

For The Weekly Visitor.

Reflections and Researches.

NUMERUS III.

PHILIP AND THE PHILIPPIOS.

Philip II., of Macedonia, was sent in his youth to Thebes, for three years, as a hostage, that a certain compact should be adhered to.

When in that city, he stayed in the house of Epaminondas, and there received a Greek education. Here he also obtained a complete knowledge of the great jealousies existing between the various Grecian States.

When the compact for which he was held a hostage had expired, he returned to his native land, where he was appointed ruler over a small territory.

An infant being upon the Macedonian throne, the empire being invaded by the barbarous tribes of the north, and two other claimants to the throne having arisen, Philip soon assumed the position of protector, conquered both pretenders, caused the barbarian invaders to retire with precipitation, and was himself proclaimed king.

His life-object now became the subjugation of the Persian empire. This was a great undertaking, and he must needs first secure the co-operation of the Grecian States; but so contentious, jealous, and fickle were they, that he saw the necessity of conquering them first, and then be able to draw what assistance from them he needed, as his word would then be law.

The Thessalians soon gave him an admirable opportunity to get his finger into Grecian affairs, in an application to him for help against the tyrants of Phæra. Only too glad that so excellent a chance had been offered for the furtherance of his ambitious and selfish designs, he quickly came with a large force, and soon gained the freedom of the Thessalian cities; but the crafty king still left the tyrants in the country, that there might still be occasion for his aid. The Phocians having espoused the cause of the tyrants, Philip was again applied to, when he completely subdued that nation; but he remained in Thessaly, and ever after treated that province in every respect as a Macedonian territory.

Soon after, by various intrigues, he brought about a war between himself and the Locrisians. Under the pretext of conquering these, he brought a large army down into that part of Greece, and after he had subdued that nation, he marched against, and took Elatea, the fortress and key of Boeotia.

This last unprovoked act clearly showed to the other states of Greece, that Philip

had a deep plan to execute against their freedom. Then were unveiled to them all the intrigues and pretences of the crafty king, just as the sun shines forth after bursting out from behind a dark and gloomy cloud; so, now that the scales had fallen from their eyes, these states realized that their commonwealth was in danger, and that their subjugation, and, perhaps, their enslavement, was not only meditated, but actually carried out by the Macedonian monarch.

It was in this emergency (when the Athenian State was in danger of being totally wrecked—when the citizens were almost on the eve of being compelled to acknowledge themselves tributary to the barbarous nation of the north, and its tyrannical king), that there stepped forward a man of Athens, who forcibly presented to them their folly—who showed them how different was their state, and their policy, from that of their ancestors—who pointed out, in vivid descriptions, the poor state of defence in which they were, and the malignant insolence and almost invincible strength of the enemy, and energetically earnestly urged them to arouse from their indolence—to shake off their sloth, and step forward boldly to do their utmost to avert the evil which was pending over them.

Then it was that the greatest of all Grecian orators made the halls of Athens ring with his irresistible eloquence; stirred up the smouldering fires of patriotism in the once sturdy and invincible Athenians; caused them to loathe the very name of Philip; to abhor and detest the very idea thought of his tyranny; and to grasp their swords as in days of old, and rush to the army, there to fight for the liberty of their country, and for the overthrow of the insolent tyrant.

Then it was that the great, the immortal Demosthenes did, by his consummate eloquence, so present the state of the country before the eyes of the people, so paint and describe the character of their Macedonian enemy, so persuade and entreat his audiences to raise up and save their country from ruin and devastation, and themselves from slavery,—that they, no longer hesitating between duty and inclination, between the call of patriotism, and those of self interest, cried out as but one man,—“Let us march against Philip; let us fight for our liberties; let us conquer—or die!”

“Borne by the tide of words along,
One voice, one mind inspire the throng,—
“To arms! to arms! to arms!” They cry:
“Grasp the shield, and draw the sword;
Lead us to Philip’s lord:
Let us conquer him—or die!”

But alas! what is an army without a general? Had there been a general at this

time as earnest, as patriotic, and as skilful, and practiced in his profession, as was Demosthenes in his occupation, how different a tale would it be our lot to tell. But “facts are stubborn things;” and it is a fact that for want of a skilful and practical general, all the efforts of the noble Athenians were in vain. In vain did they rush to the national standard, and march forth, willing to sacrifice themselves for their country;—they had so long courted luxury and indolence, that there was not among them a competent general, and so they fell, and along with them went the noble orator, the immortal Demosthenes.

“Ah, Eloquence! thou wast undone—
Wast from thy native country driven—
When tyranny eclipsed the sun,
And blotted out the stars of heaven.”

Ignominious defeat caused the nation to hang down its head, and it then became a tributary nation. Since then it has never held up its head among nations as before. The grand army raised against Philip, being beaten, the country soon yielded to his sway, and acknowledged his sovereignty. Philip having accomplished the conquest of Greece (his secondary object), next proceeded to make necessary preparations for the carrying out of his primary project, viz: the invasion of Persia.

But ere he could have these arrangements all concluded,—ere he was ready to start out on his expedition,—his preparations received a sudden check, in his death, which he met as a tyrant deserves;—he was murdered in cold blood, by the hand of an assassin.

Thus did Philip reap the just reward of his deeds.

As he had gained all his conquests—all his accessions of power and territory by intrigue, by deceit, by false representations, and by strategy—so his assassin, by the same means, gained his point, and the great monarch was ushered into eternity. As he had always found his enemies surprised, and unprepared, and himself unlooked for; so, at the time when he was called upon to “shuffle off this mortal coil,” he was in the midst of a worldly enterprise, and had entertained no thoughts of death, the messenger came to him an unexpected, unwelcome, but irresistible visitor. So did he pay for his injustice in life, by being unjustly dealt with at his death.

As he was treacherous as a warrior and a statesman, so he fell by treacherous hands.

His bread being cast upon the waters, returned after many days. He reaped the fruits of what he sowed—but he did not expect it.

This is worth remembering, and in this life we should always bear in mind the “Golden Rule;” “Whosoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.”