army, assented, and the unholy combat began.

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Never was a more furious combat than that between the hostile brothers. Each was exasperated to bitter hatred of the other, and they fought with a violence and desperation that could end only in the death of one of the combatants. As it proved, the curse of Œdipus was in the keeping of the gods, and both fell dead,—the fate for which their aged father had prayed. But the duel had decided nothing, and the two armies renewed the battle.

And now death and bloodshed ran riot; men fell by hundreds; deeds of heroic valor were achieved on either side; feats of individual daring were displayed like those which Homer sings in the story of Troy. But the battle ended in the defeat of the assailants. Of the seven leaders only two survived, and one of these, Amphiaraüs, was about to suffer the fate he had foretold, when Jupiter rescued him from death by a miracle. The earth opened beneath him, and he, with his chariot and horses, was received unhurt into her bosom. Rendered immortal by the king of the gods, he was afterwards worshipped as a god himself.

Adrastus, the only remaining chief, was forced to fly, and was preserved by the matchless speed of his horse. He reached Argos in safety, but brought with him nothing but "his garment of woe and his black-maned steed."

Thus ended, in defeat and disaster to the assailants, the first of the celebrated sieges of Thebes. It was followed by a tragic episode which remains to be told, that of the sisterly fidelity of Antigone and her sorrowful fate. Her story, which the dramatists have made immortal, is thus told in the legend.

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After the repulse of his foes, King Creon caused the body of Eteocles to be buried with the highest honors; but that of Polynikes was cast outside the gates as the corpse of a traitor, and death was threatened to any one who should dare to give it burial. This cruel edict, which no one else ventured to ignore, was set aside by Antigone, the sister of Polynikes. This brave maiden, with warm filial affection, had accompanied her blind father during his exile to Attica, and was now returned to Thebes to perform another holy duty. Funeral rites were held by the Greeks to be essential to the repose of the dead, and Antigone, despite Creon's edict, determined that her brother's body should not be left to the dogs and vultures. Her sister, though in sympathy with her purpose, proved too timid to help her. No other assistance was to be had. But not deterred by this, she determined to perform the act alone, and to bury the body with her own hands.

In this act of holy devotion Antigone succeeded; Polynikes was buried. But the sentinels whom Creon had posted detected her in the act, and she was seized and dragged before the tribunal of the tyrant. Here she defended her action with an earnestness and dignity that should have gained her release, but Creon was inflexible in his anger. She had set at naught his edict, and should suffer the penalty for her crime. He condemned her to be buried alive.

Sophocles, the dramatist, puts noble words into the mouth of Antigone. This is her protest against the tyranny of the king:

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"No ordinance of man shall override
The settled laws of Nature and of God;
Not written these in pages of a book,
Nor were they framed to-day, nor yesterday;
We know not whence they are; but this we know,
That they from all eternity have been,
And shall to all eternity endure."

And when asked by Creon why she had dared disobey the laws, she nobly replied,—

"Not through fear
Of any man's resolve was I prepared
Before the gods to bear the penalty
Of sinning against these. That I should die
I knew (how should I not?) though thy decree
Had never spoken. And before my time
If I shall die, I reckon this a gain;
For whoso lives, as I, in many woes,
How can it be but he shall gain by death?"

At the king's command the unhappy maiden was taken from his presence and thrust into a sepulchre, where she was condemned to perish in hunger and loneliness. But Antigone was not without her advocate. She had a lover,—almost the only one in Greek literature. Hæmon, the son of Creon, to whom her hand had been promised in marriage, and who loved her dearly, appeared before his father and earnestly interceded for her life. Not on the plea of his love,—such a plea would have had no weight with a Greek tribunal,—but on those of mercy and justice. His plea was

vain; Creon was obdurate: the unhappy lover left his presence and sought Antigone's living tomb, where he slew himself at the feet of his love, already dead. His mother, on learning of his fatal act, also killed herself by her own hand, and Creon was left alone to suffer the consequences of his unnatural act.

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The story goes on to relate that Adrastus, with the disconsolate mothers of the fallen chieftains, sought the hero Theseus at Athens, and begged his aid in procuring the privilege of interment for the slain warriors whose bodies lay on the plain of Thebes. The Thebans persisting in their refusal to permit burial, Theseus at length led an army against them, defeated them in the field, and forced them to consent that their fallen foes should be interred, that last privilege of the dead which was deemed so essential by all pious Greeks. The tomb of the chieftains was shown near Eleusis within late historical times.

But the Thebans were to suffer another reverse. The sons of the slain chieftains raised an army, which they placed under the leadership of Adrastus, and demanded to be led against Thebes. Alkmæon, the son of Amphiaraüs, who had been commanded to revenge him, played the most prominent part in the succeeding war. As this new expedition marched, the gods, which had opposed the former with hostile signs, now showed their approval with favorable portents. Adherents joined them on their march. At the river Glisas they were met by a Theban army, and a battle was fought, which ended in a complete victory over the Theban foe. A prophet now declared to the Thebans that the gods were against them, and advised them to surrender the city. This they did, flying themselves, with their wives and children, to the country of the Illyrians, and leaving their city empty to the triumphant foe. The Epigoni, as the youthful victors were called, marched in at the head of their forces, took possession, and placed Thersander, the son of Polynikes, on the throne. And thus ends the famous old legend of the two sieges of Thebes.

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LYCURGUS AND THE SPARTAN LAWS.

Of the many nations between which the small peninsula of Greece was divided, much the most interesting were those whose chief cities were Athens and Sparta. These are the states with whose doings history is full, and without which the history of ancient Greece would be little more interesting to us than the history of ancient China and Japan. No two cities could have been more opposite in character and institutions than these, and they were rivals of each other for the dominant power through centuries of Grecian history. In Athens freedom of thought and freedom of action prevailed. Such complete political equality of the citizens has scarcely been known elsewhere upon the earth, and the intellectual activity of these citizens stands unequalled. In Sparta freedom of thought and action were both suppressed to a degree rarely known, the most rigid institutions existed, and the only activity was a warlike one. All thought and all education had war for their object, and the state and city became a compact military machine. This condition was the result of a remarkable code of laws by which Sparta was governed, the most peculiar and surprising code which any nation has ever possessed. It is this code, and Lycurgus, to whom Sparta owed it, with which we are now concerned.

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First, who was Lycurgus and in what age did he live? Neither of these questions can be closely answered. Though his laws are historical, his biography is legendary. He is believed to have lived somewhere about 800 or 900 B.C., that age of legend and fable in which Homer lived, and what we know about him is little more to be trusted than what we know about the great poet. The Greeks had stories of their celebrated men of this remote age, but they were stories with which imagination often had more to do than fact, and though we may enjoy them, it is never quite safe to believe them.

As for the very uncertain personage named Lycurgus, we are told by Herodotus, the Greek historian, that when he was born the Spartans were the most lawless of the Greeks. Every man was a law unto himself, and confusion, tumult, and injustice everywhere prevailed. Lycurgus, a noble Spartan, sad at heart for the misery of his country, applied to the oracle at Delphi, and received instructions as to how he should act to bring about a better state of affairs.

Plutarch, who tells so many charming stories about the ancient Greeks and Romans, gives us the following account. According to him the brother of Lycurgus was king of Sparta. When he died Lycurgus was offered the throne, but he declined the honor and made his infant nephew, Charilaus, king. Then he left Sparta, and travelled through Crete, Ionia, Egypt, and several more remote countries, everywhere studying the laws and customs which he found prevailing. In Ionia he obtained a copy of the poems of Homer, and is said by some to have met and conversed with Homer himself. If, as is supposed, the Greeks of that age had not the art of writing, he must have carried this copy in his memory.

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On his return home from this long journey Lycurgus found his country in a worse state than before. Sparta, it may be well here to say, had always two kings; but it found, as might have been expected, that two kings were worse than one, and that this odd device in government never

worked well. At any rate, Lycurgus found that law had nearly vanished, and that disorder had taken its place. He now consulted the oracle at Delphi, and was told that the gods would support him in what he proposed to do.

Coming back to Sparta, he secretly gathered a body-guard of thirty armed men from among the noblest citizens, and then presented himself in the Agora, or place of public assembly, announcing that he had come to end the disorders of his native land. King Charilaus at first heard of this with terror, but on learning what his uncle intended, he offered his support. Most of the leading men of Sparta did the same. Lycurgus was to them a descendant of the great hero Hercules, he was the most learned and travelled of their people, and the reforms he proposed were sadly needed in that unhappy land.

These reforms were of two kinds. He desired to reform both the government and society. We [Pg 53] shall deal first with the new government which he instituted. The two kings were left unchanged. But under them was formed a senate of twenty-eight members, to whom the kings were joined, making thirty in all. The people also were given their assemblies, but they could not debate any subject, all the power they had was to accept or reject what the senate had decreed. At a later date five men, called ephors, were selected from the people, into whose hands fell nearly all the civil power, so that the kings had little more to do than to command the army and lead it to war. The kings, however, were at the head of the religious establishment of the country, and were respected by the people as descendants of the gods.

The government of Sparta thus became an aristocracy or oligarchy. The ephors came from the people, and were appointed in their interest, but they came to rule the state so completely that neither the kings, the senate, nor the assembly had much voice in the government. Such was the outgrowth of the governmental institutions of Lycurgus.

It is the civil laws made by Lycurgus, however, which are of most interest, and in which Sparta differed from all other states. The people of Laconia, the country of which Sparta was the capital, were composed of two classes. That country had originally been conquered by the Spartans, and the ancient inhabitants, who were known as Helots, were held as slaves by their Spartan conquerors. They tilled the ground to raise food for the citizens, who were all soldiers, and whose whole life and thought were given to keeping the Helots in slavery and to warlike activity. That [Pg 54] they might make the better soldiers, Lycurgus formed laws to do away with all luxury and inequality of conditions, and to train up the young under a rigid system of discipline to the use of weapons and the arts of war. The Helots, also, were often employed as light-armed soldiers, and there was always danger that they might revolt against their oppressors, a fact which made constant discipline and vigilance necessary to the Spartan citizens.

Lycurgus found great inequality in the state. A few owned all the land, and the remainder were poor. The rich lived in luxury; the poor were reduced to misery and want. He divided the whole territory of Sparta into nine thousand equal lots, one of which was given to each citizen. The territory of the remainder of Laconia was divided into thirty thousand equal lots, one of which was given to each Periœcus. (The Periœci were the freemen of the country outside of the Spartan city and district, and did not possess the full rights of citizenship.)

This measure served to equalize wealth. But further to prevent luxury, Lycurgus banished all gold and silver from the country, and forced the people to use iron money,—each piece so heavy that none would care to carry it. He also forbade the citizens to have anything to do with commerce or industry. They were to be soldiers only, and the Helots were to supply them with food. As for commerce, since no other state would accept their iron money, they had to depend [Pg 55] on themselves for everything they needed. The industries of Laconia were kept strictly at home.

To these provisions Lycurgus added another of remarkable character. No one was allowed to take his meals at home. Public tables were provided, at which all must eat, every citizen being forced to belong to some special public mess. Each had to supply his quota of food, such as barley, wine, cheese, and figs from his land, game obtained by hunting, or the meat of the animals killed for sacrifices. At these tables all shared alike. The kings and the humblest citizens were on an equality. No distinction was permitted except to those who had rendered some signal service to the state.

This public mess was not accepted without protest. Those who were used to luxurious living were not ready to be brought down to such simple fare, and a number of these attacked Lycurgus in the market-place, and would have stoned him to death had he not run briskly for his life. As it was, one of his pursuers knocked out his eye. But, such was his content at his success, that he dedicated his last eye to the gods, building a temple to the goddess Athené of the Eye. At these public tables black broth was the most valued dish, the elder men eating it in preference, and leaving the meat to their younger messmates.

The houses of the Spartans were as plain as they could well be made, and as simple in furniture as possible, while no lights were permitted at bedtime, it being designed that every one should become accustomed to walking boldly in the dark. This, however, was but a minor portion [Pg 56] of the Spartan discipline. Throughout life, from boyhood to old age, every one was subjected to the most rigorous training. From seven years of age the drill continued, and everyone was constantly being trained or seeing others under training. The day was passed in public exercises and public meals, the nights in public barracks. Married Spartans rarely saw their wives—during the first years of marriage—and had very little to do with their children; their whole lives were given to the state, and the slavery of the Helots to them was not more complete than their slavery

to military discipline.

They were not only drilled in the complicated military movements which taught a body of Spartan soldiers to act as one man, but also had incessant gymnastic training, so as to make them active, strong, and enduring. They were taught to bear severe pain unmoved, to endure heat and cold, hunger and thirst, to walk barefoot on rugged ground, to wear the same garment summer and winter, to suppress all display of feeling, and in public to remain silent and motionless until action was called for.

Two companies were often matched against each other, and these contests were carried on with fury, fists and feet taking the place of arms. Hunting in the woods and mountains was encouraged, that they might learn to bear fatigue. The boys were kept half fed, that they might be forced to provide for themselves by hunting or stealing. The latter was designed to make them [Pg 57] cunning and skilful, and if detected in the act they were severely punished. The story is told that one boy who had stolen a fox and hidden it under his garment, permitted the animal to tear him open with claws and teeth, and died rather than reveal his theft.

One might say that he would rather have been born a girl than a boy in Sparta; but the girls were trained almost as severely as the boys. They were forced to contend with each other in running, wrestling, and boxing, and to go through other gymnastic exercises calculated to make them strong and healthy. They marched in the religious processions, sung and danced at festivals, and were present at the exercises of the youths. Thus boys and girls were continually mingled, and the praise or reproach of the latter did much to stimulate their brothers and friends to the utmost exertion.

As a result of all this the Spartans became strong, vigorous, and handsome in form and face. The beauty of their women was everywhere celebrated. The men became unequalled for soldierly qualities, able to bear the greatest fatigue and privation, and to march great distances in a brief time, while on the field of battle they were taught to conquer or to die, a display of cowardice or flight from the field being a lifelong disgrace.

Such were the main features of the most singular set of laws any nation ever had, the best fitted to make a nation of soldiers, and also to prevent intellectual progress in any other direction than the single one of war-making. Even eloquence in speech was discouraged, and a brief or [Pg 58] laconic manner sedulously cultivated. But while all this had its advantages, it had its defects. The number of citizens decreased instead of increasing. At the time of the Persian war there were eight thousand of them. At a late date there were but seven hundred, of whom one hundred possessed most of the land. Whether Lycurgus really divided the land equally or not is doubtful. At any rate, in time the land fell into a few hands, the poor increased in number, and the people steadily died out; while the public mess, so far as the rich were concerned, became a mere form.

But we need not deal with these late events, and must go back to the story told of Lycurgus. It is said that when he had completed his code of laws, he called together an assembly of the people, told them that he was going on a journey, and asked them to swear that they would obey his laws till he returned. This they agreed to do, the kings, the senate, and the people all taking the oath.

Then the law-giver went to Delphi, where he offered a sacrifice to Apollo, and asked the oracle if the laws he had made were good. The oracle answered that they were excellent, and would bring the people the greatest fame. This answer he had put into writing and sent to Sparta, for he had resolved to make his oath binding for all time by never returning. So the old man starved himself to death.

The Spartans kept their oath. For five hundred years their city continued one of the chief cities of Greece, and their army the most warlike and dreaded of the armies of the earth. As for Lycurgus, his countrymen worshipped him as a god, and imputed to him all that was noble in [Pg 59] their institutions and excellent in their laws. But time brings its inevitable changes, and these famous institutions in time decayed, while the people perished from over-strict discipline or other causes till but a small troop of Spartans remained, too weak in numbers fairly to control the Helots of their fields.

In truth, the laws of Lycurgus were unnatural, and in the end could but fail. They were framed to make one-sided men, and only whole men can long succeed. Human nature will have its way, and luxury and corruption crept into Sparta despite these laws. Nor did the Spartans prove braver or more successful in war than the Athenians, whose whole nature was developed, and who were alike great in literature, art, and war.

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ARISTOMENES, THE HERO OF MESSENIA.

We have told by what means the Spartans grew to be famous warriors. We have now to tell one

of the ancient stories of how they used their warlike prowess to extend their dominions. Laconia, their country, was situated in the southeast section of the Peloponnesus, that southern peninsula which is attached to the remainder of Greece by the narrow neck of land known as the Isthmus of Corinth. Their capital city was anciently called Lacedæmon; it was later known as Sparta. In consequence they are called in history both Spartans and Lacedæmonians.

In the early history of the Spartans they did not trouble themselves about Northern Greece. They had enough to occupy them in the Peloponnesus. As the Romans, in after-time, spent their early centuries in conquering the small nations immediately around them, so did the Spartans. And the first wars of this nation of soldiers seem to have been with Messenia, a small country west of Laconia, and extending like it southward into the blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea.

There were two wars with the Messenians, both full of stories of daring and disaster, but it is the second of these with which we are specially concerned, that in which the hero Aristomenes [Pg 61] won his fame. We shall not ask our readers to believe all that is told about this ancient champion. Much of it is very doubtful. But the war in which he took part was historical, and the conquest of Messenia was the first great event in Spartan history.

Now for the story itself. In the first Messenian war, which was fought more than seven hundred years B.C., the leader of the Messenians was named Aristodemus. A quarrel had arisen between the two nations during some sacrifices on their border lands. The Spartans had laid a snare for their neighbors by dressing some youths as maidens and arming them with daggers. They attacked the Messenians, but were defeated, and the Spartan king was slain.

In the war that ensued the Messenians in time found themselves in severe straits, and followed the plan that seems to have been common throughout Grecian history. They sent to Delphi to ask aid and advice from the oracle of Apollo. And the oracle gave them one of its often cruel and always uncertain answers; saying that if they would be successful a virgin of the house of Æpytus must die for her country. To fulfil this cruel behest Aristodemus, who was of that ancient house, killed his daughter with his own hand,—much as Agamemnon had sacrificed his daughter before sailing for Troy.

Aristodemus afterwards became king, and had a stirring and tragic history, which was full of portents and prodigies. Thus an old blind prophet suddenly recovered his sight,—which the [Pg 62] Messenians looked upon to mean something, though it is not clear what. A statue of Artemis (or Diana) let fall its brazen shield; which meant something more,—probably that the fastenings had given way; but the ancients looked on it as a portent. Then the ghost of his murdered daughter appeared to Aristodemus, pointed to her wounded side, stripped off his armor, placed on his head a crown of gold and on his body a white robe,—a sign of death. So, as it seemed evident that he had mistaken the oracle, and killed his daughter without saving his country, he did the only thing that remained for him: he went to her grave and killed himself. And with this tragedy ends all we need to tell about the first champion of Messenia.

The war ended in the conquest of Messenia by the Spartans. The conquered people were very harshly treated by the conquerors, being forced to pay as tribute half the produce of their fields, and to humble themselves before their haughty masters. As a result, about fifty years afterwards, they broke out into rebellion, and a second Messenian war began.

This war lasted for many years, the Messenians being led by a valiant hero named Aristomenes, who performed startling exploits and made marvellous escapes. Three great battles took place, with various results and three times Aristomenes made a remarkable sacrifice to the king of the gods. This was called the Hekatomphonia, and could only be offered by one who had slain, with his own hands, one hundred enemies in battle.

But great battles were not all. There were years of guerilla warfare. At the head of a band of [Pg 63] brave followers Aristomenes made his way more than once to the very heart of Laconia, surprised two of its cities, and on one occasion ventured into Sparta itself by night. Here he boldly entered the temple of Athené of the Brazen House and hung up his shield there as a mark of defiance to his enemies, placing on it an inscription which said that Aristomenes presented it as an offering from Spartan spoil.

The Messenian maidens crowned their hero with garlands, and danced around him, singing a war strain in honor of his victories over his foes. Yet he found the Spartans vigorous and persistent enemies, and in spite of all his victories was forced at length to take refuge in the mountain fastnesses, where he held out against his foes for eleven years.

We do not know all the adventures of this famous champion, but are told that he was taken prisoner three times by his enemies. Twice he made marvellous escapes while they were conveying him to Sparta. On the third occasion he was less fortunate. His foes bore him in triumph to their capital city, and here he was condemned to be cast from Mount Taygetus into the Keadas, a deep rock cavity into which they flung their criminals.

Fifty Messenian prisoners suffered the same fate and were all killed; but the gods, so we are told, came to their leader's aid. The legend says that an eagle took Aristomenes on its outspread wings, and landed him safely in the bottom of the pit. More likely the bodies of the former victims [Pg 64] broke his fall. Seeing no possible way out from the deep cavity, he wrapped himself in his cloak, and resigned himself to die. But, while thus lying, he saw a fox prowling among the dead bodies, and questioned himself how it had found its way into the pit. When it came near him he grasped its tail, defending himself from its bites by means of his cloak. Holding fast, he followed the fox to

the aperture by which it had entered, enlarged it so that he could creep out, and soon appeared alive again in the field, to the surprise of his friends and the consternation of his foes.

Being seized again by some Cretan bowmen, he was rescued by a maiden, who dreamed that wolves had brought into the city a chained lion, bereft of its claws, and that she had given it claws and set it free. When she saw Aristomenes among his captors, she believed that her dream had come true, and that the gods desired her to set him free. This she did by making his captors drunk, and giving him a dagger with which he cut his bonds. The indiscreet bowmen were killed by the warrior, while the escaped hero rewarded the maiden by making her the wife of his son.

But Messenia was doomed by the gods, and no man could avert its fate. The oracle of Delphi declared that if the he-goat (Tragos) should drink the waters of the Neda, the god could no longer defend that fated country. And now a fig-tree sprang up on the banks of the Neda, and, instead of spreading its branches aloft, let them droop till they touched the waters of the stream. This a [Pg 65] seer announced as the fulfillment of the oracle, for in the Messenian language the fig-tree was called *Tragos*.

Aristomenes now, discouraged by the decree of the gods, and finding himself surrounded, through treachery, by his enemies in his mountain stronghold, decided to give up the hopeless struggle. He broke fiercely through the ranks of his assailants with his sons and followers, and left his country to the doom which the gods had decreed.

The end of his career, like its earlier events, was, according to the legend, under the control of the deities. Damagetes, the king of the island of Rhodes, had been told by an oracle that he must marry the bravest of the Hellenes (or Greeks). Believing that Aristomenes had the best claim to this proud title, he asked him for the hand of his daughter in marriage, and offered him a home in his island realm. Aristomenes consented, and spent the remainder of his days in Rhodes. From his daughter descended the illustrious family of the Diagoridæ.

This romantic story of the far past resembles those of King Alfred of England, of Wallace and Bruce of Scotland, and of other heroes who have defended their countries single-handed against a powerful foe. But we are not done with it yet. There is another singular and interesting episode to be told,—a legend, no doubt, but one which has almost passed into history.

The story goes that the Spartans, losing heart at the success of the Messenians in the early years of the war, took the usual method then adopted, and sent to the oracle at Delphi for advice. [Pg 66] The oracle told them to apply to Athens for a leader. They did so, sending an embassy to that city; and in response to the oracle the Athenians sent them a lame schoolmaster named Tyrtæus. They did not dare to resist the command of the god, but they had no desire to render any actual aid to the Spartans.

However, Apollo seems to have been wiser than the Athenians. The lame schoolmaster was an able poet as well, and on reaching Sparta he composed a series of war-songs which so inspirited the army that they marched away to victory. Tyrtæus was probably not only an able poet; very likely he also gave the Spartans good advice in the conduct of the war, and though he did not lead their armies, he animated them by his songs and aided them with his advice until victory followed their career of defeat.

For many years afterwards the war-songs of Tyrtæus remained highly popular at Sparta, and some of them have come down to our own days. As for the actual history of this war, most of what we know seems to have been written by Tyrtæus, who was thus not only the poet but the historian of the Messenian wars.

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SOLON, THE LAW-GIVER OF ATHENS.

We have told how Sparta came to have an aristocratic government, under the laws of Lycurgus. We have now to tell how Athens came to have a democratic government, under the laws of Solon. These formed the types of government for later Greece, some of whose nations became aristocracies, following the example of Sparta; others became democracies, and formed their governments on the model of that of Athens.

As before Lycurgus the Spartan commonwealth was largely without law, so was Athens before Solon. In those days the people of Attica—of which Athens was the capital city—were divided into three factions,—the rich, the middle class, and the poor. As for the poor, they were in a condition of misery, being loaded down with debt, and many of them in a state of slavery to the rich, who owned nearly all the land.

At that period what law existed was very severe against debtors. The debtor became the slave of his creditor, and was held in this state until he could pay his debt, either in money or in labor. And not only he, but his younger sons and his unmarried daughters and sisters, were reduced to

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slavery. Through the action of this severe law many of the poor of Attica were owned as slaves, many had been sold as slaves, some had kept their freedom only by selling their own children, and some had fled from the country to escape slavery. And this, too, had arisen in many cases through injustice in the courts and corruption of the judges.

In the time of Solon the misery and oppression from these laws became so great that there was a general mutiny of the poor against the rich. They refused to submit to the unjust enactments of their rulers, and the state fell into such frightful disorder that the governing class, no longer able to control the people, were obliged to call Solon to their aid.

Solon did not belong to the rich men of Athens, though he was of noble birth, and, like so many of the older Greeks, traced his family line back to the gods. Neptune, the ocean deity, was fabled to be his far-off ancestor. He was born about 638 B.C. His father had spent most of his money, largely in kind deeds to others, and the son found himself obliged to become a merchant. In this pursuit he travelled in many parts of Greece and Asia, and in his journeys paid more heed to the gaining of knowledge than of money, so that when he came back his mind was fuller than his purse. Men who seek wisdom rarely succeed in gaining much money, but Solon's story goes to show that wisdom is far the better of the two, and that a rich mind is of more value than a rich purse. When he returned to Attica he gained such fame as a poet and a man of learning and wisdom that he has ever since been classed as one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece.

Of these wise men the following story is told. Some fishermen of Cos cast their net into the [Pg 69] sea, and brought up in its meshes a golden tripod, which the renowned Helen had thrown into the sea during her return from Troy. A dispute arose as to whom the tripod should belong to. Several cities were ready to go to war about it. To prevent bloodshed the oracle of Apollo was applied to, and answered that it should be sent to the wisest man that could be found.

It was at first sent to Thales of Miletus, a man famous for wisdom. But he decided that Bias of Priene was wiser than he, and sent it to him. And thus it went the round of the seven wise men,—Solon among them, so we are told,—and finally came back to Thales. He refused to keep it, and placed it in the temple of Apollo at Thebes.

An evidence alike of Solon's wisdom, shrewdness, and political skill arose in the war for the island of Salamis, which adjoined the two states of Megara and Attica, and for whose possession they were at war. After the Athenians had been at great loss of men and money in this conflict, Megara gained the island, and the people of Athens became so disgusted with the whole affair that a law was passed declaring that any man who spoke or wrote again about the subject should be put to death.

This Solon held to be a stain on the honor of Athens. He did not care to lose his life by breaking the law, but was not content that his country should rest under the stigma of defeat, and should yield so valuable a prize. He accordingly had it given out that he had gone mad; and in pretended [Pg 70] insanity he rushed into the public square, mounted the herald's stone, and repeated a poem he had composed for the occasion, recalling vividly to the people the disgrace of their late defeat. His stirring appeal so wrought upon their feelings that the law was repealed, war was declared, and Solon was placed in command of the army.

Megara sent out a ship to watch the proceedings, but this was seized by Solon's fleet and manned by part of his force. The remainder of his men were landed and marched towards the city of Salamis, on which they made an assault. While this was going on, Solon sailed up with the ship he had captured. The Megarians, thinking it to be their own ship, permitted it to enter the port, and the city was taken by surprise. Salamis, thus won, continued to belong to Athens till those late days when Philip of Macedon conquered Greece.

To Solon, now acknowledged to be the wisest and most famous of the Athenians, the tyrants who had long misruled Athens turned, when they found the people in rebellion against their authority. In the year 594 B.C. he was chosen archon, or ruler of the state, and was given full power to take such measures as were needed to put an end to the disorders. Probably these autocrats supposed that he would help them to continue in power; but, if so, they did not know the man with whom they had to deal.

Solon might easily have made himself a despot, if he had chosen,—all the states of Greece being then under the rule of despots or of tyrannical aristocrats. But he was too honest and too [Pg 71] wise for this. He set himself earnestly to overcome the difficulties which lay before him. And he did this with a radical hand. In truth, the people were in no mood for any but radical measures.

The enslaved debtors were at once set free. All contracts in which the person or the land of the debtor had been given as security were cancelled. No future contract under which a citizen could be enslaved or imprisoned for debt was permitted. All past claims against the land of Attica were cancelled, and the mortgage pillars removed. (These pillars were set up at the boundaries of the land, and had the lender's name and the amount of the debt cut into the stone.)

But as many of the creditors were themselves in debt to richer men, and as Solon's laws left them poor, he adopted a measure for their relief. This was to lower the value of the money of the state. The old silver drachmas were replaced by new drachmas, of which seventy-three equalled one hundred of the old. Debtors were thus able to pay their debts at a discount of twenty-seven per cent., and the great loss fell on the rich; and justly so, for most of them had gained their wealth through dishonesty and oppression. Lastly, Solon made full citizens of all from whom political rights had been taken, except those who had been condemned for murder or treason.

This was a bold measure. And, like such bold measures generally, it did injustice to many. But the evil was temporary, the good permanent. It put an end to much injustice, and no such condition as had prevailed ever again arose in Athens. The government of the aristocracy came to an end under Solon's laws. From that time forward Athens grew more and more a government of the people. [Pg 72]

The old assembly of the people existed then, but all its power had been taken from it. Solon gave back to it the right of voting and of passing laws. But he established a council of four hundred men, elected annually by the people, whose duty it was to consider the business upon which the assembly was to act. And the assembly could only deal with business that was brought before it by this council.

The assemblies of the people took place on the Pnyx, a hill that overlooked the city, and from which could be seen the distant sea. At its right stood the Acropolis, that famous hill on which the noblest of temples were afterwards built. Between these two hills rose the Areopagus, on which the Athenian supreme court held its sessions. The Athenians loved to do their business in the open air, and, while discussing questions of law and justice, delighted in the broad view before them of the temples, the streets, and the crowded marts of trade of the city, and the shining sea, with its white-sailed craft, afar in the sunny distance.

Solon's laws went further than we have said. He divided the people into four ranks or divisions, according to their wealth in land. The richer men were, the more power they were given in the state. But at the same time they had to pay heavier taxes, so that their greater authority was not an unmixed blessing. The lowest class, composed of the poorest citizens, had no taxes at all to pay, and no power in the state, other than the right to vote in the assembly. When called out as soldiers arms were furnished them, while the other classes had to buy their own arms. [Pg 73]

Various other laws were made by Solon. The old law against crime, established long before by Draco, had made death the penalty for every crime, from murder to petty theft. This severe law was repealed, and the punishment made to agree with the crime. Minor laws were these: The living could not speak evil of the dead. No person could draw more than a fixed quantity of water daily from the public wells. People who raised bees must not have their hives too near those of their neighbors. It was fixed how women should dress, and they were forbidden to scratch or tear themselves at funerals. They had to carry baskets of a fixed size when they went abroad. A dog that bit anybody had to be delivered up with a log four feet and a half long tied to its neck. Such were some of the laws which the council swore to maintain, each member vowing that if he broke any of them he would dedicate a golden statue as large as himself to Apollo, at Delphi.

Having founded his laws, Solon, fearing that he would be forced to make changes in them, left Athens, having bound the people by oath to keep them for ten years, during which time he proposed to be absent.

From Athens he set sail for Egypt, and in that ancient realm talked long with two learned priests about the old history of the land. Among the stories they told him was a curious one about a great island named Atlantis, far in the western ocean, against which Athens had waged war nine thousand years before, and which had afterwards sunk under the Atlantic's waves. It was one of those fanciful legends of which the past had so great a store. [Pg 74]

From Egypt he went to Cyprus, where he dwelt long and made useful changes. He is also said to have visited, at Sardis, Crœsus, the king of Lydia, a monarch famous for his wealth and good fortune. About this visit a pretty moral story is told. It is probably not true, being a fiction of the ancient story-tellers, but, fiction or not, it is well worth the telling.

Crœsus had been so fortunate in war that he had made his kingdom great and prosperous, while he was esteemed the richest monarch of his times. He lodged Solon in his palace and had his servants show him all the treasures which he had gained. He then, conversing with his visitor, praised him for his wisdom, and asked him whom he deemed to be the happiest of men.

He expected an answer flattering to his vanity, but Solon simply replied,—

"Tellus, of Athens."

"And why do you deem Tellus the happiest?" demanded Crœsus.

Solon gave as his reason that Tellus lived in comfort and had good and beautiful sons, who also had good children; and that he died in gallant defence of his country, and was buried by his countrymen with the highest honors.

"And whom do you give the second place in happiness?" asked Crœsus. [Pg 75]

"Cleobis and Bito," answered Solon. "These were men of the Argive race, who had fortune enough for their wants, and were so strong as to gain prizes at the Games."

"But their special title to happiness was," continued Solon, "that in a festival to the goddess Juno, at Argos, their mother wished to go in a car. As the oxen did not return in time from the fields, the youths, fearing to be late, yoked themselves to the car, and drew their mother to the temple, forty-five furlongs away. This filial deed gained them the highest praise from the people, while their mother prayed the goddess to bestow upon them the highest blessing to which mortals can attain. After her prayer, the youths offered sacrifices, partook of the holy banquet, and fell asleep in the temple. They never woke again! This was the blessing of the goddess."

"What," cried Crœsus, angrily, "is my happiness, then, of so little value to you that you put me on a level with private men like these?"

"You are very rich, Crœsus," answered Solon, "and are lord of many nations. But remember that you have many days yet to live, and that any single day in a man's life may yield events that will change all his fortune. As to whether you are supremely happy and fortunate, then, I have no answer to make. I cannot speak for your happiness till I know if your life has a happy *ending*."[1]

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Solon, having completed his travels, returned to Athens to find it in turmoil. Pisistratus, a political adventurer and a favorite with the people, had gained despotic power by a cunning trick. He wounded himself, and declared that he had been attacked and wounded by his political enemies. He asked, therefore, for a body-guard for his protection. This was granted him by the popular assembly, which was strongly on his side. With its aid he seized the Acropolis and made himself master of the city, while his opponents were forced to fly for their lives.

This revolutionary movement was strenuously opposed by Solon, but in vain. Pisistratus had made himself so popular with the people that they treated their old law-giver like a man who had lost his senses. As a last appeal he put on his armor and placed himself before the door of his house, as if on guard as a sentinel over the liberties of his country! This appeal was also in vain.

"I have done my duty!" he exclaimed; "I have sustained to the best of my power my country and the laws."

He refused to fly, saying, when asked on what he relied for protection, "On my old age."

Pisistratus—who proved a very mild despot—left his aged opponent unharmed, and in the next year Solon died, being then eighty years of age.

His laws lived after him, despite the despotism which ruled over Athens for the succeeding fifty years.

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THE FORTUNE OF CRŒSUS.

The land of the Hellenes, or Greeks, was not confined to the small peninsula now known as Greece. Hellenic colonies spread far to the east and the west, to Italy and Sicily on the one hand, to Asia Minor and the shores of the Black Sea on the other. The story of the Argonauts probably arose from colonizing expeditions to the Black Sea. That of Crœsus has to do with the colonies in Asia Minor.

These colonies clung to the coast. Inland lay other nations, to some extent of Hellenic origin. One of these was the kingdom of Lydia, whose history is of the highest importance to us, since the conflicts between Lydia and the coast colonies were the first steps towards the invasion of Greece by the Persians, that most important event in early Grecian history.

These conflicts began in the reign of Crœsus, an ambitious king of Lydia in the sixth century before Christ. What gave rise to the war between Lydia and the Greek settlements of Ionia and Æolia we do not very well know. An ambitious despot does not need much pretext for war. He wills the war, and the pretext follows. It will suffice to say that, on one excuse or another, Crœsus made war on every Ionian and Æolian state, and conquered them one after the other.

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First the great and prosperous city of Ephesus fell. Then, one by one, others followed, till, by the year 550 B.C., Crœsus had become lord and master of every one of those formerly free and wealthy cities and states. Then, having placed all the colonies on the mainland under tribute, he designed to conquer the islands as well, and proposed to build ships for that purpose. He was checked in this plan by the shrewd answer of one of the seven wise men of Greece, either Bias or Pittacus, who had visited Sardis, the capital of Lydia.

"What news bring you from Greece?" asked King Crœsus of his wise visitor.

"I am told that the islanders are gathering ten thousand horse, with the purpose of attacking you and your capital," was the answer.

"What!" cried Crœsus. "Have the gods given these shipmen such an idea as to fight the Lydians with cavalry?"

"I fancy, O king," answered the Greek, "that nothing would please you better than to catch these islanders here on horseback. But do you not think that they would like nothing better than to catch you at sea on shipboard? Would they not avenge on you the misfortunes of their conquered brethren?"

This shrewd suggestion taught Crœsus a lesson. Instead of fighting the islanders, he made a treaty of peace and friendship with them. But he continued his conquests on the mainland till in

the end all Asia Minor was under his sway, and Lydia had become one of the great kingdoms of the earth. Such wealth came to Crœsus as a result of his conquests and unchanging good fortune that he became accounted the richest monarch upon the earth, while Sardis grew marvellous for its splendor and prosperity. At an earlier date there had come thither another of the seven wise men of Greece, Solon, the law-giver of Athens. What passed between this far-seeing visitor and the proud monarch of Lydia we have already told. [Pg 79]

The misfortunes which Solon told the king were liable to come upon any man befell Crœsus during the remainder of his life. Herodotus, the historian, tells us the romantic story of how the gods sent misery to him who had boasted overmuch of his happiness. We give briefly this interesting account.

Crœus had two sons, one of whom was deaf and dumb, the other, Atys by name, gifted with the highest qualities which nature has to bestow. The king loved his bright and handsome son as dearly as he loved his wealth, and when a dream came to him that Atys would die by the blow of an iron weapon, he was deeply disturbed in his mind.

How should he prevent such a misfortune? In alarm, he forbade his son to take part in military forays, to which he had before encouraged him; and, to solace him for this deprivation, bade him to take a wife. Then, lest any of the warlike weapons which hung upon the walls of his apartments might fall and wound him, the king had them all removed, and stored away in the part of the palace devoted to the women.

But fate had decreed that all such precautions should be in vain. At Mount Olympus, in Mysia, had appeared a monster boar, that ravaged the fields of the lowlands and defied pursuit into his mountain retreat. Hunting parties were sent against him, but the great boar came off unscathed, while the hunters always suffered from his frightful tusks. At length ambassadors were sent to Crœsus, begging him to send his son, with other daring youths and with hunting hounds, to aid them rid their country of this destructive brute. [Pg 80]

"That cannot be," answered Crœsus, still in terror from his dream. "My son is just married, and cannot so soon leave his bride. But I will send you a picked band of hunters, and bid them use all zeal to kill this foe of your harvests."

With this promise the Mysians were quite content, but Atys, who overheard it, was not.

"Why, my father," he demanded, "do you now keep me from the wars and the chase, when you formerly encouraged me to take part in them, and win glory for myself and you? Have I ever shown cowardice or lack of manly spirit? What must the citizens or my young bride think of me? With what face can I show myself in the forum? Either you must let me go to the chase of this boar, or give a reason why you keep me at home."

In reply Crœsus told the indignant youth of his vision, and the alarm with which it had inspired him.

"Ah!" cried Atys, "then I cannot blame you for keeping this tender watch over me. But, father, do you not wrongly interpret the dream? It said I was to die stricken by an iron weapon. A boar wields no such weapon. Had the dream said I was to die pierced by a tusk, then you might well be alarmed; but it said a weapon. We do not propose now to fight men, but to hunt a wild beast I pray you, therefore, let me go with the party." [Pg 81]

"You have the best of me there," said Crœsus. "Your interpretation of the dream is better than mine. You may go, my son."

At that time there was at the king's court a Phrygian named Adrastus, who had unwittingly slain his own brother and had fled to Sardis, where he was purified according to the customs of the country, and courteously received by the king. Crœsus sent for this stranger and asked him to go with the hunting party, and keep especial watch over his son, in case of an attack by some daring band of robbers.

Adrastus consented, though against his will, his misfortune having taken from him all desire for scenes of bloodshed. However, he would do his utmost to guard the king's son against harm.

The party set out accordingly, reached Olympus without adventure, and scattered in pursuit of the animal, which the dogs soon roused from its lair. Closing in a circle around the brute, the hunters drew near and hurled their weapons at it. Not the least eager among the hunters was Adrastus, who likewise hurled his spear; but, through a frightful chance, the hurtling weapon went astray, and struck and killed Atys, his youthful charge. Thus was the dream fulfilled: an iron weapon had slain the king's favorite son.

The news of this misfortune plunged Crœsus into the deepest misery of grief. As for Adrastus, he begged to be sacrificed at the grave of his unfortunate victim. This Crœsus, despite his grief, refused, saying,— [Pg 82]

"Some god is the author of my misfortune, not you. I was forewarned of it long ago."

But Adrastus was not to be thus prevented. Deeming himself the most unfortunate of men, he slew himself on the tomb of the hapless youth. And for two years Crœsus abandoned himself to grief.

And now we must go on to tell how Crœsus met with a greater misfortune still, and brought

the Persians to the gates of Greece. Cyrus, son of Cambyses, king of Persia, had conquered the neighboring kingdom of Media, and, inspired by ambition, had set out on a career of wide-spread conquest and dominion. He had grown steadily more powerful, and now threatened the great kingdom which Crœsus had gained.

The Lydian king, seeing this danger approaching, sought advice from the oracles. But wishing first to know which of them could best be trusted, he sent to six of them demanding a statement of what he was doing at a certain moment. The oracle of Delphi alone gave a correct answer.

Thereupon Crœsus offered up a vast sacrifice to the Delphian deity. Three thousand oxen were slain, and a great sacrificial pile was built, on which were placed splendid robes and tunics of purple, with couches and censers of gold and silver, all to be committed to the flames. To Delphi he sent presents befitting the wealthiest of kings,—ingots, statues, bowls, jugs, etc., of gold and [Pg 83] silver, of great weight. These Herodotus himself saw with astonishment a century afterwards at Delphi. The envoys who bore these gifts asked the oracle whether Crœsus should undertake an expedition against the Persians, and should solicit allies.

He was bidden, in reply, to seek alliance with the most powerful nations of Greece. He was also told that if he fought with the Persians he would overturn a "mighty empire." Crœsus accepted this as a promise of success, not thinking to ask whose empire was to be overturned. He sent again to the oracle, which now replied, "When a mule shall become king of the Medes, then thou must run away,—be not ashamed." Here was another enigma of the oracle. Cyrus—son of a royal Median mother and a Persian father of different race and lower position—was the mule indicated, though Crœsus did not know this. In truth, the oracles of Greece seem usually to have borne a double meaning, so that whatever happened the priestess could claim that her word was true, the fault was in the interpretation.

Crœsus, accepting the oracles as favorable, made an alliance with Sparta, and marched his army into Media, where he inflicted much damage. Cyrus met him with a larger army, and a battle ensued. Neither party could claim a victory, but Crœsus returned to Sardis, to collect more men and obtain aid from his allies. He might have been successful had Cyrus waited till his preparations were complete. But the Persian king followed him to his capital, defeated him in a [Pg 84] battle near Sardis, and besieged him in that city.

Sardis was considered impregnable, and Crœsus could easily have held out till his allies arrived had it not been for one of those unfortunate incidents of which war has so many to tell. Sardis was strongly fortified on every side but one. Here the rocky height on which it was built was so steep as to be deemed inaccessible, and walls were thought unnecessary. Yet a soldier of the garrison made his way down this precipice to pick up his helmet, which had fallen. A Persian soldier saw him, tried to climb up, and found it possible. Others followed him, and the garrison, to their consternation, found the enemy within their walls. The gates were opened to the army without, and the whole city was speedily taken by storm.

Crœsus would have been killed but for a miracle. His deaf and dumb son, seeing a Persian about to strike him down, burst into speech through the agony of terror, crying out, "Man, do not kill Crœsus!" The story goes that he ever afterwards retained the power of speech.

Cyrus had given orders that the life of Crœsus should be spared, and the unhappy captive was brought before him. But the cruel Persian had a different death in view. He proposed to burn the captive king, together with fourteen Lydian youths, on a great pile of wood which he had constructed. We give what followed as told by Herodotus, though its truth cannot be vouched for at this late day.

As Crœsus lay in fetters on the already kindled pile and thought of this terrible ending to his [Pg 85] boasted happiness, he groaned bitterly, and cried in tones of anguish, "Solon! Solon! Solon!"

"What does he mean?" asked Cyrus of the interpreters. They questioned Crœsus, and learned from him what Solon had said. Cyrus heard this story not without alarm. His own life was yet to end; might not a like fate come to him? He ordered that the fire should be extinguished, but would have been too late had not a timely downpour of rain just then come to the aid of the captive king,—sent by Apollo, in gratitude for the gifts to his temple, suggests Herodotus. Crœsus was afterwards made the confidential friend and adviser of the Persian king, whose dominions, through this victory, had been extended over the whole Lydian empire, and now reached to the ocean outposts of Greece.

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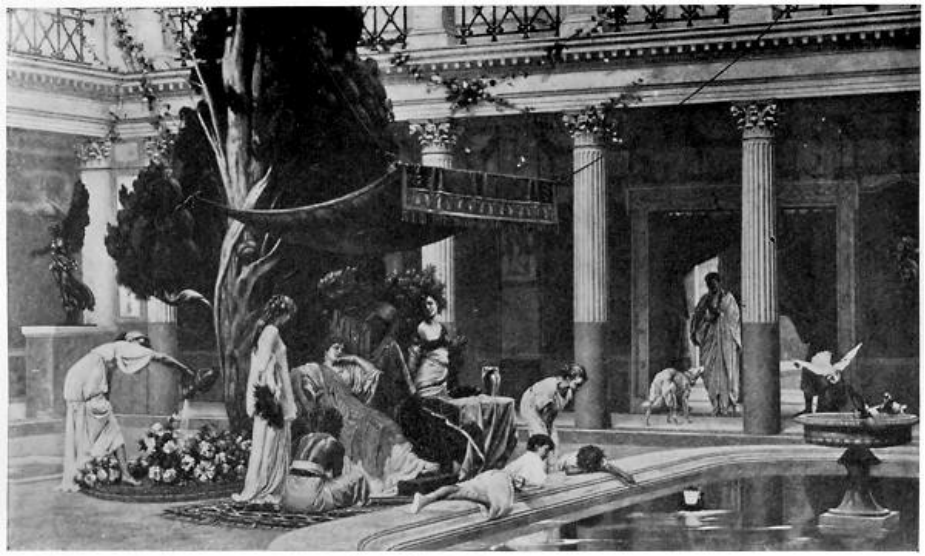
THE SUITORS OF AGARISTÉ.

Sicyon, the smallest country of the Peloponnesus, lay on the Gulf of Corinth, adjoining the isthmus which connects the peninsula with the rest of Greece. In this small country—as in many larger ones—the nobles held rule, the people were subjects. The rich and proud rulers dwelt on

the hill slopes, the poor and humble people lived on the sea-shore and along the river Asopus. But in course of time many of the people became well off, through success in fisheries and commerce, to which their country was well adapted. Weary of the oppression of the nobles, they finally rose in rebellion and overthrew the government. Orthagoras, once a cook, but now leader of the rebels, became master of the state, and he and his descendants ruled it for a hundred years. The last of this dynasty was Cleisthenes, a just and moderate ruler, concerning whom we have a story to tell.

These lords of the state were called tyrants; but this word did not mean in Greece what it means to us. The tyrants of Greece were popular leaders who had overthrown the old governments and laws, and ruled largely through force and under laws of their own making. But they were not necessarily tyrannical. The tyrants of Athens were mild and just in their dealings with the people, and so proved to be those of Sicyon. [Pg 87]



GRECIAN LADIES AT HOME.

Cleisthenes, who became the most eminent of the tyrants of Sicyon, had a beautiful daughter, named Agaristé, whom he thought worthy of the noblest of husbands, and decided that she should be married to the worthiest youth who could be found in all the land of Greece. To select such a husband he took unusual steps.

When the fair Agaristé had reached marriageable age, her father attended the Olympic games, at which there were used to gather men of wealth and eminence from all the Grecian states. Here he won the prize in the chariot race, and then bade the heralds to make the following proclamation:

"Whoever among the Greeks deems himself worthy to be the son-in-law of Cleisthenes, let him come, within sixty days, to Sicyon. Within a year from that time Cleisthenes will decide, from among those who present themselves, on the one whom he deems fitting to possess the hand of his daughter."

This proclamation, as was natural, roused warm hopes in many youthful breasts, and within the sixty days there had gathered at Sicyon thirteen noble claimants for the charming prize. From the city of Sybaris in Italy came Smindyrides, and from Siris came Damasus. Amphimnestus and Males made their way to Sicyon from the cities of the Ionian Gulf. The Peloponnesus sent Leocedes from Argos, Amiantus from Arcadia, Laphanes from Pæus, and Onomastus from Elis. From Eubœa came Lysanias; from Thessaly, Diactorides; from Molossia, Alcon; and from Attica, Megacles and Hippoclides. Of the last two, Megacles was the son of the renowned Alkmæon, while Hippoclides was accounted the handsomest and wealthiest of the Athenians. [Pg 88]

At the end of the sixty days, when all the suitors had arrived, Cleisthenes asked each of them whence he came and to what family he belonged. Then, during the succeeding year, he put them to every test that could prove their powers. He had had a foot-course and a wrestling-ground made ready to test their comparative strength and agility, and took every available means to discover their courage, vigor, and skill.

But this was not all that the sensible monarch demanded in his desired son-in-law. He wished to ascertain their mental and moral as well as their physical powers, and for this purpose kept them under close observation for a year, carefully noting their manliness, their temper and disposition, their accomplishments and powers of intellect. Now he conversed with each separately; now he brought them together and considered their comparative powers. At the gymnasium, in the council chamber, in all the situations of thought and activity, he tested their abilities. But he particularly considered their behavior at the banquet-table. From first to last they were sumptuously entertained, and their demeanor over the trencher-board and the wine-cup was closely observed.

In this story, as told us by garrulous old Herodotus, nothing is said of Agaristé herself. In a modern romance of this sort the lady would have had a voice in the decision and a place in the narrative. There would have been episodes of love, jealousy, and malice, and the one whom the [Pg 89]

lady blessed with her love would in some way—in the eternal fitness of things—have become victor in the contest and carried off the prize. But they did things differently in Greece. The preference of the maiden had little to do with the matter; the suitor exerted himself to please the father, not the daughter; maiden hands were given rather in barter and sale than in trust and affection; in truth, almost the only lovers we meet with in Grecian history are Hæmon and Antigone, of whom we have spoken in the tale of the "Seven against Thebes."

And thus it was in the present instance. It was the father the suitors courted, not the daughter. They proved their love over the banquet-table, not at the trysting-place. It was by speed of foot and skill in council, not by whispered words of devotion, that they contended for the maidenly prize. Or, if lovers' meetings took place and lovers' vows were passed, they were matters of the strictest secrecy, and not for Greek historians to put on paper or Greek ears to hear.

But the year of probation came in due time to its end, and among all the suitors the two from Athens most won the favor of Cleisthenes. And of the two he preferred Hippoclides. It was not alone for his handsome face and person and manly bearing that this favored youth was chosen, but also because he was descended from a noble family of Corinth which Cleisthenes esteemed. [Pg 90] Yet "there is many a slip between the cup and the lip," an adage whose truth Hippoclides was to learn.

When the day came on which the choice of the father was to be made, and the wedding take place, Cleisthenes held a great festival in honor of the occasion. First, to gain the favor of the gods, he offered a hundred oxen in sacrifice. Then, not only the suitors, but all the people of the city were invited to a grand banquet and festival, at the end of which the choice of Cleisthenes was to be declared. What torments of love and fear Agaristé suffered during this slow-moving feast the historian does not say. Yet it may be that she was the power behind the throne, and that the proposed choice of the handsome Hippoclides was due as much to her secret influence as to her father's judgment.

However this be, the feast went on to its end, and was followed by a contest between the suitors in music and oratory, with all the people to decide. As the drinking which followed went on, Hippoclides, who had surpassed all the others as yet, shouted to the flute-player, bidding him to play a dancing air, as he proposed to show his powers in the dance.

The wine was in his weak head, and what he considered marvellously fine dancing did not appear so to Cleisthenes, who was closely watching his proposed son-in-law. Hippoclides, however, in a mood to show all his accomplishments, now bade an attendant to bring in a table. This being brought, he leaped upon it, and danced some Laconian steps, which he followed by [Pg 91] certain Attic ones. Finally, to show his utmost powers of performance, he stood on his head on the table, and began to dance with his legs in empty air.

This was too much for Cleisthenes. He had changed his opinion of Hippoclides during his light and undignified exhibition, but restrained himself from speaking to avoid any outbreak or ill feeling. But on seeing him tossing his legs in this shameless manner in the air, the indignant monarch cried out,—

"Son of Tisander, you have danced your wife away."

"What does Hippoclides care?" was the reply of the tipsy youth.

And for centuries afterwards "What does Hippoclides care?" was a common saying in Greece, to indicate reckless folly and lightness of mind.

Cleisthenes now commanded silence, and spoke as follows to the assembly:

"Suitors of my daughter, well pleased am I with you all, and right willingly, if it were possible, would I content you all, and not, by making choice of one, appear to put a slight upon the rest. But as it is out of my power, seeing that I have only one daughter, to grant to all their wishes, I will present to each of you whom I must needs dismiss a talent of silver[2] for the honor that you have done in seeking to ally yourselves with my house, and for your long absence from your homes. But my daughter Agaristé I betroth to Megacles, the son of Alkmæon, to be his wife, [Pg 92] according to the usage and wont of Athens."

Megacles gladly accepted the honor thus offered him, the marriage was solemnized with all possible state, and the suitors dispersed,—twelve of them happy with their silver talents, one of them happier with his charming bride.

We have but further to say that Cleisthenes of Athens—a great leader and law-giver, whose laws gave origin to the democratic government of that city—was the son of Megacles and Agaristé, and that his grandson was the famous Pericles, the foremost name in Athenian history.

[Pg 93]

THE TYRANTS OF CORINTH.

We have already told what the word "tyrant" meant in Greece,—a despot who set aside the law and ruled at his own pleasure, but who might be mild and gentle in his rule. Such were the tyrants of Sicyon, spoken of in our last tale. The tyrants of Corinth, the state adjoining Sicyon, were of a harsher character. Herodotus, the gossiping old historian tells some stories about these severe despots which seem worth telling again.

The government of Corinth, like most of the governments of Greece, was in early days an oligarchy,—that is, it was ruled by a number of powerful aristocrats instead of by a single king. In Corinth these belonged to a single family, named the Bacchiadæ (or legendary descendants of the god Bacchus), who constantly intermarried, and kept all power to themselves.

But one of this family, Amphion by name, had a daughter, named Labda, whom none of the Bacchiadæ would marry, as she had the misfortune to be lame. So she married outside the family, her husband being named Aëtion, and a man of noble descent. Having no children, Aëtion applied to the Delphian oracle, and was told that a son would soon be borne to him, and that this [Pg 94] son "would, like a rock, fall on the kingly race and right the city of Corinth."

The Bacchiadæ heard of this oracle, and likewise knew of an earlier one that had the same significance. Forewarned is forearmed. They remained quiet, waiting until Aëtion's child should be born, and proposing then to take steps for their own safety.

When, therefore, they heard that Labda had borne a son, they sent ten of their followers to Petra (the *rock*), where Aëtion dwelt, with instructions to kill the child. These assassins entered Aëtion's house, and, with murder in their hearts, asked Labda, with assumed friendliness, if they might see her child. She, looking upon them as friends of her husband, whom kindly feeling had brought thither, gladly complied, and, bringing the infant, laid it in the arms of one of the ruffianly band.

It had been agreed between them that whoever first laid hold of the child should dash it to the ground. But as the innocent intended victim lay in the murderer's arms, it smiled in his face so confidingly that he had not the heart to do the treacherous deed. He passed the child, therefore, on to another, who passed it to a third, and so it went the rounds of the ten, disarming them all by its happy and trusting smile from performing the vile deed for which they had come. In the end they handed the babe back to its mother, and left the house.

Halting just outside the door, a hot dispute arose between them, each blaming the others, and nine of them severely accusing the one whose task it had been to do the cruel deed. He defended himself, saying that no man with a heart in his breast could have done harm to that smiling babe, [Pg 95] —certainly not he. In the end they decided to go into the house again, and all take part in the murder.

But they had talked somewhat too long and too loud. Labda had overheard them and divined their dread intent. Filled with fear, lest they should return and murder her child, she seized the infant, and, looking eagerly about for some place in which she might conceal it, chose a *cypsel*, or corn-bin, as the place least likely to be searched.

Her choice proved a wise one. The men returned, and, as she refused to tell them where the child was, searched the house in vain,—none of them thinking of looking for an infant in a corn-bin. At length they went away, deciding to report that they had done as they were bidden, and that the child of Aëtion was slain.

The boy, in memory of his escape, was named *Cypselus*, after the corn-bin. He grew up without further molestation, and on coming to man's estate did what so many of the ancients seemed to have considered necessary, went to Delphi to consult the oracle.

The pythoness, or priestess of Apollo, at his approach, hailed him as king of Corinth. "He and his children, but not his children's children." And the oracle, as was often the case, produced its own accomplishment, for it encouraged Cypselus to head a rebellion against the oligarchy, by which it was overthrown and he made king. For thirty years thereafter he reigned as tyrant of Corinth, with a prosperous but harsh rule. Many of the Corinthians were put to death by him, [Pg 96] others robbed of their fortunes, and others banished the state. Then he died and left the government to his son Periander.

Periander began his reign in a mild spirit. But his manner changed after he had sent a herald to Thrasybúlus, the tyrant of Miletus, asking his advice how he could best rule with honor and fortune. Thrasybúlus led the messenger outside the city and through a field of corn, questioning him as they walked, while, whenever he came to an ear of corn that overtopped its fellows, he broke it off and threw it aside. Thus his path through the field was marked by the downfall of all the tallest stems and ears. Then, returning to the city, he sent the messenger back without a word of answer to his petition.

Periander, on his herald's return, asked him what counsel he brought. "None," was the answer; "not a word. King Thrasybúlus acted in the strangest way, destroying his corn as he led me through the field, and sending me away without a word." He proceeded to tell how the monarch had acted.

Periander was quick to gather his brother tyrant's meaning. If he would rule in safety he must cut off the loftiest heads,—signified by the tall ears of corn. He took the advice thus suggested, and from that time on treated his subjects with the greatest cruelty. Many of those whom

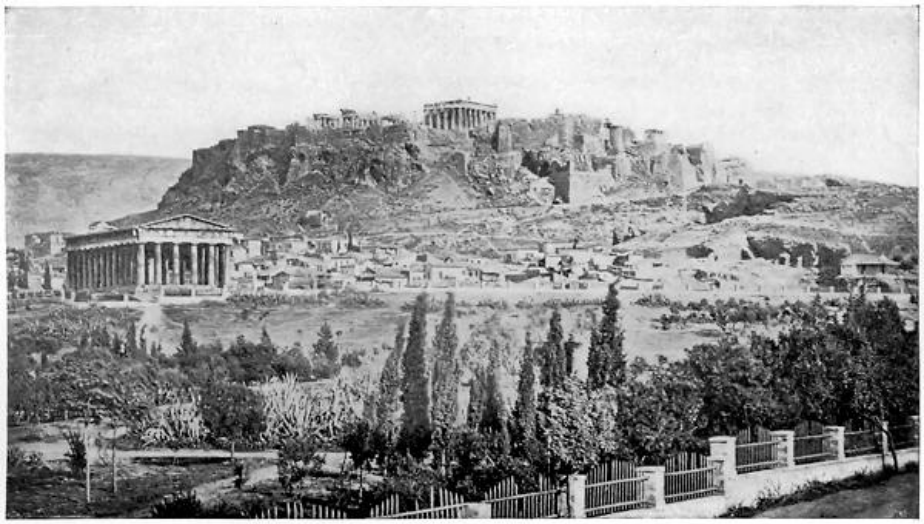
Cypselus had spared he put to death or banished, and acted the tyrant in the fullest sense of the word.

He even killed his wife Melissa; just why, we do not know. But we are told that she afterwards [Pg 97] appeared to him in a dream and said that she was cold, being destitute of clothes. The garments he had buried with her were of no use to her spirit, since they had not been burned. Periander took his own way to quiet and clothe the restless ghost. He proclaimed that all the wives of Corinth should go to the temple of Juno. This they did, dressed in their best, deeming it a festival. When they were all within he closed the doors, and had them stripped of their rich robes and ornaments, which he threw into a pit and set on fire, calling on the name of Melissa as they burned. And in this way the demand of the shivering ghost was satisfied.

Periander had two sons,—the elder a dunce, the younger, Lycophron (or wolf-heart), a youth of noble nature and fine intellect. He sent them on a visit to Proclus, their mother's father, and from him the boys learned, what they had not known before, that their father was their mother's murderer.

This story did not trouble the dull-brained elder, but Lycophron was so affected by it that on his return home he refused to speak to his father, and acted so surlily that Periander in anger turned him out of his house. The tyrant, learning from his elder son the cause of Lycophron's strange behavior, grew still more incensed. He sent orders to those who had given shelter to his son that they should cease to harbor him, And he continued to drive him from shelter to shelter, till in the end he proclaimed that whoever dared to harbor, or even speak to, his rebellious son, should pay a heavy fine to Apollo.

Thus, driven from every house, Lycophron took lodging in the public porticos, where he dwelt [Pg 98] without shelter and almost without food. Seeing his wretched state, Periander took pity on him and bade him come home and no longer indulge in such foolish and unfilial behavior.



THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS.

Lycophron's only reply was that his father had broken his own edict by coming and talking with him, and therefore himself owed the penalty to Apollo.

Periander, seeing that the boy was uncontrollable in his indignation, and troubled at heart by the piteous spectacle, now sent him by ship to the island of Corcyra, a colony of Corinth. As for Proclus, the tyrant made war upon him for his indiscreet revelation, robbed him of his kingdom, Epidaurus, and carried him captive to Corinth.

And the years went on, and Periander grew old and unable properly to handle his affairs. His elder son was incapable of taking his place, so he sent to Corcyra and asked Lycophron to come to Corinth and take the kingship of that fair land.

Lycophron, whose indignation time had not cooled, refused even to answer the message. Then Periander sent his daughter, the sister of Lycophron, hoping that she might be able to persuade him. She made a strong appeal, begging him not to let the power pass away from their family and their father's wealth fall into strange hands, and reminding him that mercy was a higher virtue than justice.

Her appeal was in vain. Lycophron refused to go back to Corinth as long as his father remained alive.

Then the desperate old man, at his wits' end through Lycophron's obstinacy, sent a herald, [Pg 99] saying that he would himself come to Corcyra, and let his son take his place in Corinth as king. To these terms Lycophron agreed. But there were others to deal with, for, when the terrified Corcyrians heard that the terrible old tyrant was coming to dwell in their island, they rose in a tumult and put Lycophron to death.

And thus ended the dynasty of Cypselus, as the oracle had foretold. Though Periander revenged himself on the Corcyrians, he could not bring his son to life again, and the children's children of Cypselus did not come to the throne.

[Pg 100]

THE RING OF POLYCRATES.

NEAR the coast of Asia Minor lies the bright and beautiful island of Samos, one of the choicest gems of the Ægean archipelago. This island was, somewhere about the year 530 B.C., seized by a political adventurer named Polycrates. He accomplished this by the aid of his two brothers, but of these he afterwards killed one and banished the other,—Syloson by name,—so that he became sole ruler and despot of the island.

This island kingdom of Polycrates was a small one, about eighty miles in circumference, but it was richly fertile, and had the honor of being the birthplace of many illustrious Greeks, among whom we may name Pythagoras, the famous philosopher. The city of Samos became, under Polycrates, "the first of all cities, Greek or barbarian." It was adorned with magnificent buildings and costly works of art; was supplied with water by a great aqueduct, tunnelled for nearly a mile through a mountain; had a great breakwater to protect the harbor, and a vast and magnificent temple to Juno: all of which seem to have been partly or wholly constructed by Polycrates.

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But this despot did not content himself with ruling the island and adorning the city which he had seized. He was ambitious and unscrupulous, and aspired to become master of all the islands of the Ægean Sea, and of Ionia in Asia Minor. He conquered several of these islands and a number of towns in the mainland, defeated the Lesbian fleet that came against him during his war with Miletus, got together a hundred armed ships and hired a thousand bowmen, and went forward with his designs with a fortune that never seemed to desert him. His naval power became the greatest in the world of Greece, and it seemed as if he would succeed in all his ambitious designs. But a dreadful fate awaited the tyrant. Like Crœsus, he was to learn that good fortune is apt to be followed by disaster. The remainder of his story is part history and part legend, and we give it as told by old Herodotus, who has preserved so many interesting tales of ancient Greece.

At, that time Persia, whose king Cyrus had overcome Crœsus, was the greatest empire in the world. All western Asia lay in its grasp; Asia Minor was overrun; and Cambyses, the king who had succeeded Cyrus, was about to invade the ancient land of Egypt. The king of this country, Amasis by name, was in alliance with Polycrates, rich gifts had passed between them, and they seemed the best of friends. But Amasis had his superstitions, and the constant good fortune of Polycrates seemed to him so different from the ordinary lot of kings that he feared that some misfortune must follow it. He perhaps had heard the story of Solon and Crœsus. Amasis accordingly wrote a warning letter to his friend.

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The great prosperity of his friend and ally, he said, caused him foreboding instead of joy, for he knew that the gods were envious, and he desired for those he loved alternate good and ill fortune. He had never heard of any one who was successful in all his enterprises that did not meet with calamity in the end. He therefore counselled Polycrates to do what the gods had not yet done, and bring some misfortune on himself. His advice was that he should select the treasure he most valued and could least bear to part with, and throw it away so that it should never be seen again. By this voluntary sacrifice he might avert involuntary loss and suffering.

This advice seemed wise to the despot, and he began to consider which of his possessions he could least bear to lose. He settled at length on his signet-ring, an emerald set in gold, which he highly valued. This he determined to throw away where it could never be recovered. So, having one of his fifty-oared vessels manned, he put to sea, and when he had gone a long distance from the coast he took the ring from his finger and, in the presence of all the sailors, tossed it into the waters.

This was not done without deep grief to Polycrates. He valued the ring more highly than ever, now that it lay on the bottom of the sea, irretrievably lost to him, as he thought; and he grieved for days thereafter, feeling that he had endured a real misfortune, which he hoped the gods might accept as a compensation for his good luck.

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But destiny is not so easily to be disarmed. Several days afterwards a Samian fisherman had the fortune to catch a fish so large and beautiful that he esteemed it worthy to be offered as a present to the king. He accordingly went with it to the palace gates and asked to see Polycrates. The guards, learning his purpose, admitted him. On coming into the king's presence, the fisherman said that, though he was a poor man who lived by his labor, he could not let himself offer such a prize in the public market.

"I said to myself," he continued, "'It is worthy of Polycrates and his greatness;' and so I brought it here to give it to you."

The compliment and the gift so pleased the tyrant that he not only thanked the fisherman warmly, but invited him to sup with him on the fish.

But a wonder happened in the king's kitchen. On the cook's cutting open the fish to prepare it

for the table, to his surprise he found within it *the signet-ring of the king*. With joy he hastened to Polycrates with his strangely recovered treasure, the story of whose loss had gone abroad, and told in what a remarkable way it had been restored.

As for Polycrates, the return of the ring brought him some joy but more grief. The fates, it appeared, were not so lightly to be appeased. He wrote to Amasis, telling what he had done and with what result. The letter came to the Egyptian king like a prognostic of evil. That there would be an ill end to the career of Polycrates he now felt sure; and, not wishing to be involved in it himself, he sent a herald to Samos and informed his late friend and ally that the alliance between them was at an end. [Pg 104]

It cannot be said that Amasis profited much by this act. Soon afterwards his own country was overrun and conquered by Cambyses, the Persian king, and his reign came to a disastrous termination.

Whether there is any historical basis for this story of the ring may be questioned. But this we do know, that the friendship between Amasis and Polycrates was broken, and that Polycrates offered to help Cambyses in his invasion, and sent forty ships to the Nile for this purpose. On these were some Samians whom the tyrant wished to get rid of, and whom he secretly asked the Persian king not to let return.

These exiles, however, suspecting what was in store for them, managed in some way to escape, and returned to Samos, where they made an attack on Polycrates. Being driven off by him, they went to Sparta and asked for assistance, telling so long a story of their misfortunes and sufferings that the Spartans, who could not bear long speeches, curtly answered, "We have forgotten the first part of your speech, and the last part we do not understand." This answer taught the Samians a lesson. The next day they met the Spartans with an empty wallet, saying, "Our wallet has no meal in it." "Your wallet is superfluous," said the Spartans; meaning that the words would have served without it. The aid which the Spartans thereupon granted the exiles proved of no effect, for it was against Polycrates, the fortunate. They sent an expedition to Samos, and besieged the city forty days, but were forced to retire without success. Then the exiles, thus made homeless, became pirates. They attacked the weak but rich island of Siphnos, which they ravaged, and forced the inhabitants to buy them off at a cost of one hundred talents. With this fund they purchased the island of Hydrea, but in the end went to Crete, where they captured the city of Cydonia. After they had held this city for five years the Cretans recaptured it, and the Samian exiles ended their career by being sold into slavery. [Pg 105]

Meanwhile the good fortune of Polycrates continued, and Samos flourished under his rule. In addition to his great buildings and works of engineering he became interested in stock-raising, and introduced into the island the finest breeds of sheep, goats, and pigs. By high wages he attracted the ablest artisans of Greece to the city, and added to his popularity by lending his rich hangings and costly plate to those who wanted them for a wedding feast or a sumptuous banquet. And that none of his subjects might betray him while he was off upon an extended expedition, he had the wives and children of all whom he suspected shut up in the sheds built to shelter his ships, with orders that these should be burned in case of any rebellious outbreak.

Yet the misfortune that the return of the ring had indicated came at length. The warning which Solon had given Crœsus applied to Polycrates as well. The prosperous despot had a bitter enemy, Orœtes by name, the Persian governor of Sardis. As to why he hated Polycrates two stories are told, but as neither of them is certain we shall not repeat them. It is enough to say that he hated Polycrates bitterly and desired his destruction, which he laid a plan to bring about. [Pg 106]

Orœtes, residing then at Magnesia, on the Mæander River, in the vicinity of Samos, and being aware of the ambitious designs of Polycrates, sent him a message to the effect that he knew that while he desired to become lord of the isles, he had not the means to carry out his ambitious project. As for himself, he was aware that Cambyses was bent on his destruction. He therefore invited Polycrates to come and take him, with his wealth, offering for his protection gold sufficient to make him master of the whole of Greece, so far as money would serve for this.

This welcome offer filled Polycrates with joy. He knew nothing of the hatred of Orœtes, and at once sent his secretary to Magnesia to see the Persian and report upon the offer. What he principally wished to know was in regard to the money offered, and Orœtes prepared to satisfy him in this particular. He had eight large chests prepared, filled nearly full of stones, upon which gold was spread. These were corded, as if ready for instant removal.

This seeming store of gold was shown to the secretary, who hastened back to Polycrates with a glowing description of the treasure he had seen. Polycrates, on hearing this story, decided to go at once and bring Orœtes and his chests of gold to Samos.

Against this action his friends protested, while the soothsayers found the portents unfavorable. His daughter, also, had a significant dream. She saw her father hanging high in the air, washed by Zeus, the king of the gods, and anointed by the sun. Yet in spite of all this the infatuated king persisted in going. His daughter followed him on the ship, still begging him to return. His only answer was that if he returned successfully he would keep her an old maid for years. [Pg 107]

"Oh that you may perform your threat!" she answered. "It is far better for me to be an old maid than to lose my father."

Yet the infatuated king went, despite all warnings and advice, taking with him a considerable

suite. On his arrival at Magnesia grief instead of gold proved his portion. His enemy seized him, put him to a miserable death, and hung his dead body on a cross to the mercy of the sun and the rains. Thus his daughter's dream was fulfilled, for, in the old belief, to be washed by the rain was to be washed by Zeus, while the sun anointed him by causing the fat to exude from his body.

A year or two after the death of Polycrates, his banished brother Syloson came to the throne in a singular way. During his exile he found himself at Memphis, in Egypt, while Cambyses was there with his conquering army. Among the guards of the king was Darius, the future king of Persia, but then a soldier of little note. Syloson wore a scarlet cloak to which Darius took a fancy and proposed to buy it. By a sudden impulse Syloson replied, "I cannot for any price sell it; but I give it you for nothing, if it must be yours."

Darius thanked him for the cloak, and that ended the matter there and then,—Syloson [Pg 108] afterwards holding himself as silly for the impulsive good nature of his gift.

But at length he learned with surprise that the simple Persian soldier whom he had benefited was now king of the great Persian empire. He went to Susa, the capital, and told who he was. Darius had forgotten his face, but he remembered the incident of the cloak, and offered to pay a kingly price for the small favor of his humbler days, tendering gold and silver in profusion to his visitor. Syloson rejected these, but asked the aid of Darius to make him king of Samos. This the grateful monarch granted, and sent Syloson an army, with whose aid the island quickly and quietly fell into his hands.

Yet calamity followed this peaceful conquest. Charilaus, a hot-tempered and half-mad Samian, who had been given charge of the acropolis, broke from it at the head of the guards, and murdered many of the Persian officers who were scattered unguarded throughout the town. The reprisal was dreadful. The Persian army fell in fury on the Samians and slaughtered every man and boy in the island, handing over to Syloson a kingdom of women and infants. Some time afterwards, however, the island was repeopled by men from without, and Syloson completed his reign in peace, leaving the sceptre of Samos to his son.

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THE ADVENTURES OF DEMOCEDES.

When Pythagoras, the celebrated Greek philosopher, settled in the ancient Italian city of Crotona (between 550 and 520 B.C.) there was living in that town a youthful surgeon who was destined to have a remarkable history. Democedes by name, the son of a Crotonian named Calliphon, he strongly inclined while still a mere boy to the study of medicine and surgery, for which arts that city had then a reputation higher than any part of Greece.

The boy had two things to contend with, the hard study in his chosen profession and the high temper of his father. The latter at length grew unbearable, and the youthful surgeon ran away from home, making his way to the Greek island of Ægina. Here he began to practise what he had learned at home, and, though he was very poorly equipped with the instruments of his profession, he proved far abler and more successful than the surgeons whom he found in that island. So rapid, indeed, was his progress that his first year's service brought him an offer from the citizens of Ægina to remain with them for one year, at a salary of one talent,—the Æginetan talent being nearly equal to two thousand dollars. The next year he spent at Athens, whose people had offered [Pg 110] him one and two-thirds talents. In the following year Polycrates of Samos bid higher still, offering him two talents, and the young surgeon repaired to that charming island.

Thus far the career of Democedes had been one of steady progress. But, as Solon told Crœsus, a man cannot count himself sure of happiness while he lives. The good fortune which had attended the runaway surgeon was about to be followed by a period of ill luck and degradation, following those of his new patron. In the constant wars of Greece a free citizen could never be sure how soon he might be reduced to slavery, and such was the fate of Democedes.

We have already told how Polycrates was treacherously seized and murdered by the Persian satrap Orœtes. Democedes had accompanied him to the court of the traitor, and was, with the other attendants of Polycrates, seized and left to languish in neglect and imprisonment. Soon afterwards Orœtes received the just retribution for his treachery, being himself slain. And now a third turn came to the career of Democedes. He was classed among the slaves of Orœtes, and sent with them in chains to Susa, the capital of Darius, the great Persian king.

But here the wheel of fortune suddenly took an upward turn. Darius, the king, leaping one day from his horse in the chase, sprained his foot so badly that he had to be carried home in violent pain. The surgeons of the Persian court were Egyptians, who were claimed to be the first men in their profession. But, though they used all their skill in treating the foot of the king, they did him no good. Indeed, they only made the pain more severe. For seven days and nights the mighty [Pg 111] king was taught that he was a man as well as a monarch, and could suffer as severely as the poorest peasant in his kingdom. The foot gave him such torture that all sleep fled from his

eyelids, and he and those around him were in despair.

At length it came to the memory of one who had come from the court of Orœtes, at Sardis, that report had spoken of a Greek surgeon among the slaves of the slain satrap. He mentioned this, and the king, to whom any hope of relief was welcome, gave orders that this man should be sought and brought before him. It was a miserable object that was soon ushered into the royal presence, a poor creature in rags, with fetters on his hands, and deep lines of suffering upon his face; a picture of misery, in fact.

He was asked if he understood surgery. "No," he replied; saying that he was a slave, not a surgeon. Darius did not believe him; these Greeks were artful; but there were ways of getting at the truth. He ordered that the scourge and the pricking instruments of torture should be brought. Democedes, who was probably playing a shrewd game, now admitted that he did have some little skill, but feared to practise his small art on so great a patient. He was bidden to do what he could, and went to work on the royal foot.

The little skill of the Greek soon distanced the great skill of the Egyptians. He succeeded perfectly in alleviating the pain, and soon had his patient in a deep and refreshing sleep. In a short time the foot was sound again, and Darius could once more stand without a twinge of pain. [Pg 112]

The king, who had grown hopeless of a cure, was filled with joy, and set no bounds to his gratitude. Democedes had come before him in iron chains. As a first reward the king presented him with two sets of chains of solid gold. He next sent him to receive the thanks of his wives. Being introduced into the harem, Democedes was presented to the sultanas as the man who had saved the king's life, and whom their lord and master delighted to honor. Each of the fair and grateful women, in reward for his great deed, gave him a saucer-full of golden coins, which were so many, and heaped so high, that the slave who followed him grew rich by merely picking up the pieces that dropped on the floor.

Nor did the generosity of Darius stop here. He gave Democedes a splendid house and furniture, made him eat at his own table, and showed him every favor at his command. As for the unlucky Egyptian surgeons, they would all have been crucified for their lack of skill had not Democedes begged for their lives. He might safely have told Darius that if he began to crucify men for ignorance and assurance he would soon have few subjects left.

But with all the favors which Darius granted, there was one which he steadily refused to grant. And it was one on which Democedes had set his heart. He wanted to return to Greece. Splendor in Persia was very well in its way, but to his patriotic heart a crust in Greece was better than a loaf in this land of strangers. Ask as he might, however, Darius would not consent. A sprain or [Pg 113] other harm might come to him again. What would he then do without Democedes? He could not let him go.

As asking had proved useless, the wily Greek next tried artifice. Atossa, the favorite wife of the king, had a tumor to form on her breast. She said nothing of it for a time, but at length it grew so bad that she was forced to speak to the surgeon. He examined the tumor, and told her he could cure it, and would do so if she would solemnly swear to do in return whatever he might ask. As she agreed to this, he cured the tumor, and then told her that the reward he wished was liberty to return to Greece. But he told Atossa that the king would not grant that favor even to her, and that it could only be had by stratagem. He advised her how she should act.

When next in conversation with the king, Atossa told him that the Persians expected him to do something for the glory and power of the empire. He must add to it by conquest.

"So I propose," he replied. "I have in view an expedition against the Scythians of the north."

"Better lead one against the Greeks of the west," she replied. "I have heard much about the beauty of the maidens of Sparta, Athens, Argos, and Corinth, and I want to have some of these fair barbarians to serve me as slaves. And if you wish to know more about these Greek people, you have near you the best person possible to give you information,—the Greek who cured your foot."

The suggestion seemed to Darius one worth considering. He would certainly like to know more about this land of Greece. In the end, after conversing with his surgeon, he decided to send some [Pg 114] confidential agents there to gain information, with Democedes as their guide. Fifteen such persons were chosen, with orders to observe closely the coasts and cities of Greece, obeying the suggestions and leadership of Democedes. They were to bring back what information they could, —and on peril of their lives to bring back Democedes. If they returned without him it would be a sorry home-coming for them.

The king then sent for Democedes, told him of the proposed expedition and what part he was to take in it, but imperatively bade him to return as soon as his errand was finished. He was bidden to take with him the wealth he had received, as presents for his father and brothers. He would not suffer from its loss, since as much, and more, would be given him on his return. Lastly, orders were given that a store-ship, "filled with all manner of good things," should be taken with the expedition.

Democedes heard all this with the aspect of one to whom it was new tidings. Come back? Of course he would. He wished ardently to see Greece, but for a steady place of residence he much preferred Susa and the palace of his king. As for the gold which had been given him, he would

not take it away. He wanted to find his house and property on his return. The store-ship would answer for all the presents he cared to make.

His shrewd reply left no shadow of doubt in the heart of the king. The envoys proceeded to Sidon, in Phœnicia, where two armed triremes and a large store-ship were got ready by their orders. In these they sailed to the coast of Greece, which they fully surveyed, and even went as far as Italy. The cities were also visited, and the story of all they had seen was carefully written down.

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At length they arrived at Tarentum, in Italy, not far from Crotona, the native place of Democedes. Here, at the secret suggestion of the wily surgeon, the king seized the Persians as spies, and, to prevent their escape, took away the rudders of their ships. Their treacherous leader took the opportunity to make his way to Crotona, and here the Persians, who had been released and given back their ships, found him on their arrival. They seized him in the market-place, but he was rescued from them by his fellow-citizens in spite of the remonstrances and threats of the envoys. The Crotonians even took from them the store-ship, and forced them to leave the harbor in their triremes.

On their way home the unlucky envoys suffered a second misfortune; they were shipwrecked and made slaves,—as was the cruel way of dealing with unfortunates in those days. An exile from Tarentum, named Gillis, paid their ransom, and took them to Susa,—for which service Darius offered him any reward he chose to ask. Like Democedes, all he wanted was to go home. But this reward he did not obtain. Darius brought to bear on Tarentum all the influence he could wield, but in vain. The Tarentines were obdurate, and would not have their exile back again. And Gillis was more honorable than Democedes. He did not lay plans to bring a Persian invasion upon Greece through his selfish wish to get back to his native land.

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A few words more will tell all else we know about Democedes. His last words to his Persian companions bade them tell Darius that he was about to marry the daughter of Milo of Crotona, famed as the greatest wrestler of his time. Darius knew well the reputation of Milo. He had probably learned it from Democedes himself. And a Persian king was more likely to admire a muscular than a mental giant. Milo meant more to him than Homer or any hero of the pen. Democedes did marry Milo's daughter, paying a high price for the honor, for the sole purpose, so far as we know, of sending back this boastful message to his friend, the king. And thus ends all we know of the story of the surgeon of Crotona.

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DARIUS AND THE SCYTHIANS.

The conquest of Asia Minor by Cyrus and his Persian army was the first step towards that invasion of Greece by the Persians which proved such a vital element in the history of the Hellenic people. The next step was taken in the reign of Darius, the first of Asiatic monarchs to invade Europe. This ambitious warrior attempted to win fame by conquering the country of the Scythian barbarians,—now Southern Russia,—and was taught such a lesson that for centuries thereafter the perilous enterprise was not repeated.

It was about the year 516 B.C. that the Persian king, with the ostensible purpose—invented to excuse his invasion—of punishing the Scythians for a raid into Asia a century before, but really moved only by the thirst for conquest, reached the Bosphorus, the strait that here divides Europe from Asia. He had with him an army said to have numbered seven hundred thousand men, and on the seas was a fleet of six hundred ships. A bridge of boats was thrown across this arm of the sea, —on which Constantinople now stands,—and the great Persian host reached European soil in the country of Thrace.

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Happy was it for Greece that the ambitious Persian did not then seek its conquest, as Democedes, his physician, had suggested. The Athenians, then under the rule of the tyrant Pisistratus, were not the free and bold people they afterwards became, and had Darius sought their conquest at that time, the land of Greece would probably have become a part of the overgrown Persian empire. Fortunately, he was bent on conquering the barbarians of the north, and left Greece to grow in valor and patriotism.

While the army marched from Asia into Europe across its bridge of boats, the fleet was sent into the Euxine, or Black Sea, with orders to sail for two days up the Danube River, which empties into that sea, and build there also a bridge of boats. When Darius with his army reached the Danube, he found the bridge ready, and on its swaying length crossed what was then believed to be the greatest river on the earth. Reaching the northern bank, he marched onward into the unknown country of the barbarous Scythians, with visions of conquest and glory in his mind.

What happened to the great Persian army and its ambitious leader in Scythia we do not very well know. Two historians tell us the story, but probably their history is more imagination than fact. Ctesias tells the fairy-tale that Darius marched northward for fifteen days, that he then

exchanged bows with the Scythian king, and that, finding the Scythian bow to be the largest, he fled back in terror to the bridge, which he hastily crossed, having left a tenth of his army as a sacrifice to his mad ambition. [Pg 119]

The story told by Herodotus is probably as much a product of the imagination as that of Ctesias, though it reads more like actual history. He says that the Scythians retreated northward, sending their wives and children before them in wagons, and destroying the wells and ruining the harvests as they went, so that little was left for the invaders to eat and drink. On what the vast host lived we do not know, nor how they crossed the various rivers in their route. With such trifling considerations as these the historians of that day did not concern themselves. There were skirmishes and combats of horsemen, but the Scythian king took care to avoid any general battle. Darius sent him a herald and taunted him with cowardice, but King Idanthyrsus sent word back that if the Persians should come and destroy the tombs of the forefathers of the Scythians they would learn whether they were cowards or not.

Day by day the monster Persian army advanced, and day by day its difficulties increased, until its situation grew serious indeed. The Scythians declined battle still, but Idanthyrsus sent to his distressed foe the present of a bird, a mouse, a frog, and five arrows. This signified, according to the historian, "Unless you take to the air, like a bird; to the earth, like a mouse; or to the water, like a frog, you will become the victim of the Scythian arrows."

This warning frightened Darius. In truth, he was in a desperate strait. Leaving the sick and weak part of his army encamped with the asses he had brought,—animals unknown to the Scythians, who were alarmed by their braying,—he began a hasty retreat towards his bridge of boats. But rapidly as he could march, the swifter Scythians reached the bridge before him, and counselled with the Ionian Greeks, who had been left in charge, and who were conquered subjects of the Persian king, to break down the bridge and leave Darius and his army to their fate. [Pg 120]

And now we get back into real history again. The story of what happened in Scythia is all romance. All we really know is that the expedition failed, and what was left of the army came back to the Danube in hasty retreat. And here comes in an interesting part of the narrative. The fleet of Darius was largely made up of the ships of the Ionians of Asia Minor, who had long been Persian subjects. It was they who had bridged the Danube, and who were left to guard the bridge. After Darius had crossed the bridge, on his march north, he ordered the Ionians to break it down and follow him into Scythia, leaving only the rowers and seamen in the ships. But one of his Greek generals advised him to let the bridge stand under guard of its builders, saying that evil fortune might come to the king's army through the guile and shrewdness of the Scythians.

Darius found this advice good, and promised to reward its giver after his return. He then took a cord and tied sixty knots in it. This he left with the Ionians. "Take this cord," he said. "Untie one of the knots in it each day after my advance from the Danube into Scythia. Remain here and guard the bridge until you shall have untied all the knots; but if by that time I shall not have returned, then depart and sail home." [Pg 121]

Such were the methods of counting which then prevailed. And the knowledge of geography was not more advanced. Darius had it in view to march round the Black Sea and return to Persia along its eastern side,—with the wild idea that sixty days would suffice for this great march.

Fortunately for him, as the story goes, the Ionians did not obey orders, but remained on guard after the knots were all untied. Then, to their surprise, Scythians instead of Persians appeared. These told the Ionians that the Persian army was in the greatest distress, was retreating with all speed, and that its escape from utter ruin depended on the safety of the bridge. They urged the Greeks to break the bridge and retire. If they should do so the Persians would all be destroyed, and Ionia would regain its freedom.

This was wise advice. Had it been taken it might have saved Greece from the danger of Persian invasion. The Ionians were at first in favor of it, and Miltiades, one of their leaders, and afterwards one of the heroes of Greek history, warmly advised that it should be done. But Histiæus, the despot of Miletus, advised the other Ionian princes that they would lose their power if their countries became free, since the Persians alone supported them, while the people everywhere were against them. They determined, therefore, to maintain the bridge. [Pg 122]

But, to rid themselves of the Scythians, they pretended to take their advice, and destroyed the bridge for the length of a bow-shot from the northern shore of the stream. The Scythians, thinking that they now had their enemies at their mercy, departed in search of their foes. That night the Persian army, in a state of the greatest distress and privation, reached the Danube, the Scythians having missed them and failed to check their march. To the horror of Darius and his starving and terror-stricken men, the bridge, in the darkness, appeared to be gone. An Egyptian herald, with a voice like a trumpet, was ordered to call for Histiæus, the Milesian. He did so, an answer came through the darkness, and the hopes of the fleeing king were restored. The bridge was speedily made complete again, and the Persian army hastily crossed, reaching the opposite bank before the Scythians, who had lost their track, reappeared in pursuit.

Thus ended in disaster the first Persian invasion of Europe. It was to be followed by others in later years, equally disastrous to the invaders. As for the despots of Ionia, who had through selfishness lost the chance of freeing their native land, they were to live to see, before many years, Ionia desolated by the Persian tyrant whom they had saved from irretrievable ruin. We

shall tell how this came about, as a sequel to the story of the invasion of Scythia.

[Pg 123] Histiæus, despot of Miletus, whose advice had saved the bridge for Darius, was richly rewarded for his service, and attended Darius on his return to Susa, the Persian capital, leaving his son-in-law Aristagoras in command at Miletus. Some ten years afterwards this regent of Miletus made an attempt, with Persian aid, to capture the island of Naxos. The effort failed, and Aristagoras, against whom the Persians were incensed by their defeat and their losses, was threatened with ruin. He began to think of a revolt from Persian rule.

While thus mentally engaged, he received a strangely-sent message from Histiæus, who was still detained at Susa, and who eagerly desired to get away from dancing attendance at court and return to his kingdom. Histiæus advised his regent to revolt. But as this message was far too dangerous to be sent by any ordinary channels, he adopted an extraordinary method to insure its secrecy. Selecting one of his most trusty slaves, Histiæus had his head shaved, and then pricked or tattooed upon the bare scalp the message he wished to send. Keeping the slave in seclusion until his hair had grown again, he sent him to Miletus, where he was instructed simply to tell Aristagoras to shave and examine his head. Aristagoras did so, read the tattooed message, and immediately took steps to obey.

Word of the proposed revolt was sent by him to the other cities along the coast, and all were found ready to join in the attempt to secure freedom. Not only the coast settlements, but the island of Cyprus, joined in the revolt. At the appointed time all the coast region of Asia Minor [Pg 124] suddenly burst into a flame of war.

Aristagoras hurried to Greece for aid, seeking it first at Sparta. Finding no help there, he went to Athens, which city lent him twenty ships,—a gift for which it was to pay dearly in later years. Hurrying back with this small reinforcement, he quickly organized an expedition to assail the Persians at the centre of their power.

Marching hastily to Sardis, the capital of Asia Minor, the revolted Ionians took and burned that city. But the Persians, gathering in numbers, defeated and drove them back to the coast, where the Athenians, weary of the enterprise, took to their ships and hastened home.

When word of this raid, and the burning of Sardis by the Athenians and Ionians, came to the ears of Darius at his far-off capital city, he asked in wonder, "The Athenians!—who are they?" The name of this distant and insignificant Greek city had not yet reached his kingly ears.

He was told who the Athenians were, and, calling for his bow, he shot an arrow high into the air, at the same time calling to the Greek deity, "Grant me, Zeus, to revenge myself on those Athenians."

And he bade one of his servants to repeat to him three times daily, when he sat down to his mid-day meal, "Master, remember the Athenians!"

The invaders had been easily repulsed from Sardis, but the revolt continued, and proved a serious and stubborn one, which it took the Persians years to overcome. The smaller cities were [Pg 125] conquered one by one, but the Persians were four years in preparing for the siege of Miletus. Resistance here was fierce and bitter, but in the end the city fell. The Persians now took a savage revenge for the burning of Sardis, killing most of the men of this important city, dragging into captivity the women and children, and burning the temples to the ground. The other cities which still held out were quickly taken, and visited like Miletus, with the same fate of fire and bloodshed. It was now 495 B.C., more than twenty years after the invasion of Scythia.

As for Histiæus, he was at first blamed by Darius for the revolt. But as he earnestly declared his innocence, and asserted that he could soon bring it to an end, Darius permitted him to depart. Reaching Miletus, he applied at the gates for admission, saying that he had come to the city's aid. But Aristagoras was no longer there, and the Milesians had no use for their former tyrant. They refused him admission, and even wounded him when he tried to force his way in at night. He then went to Lesbos, obtained there some ships, occupied the city of Byzantium, and began a life of piracy, which he kept up till his death, pillaging the Ionian merchant ships as they passed into and out of the Euxine Sea. Thus ended the career of this treacherous and worthless despot, to whom Darius owed his escape from Scythia.

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THE ATHENIANS AT MARATHON.

The time came when Darius of Persia did not need the bidding of a slave to make him "Remember the Athenians." He was taught a lesson on the battle-field of Marathon that made it impossible for him ever to forget the Athenian name. Having dismally failed in his expedition against the Scythians, he invaded Greece and failed as dismally. It is the story of this important event which we have next to tell.

And here it may be well to remark what terrible consequences to mankind the ambition of a single man may cause. The invasion of Greece, and all that came from it, can be traced in a direct line of events from the deeds of Histiæus, tyrant of Miletus, who first saved Darius from annihilation by the Scythians, then roused the Ionians to rebellion, and, finally, through the medium of Aristagoras, induced the Athenians to come to their aid and take part in the burning of Sardis. This roused Darius, who had dwelt at Susa for many years in peace, to a thirst for revenge on Athens, and gave rise to that series of invasions which ravaged Greece for many years, and whose fitting sequel was the invasion and conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great, a century and a half later.

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And now, with this preliminary statement, we may proceed with our tale. No sooner had the Ionian revolt been brought to an end, and the Ionians punished for their daring, than the angry Oriental despot prepared to visit upon Athens the vengeance he had vowed. His preparations for this enterprise were great. His experience in Scythia had taught him that the Western barbarians —as he doubtless considered them—were not to be despised. For two years, in every part of his vast empire, the note of war was sounded, and men and munitions of war were actively gathered. On the coast of Asia Minor a great fleet, numbering six hundred armed triremes and many transports for men and horses, was prepared. The Ionian and Æolian Greeks largely manned this fleet, and were forced to aid their late foe in the effort to destroy their kinsmen beyond the archipelago of the Ægean Sea.

An Athenian traitor accompanied the Persians, and guided their leader in the advance against his native city. We have elsewhere spoken of Pisistratus, the tyrant of Athens, whose treason Solon had in vain endeavored to prevent. After his death, his sons Hipparchus and Hippias succeeded him in the tyranny. Hipparchus was killed in 514 B.C., and in 511 Hippias, who had shown himself a cruel despot, was banished from Athens. He repaired to the court of King Darius, where he dwelt many years. Now he came back, as guide and counsellor to the Persians, hoping, perhaps, to become again a despot of Athens; but only, as the fates decreed, to find a grave on the fatal field of Marathon.

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The assault on Greece was a twofold one. The first was defeated by nature, the second by man. A land expedition, led by the Persian general Mardonius, crossed the Hellespont in the year 493 B.C., proposing to march to Athens along the coast, and with orders to bring all that were left alive of its inhabitants as captives to the great king. On marched the great host, nothing doubting that Greece would fall an easy prey to their arms. And as they marched along the land, the fleet followed them along the adjoining sea, until the stormy and perilous promontory of Mount Athos was reached.

No doubt the Greeks viewed with deep alarm this formidable progress. They had never yet directly measured arms with the Persians, and dreaded them more than, as was afterwards shown, they had reason to. But at Mount Athos the deities of the winds came to their aid. As the fleet was rounding that promontory, often fatal to mariners, a frightful hurricane swooped upon it, and destroyed three hundred of its ships, while no less than twenty thousand men became victims of the waves. Some of the crews reached the shores, but of these many died of cold, and others were slain and devoured by wild beasts, which roamed in numbers on that uninhabited point of land. The land army, too, lost heavily from the hurricane; and Mardonius, fearing to advance farther after this disaster, ingloriously made his way back to the Hellespont. So ended the first invasion of Greece.

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Three years afterwards another was made. Darius, indeed, first sent heralds to Greece, demanding *earth and water* in token of submission to his will. To this demand some of the cities cowardly yielded; but Athens, Sparta, and others sent back the heralds with no more earth than clung to the soles of their shoes. And so, as Greece was not to be subdued through terror of his name, the great king prepared to make it feel his power and wrath, incited thereto by his hatred of Athens, which Hippias took care to keep alive. Another expedition was prepared, and put under the command of another general, Datis by name.

The army was now sent by a new route. Darius himself had led his army across the Bosphorus, where Constantinople now stands, and where Byzantium then stood. Mardonius conveyed his across the southern strait, the Hellespont. The third expedition was sent on shipboard directly across the sea, landing and capturing the islands of the Ægean as it advanced. Landing at length on the large island of Eubœa, near the coast of Attica, Datis stormed and captured the city of Eretria, burnt its temples, and dragged its people into captivity. Then, putting his army on shipboard again, he sailed across the narrow strait between Eubœa and Attica, and landed on Attic soil, in the ever-memorable Bay of Marathon.

It seemed now, truly, as if Darius was about to gain his wish and revenge himself on Athens. The plain of Marathon, where the great Persian army had landed and lay encamped, is but twenty-two miles from Athens by the nearest road,—scarcely a day's march. The plain is about six miles long, and from a mile and a half to three miles in width, extending back from the sea-shore to the rugged hills and mountains which rise to bind it in. A brook flows across it to the sea, and marshes occupy its ends. Such was the field on which one of the decisive battles of the world was about to be fought.

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RUINS OF THE PARTHENON.

The coming of the Persians had naturally filled the Athenians and all the neighboring nations of Greece with alarm. Yet if any Athenian had a thought of submission without fighting, he was wise enough to keep it to himself. The Athenians of that day were a very different people from what they had been fifty years before, when they tamely submitted to the tyranny of Pisistratus. They had gained new laws, and with them a new spirit. They were the freest people upon the earth,—a democracy in which every man was the equal of every other, and in which each had a full voice in the government of the state. They had their political leaders, it is true, but these were their fellow-citizens, who ruled through intellect, not through despotism.

There were now three such men in Athens,—men who have won an enduring fame. One of these was that Miltiades who had counselled the destruction of Darius's bridge of boats. The others were named Themistocles and Aristides, concerning whom we shall have more to say. These three were among the ten generals who commanded the army of Athens, and each of whom, according to the new laws, was to have command for a day. It was fortunate for the Athenians that they had the wit to set aside this law on this important occasion, since such a divided generalship must surely have led to defeat and disaster.

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But before telling what action was taken there is an important episode to relate. Athens—as was common with the Greek cities when threatened—did not fail to send to Sparta for aid. When the Persians landed at Marathon, a swift courier, Phidippides by name, was sent to that city for assistance, and so fleet of foot was he that he performed the journey, of one hundred and fifty miles, in forty-eight hours' time.

The Spartans, who knew that the fall of Athens would soon be followed by that of their own city, promised aid without hesitation. But superstition stood in their way. It was, unfortunately, only the ninth day of the moon. Ancient custom forbade them to march until the moon had passed its full. This would be five days yet,—five days which might cause the ruin of Greece. But old laws and observances held dominion at Sparta, and, whatever came from it, the moon must pass its full before the army could march.

When this decision was brought back by the courier to Athens it greatly disturbed the public mind. Of the ten generals, five strongly counselled that they should wait for Spartan help. The other five were in favor of immediate action. Delay was dangerous with an enemy at their door and many timid and doubtless some treacherous citizens within their walls.

Fortunately, there was an eleventh general, Callimachus, the war archon, or polemarch, who had a casting vote in the council of generals, and who, under persuasion of Miltiades, cast his vote for an immediate march to Marathon. The other generals who favored this action gave up to Miltiades their days of command, making him sole leader for that length of time. Herodotus says that he refused to fight till his own day came regularly round,—but we can scarcely believe that a general of his ability would risk defeat on such a childish point of honor. If so, he should have been a Spartan, and waited for the passing of the full moon.

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To Marathon, then, the men of Athens marched, and from its surrounding hills looked down on the great Persian army that lay encamped beneath, and on the fleet which seemed to fill the sea. Of those brave men there were no more than ten thousand. And from all Greece but one small band came to join them, a thousand men from the little town of Platæa. The numbers of the foe we do not know. They may have been two hundred thousand in all, though how many of these landed and took part in the battle no one can tell. Doubtless they outnumbered the Athenians more than ten to one.

Far along the plain stretched the lines of the Persians, with their fleet behind them, extended along the beach. On the high ground in the rear were marshalled the Greeks, spread out so long that their line was perilously thin. The space of a mile separated the two armies.

And now, at the command of Miltiades, the valiant Athenians crossed this dividing space at a

full run, sounding their pæan or war-cry as they advanced. Miltiades was bent on coming to close quarters at once, so as to prevent the enemy from getting their bowmen and cavalry at work.

[Pg 133] The Persians, on seeing this seeming handful of men, without archers or horsemen, advancing at a run upon their great array, deemed at first that the Greeks had gone mad and were rushing wildly to destruction. The ringing war-cry astounded them,—a Greek pæan was new music to their ears. And when the hoplites of Athens and Platæa broke upon their ranks, thrusting and hewing with spear and sword, and with the strength gained from exercises in the gymnasium, dread of these courageous and furious warriors filled their souls. On both wings the Persian lines broke and fled for their ships. But in the centre, where Datis had placed his best men, and where the Athenian line was thinnest, the Greeks, breathless from their long run, were broken and driven back. Seeing this, Miltiades brought up his victorious wings, attacked the centre with his entire force, and soon had the whole Persian army in full flight for its ships.

The marshes swallowed up many of the fleeing host. Hundreds fell before the arms of the victors. Into the ships poured in terror those who had escaped, followed hotly by the victorious Greeks, who made strenuous efforts to set the ships on fire and destroy the entire host. In this they failed. The Persians, made desperate by their peril, drove them back. The fleet hastily set sail, leaving few prisoners, but abandoning a rich harvest of tents and equipments to the victorious Greeks. Of the Persian host, some sixty-four hundred lay dead on the field, the ships having saved them from further slaughter. [Pg 134] The Greek loss in dead was only one hundred and ninety-two.

Yet, despite this signal victory, Greece was still in imminent danger. Athens was undefended. The fleeing fleet might reach and capture it before the army could return. In truth, the ships had sailed in this direction, and from the top of a lofty hill Miltiades saw the polished surface of a shield flash in the sunlight, and quickly guessed what it meant. It was a signal made by some traitor to the Persian fleet. Putting his army at once under march, despite the weariness of the victors, he hastened back over the long twenty-two miles at all possible speed, and the worn-out troops reached Athens barely in time to save it from the approaching fleet.

The triumph of Miltiades was complete. Only for his quickness in guessing the meaning of the flashing shield, and the rapidity of his march, all the results of his great victory would have been lost, and Athens fallen helpless into Persian arms. But Datis, finding the city amply garrisoned, and baffled at every point, turned his ships and sailed in defeat away, leaving the Athenians masters of city and field.

And now the Spartans—to whom the full moon had come too late—appeared, two thousand strong, only in time to congratulate the victors and view the dead Persians on the field. They had marched the whole distance in less than three days. As for the Athenian dead, they were buried with great ceremony on the plain where they fell, and the great mound which covers them is visible there to this day.

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XERXES AND HIS ARMY.

The defeat of the Persian army at Marathon redoubled the wrath of King Darius against the Athenians. He resolved in his autocratic mind to sweep that pestilent city and all whom it contained from the face of the earth. And he perhaps would have done so had he not met a more terrible foe even than Miltiades and his army,—the all-conqueror Death, to whose might the greatest monarchs must succumb. Burning with fury, Darius ordered the levy of a mighty army, and for three years busy preparations for war went on throughout the vast empire of Persia. But, just as the mustering was done and he was about to march, that grisly foe Death struck him down in the midst of his schemes of conquest, and Greece was saved,—the great Darius was no more.

Xerxes, son of Darius, succeeded him on the throne. This new monarch was the handsomest and stateliest man in all his army. But his fair outside covered a weak nature; timid, faint-hearted, vain, conceited, he was not the man to conquer Greece, small as it was and great as was the empire under his control; and the death of Darius was in all probability the salvation of Greece.

[Pg 136] Xerxes succeeded not only to the throne of Persia, but also to the vast army which his father had brought together. He succeeded, moreover, to a war, for Egypt was in revolt. But this did not last long; the army was at once set in motion, Egypt was quickly subdued, and the Egyptians found themselves under a worse tyranny than before.

Greece remained to conquer, and for that enterprise the timid Persian king was not eager. Marathon could not be forgotten. Those fierce Athenians who had defeated his father's great host were not to be dealt with so easily as the unwarlike Egyptians. He held back irresolute, now persuaded to war by one councillor, now to peace by another, and finally—so we are told—driven to war by a dream, in which a tall, stately man appeared to him and with angry countenance

commanded him not to abandon the enterprise which his father had designed. This dream came to him again the succeeding night, and when Artabanus, his uncle, and the advocate of peace, was made to sit on his throne and sleep in his bed, the same figure appeared to him, and threatened to burn out his eyes if he still opposed the war. Artabanus, stricken with terror, now counselled war, and Xerxes determined on the invasion of Greece.

This story we are told by Herodotus, who told many things which it is not very safe to believe. What we really know is that Xerxes began the most stupendous preparations for war that had ever been known, and added to the army left by his father until he had got together the greatest host the world had yet beheld. For four years those preparations, to which Darius had already [Pg 137] given three years of time, were actively continued. Horsemen and foot-soldiers, ships of war, transports, provisions, and supplies of all kinds were collected far and near, the vanity of Xerxes probably inciting him to astonish the world by the greatness of his army.

In the autumn of the year 481 B.C. this vast army, marching from all parts of the mighty empire, reached Lydia and gathered in and around the city of Sardis, the old capital of Crœsus. Besides the land army, a fleet of twelve hundred and seven ships of war, and numerous other vessels, were collected, and large magazines of provisions were formed at points along the whole line of march. For years flour and other food, from Asia and Egypt, had been stored in cities on the route, that the fatal enemy starvation might not attack the mighty host.

Two important questions occupied the mind of Xerxes. How was he to get his vast army on European soil, and how escape those dangers from storm which had wrecked his father's fleet? He might cross the sea in ships, as Datis had done,—and be like him defeated. Xerxes thought it safest to keep on solid land, and decided to build a bridge of boats across the Hellespont, that ocean river now known as the Dardanelles, the first of the two straits which connect the Mediterranean with the Black Sea. As for the other trouble, that of storms at sea, he remembered the great gale which had wrecked the fleet of Mardonius off the stormy cape of Mount Athos, and [Pg 138] determined to avoid this danger. A narrow neck of land connects Mount Athos with the mainland. Xerxes ordered that a ship-canal should be cut through this isthmus, wide and deep enough to allow two triremes—war-ships with three ranks of oars—to sail abreast.

This work was done by the Phœnicians, the ablest engineers at that time in the world. A canal was made through which his whole fleet could sail, and thus the stormy winds and waves which hovered about Mount Athos be avoided.

This work was successfully done, but not so the bridge of boats. Hardly had the latter been completed, when there came so violent a storm that the cables were snapped like pack-thread and the bridge swept away. With the weakness of a man of small mind, on hearing of this disaster Xerxes burst into a fit of insane rage. He ordered that the heads of the chief engineers should be cut off, but this was far from satisfying his anger. The elements had risen against his might, and the elements themselves must be punished. The Hellespont should be scourged for its temerity, and three hundred lashes were actually given the water, while a set of fetters were cast into its depths. It is further said that the water was branded with hot irons, but it is hard to believe that even Xerxes was such a fool as this would make him.

The rebellious water thus punished, Xerxes regained his wits, and ordered that the bridge should be rebuilt more strongly than before. Huge cables were made, some of flax, some of papyrus fibre, to anchor the ships in the channel and to bind them to the shore. Two bridges were [Pg 139] constructed, composed of large ships laid side by side in the water, while over each of them stretched six great cables, to moor them to the land and to support the wooden causeway. In one of these bridges no less than three hundred and sixty ships were employed.

And now, everything being ready, the mighty army began its march. It presented a grand spectacle as it made its way from Sardis to the sea. First of all came the baggage, borne on thousands of camels and other beasts of burden. Then came one-half the infantry. The other half marched in the rear, while between them were Xerxes and his great body-guard, which is thus described by the Greek historian:

First came a thousand Persian cavalry and as many spearmen, each of the latter having a golden pomegranate on the rear end of his spear, which was carried in the air, the point being turned downward. Then came ten sacred horses, splendidly caparisoned, and following them rolled the sacred chariot of Zeus, drawn by eight white horses. This was succeeded by the chariot of Xerxes himself, who was immediately attended by a thousand horse-guards, the choicest troops of the kingdom, of whose spears the ends glittered with golden apples. Then came detachments of one thousand horse, ten thousand foot, and ten thousand horse. These foot-soldiers, called the Immortals, because their number was always maintained, had pomegranates of silver on their spears, with the exception of one thousand, who marched in front and rear and [Pg 140] on the sides, and bore pomegranates of gold. After these household troops followed the vast remaining host.

The army of Xerxes was, as we have said, superior in numbers to any the world had ever seen. Forty-six nations had sent their quotas to the host, each with its different costume, arms, mode of march, and system of fighting. Only those from Asia Minor bore such arms as the Greeks were used to fight with. Most of the others were armed with javelins or other light weapons, and bore slight shields or none at all. Some came armed only with daggers and a lasso like that used on the American plains. The Ethiopians from the Upper Nile had their bodies painted half red and half white, wore lion-and panther-skins, and carried javelins and bows. Few of the whole army

bore the heavy weapons or displayed the solid fighting phalanx of those whom they had come to meet in war.

As to the number of men thus brought together from half the continent of Asia we cannot be sure. Xerxes, after reaching Europe, took an odd way of counting his army. Ten thousand men were counted and packed close together. Then a line was drawn around them, and a wall built about the space. The whole army was then marched in successive detachments into this walled enclosure. Herodotus tells us that there were one hundred and seventy of these divisions, which would make the whole army one million seven hundred thousand foot. In addition there were eighty thousand horse, many war-chariots, and a fleet of twelve hundred and seven triremes and three thousand smaller vessels. According to Herodotus, the whole host, soldiers and sailors, numbered two million six hundred and forty thousand men, and there were as many or more camp-followers, so that the whole number present, according to this estimate, was over five million men. It is not easy to believe that such a marching host as this could be fed, and it has probably been much exaggerated; yet there is no doubt that the host was vast enough almost to blow away all the armies of Greece with the wind of its coming. [Pg 141]

On leaving Sardis a frightful spectacle was provided by Xerxes: the army found itself marching between two halves of a slaughtered man. Pythius, an old Phrygian of great riches, had entertained Xerxes with much hospitality, and offered him all his wealth, amounting to two thousand talents of silver and nearly four million darics of gold. This generous offer Xerxes declined, and gave Pythius enough gold to make up his darics to an even four millions. Then, when the army was about to march, the old man told Xerxes that he had five sons in the army, and begged that one of them, the eldest, might be left with him as a stay to his declining years. Instantly the despot burst into a rage. The request of exemption from military service was in Persia an unpardonable offence. The hospitality of Pythius was forgotten, and Xerxes ordered that his son should be slain, and half the body hung on each side of the army, probably as a salutary warning to all who should have the temerity to question the despot's arbitrary will.

On marched the great army. It crossed the plain of Troy, and here Xerxes offered libations in honor of the heroes of the Trojan war, the story of which was told him. Reaching the Hellespont, he had a marble throne erected, from which to view the passage of his troops. The bridges—which the scourged and branded waters had now spared—were perfumed with frankincense and strewed with myrtle boughs, and, as the march began, Xerxes offered prayers to the sun, and made libations to the sea with a golden censer, which he then flung into the water, together with a golden bowl and a Persian scimitar, perhaps to repay the Hellespont for the stripes he had inflicted upon it. [Pg 142]

At the first moment of sunrise the passage began, the troops marching across one bridge, the baggage and attendants crossing the other. All day the march continued, and all night long, the whip being used to accelerate the troops; yet so vast was the host that for seven days and nights, without cessation, the army moved on, and a week was at its end before the last man of the great Persian host set foot on European soil.

Then down through the Grecian peninsula Xerxes marched, doubtless inflated with pride at the greatness of his host and the might of the fleet which sailed down the neighboring seas and through the canal which he had cut to baffle stormy Athos. One regret alone seemed to come into his mind, and that was that in a hundred years not one man of that vast army would be alive. It did not occur to him that in less than one year few of them might be alive, for all thought of any peril to his army and fleet from the insignificant numbers of the Greeks must have been dismissed with scorn from his mind. [Pg 143]

Like locusts the army marched southward through Thrace, eating up the cities as it advanced, for each was required to provide a day's meals for the mighty host. For months those cities had been engaged in providing the food which this army consumed in a day. Many of the cities were brought to the verge of ruin, and all of them were glad to see the army march on. At length Xerxes saw before him Mount Olympus, on the northern boundary of the land of Hellas or Greece. This was the end of his own dominions. He was now about to enter the territory of his foes. With what fortune he did so must be left for later tales.

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HOW THE SPARTANS DIED AT THERMOPYLÆ.

When Xerxes, as his father had done before him, sent to the Grecian cities to demand earth and water in token of submission, no heralds were sent to Athens or Sparta. These truculent cities had flung the heralds of Darius into deep pits, bidding them to take earth and water from there and carry it to the great king. This act called for revenge, and whatever mercy he might show to the rest of Greece, Athens and Sparta were doomed in his mind to be swept from the face of the earth. How they escaped this dismal fate is what we have next to tell.

As one of the great men of Athens, Miltiades, had saved his native land in the former Persian invasion, so a second patriotic citizen, Themistocles, proved her savior in the dread peril which now threatened her. But the work of Themistocles was not done in a single great battle, as at Marathon, but in years of preparation. And a war between Athens and the neighboring island of Ægina had much to do with this escape from ruin.

To make war upon an island a land army was of no avail. A fleet was necessary. The Athenians were accustomed to a commercial, though not to a warlike, life upon the sea. Many of them were active, daring, and skilful sailors, and when Themistocles urged that they should build a powerful [Pg 145] fleet he found approving listeners. Longer of sight than his fellow-citizens, he warned them of the coming peril from Persia. The conflict with the small island of Ægina was a small matter compared with that threatened by the great kingdom of Persia. But to prepare against one was to prepare against both. And Athens was just then rich. It possessed valuable silver-mines at Laurium, in Attica, from which much wealth came to the state. This money Themistocles urged the citizens to use in building ships, and they were wise enough to take his advice, two hundred ships of war being built. These ships, as it happened, were not used for the purpose originally intended, that of the war with Ægina. But they proved of inestimable service to Athens in the Persian war.

THE PLACE OF ASSEMBLY OF THE ATHENIANS.

The vast preparations of Xerxes were not beheld without deep terror in Greece. Spies were sent into Persia to discover what was being done. They were captured and condemned to death, but Xerxes ordered that they should be shown his total army and fleet, and then sent home to report what they had seen. He hoped thus to double the terror of the Grecian states.

At home two things were done. Athens and Sparta called a congress of all the states of Greece on the Isthmus of Corinth, and urged them to lay aside all petty feuds and combine for defence against the common foe. It was the greatest and most successful congress that Greece had ever yet held. All wars came to an end. That between Athens and Ægina ceased, and the fleet which [Pg 146] Athens had built was laid aside for a greater need. The other thing was that step always taken in Greece in times of peril, to send to the temple at Delphi and obtain from the oracle the sacred advice which was deemed so indispensable.

The reply received by Athens was terrifying. "Quit your land and city and flee afar!" cried the prophetess. "Fire and sword, in the train of the Syrian chariot, shall overwhelm you. Get ye away from the sanctuary, with your souls steeped in sorrow."

The envoys feared to carry back such a sentence to Athens. They implored the priestess for a more comforting reply, and were given the following enigma to solve: "This assurance I will give you, firm as adamant. When everything else in the land of Cecrops shall be taken, Zeus grants to Athené that the wooden wall alone shall remain unconquered, to defend you and your children. Stand not to await the assailing horse and foot from the continent, but turn your backs and retire; you shall yet live to fight another day. O divine Salamis, thou too shalt destroy the children of women, either at the seed-time or at the harvest."

Here was some hope, though small. "The wooden wall"? What could it be but the fleet? This was the general opinion of the Athenians. But should they fight? Should they not rather abandon Attica forever, take to their wooden walls, and seek a new home afar? Salamis was to destroy the children of women! Did not this portend disaster in case of a naval battle? [Pg 147]

The fate of Athens now hung upon a thread. Had its people fled to a distant land, one of the greatest chapters in the history of the world would never have been written. But now Themistocles, to whom Athens owed its fleet, came forward as its savior. If the oracle, he declared, had meant that the Greeks should be destroyed, it would have called Salamis, where the battle was to be fought, "wretched Salamis." But it had said "divine Salamis." What did this mean but that it was not the Greeks, but the enemies of Greece, who were to be destroyed? He begged his countrymen not to desert their country, but to fight boldly for its safety. Fortunately

for Athens, his solution of the riddle was accepted, and the city set itself diligently to building more ships, that they might have as powerful a fleet as possible when the Persians came.

But not only Athens was to be defended; all Greece was in peril; the invaders must be met by land as well as by sea. Greece is traversed by mountain ranges, which cross from sea to sea, leaving only difficult mountain paths and narrow seaside passes. One of these was the long and winding defile to Tempé, between Mounts Olympus and Ossa, on the northern boundary of Greece. There a few men could keep back a numerous host, and thither at first marched the small army which dared to oppose the Persian millions, a little band of ten thousand men, under the command of a Spartan general.

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But they did not remain there. The Persians were still distant, and while the Greeks awaited their approach new counsels prevailed. There was another pass by which the mountains might be crossed,—which pass, in fact, the Persians took. Also the fleet might land thousands of men in their rear. On the whole it was deemed best to retreat to another pass, much farther south, the famous pass of Thermopylæ. Here was a road a mile in width, where were warm springs; and at each end were narrow passes, called gates,—the name Thermopylæ meaning "hot gates." Adjoining was a narrow strait, between the mainland and the island of Eubœa, where the Greek fleet might keep back the Persian host of ships. There was an old wall across the pass, now in ruins. This the Greeks rebuilt, and there the devoted band, now not more than seven thousand in all, waited the coming of the mighty Persian host.

It was in late June, of the year 480 B.C., that the Grecian army, led by Leonidas, king of Sparta, marched to this defile. There were but three hundred Spartans[3] in his force, with small bodies of men from the other states of Greece. The fleet, less than three hundred ships in all, took post beside them in the strait. And here they waited while day by day the Persian hordes marched southward over the land.

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The first conflict took place between some vessels of the fleets, whereupon the Grecian admirals, filled with sudden fright, sailed southward and left the army to the mercy of the Persian ships. Fortunately for Greece, thus deserted in her need, a strong ally now came to the rescue. The gods of the winds had been implored with prayer. The answer came in the form of a frightful hurricane, which struck the great fleet while it lay at anchor, and hurled hundreds of ships on the rocky shore. For three days the storm continued, and when it ended more than four hundred ships of war, with a multitude of transports and provision craft, were wrecked, while the loss of life had been immense. The Greek fleet had escaped this disaster, and now, with renewed courage, came sailing back to the post it had abandoned, and so quickly as to capture fifteen vessels of the Persian fleet.

While this gale prevailed Xerxes and his army lay encamped before Thermopylæ, the king in terror for his fleet, which he was told had been all destroyed. As for the Greeks, he laughed them to scorn. He was told that a handful of Spartans and other Greeks were posted in the pass, and sent a horseman to tell him what was to be seen. The horseman rode near the pass, and saw there the wall and outside it the small Spartan force, some of whom were engaged in gymnastic exercises, while others were combing their long hair.

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The great king was astonished and puzzled at this news. He waited expecting the few Greeks to disperse and leave the pass open to his army. The fourth day came and went, and they were still there. Then Xerxes bade the Median and Kissian divisions of his army to advance, seize these insolent fellows, and bring them to him as prisoners of war. Forward went his troops, and entered the throat of the narrow pass, where their bows and arrows were of little use, and they must fight the Greeks hand to hand. And now the Spartan arms and discipline told. With their long spears, spreading shields, steady ranks, and rigid discipline, the Greeks were far more than a match for the light weapons, slight shields, and open ranks of their foes. The latter had only their numbers, and numbers there were of little avail. They fell by hundreds, while the Greeks met with little loss. For two days the combat continued, fresh defenders constantly replacing the weary ones, and a wall of Persian dead being heaped up outside the wall of stone.

Then, as a last resort, the Immortals,—the Persian guard of ten thousand,—with other choice troops, were sent; and these were driven back with the same slaughter as the rest. The fleet in the strait doubtless warmly cheered on the brave hoplites in the pass; but as for Xerxes, "Thrice," says Herodotus, "did he spring from his throne, in agony for his army."

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The deed of a traitor rendered useless this noble defence. A recreant Greek, Ephialtes by name, sought Xerxes and told him of a mountain pass over which he could guide a band to attack the defenders of Thermopylæ in the rear. A strong Persian detachment was ordered to cross the pass, and did so under shelter of the night. At daybreak they reached the summit, where a thousand Greeks from Phocis had been stationed as a guard. These men, surprised, and overwhelmed with a shower of arrows, fled up the mountain-side, and left the way open to the Persians, who pursued their course down the mountain, and at mid-day reached the rear of the pass of Thermopylæ.

Leonidas had heard of their coming. Scouts had brought him word. The defence of the pass was at an end. They must fly or be crushed. A council was hastily called, and it was decided to retreat. But this decision was not joined in by Leonidas and his gallant three hundred. The honor of Sparta would not permit her king to yield a pass which he had been sent to defend. The laws of his country required that he should conquer or die at his post. It was too late to conquer; but he could still die. With him and his three hundred remained the Thespians and Thebans, seven

hundred of the former and about four hundred of the latter. The remainder of the army withdrew.

Xerxes had arranged to wait till noon, at which hour the defenders of the pass were to be attacked in front and rear. But Leonidas did not wait. All he and his men had now to do was to sell their lives as dearly as possible, so they marched outside the pass, attacked the front of the Persian host, drove them back, and killed them in multitudes, many of them being driven to perish in the sea and the morass. The Persian officers kept their men to the deadly work by threats and the liberal use of the whip.

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But one by one the Spartans fell. Their spears were broken, and they fought with their swords. Leonidas sank in death, but his men fought on more fiercely still, to keep the foe back from his body. Here many of the Persian chiefs perished, among them two brothers of Xerxes. It was like a combat of the Iliad rather than a contest in actual war. Finally the Greeks, worn out, reduced in numbers, their best weapons gone, fell back behind the wall, bearing the body of their chief. Here they still fought, with daggers, with their unarmed hands, even with their mouths, until the last man fell dead.

The Thebans alone yielded themselves as prisoners, saying that they had been kept in the pass against their will. Of the thousand Spartans and Thespians, not a man remained alive.

Meanwhile the fleets had been engaged, to the advantage of the Greeks, while another storm that suddenly rose wrecked two hundred more of the Persian ships on Eubœa's rocky coast. When word came that Thermopylæ had fallen the Grecian fleet withdrew, sailed round the Attic coast, and stopped not again until the island of Salamis was reached.

As for Leonidas and his Spartans, they had died, but had won imperishable fame. The same should be said for the Thespians as well, but history has largely ignored their share in the glorious deed. In after-days an inscription was set up which gave all glory to the Peloponnesian heroes without a word for the noble Thespian band. Another celebrated inscription honored the Spartans alone:

> "Go, stranger, and to Lacedæmon tell
> That here, obeying her behests, we fell,"

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or, in plain prose, "Stranger, tell the Lacedæmonians that we lie here, in obedience to their orders."

On the hillock where the last of the faithful band died was erected a monument with a marble lion in honor of Leonidas, while on it was carved the following epitaph, written by the poet Simonides:

> "In dark Thermopylæ they lie.
> Oh, death of glory, thus to die!
> Their tomb an altar is, their name
> A mighty heritage of fame.
> Their dirge is triumph; cankering rust,
> And time, that turneth all to dust,
> That tomb shall never waste nor hide,—
> The tomb of warriors true and tried.
> The full-voiced praise of Greece around
> Lies buried in this sacred mound;
> Where Sparta's king, Leonidas,
> In death eternal glory has!"

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THE WOODEN WALLS OF ATHENS.

The slaughter of the defenders of Thermopylæ exposed Athens to the onslaught of the vast Persian army, which would soon be on the soil of Attica. A few days' march would bring the invaders to its capital city, which they would overwhelm as a flight of locusts destroys a cultivated field. The states of the Peloponnesus, with a selfish regard for their own safety, had withdrawn all their soldiers within the peninsula, and began hastily to build a wall across the isthmus of Corinth with the hope of keeping back the invading army. Athens was left to care for itself. It was thus that Greece usually let itself be devoured piecemeal.

There was but one thing for the Athenians to do, to obey the oracle and fly from their native soil. In a few days the Persians would be in Athens, and there was not an hour to lose. The old men, the women and children, with such property as could be moved, were hastily taken on shipboard and carried to Salamis, Ægina, Trœzen, and other neighboring islands. The men of fighting age took to their ships of war, to fight on the sea for what they had lost on land. A few of the old and the poverty-stricken remained, and took possession of the hill of the Acropolis, whose

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wooden fence they fondly fancied might be the wooden wall which the oracle had meant. Apart from these few the city was deserted, and Athens had embarked upon the seas. Not only Athens, but all Attica, was left desolate, and in the whole state Xerxes made only five hundred prisoners of war.

Onward came the great Persian host, destroying all that could be destroyed on Attic soil, and sending out detachments to ravage other parts of Greece. The towns that submitted were spared. Those that resisted, or whose inhabitants fled, were pillaged and burnt. A body of troops was sent to plunder Delphi, the reputed great wealth of whose temple promised a rich reward. The story of what happened there is a curious one, and well worth relating.

The frightened Delphians prepared to fly, but first asked the oracle of Apollo whether they should take with them the sacred treasures or bury them in secret places. The oracle bade them not to touch these treasures, saying that the god would protect his own. With this admonition the people of Delphi fled, sixty only of their number remaining to guard the holy shrine.

These faithful few were soon encouraged by a prodigy. The sacred arms, kept in the temple's inmost cell, and which no mortal hand dared touch, were seen lying before the temple door, as if Apollo was prepared himself to use them. As the Persians advanced by a rugged path under the steep cliffs of Mount Parnassus, and reached the temple of Athené Pronæa, a dreadful peal of thunder rolled above their affrighted heads, and two great crags, torn from the mountain's flank, [Pg 156] came rushing down with deafening sound, and buried many of them beneath their weight. At the same time, from the temple of Athené, came the Greek shout of war.

In a panic the invaders turned and fled, hotly pursued by the few Delphians, and, so the story goes, by two armed men of superhuman size, whose destructive arms wrought dire havoc in the fleeing host. And thus, as we are told, did the god preserve his temple and his wealth.

But no god guarded the road to Athens, and at length Xerxes and his army reached that city,—four months after they had crossed the Hellespont. It was an empty city they found. The few defenders of the Acropolis—a craggy hill about one hundred and fifty feet high—made a vigorous defence, for a time keeping the whole Persian army at bay. But some Persians crept up a steep and unguarded part of the wall, entered the citadel, and soon all its defenders were dead, and its temples and buildings in flames.

While all this was going on, the Grecian fleet lay but a few miles away, in the narrow strait between the isle of Salamis and the Attic coast, occupying the little bay before the town of Salamis, from which narrow channels at each end led into the Bay of Eleusis to the north and the open sea to the south. In front rose the craggy heights of Mount Ægaleos, over which, only five miles away, could be seen ascending the lurid smoke of blazing Athens. It was a spectacle calculated to infuriate the Athenians, though not one to inspire them with courage and hope. [Pg 157]

The fleet of Greece consisted of three hundred and sixty-six ships in all, of which Athens supplied two hundred, while the remainder came in small numbers from the various Grecian states. The Persian fleet, despite its losses by storm, far outnumbered that of Greece, and came sweeping down the Attic coast, confident of victory, while the great army marched southward over Attic land.

And now two councils of war were held,—one by the Persian leaders, one by the Greeks. The fleet of Xerxes, probably still a thousand ships strong, lay in the Bay of Phalerum, a few miles from Athens; and hither the king, having wrought his will on that proud and insolent city, came to the coast to inspect his ships of war and take counsel as to what should next be done.

Here, before his royal throne, were seated the kings of Tyre and Sidon, and the rulers of the many other nations represented in his army. One by one they were asked what should be done. "Fight," was the general reply; "fight without delay." Only one voice gave different advice, that of Queen Artemisia of Halicarnassus. She advised Xerxes to march to the isthmus of Corinth, saying that then all the ships of the Peloponnesus would fly to defend their own homes, and the fleet of Greece would thus be dispersed. Xerxes heard her with calmness, but declined to take her prudent advice. The voice of the others and his own confidence prevailed, and orders were given for the fleet to make its attack the next day.

The almost unanimous decision of this council, over which ruled the will of an autocratic king, [Pg 158] was very different from that which was reached by the Greeks, in whose council all who spoke had equal authority. The fleet had come to Salamis to aid the flight of the Athenians. This done, it was necessary to decide where it was best to meet the Persian fleet. Only the Athenians, under the leadership of Themistocles, favored remaining where they were. The others perceived that if they were defeated here, escape would be impossible. Most of them wished to sail to the isthmus of Corinth, to aid the land army of the Peloponnesians, while various other plans were urged.

While the chiefs thus debated news came that Athens and the Acropolis were in flames. At once some of the captains left the council in alarm, and began hastily to hoist sail for flight. Those that remained voted to remove to the isthmus, but not to start till the morning of the next day.

Themistocles, who had done his utmost to prevent this fatal decision, which he knew would end in the dispersal of the fleet and the triumph of Persia, returned to his own ship sad of heart. Many of the women and children of Athens were on the island of Salamis, and if the fleet sailed they, too, must be removed.

"What has the council decided?" asked his friend Mnesiphilus.

Themistocles gloomily told him.

"This will be ruinous!" burst out Mnesiphilus. "Soon there will be no allied fleet, nor any cause or country to fight for. You must have the council meet again; this vote must be set aside; if it be carried out the liberty of Greece is at an end." [Pg 159]

So strongly did he insist upon this that Themistocles was inspired to make another effort. He went at once to the ship of Eurybiades, the Spartan who had been chosen admiral of the fleet, and represented the case so earnestly to him that Eurybiades was partly convinced, and consented to call the council together again.

Here Themistocles was so excitedly eager that he sought to win the chiefs over to his views even before Eurybiades had formally opened the meeting and explained its object. For this he was chided by the Corinthian Adeimantus, who said,—

"Themistocles, those who in the public festivals rise up before the proper signal are scourged."

"True," said Themistocles; "but those who lag behind the signal win no crowns."

When the debate was formally opened, Themistocles was doubly urgent in his views, and continued his arguments until Adeimantus burst out in a rage, bidding him, a man who had no city, to be silent.

This attack drew a bitter answer from the insulted Athenian. If he had no city, he said, he had around him two hundred ships, with which he could win a city and country better than Corinth. Then he turned to Eurybiades, and said,—

"If you will stay and fight bravely here, all will be well. If you refuse to stay, you will bring all Greece to ruin. If you will not stay, we Athenians will migrate with our ships and families. Then, chiefs, when you lose an ally like us, you will remember what I say, and regret what you have done." [Pg 160]

THE VICTORS AT SALAMIS.

These words convinced Eurybiades. Without the Athenian ships the fleet would indeed be powerless. He asked for no vote, but gave the word that they should stay and fight, and bade the captains to make ready for battle. Thus it was that at dawn of day the fleet, instead of being in full flight, remained drawn up in battle array in the Bay of Salamis. The Peloponnesian chiefs, however, were not content. They held a secret council, and resolved to steal secretly away. This treacherous purpose came to the ears of Themistocles, and to prevent it he took a desperate course. He sent a secret message to Xerxes, telling him that the Greek fleet was about to fly, and that if he wished to capture it he must at once close up both ends of the strait, so that flight would be impossible.

He cunningly represented himself as a secret friend of the Persian king, who lost no time in taking the advice. When the next day's dawn was at hand the discontented chiefs were about to fly, as they had secretly resolved, when a startling message came to their ears. Aristides, a noble Athenian who had been banished, but had now returned, came on the fleet from Salamis and told them that only battle was left, that the Persians had cooped them in like birds in a cage, and that there was nothing to do but to fight or surrender.

This disturbing message was not at first believed. But it was quickly confirmed. Persian ships appeared at both ends of the strait. Themistocles had won. Escape was impossible. They must do battle like heroes or live as Persian slaves. There was but one decision,—to fight. The dawn of day found the Greeks actively preparing for the most famous naval battle of ancient times. [Pg 161]

The combat about to be fought had the largest audience of any naval battle the world has ever known. For the vast army of Persia was drawn up as spectators on the verge of the narrow strait

which held the warring fleets, and Xerxes himself sat on a lofty throne erected at a point which closely overlooked the liquid plain. His presence, he felt sure, would fill his seamen with valor, while by his side stood scribes prepared to write down the names alike of the valorous and the backward combatants. On the other hand, the people of Athens and Attica looked with hope and fear on the scene from the island of Salamis. It was a unique preparation for a battle at sea, such as was never known before or since that day.

The fleet of Persia outnumbered that of Greece three to one. But the Persian seamen had been busy all night long in carrying out the plan to entrap the Greeks, and were weary with labor. The Greeks had risen fresh and vigorous from their night's rest. And different spirits animated the two hosts. The Persians were moved solely by the desire for glory; the Greeks by the stern alternatives of victory, slavery, or death. These differences in strength and motive went far to negative the difference in numbers; and the Greeks, caught like lions in a snare, dashed into the combat with the single feeling that they must now fight or die.

History tells us that the Greeks hesitated at first; but soon the ship of Ameinias, an Athenian [Pg 162] captain, dashed against a Phœnician trireme with such fury that the two became closely entangled. While their crews fought vigorously with spear and javelin, other ships from both sides dashed to their aid, and soon numbers of the war triremes were fiercely engaged.

The battle that followed was hot and furious, the ships becoming mingled in so confused a mass that no eye could follow their evolutions. Soon the waters of the Bay of Salamis ran red with blood. Broken oars, fallen spars, shattered vessels, filled the strait. Hundreds were hurled into the waters,—the Persians, few of whom could swim, to sink; the Greeks, who were skilful swimmers, to seek the shore of Salamis or some friendly deck.

From the start the advantage lay with the Greeks. The narrowness of the strait rendered the great numbers of the Persians of no avail. The superior discipline of the Greeks gave them a further advantage. The want of concert in the Persian allies was another aid to the Greeks. They were ready to run one another down in the wild desire to escape. Soon the Persian fleet became a disorderly mass of flying ships, the Greek fleet a well-ordered array of furious pursuers. In panic the Persians fled; in exultation the Greeks pursued. One trireme of Naxos captured five Persian ships. A brother of Xerxes was slain by an Athenian spear. Great numbers of distinguished Persians and Medes shared his fate. Before the day was old the battle on the Persian side had become a frantic effort to escape, while some of the choicest troops of Persia, [Pg 163] who had been landed before the battle on the island of Psyttaleia, were attacked by Aristides at the head of an Athenian troop, and put to death to a man.

The confident hope of victory with which Xerxes saw the battle begin changed to wrath and terror when he saw his ships in disorderly flight and the Greeks in hot pursuit. The gallant behavior of Queen Artemisia alone gave him satisfaction, and when he saw her in the flight run into and sink an opposing vessel, he cried out, "My men have become women; and my women, men." He was not aware that the ship she had sunk, with all on board, was one of his own fleet.

The mad flight of his ships utterly distracted the mind of the faint-hearted king. His army still vastly outnumbered that of Greece. With all its losses, his fleet was still much the stronger. An ounce of courage in his soul would have left Greece at his mercy. But that was wanting, and in panic fear that the Greeks would destroy the bridge over the Hellespont, he ordered his fleet to hasten there to guard it, and put his army in rapid retreat for the safe Asiatic shores.

He had some reason to fear the loss of his bridge. Themistocles and the Athenians had it in view to hasten to the Hellespont and break it down. But Eurybiades, the Spartan leader, opposed this, saying that it was dangerous to keep Xerxes in Greece. They had best give him every chance to fly.

Themistocles, who saw the wisdom of this advice, not only accepted it, but sent a message to Xerxes—as to a friend—advising him to make all haste, and saying that he would do his best to [Pg 164] hold back the Greeks, who were eager to burn the bridge.

The frightened monarch was not slow in taking this advice. Leaving a strong force in Greece, under the command of his general Mardonius, he marched with the speed of fear for the bridge. But he had nearly exhausted the country of food in his advance, and starvation and plague attended his retreat, many of the men being obliged to eat leaves, grass, and the bark of trees, and great numbers of them dying before the Hellespont was reached.

Here he found the bridge gone. A storm had destroyed it. He was forced to have his army taken across in ships. Not till Asia Minor was reached did the starving troops obtain sufficient food,—and there gorged themselves to such an extent that many of them died from repletion. In the end Xerxes entered Sardis with a broken army and a sad heart, eight months after he had left it with the proud expectation of conquering the western world.

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PLATÆA'S FAMOUS DAY.

On a certain day, destined to be thereafter famous, two strong armies faced each other on the plain north of the little Bœotian town of Platæa. Greece had gathered the greatest army it had ever yet put into the field, in all numbering one hundred and ten thousand men, of whom nearly forty thousand were hoplites, or heavy-armed troops, the remainder light-armed or unarmed. Of these Sparta supplied five thousand hoplites and thirty-five thousand light-armed Helots, the greatest army that warlike city had ever brought into action. The remainder of Laconia furnished five thousand hoplites and five thousand Helot attendants. Athens sent eight thousand hoplites, and the remainder of the army came from various states of Greece. This host was in strange contrast to the few thousand warriors with whom Greece had met the vast array of Xerxes at Thermopylæ.

Opposed to this force was the army which Xerxes had left behind him on his flight from Greece, three hundred thousand of his choicest troops, under the command of his trusted general Mardonius. This host was not a mob of armed men, like that which Xerxes had led. It embraced the best of the Persian forces and Greek auxiliaries, and the hopes of Greece still seemed but slight, thus outnumbered three to one. But the Greeks fought for liberty, and were inspired with the spirit of their recent victories; the Persians were disheartened and disunited: this difference of feeling went far to equalize the hosts. [Pg 166]

And now, before bringing the waiting armies to battle, we must tell what led to their meeting on the Platæan plain. After the battle of Salamis a vote was taken by the chiefs to decide who among them should be awarded the prize of valor on that glorious day. Each cast two ballots, and when these were counted each chief was found to have cast his first vote for—himself! But the second votes were nearly all for Themistocles, and all Greece hailed him as its preserver. The Spartans crowned him with olive, and presented him with a kingly chariot, and when he left their city they escorted him with the honors due to royalty.

Meanwhile Mardonius, who was wintering with his army in Thessaly, sent to Athens to ask if its people still proposed the madness of opposing the power of Xerxes the king. "Yes," was the answer; "while the sun lights the sky we will never join in alliance with barbarians against Greeks."

On receiving this answer Mardonius broke up his winter camp and marched again to Athens, which he found once more empty of inhabitants. Its people had withdrawn as before to Salamis, and left the shell of their nation to the foe.

The Athenians sent for aid to Sparta, but the people of that city, learning that Athens had defied Mardonius, selfishly withheld their assistance, and the completion of the wall across the isthmus was diligently pushed. Fortunately for Greece, this selfish policy came to a sudden end. "What will your wall be worth if Athens joins with Persia and gives the foe the aid of her fleet?" was asked the Spartan kings; and so abruptly did they change their opinion that during that same night five thousand Spartan hoplites, each man with seven Helot attendants, marched for the isthmus, with Pausanias, a cousin of Leonidas, the hero of Thermopylæ, at their head. [Pg 167]

On learning of this movement, Mardonius set fire to what of Athens remained, and fell back on the city of Thebes, in Bœotia, as a more favorable field for the battle which now seemed sure to come. Here his numerous cavalry could be brought into play, the country was allied with him, the friendly city of Thebes lay behind him, and food for his great army was to be had. Here, then, he awaited the coming of the Greeks, and built for his army a fortified camp, surrounded with walls and towers of wood.

Yet his men and officers alike lacked heart. At a splendid banquet given to Mardonius by the Thebans, one of the Persians said to his Theban neighbor,—

"Seest thou these Persians here feasting, and the army which we left yonder encamped near the river? Yet a little while, and out of all these thou shalt behold but a few surviving."

"If you feel thus," said the Theban, "thou art surely bound to reveal it to Mardonius."

"My friend," answered the Persian, "man cannot avert what God has decreed. No one will believe the revelation, sure though it be. Many of us Persians know this well, and are here serving only under the bond of necessity. And truly this is the most hateful of all human sufferings, to be full of knowledge, and at the same time to have no power over any result." [Pg 168]

Not long had the lukewarm Persians to wait for their foes. Soon the army of Greece appeared, and, seeing their enemy encamped along the little river Asopus in the plain, took post on the mountain declivity above. Here they were not suffered to rest in peace. The powerful Persian cavalry, led by Masistius, the most distinguished officer in the army, broke like a thunderbolt on the Grecian ranks. The Athenians and Megarians met them, and a sharp and doubtful contest ensued. At length Masistius fell from his wounded horse and was slain as he lay on the ground. The Persians fought with fury to recover his body, but were finally driven back, leaving the corpse of their general in the hands of the Greeks.

This event had a great effect on both armies. Grief assailed the army of Mardonius at the loss of their favorite general. Loud wailings filled the camp, and the hair of men, horses, and cattle was cut in sign of mourning. The Greeks, on the contrary, were full of joy. The body of Masistius, a man of great stature, and clad in showy armor, was placed in a cart and paraded around the camp, that all might see it and rejoice. Such was their confidence at this defeat of the cavalry, which they had sorely feared, that Pausanias broke up his hill camp and marched into the plain [Pg 169]

below, where he took station in front of the Persian host, only the little stream of the Asopus dividing the two hostile armies.

And here for days they lay, both sides offering sacrifices, and both obtaining the same oracle,—that the side which attacked would lose the battle, the side which resisted would win. Under such circumstances neither side cared to attack, and for ten days the armies lay, the Greeks much annoyed by the Persian cavalry, and having their convoys of provisions cut off, yet still waiting with unyielding faith in the decision of the gods.

Mardonius at length grew impatient. He asked his officers if they knew of any prophecy saying that the Persians would be destroyed in Greece. They were all silent, though many of them knew of such prophecies.

"Since you either do not know or will not tell," he at length said, "I well know of one. There is an oracle which declares that Persian invaders shall plunder the temple of Delphi, and shall afterwards all be destroyed. Now we shall not go against that temple, so on that ground we shall not be destroyed. Doubt not, then, but rejoice, for we shall get the better of the Greeks." And he gave orders to prepare for battle on the morrow, without waiting longer on the sacrifices.

That night Alexander of Macedon, who was in the Persian army, rode up to the Greek outposts and gave warning of the coming attack. "I am of Greek descent," he said, "and ask you to free me [Pg 170] from the Persian yoke. I cannot endure to see Greece enslaved."

During the night Pausanias withdrew his army to a new position in front of the town of Platæa, water being wanting where they were. One Spartan leader, indeed, refused to move, and when told that there had been a general vote of the officers, he picked up a huge stone and cast it at the feet of Pausanias, crying, "This is *my* pebble. With it I give my vote not to run away from the strangers."

Dawn was at hand, and the Spartans still held their ground, their leader disputing in vain with the obstinate captain. At length he gave the order to march, it being fatal to stay, since the rest of the army had gone. Amompharetus, the obstinate captain, seeing that his general had really gone, now lost his scruples and followed.

When day dawned the Persians saw with surprise that their foes had disappeared. The Spartans alone, detained by the obstinacy of Amompharetus, were still in sight. Filled with extravagant confidence at this seeming flight. Mardonius gave orders for hasty pursuit, crying to a Greek ally, "There go your boasted Spartans, showing, by a barefaced flight, what they are really worth."

Crossing the shallow stream, the Persians ran after the Greeks at full speed, without a thought of order or discipline. The foe seemed to them in full retreat, and shouts of victory rang from their lips as they rushed pell-mell across the plain.

The Spartans were quickly overtaken, and found themselves hotly assailed. They sent in haste to the Athenians for aid. The Athenians rushed forward, but soon found themselves confronted by [Pg 171] the Greek allies of Persia, and with enough to do to defend themselves. The remainder of the Greek army had retreated to Platæa and took no part in the battle.

The Persians, thrusting the spiked extremities of their long shields in the ground, formed a breastwork from which they poured showers of arrows on the Spartan ranks, by which many were wounded or slain. Yet, despite their distress, Pausanias would not give the order to charge. He was at the old work again, offering sacrifices while his men fell around him. The responses were unfavorable, and he would not fight.

At length the victims showed favorable signs. "Charge!" was the word. With the fury of unchained lions the impatient hoplites sprang forward, and like an avalanche the serried Spartan line fell on the foe.

Down went the breastwork of shields. Down went hundreds of Persians before the close array and the long spears of the Spartans. Broken and disordered, the Persians fought bravely, doing their utmost to get to close quarters with their foes. Mardonius, mounted on a white horse, and attended by a body-guard of a thousand select troops, was among the foremost warriors, and his followers distinguished themselves by their courage.

At length the spear of Aeimnestus, a distinguished Spartan, brought Mardonius dead to the ground. His guards fell in multitudes around his body. The other Persians, worn out with the [Pg 172] hopeless effort to break the Spartan phalanx, and losing heart at the death of their general, turned and fled to their fortified camp. At the same time the Theban allies of Persia, whom the Athenians had been fighting, gave ground, and began a retreat, which was not ended till they reached the walls of Thebes.

On rushed the victorious Spartans to the Persian camp, which they at once assailed. Here they had no success till the Athenians came to their aid, when the walls were stormed and the defenders slain in such hosts that, if we can believe Herodotus, only three thousand out of the three hundred thousand of the army of Mardonius remained alive. It is true that one body of forty thousand men, under Artabazus, had been too late on the field to take part in the fight. The Persians were already defeated when these troops came in sight, and they turned and marched away for the Hellespont, leaving the defeated host to shift for itself. Of the Greeks, Plutarch tells us that the total loss in the battle was thirteen hundred and sixty men.

The spoil found in the Persian camp was rich and varied. It included money and ornaments of gold and silver, carpets, splendid arms and clothing, horses, camels, and other valuable materials. This was divided among the victors, a tenth of the golden spoil being reserved for the Delphian shrine, and wrought into a golden tripod, which was placed on a column formed of three twisted bronze serpents. This defeat was the salvation of Greece. No Persian army ever again set foot on European soil. And, by a striking coincidence, on the same day that the battle of [Pg 173] Platæa was fought, the Grecian fleet won a brilliant victory at Mycale, in Asia Minor, and freed the Ionian cities from Persian rule. In Greece, Thebes was punished for aiding the Persians. Byzantium (now Constantinople) was captured by Pausanias, and the great cables of the bridge of Xerxes were brought home in triumph by the Greeks.

We have but one more incident to tell. The war tent of Xerxes had been left to Mardonius, and on taking the Persian camp Pausanias saw it with its colored hangings and its gold and silver adornments, and gave orders to the cooks that they should prepare him such a feast as they were used to do for their lord. On seeing the splendid banquet, he ordered that a Spartan supper should be prepared. With a hearty laugh at the contrast he said to the Greek leaders, for whom he had sent, "Behold, O Greeks, the folly of this Median captain, who, when he enjoyed such fare as this, must needs come here to rob us of our penury."

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FOUR FAMOUS MEN OF ATHENS.

In the days of Crœsus, the wealthiest of ancient kings, a citizen of Athens, Alkmæon by name, kindly lent his aid to the messengers sent by the Lydian monarch to consult the Delphian oracle, before his war with King Cyrus of Persia, This generous aid was richly rewarded by Crœsus, who sent for Alkmæon to visit him at Sardis, richly entertained him, and when ready to depart made him a present of as much gold as he could carry from the treasury.

This offer the visitor, who seemed to possess his fair share of the perennial thirst for gold, determined to make the most of. He went to the treasure-chamber dressed in his loosest tunic and wearing on his feet wide-legged buskins, both of which he filled bursting full with gold. Not yet satisfied, he powdered his hair thickly with gold-dust, and filled his mouth with this precious but indigestible food. Thus laden, he waddled as well as he could from the chamber, presenting so ludicrous a spectacle that the good-natured monarch burst into a loud laugh on seeing him.

Crœsus not only let him keep all he had taken, but doubled its value by other presents, so that [Pg 175] Alkmæon returned to Athens as one of its wealthiest men. Megacles, the son of this rich Athenian, was he who won the prize of fair Agaristé of Sicyon, in the contest which we have elsewhere described. The son of Megacles and Agaristé was named Cleisthenes, and it is he who comes first in the list of famous men whom we have here to describe.

It was Cleisthenes who made Attica a democratic state; and thus it came about. The laws of Solon—which favored the aristocracy—were set aside by despots before Solon died. After Hippias, the last of those despots, was expelled from the state, the people rose under the leadership of Cleisthenes, and, probably for the first time in the history of mankind, a government "of the people, for the people, and by the people" was established in a civilized state. The laws of Solon were abrogated, and a new code of laws formed by Cleisthenes, which lasted till the independence of Athens came to an end.

Before that time the clan system had prevailed in Greece. The people were divided into family groups, each of which claimed to be descended from a single ancestor,—often a supposed deity. These clans held all the power of the state; not only in the early days, when they formed the whole people, but later, when Athens became a prosperous city with many merchant ships, and when numerous strangers had come from afar to settle within its walls.

None of these strangers were given the rights of citizenship. The clans remained in power, and the new people had no voice in the government. But in time the strangers grew to be so numerous, rich, and important that their claim to equal rights could no longer be set aside. They [Pg 176] took part in the revolution by which the despots were expelled, and in the new constitution that was formed their demand to be made citizens of the state had to be granted.

Cleisthenes, the leader of the people against the aristocratic faction, made this new code of laws. By a system never before adopted he broke up the old conditions. Before that time the people were the basis on which governments were organized. He made the land the basis, and from that time to this land has continued the basis of political divisions.

Setting aside the old division of the Attic people into tribes and clans, founded on birth or descent, he separated the people into ten new tribes, founded on land. Attica was divided by him into districts or parishes, like modern townships and wards, which were called Demes, and each tribe was made up of several demes at a distance from each other. Every man became a citizen of the deme in which he lived, without regard to his clan, the new people were made citizens, and

thus every freeborn inhabitant of Attica gained full rights of suffrage and citizenship, and the old clan aristocracy was at an end. The clans kept up their ancient organization and religious ceremonies, but they lost their political control. It must be said here, however, that many of the people of Attica were slaves, and that the new commonwealth of freemen was very far from including the whole population.

One of the most curious of the new laws made by Cleisthenes was that known as "ostracism," by which any citizen who showed himself dangerous to the state could be banished for ten years if six thousand votes were cast against him. This was intended as a means of preventing the rise of future despots. [Pg 177]

The people of Athens developed wonderfully in public spirit under their new constitution. Each of them had now become the equal politically of the richest and noblest in the state, and all took a more vital interest in their country than had ever been felt before. It was this that made them so earnest and patriotic in the Persian war. The poorest citizen fought as bravely as the richest for the freedom of his beloved state.

Each tribe, under the new laws, chose its own war-leader, or general, so that there were ten generals of equal power, and in war each of these was given command of the army for a day; and one of the archons, or civil heads of the state, was made general of the state, or war archon, so that there were eleven generals in all.

The leading man in each tribe was usually chosen its general, and of these we have the stories of three to tell,—Miltiades, the hero of Marathon; Themistocles, who saved Greece at Salamis; and Aristides, known as "the Just."

We have already told how two of these men gained great glory. We have now to tell how they gained great disgrace. Ambition, the bane of the leaders of states, led them both to ruin.

Miltiades was of noble birth, and succeeded his uncle as ruler of the Chersonese country, in Thrace. Here he fell under the dominion of Persia, and here, when Darius was in Scythia, he advised that the bridge over the Danube should be destroyed. When Darius returned Miltiades had to fly for his life. He afterwards took part in the Ionic revolt, and captured from the Persians the islands of Lemnos and Imbros. But when the Ionians were once more conquered Miltiades had again to fly for his life. Darius hated him bitterly, and had given special orders for his capture. He fled with five ships, and was pursued so closely that one of them was taken. He reached Athens in safety with the rest. [Pg 178]

Not long afterwards Miltiades revenged himself on Darius for this pursuit by his great victory at Marathon, which for the time made him the idol of the state and the most admired man in all Greece.

But the glory of Miltiades was quickly followed by disgrace, and the end of his career was near at hand. He was of the true soldierly temperament, stirring, ambitious, not content to rest and rust, and as a result his credit with the fickle Athenians quickly disappeared. His head seems to have been turned by his success, and he soon after asked for a fleet of seventy ships of war, to be placed under his command. He did not say where he proposed to go, but stated only that whoever should come with him would be rewarded plentifully with gold.

The victor at Marathon had but to ask to obtain. The people put boundless confidence in him, and gave him the fleet without a question. And the golden prize promised brought him numbers of eager volunteers, not one of whom knew where he was going or what he was expected to do. Miltiades was in command, and where Miltiades chose to lead who could hesitate to follow? [Pg 179]

The purpose of the admiral of the fleet was soon revealed. He sailed to the island of Paros, besieged the capital, and demanded a tribute of one hundred talents. He based this claim on the pretence that the Parians had furnished a ship to the Persian fleet, but it is known that his real motive was hatred of a citizen of Paros.

As it happened, the Parians were not the sort of people to submit easily to a piratical demand. They kept their foe amused by cunning diplomacy till they had repaired the city walls, then openly defied him to do his worst. Miltiades at once began the assault, and kept it up for twenty-six days in vain. The island was ravaged, but the town stood intact. Despairing of winning by force, he next attempted to win by fraud. A woman of Paros promised to reveal to him a secret which would place the town in his power, and induced him to visit her at night in a temple to which only women were admitted. Miltiades accepted the offer, leaped over the outer fence, and approached the temple. But at that moment a panic of superstitious fear overcame him. Doubtless fancying that the deity of the temple would punish him terribly for this desecration, he ran away in the wildest terror, and sprang back over the fence in such haste that he badly sprained his thigh. In this state he was found and carried on board ship, and, the siege being raised, the fleet returned to Athens.

Here Miltiades found the late favor of the citizens changed to violent indignation, in which his recent followers took part. He was accused of deceiving the people, and of committing a crime against the state worthy of death. The dangerous condition of his wound prevented him from saying a word in his own defence. In truth, there was no defence to make; the utmost his friends could do was to recall his service at Marathon. No Athenian tribunal could adjudge to death, however great the offence, the conqueror of Lemnos and victor at Marathon. But neither could forgiveness be adjudged, and Miltiades was fined fifty talents, perhaps to repay the city the [Pg 180]

expense of fitting out the fleet.

This fine he did not live to pay. His wounded thigh mortified and he died, leaving his son Cimon to pay the penalty incurred through his ambition and personal grudge. Some writers say that he was put in prison and died there, but this is not probable, considering his disabled state.

Miltiades had belonged to the old order of things, being a born aristocrat, and for a time a despot. Themistocles and Aristides were children of the new state, democrats born, and reared to the new order of things. They were not the equals of Miltiades in birth, both being born of parents of no distinction. But, aside from this similarity, they differed essentially, alike in character and in their life records; Themistocles being aspiring and ambitious, Aristides, his political opponent, quiet and patriotic; the one considering most largely his own advancement, the other devoting his whole life to the good of his native city.

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Themistocles displayed his nature strongly while still a boy. Idleness and play were not to his taste, and no occasion was lost by him to improve his mind and develop his powers in oratory. He cared nothing for accomplishments, but gave ardent attention to the philosophy and learning of his day. "It is true I cannot play on a flute, or bring music from the lute," he afterwards said; "all I can do is, if a small and obscure city were put into my hands, to make it great and glorious."

THE ANCIENT ENTRANCE TO THE STADIUM, ATHENS.

Of commanding figure, handsome face, keen eyes, proud and erect posture, sprightly and intellectual aspect, he was one to attract attention in any community, while his developed powers of oratory gave him the greatest influence over the speech-loving Athenians. In his eagerness to win distinction and gain a high place in the state, he cared not what enemies he might make so that he won a strong party to his support. So great was his thirst for distinction that the victory of Miltiades at Marathon threw him into a state of great depression, in which he said, "The glory of Miltiades will not let me sleep."

Themistocles was not alone ambitious and declamatory. He was far-sighted as well; and through his power of foreseeing the future he was enabled to serve Athens even more signally than Miltiades had done. Many there were who said that there was no need to dread the Persians further, that the victory at Marathon would end the war. "It is only the beginning of the war," said Themistocles; "new and greater conflicts will come; if Athens is to be saved, it must prepare."

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We have elsewhere told how he induced the Athenians to build a fleet, and how this fleet, under his shrewd management, defeated the great flotilla of Xerxes and saved Greece from ruin and subjection. All that Themistocles did before and during this war it is not necessary to state. It will suffice here to say that he had no longer occasion to lose sleep on account of the glory of Miltiades. He had won a higher glory of his own; and in the end ambition ruined him, as it had his great predecessor.

To complete the tale of Themistocles we must take up that of another of the heroes of Greece, the Spartan Pausanias, the leader of the victorious army at Platæa. He, too, allowed ambition to destroy him. After taking the city of Byzantium, he fell in love with Oriental luxury and grew to despise the humble fare and rigid discipline of Sparta. He offered to bring all Greece under the domain of Persia if Xerxes would give him his daughter for wife, and displayed such pompous folly and extravagance that the Spartans ordered him home, where he was tried for treason, but not condemned.

He afterwards conspired with some of the states of Asia Minor, and when again brought home formed a plot with the Helots to overthrow the government. His treason was discovered, and he fled to a temple for safety, where he was kept till he starved to death.

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Thus ambition ended the careers of two of the heroes of the Persian war. A third, Themistocles, ended his career in similar disgrace. In fact, he grew so arrogant and unjust that the people of Athens found him unfit to live with. They suspected him also of joining with Pausanias in his

schemes. So they banished him by ostracism, and he went to Argos to live. While there it was proved that he really had taken part in the treason of Pausanias, and he was obliged to fly for his life.

The fugitive had many adventures in this flight. He was pursued by envoys from Athens, and made more than one narrow escape. While on shipboard he was driven by storm to the island of Naxos, then besieged by an Athenian fleet, and escaped only by promising a large reward to the captain if he would not land. Finally, after other adventures, he reached Susa, the capital of Persia, where he found that Xerxes was dead, and his son Artaxerxes was reigning in his stead.

He was well received by the new king, to whom he declared that he had been friendly to his father Xerxes, and that he proposed now to use his powers for the good of Persia. He formed schemes by which Persia might conquer Greece, and gained such favor with the new monarch that he gave him a Persian wife and rich presents, sent him to Magnesia, near the Ionian coast, and granted him the revenues of the surrounding district. Here Themistocles died, at the age of sixty-five, without having kept one of his alluring promises to the Persian king.

And thus, through greed and ambition, the three great leaders of Greece in the Persian war ended their careers in disgrace and death. We have now the story of a fourth great Athenian to tell, who through honor and virtue won a higher distinction than the others had gained through warlike fame. [Pg 184]

Throughout the whole career of the brilliant Themistocles he had a persistent opponent, Aristides, a man, like him, born of undistinguished parents, but who by moral strength and innate power of intellect won the esteem and admiration of his fellow-citizens. He became the leader of the aristocratic section of the people, as Themistocles did of the democratic, and for years the city was divided between their adherents. But the brilliancy of Themistocles was replaced in Aristides by a staid and quiet disposition. He was natively austere, taciturn, and deep-revolving, winning influence by silent methods, and retaining it by the strictest honor and justice and a hatred of all forms of falsehood or political deceit.

For years these two men divided the political power of Athens between them, until in the end Aristides said that the city would have no peace until it threw the pair of them into the pit kept for condemned criminals. So just was Aristides that, on one of his enemies being condemned by the court without a hearing, he rose in his seat and begged the court not to impose sentence without giving the accused an opportunity for defence.

Aristides was one of the generals at Marathon, and was left to guard the spoils on the field of battle after the defeat of the Persians. At a later date, by dint of false reports, Themistocles succeeded in having him ostracized, obtaining the votes of the rabble against him. One of these, not knowing Aristides, asked him to write his own name on the tile used as a voting tablet. He did so, but first inquired, "Has Aristides done you an injury?" "No," was the answer; "I do not even know him, but I am tired of hearing him always called 'Aristides the Just.'" On leaving the city Aristides prayed that the people should never have any occasion to regret their action. [Pg 185]

This occasion quickly came. In less than three years he was recalled to aid his country in the Persian invasion. Landing at Salamis, he served Athens in the manner we have already told. The command of the army which Aristides surrendered to Miltiades at the battle of Marathon fell to himself in the battle of Platæa, for on that great day he led the Athenians and played an important part in the victory that followed. He commanded the Athenian forces in a later war, and by his prudence and mildness won for Athens the supremacy in the Greek confederation that was afterwards formed.

At a later date, leader of the aristocrats as he was, to avert a revolution he proposed a change in the constitution that made Athens completely democratic, and enabled the lowliest citizen to rise to the highest office of the state. In 468 B.C. died this great and noble citizen of Athens, one of the most illustrious of ancient statesmen and patriots, and one of the most virtuous public men of any age or nation. He died so poor that it is said he did not leave enough money to pay his funeral expenses, and for several generations his descendants were kept at the charge of the state.

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HOW ATHENS ROSE FROM ITS ASHES.

THE torch of Xerxes and Mardonius left Athens a heap of ashes. But, like the new birth of the fabled phœnix, there rose out of these ashes a city that became the wonder of the world, and whose time-worn ruins are still worshipped by the pilgrims of art. We cannot proceed with our work without pausing awhile to contemplate this remarkable spectacle.

The old Athens bore to the new much the same relation that the chrysalis bears to the butterfly. It was little more than an ordinary country town, the capital of a district comparable in

size to a modern county. Pisistratus and his sons had built some temples, and had completed a part of the Dionysiac theatre, but the city itself was simply a cluster of villages surrounded by a wall; while the citadel had for defence nothing stronger than a wooden rampart. The giving of this city to the torch was no serious loss; in reality it was a gain, since it cleared the ground for the far nobler city of later days.

It is not often that a whole nation removes from its home, and its possessions are completely swept away. But such had been the case with the Attic state. For a time all Attica was afloat, the people of city and country alike taking to their ships; while a locust flight of Persians passed over [Pg 187] their lands, ravaging and destroying all before them, and leaving nothing but the bare soil. Such was what remained to the people of Attica on their return from Salamis and the adjacent isles.

Athens lay before them a heap of ashes and ruin, its walls flung down, its dwellings vanished, its gardens destroyed, its temples burned. The city itself, and the citadel and sacred structures of its Acropolis, were swept away, and the business of life on that ravaged soil had to be begun afresh.

Yet Attica as a state was greater than ever before. It was a victor on land and sea, the recognized savior of Greece; and the people of Athens returned to the ashes of their city not in woe and dismay, but in pride and exultation. They were victors over the greatest empire then on the face of the earth, the admired of the nations, the leading power in Greece, and their small loss weighed but lightly against their great glory.

The Athens that rose in place of the old city was a marvel of beauty and art, adorned with hall and temple, court and gymnasium, colonnade and theatre, while under the active labors of its sculptors it became so filled with marble inmates that they almost equalled in numbers its living inhabitants. Such sculptors as Phidias and such painters as Zeuxis adorned the city with the noblest products of their art. The great theatre of Dionysus was completed, and to it was added a new one, called the Odeon, for musical and poetical representations. On the Acropolis rose the Parthenon, the splendid temple to Minerva, or Athené, the patron goddess of the city, whose [Pg 188] ruins are still the greatest marvel of architectural art. Other temples adorned the Acropolis, and the costly Propylæa, or portals, through which passed the solemn processions on festival days, were erected at the western side of the hill. The Acropolis was further adorned with three splendid statues of Minerva, all the work of Phidias, one of ivory in the Parthenon, forty-seven feet high, the others of bronze, one being of such colossal height that it could be seen from afar by mariners at sea.

The city itself was built upon a scale to correspond with this richness of architectural and artistic adornment, and such was its encouragement to the development of thought and art, that poets, artists, and philosophers flocked thither from all quarters, and for many years Athens stood before the world as the focal point of the human intellect.

Not the least remarkable feature in this great growth was the celerity with which it was achieved. The period between the Persian and the Peloponnesian war was only sixty years in duration. Yet in that brief space of time the great growth we have chronicled took place, and the architectural splendor of the city was consummated. The devastation of the unhappy Peloponnesian war put an end to this external growth, and left the Athens of old frozen into marble, a thing of beauty forever. But the intellectual growth went on, and for centuries afterwards Athens continued the centre of ancient thought.

And now the question in point is how all this came about, and what made Athens great and glorious among the cities of Greece. It all flowed naturally from her eminence in the Persian war. [Pg 189] During that war there had been a league of the states of Greece, with Sparta as its accepted leader. After the war the need of being on the alert against Persia continued, and Greece became in great part divided into two leagues,—one composed of Sparta and most of the Peloponnesian states, the other of Athens, the islands of the archipelago, and many of the towns of Asia Minor and Thrace. This latter was called the League of Delos, since its deputies met and its treasure was kept in the temple of Apollo on that island.

This League of Delos developed in time to what has been called the Athenian Empire, and in this manner. Each city of the league pledged itself to make an annual contribution of a certain number of ships or a fixed sum of money, to be used in war against Persia or for the defence of members of the league. The amount assessed against each was fixed by Aristides, in whose justice every one trusted. In time the money payment was considered preferable to that of ships, and most of the states of the league contributed money, leaving Athens to provide the fleet.

In this way all the power fell into the hands of Athens, and the other cities of the league became virtually payers of tribute. This was shown later on when some of the island cities declined to pay. Athens sent a fleet, made conquest of the islands, and reduced them to the state of real tribute payers. Thus the league began to change into an Athenian dominion.

In 459 B.C. the treasure was removed from Delos to Athens. And in the end Chios, Samoa, and [Pg 190] Lesbos were the only free allies of Athens. All the other members of the league had been reduced to subjection. Several of the states of Greece also became subject to Athens, and the Athenian Empire grew into a wealthy, powerful, and extended state.

A REUNION AT THE HOUSE OF ASPASIA.

The treasure laid up at Athens in time became great. The payments amounted to about six hundred talents yearly, and at one time the treasury of Athens held the great sum of nine thousand seven hundred talents, equal to over eleven million dollars,—a sum which meant far more then than the equivalent amount would now.

It was this money that made Athens great. It proved to be more than was necessary for defensive war against Persia, or even for the aggressive war which was carried on in Asia Minor and Egypt. It also more than sufficed for sending out the colonies which Athens founded in Italy and elsewhere. The remainder of the fund was used in Athens, part of it in building great structures and in producing splendid works of art, part for purposes of fortification. The Piræus, the port of Athens, was surrounded by strong walls, and a double wall—the famous "Long Walls"—was constructed from the city to the port, a distance of four miles. These walls, some two hundred yards apart, left a grand highway between, the channel of a steady traffic which flowed from the sea to the city, and which for years enabled Athens to defy the cutting off its resources by attack from without. Through this broad avenue not only provisions and merchandise, but men in multitudes, made their way into Athens, until that city became fuller of bustle, energy, political and scholarly activity, and incessant industry than any of the other cities of the ancient world. [Pg 191]

In a city like this, free and equal as were its citizens, and democratic as were its institutions, some men were sure to rise to the surface and gain controlling influence. In the period in question there were two such men, Cimon and Pericles, men of such eminence that we cannot pass them by unconsidered. Cimon was the son of Miltiades, the hero of Marathon, and became the leader of aristocratic Athens. Pericles was the great-grandson of Cleisthenes, the democratic law-giver, and, though of the most aristocratic descent, became the leader of the popular party of his native city.

The struggle for precedence between these two men resembled that between Themistocles and Aristides. Cimon was a strong advocate of an alliance with Sparta, which Pericles opposed. He was brilliant as a soldier, gained important victories against Persia, but was finally ostracized as a result of his friendship for Sparta. He came back to Athens afterwards, but his influence could not be regained.

It is, however, of Pericles that we desire particularly to speak,—Pericles, who found Athens poor and made her magnificent, found her weak and made her glorious. This celebrated statesman had not the dashing qualities of his rival. He was by nature quiet but deep, serene but profound, the most eloquent orator of his day, and one of the most learned and able of men. He was dignified and composed in manner, possessed of a self-possession which no interruption could destroy, and gifted with a luminous intelligence that gave him a controlling influence over the thoughtful and critical Athenians of his day. [Pg 192]

Pericles was too wise and shrewd to keep himself constantly before the people, or to haunt the assembly. He sedulously remained in the background until he had something of importance to say, but he then delivered his message with a skill, force, and animation that carried all his hearers irresistibly away. His logic, wit, and sarcasm, his clear voice, flashing eyes, and vigorous power of declamation, used only when the occasion was important, gave him in time almost absolute control in Athens, and had he sought to make himself a despot he might have done so with a word; but happily he was honest and patriotic enough to content himself with being the First Citizen of the State.

To make the people happy, and to keep Athens in a condition of serene content, seem to have been leading aims with Pericles. He entertained them with quickly succeeding theatrical and other entertainments, solemn banquets, splendid shows and processions, and everything likely to add to their enjoyment. Every year he sent out eighty galleys on a six months' cruise, filled with

citizens who were to learn the art of maritime war, and who were paid for their services. The citizens were likewise paid for attending the public assembly, and allowances were made them for the time given to theatrical representations, so that it has been said that Pericles converted the sober and thrifty Athenians into an idle, pleasure-loving, and extravagant populace. At the same time, that things might be kept quiet in Athens, the discontented overflow of the people were sent out as colonists, to build up daughter cities of Attica in many distant lands.

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Thus it was that Athens developed from the quiet country town of the old régime into the wealthiest, gayest, and most progressive of Grecian cities, the capital of an empire, the centre of a great commerce, and the home of a busy and thronging populace, among whom the ablest artists, poets, and philosophers of that age of the world were included. Here gathered the great writers of tragedy, beginning with Æschylus, whose noble works were performed at the expense of the state in the great open-air theatre of Dionysus. Here the comedians, the chief of whom was Aristophanes, moved hosts of spectators to inextinguishable laughter. Here the choicest lyric poets of Greece awoke admiration with their unequalled songs, at their head the noble Pindar, the laureate of the Olympic and Pythian games. Here the sophists and philosophers argued and lectured, and Socrates walked like a king at the head of the aristocracy of thought. Here the sculptors, headed by Phidias, filled temples, porticos, colonnades, and public places with the most exquisite creations in marble, and the painters with their marvellous reproductions of nature. Here, indeed, seemed gathered all that was best and worthiest in art, entertainment, and thought, and for half a century and more Athens remained a city without a rival in the history of the world.

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THE PLAGUE AT ATHENS.

During the period after the Persian war two great powers arose in Greece, which were destined to come into close and virulent conflict. These were the league of Delos, which developed into the empire of Athens, and the Peloponnesian confederacy, under the leadership of Sparta. The first of these was mainly an island empire, the second a mainland league; the first a group of democratic, the second one of aristocratic, states; the first a power with dominion over the seas, the second a power whose strength lay in its army. Such were the two rival confederacies into which Greece gradually divided, and between which hostile sentiment grew stronger year after year.

It became apparent as the years went on that a struggle was coming for supremacy in Greece. Outbreaks of active hostility between the rival powers from time to time took place. At length the situation grew so strained that a general conflict began, that devastating Peloponnesian war which for nearly thirty years desolated Greece, and which ended in the ruin of Athens, the home of poetry and art, and the supremacy of Sparta, the native school of war. The first great conflict of the Hellenic people, the Persian war, had made Greece powerful and glorious. The second great conflict, the Peloponnesian war, brought Greece to the verge of ruin, and destroyed that Athenian supremacy in which lay the true path of progress for that fair land.

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In 431 B.C. the war broke out. Sparta and her allies declared war against Athens on the ground that that city was growing too great and grasping, and an army marched from the Peloponnesus northward to invade the Attic state. Meanwhile the Athenians, under the shrewd advice of Pericles, adopted a wise policy. It was with her fleet that Athens had defeated Persia, and her wise statesman advised that she should devote herself to the dominion of the sea, and leave to Sparta that of the land. Their walls would protect her people, their ships would bring them food from afar, they were not a fair match for Sparta on land, and could safely leave to that city of warriors the temporary dominion of Attic soil.

This advice was taken. When the Spartan army came near Attica all its people left their fields and homes and sought refuge, as once before, within the walls of their capacious capital city. Over the Attic plain marched the invaders, destroying the summer crops, burning the farmers' homesteads, yet recoiling in helpless rage before those strong walls behind which lay the whole population of the state. From the city, as we know, long and high walls stretched away to the sea and invested the seaport town of Piræus, within whose harbor lay the powerful Athenian fleet. And in the treasury of the city rested an abundant supply of money,—the sinews of war,—with whose aid food and supplies could be brought from over the seas. In vain, then, did Sparta ravage the fields of Attica. The people of that desolated realm defied them from behind their city walls.

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When winter came the invaders retired and the farmers went back to their fields. In the spring they ploughed and sowed as of yore, and watched in hope the growing crops. But with the summer the Spartans came again, to destroy their hopes of a harvest, and the country people once more fled for safety to their great city's defiant walls.

It was a strange spectacle, that of a powerful invading army wreaking their wrath year after year on deserted fields, and gnashing their teeth in impotent rage before lofty and well-defended walls and ramparts, behind which lay their foes, little the worse for all that their malice could

perform.

Athens felt secure, and laughed her enemy to scorn. Unhappily for her, a new enemy was at hand, against whom the mightiest walls were of no avail. Sparta gained an unthought-of ally, and death stalked at large in the Athenian streets, silent and implacable, without clash of weapon or shout of war, yet more fatal and merciless than would have been the strongest army in the field.

Athens was crowded. The country people filled all available space. There was little attention to drainage or sanitary regulations. An open invitation was given to pestilence, and the invited enemy came. For some years before the plague had been at its deadly work in Egypt and Libya, [Pg 197] and in parts of Persian Asia. Then it made its appearance in some of the Grecian islands. Finally its wings of destruction were folded over Athens, and it settled down in terrific form upon that devoted city.

The seeds of death found there fertile soil. Families were crowded together in close cabins and temporary shelters, to which they had been driven in multitudes from their ravaged fields. The plague first appeared in mid-April in the Piræus,—brought, perhaps, by merchant-ships,—but soon spread to Athens, and as the heat of summer came on the inhabitants of that thronged city fell victims to it in appalling multitudes.

The plague, they called it. The disease seems to have been something like the small-pox, though not quite the same. Its victims were seized suddenly, suffered the greatest agonies, and most of them died on the seventh or the ninth day. Even when the patients recovered, some had lost their memory, others the use of their eyes, hands, feet, or some other member of the body. No remedy could be found. The physicians died as rapidly as their patients. As for the charms and incantations which many used, we can scarcely imagine that they saved any lives. Some said that their enemies had poisoned the water-cisterns, others that the gods were angry, and vain processions were made to the temples, to implore the mercy of the deities.

When nothing availed to stay the pestilence, Athens fell into deep despondency and despair. The sick lost courage, and lay down inertly to await death. Those who waited on the sick were [Pg 198] themselves stricken down, and so great grew the terror that the patients were deserted and left to die alone. Fortunately the disease rarely attacked any one twice, and those who had been sick and recovered became the only nurses of the new victims of the disease.

So dread became the pestilence that the dead and the dying lay everywhere, in houses and streets, and even in the temples; half-dead sufferers gathered around the springs, tortured by violent thirst; the very dogs that meddled with the corpses died of the disease; vultures and other carrion birds avoided the city as if by instinct. Many bodies were burnt or buried with unseemly haste, many doubtless left to fester where they lay. Misery, terror, despair, overwhelmed all within the walls, while the foe without drew back in equal terror, lest the pestilence should leap the walls and assail them in their camps.

Nor have we yet told all. Other evils followed that of the plague. Law was forgotten, morality ignored. Men hesitated not at crime or the indulgence of evil passions, having no fear of punishment. Many gave themselves up to riot and luxurious living, with the hope of snatching an interval of enjoyment before yielding to death. The story we here tell is no new one. It has been realized again and again in the flight of the centuries, when pestilence has made its home in some crowded city. Human nature is everywhere the same, and the bonds of law and morality are loosened when death stalks abroad.

For two years this dread calamity continued to desolate Athens. Then, after a period of a year [Pg 199] and a half, it came again, and raged for another year as furiously as before. The losses were frightful. Of the armed men of the state nearly five thousand were swept away. Of the poorer people the loss was beyond computation. Nothing the human enemy was capable of could have done so much to ruin Athens as this frightful visitation, and to the end of the war that city felt its weakening effects.

But perhaps the greatest of the losses of Athens was the death of Pericles. In him Athens lost its wisest man and ablest statesman. The strong hand which had so long held the rudder of the state was gone, and the subsequent misfortunes of Athens were due more to the loss of this wise counsellor than to the efforts of her foes.

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THE ENVOYS OF LIFE AND DEATH.

Near the coast of Asia Minor lies the beautiful island of Lesbos, the birthplace of the poets Sappho, Alcæus, and Terpander, and of other famous writers and sages of the past. Here were green valleys and verdure-clad mountains, here charming rural scenes and richly-yielding fields, here all that seems necessary to make life serene and happy. But here also dwelt uneasy man, and hither came devastating war, bringing with it the shadow of a frightful tragedy from which

the people of Lesbos barely escaped.

Lesbos was one of the islands that entered into alliance with Athens, and formed part of the empire that arose from the league of Delos. In 428 B.C. this island, and its capital, Mitylene, revolted from Athens, and struck for the freedom they had formerly enjoyed. Mitylene had never become tributary to Athens. It was simply an ally; and it retained its fleet, its walls, and its government; its only obligations being those common to all members of the League.

Yet even these seemed to have been galling to the proud Mitylenians. Athens was then at war with Sparta. It seemed a good time to throw off all bonds, and the political leaders of the Lesbians declared themselves absolved from all allegiance to the league. [Pg 201]

The news greatly disturbed the Athenians. They had their hands full of war. But Mitylene had asked aid from Sparta, and unless brought under subjection to Athens it would become an ally of her enemy. No time was therefore to be lost. A fleet was sent in haste to the revolted city, hoping to take it by surprise. This failing, the city was blockaded by sea and land, and the siege kept up until starvation threatened the people within the walls. Until now hope of Spartan aid had been entertained. But the Spartans came not, the provisions were gone, death or surrender became inevitable, and the city was given up. About a thousand prisoners were sent to Athens, and Mitylene was held till the pleasure of its conquerors should be known.

This pleasure was a tragic one. The Athenians were deeply incensed against Mitylene, and full of thirst for revenge. Their anger was increased by the violent speeches of Cleon, a new political leader who had recently risen from among the ranks of trade, and whose virulent tongue gave him controlling influence over the Athenians at that period of public wrath. When the fate of Mitylene and its people was considered by the Athenian assembly this demagogue took the lead in the discussion, wrought the people up to the most violent passion by his acrimonious tongue, and proposed that the whole male population of the conquered city should be put to death, and the women and children sold as slaves. This frightful sentence was in accord with the feeling of [Pg 202] the assembly. They voted death to all Mitylenians old enough to bear arms, and a trireme was sent to Lesbos, bearing orders to the Athenian admiral to carry this tragical decision into effect.

Slaughter like this would to-day expose its authors to the universal execration of mankind. In those days it was not uncommon, and the quality of mercy was sadly wanting in the human heart. Yet such cruelty was hardly in accord with the advanced civilization of Athens, and when the members of the assembly descended to the streets, and their anger somewhat cooled, it began to appear to them that they had sent forth a decree of frightful cruelty. Even the captain and seamen of the trireme that was sent with the order to Mitylene left the port with heavy hearts, and would have gladly welcomed a recall. But the assembly of Athens was the ruling power and from its decision there was no appeal.

Though it was illegal, the friends of Mitylene called a fresh meeting of the assembly for the next day. In this they were supported by the people, whose feeling had quickly and greatly changed. Yet at this new meeting it appeared at first as if Cleon would again win a fatal verdict, so vigorously did he again seek to stir up the public wrath. Diodotus, his opponent, followed with a strong appeal for mercy, and while willing that the leaders of the revolt, who had been sent to Athens, should be put to death, argued strongly in favor of pardoning the rest. When at length the assembly voted, mercy prevailed, but by so small a majority that for a time the decision was in doubt.

And now came a vital question. The trireme bearing the fatal order had left port twenty-four [Pg 203] hours before. It was now far at sea, carrying its message of cold-blooded slaughter. Could it possibly be overtaken and the message of mercy made to fly more swiftly across the sea than that of death? As may well be imagined, no time was lost. A second trireme was got ready with all haste, and amply provisioned by the envoys from Mitylene then in Athens, those envoys promising large rewards to the crew if they should arrive in time.

The offers of reward were not needed. The seamen were as eager as those of the former trireme had been despondent. Across the sea rushed the trireme, with such speed as trireme never made before nor since. By good fortune the sea was calm; no storm arose to thwart the rowers' good intent; not for an instant were their oars relaxed; they took turns for short intervals of rest, while barley meal, steeped in wine and oil, was served to them for refreshment upon their seats.

Yet they strove against fearful odds. A start of twenty-four hours, upon so brief a journey, was almost fatal. Fortunately, the rowers of the first trireme had no spirit for their work. They were as slow and dilatory as the others were eager and persistent. And thus time moved slowly on, and the fate of Mitylene hung desperately in the balance. An hour more or less in this vital journey would make or mar a frightful episode in the history of mankind.

Fortune proved to be on the side of mercy. The envoys of life were in time; but barely in time. [Pg 204] Those who bore the message of death had reached port and placed their dread order in the hands of the Athenian commander, and he was already taking steps for the fearful massacre, when the second trireme dashed into the waters of that island harbor, and the cheers of exultation of its rowers met the ears of the imperilled populace.

So near was Mitylene to destruction that the breaking of an oar would have been enough to doom six thousand men to death. So near as this was Athens to winning the execration of mankind, by the perpetration of an enormity which barbarians might safely have performed, but

for which Athens could never have been forgiven. The thousand prisoners sent to Athens—the leading spirits of the revolt—were, it is true, put to death, but this merciless cruelty, as it would be deemed to-day, has been condoned in view of the far greater slaughter of the innocent from which Athens so narrowly escaped.

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THE DEFENCE OF PLATÆA.

At the foot of Mount Cithæron, one of the most beautiful of the mountains of Greece, winds the small river Asopus, and between, on a slope of the mountain, may to-day be seen the ruins of Platæa, one of the most memorable of the cities of ancient Greece. This city had its day of glory and its day of woe. Here, in the year 479 B.C., was fought that famous battle which drove the Persians forever from Greece. And here Pausanias declared that the territory on which the battle was fought should forever be sacred ground to all of Grecian birth. Forever is seldom a very long period in human history. In this case it lasted just fifty years.

War had broken out between Sparta and its allies and Athens and its dominion, and all Greece was in turmoil. Of the two leading cities of Bœotia, Thebes was an ally of the Lacedæmonians, Platæa of the Athenians. The war broke out by an attack of the Thebans upon Platæa. Two years afterwards, in the year 429 B.C., Archidamus, the Spartan king, led his whole force against this ally of Athens. In his army marched the Thebans, men of a city but two hours' journey from Platæa, and citizens of the same state, yet its bitterest foes. The Platæans were summoned to surrender, to consent to remain neutral, or to leave their city and go where they would; all of [Pg 206] which alternatives they declined. Thereupon the Spartan force invested the city, and prepared to take it by dint of arms. And thus Sparta kept the pledge of Platæan sacredness made by her king Pausanias half a century before.

Platæa was a small place, probably not very strongly fortified, and contained a garrison of only four hundred and eighty men, of whom eighty were Athenians. Fortunately, all the women and children had been sent to Athens, the only women remaining in the town being about a hundred slaves, who served as cooks. Around this small place gathered the entire army of Sparta and her allies, a force against which it seemed as if the few defenders could not hold out a week. But these faithful few were brave and resolute, and for a year and more they defied every effort of their foes.

The story of this siege is of interest as showing how the ancients assailed a fortified town. Defences which in our times would not stand a day, in those times took months and years to overcome. The army of Sparta, defied by the brave garrison, at first took steps to enclose the town. If the defenders would not let them in, they would not let the defenders out. They laid waste the cultivated land, cut down the fruit-trees, and used these to build a strong palisade around the entire city, with the determination that not a Platæan should escape. This done, they began to erect a great mound of wood, stones, and earth against the city wall, forming an inclined plane up which they proposed to rush and take the city by assault. The sides of this [Pg 207] mound were enclosed by cross-beams of wood, so as to hold its materials in place.

For seventy days and nights the whole army worked busily at this sloping mound, and at the end of this time it had reached nearly the height of the wall. But the Platæans had not been idle while their foes were thus at work. They raised the height of their old wall at this point by an additional wall of wood, backed up by brickwork, which they tore down houses to obtain. In front of this they suspended hides, so as to prevent fire-bearing arrows from setting the wood on fire. Then they made a hole through the lower part of the town wall, and through it pulled the earth from the bottom of the mound, so that the top fell in.

The besiegers now let down quantities of stiff clay rolled up in wattled reeds, which could not be thus pulled away. Yet their mound continued to sink, in spite of the new materials they heaped on top, and they could not tell why. In fact, the Platæans had dug an underground passage from within the town, and through this carried away the foundations of the mound. And thus for more than two months the besiegers built and the garrison destroyed their works.

Not content with this, the Platæans built a new portion of wall within the town, joining the old wall on both sides of the mound, so that if the besiegers should complete their mound and rush up it in assault, they would find a new wall staring them in the face, and all their labor lost.

This was not all that was done. Battering engines were used against the walls to break them [Pg 208] down. These the defenders caught by long ropes, pulling the heads of the engines upward or sideways. They also fixed heavy wooden beams in such a manner that when the head of an engine came near the wall they could drop a beam suddenly upon it, and break off its projecting beak.

In these rude ways the attack and defence went on, until three months had passed, and Archidamus and his army found themselves where they had begun, and the garrison still safe and defiant. The besiegers next tried to destroy the town by fire. From the top of the mound they

hurled fagots as far as they could within the walls. They then threw in pitch and other quick-burning material, and finally set the whole on fire. In a brief time the flames burst out hotly, and burnt with so fierce a conflagration that the whole town was in imminent danger of destruction. Nothing could have saved it had the wind favored the flames. There is a story also that a thunder-storm came up to extinguish the fire,—but such opportune rains seem somewhat too common in ancient history. As it was, part of the town was destroyed, but the most of it remained, and the brave inmates continued defiant of their foes.

Archidamus was almost in despair. Was this small town, with its few hundred men, to defy and defeat his large army? He had tried the various ancient ways of attack in vain. The Spartans, with all their prowess in the field, lacked skill in the assault of walled towns, and were rarely successful in the art of siege. The Platæans had proved more than their match, and there only remained to be tried the wearisome and costly process of blockade and famine. [Pg 209]

Determined that Platæa should not escape, this plan was in the end adopted, and a wall built round the entire city, to prevent escape or the entrance of aid from without. In fact, two walls were built, sixteen feet apart, and these were covered in on top, so that they looked like one very thick wall. There were also two ditches, from which the bricks of the wall had been dug, one on the inside, and one without to prevent relief by a foreign force. The covered space within the walls served as quarters for the troops left on guard, its top as a convenient place for sentry duty. This done, the main army marched away. It needed no great host to keep the few Platæans within their walls until they should consume all their food and yield to famine, a slower but more irresistible foe than all the Lacedæmonian power.

Fortunately for the besieged, they were well provisioned, and for more than a year remained in peace within their city, not attacked by their foes and receiving no aid from friends. Besides the eighty Athenians within the walls no help came to the Platæans during the long siege. At length provisions began to fail. It was evident that they must die like rats in a cage, surrender to their foes, or make a desperate break for freedom.

The last expedient was proposed by their general. It was daring, and seemed desperate, to seek to escape over the blockading wall with its armed guards. So desperate did it appear that half the garrison feared to attempt it, deeming that it would end in certain death. The other half, more than two hundred in number, decided that it was better to dare death in the field than to meet death in the streets. [Pg 210]

The wall was furnished with frequent battlements and occasional towers, and its whole circuit was kept under watch day and night. But as time went on the besiegers grew more lax in discipline, and on wet nights sought the shelter of the towers, leaving the spaces between without guards. This left a chance for escape which the Platæans determined to embrace.

By counting the layers of bricks in the blockading wall they were able to estimate its height, and prepared ladders long enough to reach its top. Then they waited for a suitable time. At length it came, a cold, dark, stormy December night, with a roaring wind, and showers of rain and sleet.

The shivering guards cowered within their sheltering towers. Out from their gates marched the Platæans, lightly armed, and, to avoid any sound, with the right foot naked. The left was shod, that it might have firmer hold on the muddy ground. Moving with the wind in their faces, and so far apart that their arms could not strike and clatter, they reached and crossed the ditch and lifted their ladders against the wall. Eleven men, armed only with sword and breastplate, mounted first. Others bearing spears followed, leaving their shields for their comrades below to carry up and hand to them. This first company was to attack and master the two towers right and left. This they did, surprising and slaying the guards without the alarm having spread. Then the others rapidly mounted the wall. [Pg 211]

At this critical moment one of them struck a loose tile with his foot and sent it clattering down the wall. This unlucky accident gave the alarm. In an instant shouts came from the towers, and the garrison below sprang to arms and hurried to the top of the wall. But they knew not where to seek the foe, and their perplexity was increased by the garrison within the city, which made a false attack on the other side.

Not knowing what to do or where to go, the blockaders remained at their posts, except a body of three hundred men, who were kept in readiness to patrol the outside of the outer ditch. Fire-signals were raised to warn their allies in Thebes, but the garrison in the town also kindled fire-signals so as to destroy the meaning of those of the besiegers.

Meanwhile the escaping warriors were actively engaged. Some held with spear and javelin the towers they had captured. Others drew up the ladders and planted them against the outer wall. Then down the ladders they hurried, waded across the outer ditch, and reached level ground beyond. Each man, as he gained this space, stood ready with his weapons to repel assault from without. When all the others were down, the men who had held the towers fled to the ladders and safely descended.

The outer ditch was nearly full of water from the rain and covered with thin ice. Yet they scrambled through it, and when the three hundred of the outer guard approached with torches, they suddenly found themselves assailed with arrows and javelins from a foe invisible in the darkness. They were thus kept back till the last Platæan had crossed the ditch, when the bold fugitives marched speedily away, leaving but one of their number a prisoner in the hands of the [Pg 212]

foe.

They first marched towards Thebes, while their pursuers took the opposite direction. Then they turned, struck eastward, entered the mountains, and finally—two hundred and twelve in number—made their way safely to Athens, to tell their families and allies the thrilling story of their escape.

A few who lost heart returned from the inner wall to the town, and told those within that the whole band had perished. The truth was only learned within the town when on the next morning a herald was sent out to solicit a truce for burial of the dead bodies. The herald brought back the glad tidings that there were no dead to bury, that the whole bold band had escaped.

Happy had it been for the remaining garrison had they also fled, even at the risk of death. With the provisions left they held out till the next summer, when they were forced to yield. In the end, after the form of a trial, they were all slaughtered by their foes, and the city itself was razed to the ground by its Theban enemies, only the Heræum, or temple of Here, being left. Such was the fate of a city to which eternal sacredness had been pledged.

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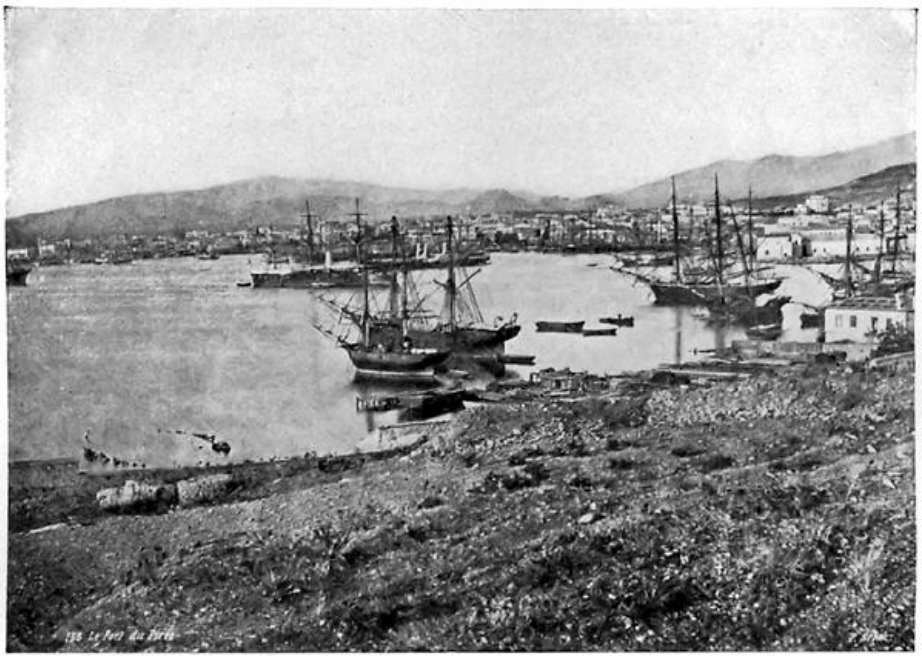
HOW THE LONG WALLS WENT DOWN.

THE retreat of the Persians from Athens left that city without a wall or a home. On the return of the Athenians, and the rebuilding of their ruined homes, a new wall became a necessity, and, under the wise advice of Themistocles, the citizens determined that the new wall should be much larger in circuit than the old,—wide enough to hold all Attica in case of war.



PIRÆUS, THE PORT OF ATHENS.

But no sooner was this begun than a protest arose from rival states. The Spartans in particular raised such a clamor on the subject that Themistocles went to that city and denied that he was fortifying Athens. If they did not believe him, they might send there and see. They did so, and the Spartan ambassadors, on arriving there, found the walls completed and themselves held as hostages for the safe return of Themistocles. Not only Athens was thus fortified, but a still stronger wall was built around Piræus, the port, four miles away.

Years afterwards, when Athens was in a position to defy the protest of Sparta, her famous Long Walls were built, extending from the city to the port, and forming a great artery through which the food and products brought in ships from distant lands could flow to the city from the sea, in defiance of foes. These walls it was that enabled Athens to survive and flourish when all the soil of Attica lay in the hands of the Spartan enemy. But the time came when these walls were to fall, and Athens to lie helpless in the hands of her mortal foe.

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The Peloponnesian war was full of incident, victories and defeats, marches and countermarches, making and breaking of truces, loss of provinces and fleets, triumphs of one side and the other, and still the years rolled on, and neither party became supreme. Athens had its ill-advisers, who kept it at war when it could have won far more by concluding peace, and who induced it to forget the advice of Pericles and make war on land when its great strength lay in its

fleet.

Its great error, however, was an attempt at foreign conquest, when it had quite enough to occupy it at home. War broke out between Athens and Sicily, and a strong fleet was sent to blockade and seek to capture the city of Syracuse. This expedition fatally sapped the strength of the Athenian empire. Ships and men were supplied in profusion to take part in a series of military blunders, of which the last were irreparable. The fleet, with all on board, was finally blocked up in the harbor of Syracuse, defeated in battle, and forced to yield, while of forty thousand Athenian troops but a miserable remnant survived to end their lives as slaves in Syracusan quarries. It was a disaster such as Athens in its whole career had not endured, and whose consequences were inevitable. From that time on the supremacy of Athens was at an end.

[Pg 215] Yet for nine years more the war continued, with much the same succession of varying events as before. But during this period Sparta was learning an important lesson. If she would defeat Athens, she must learn how to win victories on sea as well as on land. After every defeat of a fleet she built and equipped another, and gradually grew stronger in ships, and her seamen more skilful and expert, until the old difference between Athenian and Spartan seamen ceased to exist. Persia also came to the aid of Sparta, supplied her with money, and enabled her to replace her lost ships with ever new ones, while the ship-building power of Athens declined.

In 405 B.C. the crisis came. Athens was forced to depend solely for subsistence on her fleet. That gone, all would be gone. In the autumn of that year she had a fleet of one hundred and eighty triremes in the Hellespont, in the close vicinity of a Spartan fleet of about the same force, under an able admiral named Lysander. Ægospotami, or Goat's River (a name of fatal sound to all later Athenians), was the station of the Athenian fleet. That of Sparta lay opposite, across the strait, nearly two miles away.

And now an interesting scene began. Every day the Athenian fleet crossed the strait and offered battle to the Spartans, daring them to come out from their sheltered position. And every day, when the Spartans had refused, it would go back to the opposite shore, where many of the men were permitted to land. Day by day this challenge was repeated, the Athenians growing [Pg 216] daily more confident and more careless, and the crews dispersing in search of food or amusement as soon as they reached the shore. Lysander, meanwhile, fox-like, was on the watch. A scout-ship followed the enemy daily. At length, on the fifth day, when the Athenian ships had anchored, and the sailors had, as usual, dispersed, the scout-ship hoisted a bright shield as a signal. In an instant the fleet of Lysander, which was all ready, dashed out of its harbor, and rowed with the utmost speed across the strait. The Athenian commanders, perceiving too late their mistake, did their utmost to recall the scattered crews, but in vain. The Spartan ships dashed in among those of Athens, found some of them entirely deserted, others nearly so, and wrought with such energy that of the whole fleet only twelve ships escaped. Nearly all the men ashore were also taken, while this great victory was won not only without the loss of a ship, but hardly of a man. The prisoners, three or four thousand in number, in the cruel manner of the time, were put to death.

This defeat, so disgraceful to the Athenian commanders, so complete and thorough, was a death-blow to the dominion of Athens. That city was left at the mercy of its foes. When news of the disaster reached the city, such a night of wailing and woe, of fear and misery, came upon the Athenians as few cities had ever before gone through. Their fleet gone, all was gone. On it depended their food. Their land-supplies had long been cut off. No corn-ships could now reach [Pg 217] them from the Euxine Sea, and few from other quarters. They might fight still, but the end was sure. The victor at Salamis would soon be a prisoner within her own walls.

Lysander was in no hurry to sail to Athens. That city could wait. He employed himself in visiting the islands and cities in alliance with or dependent upon Athens, and inducing them to ally themselves with Sparta. The Athenian garrisons were sent home. Lysander shrewdly calculated that the more men the walls of Athens held, the sooner must their food-supply be exhausted and the end come. At length, in November of 405 B.C., Lysander sailed with his fleet to Piræus and blockaded its harbor, while the land army of the Peloponnesus marched into Attica and encamped at the gates of Athens.

That great and proud city was now peopled with despair. The plague which had desolated it twenty-five years before now threatened to be succeeded by a still more fatal plague, that of famine. Yet pride and resolution remained. The walls had been strengthened; their defenders could hold out while any food was left; not until men actually began to die of hunger did they ask for peace.

The envoys sent to Sparta were refused a hearing. Athens wished to preserve her walls. Sparta sent word that there could be no peace until the Long Walls were levelled with the earth. These terms Athens proudly refused. Suffering and privation went on.

For three months longer the siege continued. Though famine dwelt within every house, and numbers died of starvation, the Athenians held out with heroic endurance, and refused to [Pg 218] surrender on humiliating terms. But there could be only one end. Where famine commands man must obey. Peace must be had at any price, or death would end all, and an envoy was sent out with power to make peace on any terms he could obtain.

It was pitiable that glorious Athens should be brought to this sad pass. She was so cordially hated by many of the states of Greece that they voted for her annihilation, demanding that the

entire population should be sold as slaves, and the city and the very name of Athens be utterly swept from the earth.

At this dread moment the greatest foe of Athens became almost her only friend. Sparta declared that she would never consent to such a fate for the city which had been the savior of Greece in the Persian war. In the end peace was offered on the following terms: The Long Walls and the defences of Piræus should be destroyed; the Athenians should give up all foreign possessions and confine themselves to Attica; they should surrender all their ships-of-war; they should admit all their exiles; they should become allies of Sparta, be friends of her friends and foes of her foes, and follow her leadership on sea and land.

When the envoy, bearing this ultimatum, returned to Athens, a pitiable spectacle met his eyes. A despairing crowd faced him with beseeching eyes, in terror lest he brought only a message of death or despair. Thousands there were who could not meet him, victims of the increasing famine. Peace at any price had become a valued boon. Nevertheless, when the terms were read [Pg 219] in the assembly, there were those there who would have refused them, and who preferred death by starvation to such disgrace. The great majority, however, voted to accept them, and word was sent to Lysander that Athens yielded to the inevitable.

And now into the harbor of the Piræus sailed the triumphant Lacedæmonian fleet, just twenty-seven years after the war had begun. With them came the Athenian exiles, some of whom had served with their city's foes. The ships building in the dock-yards were burned and the arsenals ruined, there being left to Athens only twelve ships-of-war. And then, amid the joyful shouts of the conquerors, to the music of flutes played by women and the sportive movements of dancers crowned with wreaths, the Long Walls of Athens began to fall.

The conquerors themselves lent a hand to this work at first, but its completion was left to the Athenians, who with sore hearts and bowed heads for many days worked at the demolition of what so long had been their city's strength and pride.

What followed may be briefly told. Athens had, some time before, fallen under the power of a Committee of Four Hundred, aristocrats who overthrew the constitution and reigned supreme until the people rose in their might and brought their despotism to an end. Now a new oligarchy, called "The Thirty," and mostly composed of the returned exiles, came into despotic power, and the ancient constitution was once more ignored.

The reign of The Thirty was one of blood, confiscation, and death. Supported by a Spartan [Pg 220] garrison, they tyrannized at their own cruel will, murdering, confiscating, exiling, until they converted Athens into a prototype of Paris during the French Revolution.

At length the saturnalia of crime came to an end. Even the enemies of Athens began to pity her sad state. Those who had been exiled by these new tyrants returned to Attica, and war between them and The Thirty began. In the end Sparta withdrew her support from the tyrants, those of them who had not perished fled, and after nearly a year of terrible anarchy the democracy of Athens was restored, and peace once more spread its wings over that frightfully afflicted city.

We may conclude this tale with an episode that took place eleven years after the Long Walls had fallen. As they had gone down to music, they rose to music again. In these eleven years despotic Sparta had lost many of her allies, and the Persians, who had become friends of Athens, now lent a fleet and supplied money to aid in rebuilding the walls. Some even of those who had danced for joy when the walls went down now gave their cheerful aid to raise them up again, so greatly had Spartan tyranny changed the tide of feeling. The completion of the walls was celebrated by a splendid sacrifice and festival banquet, and joy came back to Athens again. A new era had begun for the city, not one of dominion and empire, but one marked by some share of her old dignity and importance in Greece.

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SOCRATES AND ALCIBIADES.

During the period of the Peloponnesian war two men became strikingly prominent in Athens, a statesman and a philosopher, as unlike each other in character, appearance, aims, and methods as two persons could well be, yet the most intimate of friends, and long dividing between them the admiration of the Athenians. These were the historically famous Alcibiades and Socrates. Alcibiades was a leader in action, Socrates a leader in thought; thus they controlled the two great dominions of human affairs.

Of these two, Socrates was vastly the nobler and higher, Alcibiades much the more specious and popular. Democratic Athens was never long without its aristocratic leader. For many years it had been Pericles. It now became Alcibiades, a man whose career and character were much more like those of Themistocles of old than of the sedate and patriotic Pericles.

Alcibiades was the Adonis of Athens, noted for his beauty, the charm of his manner, his winning personality, qualities which made all men his willing captives. He was of high birth, great wealth, and luxurious and pleasure-loving disposition, yet with a remarkable power of accommodating himself to circumstances, and becoming all things to all men. While numbers of [Pg 222] high-born Athenians admired him for his extraordinary beauty of person, Socrates saw in him admirable qualities of mind, and loved him with a warm affection, which Alcibiades as warmly returned. The philosopher gained the greatest influence over his youthful friend, taught him to despise affectation and revere virtue, and did much to develop in him noble qualities of thought and aspiration.

Yet nature had made Alcibiades, and nature's work is hard to undo. He was a man of hasty impulse and violent temper, a man destitute of the spirit of patriotism, and in very great measure it was to this brilliant son of Athens that that city owed its lamentable fate.

No greater contrast could be imagined than was shown by these almost inseparable friends. Alcibiades was tall, shapely, remarkably handsome, fond of showy attire and luxurious surroundings, full of animal spirits, rapid and animated in speech, and aristocratic in sentiment; Socrates short, thick-set, remarkably ugly, careless in attire, destitute of all courtly graces, democratic in the highest degree, and despising-utterly those arts and aims, loves and luxuries, which appealed so strongly to the soul of his ardent friend. Yet the genius, the intellectual acuteness, the lofty aims, and wonderful conversational power of Socrates overcame all his natural defects, attracted Alcibiades irresistibly, and welded the two together in an intellectual sympathy that set aside all differences of form and character.

The philosopher and the politician owed to each other their lives. They served as soldiers [Pg 223] together at Potidæa, lodged in the same tent, and stood side by side in the ranks. Alcibiades was wounded in the battle, but was defended and rescued by his friend, who afterwards persuaded the generals to award to him the prize for valor. Later, at the battle of Delium, Alcibiades protected and saved Socrates. These personal services brought them into still closer relations, while their friendship was perhaps the stronger from their almost complete diversity of character.

Unluckily for Athens, Socrates was not able to instil strong principles of virtue into the mind of the versatile Alcibiades. This ardent pleasure lover was moved by ambition, desire of admiration, love of display, and fondness for luxurious living, and indulged in excesses that it was not easy for the more frugal citizens to forgive. He sent seven chariots to the Olympic Games, from which he carried off the first, second, and fourth prizes. He gave splendid shows, distributed money freely, and in spite of his wanton follies retained numbers of friends among the Athenian people.

It was to this engaging and ambitious politician that the ruinous Sicilian expedition was due. He persuaded the Athenians to engage in it, in spite of wiser advice, and was one of those placed in command. But the night before the fleet set sail a dreadful sacrilege took place. All the statues of the god Hermes in the city were mutilated by unknown parties,—an outrage which caused almost a panic among the superstitious people. Among those accused of this sacrilege was [Pg 224] Alcibiades. There was no evidence against him, and he was permitted to proceed. But after he had reached Sicily he was sent for to return, on a new charge of sacrilege. He refused to do so, fearing the schemes of his enemies, and, when told that the assembly had voted sentence of death against him, he said, bitterly, "I will make them feel that I *live*!"

He did so. To him Athens was indebted for the ruin of its costly expedition. He fled to Sparta and advised the Spartans to send to Syracuse the able general to whom the Athenians owed their fatal defeat. He also advised his new friends to seize and fortify a town in Attica. By this they cut off all the land supply of food from Athens, and did much to force the final submission of that city.

Alcibiades now put on a new guise. He affected to be enraptured with Spartan manners, cropped his hair, lived on black broth, exercised diligently, and by his fluent tongue made himself a favorite in that austere city. But at length, by an idle boast, he roused Spartan enmity, and had to fly again. Now he sought Asia Minor, became a friend of Tissaphernes, the Persian satrap, adopted the excesses of Persian luxury, and sought to break the alliance between Persia and Sparta, which he had before sustained.

Next, moved by a desire to see his old home, he offered the leading citizens of Athens to induce Tissaphernes to come to their aid, on the condition that he might be permitted to return. But he declared that he would not come while the democracy was in power, and it was by his [Pg 225] influence that the tyrannical Committee of Four Hundred was formed. Afterwards, falling out with these tyrants, Alcibiades turned democrat again, was made admiral of the fleet, and wrought the ruin of the oligarchy which he had raised to power.

And now this brilliant and fickle son of Athens worked as actively and ably for his native city as he had before sought her ruin. Under his command the fleet gained several important victories, and conquered Byzantium and other cities. The ruinous defeat at Ægospotami would not have occurred had the admiral of the fleet listened to his timely warning. After the fall of Athens, and during the tyranny of the Thirty, he retired to Asia Minor, where he was honorably received by the satrap Pharnabazus. And here the end came to his versatile career. One night the house in which he slept was surrounded by a body of armed men and set on fire. He rushed out, sword in hand, but a shower of darts and arrows quickly robbed him of life. Through whose enmity he died is not known. Thus perished, at less than fifty years of age, one of the most brilliant and able of all the Athenians,—one who, had he lived, would doubtless have added fresh and striking

chapters to the history of his native land, though whether to her advantage or injury cannot now be told.

The career of Socrates was wonderfully different from that of his brilliant but unprincipled friend. While Alcibiades was seeking to dazzle and control, Socrates was seeking to convince and improve mankind. A striking picture is given us of the physical qualities of this great moral [Pg 226] philosopher. His ugliness of face was matter of jest in Athens. He had the flat nose, thick lips, and prominent eyes of a satyr. Yet he was as strong as he was ugly. Few Athenians could equal him in endurance. While serving as a soldier, he was able to endure heat and cold, hunger and fatigue, in a manner that astonished his companions. He went barefoot in all weather, and wore the same clothing winter and summer. His diet was of the simplest, but in religious festivals, when all were expected to indulge, Socrates could drink more wine than any person present, without a sign of intoxication. Yet it was his constant aim to limit his wants and to avoid all excess.

To these qualities of body Socrates added the highest and noblest qualities of mind. Naturally he had a violent temper, but he held it under severe control, though he could not always avoid a display of anger under circumstances of great provocation. But his depth of thought, his remarkable powers of argument, his earnest desire for human amendment, his incessant moral lessons to the Athenians, place him in the very first rank of the teachers of mankind.

Socrates was of humble birth. He was born 469 B.C. and lived for seventy years. His father was a sculptor, and he followed the same profession. He married, and his wife Xanthippe has become famous for the acidity of her temper. There is little doubt that Socrates, whose life was spent in arguing and conversing, and who paid little attention to filling the larder, gave the poor [Pg 227] housewife abundant provocation. We know very little about the events of his life, except that he served as a soldier in three campaigns, that he strictly obeyed the laws, performed all his religious duties, and once, when acting as judge, refused, at the peril of his life, to perform an unjust action.

Of the daily life of Socrates we have graphic pictures, drawn by his friends and followers Xenophon and Plato. From morning to night he might be seen in the streets and public places, engaged in endless talk,—prattling, his enemies called it. In the early morning, his sturdy figure, shabbily dressed, and his pale and ill-featured face, were familiar visions in the public walks, the gymnasia, and the schools. At the hour when the market-place was most crowded, Socrates would be there, walking about among the booths and tables, and talking to every one whom he could induce to listen. Thus was his whole day spent. He was ready to talk with any one, old or young, rich or poor, being in no sense a respecter of persons. He conversed with artisans, philosophers, students, soldiers, politicians,—all classes of men. He visited everywhere, was known to all persons of distinction, and was a special friend of Aspasia, the brilliant woman companion of Pericles.

His conversational powers must have been extraordinary, for none seemed to tire of hearing him, and many sought him in his haunts, eager to hear his engaging and instructive talk. Many, indeed, in his later years, came from other cities of Greece, drawn to Athens by his fame, and [Pg 228] anxious to hear this wonderful conversationalist and teacher. These became known as his scholars or disciples, though he claimed nothing resembling a school, and received no reward for his teachings.

The talk of Socrates was never idle or meaningless chat. He felt that he had a special mission to fulfil, that in a sense he was an envoy to man from the gods, and declared that, from childhood on, a divine voice had spoken to him, unheard by others, warning and restraining him from unwise acts or sayings. It forbade him to enter public life, controlled him day by day, and was frequently mentioned by him to his disciples. This guardian voice has become known as the dæmon or genius of Socrates.

The oracle at Delphi said that no man was wiser than Socrates. To learn if this was true and he really was wiser than other men, he questioned everybody everywhere, seeking to learn what they knew, and leading them on by question after question till he usually found that they knew very little of what they professed.

As to what Socrates taught, we can only say here that he was the first great ethical philosopher. The philosophers before him had sought to explain the mystery of the universe. He declared that all this was useless and profitless. Man's mind was superior to all matter, and he led men to look within, study their own souls, consider the question of human duty, the obligations of man to man, and all that leads towards virtue and the moral development of human society.

It is not surprising that Xanthippe scolded her idle husband, who supplied so much food for the [Pg 229] souls of others, but quite ignored the demands of food for the bodies of his wife and children. His teachings were but vaporing talk to her small mind and to those of many of the people. And the keen questions with which he convicted so many of ignorance, and the sarcastic irony with which he wounded their self-love, certainly did not make him friends among this class. In truth, he made many enemies. One of these was Aristophanes, the dramatist, who wrote a comedy in which he sought to make Socrates ridiculous. This turned many of the audiences at the theatres against him.

PRISON OF SOCRATES, ATHENS.

All this went on until the year 399 B.C., when some of his enemies accused him of impiety, declaring that he did not worship the old gods, but introduced new ones and corrupted the minds of the young. "The penalty due," they said, "is death."

It had taken them some thirty years to find this out, for Socrates had been teaching the same things for that length of time. In fact, no ancient city but Athens would have listened to his radical talk for so many years without some such charge. But he had now so many enemies that the accusation was dangerous. He made it worse by his carelessness in his defence. He said things that provoked his judges. He could have been acquitted if he wished, for in the final vote only a majority of five or six out of nearly six hundred brought him in guilty.

Socrates seemingly did not care what verdict they brought. He had no fear of death, and would not trouble himself to say a word to preserve his life. The divine voice, he declared, would not [Pg 230] permit him. He was sentenced to drink the poison of hemlock, and was imprisoned for thirty days, during which he conversed in his old calm manner with his friends.

Some of his disciples arranged a plan for his escape, but he refused to fly. If his fellow-citizens wished to take his life he would not oppose their wills. On the last day he drank the hemlock as calmly as though it were his usual beverage, and talked on quietly till death sealed his tongue.

Thus died the first and one of the greatest of ethical philosophers, and a man without a parallel, in his peculiar field, in all the history of mankind. Greece produced none like him, and this homely and humble personage, who wrote not a line, has been unsurpassed in fame and influence upon mankind by any of the host of illustrious writers who have made famous the Hellenic lands.

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THE RETREAT OF THE TEN THOUSAND.

We have now to tell of one of the most remarkable events in Grecian history, to describe how ten thousand Greeks, who found themselves in the heart of the great Persian empire, without a leader and almost without food, marched through the land of their foes, over rugged mountains swarming with enemies, and across lofty plains covered deep with snow, until finally they reached once more their native land. Xenophon, their chosen leader, has told the story of this wonderful march in a book called the "Anabasis," and from this book we take what we have here to say.

First, how came these Greeks so far away from their home and friends? We have told elsewhere how the Persians several times invaded Greece. We have now to tell how the Greeks first invaded Persia. It happened many years afterwards. The Persian king Xerxes had long since been dead, and succeeded by his son Artaxerxes, who reigned over Persia for nearly forty years. Then came Darius Nothus, whose reign lasted nineteen years. This king had two sons, Artaxerxes and Cyrus. On his death he bequeathed the throne to Artaxerxes, while Cyrus was left satrap of a large province in Asia Minor.

Of these two sons, the new king was timid and incompetent; Cyrus was remarkably shrewd and [Pg 232] able, and was filled with a consuming ambition. He wanted the Persian throne and knew the best means of obtaining it. He was well aware of the military ability of the Greeks. It was he who supplied the money which enabled Sparta to overthrow Athens. He now secretly enlisted a body

of about thirteen thousand Greeks, promising them high pay if they would enter his service; and with these, and one hundred thousand Asiatics, he marched against his brother.

But Cyrus was too shrewd to let his purpose be known. He gave out that he was going to put down some brigand mountaineers. Then when he had got his army far eastward, he threw off the mask and started on the long march across the desert to Babylonia. The Greeks had been deceived. At first they refused to follow him on so perilous an errand, and to such a distance from home. But by liberal promises he overcame their objections, and they marched on till the heart of Babylonia was reached.

The army was now in the wonderfully fertile country between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, that rich Mesopotamian region which had been part of the Persian empire since the great cities of Nineveh and Babylon were taken by the Persians a century before. And in all this long march no enemy had been met. But now Cyrus and his followers found themselves suddenly confronted by a great Persian army, led by Artaxerxes, the king.

First a great cloud of white dust was seen in the distance. Then under it appeared on the earth [Pg 233] a broad dark spot, which widened and deepened as it came nearer, until at length armor began to shine and spear-heads to glitter, and dense masses of troops appeared beneath the cloud. Here were great troops of cavalry, wearing white cuirasses; here a vast array of bowmen with wicker shields, spiked so that they could thrust their points into the ground and send their arrows from behind them; there a dark mass of Egyptian infantry, with long wooden shields that covered the whole body; in front of all was a row of chariots, with scythes stretching outward from the wheels, so as to mow down the ranks through which they were driven.

These scythed chariots faced the Greeks, whose ranks they were intended to break. But when the battle-shout was given, and the dense mass of Greeks rushed forward at a rapid pace, the Persians before them broke into a sudden panic and fled, the drivers of the chariots leaping wildly to the ground and joining in the flight. The horses, left to themselves, and scared by the tumult, rushed in all directions, many of them hurtling with their scythed chariots through the flying host, others coming against the Greeks, who opened their ranks to let them pass. In that part of the field the battle was won without a blow being struck or a man killed. The very presence of the Greeks had brought victory.

The great Persian army would soon have been all in flight but for an unlooked-for event. Artaxerxes, in the centre of his army, was surrounded by a body-guard of six thousand horse. Against these Cyrus, followed by six hundred horse, made an impetuous charge. So fierce was [Pg 234] the onset that the body-guard were soon in full flight, Cyrus killing their general with his own hand. The six hundred hotly pursued their flying foe, leaving Cyrus almost alone. And now before him appeared his brother Artaxerxes, exposed by the flight of his guard.

Between these two men brotherly affection did not exist. They viewed each other as bitter enemies. So fiercely did Cyrus hate his brother that on seeing him he burst into a paroxysm of rage which robbed him of all the prudence and judgment he had so far shown. "I see the man!" he cried in tones of fury, and rushed hotly forward, followed only by the few companions who remained with him, against Artaxerxes and the strong force still with him. As Cyrus came near the king he cast his javelin so truly, and with such force, that it pierced the cuirass of Artaxerxes, and wounded him in the breast. Yet the assault of Cyrus was a mad one, and it met the end of madness. He was struck below the eye by a javelin, hurled from his horse and instantly slain; his few followers quickly sharing his fate.

The head and right hand of the slain prince were immediately cut off and held up to the view of all within sight, and the contest was proclaimed at an end. The Asiatic army of Cyrus, on learning of the fatal disaster, turned and fled. The Greeks held their own and repulsed all that came against them, in ignorance of the death of Cyrus, of which they did not hear till the next morning. The news then filled them with sorrow and dismay.

What followed must be briefly told. The position of the Greeks, much more than a thousand [Pg 235] miles from their country, in the heart of an empire filled with foes, and in the presence of a vast hostile army, seemed hopeless. Yet they refused to surrender at the demand of the king. They were victors, not defeated men; why should they surrender? "If the king wants our arms, let him come and try to take them," they said. "Our arms are all the treasure we have left; we shall not be fools enough to hand them over to you, but shall use them to fight for your treasure."

This challenge King Artaxerxes showed no inclination to accept. Both he and his army feared the Greeks. As for the latter, they immediately began their retreat. They could not go back over the desert by which they had come, that was impossible; they therefore chose a longer road, but with more chance of food, leading up the left bank of the Tigris River and proceeding to the Euxine, or Black Sea. It was in dread and hopelessness that the solitary band began this long and perilous march, through a country of which they knew nothing, amid hosts of foes, and with the winter at hand. But they were soon to experience a new misfortune and be left in a still more hopeless state.

Their boldness had so intimidated King Artaxerxes that he sent heralds to them to treat for a truce. "Go tell the king," their general replied, "that our first business must be to fight. We have nothing to eat, and no man should talk to Greeks about a truce without first providing them with a dinner."

The result of this bold answer was that food was provided, a truce declared, and Tissaphernes, [Pg 236]

a Persian satrap, with a body of troops, undertook to conduct the Greeks out of the country. Crossing the Tigris, they marched for fifteen days up its east side, until the Great Zab River, in the country of Media, was reached. Here the treachery which Tissaphernes had all along intended was consummated. He invited Clearchus, the Greek leader, and the other generals to a conference with him in his tent,—three miles from their camp. They incautiously accepted, and on arriving there were immediately seized, the captains and soldiers who had accompanied them cut down, and the generals sent in chains to the king, who ordered them all to be put to death.

This loss of their leaders threw the Greeks into despair. Ruin appeared inevitable. In the midst of a hostile country, more than a thousand miles from Grecian soil, surrounded by enemies, blocked up by deep rivers and almost impassable mountains, without guides, without provisions, without cavalry, without generals to give orders, what were they to do? A stupor of helplessness seized upon them. Few came to the evening muster; few lighted fires to cook their suppers; every man lay down to rest where he was; yet fear, anguish, and yearning for home drove sleep from every eye. The expectation of the Persians that they would now surrender seemed likely to be realized, for without a guiding head and hand there seemed to many of the disheartened host nothing else to do.

Yet they were not all in that mood. One among them, a volunteer, with no rank in the army, but [Pg 237] with ample courage, brought back by brave words hope to their souls. This man, an Athenian, Xenophon by name, and one of the disciples of Socrates the philosopher, had an encouraging dream in the night, and at once rose, called into council the captains of the host, and advised them to select new generals to take the place of the four who had been seized. This was done, Xenophon being one of the new leaders. At daybreak the soldiers were called together, told what had been done in the night, and asked to confirm the action of their captains. This they did.

Xenophon, the orator of the army, now made them a stirring speech. He told them that they need not fear the Persians, who were cowards and traitors, as they knew. If provisions were no longer furnished them, they could take them for themselves. If rivers were to be crossed, they could march up their course and wade them where not deep. "Let us burn our baggage-wagons and tents, and carry only what is strictly needful. Above all, let us maintain discipline and obedience to commanders. Now is the time for action. If any man has anything better to suggest, let him state it. We all have but one object,—the common safety."

No one had anything better to suggest; the soldiers enthusiastically accepted Xenophon's plan of action, and soon were on the march again, with Tissaphernes, their late guide, now their open foe. They marched in a hollow oblong body, with the baggage in the centre. Here also walked the [Pg 238] women, of whom many had accompanied the army through all its career.

Crossing the Great Zab River, the Greeks continued their march, though surrounded by enemies, many of them horsemen, who cast javelins and arrows into their ranks, and fled when pursued. That night they reached some villages, bearing their wounded, who were many, and deeply discouraged. During the night the Greeks organized a small body of cavalry and two hundred Rhodian slingers, who threw leaden bullets instead of stones. The next day they were attacked by a body of four thousand confident Persians, who expected an easy victory. Yet when the few horsemen and slingers of the Greeks attacked them they fled in dismay, and many of them were killed in a ravine which they were forced to traverse.

On went the fugitives, day by day, still assailed, still repelling their foes. On the fifth day they saw a palace, around which lay many villages. To reach it they had high hills to pass, and here their enemies appeared on the summits, showering down arrows, darts, and stones. The Greeks finally dislodged them by mounting to higher points, and by night had fought their way to the villages, where they found abundance of food and wine, and where they rested for three days.

On starting again the troops of Tissaphernes annoyed them as before. They now adopted a new plan. Whenever the enemy came up they halted at some village and fought them from their camp. Each night the Persians withdrew about ten miles, lest they might be surprised when their horses [Pg 239] were shackled and they unarmed. This custom the Greeks now took advantage of. As soon as the enemy had withdrawn to their nightly camp the march was resumed and continued for some ten miles. The distance gained gave the Greeks two days of peaceful progress before their foes came up again.

On the fourth day the Greeks saw before them a lofty hill, which must be passed, and which their enemies occupied, having got past them in the night. Their march seemed at an end, for the path that must be taken was completely commanded by the weapons of the foe. What was to be done? A conference took place between Xenophon and the Spartan Cheirisophus, his principal colleague. Xenophon perceived that from the top of a mountain near the army the hill held by the enemy might be reached.

"The best thing we can do is to gain the top of this mountain with all haste," he said; "if we are once masters of that the enemy cannot maintain themselves on the hill. You stay with the army, if you think fit, and I will go up the hill. Or you go, if you desire, and I will stay here."

"I give you your choice," answered Cheirisophus.

"Then I will go, as I am the younger man," said Xenophon.

Taking a strong force from the van of the army, Xenophon at once began to climb the hill. The enemy, seeing this movement, hastily detached a force for the same purpose. Both sides shouted

encouragement to their men, and Xenophon, riding beside his troop, spurred them to exertion by reminding them of their wives and children at home. And here took place one of those occurrences which gave this leader so much influence over his men. [Pg 240]

"We are not upon equal terms, Xenophon," said Soteridas, a soldier from Sicyon, "for you are on horseback, while I am weary from carrying my shield."

Instantly Xenophon sprang from his horse, took the man's shield from his arm, and thrust him out of the ranks, taking his place. The horseman's corselet which he wore, added to by the weight of the shield, gave him much annoyance. But he called out bravely to the men to hasten their pace.

On this the other soldiers began to abuse and stone Soteridas, making it so unpleasant for him that he was glad to ask for his shield again. Xenophon now remounted and rode as far as his horse could go, then sprang down and hastened onward on foot. Such was the speed made that they reached the summit before the foe, whereupon the enemy fled, leaving the road open to the Greeks. That evening they reached the plain beyond, where they found a village abounding in food; and in this plain, near the Tigris, many other villages were found, well filled with all sorts of provisions.

Finding it impossible to cross the Tigris in the face of the enemy, who lined its western bank, the Greeks were obliged to continue their course up its eastern side. This would bring them to the elevated table land of Armenia, but first they would have to cross the rugged Carduchian Mountains, inhabited by a tribe so fierce that they had hitherto defied all the power of Persia, and had once destroyed a Persian army of one hundred and twenty thousand men. These [Pg 241] mountains must be crossed, but the mountaineers proved fiercely hostile. Seven days were occupied in the task, and these were days of constant battle and loss. At one pass the Carduchians rolled down such incessant masses of rocks that progress was impossible, and the Greeks were almost in despair. Fortunately a prisoner showed them a pass by which they could get above these defenders, who, on seeing themselves thus exposed, took to their heels, and left the way open to the main body of the Greek army. Glad enough were the disheartened adventurers to see once more a plain, and find themselves past these dreaded hills and on the banks of an Armenian river.

But they now had the Persians again in their front, with the Carduchians in their rear, and it was with no small difficulty that they reached the north side of this stream. In Armenia they had new perils to encounter. The winter was upon them, and the country covered with snow. Reaching at length the head-waters of the Euphrates, they waded across, and there found themselves in such deep snow and facing such fierce winds that many slaves and draught-horses died of cold, together with about thirty soldiers. Some of the men lost their sight from the snow-glare; others had their feet badly frosted; food was very scarce; the foe was in their rear. It was a miserable and woe-begone army that at length gladly reached, on the summit of some hills, a number of villages well stored with food.

In the country of the Taochians, which the fugitives next reached, the people carried off all [Pg 242] their food into mountain strongholds, and starvation threatened the Greeks. One of these strongholds was reached, a lofty place surrounded by precipices, where great numbers of men and women, with their cattle, had assembled. Yet, strong as it was, it must be taken, or the army would be starved.

As they sought to ascend, stones came down in showers, breaking the legs and ribs of the unlucky climbers. By stratagem, however, the Greeks induced the defenders to exhaust their ammunition of stones, the soldiers pretending to advance, and then running back behind trees as the stones came crashing down. Finally several bold men made a dash for the top, others followed, and the place was won. Then came a dreadful scene. The women threw their children down the precipice, and then leaped after them. The men did the same. Æneas, a captain, seeing a richly-dressed barbarian about to throw himself down the height, caught hold of him. It was a fatal impulse of cupidity. The Taochian seized him in a fierce grasp and sprang with him over the brink, both being dashed to pieces below. Very few prisoners were made, but, what was more to the purpose of the Greeks, a large number of oxen, asses, and sheep were obtained.

At another point, where a mountain-pass had to be crossed, which could only be done by ascending the mountain by stealth at night, and so turning the position of the enemy, an amusing piece of badinage took place between Xenophon, the Athenian, and Cheirisophus, the Spartan.

"Stealing a march upon the enemy is more your trade than mine," said Xenophon. "For I [Pg 243] understand that you, the full citizens and peers at Sparta, practise stealing from your boyhood upward, and that it is held no way base, but even honorable, to steal such things as the law does not distinctly forbid. And to the end that you may steal with the greatest effect, and take pains to do it in secret, the custom is to flog you if you are found out. Here, then, you have an excellent opportunity to display your training. Take good care that we be not found out in stealing an occupation of the mountain now before us; for if we *are* found out, we shall be well beaten."

"Why, as to that," retorted Cheirisophus, good-humoredly, "you Athenians also, as I learn, are capital hands at stealing the public money, and that, too, in spite of prodigious peril to the thief. Nay, your most powerful men steal most of all, at least if it be the most powerful men among you who are raised to official command. So this is a time for *you* to exhibit your training, as well as for me to exhibit mine."

Leaving the land of the Taochi, the Greeks entered that of the Chalybes, which they were seven days in passing through. All the food here was carried off, and they had to live on the cattle they had recently won. Then came the country of the Skythini, where they found villages and food. Four days more brought them to a large and flourishing city named Gymnias. They were now evidently drawing near to the sea and civilization.

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In feet, the chief of this city told them that the sea was but five days' journey away, and gave them a guide who in that time would conduct them to a hill from which they could see the Euxine's distant waves. On they went, and at length, while Xenophon was driving off some natives that had attacked the rear of the column, he heard loud shouts in front. Thinking that the van had been assailed, he rode hastily forward at the head of his few cavalry, the noise increasing as he approached.

At length the sounds took shape in words. "*Thalatta! Thalatta!*" ("The sea! The sea!") cried the Greeks, in tones of exultation and ecstasy. All, excited by the sound, came hurrying up to the summit, and burst into simultaneous shouts of joy as they saw, far in the distance, the gleaming waters of the long-prayed-for sea. Tears, embraces, cries of wild delight, manifested their intense feeling, and for the time being the whole army went mad with joy. The terrors of their march were at an end; they were on the verge of Grecian territory again; and with pride they felt that they had achieved an enterprise such as the world had never known before.

A few words will suffice to complete their tale. Reaching the city of Trebizond, they took ship for home. Fifteen months had passed since they set out with the army of Cyrus. After various further adventures, Xenophon led them on a pillaging expedition against the Persians of Asia Minor, paid them all richly from the plunder, and gained himself sufficient wealth to enrich him for the remainder of his days.

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THE RESCUE OF THEBES.

On a certain cold and wet evening, in the month of December of the year 379 B.C., seven men, dressed as rustics or hunters, and to all appearance unarmed, though each man had a dagger concealed beneath his clothes, appeared at the gate of Thebes, the principal city of the Bœotian confederacy. They had come that day from Athens, making their way afoot across Mount Cithæron, which lay between. It was now just nightfall and most of the farmers had come into the city from the fields, but some late ones were still returning. Mingling with these, the seven strangers entered the gates, unnoticed by the guards, and were quickly lost to sight in the city streets. Quietly as they had come, the noise of their coming was soon to resound throughout Greece, for the arrival of those seven men was the first step in a revolution that was destined to overturn all the existing conditions of Grecian states.

We should like to go straight on with their story; but to make it clear to our readers we must go back and offer a short extract from earlier history. Hitherto the history of Greece had been largely the history of two cities, Athens and Sparta. The other cities had all played second or third parts to these great and proud municipalities. But now a third city, Thebes, was about to come forward, and assume a leading place in the history of Greece. And of the two men who were to guide it in this proud career, one was among the seven who entered the gates of the city in rustic garb that rainy December night.

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Of the earlier history of Thebes little need be said. It played its part in the legendary story of Greece, as may be seen in our story of the "Seven against Thebes." During the Persian invasion Thebes proved false to its country, assisted the invaders, and after their repulse was punished for its treasonable acts. Later on it came again into prominent notice. During the Peloponnesian war it was a strong ally of Sparta. Another city, only six miles away, Platæa, was as strong an ally of Athens. And the inhabitants of these two cities hated each other with the bitterest animosity. It is a striking example of the isolated character of Greek communities, and one that it is difficult to understand in modern times, that two cities of one small state, so near together that an easy two hours' walk would take a traveller from the gates of one to those of the other, could be the bitterest of enemies, sworn allies of two hostile states, and the inhabitants ready to cut each other's throats at any opportunity. Certainly the sentiment of human brotherhood has vastly widened since then. There are no two cities in the civilized world to-day that feel to each other as did Platæa and Thebes, only six miles apart, in that famous era of Grecian enlightenment.

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We have told how Platæa was taken and destroyed, and its defenders murdered, by a Spartan army. But it is well to say here that Thebans formed the most fiercely hostile part of that army, and that it was the Thebans who demanded and obtained the murder in cold blood of the hapless prisoners.

And now we pass on to a date less than fifty years later to find a remarkable change in the state of affairs. Athens has fallen from her high estate. Sparta is now the lord and master of the

Grecian world. And a harsh master has she proved, with her controlling agents in every city, her voice the arbiter in all political concerns.

Thebes is now the friend of Athens and the foe of Sparta, the chief among those cities which oppose the new order of things. Yet Thebes in 379 B.C. lies hard and fast within the Spartan clutch. How she got there is now for us to tell.

It was an act of treason, some three years before, that handed this city over to the tender mercies of her old ally, her present foe. There was a party in Thebes favorable to Sparta, at whose head was a man named Leontiades. And at this time Sparta was at war with Olynthus, a city far to the north. One Spartan army had marched to Olynthus. Another, led by a general named Phœbidas, was on its march thither, and had halted for a period of rest near the gymnasium, a short distance outside the walls of Thebes. There is good reason to believe that Phœbidas well knew what Leontiades designed, and was quite ready to play his part in the treacherous scheme.

It was the day of the Thesmophoria, a religious festival celebrated by women only, no men [Pg 248] being admitted. The Cadmeia, or citadel, had been given to their use, and was now occupied by women alone. It was a warm summer's day. The heat of noon had driven the people from the streets. The Senate of the city was in session in the portico of the agora, or forum, but their deliberations were drowsily conducted and the whole city seemed taking a noontide siesta.

Phœbidas chose this warm noontide to put his army in march again, rounding the walls of Thebes. As the van passed the gates Leontiades, who had stolen away from the Senate and hastened on horseback through the deserted streets, rode up to the Spartan commander, and bade him turn and march inward through the gate which lay invitingly open before him. Through the deserted streets Phœbidas and his men rapidly made their way, following the traitor Theban, to the gates of the Cadmeia, which, like those of the town, were thrown open to his order as polemarch, or war governor; and the Spartans, pouring in, soon were masters not only of the citadel, but of the wives and daughters of the leading Theban citizens as well.

The news got abroad only when it was too late to remedy the treacherous act. The Senate heard with consternation that their acropolis was in the hands of their enemies, their wives captives, their city at the mercy of the foe. Leontiades returned to his seat and at once gave orders for the arrest of his chief opponent Ismenias. He had a party armed and ready. The Senate [Pg 249] was helpless. Ismenias was seized and conveyed to Sparta, where he was basely put to death. The other senators hurried home, glad to escape with their lives. Three hundred of them left the city in haste, and made their way as exiles to Athens. The other citizens, whose wives and daughters were in Spartan hands, felt obliged to submit. "Order reigned" in Thebes; such was the message which Leontiades bore to Sparta.

Thus it was that Sparta gained possession of one of her greatest opponents. Leontiades and his fellows, backed by a Spartan general, ruled the city harshly. The rich were robbed, the prisons were filled, many more citizens fled into exile. Thebes was in the condition of a conquered city; the people, helpless and indignant, waited impatiently the slow revolution of the wheel of destiny which should once more set them free.

As for the exiles at Athens, they sought in vain to obtain Athenian aid to recover their city from the foe. Athens was by no means in love with Sparta, but peace had been declared, and all they could agree to do was to give the fugitives a place of refuge. Evidently the city, which had been won by treason, was not to be recovered by open war. If set free at all it must be by secret measures. And with this intent a conspiracy was formed between the leaders of the exiles and certain citizens of Thebes for the overthrow of Leontiades and his colleagues and the expulsion of the Spartan garrison from the citadel. And this it was that brought the seven men to Thebes,—seven exiles, armed with hidden daggers, with which they were to win a city and start a [Pg 250] revolution which in the end would destroy the power of Sparta the imperial.

Of the seven exiles who thus returned, under cover of night and disguise, to their native city, the chief was Pelopidas, a rich and patriotic Theban, who was yet to prove himself one of the great men of Greece. Entering the gates, they proceeded quietly through the streets, and soon found an abiding-place in the house of Charon, an earnest patriot. This was their appointed rendezvous.

And now we have a curious incident to tell, showing on what small accidents great events may hinge. Among the Thebans who had been let into the secret of the conspiracy was a faint-hearted man named Hipposthenidas. As the time for action drew near this timid fellow grew more and more frightened, and at length took upon himself, unknown to the rest, to stop the coming of the exiled patriots. He ordered Chlidon, a faithful slave of one of the seven, to ride in haste from Thebes, meet his master on the road, and bid him and his companions to go back to Athens, as circumstances had arisen which made their coming dangerous and their project impracticable.

Chlidon, ready to obey orders, went home for his bridle, but failed to find it in its usual place. He asked his wife where it was. She pretended at first to help him look for it, but at last, in a tone of contrition, acknowledged that she had lent it, without asking him, to a neighbor. Chlidon, in a burst of anger at the delay to his journey, entered into a loud altercation with the woman, who grew angry on her part and wished him ill luck on his journey. Word led to word, both sides grew [Pg 251] more angry and abusive, and at length he began to beat his wife, and continued his ill treatment until her cries brought neighbors in to separate them. But all this caused a loss of time, the bridle

was not in this way to be had, and in the end Chlidon's journey was stopped, and the message he had been asked to bear never reached the conspirators on their way. Accidents of this kind often frustrate the best-laid plans. In this case the accident was providential to the conspiracy.

And now, what were these seven men to do? Four men—Leontiades, Archias, Philippus, and Hypates—had the city under their control. But they were supported in their tyranny by a garrison of fifteen hundred Spartans and allies in the Cadmeia, and Lacedæmonian posts in the other cities around. These four men were to be dealt with, and for that purpose the seven had come. On the evening of the next day Archias and Philippus designed to have a banquet. Phyllidas, their secretary, but secretly one of the patriots, had been ordered to prepare the banquet for them, and had promised to introduce into their society on that occasion some women of remarkable beauty and of the best families in Thebes. He did not hint to them that these women would wear beards and carry daggers under their robes.

We have told, in a previous tale, the story of the "Seven against Thebes." The one with which we are now concerned might be properly entitled the "Seven for Thebes." That night and the following day the devoted seven lay concealed. Evening came on. The hour when they were to [Pg 252] play their parts had nearly arrived. They were in that state of strained expectation that brings the nerves to the surface, and started in sudden dread when a loud knock came upon the door. They were still more startled on hearing its purpose. A messenger had come to bid Charon instantly to come to the presence of the two feasting polemarchs.

What did it mean? Had the plot been divulged? Had the timid Hipposthenidas betrayed them? At any rate, there was but one thing to do; Charon must go at once. But he, faithful soul, was most in dread that his friends should suspect him of treachery. He therefore brought his son, a highly promising youth of fifteen, and put him in the hands of Pelopidas as a hostage for his fidelity.

"This is folly!" cried they all. "No one doubts you. Take the boy away. It is enough for us to face the danger; do not seek to bring the boy into the same peril."

Charon would not listen to their remonstrances, but insisted on leaving the youth in their hands, and hastened away to the house of the polemarchs. He found them at the feast, already half intoxicated. Word had been sent them from Athens that some plot, they knew not what, was afloat. He was known to be a friend of the exiles. He must tell them what he knew about it.

Fortunately, the pair were too nearly drunk to be acute. Their suspicions were very vague. Charon, aided by Phyllidas, had little trouble in satisfying them that the report was false. Eager [Pg 253] to get back to their wine they dismissed him, very glad indeed to get away. Hardly had he gone before a fresh message, and a far more dangerous one, was brought to Archias, sent by a namesake of his at Athens. This gave a full account of the scheme and the names of those who were to carry it out. "It relates to a very serious matter," said the messenger who bore it.

"Serious matters for to-morrow," cried Archias, with a drunken laugh, as he put the unopened despatch under the pillow of his couch and took up the wine-cup again.

"Those whom the gods mean to destroy they first make mad," says an apposite Grecian proverb. These men were foredoomed.

"A truce to all this disturbance," cried the two polemarchs to Phyllidas. "Where are the women whom you promised us? Let us see these famous high-born beauties."

Phyllidas at once retired, and quickly returned with the seven conspirators, clothed in female attire. Leaving them in an adjoining chamber, he entered the banquet-room, and told the feasters that the women refused to come in unless all the domestics were first dismissed.

"Let it be so," said Archias, and at the command of Phyllidas the domestics sought the house of one of their number, where the astute secretary had well supplied them with wine.

The two polemarchs, with one or two friends, alone remained, all half intoxicated, and the only armed one being Cabeirichus, the archon, who was obliged by law to keep always with him the [Pg 254] consecrated spear of office.

And now the supposed and eagerly expected women were brought in,—three of them attired as ladies of distinction, the four others dressed as attendants. Their long veils and ample robes completely disguised them, and they sat down beside the polemarchs without a suspicion being entertained. Not till their drunken companions lifted their veils did the truth appear. But the lifting of the veils was the signal for quick and deep dagger thrusts, and Archias and Philippus, with scarcely a movement of resistance, fell dead from their seats. No harm was meant to the others, but the drunken archon rushed on the conspirators with his spear, and in consequence perished with his friends.

There were two more of the tyrants to deal with. Phyllidas led three of the conspirators to the house of Leontiades, into which he was admitted as the bearer of an order from the polemarchs. Leontiades was reclining after supper, with his wife spinning wool by his side, when his foes entered his chamber, dagger in hand. A bold and strong man, he instantly sprang up, seized his sword, and with a thrust mortally wounded the first of the three. Then a desperate struggle took place in the doorway between him and Pelopidas, the place being too narrow for the third to approach. In the end Pelopidas dealt him a mortal blow. Then, threatening the wife with death if she gave the alarm, and closing the door with stern commands that it should not be opened

again, the two patriots left the house and sought that of Hypates. He took the alarm and fled, and was pursued to the roof, where he was killed as he was trying to escape over the house-tops. [Pg 255]

This work done, and no alarm yet given, the conspirators proceeded to the prison, whose doors they ordered to be opened. The jailer hesitated, and was slain by a spear-thrust, the patriots rushing over his body into the prison, from whose cells the tenants were soon released. These, one hundred and fifty in number, sufferers for their patriotic sentiments, were quickly armed from battle-spoils kept near by, and drawn up in battle array. And now, for the first time, did the daring conspirators feel assurance of success.

GATE OF THE AGORA OR OIL MARKET, ATHENS.

The tidings of what had been done by this time got abroad, and ran like wildfire through the city. Citizens poured excitedly into the streets. Epaminondas, who was afterwards to become the great leader of the Thebans, joined with some friends the small array of patriots. Proclamation was made throughout the city by heralds that the despots were slain and Thebes was free, and all Thebans who valued liberty were bidden to muster in arms in the market-place. All the trumpeters in the city were bidden to blow with might and main, from street to street, and thus excite the people to take arms to secure their liberty.

While night lasted surprise and doubt continued, many of the citizens not knowing what to do. But with day-dawn came a wild outburst of joy and enthusiasm. Horsemen and footmen hastened in arms to the agora. Here a formal assembly of the Theban people was convened, before whom [Pg 256] Pelopidas and his fellows appeared to tell what they had done. The priests crowned them with wreaths, while the people hailed them with joyful acclamations. With a single voice they nominated Pelopidas, Mellon, and Charon as Bœotarchs,—a Theban title of authority which had for a number of years been dropped.

Such was the hatred which the long oppression had aroused, that the very women trod underfoot the slain jailer, and spat upon his corpse. In that city, where women rarely showed themselves in public, this outburst strongly indicated the general public rage against the overthrown despots. Messengers hastened to Attica to carry to the exiles the glad tidings, and soon they, with a body of Athenian volunteers, were in joyful march for the city.

Meanwhile, the Spartans in the citadel were in a state of distraction and alarm. All night long the flashing of lights, the blare of trumpets, the shouts of excited patriots, the sound of hurrying feet in the city, had disturbed their troubled souls, and when affrighted partisans of the defeated party came hurrying for safety into the Cadmeia, with tidings of the tragic event, they were filled with confusion and dismay. Accustomed to look to the polemarchs for orders, the garrison did not know whom to trust or consult. They hastily sent out messengers to Thespiæ and Platæa for aid, but the forces which came to their help from these cities were charged upon by the Thebans and driven back with loss.

What to do the Spartan commander knew not. The citizens were swarming in the streets, and [Pg 257] gathering in force around the citadel. That they intended to storm it before aid could come from Sparta was evident. In fact, they were already rushing to the assault,—large rewards being offered those who should first force their way in,—when a flag of truce from the garrison stopped them in mid-career. The commander proposed to capitulate.

All he asked was liberty to march out of Thebes with the honors of war. This was granted him, under oath. At once the foreign garrison filed out from the citadel and marched to one of the gates, accompanied by the Theban refugees who had sought shelter with them. These latter had

not been granted the honors of war. Among them were some of the prominent oppressors of the people. In a burst of ungovernable rage these were torn from the Spartan ranks by the people and put to death; even the children of some of them being slain. Few of the refugees would have escaped but for the Athenians present, who generously helped to get them safely through the gates and out of sight and reach of their infuriated townsmen.

And thus, almost without a blow, in a night's and a morning's work, the city of Thebes, which for several years had lain helpless in the hands of its foes, regained its liberty. As for the Spartan harmosts, or leaders, who had capitulated without an attempt at defence, two of them were put to death on reaching home, the third was heavily fined and banished. Sparta had no mercy and no room for beaten men. [Pg 258]

Thebes was free! The news spread like an electric shock through the Grecian world. A few men, taking a desperate risk, had in an hour overthrown a government that seemed beyond assault. The empire of Sparta, the day before undisputed and nearly universal over Greece, had received a serious blow. Throughout all Greece men breathed easier, while the spirit of patriotism suddenly flamed again. The first blow in a coming revolution had been struck.

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THE HUMILIATION OF SPARTA.

Thebes was free! But would she stay free? Sparta was against her,—Sparta, the lord of Greece. Could a single city, however liberty-loving and devoted its people, maintain itself against that engine of war which had humbled mighty Athens and now lorded it over the world of Greece? This is the question we have to answer; how in a brief space the dominion of Sparta was lost, and Thebes, so long insignificant and almost despised, rose to take the foremost place in Greece.

Two men did this work. As seven men had restored Thebes to freedom, two men lifted her almost into empire. One of these was Pelopidas, the leading spirit of the seven. The other was Epaminondas, whose name was simply mentioned in the tale of the patriotic seven, yet who in the coming years was to prove himself one of the greatest men Greece ever produced.

Pelopidas belonged to one of the richest and highest families of Thebes. He was one of the youngest of the exiles, yet a man of earnest patriotism and unbounded daring. It was his ardent spirit that gave life to the conspiracy, and his boldness and enterprise that led it forward to success. And it was the death of Leontiades by his hand that freed Thebes.

Epaminondas was a man of different character and position. Though of ancient and honorable family, he was poor, while Pelopidas was very rich; middle-aged, while Pelopidas was young; quiet, patient, and thoughtful, while Pelopidas was bold, active, and energetic. In the wars that followed he was the brain, while Pelopidas was the right hand, of Thebes. Epaminondas had been an earnest student of philosophy and music, and was an adept in gymnastic training. He was a listener, not a talker, yet no Theban equalled him in eloquence in time when speech was needful. He loved knowledge, yet he cared little for power, and nothing for money, and he remained contentedly poor till the end of his days, not leaving enough wealth to pay his funeral expenses. He did not love bloodshed, even to gain liberty. He had objected to the conspiracy, since freedom was to be gained through murder. Yet this was the man who was to save Thebes and degrade her great enemy, Sparta. [Pg 260]

Like Socrates and Alcibiades, these two men were the warmest friends. Their friendship, like that of the two great Athenians, had been cemented in battle. Standing side by side as hoplites (or heavy armed soldiers), on an embattled field, Pelopidas had fallen wounded, and Epaminondas had saved his life at the greatest danger to himself, receiving several wounds while bearing his helpless friend to a place of safety. To the end of their lives they continued intimate friends, each recognizing the peculiar powers of the other, and the two working like one man for Theban independence.

Epaminondas proved himself a thinker of the highest military genius, Pelopidas a leader of the greatest military vigor. The work of the latter was largely performed with the Sacred Band, a warlike association of three hundred youthful Thebans, sworn to defend the citadel until death, bound by bonds of warm friendship, and trained into the highest military efficiency. Pelopidas was the captain of this noble band, which was never overcome until the fatal battle of Chæronea, and then only by death, the Three Hundred lying dead in their ranks as they had stood. [Pg 261]

For the events with which we have now to deal we must leap over seven years from the freeing of Thebes. It will suffice to say that for two years of that time Sparta fought fiercely against that city, but could not bring it under subjection again. Then wars arose elsewhere and drew her armies away. Thebes now took the opportunity to extend her power over the other cities of Bœotia, and of one of these cities there is something of interest to tell.

We have told in an earlier tale how Sparta and Thebes captured Platæa and swept it from the

face of the earth. Recently Sparta had rebuilt the city, recalled its exiled citizens, and placed it as a Spartan outpost against Thebes. But now, when the armies of Sparta had withdrawn, the Thebans deemed it a good opportunity to conquer it again. One day, when the Platæan men were at work in their fields, and unbroken peace prevailed, a Theban force suddenly took the city by surprise, and forced the Platæans to surrender at discretion. Poor Platæa was again levelled with [Pg 262] the ground, her people were once more sent into exile, and her soil was added to that of Thebes. It may be well to say here that most of the Grecian cities consisted of the walled town and sufficient surrounding land to raise food for the inhabitants within, and that the farmers went out each morning to cultivate their fields, and returned each night within the shelter of their walls. It was this habit that gave Thebes its treacherous opportunity.

During the seven years mentioned we hear nothing of Epaminondas, yet we know that he made himself felt within the walls of Thebes; for when, in 371 B.C., the cities of Greece, satisfied that it was high time to stop cutting each other's throats, held a congress at Sparta to conclude peace, we find him there as the representative of Thebes.

The terms of peace demanded by Athens, and agreed to by most of the delegates, were that each city, small or large, should possess autonomy, or self-government. Sparta and Athens were to become mutual guarantees, dividing the headship of Greece between them. As for Thebes and her claim to the headship of Bœotia, her demand was set aside.

This conclusion reached, the cities one after another took oath to keep the terms of peace, each city swearing for itself except Sparta, which took the oath for itself and its allies. When it came to the turn of Thebes there was a break in this love-feast. Sparta had sworn for all the cities of Laconia; Epaminondas, as the representative of Thebes, insisted on swearing not for Thebes alone, but for Thebes as president of all Bœotia. He made a vigorous speech, asking why Sparta [Pg 263] was granted rights from which other leading cities were debarred.

This was a new question. No Greek had ever asked it openly before. To Sparta it seemed the extreme of insolence and insult. What daring stranger was this who presumed to question her right to absolute control of Laconia? No speech was made in her defence. Spartans never made speeches. They prided themselves on their few words and quick deeds,—*laconic* utterances, as they have since been called. The Spartan king sprang indignantly from his seat.

"Speak plainly," he scornfully demanded. "Will you, or will you not, leave to each of the Bœotian cities its separate autonomy?"

"Will *you* leave each of the Laconian towns its separate autonomy?" demanded Epaminondas.

Not another word was said. Agesilaus, the Spartan king, who was also president of the congress, caused the name of Thebes to be stricken from the roll, and proclaimed that city to be excluded from the treaty of peace.

It was a bold move on the part of Epaminondas, for it meant war with all the power of Sparta, relieved of all other enemies by the peace. Sparta had conquered and humbled Athens. It had conquered many other cities, forcing some of them to throw down their walls and go back again to their old state of villages. What upstart was this that dared defy its wrath and power? Thebes could hope for no allies, and seemed feeble against Spartan strength. How dared, then, this [Pg 264] insolent delegate to fling defiance in the teeth of the lord of Greece?

Fortunately Thebes needed no allies. It had two men of warlike genius, Epaminondas and Pelopidas. These were to prove in themselves worth a host of allies. The citizens were with them. Great as was the danger, the Thebans sustained Epaminondas in his bold action, and made him general of their army. He at once marched to occupy a pass by which it was expected the Spartans would come. Sparta at that moment had a strong army under Cleombrotus, one of its two kings, in Phocis, on the frontier of Bœotia. This was at once ordered to march against defiant Thebes.

Cleombrotus lost no time, and with a military skill which Spartans rarely showed he evaded the pass which Epaminondas held, followed a narrow mountain-track, captured Creusis, the port of Thebes, with twelve war-ships in the harbor, and then marched to a place called Leuctra, within an easy march of Thebes, yet which left open communication with Sparta by sea, by means of the captured port.

The Thebans had been outgeneralled, and were dismayed by the result. The Spartans and their king were full of confidence and joy. All the eloquence of Epaminondas and the boldness of Pelopidas were needed to keep the courage of their countrymen alive and induce them to march against their foes. And it was with much more of despair than of hope that they took up at length a position on the hilly ground opposite the Spartan camp.

The two armies were not long in coming to blows. The Spartans and their allies much exceeded [Pg 265] the Thebans in numbers. But Epaminondas prepared to make the most of his small force by drawing it up in a new array, never before seen in Greece.

Instead of forming the narrow line of battle always before the rule in Greek armies, he placed in front of his left wing Pelopidas and the Sacred Band, and behind them arranged a mass of men fifty shields deep, a prodigious depth for a Grecian host. The centre and right were drawn up in the usual thin lines, but were kept back on the defensive, so that the deep column might join battle first.

Thus arrayed, the army of Thebes marched to meet its foe, in the valley between the two declivities on which the hostile camps were placed. The cavalry met first, and the Theban horsemen soon put the Spartan troop to flight. Then the footmen came together with a terrible shock. Pelopidas and his Sacred Band, and behind them the weight of the fifty shields, proved more than the Spartans, with all their courage and discipline, could endure. Both sides fought bravely, hand to hand; but soon Cleombrotus fell, mortally hurt, and was with difficulty carried off alive. Around him fell others of the Spartan leaders. The resistance was obstinate, the slaughter terrible; but at last the Spartan right wing, overborne by the heavy Theban mass and utterly beaten, was driven back to its camp on the hill-side above. Meanwhile the left wing, made up of allies, did little fighting, and quickly followed the Spartans back to the camp.

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It was a crushing defeat. Of seven hundred Spartans who had marched in confidence from the camp, only three hundred returned thither in dismay. A thousand and more Lacedæmonians besides were left dead upon the field. Not since the day of Thermopylæ had Sparta lost a king in battle. The loss of the Theban army was not more than three hundred men. Only twenty days had elapsed since Epaminondas left Sparta, spurned by the scorn of one of her kings; and now he stood victor over Sparta at Leuctra, with her second king dead in his camp of refuge. It is not surprising that to Greece, which had felt sure of the speedy overthrow of Thebes, these tidings came like a thunderbolt. Sparta on land had been thought irresistible. But here on equal ground, and with nearly double force, she had been beaten by insignificant Thebes.

We must hasten to the end of this campaign. Sparta, wrought to desperation by her defeat, sent all the men she could spare in reinforcement. Thebes, too, sought allies, and found a powerful one in Jason of Pheræ, a city of Thessaly. The Theban leaders, flushed with victory, were eager to attack the enemy in his camp, but Jason gave them wiser advice.

"Be content," he said, "with the great victory you have gained. Do not risk its loss by attacking the Lacedæmonians driven to despair in their camp. You yourselves were in despair a few days ago. Remember that the gods take pleasure in bringing about sudden changes of fortune."

This advice taken, Jason offered the enemy the opportunity to retreat in safety from their dangerous position. This they gladly accepted, and marched in haste away. On their journey home they met a second army coming to their relief. This was no longer needed, and the whole baffled force returned home.

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The military prestige held by Sparta met with a serious blow from this signal defeat. The prestige of Thebes suddenly rose into supremacy, and her control of Bœotia became complete. But the humiliation of Sparta was not yet near its end. Epaminondas was not the man to do things by halves. In November of 370 B.C. he marched an army into Arcadia (a country adjoining Laconia on the north), probably the largest hostile force that had ever been seen in the Peloponnesus. With its Arcadian and other allies it amounted to forty thousand, or, as some say, to seventy thousand, men, and among these the Thebans formed a body of splendidly drilled and disciplined troops, not surpassed by those of Sparta herself. The enthusiasm arising from victory, the ardor of Pelopidas, and the military genius of Epaminondas had made a wonderful change in the hoplites of Thebes in a year's time.

And now a new event in the history of the Spartan commonwealth was seen. For centuries the Spartans had done their fighting abroad, marching at will through all parts of Greece. They were now obliged to fight on their own soil, in defence of their own hearths and homes. Dividing his army into four portions, Epaminondas marched into rock-bounded Laconia by four passes.

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The Arcadians had often felt the hard hand of their warlike neighbors. Only a snort time before one of their principal cities, Mantinea, had been robbed of its walls and converted into open villages. Since the battle of Leuctra the villagers had rebuilt their walls and defied a Spartan army. Now the Arcadians proved even more daring than the Thebans. They met a Spartan force and annihilated it.

Into the country of Laconia pushed the invaders. The city of Sellasia was taken and burned. The river Eurotas was forded. Sparta lay before Epaminondas and his men.

It lay before them without a wall or tower. Through its whole history no foreign army had come so near it. It trusted for defence not to walls, but to Spartan hearts and hands. Yet now consternation reigned. Sparta the inviolate, Sparta the unassailable, was in imminent peril of suffering the same fate it had often meted out freely to its foes.

But the Spartans had not been idle. Allies had sent aid in all haste to the city. Even six thousand of the Helots were armed as hoplites, though to see such a body of their slaves in heavy armor alarmed the Spartans almost as much as to behold their foes so near at hand. In fact, many of the Helots and country people joined the Theban army, while others refused to come to the aid of the imperilled city.

Epaminondas marched on until he was in sight of the city. He did not attempt to storm it. Though without walls, Sparta had strong natural defences, and heaps of earth and stones had been hastily thrown up on the most open roads. A strong army had been gathered. The Spartans would fight to death for their homes. To attack them in their stronghold might be to lose all that had been gained. Repulse here would be ruin. Content with having faced the lion in his den, Epaminondas turned and marched down the Eurotas, his army wasting, plundering, and burning as it went, while the Spartans, though in an agony of shame and wounded honor, were held back by their king from the peril of meeting their enemy in the field.

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In the end, his supplies growing scarce, his soldiers loaded with plunder, Epaminondas led his army back to Arcadia, having accomplished far more than any foe of Sparta had ever done before, and destroyed the warlike reputation of Sparta throughout Greece.

But the great Theban did not end here. He had two other important objects in view. One was to consolidate the Arcadians by building them a great central city, to be called Megalopolis (Great City), and inhabited by people from all parts of the state. This was done, thick and lofty walls, more than five miles and a half in circumference, being built round the new stronghold.

His other purpose was to restore the country of Messenia. We have already told how this country had been conquered by the Spartans centuries before, and its people exiled or enslaved. Their descendants were now to regain their liberty and their homes. A new city, to be named Messenia, was ordered by Epaminondas to be built, and this, at the request of the Messenians, was erected on Mount Ithome, where the gallant hero Aristomenes had made his last stand against his country's invaders.

The city was built, the walls rising to the music of Argeian and Bœotian flutes. The best [Pg 270] architects and masons of Greece were invited to lay out the plans of streets and houses and of the sacred edifices. The walls were made so strong and solid that they became the admiration of after-ages. The surrounding people, who had been slaves of Sparta, were made freemen and citizens of the reorganized state. A wide area of land was taken from Laconia and given to the new communities which Epaminondas had formed. Then, in triumph, he marched back to Thebes, having utterly destroyed the power and prestige of Sparta in Greece.

Reaching home, he was put on trial by certain enemies. He had broken the law by keeping command of the army four months beyond the allotted time. He appealed to the people, with what result we can readily understand. He was acquitted by acclamation, and he and Pelopidas were immediately re-elected Bœotarchs (or generals) for the coming year.

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TIMOLEON, THE FAVORITE OF FORTUNE.

In the city of Corinth dwelt two brothers; one of whom, named Timoleon, was distinguished alike for his courage, gentleness, patriotism, lack of ambition, and hatred of despots and traitors; the other, named Timophanes, was noted for bravery and enterprise, but also for unprincipled ambition and lack of patriotism. Timophanes, being a valiant soldier, had gained high rank in the army of Corinth. Timoleon loved his unworthy brother and sought to screen his faults. He did more: he saved his life at frightful peril to himself. During a battle between the army of Corinth and that of some neighboring state, Timophanes, who commanded the cavalry, was thrown from his wounded horse very near to the enemy. The cavalry fled, leaving him to what seemed certain death. But Timoleon, who was serving with the infantry, rushed from the ranks and covered his brother with his shield just as the enemy were about to pierce him. They turned in numbers on the defender, with spears and darts, but he warded off their blows, and protected his fallen brother at the cost of several wounds to himself, until others rushed to the rescue and drove back the foe.

The whole city was full of admiration of Timoleon for this act of devotion. Timophanes also was [Pg 272] raised in public estimation through his brother's deed, and was placed in an important post. Corinth was governed by an aristocracy, who, just then, brought in a garrison of four hundred foreign soldiers and placed them in the citadel. Timophanes was given command of this garrison and control of the stronghold.

The governors of the city did not know their man. Here was an opportunity for the unlimited ambition of the new commander. Gaining some armed partisans among the poorer citizens, and availing himself of the control of fort and garrison, Timophanes soon made himself master of the city, and seized and put to death all who opposed him among the chief citizens. Unwittingly the Corinthian aristocrats had put over themselves a cruel despot.

But they found also a defender. The crimes of his brother at first filled Timoleon with shame and sorrow. He went to the citadel and begged Timophanes, by all he held sacred, to renounce his ambitious projects. The new despot repelled his appeal with contempt. Timoleon went again, this time with three friends, but with no better effect. Timophanes laughed them to scorn, and as they continued their pleading he grew angry and refused to hear more. Then the three friends drew their swords and killed the tyrant on the spot, while Timoleon stood aside, with his face hidden and his eyes bathed in tears.

He who had saved his brother's life at the risk of his own had now consented to his death to [Pg 273] save his country. But personally, although all Corinth warmly applauded his patriotic act, he was thrown into the most violent grief and remorse. This was the greater from the fact that his mother viewed his deed with horror and execration, invoked curses on his head, and refused even to see him despite his earnest supplications.

The gratitude of the city was overcome in his mind by grief for his brother, and he was attacked by the bitterest pangs of remorse. The killing of the tyrant he had felt to be a righteous and necessary act. The murder of his brother afflicted him with despair. For a time he refused food, resolving to end his odious life by starvation. Only the prayers of his friends made him change this resolution. Then, like one pursued by the furies, he fled from the city, hid himself in solitude, and kept aloof from the eyes and voices of men. For several years he thus dwelt in self-afflicting solitude, and when at length time reduced his grief and he returned to the city, he shunned all prominent positions, and lived in humility and retirement. Thus time went on until twenty years had passed, Timoleon still, in spite of the affection and sympathy of his fellow-citizens, refusing any office or place of authority.

But now an event occurred which was to make this grieving patriot famous through all time, as the favored of the gods and one of the noblest of men,—the Washington of the far past. To tell how this came about we must go back some distance in time. Corinth, though it played no leading part in the wars of Greece, like Athens, Sparta, and Thebes, was still a city of much importance, [Pg 274] its situation on the isthmus between the Peloponnesus and northern Greece being excellent for commerce and maritime enterprise. Many years before it had sent out a colony which founded the city of Syracuse, in Sicily. It was in aid of this city of Syracuse that Timoleon was called upon to act.

We have already told how Athens sought to capture this city and ruined herself in the enterprise. After that time of triumph Syracuse passed through several decades of terror and woe. Tyrants set their feet on her fair neck, and almost crushed her into the earth. One of these, Dionysius by name, had made his power felt by far-off Greece and nearer Carthage, and for years ruled over Sicily with a rod of iron. His successor, Dion, a friend and pupil of the philosopher Plato, became an oppressor when he came into power. Then another Dionysius gained the throne, a cowardly and drunken wretch, who repeated the acts of his tyrannical father.

Such was the state of affairs in Sicily when Timoleon was dwelling quietly at home in Corinth, a man of fifty, with no ambitious thought and no ruling desire except to reach the end of his sorrow-laden life. So odious now had the tyranny of Dionysius become that the despairing Syracusans sent a pathetic appeal to Corinth, their mother city, praying for aid against this brutal despot and the Carthaginians, who had invaded the island of Sicily in force.

Corinth just then, fortunately, had no war on hand,—a somewhat uncommon condition for a [Pg 275] Greek city at that day. The citizens voted at once to send the aid asked for. But who should be the leader? There were danger and difficulty in the enterprise, with little hope for profit, and none of the Corinthian generals or politicians seemed eager to lead this forlorn hope. The archons called out their names one by one, but each in succession declined. The archons had come nearly to their wits' end whom to choose, when from an unknown voice in the assembly came the name "Timoleon." The archons seized eagerly on the suggestion, hastily chose Timoleon for the post which all the leading men declined, and the assembly adjourned.

Timoleon, who sadly needed some active exertion to relieve him from the weight of eating thought, accepted the thankless enterprise, heedless probably of the result. He at once began to gather ships and soldiers. But he found the Corinthians more ready to select a commander than to provide him with means and men. Little money was forthcoming; few men seemed ready to enlist; Timoleon had no great means of his own. In the end he only got together seven triremes and one thousand men,—the most of them mere mercenaries. Three more ships and two hundred men were afterwards added.

And thus, with this small force, Timoleon set out to conquer a city and kingdom on whose conquest Athens, years before, had lavished hundreds of ships and tens of thousands of men in vain. The effort seemed utterly puerile. Was the handful of Corinthians to succeed where all the imperial power of Athens had failed? Yet the gods fought with Timoleon. [Pg 276]

In truth, from the day he left Corinth, those presages of fortune, on which the Greeks so greatly depended, gathered about his path across the seas. The signs and tokens were all favorable. While he was at Delphi, seeking the favor of Apollo, a fillet with wreaths and symbols of victory fell from a statue upon his head, and the goddess Persephone told her priestess in a dream that she was about to sail with Timoleon to Sicily, her favorite island. He took, therefore, a special trireme, sacred to the goddesses Demeter and Persephone, both of whom were to accompany him. While at sea this sacred trireme was illumined by a light from heaven, while a burning torch on high seemed to guide the fleet to a safe harbor. All these portents filled the adventurers with hope and joy.

But Timoleon had himself to depend on as well as the gods. At the Italian port of Rhegium he found Hicetas, the despot of a Sicilian city, who had invited him to Sicily, but was now allied with the Carthaginians. He had there twenty of the war-ships of Carthage, double the force of Timoleon. Yet the shrewd Corinthian played with and tricked him, set him to talking and the people of Rhegium to talking with him, and slipped slyly out of the harbor with his ships while the interminable talk went on.

This successful stratagem redoubled the spirit of his followers. Landing at a small town on the Sicilian coast, a new enterprise presented itself. Forty miles inland lay the town of Adranum, [Pg 277] sacred to the god Adranus, a deity worshipped throughout Sicily. There were two parties in Adranum, one of which invited Timoleon, the other Hicetas. The latter at once started thither, with a force of five thousand men, an army with which that of Timoleon seemed too small to cope.

But heedless of this discrepancy Timoleon hastened thither, and on arriving near the town perceived that the opposing army had outstripped him in speed. Hicetas, not aware of the approach of a foe, had encamped, and his men were disarmed and at their suppers.

The small army of Timoleon, worn out with their long and rapid march, and in sight of an enemy four times their number, were loath to move farther; but their leader, who knew that his only chance for victory lay in a surprise, urged them forward, seized his shield and placed himself at their head, and led them so suddenly on the foe that the latter, completely surprised, fled in utter panic. Three hundred were killed, six hundred taken, and the rest, abandoning their camp, hastened at all speed back to Syracuse.

Again the gods spoke in favor of Timoleon. Just as the battle began the gates of the temple of Adranus burst open, and the god himself appeared with brandished spear and perspiring face. So said the awe-struck Adranians, and there was no one to contradict their testimony.

Superstition came here to the adventurer's aid. The report of the god's doings did as much as the victory to add to the fame of Timoleon. Reinforcements flocked to his ranks, and several towns sought alliance with him. He now, with a large and confident army, marched to Syracuse, and defied his foe to meet him in the field. [Pg 278]

Hicetas was master of all Syracuse except the stronghold of Ortygia, which was held by Dionysius, and which Hicetas had blockaded by sea and land. Timoleon had no means of capturing it, and as the enemy would not come out from behind its walls, he would soon have had to retire had not fortune again helped her favorite son, and this time in an extraordinary manner.

As it happened, Dionysius was growing short of provisions, was beginning to despair of holding Ortygia, and was withal a man of indolent and drunken habits, without a tithe of his father's spirit and energy. He was like a fox driven to bay, and having heard of the victory of Timoleon, it occurred to him that he would be better off in yielding the city to these Corinthians than losing it to his Sicilian foe. All he wished was the promise of a safe asylum and comfortable maintenance in the future. He therefore agreed with Timoleon to surrender the city, with the sole proviso that he should be taken safely with his property to Corinth and given freedom of residence in that city. This Timoleon instantly and gladly granted, the city was yielded, and Dionysius passed into Timoleon's camp with a few companions.

We can imagine the astonishment of the people of Corinth when a trireme came into their harbor with tidings of the remarkable success of their townsman, and bearing as striking evidence the person of the late tyrant of Sicily. Only fifty days had passed since he left their city with his thousand men, and already he had this extraordinary prize to show. At once they voted him a reinforcement of two thousand hoplites and five hundred cavalry, and willingly granted the dethroned king a safe residence in their city. In after years, so report says, Dionysius opened a school there for teaching boys to read, and instructed the public singers in their art. Certainly this was an innocent use to put a tyrant to. [Pg 279]

Ortygia contained a garrison of two thousand soldiers and vast quantities of military stores. Timoleon, after taking possession, returned to Adranum, leaving his lieutenant Neon in command. Soon after—Hicetas having left Syracuse for the purpose of cutting off Neon's source of provisions—a sudden sally was made, the blockading army taken by surprise and driven back with loss, and another large section of the city was added to Timoleon's gains.

This success was quickly followed by another. The reinforcement from Corinth had landed at Thurii, on the east coast of Italy. The Carthaginian admiral, thinking that they could not easily get away from that place, sailed to Ortygia, where he displayed Grecian shields and had his seamen crowned with wreaths. He fancied that by these signs of victory he would frighten the garrison into surrender. But the garrison were not so easily scared; and meanwhile the Corinthian troops, tired of Thurii, and not able to get away by sea, had left their ships and marched rapidly overland to the narrow strait of Messina, that separated Italy from Sicily. They found this unguarded,—the Carthaginian ships being away on their mission of alarm to Ortygia. And, by good fortune, several days of stormy weather had been followed by a sudden and complete calm, so that the Corinthians were enabled to cross in fishing and other boats and reach Sicily in safety. Thus by a new favor of fortune Timoleon gained this valuable addition to his small army. [Pg 280]

Timoleon now marched against Syracuse, where fortune once more came to his aid. For Magon, the Carthaginian admiral, had begun to doubt Hicetas. He doubted him the more when he saw the men of Timoleon and those of Hicetas engaged in fishing for eels together in the marshy grounds between the armies, and seemingly on very friendly terms. Thinking he was betrayed, he put all his troops on board ship and sailed away for Africa.

It may well be imagined that Timoleon and his men saw with surprise and joy this sudden flight of the Carthaginian ships. With shouts of encouragement they attacked the city on all sides. To their astonishment, scarcely any defence was made. In fact, the army of Hicetas, many of them Greeks, were largely in favor of Timoleon, while the talk of the eel catching soldiers in the marshes had won many more over. As a result, Timoleon took the great city of Syracuse, on which the Athenians had vainly sacrificed hundreds of ships and thousands of men, without the loss of a single man, killed or wounded.

Such a succession of astonishing favors of fortune has rarely been seen in the world's history. The news flew through Sicily, Italy, and Greece, and awakened wonder and admiration everywhere. Only a few months had passed since Timoleon left Corinth, and already, with very [Pg 281]

little loss, he was master of Syracuse and of much of Sicily, and had sent the dreaded Sicilian tyrant to dwell as a common citizen in Corinth. His ability seemed remarkable, his fortune superhuman, and men believed that the gods themselves had taken him under their especial care.

And now came the temptation of power, to which so many great men have fallen victims. Timoleon had but to say the word and he would be despot of Syracuse. Everybody looked for this as the next move. In Ortygia rose the massive citadel within which Dionysius had defied revolt or disaffection. Timoleon had but to establish himself there, and his word would be the law throughout Syracuse, if not throughout Sicily. What would he do?

What he proposed to do was quickly shown. He proclaimed that this stronghold of tyranny should be destroyed, and invited every Syracusan that loved liberty to come with crowbar and hammer and join in the work of levelling to the ground the home and citadel of Dionysius. The astounded citizens could scarcely believe their ears. What! destroy the tyrant's stronghold! Set Syracuse free! What manner of man was this? With joyous acclaim they gathered, and heaved and tugged until the massive walls were torn stone from stone, and the vast edifice levelled with the ground, while the time passed like a holiday, and songs of joy and triumph made their work light. [Pg 282]

The Bastile of Syracuse down, Timoleon ordered that the materials should be used to build courts of justice,—for justice was henceforth to replace despotism in that tyrant-ridden city. But he had more to do. So long had oppression and suffering lasted that the city was half deserted and the very market-place turned into a horse pasture. The same was the case with other cities of Sicily. Even the fields were but half cultivated. Ruin had swept over that fertile island far and wide.

Timoleon now sent invitations everywhere, inviting exiles to return and new colonists to come and people the island. To make them sure that they would not be oppressed, a new constitution was formed, giving all the power to the people. The invitation was accepted. From all quarters colonists came, while ten thousand exiles and others sailed from Corinth. In the end no fewer than sixty thousand new citizens were added to Syracuse.

Meanwhile Timoleon put down the other despots of Sicily and set the cities free. Hicetas, his old enemy, was forced to give up his control of Leontini, to which he had retired on the loss of Syracuse. But the snake retained his venom. The Carthaginians were furious at the flight of their fleet. Hicetas stirred them up to another invasion of the liberated island.

How long they were in preparing for this expedition we do not know, but it was made on a large scale. An army of seventy thousand men landed on the western corner of the island, [Pg 283] brought thither by a fleet of two hundred triremes and one thousand transports. In the army were ten thousand heavy-armed Carthaginians, who carried white shields and wore elaborate breastplates. Among these were many of the rich men of Carthage, who brought with them costly baggage and rich articles of gold and silver. Twenty-five hundred of them were called the Sacred Band of Carthage. That great city had rarely before made such a determined effort at conquest.

Timoleon was not idle in the face of this great invasion. But the whole army he could muster was but twelve thousand strong, a pitiable total to meet so powerful a foe. And as he marched to meet the enemy distrust and fear marched in his ranks. Such was the dread that one division of the army, one thousand strong, mutinied and deserted, and it needed all his personal influence to keep the rest together.

Yet Timoleon had in him the spirit that commands success. He pushed on with his disheartened force until near the river Crimesus, beyond which was encamped the great army of Carthage. Some mules laden with parsley met the Corinthians on the road. Parsley was used for the wreaths laid on tombstones. It seemed a fatal omen. But Timoleon, with the quickness of genius, seized some of it, wove a wreath for his head, and cried, "This is our Corinthian symbol of victory: it is the sacred herb with which we decorate the victors at the Isthmian festival. Its coming signifies success." With these encouraging words he restored the spirits of the army, and led [Pg 284] them on to the top of the hill overlooking the Crimesus.

It was a misty May morning. Nothing could be seen; but from the valley a loud noise and clatter arose. The Carthaginians were on the march, and had begun to cross the stream. Soon the mist rose and the formidable host was seen. A multitude of war-chariots, each drawn by four horses, had already crossed. The ten thousand native Carthaginians, bearing their white shields, were partly across. The main body of the host was hastening in disorderly march to the rugged banks of the stream.

Fortune had favored Timoleon again. If he hoped for success this was the moment to attack. The enemy was divided and in disorder. With cheery words he bade his men to charge. The cavalry dashed on in front. Seizing a shield, Timoleon sprang to the front and led on his footmen, rousing them to activity by exultant words and bidding the trumpets to sound. Rushing down the hill and through the line of chariots, the charging mass poured on the Carthaginian infantry. These fought bravely and defied the Grecian spears with the strength of their armor. The assailants had to take to their swords, and try and hew their way through the dense ranks of the foe.

The result was in serious doubt, when once more the gods—as it seemed—came to Timoleon's aid. A violent storm suddenly arose. Darkness shrouded the hill-tops. The wind blew a hurricane.

Rain and hail poured down in torrents, while the clouds flashed with lightning and roared with thunder. And all this was on the backs of the Greeks; in the faces of the Carthaginians. They could not hear the orders of their officers. The ground became so muddy that many of them slipped and fell: and once down their heavy armor would not let them rise again. The Greeks, driven forward by the wind, attacked their foes with double energy. At length, blinded by the driving storm, distracted by the furious assault, and four hundred of their front ranks fallen, the white shield battalion turned and fled. [Pg 285]

But flight was not easy. They met their own troops coming up. The stream had become suddenly swollen with the rain. In the confused flight numbers were drowned. The panic spread from rank to rank until the whole host was in total rout, flying wildly over the hills, leaving their camp and baggage to the victors, who pursued and slaughtered them in thousands as they fled.

Such a complete victory had rarely been won. Ten thousand Carthaginians were killed and fifteen thousand made prisoners, their war chariots were captured, and the spoil found in the camp and on the track of the flying army was prodigiously great. As for the Sacred Band, it was annihilated. The story is told that it was slain to a man. The broken remnants of the flying army hastened to their ships, which they were half afraid to enter, for fear the gods that helped Timoleon would destroy them on the seas. And thus was Sicily freed.

The thousand deserters who had left Timoleon's army on its march were ordered by him to leave the island at once. They did so, crossed the Strait of Messina, and took possession of a site in southern Italy, where they were attacked by the people and every man of them slain. As regards the concluding events of our story, it will suffice to say that Timoleon had other fighting to do, with Carthaginians and despots; but his wonderful fortune continued throughout, and before long Sicily held not an enemy in arms. [Pg 286]

And now came the greatest triumph of the Corinthian victor. One master alone remained in Sicily,—himself. Despotic power was his had he said the word. The people warmly requested him to retain his control. But no; he had come to free them from tyranny, and free they should be. He laid down at once all his power, gave up the command of the army, and went to live as a private citizen of Syracuse, without office or power.

A single dominion yet remained to him,—that of affection. The people worshipped him. His voice was law. As he grew older his sight failed, until he became totally blind. Yet still, when any difficult question arose, the people trusted to their sightless benefactor to tell them what to do. On such occasions Timoleon would be brought in his car, drawn by mules across the market-place, and then by attendants into the hall of assembly. Here, still seated in his car, he would listen to the debate, and in the end give his own opinion, which was usually accepted by nearly the whole assembly. This done, the car would be drawn out again amid shouts and cheers, and the blind "father of his country" return to his modest home.

Such liberty and prosperity as now ruled in Sicily had not for a century been known, and when, three or four years after the great victory of the Crimesus, Timoleon suddenly died, the grief of the people was universal and profound. His funeral obsequies were splendidly celebrated at the public cost, his body was burned on a vast funeral pile, and as the flames flashed upward a herald proclaimed,— [Pg 287]

"The Syracusan people solemnize, at the cost of two hundred minæ, the funeral of this man, the Corinthian Timoleon, son of Timodemus. They have passed a vote to honor him for all future time with festival matches in music, horse and chariot races, and gymnastics; because, after having put down the despots, subdued the foreign enemy, and recolonized the greatest among the ruined cities, he restored to the Sicilian Greeks their constitution and laws."

And thus died one of the noblest and most successful men the world has ever known. The fratricide of his earlier years was for the good of mankind, and his whole life was consecrated to the cause of human liberty, while not a thought of self-aggrandizement seems to have ever disturbed his noble soul.

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THE SACRED WAR.

There were two places in Greece which had been set aside as sacred,—Platæa, the scene of the final defeat of the Persian invaders, and Delphi, the seat of the great temple of Apollo, in whose oracles all Greece placed faith. We have already seen how little the sacredness of Platæa protected it from ruin. We have next to see how the sacredness of Delphi was condemned, and how all Greece suffered in consequence.

The temple of Apollo at Delphi had long been held so inviolate that it became a rich reservoir of treasures, gathered throughout the centuries. Crœsus, the rich king of Lydia, sent thither the overflow of his wealth, and hundreds of others paid liberally for the promises of the priestess,

until the treasures of Delphi became a by-word in Greece. This vast wealth was felt to be safe. The god would protect his own. Men's voices were deep with awe when they told how the wrath of Apollo had overthrown the Persian robbers who sought to rifle his holy fane. And yet the time came when a horde of bandit Greeks made the temple their prey and the hand of the god was not lifted in its defence, nor did outraged Greece rise to punish the sacrilegious robbers. This is the tale that we have next to tell, that of the so-called Sacred War, with all it meant to Greece.

There was a great Greek council, centuries old, called the Amphictyonic. It met twice every year, usually for religious purposes, rarely for political. But in the time we have now reached this Amphictyonic Council ventured to meddle in politics, and made mischief of the direst character. Its first political act was to fine Sparta five hundred talents for seizing the citadel of Thebes in times of peace. The fine was to be doubled if not paid within a certain time. But as Sparta sneered at the fine, and neither paid it nor its double, the action of the council proved of little avail. [Pg 289]

BED OF THE RIVER KLADEOS.

This was of small importance; it was to the next act of the council that the mischief was due. The people of the small state of Phocis, adjoining Delphi, had been accused of cultivating a part of the Cirrhæan plain, which was consecrated to Apollo. This charge, like the former, was brought by Thebes, and the Amphictyonic Council, having fined Sparta, now, under Theban influence, laid a fine on the Phocians so heavy that it was far beyond their means of payment. But Sparta had not paid; why should they? The sentence troubled them little.

At the next meeting of the council severer measures were taken. Sparta was strong; Phocis weak. It was resolved to seize all its territory and consecrate it to Apollo. This unjust sentence roused the Phocians. A bold citizen, Philomelus by name, told them that they must now face war or ruin. The district of Delphi had once been theirs, and had been taken from them wrongfully. "Let us assert our lost rights and seize the temple," he said. "The Thebans want it; let us anticipate them and take back our own." [Pg 290]

His words took fire. A strong force was raised, the town and temple were attacked, and both, being practically undefended, were quickly captured. Phocis had regained her own, for Delphi had been taken from her during an older "Sacred War."

Philomelus now announced that the temple and its oracles would not be meddled with. Its treasures would be safe. Visitors would be free to come and go. He would give any security that Greece required that the wealth of Apollo should be safe and all go on as before. But he fortified the town, and invited mercenary soldiers till he had an army of five thousand men. As for the priestess of Apollo, from whose lips the oracles came, he demanded that she should continue to be inspired as before, and should give an oracle in his favor. The priestess refused; whereupon he seized her and sought to drag her to the holy tripod on which she was accustomed to sit. The woman, scared by his violence, cried out, "You may do what you choose!"

Philomelus at once proclaimed this as an oracle in his favor, and published it widely. And it is interesting to learn that many of the superstitious Greeks took his word for it. He certainly took the word of the priestess,—for he did what he chose.

War at once began. Many of the Greek states rose at the call of the condemned Amphictyonic Council. The Phocians were in imminent peril. They were far from strong enough for the war they had invoked. Mercenary troops—"soldiers of fortune"—must be hired; and to hire them money must be had. The citizens of Delphi had already been taxed; the Phocian treasury was empty; where was money to be obtained? [Pg 291]

Philomelus settled this question by *borrowing*, with great reluctance, a sum from the temple treasures,—to be paid back as soon as possible. But as the war went on and more money was needed, he borrowed again and again,—now without reluctance. And the practice of robbery once started, he not only paid his troops, but enriched his friends and adorned his wife from

Apollo's hoarded wealth.

By this means Philomelus got together an army of ten thousand men,—reckless, dissolute characters, the impious scum of Greece, for no pious Greek would enlist in such a cause. The war was ferocious. The allies put their prisoners to death. Philomelus followed their example. This was a losing game, and both sides gave it up. At length Philomelus and his army were caught in an awkward position, the army was dispersed, and he driven to the verge of a precipice, where he must choose between captivity or death. He chose the latter and leaped from the beetling crags.

The Thebans and their allies foolishly believed that with the death of Philomelus the war was at an end, and marched for their homes. Onomarchus, another Phocian leader, took the opportunity thus afforded to gather the scattered army together again, seized the temple once more, and stood in defiance of all his foes.

[Pg 292] In addition to gold and silver, the treasury contained many gifts in brass and iron. The precious metals were melted and converted into money; of the baser metals arms were made. Onomarchus went farther than Philomelus; he not only paid his troops with the treasure, but bribed the leaders of Grecian states, and thus gained powerful friends. He was soon successfully at war, drove back his foes, and pressed his conquests till he had captured Thermopylæ and invaded Thessaly.

Here the Phocians came into contact with a foe dangerous to themselves and to all Greece. This foe was the celebrated Philip of Macedonia, a famous soldier who was to play a leading part in the subsequent game. He had long been paving the way to the conquest of Greece, and the Sacred War gave him just the opportunity he wanted.

Macedonia lay north of Greece. Its people were not Greeks, nor like Greeks in their customs. They lived in the country, not in cities, and had little or none of the culture of Greece. But they were the stuff from which good soldiers are made. Hitherto this country had been hardly thought of as an element in the Grecian problem. Its kings were despots who had been kept busy with their foes at home. But now a king had arisen of wider views and larger mould. Philip had spent his youth in Thebes, where he had learned the art of war under Epaminondas. On coming to the throne he quickly proved himself a great soldier and a keen and cunning politician. By dint of war and trickery he rapidly spread his dominions until all his home foes were subdued, Macedonia was greatly extended, and Thessaly, the most northern state of Greece, was overrun.

[Pg 293] Therefore the invasion of Thessaly by the Phocians brought them into contact with the Macedonians. At first Onomarchus was successful. He won two battles and drove Philip back to his native state. But another large army was quickly in the field, and this time the army of Onomarchus was utterly beaten and himself slain. As for Philip, although he probably cared not an iota for the Delphian god, he shrewdly professed to be on a crusade against the impious Phocians, and drowned all his prisoners as guilty of sacrilege.

A third leader, Phayllus by name, now took command of the Phocians, and the temple of Apollo was rifled still more freely than before. The splendid gifts of King Crœsus had not yet been touched. They were held too precious to be meddled with. But Phayllus did not hesitate to turn these into money. One hundred and seventeen ingots of gold and three hundred and sixty golden goblets went to the melting-pot, and with them a golden statue three cubits high and a lion of the same precious metal. And what added to the horror of pious Greece was that much of the proceeds of these precious treasures was lavished on favorites. The necklaces of Helen and Eriphyle were given to dissolute women, and a woman flute-player received a silver cup and a golden wreath from the temple hoard.

All this gave Philip of Macedonia the desired pretence. He marched against the Phocians, who held Thermopylæ, while keeping his Athenian enemies quiet by lies and bribes. The leader of the Phocian garrison, finding that no aid came from the Athenian fleet, surrendered to Philip, and [Pg 294] that astute monarch won what he had long schemed for, the Pass of Thermopylæ, the Key of Greece.

The Sacred War was at an end, and with it virtually the independence of Greece. Phocis was in the hands of Philip, who professed more than ever to be the defender and guardian of Apollo. All the towns in Phocis were broken up into villages, and the inhabitants were ordered to be fined ten talents annually till they had paid back all they had stolen from the temple. Philip gave back the temple to the Delphians, and was himself voted into membership in the Amphictyonic assembly in place of the discarded Phocians. And all this took place while a treaty of peace tied the hands of the Greeks. The Sacred War had served as a splendid pretext to carry out the ambitious plans of the Macedonian king.

We have now a long story to tell in a few words. Another people, the Locrians, had also made an invasion on Delphian territory. The Amphictyonic Council called on Philip to punish them, He at once marched southward, but, instead of meddling with the Locrians, seized and fortified a town in Phocis. At once Athens, full of alarm, declared war, and Philip was as quick to declare war in return. Both sides sought the support of Thebes, and Athens gained it. In August, 338 B.C., the Grecian and Macedonian armies met and fought a decisive battle near Chæronea, a Bœotian town. In this great contest Alexander the Great took part.

It was a hotly-contested fight, but in the end Philip triumphed, and Greece was lost. Thebes was forced to yield. Athens, to regain the prisoners held by Philip, acknowledged him to be the [Pg 295]

head of Greece. All the other states did the same except Sparta, which defied him. He ravaged Laconia, but left the city untouched.

Two years afterwards Philip, lord and master of Greece, was assassinated at the marriage feast of his daughter. His son Alexander succeeded him. Here seemed an opportunity for Greece to regain her freedom. This untried young man could surely not retain what his able father had won. Demosthenes, the celebrated orator, stirred up Athens to revolt. Thebes sprang to arms and attacked the Macedonian garrison in the citadel.

They did not know the man with whom they had to deal. Alexander came upon Thebes like an avalanche, took it by assault, and sold into slavery all the inhabitants not slain in the assault. The city was razed to the ground. This terrible example dismayed the rest of Greece. Submission—with the exception of that of Sparta—was universal. The independence of Greece was at an end. More than two thousand years were to pass before that country would again be free.

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ALEXANDER THE GREAT AND DARIUS.

In the citadel of Gordium, an ancient town of Phrygia in Asia Minor, was preserved an old wagon, rudely built, and very primitive in structure. Tradition said that it had originally belonged to the peasant Gordius and his son Midas, rustic chiefs who had been selected by the gods and chosen by the people as the primitive kings of Phrygia. The cord which attached the yoke of this wagon to the pole, composed of fibres from the bark of the cornel tree, was tied into a knot so twisted and entangled that it seemed as if the fingers of the gods themselves must have tied it, so intricate was it and so impossible, seemingly, to untie.

An oracle had declared that the man who should untie this famous knot would become lord and monarch of all Asia. As may well be imagined, many ambitious men sought to perform the task, but all in vain. The Gordian knot remained tied and Asia unconquered in the year 333 B.C., when Alexander of Macedon, who the year before had invaded Asia, and so far had swept all before him, entered Gordium with his victorious army. As may be surmised, it was not long before he sought the citadel to view this ancient relic, which contained within itself the promise of what he had set out to accomplish. Numbers followed him, Phrygians and Macedonians, curious to see if [Pg 297] the subtle knot would yield to his conquering hand, the Macedonians with hope, the Phrygians with doubt.

While the multitude stood in silent and curious expectation, Alexander closely examined the knot, looking in vain for some beginning or end to its complexity. The thing perplexed him. Was he who had never yet failed in any undertaking to be baffled by this piece of rope, this twisted obstacle in the way of success? At length, with that angry impatience which was a leading element in his character, he drew his sword, and with one vigorous stroke severed the cord in two.

At once a shout went up. The problem was solved; the knot was severed; the genius of Alexander had led him to the only means. He had made good his title to the empire of Asia, and was hailed as predestined conqueror by his admiring followers. That night came a storm of thunder and lightning which confirmed the belief, the superstitious Macedonians taking it as the testimony of the gods that the oracle was fulfilled.

Had there been no Gordian knot and no oracle, Alexander would probably have become lord of the empire of Asia all the same, and this not only because he was the best general of his time and one of the best generals of all time, but for two other excellent reasons. One was that his father, Philip, had bequeathed to him the best army of the age. The Greeks had proved, nearly two centuries before, that their military organization and skill were far superior to those of the [Pg 298] Persians. During the interval there had been no progress in the army of Persia, while Epaminondas had greatly improved the military art in Greece, and Philip of Macedon, his pupil, had made of the Macedonian army a fighting machine such as the world had never before known. This was the army which, with still further improvements, Alexander was leading into Asia to meet the multitudinous but poorly armed and disciplined Persian host.

The second reason was that Alexander, while the best captain of his age, had opposed to him the worst. It was the misfortune of Persia that a new king, Darius Codomannus by name, had just come to the throne, and was to prove himself utterly incapable of leading an army, unless it was to lead it in flight. It was not only Alexander's great ability, but his marvellous good fortune, which led to his immense success.

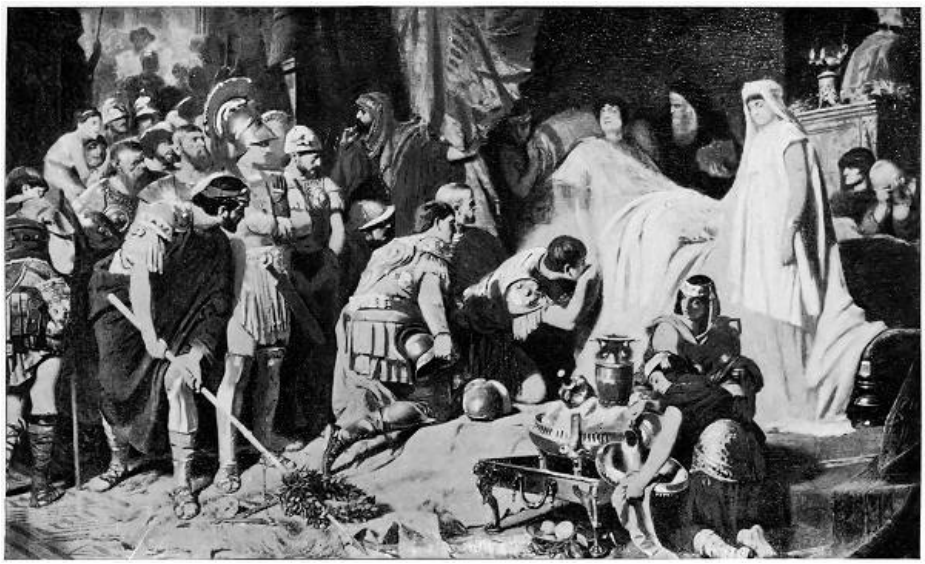
The Persians had had a good general in Asia Minor,—Memnon, a Greek of the island of Rhodes. But just at this time this able leader died, and Darius took the command on himself. He could hardly have selected a man from his ranks who would not have made a better commander-in-chief.

Gathering a vast army from his wide-spread dominions, a host six hundred thousand strong, the Persian king marched to meet his foe. He brought with him an enormous weight of baggage, there being enough gold and silver alone to load six hundred mules and three hundred camels; and so confident was he of success that he also brought his mother, wife, and children, and his whole harem, that they might witness his triumph over the insolent Macedonian. [Pg 299]

Darius took no steps to guard any of the passes of Asia Minor. Why should he seek to keep back this foe, who was marching blindly to his fate? But instead of waiting for Alexander on the plain, where he could have made use of his vast force, he marched into the defile of Issus, where there was only a mile and a half of open ground between the mountains and the sea, and where his vanguard alone could be brought into action. In this defile the two armies met, the fighting part of each being, through the folly of the Persian king, not greatly different in numbers.

The blunder of Darius was soon made fatal by his abject cowardice. The Macedonians having made a sudden assault on the Persian left wing, it gave way and fled. Darius, who was in his chariot in the centre, seeing himself in danger from this flight, suddenly lost his over-confidence, and in a panic of terror turned his chariot and fled with wild haste from the field. When he reached ground over which the chariot could not pass, he mounted hastily on horseback, flung from him his bow, shield, and royal mantle, and rode in mortal terror away, not having given a single order or made the slightest effort to rally his flying troops.

Darius had been sole commander. His flight left the great army without a leader. Not a man remained who could give a general order. Those who saw him flying were infected with his terror and turned to flee also. The vast host in the rear trampled one another down in their wild haste to get beyond the enemy's reach. The Macedonians must have looked on in amazement. The battle—or what ought to have been a battle—was over before it had fairly begun. The Persian right wing, in which was a body of Greeks, made a hard fight; but these Greeks, on finding that the king had fled, marched in good order away. The Persian cavalry, also, fought bravely until they heard that the king had disappeared, when they also turned to fly. Never had so great a host been so quickly routed, and all through the cowardice of a man who was better fitted by nature to turn a spit than to command an army. [Pg 300]



THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

But Alexander was not the man to let his enemy escape unscathed. His pursuit was vigorous. The slaughter of the fugitives was frightful. Thousands were trodden to death in the narrow and broken pass. The camp and the family of Darius were taken, together with a great treasure in coin. The slain in all numbered more than one hundred thousand.

The panic flight of Darius and his utter lack of ability did more than lose him a battle: it lost him an empire. Never was there a battle with more complete and great results. During the next two years Alexander went to work to conquer western Persia. Most of the cities yielded to him. Tyre resisted, and was taken and destroyed. Gaza, another strong city, was captured and its defenders slain. These two cities, which it took nine months to capture, gave Alexander the hardest fighting he ever had. He marched from Gaza to Egypt, which fell without resistance into his hands, and where he built the great city of Alexandria, the only existing memento of his name and deeds. Thence he marched to the Euphrates, wondering where Darius was and what he meant to do. Nearly two years had passed since the battle of Issus, and the kingly poltroon had apparently contented himself with writing letters begging Alexander to restore his family. But Alexander knew too well what a treasure he held to consent. If Darius would acknowledge him as his lord and master he could have back his wife and children, but not otherwise. [Pg 301]

Finding that all this was useless, Darius began to collect another army. He now got together a vaster host than before. It was said to contain one million infantry, forty thousand cavalry, and two hundred chariots, each of which had a projecting pole with a sharp point, while three sword-blades stood out from the yoke on either side, and scythes projected from the naves of the wheels. Darius probably expected to mow down the Macedonians in swaths with these formidable implements of war.

The army which Alexander marched against this mighty host consisted of forty thousand foot and seven thousand horse. It looked like the extreme of foolhardiness, like a pigmy advancing against a giant; yet Darius commanded one army, Alexander the other, and Issus had not been forgotten.

The affair, in fact, proved but a repetition of that at Issus. The chariots, on which Darius had counted to break the enemy's line, proved useless. Some of the horses were killed; others refused [Pg 302] to face the Macedonian pikes; some were scared by the noise and turned back; the few that reached the Greek lines found the ranks opened to let them pass.

The chariots thus disposed of, the whole Macedonian line charged. Alexander, at the head of his cavalry, pushed straight for the person of Darius. He could not get near the king, who was well protected, but he got near enough to fill his dastard soul with terror. The sight of the serried ranks of the Macedonian phalanx, the terrific noise of their war-cries, the failure of the chariots, all combined to destroy his late confidence and replace it by dread. As at Issus, he suddenly had his chariot turned round and rushed from the field in full flight.

His attendants followed. The troops around him, the best in the army, gave way. Soon the field was dense with fugitives. So thick was the cloud of dust raised by the flying multitude that nothing could be seen. Amid the darkness were heard a wild clamor of voices and the noise of the whips of the charioteers as they urged their horses to speed. The cloud of dust alone saved Darius from capture by the pursuing horsemen. The left of the Persian army fought bravely, but at length it too gave way. Everything was captured,—camp, treasure, the king's equipage, everything but the king himself. How many were killed and taken is not known, but the army, as an army, ceased to exist. As at Issus, so at Arbela, it was so miserably managed that three-fourths of it had nothing whatever to do with the battle. Its dispersal ended the Persian resistance; the [Pg 303] empire was surrendered to Alexander almost without another blow.

Great a soldier as Alexander unquestionably was, he was remarkably favored by fortune, and won the greatest empire the world had up to that time known with hardly an effort, and with less loss of men than often takes place in a single battle. The treasure gained was immense. Darius seemed to have been heaping up wealth for his conqueror. Babylon and Susa, the two great capitals of the Persian empire, contained vast accumulations of money, part of which was used to enrich the soldiers of the victorious army. At Persepolis, the capital of ancient Persia, a still greater treasure was found, amounting to one hundred and twenty thousand talents in gold and silver, or about one hundred and twenty-five million dollars. It took five thousand camels and a host of mules to transport the treasure away. The cruel conqueror rewarded the Persians for this immense gift, kept through generations for his hands, by burning the city and slaughtering its inhabitants, in revenge, as he declared, for the harm which Xerxes had done to Greece a century and a half before.

What followed must be told in a few words. The conqueror did not feel that his work was finished while Darius remained free. The dethroned king was flying eastward to Bactria. Alexander pursued him with such speed that many of his men and animals fell dead on the road. He overtook him at last, but did not capture him, as the companions of the Persian king killed [Pg 304] him and left only his dead body to the victor's hands.

For years afterwards Alexander was occupied in war, subduing the eastern part of the empire, and marching into India, where he conquered all before him. War, incessant war, was all he cared for. No tribe or nation he met was able to stand against his army. In all his career he never met a reverse in the field. He was as daring as Darius had been cowardly, exposed his life freely, and was more than once seriously wounded, but recovered quickly from his hurts.

At length, after eleven years of almost incessant war, the conqueror returned to Babylon, and here, while preparing for new wars in Arabia and elsewhere, indulged with reckless freedom in that intoxication which was his principal form of relaxation from warlike schemes and duties. As a result he was seized with fever, and in a week's time died, just at the time he had fixed to set out with army and fleet on another great career of conquest. It was in June, 323 B.C., in his thirty-third year. He had reigned only twelve years and eight months.

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST ORATOR.

DURING the days of the decline of Athens, the centre of thought to Greece, there roamed about the streets of that city a delicate, sickly lad, so feeble in frame that, at his mother's wish, he kept away from the gymnasium, lest the severe exercises there required should do him more harm than good. His delicate clothing and effeminate habits were derided by his playmates, who nicknamed him Batalus, after, we are told, a spindle-shanked flute-player. We do not know, however, just what Batalus means.

As the boy was not fit for vigorous exercise, and never likely to make a hardy soldier or sailor,

it became a question for what he was best fitted. If the body could not be exercised, the mind might be. At that time Athens had its famous schools of philosophy and rhetoric, and the art of oratory was diligently cultivated. It is interesting to know that outside of Athens Greece produced no orators, if we except Epaminondas of Thebes. The Bœotians, who dwelt north of Attica, were looked upon as dull-brained and thick-witted. The Spartans prided themselves on their few words and hard blows.

[Pg 306] The Athenians, on the contrary, were enthusiastically fond of oratory, and ardently cultivated fluency of speech. It was by this art that Themistocles kept the fleet together for the great battle of Salamis. It was by this art that Pericles so long held control of Athens. The sophists, the philosophers, the leaders of the assembly, were all adepts in the art of convincing by eloquence and argument, and oratory progressed until, in the later days of Grecian freedom, Athens possessed a group of public speakers who have never been surpassed, if equalled, in the history of the world.

It was the orators who particularly attracted the weakly lad, whose mind was as active as his body was feeble. He studied grammar and rhetoric, as did the sons of wealthy Athenians in general. And while still a mere boy he begged his tutors to take him to hear Callistratus, an able public speaker, who was to deliver an oration on some weighty political subject. The speech, delivered with all the eloquence of manner and logic of thought which marked the leading orators of that day, deeply impressed the susceptible mind of the eager lad, who went away doubtless determining in his own mind that he would one day, too, move the world with eloquent and convincing speech.

As he grew older there arose a special reason why he should become able to speak for himself. His father, who was also named Demosthenes, had been a rich man. He was a manufacturer of swords or knives, in which he employed thirty-two slaves; and also had a couch or bed factory, employing twenty more. His mother was the daughter of a rich corn-dealer of the Bosphorus. [Pg 307]

The father died when his son was seven years old, leaving his estate in the care of three guardians. These were rich men, and relatives and friends, whom he thought he could safely trust; the more so as he left them legacies in his will. Yet they proved rogues, and when Demosthenes became sixteen years of age—which made him a man under the civil law of Athens—he found that the guardians had made way with nearly the whole of his estate. Of fourteen talents bequeathed him there were less than two left. The boy complained and remonstrated in vain. The guardians declared that the will was lost; their accounts were plainly fraudulent; they evidently proposed to rob their ward of his patrimony.

This may seem to us to have been a great misfortune. It was, on the contrary, the greatest good fortune. It forced Demosthenes to become an orator. Though he never recovered his estate, he gained a fame that was of infinitely greater value. The law of Athens required that every plaintiff should plead his own cause, either in person or by a deputy speaking his words. Demosthenes felt that he must bring suit or consent to be robbed. That art of oratory, towards which he had so strong an inclination, now became doubly important. He must learn how to plead eloquently before the courts, or remain the poor victim of a party of rogues. This determined the young student of rhetoric. He would make himself an orator.

[Pg 308] He at once began an energetic course of study. There were then two famous teachers of oratory in Athens, Isocrates and Isæus. The school of Isocrates was famous, and his prices very high. The young man, with whom money was scarce, offered him a fifth of his price for a fifth of his course, but Isocrates replied that his art, like a good fish, must be sold entire. He then turned to Isæus, who was the greatest legal pleader of the period, and studied under him until he felt competent to plead his own case before the courts.

Demosthenes soon found that he had mistaken his powers. His argument was formal and long-winded. His uncouth style roused the ridicule of his hearers. His voice was weak, his breath short, his manner disconnected, his utterance confused. His pronunciation was stammering and ineffective, and in the end he withdrew from the court, hopeless and disheartened.

Fortunately, his feeble effort had been heard by a friend who was a distinguished actor, and was able to tell Demosthenes what he lacked. "You must study the art of graceful gesture and clear and distinct utterance," he said. In illustration, he asked the would-be orator to speak some passages from the poets Sophocles and Euripides, and then recited them himself, to show how they should be spoken. He succeeded in this way in arousing the boy to new and greater efforts. Nature, Demosthenes felt, had not meant him for an orator. But art can sometimes overcome nature. Energy, perseverance, determination, were necessary. These he had. He went earnestly [Pg 309] to work; and the story of how he worked and what he achieved should be a lesson for all future students of art or science.

There were two things to do. He must both write well and speak well. Delivery is only half the art. Something worth delivering is equally necessary. He read the works of Thucydides, the great historian, so carefully that he was able to write them all out from memory after an accident had destroyed the manuscript. Some say he wrote them out eight separate times. He attended the teachings of Plato, the celebrated philosopher. The repulse of Isocrates did not keep the ardent student from his classes. His naturally capable mind became filled with all that Greece had to give in the line of logical and rhetorical thought. He not only read but wrote. He prepared orations for delivery in the law courts for the use of others, and in this way eked out his small income.

In these ways he cultivated his mind. That was the lightest task. He had a great mind to begin with. But he had a weak and incapable body. If he would succeed that must be cultivated too. There was his lisping and stammering voice, his short breath, his low tones, his ungraceful gesture,—all to be overcome. How he did it is a remarkable example of what may be done in self-education.

To overcome his stammering utterance he accustomed himself to speak with pebbles in his mouth. His lack of vocal strength he overcame by running with open mouth, thus expanding his lungs. To cure his shortness of breath he practised the uttering of long sentences while walking [Pg 310] rapidly up-hill. That he might be able to make himself heard above the noise of the assembly, he would stand in stormy weather on the sea-shore at Phalerum, and declaim against the roar of the waves. For two or three months together he practised writing and speaking, day and night, in an underground chamber; and that he might not be tempted to go abroad and neglect his studies he shaved the hair from one side of his head. Dread of ridicule kept him in till his hair had grown again. To gain a graceful action, he would practise for hours before a tall mirror, watching all his movements, and constantly seeking to improve them.

Several years passed away in this hard and persistent labor. He tried public speaking again and again, each time discouraged, but each time improving,—and finally gained complete success. His voice became strong and clear, his manner graceful, his delivery emphatic and decisive, the language of his orations full of clear logic, strong statement, cutting irony, and vigorous declamation, fluent, earnest, and convincing. In brief, it may be said that he made himself the greatest orator of Greece, which is equal to saying the greatest orator of the world.

It was not only in delivery that he was great. His speeches were as convincing when read as when spoken. Fortunately, the great orators of those days prepared their speeches very carefully before delivery, and so it is that some of the best of the speeches of Demosthenes have come down to us and can be read by ourselves. The voice of the whole world pronounces these orations [Pg 311] admirable, and they have been studied by every great orator since that day.

Demosthenes had a great theme for his orations. He entered public life at a critical period. The states of Greece had become miserably weak and divided by their jealousies and intrigues. Philip of Macedon, the craftiest and ablest leader of his time, was seeking to make Greece his prey, and using gold, artifice, and violence alike to enable him to succeed in this design. Against this man Demosthenes raised his voice, thundering his unequalled denunciations before the assembly of Athens, and doing his utmost to rouse the people to the defence of their liberties. Philip had as his advocate an orator only second to Demosthenes in power, Æschines by name, whom he had secretly bribed, and who opposed his great rival by every means in his power. For years the strife of oratory and diplomacy went on. Demosthenes, with remarkable clearness of vision, saw the meaning of every movement of the cunning Macedonian, and warned the Athenians in orations that should have moved any liberty-loving people to instant and decisive action. But he talked to a weak audience. Athens had lost its old energy and public virtue. It could still listen with lapsed breath to the earnest appeals of the orator, but had grown slow and vacillating in action. Æschines had a strong party at his back, and Athens procrastinated until it was too late and the liberties of ancient Greece fell, never to rise again, on the fatal field of Chæronea.

"If Philip is the friend of Greece we are doing wrong," Demosthenes had cried. "If he is the [Pg 312] enemy of Greece we are doing right. Which is he? I hold him to be our enemy, because everything he has hitherto done has benefited him and hurt us."

The fall of Greece before the sword of its foe taught the Athenians that their orator was right. They at length learned to esteem Demosthenes at his full worth, and Ctesiphon, a leading Athenian, proposed that he should receive a golden crown from the state, and that his extraordinary merit and patriotism should be proclaimed in the theatre at the great festival of Dionysus.

Æschines declared that this was unconstitutional, and that he would bring action against Ctesiphon for breaking the laws. For six years the case remained untried, and then Æschines was forced to bring his suit. He did so in a powerful speech, in which he made a bitter attack on the whole public life of Demosthenes. When he ceased, Demosthenes rose, and in a speech which is looked upon as the most splendid master-piece of oratory ever produced, completely overwhelmed his life long opponent, who left Athens in disgust. The golden crown, which Demosthenes had so nobly won, was his, and was doubly deserved by the immortal oration to which it gave birth, the grand burst of eloquence "For the Crown."

In 323 B.C. Alexander the Great died. Then like a trumpet rang out the voice of Demosthenes, calling Greece to arms. Greece obeyed him and rose. If she would be free, now or never was the time. The war known as the Lamian war began. It ended disastrously in August, 322, and Greece [Pg 313] was again a Macedonian slave. Demosthenes and others of the patriots were condemned to death as traitors. They fled for their lives. Demosthenes sought the island of Calauri, where he took refuge in a temple sacred to Poseidon, or Neptune. Thither his foes, led by Archias, formerly a tragic actor, followed him.

Archias was not the man to hesitate about sacrilege. But the temple in which Demosthenes had taken refuge was so ancient and venerable that even he hesitated, and begged him to come out, saying that there was no doubt that he would be pardoned.

Demosthenes sat in silence, his eyes fixed on the ground. At length, as Archias continued his

appeals, in his most persuasive accents, the orator looked up and said,——

"Archias, you never moved me by your acting. You will not move me now by your promises."

At this Archias lost his temper, and broke into threats.

"Now you speak like a real Macedonian oracle," said Demosthenes, calmly. "Before you were acting. Wait a moment, then, till I write to my friends."

With these words Demosthenes rose and walked back to the inner part of the temple, though he was still visible from the front. Here he took out a roll of paper and a quill pen, which he put in his mouth and bit, as he was in the habit of doing when composing. Then he threw his head back and drew his cloak over it.

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The Thracian soldiers, who followed Archias, began to gibe at his cowardice on seeing this movement. Archias went in, renewed his persuasions, and begged him to rise, as there was no doubt that he would be well treated. Demosthenes sat in silence until he felt in his veins the working of the poison he had sucked from the pen. Then he drew the cloak from his face and looked at Archias with steady eyes.

"Now," he said, "you can play the part of Creon in the tragedy as soon as you like, and cast forth my body unburied. But I, O gracious Poseidon, quit thy temple while I yet live. Antipater and his Macedonians have done what they could to pollute it."

He walked towards the door, calling on those surrounding to support his steps, which tottered with weakness. He had just passed the altar of the god, when, with a groan, he fell, and died in the presence of his foes.

So died, when sixty-two years of age, the greatest orator, and one of the greatest patriots and statesmen, of ancient times,—a man whose fame as an orator is as great as that of Homer as a poet, while in foresight, judgment, and political skill he had not his equal in the Greece of his day. Had Athens possessed any of its old vitality he would certainly have awakened it to a new career of glory. As it was, even one as great as he was unable to give new life to that corpse of a nation which his country had become.

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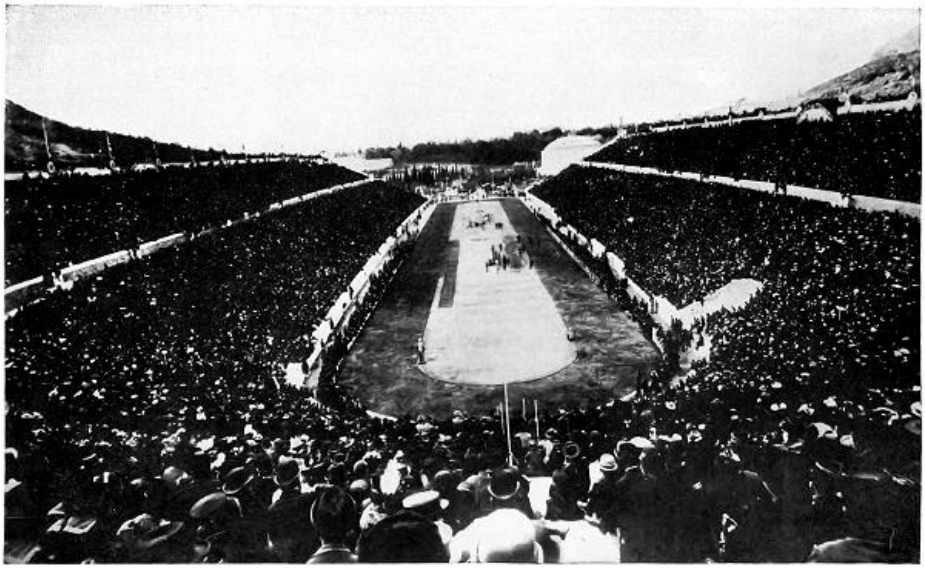
THE OLYMPIC GAMES.

The recent activity of athletic sports in this country is in a large sense a regrowth from the ancient devotion to out-door exercises. In this direction Greece, as also in its republican institutions, served as a model for the United States. The close relations between the athletics of ancient and modern times was gracefully called to attention by the reproduction of the Olympic Games at Athens in 1896, for which purpose the long abandoned and ruined Stadion, or foot-race course, of that city was restored, and races and other athletic events were conducted on the ground made classic by the Athenian athletes, and within a marble-seated amphitheatre in which the plaudits of Athens in its days of glory might in fancy still be heard.

These modern games, however, differ in character from those of the past, and are attended with none of the deeply religious sentiment which attached to the latter. The games of ancient Greece were national in character, were looked upon as occasions of the highest importance, and were invested with a solemnity largely due to their ancient institution and long-continued observance. Their purpose was not alone friendly rivalry, as in modern times, but was largely that of preparation for war, bodily activity and endurance being highly essential in the hand to hand conflicts of the ancient world. They were designed to cultivate courage and create a martial spirit, to promote contempt for pain and fearlessness in danger, to develop patriotism and public spirit, and in every way to prepare the contestants for the wars which were, unhappily, far too common in ancient Greece.

[Pg 316]



THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES IN THE STADIUM.

Each city had its costly edifices devoted to this purpose. The Stadion at Athens, within whose restored walls the modern games took place, was about six hundred and fifty feet long and one hundred and twenty-five wide, the race-course itself being six hundred Greek feet—a trifle shorter than English feet—in length. Other cities were similarly provided, and gymnastic exercises were absolute requirements of the youth of Greece,—particularly so in the case of Sparta, in which city athletic exercises formed almost the sole occupation of the male population.

But the Olympic Games meant more than this. They were not national, but international festivals, at whose celebration gathered multitudes from all the countries of Greece, those who desired being free to come to and depart from Olympia, however fiercely war might be raging between the leading nations of the land. When the Olympic Games began is not known. Their origin lay far back in the shadows of time. Several peoples of Greece claimed to have instituted such games, but those which in later times became famous were held at Olympia, a town of the small country of Elis, in the Peloponnesian peninsula. Here, in the fertile valley of the Alpheus, [Pg 317] shut in by the Messenian hills and by Mount Cronion, was erected the ancient Stadion, and in its vicinity stood a great gymnasium, a palæstra (for wrestling and boxing exercises), a hippodrome (for the later chariot races), a council hall, and several temples, notably that of the Olympian Zeus, where the victors received the olive wreaths which were the highly valued prizes for the contests.

This temple held the famous colossal statue of Zeus, the noblest production of Greek art, and looked upon as one of the wonders of the world. It was the work of Phidias, the greatest of Grecian sculptors, and was a seated statue of gold and ivory, over forty feet in height. The throne of the king of the gods was mostly of ebony and ivory, inlaid with precious stones, and richly sculptured in relief. In the figure, the flesh was of ivory, the drapery of gold richly adorned with flowers and figures in enamel. The right hand of the god held aloft a figure of victory, the left hand rested on a sceptre, on which an eagle was perched, while an olive wreath crowned the head. On the countenance dwelt a calm and serious majesty which it needed the genius of a Phidias to produce, and which the visitors to the temple beheld with awe.

The Olympic festival, whose date of origin, as has been said, is unknown, was revived in the year 884 B.C., and continued until the year 394 A.D., when it was finally abolished, only to be revived at the city of Athens fifteen hundred years later. The games were celebrated after the completion of every fourth year, this four year period being called an "Olympiad," and used as the [Pg 318] basis of the chronology of Greece, the first Olympiad dating from the revival of the games in 884 B.C.

These games at first lasted but a single day, but were extended until they occupied five days. Of these the first day was devoted to sacrifices, the three following days to the contests, and the last day to sacrifices, processions, and banquets. For a long period single foot-races satisfied the desires of the Eleans and their visitors. Then the double foot-race was added. Wrestling and other athletic exercises were introduced in the eighth century before Christ. Then followed boxing. This was a brutal and dangerous exercise, the combatants' hands being bound with heavy leather thongs which were made more rigid by pieces of metal. The four-horse chariot-race came later; afterwards the pancratium (wrestling and boxing, without the leaded thongs); boys' races and wrestling and boxing matches; foot-races in a full suit of armor; and in the fifth century, two-horse chariot-races. Nero, in the year 68 A.D., introduced musical contests, and the games were finally abolished by Theodosius, the Christian emperor, in the year 394 A.D.

Olympia was not a city or town. It was simply a plain in the district of Pisatis. But it was so surrounded with magnificent temples and other structures, so adorned with statues, and so abundantly provided with the edifices necessary to the games, that it in time grew into a locality of remarkable architectural beauty and grandeur. Here was the sacred grove of Altis, where [Pg 319] grew the wild olive which furnished the wreaths for the victors, a simple olive wreath forming the ordinary prize of victory; in the four great games the victor was presented with a palm branch,

which he carried in his right hand. Near this grove was the Hippodrome, where the chariot-races took place. The great Stadion stood outside the temple enclosure, where lay the most advantageous stretch of ground.

The training required for participants in these sacred games was severe. No one was allowed to take part unless he had trained in the gymnasium for ten months in advance. No criminal, nor person with any blood impurity, could compete, a mere pimple on the body being sufficient to rule a man out. In short, only perfect and completely trained specimens of manhood were admitted to the lists, while the fathers and relatives of a contestant were required to swear that they would use no artifice or unfair means to aid their relative to a victory. The greatest care was also taken to select judges whose character was above even the possibility of bribery.

Women were not permitted to appear at the games, and whoever disobeyed this law was to be thrown from a rock. On certain occasions, however, their presence was permitted, and there were a series of games and races in which young girls took part. In time it became the custom to diversify the games with dramas, and to exhibit the works of artists, while poets recited their latest odes, and other writers read their works. Here Herodotus read his famous history to the vast assemblage.

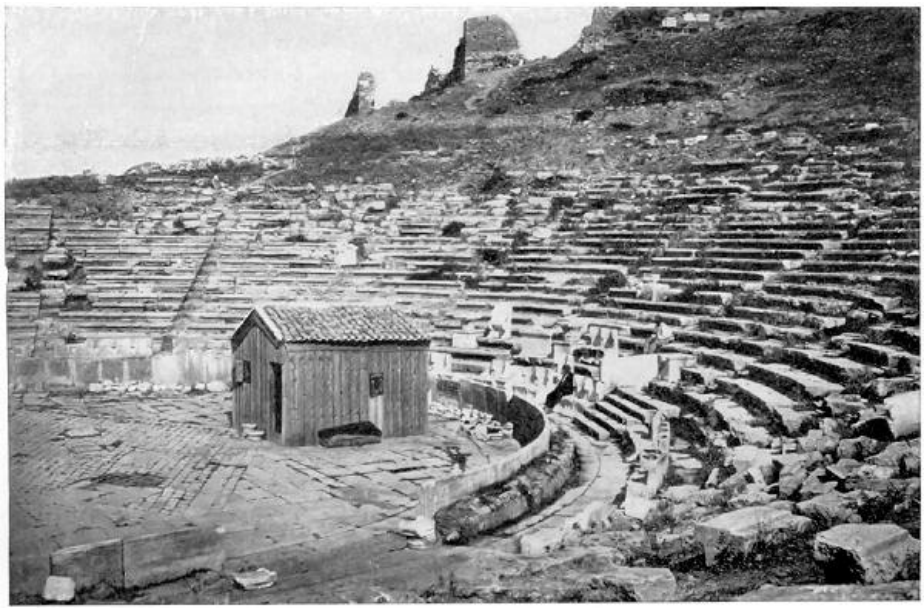
Victory in these contests was esteemed the highest of honors. When the victor was crowned, [Pg 320] the heralds loudly proclaimed his name, with those of his father and his city or native land. He was also privileged to erect a statue in honor of his triumph at a particular place in the sacred Altis. This was done by many of the richer victors, while the winners in the chariot-races often had not only their own figures, but those of their chariots and horses, reproduced in bronze.

In addition to the Olympic, Greece possessed other games, which, like the former, were of great popularity, and attracted crowds from all parts of the country. The principal among these were the Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games, though there were various others of less importance. Of them all, however, the Olympic games were much the oldest and most venerated, and in the laws of Solon every Athenian who won an Olympic prize was given the large reward of five hundred drachmas, while an Isthmian prize brought but one hundred drachmas.

On several occasions the Olympic games became occasions of great historical interest. One of these was the ninetieth Olympiad, of 420 B.C., which took place during the peace between Athens and Sparta,—in the Peloponnesian war Athens having been excluded from the two preceding ones. It was supposed that the impoverishment of Athens would prevent her from appearing with any splendor at this festival, but that city astonished Greece by her ample show of golden ewers, censers, etc., in the sacrifice and procession, while in the chariot-races Alcibiades far distanced [Pg 321] all competitors. One well-equipped chariot and four usually satisfied the thirst for display of a rich Greek, but he appeared with no less than seven, while his horses were of so superior power that one of his chariots won a first, another a second, and another a fourth prize, and he had the honor of being twice crowned with olive. In the banquet with which he celebrated his triumph he surpassed the richest of his competitors by the richness and splendor of the display.

On the occasion of the one hundred and fourth Olympiad, war existing between Arcadia and Elis, a combat took place in the sacred ground itself, an unholy struggle which dishonored the sanctuary of Panhellenic brotherhood, and caused the great temple of Zeus to be turned into a fortress against the assailants. During this war the Arcadians plundered the treasures of these holy temples, as those of the temple at Delphi were plundered at a later date.

Another occasion of interest in the Olympic games occurred in the ninety-ninth Olympiad, when Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily, sent his legation to the sacrifice, dressed in the richest garments, abundantly furnished with gold and silver plate, and lodged in splendid tents. Several chariots contended for him in the races, while a number of trained reciters and chorists were sent to exhibit his poetical compositions before those who would listen to them. His chariots were magnificent, his horses of the rarest excellence, the delivery of his poems eloquently performed; but among those present were many of the sufferers by his tyranny, and the display ended in the [Pg 322] plundering of his gold and purple tent, and the disgraceful lack of success of his chariots, some of which were overturned and broken to pieces. As for the poems, they were received with a ridicule which caused the deepest humiliation and shame to their proud composer.



THE THEATRE OF BACCHUS, ATHENS.

The people of Greece, and particularly those of Athens, did not, however, restrict their public enjoyments to athletic exercises. Abundant provision for intellectual enjoyment was afforded. They were not readers. Books were beyond the reach of the multitude. But the loss was largely made up to them by the public recitals of poetry and history, the speeches of the great orators, and in particular the dramatic performances, which were annually exhibited before all the citizens of Athens who chose to attend.

The stage on which these dramas were performed, at first a mere platform, then a wooden edifice, became finally a splendid theatre, wrought in the sloping side of the Acropolis, and presenting a vast semicircle of seats, cut into the solid rock, rising tier above tier, and capable of accommodating thirty thousand spectators. At first no charge was made for admission, and when, later, the crowd became so great that a charge had to be made, every citizen of Athens who desired to attend, and could not afford to pay, was presented from the public treasury with the price of one of the less desirable seats.

Annually, at the festivals of Dionysus, or Bacchus, and particularly at the great Dionysia, held at the of March and beginning of April, great tragic contests were held, lasting for two days, [Pg 323] during which the immense theatre was filled with crowds of eager spectators. A play seldom lasted more than an hour and a half, but three on the same general subject, called a trilogy, were often presented in succession, and were frequently followed by a comic piece from the same poet. That the actors might be heard by the vast open-air audiences, some means of increasing the power of the voice was employed, while masks were worn to increase the apparent size of the head, and thick-soled shoes to add to the height.

The chorus was a distinctive feature of these dramas,—tragedies and comedies alike. As there were never more than three actors upon the stage, the chorus—twelve to fifteen in number—represented other characters, and often took part in the action of the play, though their duty was usually to diversify the movement of the play by hymns and dirges, appropriate dances, and the music of flutes. For centuries these dramatic representations continued at Athens, and formed the basis of those which proved so attractive to Roman audiences, and which in turn became the foundation-stones of the modern drama.

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PYRRHUS AND THE ROMANS.

SEVEN years after the death of Alexander, the Macedonian conqueror, there was born in Epirus, a country of Greece, a warrior who might have rivalled Alexander's fortune and fame had he, like him, fought against Persians. But he had the misfortune to fight against Romans, and his story became different. He was the greatest general of his time. Hannibal has said that he was the greatest of any age. But Rome was not Persia, and a Roman army was not to be dealt with like a Persian horde. Had Alexander marched west instead of east, he would probably not have won the title of "Great."

Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, claimed descent from Pyrrhus, son of Achilles. While still an infant a rebellion broke out in Epirus. His father was absent, and the rebel chiefs sought to kill him, but he was hurried away in his nurse's arms, and his life saved. When he was ten years old, Glaucius,

king of Illyria, who had brought him up among his own children, conquered Epirus and placed him on the throne. Seven years afterwards rebellion broke out again, and Pyrrhus had once more to fly for his life. He now fought in some great battles, married the daughter of the king of Egypt, returned with an army, and again became king of Epirus. He afterwards conquered all [Pg 325] Macedonia, and, like Alexander the Great, whose fame he envied, looked about him for other worlds to conquer.

During the years over which our tales have passed a series of foreign powers had threatened Greece. First, in the days of legend, it had found a foreign enemy in Troy. Next came the great empire of Persia, with which it had for centuries to deal. Then rose Macedonia, the first conqueror of Greece. Meanwhile, in the west, a new enemy had been slowly growing in power and thirst for conquest, that of Rome, before whose mighty arm Greece was destined to fall and vanish from view as one of the powers of the earth. And the first of the Greeks to come in warlike contact with the Romans was Pyrrhus. How this came about, and what arose from it, we have now to tell.

Step by step the ambitious Romans had been extending their power over Italy. They were now at war with Tarentum, a city of Greek origin on the south Italian coast. The Tarentines, being hard pressed by their vigorous foes, sent an embassy to Greece, and asked Pyrrhus, then the most famous warrior of the Grecian race, to come to their aid against their enemy. This was in the year 281 B.C.

Pyrrhus had been for some years at peace, building himself a new capital city, which he profusely adorned with pictures and statues. But peace was not to his taste. Consumed by ambition, restless in temperament, and anxious to make himself a rival in fame of Alexander the Great, he was ready enough to accept this request, and measure his strength in battle against the [Pg 326] most warlike nation of the West.

His wise counsellor, Cineas, asked him what he would do next, if he should overcome the Romans, who were said to be great warriors and conquerors of many peoples.

"The Romans once overcome," he said, proudly, "no city, Greek or barbarian, would dare to oppose me, and I should be master of all Italy."

"Well," said Cineas, "if you conquer Italy, what next?"

"Greater victories would follow. There are Libya and Carthage to be won."

"And then?" asked Cineas.

"Then I should be able to master all Greece."

"And then?" continued the counsellor.

"Then," said Pyrrhus, "I would live at ease, eat and drink all day, and enjoy pleasant conversation."

"And what hinders you from taking your ease now, without all this peril and bloodshed?"

Pyrrhus had no answer to this. But thirst for fame drove him on, and the days of ease never came.

In the following year Pyrrhus crossed to Italy with an army of about twenty-five thousand men, and with a number of elephants, animals which the Romans had never seen, and with which he hoped to frighten them from the battle-field. He had been promised the aid of all southern Italy, and an army of three hundred and fifty thousand infantry and twenty thousand cavalry. In this he was destined to disappointment. He found the people of Tarentum given up to frivolous pleasure, enjoying their theatres and festivals, and expecting that he would do their fighting while they [Pg 327] spent their time in amusement.

They found, however, that they had gained a master instead of a servant. Frivolity was not the idea of war held by Pyrrhus. He at once shut up the theatre, the gymnasia, and the public walks, stopped all feasting and revelry throughout the city, closed the clubs or brotherhoods, and kept the citizens under arms all day. Some of them, in disgust at this stern discipline, left the city. Pyrrhus thereupon closed the gates, and would let none out without permission. He even went so far as to put to death some of the demagogues, and to send others into exile. By these means he succeeded in making something like soldiers of the pleasure-loving Tarentines.

Thus passed the winter. Meanwhile, the Romans had been as active as their enemies. They made the most energetic preparations for war, and with the opening of the spring were in the field. Pyrrhus, who had failed to receive the great army promised him, did not feel strong enough to meet the Roman force. He offered peace and arbitration, but his offers were scornfully rejected. He then sent spies to the Roman camp. One of these was caught and permitted to observe the whole army on parade. He was then sent back to Pyrrhus, with the message that if he wanted to see the Roman army he had better come himself in open day, instead of sending spies by night.

The two armies met at length on the banks of the river Siris, where Rome fought its first great [Pg 328] battle with a foreign foe. The Romans were the stronger, but the Greeks had the advantage in arms and discipline. The conflict that followed was very different from the one fought by Alexander at Issus. So courageous and unyielding were the contestants that each army seven

times drove back its foes.

"Beware," said an officer to Pyrrhus, as he charged at the head of his cavalry, "of that barbarian on the black horse with white feet. He has marked you for his prey."

"What is fated no man can avoid," said the king, heroically. "But neither this man nor the stoutest soldier in Italy shall encounter me for nothing."

At that instant the Italian rode at him with levelled lance and killed his horse. But his own was killed at the same instant, and while Pyrrhus was remounting his daring foe was surrounded and slain.

On this field, for the first time, the Greek spear encountered the Roman sword. The Macedonian phalanx with its long pikes was met by the Roman legion with its heavy blades. The pike of the phalanx had hitherto conquered the world. The sword of the legion was hereafter to take its place. But now neither seemed able to overcome the other. In vain the Romans sought to hew a way with their swords through the forest of pikes, and as a last resort the Roman general brought up a chosen body of cavalry, which he had held in reserve. These came on in fierce charge, but Pyrrhus met them with a more formidable reserve,—his elephants.

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On beholding these strange monsters, terrible alike to horse and rider, the Roman cavalry fell back in confusion. The horses could not be brought to face their huge opponents. Their disorder broke the ranks of the infantry. Pyrrhus charged them with his Thessalian cavalry, and the Roman army was soon in total rout, leaving its camp to the mercy of its foes.

During the battle Pyrrhus, knowing that the safety of his army depended on his own life, exchanged his arms, helmet, and scarlet cloak for the armor of Megacles, one of his officers. The borrowed splendor proved fatal to Megacles. The Romans made him their mark. Every one struck at him. He was at last struck down and slain, and his helmet and cloak were carried to Lavinus, the Roman commander, who had them borne in triumph along his ranks. Pyrrhus, fearing that this mistake might prove fatal, at once threw off his helmet and rode bareheaded along his own line, to let his soldiers see that he was still alive, and that a scarlet cloak was not a king.

The battle over, Pyrrhus surveyed the field, strewn thickly with the dead of both armies, his valiant soul moved to a new respect for his foes.

"If I had such soldiers," he cried, "I could conquer the world." Then, noting the numbers of his own dead, he added, "Another such victory, and I must return to Epirus alone."

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He sent Cineas, his wise counsellor, to Rome to offer terms of peace. Nearly four thousand of his army had fallen, and these largely Greeks; the weather was unfavorable for an advance; alliance with these brave foes might be wiser than war. Many of the Romans, too, thought the same; but while they were debating in the Forum there was borne into this building the famous censor Appius Claudius, once a leader in Rome, now totally blind and in extreme old age. His advent was like that of blind Timoleon to the Syracusan senate. The senators listened in deepest silence when the old man rose to speak. What he said we do not know, but his voice was for war, and the senate, moved by his impassioned appeal, voted that there should be no peace with Pyrrhus while he remained in Italy, and ordered Cineas to leave Rome, with this ultimatum, that very day.

Peace refused, Pyrrhus advanced against Rome. He marched through a territory which for years had been free from the ravages of war, and was in a state of flourishing prosperity. It was plundered by his soldiers without mercy. On he came until Rome itself lay visible to his eyes from an elevation but eighteen miles away. Another day's march would have brought him to its walls. But a strong Roman army was in his front; another army hung upon his rear; his own army was weakened by dissensions between the Greeks and Italians; he deemed it prudent to retreat with the plunder he had gained.

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Another winter passed. Pyrrhus had many prisoners, whom he would not exchange or ransom unless the Romans would accept peace. But he treated them well, and even allowed them to return to Rome to enjoy the winter holiday of the Saturnalia, on their solemn promise that they would return if peace was still refused. The senate was still firm for war, and the prisoners returned after the holidays, the sturdy Romans having passed an edict that any prisoner who should linger in Rome after the day fixed for the return should suffer death.

In the following spring another battle was fought near Asculum, on the plains of Apulia. Once more the Roman sword was pitted against the Macedonian pike. The nature of the ground was such that the Romans were forced to attack their enemy in front, and they hewed in vain with their swords upon the wall of pikes, which they even grasped with their hands and tried to break. The Greeks kept their line intact, and the Romans were slaughtered without giving a wound in return. At length they gave way. Then the elephants charged, and the repulse became a rout. But this time the Romans fled only to their camp, which was close at hand. They had lost six thousand men. Pyrrhus had lost three thousand five hundred of his light-armed troops. The heavy-armed infantry was almost unharmed.

Here was another battle that proved almost as bad as a defeat. Pyrrhus had lost many of the men he had brought from Epirus. He was not in condition to take the field again, and no more soldiers could just then be had from Greece. The Romans were now willing to make a truce, and Pyrrhus crossed soon after to Sicily, to aid the Greeks of that island against their Carthaginian

foes, He remained there two years, fighting with varied success and defeat. Then he returned to Tarentum, which again needed his aid against its persistent Roman enemies. [Pg 332]

On his way there Pyrrhus passed through Locri. Here was a famous temple of Proserpine, in whose vaults was a large treasure, which had been buried for an unknown period, and on which no mortal eye was permitted to gaze. Pyrrhus took bad advice and plundered the temple of the sacred treasure, placing it on board his ships. A storm arose and wrecked the ships, and the stolen treasure was cast back on the Locrian coast. Pyrrhus now ordered it to be restored, and offered sacrifices to appease the offended goddess. She gave no signs of accepting them. He then put to death the three men who had advised the sacrilege, but his mind continued haunted with dread of divine vengeance. Proserpine, who was seemingly deeply offended, might bring upon him ruin and defeat, and the hearts of his soldiers were weakened by dread of impending evils.

Once more Pyrrhus met the Romans in the field, but no longer with success. One of his elephants was wounded, and ran wildly into his ranks, throwing them into disorder. Eight of these animals were driven into ground from which there was no escape. They were captured by the Romans. As the battle continued one wing of the Roman army was repulsed; but they assailed the elephants with such a shower of light weapons that these huge brutes turned and fled through the ranks of the phalanx, throwing it into disorder. On their heels came the Romans. The Greek line once broken, the swords of the Romans gave them a great advantage over the long [Pg 333] spears of the enemy. Cut down in numbers, the Greeks were thrown into confusion, and were soon flying in panic, hotly pursued by their foes. How many were slain is not known, but the defeat was decisive. Retreating to Tarentum, Pyrrhus resolved to leave Italy, disgusted with his failure and with the supineness of his allies, and disappointed in his ambitious hopes. He reached Epirus again with little more than eight thousand troops, and without money enough to maintain even these. Thus ended the first meeting of Greeks and Romans in war.

The remainder of the story of Pyrrhus may be soon told. He had counted on living in ease after his wars, but ease was not for him. His remaining life was spent in war. He invaded and conquered Macedonia. He engaged in war against the Spartans, and was repulsed from their capital city. At last, in his attack on Argos, while forcing his way through its streets, he fell by a woman's hand. A tile was cast from a house on his head, which hurled him stunned from his horse, and he was killed in the street. Thus ignobly perished the greatest general of his age.

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PHILOPŒMEN AND THE FALL OF SPARTA.

The history of Greece may well seem remarkable to modern readers, since it brings us in contact with conditions which have ceased to exist anywhere upon the earth. To gain some idea of its character, we should have to imagine each of the counties of one of our American States to be an independent nation, with its separate government, finances, and history, its treaties of peace and declarations of war, and its frequent fierce conflicts with some neighboring county. Each of these counties would have its central city, surrounded by high walls, and its citizens ready at any moment to take arms against some other city and march to battle against foes of their own race and blood. In some cases a single county would have three or four cities, each hostile to the others, like the cities of Thebes, Platæa, Thespiæ, and Orchomenos, in Bœotia; standing ready, like fierce dogs each in its separate kennel, to fall upon one another with teeth and claws. It may further be said that of the population of these counties five out of every six were slaves, and that these slaves were white men, most of them of Greek descent. The general custom in those days was either to slay prisoners in cold blood, or sell them to spend the remainder of their lives in slavery.

This state of affairs was not confined to Greece. It existed in Italy until Rome conquered all its [Pg 335] small neighbor states. It existed in Asia until the great Babylonian and Persian empires conquered all the smaller communities. It was the first form of a civilized nation, that of a city surrounded by enough farming territory to supply its citizens with food, each city ready to break into war with any other, and each race of people viewing all beyond its borders as strangers and barbarians, to be dealt with almost as if they were beasts of prey instead of men and brothers.

The cities of Greece were not only thus isolated, but each had its separate manners, customs, government, and grade of civilization. Athens was famous for its intellectual cultivation; Thebes had a reputation for the heavy-headed dulness of its people; Sparta was a rigid war school, and so on with others. In short, the world has gone so far beyond the political and social conditions of that period that it is by no means easy for us to comprehend the Grecian state.

Among those cities Sparta stood in one sense alone. While the others were enclosed in strong walls, Sparta remained open and free,—its only wall being the valorous hearts and strong arms of its inhabitants. While other cities were from time to time captured and occasionally destroyed, no foeman had set foot within Sparta's streets. Not until the days of Epaminondas was Laconia invaded by a powerful foe; and even then Sparta remained free from the foeman's tread. Neither

Philip of Macedon, nor his son Alexander, entered this proud city, and it was not until the troublous later times that the people of Sparta, feeling that their ancient warlike virtue was gone, built around their city a wall of defence. [Pg 336]

But the humiliation of that proud city was at hand. It was to be entered by a foeman; the laws of Lycurgus, under which it had risen to such might, were to come to an end; and lordly Sparta was to sink into insignificance, and its glory remain but a memory to man.

About the year 252 B.C. was born Philopœmen, the last of the great generals of Greece. He was the son of Craugis, a citizen of Megalopolis, the great city which Epaminondas had built in Arcadia. Here he was thoroughly educated in philosophy and the other learning of the time; but his natural inclination was towards the life of a soldier, and he made a thorough study of the use of arms and the management of horses, while sedulously seeking the full development of his bodily powers. Epaminondas was the example he set himself, and he came little behind that great warrior in activity, sagacity, and integrity, though he differed from him in being possessed of a hot, contentious temper, which often carried him beyond the bounds of judgment.

Philopœmen was marked by plain manners and a genial disposition, in proof of which Plutarch tells an amusing story. In his later years, when he was general of a great Grecian confederation, word was brought to a lady of Megara that Philopœmen was coming to her house to await the return of her husband, who was absent. The good lady, all in a tremor, set herself hurriedly to [Pg 337] prepare a supper worthy of her guest. While she was thus engaged a man entered dressed in a shabby cloak, and with no mark of distinction. Taking him for one of the general's train who had been sent on in advance, the housewife called on him to help her prepare for his master's visit. Nothing loath, the visitor threw off his cloak, seized the axe she offered him, and fell lustily to work in cutting up fire-wood.

While he was thus engaged, the husband returned, and at once recognized in his wife's lackey the expected visitor.

"What does this mean, Philopœmen?" he cried, in surprise.

"Nothing," replied the general, "except that I am paying the penalty of my ugly looks."

Philopœmen had abundant practice in the art of war. Between Arcadia and Laconia hostility was the normal condition, and he took part in many plundering incursions into the neighboring state. In these he always went in first and came out last. When there was no fighting to be done he would go every evening to an estate he owned several miles from town, would throw himself on the first mattress in his way and sleep like a common laborer, and rising at break of day would go to work in the vineyard or at the plough. Then returning to the town, he would employ himself in public business or in friendly intercourse during the remainder of the day.

When Philopœmen was thirty years old, Cleomenes, the Spartan king, one night attacked [Pg 338] Megalopolis, forced the guards, broke in, and seized the market-place. The citizens sprang to arms, Philopœmen at their head, and a desperate conflict ensued in the streets. But their efforts were in vain, the enemy held their ground. Then Philopœmen set himself to aid the escape of the citizens, making head against the foe while his fellow-townsmen left the city. At last, after losing his horse and receiving several wounds, he fought his way out through the gate, being the last man to retreat. Cleomenes, finding that the citizens would not listen to his fair offers for their return, and tired of guarding empty houses, left the place after pillaging it and destroying all he readily could.

The next year Philopœmen took part in a battle between King Antigonus of Macedonia and the Spartans, in which the victory was due to his charging the enemy at the head of the cavalry against the king's orders.

"How came it," asked the king after the battle, "that the horse charged without waiting for the signal?"

"We were forced into it against our wills by a young man of Megalopolis," was the reply.

"That young man," said Antigonus, with a smile, "acted like an experienced commander."

During this battle a javelin, flung by a strong hand, passed through both his thighs, the head coming out on the other side. "There he stood awhile," says Plutarch, "as if he had been shackled, unable to move. The fastening which joined the thong to the javelin made it difficult to get it [Pg 339] drawn out, nor would any one about him venture to do it. But the fight being now at its hottest, and likely to be quickly decided, he was transported with the desire of partaking in it, and struggled and strained so violently, setting one leg forward, the other back, that at last he broke the shaft in two; and thus got the pieces pulled out. Being in this manner set at liberty, he caught up his sword, and running through the midst of those who were fighting in the first ranks, animated his men, and set them afire with emulation."

As may be imagined, a man of such indomitable courage could not fail to make his mark. Antigonus wished to engage him in his service, but Philopœmen refused, as he knew his temper would not let him serve under others. His thirst for war took him to Crete, where he brought the cavalry of that island to a state of perfection never before known in Greece.

And now a new step in political progress took place in the Peloponnesus. The cities of Achæa joined into a league for common aid and defence. Other cities joined them, until it was hoped that

all Peloponnesus would be induced to combine into one commonwealth. There had been leagues before in Greece, but they had all been dominated by some one powerful city. The Achæan League was the first that was truly a federal republic in organization, each city being an equal member of the confederacy.

Philopœmen, whose name had grown to stand highest among the soldiers of Greece, was chosen as general of the cavalry, and at once set himself to reform its discipline and improve its [Pg 340] tactics. By his example he roused a strong warlike fervor among the people, inducing them to give up all display and exercise but those needed in war. "Nothing then was to be seen in the shops but plate breaking up or melting down, gilding of breastplates, and studding buckles and bits with silver; nothing in the places of exercise but horses managing and young men exercising their arms; nothing in the hands of the women but helmets and crests of feathers to be dyed, and the military cloaks and riding frocks to be embroidered.... Their arms becoming light and easy to them with constant use, they longed for nothing more than to try them with an enemy, and fight in earnest."

Two years afterwards, in 208 B.C., Philopœmen was elected *strategus*, or general in-chief, of the Achæan league. The martial ardor of the army he had organized was not long left unsatisfied. It was with his old enemy, the Spartans, that he was first concerned. Machanidas, the Spartan king, having attacked the city of Mantinea, Philopœmen marched against him, and soon gave him other work to do. A part of the Achæan army flying, Machanidas hotly pursued. Philopœmen held back his main body until the enemy had become scattered in pursuit, when he charged upon them with such energy that they were repulsed, and over four thousand were killed. Machanidas returning in haste, strove to cross a deep ditch between him and his foe; but as he was struggling up its side, Philopœmen transfixed him with his javelin, and hurled him back dead into the muddy [Pg 341] ditch.

This victory greatly enhanced the fame of the Arcadian general. Some time afterwards he and a party of his young soldiers entered the theatre during the Nemean games, just as the actor was speaking the opening words of the play called "The Persians:"

"Under his conduct Greece was glorious and was free."

The whole audience at once turned towards Philopœmen, and clapped their hands with delight. It seemed to them that in this valiant warrior the ancient glory of Greece had returned, and for the time some of the old-time spirit came back. But, despite this momentary glow, the sun of Grecian freedom and glory was near its setting. A more dangerous enemy than Macedonia had arisen. Rome, which Pyrrhus had gone to Italy to seek, had its armies now in Greece itself, and the independence of that country would soon be no more.

The next exploit of Philopœmen had to do with Messenia. Nabis, the new Spartan king, had taken that city at a time when Philopœmen was out of command, the generalship of the League not being permanent. He tried to persuade Lysippus, then general of the Achæans, to go to the relief of Messenia, but he refused, saying that it was lost beyond hope. Thereupon Philopœmen set out himself, followed by such of his fellow citizens as deemed him their general by nature's commission. The very wind of his coming won the town. Nabis, hearing that Philopœmen was [Pg 342] near at hand, slipped hastily out of the city by the opposite gates, glad to get away in safety. He escaped, but Messenia was recovered. The martial spirit of Philopœmen next took him to Crete, where fighting was to be had to his taste. Yet he left his native city of Megalopolis so pressed by the enemy that its people were forced to sow grain in their very streets. However, he came back at length, met Nabis in the field, rescued the army from a dangerous situation, and put the enemy to flight. Soon after he made peace with Sparta, and achieved a remarkable triumph in inducing that great and famous city to join the Achæan League. In truth, the nobles of Sparta, glad to have so important an ally, sent Philopœmen a valuable present. But such was his reputation for honor that for a time no man could be found who dared offer it to him; and when at length the offer was made he went to Sparta himself, and advised its nobles, if they wanted any one to bribe, to let it not be good men, but those ill citizens whose seditious voices needed to be silenced.

In the end Sparta was destined to suffer at the hands of its incorruptible ally, it having revolted from the League. Philopœmen marched into Laconia, led his army unopposed to Sparta, and took possession of that famous seat of Mars, within which no hostile foot had hitherto been set. He razed its walls to the ground, put to death those who had stirred the city to rebellion, and took away a great part of its territory, which he gave to Megalopolis. Those who had been made citizens of Sparta by tyrants he drove from the country, and three thousand who refused to go he [Pg 343] sold into slavery; and, as a further insult, with the money received from their sale he built a colonnade at Megalopolis.

Finally, as a death-blow to Spartan power, he abolished the time-honored laws of Lycurgus, under which that city had for centuries been so great, and forced the people to educate their children and live in the same manner as the Achæans. Thus ended the glory of Sparta. Some time afterwards its citizens resumed their old laws and customs, but the city had sunk from its high estate, and from that time forward vanished from history.

At length, being then seventy years of age, misfortune came to this great warrior and ended his warlike career. An enemy of his had induced the Messenians to revolt from the Achæan League. At once the old soldier, though lying sick with a fever at Argos, rose from his bed, and reached Megalopolis, fifty miles away, in a day. Putting himself at the head of an army, he

marched to meet the foe. In the fight that followed his force was driven back, and he became separated from his men in his efforts to protect the rear. Unluckily his horse stumbled in a stony place, and he was thrown to the ground and stunned. The enemy, who were following closely, at once made him prisoner, and carried him, with insult and contumely, and with loud shouts of triumph, to the city gates, through which the very tidings of his coming had once driven a triumphant foe.

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The Messenians rapidly turned from anger to pity for their noble foe, and would probably have in the end released him, had time been given them. But Dinocrates, their general and his enemy, resolved that Philopœmen should not escape from his hands. He confined him in a close prison, and, learning that his army had returned and were determined upon his rescue, decided that that night should be Philopœmen's last.

The prisoner lay—not sleeping, but oppressed with grief and trouble—in his prison cell, when a man entered bearing poison in a cup. Philopœmen sat up, and, taking the cup, asked the man if he had heard anything of the Achæan horsemen.

"The most of them got off safe," said the man.

"It is well," said Philopœmen, with a cheerful look, "that we have not been in every way unfortunate."

Then, without a word more, he drank the poison and lay down again. As he was old and weak from his fall, he was quickly dead.

The news of his death filled all Achæa with lamentation and thirst for revenge. Messenia was ravaged with fire and sword till it submitted. Dinocrates and all who had voted for Philopœmen's death killed themselves to escape death by torture. All Achæa mourned at his funeral, statues were erected to his memory, and the highest honors decreed to him in many cities. In the words of Pausanias, a late Greek writer, "Miltiades was the first, and Philopœmen the last, benefactor to the whole of Greece."

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THE DEATH-STRUGGLE OF GREECE.

Greece learned too late the art of combining for self-defence. In the war against the vast power of Persia, Athens stood almost alone. What aid she got from the rest of Greece was given grudgingly. Themistocles had to gain the aid of the Grecian fleet at Salamis by a trick. Philip of Macedonia conquered Greece by dividing it and fighting it piecemeal. Only after the close of the Macedonian power and the beginning of that of Rome did Greece begin to learn the art of unity, and then the lesson came too late. The Achæan League, which combined the nations of the Peloponnesus into a federal republic, was in its early days kept busy in forcing its members to remain true to their pledge. If it had survived for a century it would probably have brought all Greece into the League, and have produced a nation capable of self-defence. But Rome already had her hand on the throat of Greece, and political wisdom came to that land too late to avail.

REMAINS OF THE TEMPLE OF MINERVA, CORINTH.

We have come, indeed, to the end of the story of Grecian liberty. Twice Greece rose in arms against the power of Rome, but in the end she fell hopelessly into the fetters forged for the world by that lord of conquest. Of the celebrated cities of Greece two had already fallen. Thebes had [Pg 346] been swept from the face of the earth in the wind of Alexander's wrath. Sparta had been reduced to a feeble village by the anger of Philopœmen. Corinth, now the largest and richest city of Greece, was to be razed to the ground for daring to defy Rome; and Athens was to be plundered and humiliated by a conquering Roman army.

It will not take long to tell how all this came about. The story is a short one, but full of vital consequences. Philopœmen, the great general of the Achæan League, died of poison 183 B.C. In the same year died in exile Hannibal, the greatest foe Rome ever knew, and Scipio, one of its ablest generals. Rome was already master of Greece. But the Roman senate feared trouble from the growth of the Achæan League, and, to weaken it, took a thousand of its noblest citizens, under various charges, and sent them as hostages to Rome. Among them was the celebrated historian Polybius, who wrote the history of Hannibal's wars.

These exiles were not brought to trial on the weak charges made against them, but they were detained in Italy for seventeen years. By the end of that time many of them had died, and Rome at last did what it was not in the habit of doing, it took pity on those who were left and let them return home.

Roman pity in this case proved disastrous to Greece. Many of the exiles were exasperated by their treatment, and were no sooner at home than they began to stir up the people to revolt. Polybius held them back for a time, but during his absence the spirit of sedition grew. It was [Pg 347] intensified by the action of Rome, which, to weaken Greece, resolved to dissolve the Achæan League, or to take from it its strongest cities. Roman ambassadors carried this edict to Corinth, the great city of the League. When their errand become known the people rose in riot, insulted the ambassadors, and vowed that they were not and would not be the slaves of Rome.

If they had shown the strength and spirit to sustain their vow they might have had some warrant for it. But the fanatics who stirred the country to revolt against the advice of its wisest citizens proved incapable in war. Their army was finally put to rout in the year 146 B.C. by a Roman army under the leadership of Lucius Mummius, consul of Rome.

This Roman victory was won in the vicinity of Corinth. The routed army did not seek to defend itself in that city, but fled past its open gates, and left it to the mercy of the Roman general. The gates still stood open. No defence was made. But Mummius, fearing some trick, waited a day or two before entering. On doing so he found the city nearly deserted. The bulk of the population had fled. The greatest and richest city which Greece then possessed had fallen without a blow struck in its defence.

Yet Mummius chose to consider it as a city taken by storm. All the men who remained were put to the sword; the women and children were kept to be sold as slaves; the town was mercilessly plundered of its wealth and treasures of art.

But this degree of vengeance did not satisfy Rome. Her ambassadors had been insulted,—by a [Pg 348] mob, it is true; but in those days the law-abiding had often to suffer for the deeds of the mob. The Achæan League, with Corinth at its head, had dared to resist the might and majesty of Rome. A lesson must be given that would not be easily forgotten. Corinth must be utterly destroyed.

Such was the deliberate decision of the Roman senate; such the order sent to Mummius. At his command the plundering of the city was completed. It was fabulously rich in works of art. Many of these were sent to Rome. Many of them were destroyed. The Romans were ignorant of their value. Their leader himself was as incompetent and ignorant as any Roman general could well be. He had but one thought, to obey the orders of the senate. The plundered city was thereupon set on fire and burned to the ground, its walls were pulled down, the spot where it had stood was cursed, its territory was declared the property of the Roman people. No more complete destruction of a city had ever taken place. A century afterwards Corinth was rebuilt by order of Julius Cæsar, but it never became again the Corinth of old.

As for the destruction of works of priceless value, it was pitiable. When Polybius returned and saw the ruins, he found common soldiers playing dice on paintings of the most celebrated artists of Greece. Mummius, who was as honest as he was dull-witted, strictly obeyed orders in sending the choicest of the spoil to Rome, and made himself forever famous as a marvel of stupidity by a [Pg 349] remark to those who were charged with the conveyance of some of the noblest of Grecian statues.

"Take good care that you do not lose these on the way," he said; "for if you do you shall be made to replace them by others of equal value."

Rome could conquer the world, but honest Mummius had set a task which Rome throughout its whole history was not able to perform.

Thus ended the death-struggle of Greece. The chiefs of the party of revolt were put to death; the inhabitants of Corinth who had fled were taken and sold as slaves. The walls of all the cities which had resisted Rome were levelled to the ground. An annual tribute was laid on them by the conquerors. Self-government was left to the states of Greece, but they were deprived of their old

privilege of making war.

Yet Greece might have flourished under the new conditions, for peace heals the wounds made by war, had its states not been too much weakened by their previous conflicts, and had not a new war arisen just when they were beginning to enjoy some of the fruits of peace.

This war, which broke out sixty years later, had its origin in Asia. Mithridates the Great, king of Pontus, had made himself master of all Asia Minor, where he ordered that all the Romans found should be killed. It is said that eighty thousand were slaughtered. Then he sent an army into Greece, under his general Archelaus, and there found the people ready and willing to join him, in the hope of gaining their freedom by his aid. Rome just then seemed weak, and they deemed it a good season to rebel. [Pg 350]

Archelaus took possession of Athens and the Piræus, from which all the friends of Rome were driven into exile. Meanwhile, Rome was distracted by the struggle between the two great leaders Marius and Sulla. But leaving Rome to take care of itself, Sulla marched an army against Mithridates, entered Greece, and laid siege to Athens.

This was in the year 87 B.C. The siege that followed was a long one. Archelaus lay in Piræus, with abundance of food, and had command of the sea. But the long walls that led to Athens had long since vanished. Food could not be conveyed from the port to the city, as of old. Hunger came to the aid of Rome. Resistance having almost ceased, Sulla broke into the famous old city March 1, 86 B.C., and gave it up to rapine and pillage by his soldiers.

Yet Athens was not destroyed as Corinth had been. Sulla had some respect for art and antiquity, and carefully preserved the old monuments of the city, while such of its people as had not been massacred were restored to their civil rights as subjects of Rome. Soon the Asiatics were driven from Greece and Roman dominion was once more restored. Thus ended the last struggle for liberty in Greece. Nineteen hundred years were to pass away before another blow for freedom would be struck on Grecian soil.

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ZENOBIA AND LONGINUS.

AMONG the most famous of the women of ancient days must be named Zenobia, the celebrated queen of Palmyra and the East, and who claimed to be descended from the kings whom the conquests of Alexander left over Egypt, the Ptolemies, among whose descendants was included the still more celebrated Cleopatra. Zenobia was the most lovely as well as the most heroic of her sex, no woman of Asiatic birth ever having equalled her in striking evidence of valor and ability, and none surpassed her in beauty. We are told that while of a dark complexion, her smile revealed teeth of pearly whiteness, while her large black eyes sparkled with an uncommon brightness that was softened by the most attractive sweetness. She possessed a strong and melodious voice, and, in short, had all the charms of womanly beauty.

Her mind was as well stored as her body was attractive. She was familiar with the Greek, the Syriac, and the Egyptian languages, and was an adept also in Latin, then the political language of the civilized world. She was an earnest student of Oriental history, of which she herself drew up an epitome, while she was fully conversant with Homer and Plato, and the other great writers of Greece.

This lovely and accomplished woman gave her hand in marriage to Odenathus, who from a private station had gained by his valor the empire of the East. He made Syria his by courage and ability, and twice pursued the Persian king to the gates of Ctesiphon. Of this hero Zenobia became the companion and adviser. In hunting, of which he was passionately fond, she emulated him, pursuing the lions, panthers, and other wild beasts of the desert with an ardor equal to his own, and a fortitude and endurance which his did not surpass. Inured to fatigue, she usually appeared on horseback in a military habit, and at times marched on foot at the head of the troops. Odenathus owed his success largely to the prudence and fortitude of his incomparable wife. [Pg 352]

In the midst of his successes in war, Odenathus was cut off in 250 A.D. by assassination. He had punished his nephew, who killed him in return. Zenobia at once succeeded to the vacant throne, and by her ability governed Palmyra, Syria, and the East. In this task, in which no man could have surpassed her in courage and judgment, she was aided by the counsels of one of the ablest Greeks who had appeared since the days of the famous writers of the classical age. Longinus, who had been her preceptor in the language and literature of Greece, and who, on her ascending the throne, became her secretary and chief counsellor in state affairs, was a literary critic and philosopher whose lucid intellect seemed to belong to the brightest days of Greece. He was probably a native of Syria, born some time after 200 A.D., and had studied literature and philosophy at Athens, Alexandria, and Rome, under the ablest teachers of the age. His learning was immense, and he is the first man to whom was applied the expression "a living library," or, to [Pg 353]

give it its modern form, "a walking encyclopædia." His writings were lively and penetrating, showing at once taste, judgment, and learning. We have only fragments of them, except the celebrated "Treatise on the Sublime," which is one of the most notable of ancient critical productions.

Under the advice of this distinguished counsellor, Zenobia entered upon a career which brought her disaster, but has also brought her fame. Her husband Odenathus had avenged Valerian, the Roman emperor, who had been taken prisoner and shamefully treated by the Persian king. For this service he was confirmed in his authority by the senate of Rome. But after his death the senate refused to grant this authority to his widow, and called on her to deliver her dominion over to Rome. Under the advice of Longinus the martial queen refused, defied the power of Rome, and determined to maintain her empire in despite of the senate and army of the proud "master of the world."

War at once broke out. A Roman army invaded Syria, but was met by Zenobia with such warlike energy and skill that it was hurled back in defeat, and its commanding general, having lost his army, was driven back to Europe in disgrace. This success gave Zenobia the highest fame and power in the world of the Orient. The states of Arabia, Armenia, and Persia, in dread of her [Pg 354] enmity, solicited alliance with her. To her dominions, which extended from the Euphrates over much of Asia Minor and to the borders of Arabia, she added the populous kingdom of Egypt, the inheritance of her claimed ancestors. The Roman emperor Claudius acknowledged her authority and left her unmolested. Assuming the splendid title of Queen of the East, she established at her court the stately power of the courts of Asia, exacted from her subjects the adoration shown to the Persian king, and, while strict in her economy, at times displayed the greatest liberality and magnificence.

But a new emperor came to the throne in Rome, and a new period in the history of Zenobia began. Aurelian, a fierce and vigorous soldier, marched at the head of the Roman legions against this valiant queen, who had built herself up an empire of great extent, and demanded that she should submit to the power of his arms. Asia Minor was quickly restored to Rome, Antioch fell into the hands of Aurelian, and the Romans still advanced, to meet the army of the Syrian queen. Meeting near Antioch, a great battle was fought. Zabdas, who had conquered Egypt for Zenobia, led her army, but the valiant queen animated her soldiers by her presence, and exhorted them to the utmost exertions. Her troops, great in number, were mainly composed of light-armed archers and of cavalry clothed in complete steel. These Asiatic warriors proved incapable of enduring the charge of the veteran legions of Rome. The army of Zenobia met with defeat, and at a subsequent [Pg 355] battle, near Emesa, met with a second disastrous repulse.

Zenobia found it impossible to collect a third army. Most of the nations under her control had submitted to the conqueror. Egypt was invaded by a Roman army. Out of her lately great empire only her capital, Palmyra, remained. Here she retired, made preparations for a vigorous defence, and declared that her reign and life should only end together.

Palmyra was then one of the most splendid cities of the world. A halting-place for the caravans which conveyed to Europe the rich products of India and the East, it had grown into a great and opulent city, whose former magnificence is shown by the ruins of temples, palaces, and porticos of Grecian architecture, which now extend over a district of several miles. In this city, surrounded with strong walls, Zenobia had gathered the various military engines which in those days were used in siege and defence, and, woman though she was, was prepared to make the most vigorous resistance to the armies of Rome.

Aurelian had before him no light task. In his march over the desert the Arabs harassed him perpetually. The siege proved difficult, and the emperor, leading the attacks in person, was himself wounded with a dart. Aurelian, finding that he had undertaken no trifling task, prudently offered excellent terms to the besieged, but they were rejected with insulting language. Zenobia hoped that famine would come to her aid to defeat her foe, and had reason to expect that Persia would send an army to her relief. Neither happened. The Persian king had just died. Convoys of [Pg 356] food crossed the desert in safety. Despairing at length of success, Zenobia mounted her fleetest dromedary and fled across the desert to the Euphrates. Here she was overtaken and brought back a captive to the emperor's feet.

Soon afterwards Palmyra surrendered. The emperor treated it with lenity, but a great treasure in gold, silver, silk, and precious stones fell into his hands, with all the animals and arms. Zenobia being brought into his presence, he sternly asked her how she had dared to take arms against the emperors of Rome. She answered, with respectful prudence, "Because I disdained to consider as Roman emperors an Aureolus or a Gallienus. You alone I acknowledge as my conqueror and my sovereign."

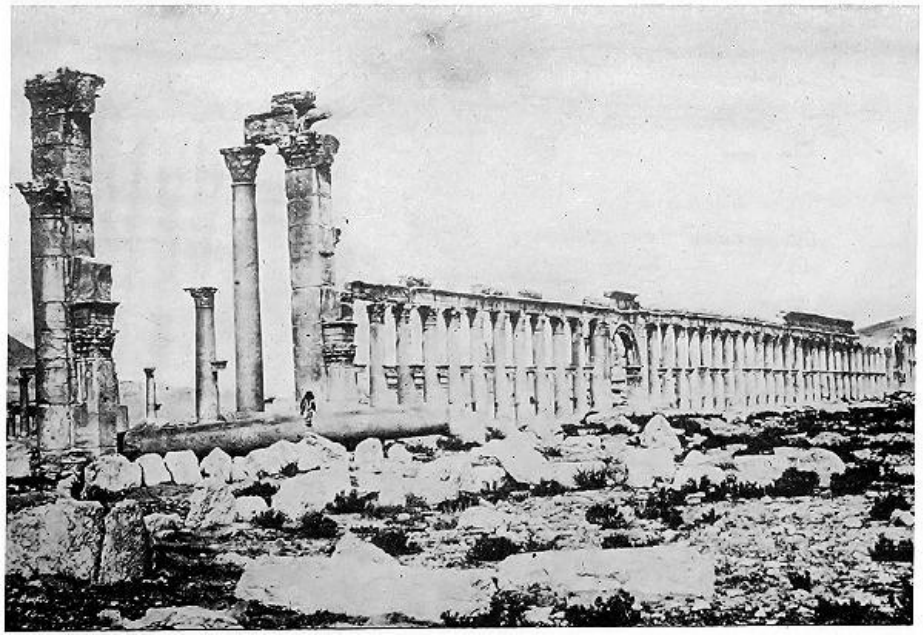
Her fortitude, however, did not last. The soldiers, with angry clamor, demanded her immediate execution, and the unhappy queen, losing for the first time the courage which had so long sustained her, gave way to terror, and declared that her resistance was not due to herself, but had arisen from the counsels of Longinus and her other advisers. It was the one base act in the woman's life. She had purchased a brief period of existence at the expense of honor and fame. Aurelian, a fierce soldier, to whom the learning of Longinus made no appeal, at once ordered his execution. The scholar died like a philosopher. He uttered no complaint. He pitied, but did not blame, his mistress. He comforted his afflicted friends. With the calm fortitude of Socrates he followed the executioner, and died like one for whom death had no terrors. The ignorant [Pg 357] emperor, in seizing the treasures of Palmyra, did not know that he had lost its choicest treasure

in setting free the soul of Longinus the scholar.

What followed may be more briefly told. Marching back with his spoils from Palmyra, Aurelian had already reached Europe when word came to him that the Palmyrians whom he had spared had risen in revolt and massacred his garrison. Instantly turning, he marched back, his soul filled with thirst for revenge. Reaching Palmyra with great celerity, his wrath fell with murderous fury on that devoted city. Not only armed rebels, but women and children, were massacred, and the city was almost levelled with the earth. The greatness of Palmyra was at an end. It never recovered from this dreadful blow. It sunk, step by step, into the miserable village, in the midst of stately ruins, into which it has now declined.

On his return Aurelian celebrated his victories and conquests with a magnificent triumph, one of the most ostentatious that any Roman emperor had ever given. His conquests had been great, both in the West and the East, and no emperor had better deserved a triumphant return to the imperial city, the mistress of the world.

All day long, from morning to night, the grand procession wound on. At its head were twenty elephants, four royal tigers, and about two hundred of the most curious and interesting animals of the North, South, and East. Sixteen hundred gladiators followed, destined for the cruel sports to be held in the amphitheatre. Then came a display of the wealth of Palmyra, the magnificent [Pg 358] plate and wardrobe of Zenobia, the arms and ensigns of numerous conquered nations. Embassadors from the most remote regions of the civilized earth,—from Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, India, and China,—attired in rich and singular dresses, attested the fame of the Roman emperor, while his power was shown by the many presents he had received, among them a great number of crowns of gold, which had been given him by grateful cities.



THE RUINS OF PALMYRA.

A long train of captives next declared his triumph, among them Goths, Vandals, Franks, Gauls, Germans, Syrians, and Egyptians. Each people was distinguished by its peculiar inscription, the title of Amazons being given to ten Gothic heroines who had been taken in arms. But in this great crowd of unhappy captives one above all attracted the attention of the host of spectators, the beauteous figure of the Queen of the East. Zenobia was so laden with jewels as almost to faint under their weight. Her limbs bore fetters of gold, while the golden chain that encircled her neck was of such weight that it had to be supported by a slave. She walked along the streets of Rome, preceding the magnificent chariot in which she had indulged hopes of riding in triumph through those grand avenues. Behind it came two other chariots, still more sumptuous, those of Odenathus and the Persian monarch. The triumphal car of Aurelian, which followed, was one which had formerly been used by a Gothic king, and was drawn by four stags or four elephants, we are not sure which. The most illustrious of the senate, the people, and the army closed this [Pg 359] grand procession, which was gazed upon with joy and wonder by the vast population of Rome.

So extended was the pompous parade that though it began with the dawn of day, the ninth hour had arrived when it ascended to the Capitol, and night had fallen when the emperor returned to his palace. Then followed theatrical representations, games in the circus, gladiatorial combats, wild-beast shows, and naval engagements. Not for generations had Rome seen such a festival. Of the rich spoils a considerable portion was dedicated to the gods of Rome, the temples glittered with golden offerings, and the Temple of the Sun, a magnificent structure erected by Aurelian, was enriched with more than fifteen thousand pounds of gold.

To Zenobia the victor behaved with a generous clemency such as the conquering emperors of Rome rarely indulged in. He presented her with an elegant villa at Tibur, or Tivoli, about twenty miles from the imperial city; and here, surrounded by luxury, she who had played so imperial a *rôle* in history sank into the humbler state of a Roman matron. Her daughters married into noble families, and the descendants of the once Queen of the East were still known in Rome in the fifth

century of the Christian era.

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THE LITERARY GLORY OF GREECE.

Shall we now leave the domain of historic events, of which the land of Greece presents so large and varied a store, and consider that other feature of national life and development which has made Greece the most notable of lands—the intellectual growth of its people, the splendor of art and literature which gave it a glory that glows unfading still?

In the whole history of mankind there is nothing elsewhere to compare with the achievements of the Greek intellect during the few centuries in which freedom and thought flourished on that rocky peninsula, and the names and works handed down to us are among the noblest in the grand republic of thought. Just when this remarkable era of literature began we do not know. So far as any remains of it are concerned, it began as the sun begins its daily career in the heavens, with a lustre not surpassed in any part of its course. For the oldest of Greek writings which we possess are among the most brilliant, comprising the poems of Homer, the model of all later works in the epic field, and which light up and illustrate a broad period of human history as no works in different vein could do. They shine out in a realm of darkness, and show us what men [Pg 361] were doing and thinking and how they were living and striving at a time which but for them would be buried in impenetrable darkness.

This was the epoch of the wandering minstrel, when the bard sang his stirring lays of warlike scenes and heroic deeds in castle and court. But the mind of Greece was then awakening in other fields, and it is of great interest to find that Homer was quickly followed by an epic writer of markedly different vein, Hesiod, the poet of peace and rural labors, of the home and the field. While Homer paints for us the warlike life of his day, Hesiod paints the peaceful labors of the husbandman, the holiness of domestic life, the duty of economy, the education of youth, and the details of commerce and politics. He also collects the flying threads of mythological legend and lays down for us the story of the gods in a work of great value as the earliest exposition of this picturesque phase of religious belief. The veil is lifted from the face of youthful Greece by these two famous writers, and we are shown the land and its people in full detail at a period of whose conditions we otherwise would be in total ignorance.

Such was the earliest phase of Greek literature, so far as any remains of it exist. It took on a different form when Athens rose to political supremacy and became a capital of art and the chief centre of Hellenic thought, its productions being received with admiration throughout Greece, while the ripened judgment and taste of its citizens became the arbiters of literary excellence for [Pg 362] many centuries to follow. The earliest notable literature, however, came from the Ionians of Asia Minor and the adjacent islands. In the soft and mild climate and productive valleys of this region and under the warm suns and beside the limpid seas of the smiling islands, the mobile Ionic spirit found inspiration and blossomed into song while yet the rocky Attic soil was barren of literary growth. But with the conquering inroads of the Persians literature fled from this field to find a new home among "those busy Athenians, who are never at rest themselves nor are willing to let any one else be."

ALONG THE COAST OF GREECE.

The day of the epic poet had now passed and the lyric took its place, making its first appearance, like the epic, in Ionia and the Ægean islands, but finding its most appreciative

audience and enthusiastic support in Athens, the coming home of the muse. Song became the prevailing literary demand, and was supplied abundantly by such choice singers as Sappho, Alcæus, Anacreon, Simonides, and others of the soft and cheerful vein, the biting satires of Archilochus, the noble odes of Pindar, the war anthems of Tyrtæus, and the productions of many of lesser fame.

This flourishing period of song sank away when a new form of literature, that of the drama, suddenly came into being and attained immediate popularity. For a century earlier it had been slowly taking form in the rural districts of Attica, beginning in the odes addressed to Dionysus, the god of wine, the Bacchus of Roman mythology. These odes were sung at the public festivals of [Pg 363] the vintage season, were accompanied by gesture and action and in time by dialogue, and the day came when groups of amateur actors travelled in carts from place to place to present their rude dramatic scenes, then mainly composed of song and dance, rude jests, and dialogues. In this way the drama slowly came into being, comedy from the jovial by-play of the rustic actors, tragedy from their crude efforts to reproduce the serious side of mythologic story. A great tragic artist and poet, the far-famed Æschylus, lifted these primitive attempts into the field of the true drama. He was quickly followed by two other great artists in the same field, Sophocles and Euripides, while the efforts of the earlier comedians were succeeded by the fun-distilling productions of Aristophanes, the greatest of ancient artists in this field.

This blossoming age of poetry and the drama came after the desperate struggles of the Persian War, which had left Athens a heap of ruins. In the new Athens which rose under the fostering care of Pericles, not only literature flourished but art reached its culmination, temple and hall, colonnade and theatre showing the artistic beauty and grandeur of the new architecture, while such sculptors as Phidias and such painters as Zeuxis adorned the city with the noblest products of art. During these busy years Athens became a marvel of beauty and art, the resort of strangers from all quarters, the ablest workers in marble and metal, the noblest artists, poets, and [Pg 364] philosophers, until for more than a century that city was the recognized centre of the loftiest products of the human intellect.

Prose came later than poetry, but was soon flourishing as luxuriantly. The early historians quickly yielded Herodotus, the delightful old storyteller, with his poetic prose; Xenophon, with his lucid and flowing narrative; and Thucydides, the greatest of ancient historians and the first to give philosophic depth to the annals of mankind. The advent of history was accompanied by that of oratory, which among the Greeks developed into one of the choicest forms of literature, especially in the case of the greatest of the world's orators, Demosthenes, whose orations were inspired by the noblest of themes, that of a patriotic effort to preserve the independence of Greece against the ambitious designs of Philip of Macedon.

Philosophy, the third great form of Greek prose literature, was as diligently cultivated, and has left as many examples for modern perusal. The works of the earlier philosophers were in verse, while Socrates, the first of the moral philosophers, left no writings, doing his work with tongue instead of pen, though he forms the leading character in Plato's philosophic dialogues. In Plato we have the most famous of the world's philosophers, and a writer of the ablest skill, in whose works the imagination of the poet is happily blended with the reasoning of the philosopher, his productions constituting a form of philosophic drama, in which the character of each speaker is [Pg 365] closely preserved, Socrates being usually the chief personage introduced.

Following Plato came Aristotle, his equal in fame though not in literary merit. His name will long survive as that of one of the ablest thinkers the world has produced, a reasoner of exceptional ability, whose scope of research covered all fields and whose discoveries in practical science formed the first true introduction to mankind of this great field of human study, to-day the greatest of them all.

We have named here only the leaders in Greek literature, the whole array being far too great to cover in brief space. Following the older form of the drama, with its archaic character, came two later forms, the Middle and the New Comedy, in the latter of which Menander was the most famous writer, making in his plays some approach to the modern form. Philosophy left later exponents in Zeno, Epicurus, and many others, and history in Polybius, Strabo, Plutarch, Arrian, and others of note. Science, as developed by Aristotle and Hippocrates, the father of medicine, was carried forward by many others, including Theophrastus, the able successor of Aristotle; Euclid, the first great geometer; Eratosthenes and Hipparchus, the astronomers; and, latest of ancient scientists, Ptolemy, whose works on astronomy and geography became the text-books of the middle-age schools.

Long before these later writers came into the field the centres of literary effort had shifted to new localities. Sicily became the field of the choicest lyric poetry, giving us Theocritus, with his [Pg 366] charming "Idyls," or scenes of rural life, and his songful dialogues, with their fine description and delightful humor. Following him came Bion and Moschus, two other bucolic poets, whose finest productions are elegies of unsurpassed beauty.

Syracuse was the home of this new field of lyric poetry, but there were other centres in which literature flourished, especially Pergamus, Antiochia, Pella, and above all Alexandria, the city founded by Alexander the Great in Egypt, and which under the fostering care of the Ptolemies, Alexander's successors in this quarter, developed into a remarkable centre of intellectual effort.

The first Ptolemy made Alexandria his capital and founded there a great state institution which became famous as the Museum, and to which philosophers, scholars, and students flocked from

all parts of the world. Here learned men could find a retreat from the bustle of the great metropolis which Alexandria became, and pursue their studies or teach their pupils in peace within its walls, and it is said that at one time fourteen thousand students gathered within its classic shades.

Here grew up two great libraries, said to number seven hundred thousand volumes, and embracing all that was worthy of study or preservation in the writings of ancient days. Of these, one was burned during the siege of the city by Julius Cæsar, but it was replaced by Marc Antony, who robbed Pergamus of its splendid library of two hundred thousand volumes and sent it to Alexandria as a present to Cleopatra.

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In this secure retreat, amply supported by the liberality of the Ptolemies, philosophers and scholars spent their days in mental culture and learned lectures and debates. The scientific studies inaugurated by Aristotle were here continued by a succession of great astronomers, geometers, chemists, and physicians, for whose use were furnished a botanical garden, a menagerie of animals, and facilities for human dissection, the first school of anatomy ever known.

In the heart of the great library, battening on books, flourished a circle of learned literary critics, engaged in the study of Homer and the other already classical writers of Greece and supplying new and revised editions of their works. Here philosophy was ardently pursued, the works of Plato and his great rivals being diligently studied, while in a later age the innovation of Neoplatonism was abundantly debated and taught. A new school of poetry also arose, most of its followers being mechanical versifiers, though the idyllic poets of Sicily sought these favoring halls. Most famous among the philosophers of Alexandria was the maiden Hypatia, who had studied in the still active schools of Athens, and taught the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle and the then popular tenets of Neoplatonism—her fame being chiefly due to her violent and terrible death at the hands of fanatical opponents of her teachings.

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The dynasty of the Ptolemies vanished with the death of Cleopatra, and during the wars and struggles that followed the library disappeared and the supremacy of Alexandria as a centre of mental culture passed away. The literary culture of Athens, whose schools of philosophy long survived its downfall as the capital of an independent state, also disappeared after being plundered of many of its works of art by Sulla, the Roman tyrant, and in later years for the adornment of Constantinople; its schools were closed by order of the Emperor Justinian in 529 A.D.; and with them the light of science and learning, which had been shining for many centuries, though very dimly at the last, was extinguished, and the final vestige of the glory of Athens and the artistic and literary supremacy of Greece vanished from the land of their birth.

THE END.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] The sequel to this episode will be found in the tale entitled "The Fortune of Crœsus."

[2] Equal to about one thousand dollars.

[3] The army of Sparta, which before had stayed at home to await the full of the moon, did so now to complete certain religious ceremonies, sparing but this handful of men for the vital need of Greece.

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