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## Epilogue

**S**UCH was the end of the Sicilian Expedition, which ultimately decided the issue of the Peloponnesian War. Forsaking the wise counsels of their greatest statesman, and carried away by the mad sophistry of Alcibiades, the Athenians had committed themselves, heart and soul, to a wild game of hazard, in which they had little to win, and everything to lose. By this act of desperate folly they brought on themselves an overwhelming disaster, from which it was impossible for them wholly to recover. With wonderful vitality they rallied from the blow, and struggled on for nine years more, against the whole power of Peloponnesus, and their own revolted allies, backed by the influence and the gold of Persia. They gained great victories, and under prudent leaders they might still have been saved from the worst consequences of their defeat in Sicily. But at every favourable crisis they wantonly flung away the advantage they had gained, and abandoned themselves to blind guides, who led them further and further on the road to ruin.

The history of Thucydides ends abruptly in the twenty-first year of the war, and for an account of the closing scenes we have to go to the pages of Xenophon. It will be convenient, therefore, to