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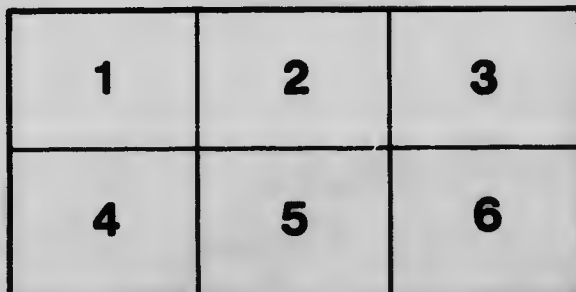
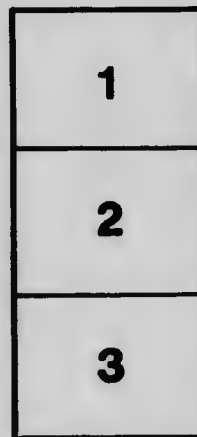
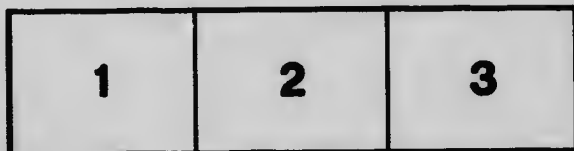
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TALES FROM ANCIENT GREECE

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H. R. MILLER. 07

THE SPARTAN MOTHER AND HER SON (p. 18).

STORIES FROM ANCIENT GREECE

BY

PROF. A. J. CHURCH

Author of "Stories from Ancient Rome," etc.

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STORIES FROM ANCIENT GREECE

CHAPTER I

SPARTA, OR ONE-SIDED.

Ar-is-tot'-le;
Ar'-te-mis;

Eph-ors;
Hō-lots;

Ly-cur'-gus;
Mes-sē'-né;

Pau-san'-ias;
Pla-to'-a.

ABOUT eleven hundred years before the birth of Christ, a tribe of mountaineers came down from their home in Northern Greece, a district which lay a little to the north of the famous town of Delphi, and invaded the country in the south. They brought with them a royal family which claimed to be descended from the famous hero Hercules and to be rightful sovereigns of the country. (The story reminds us of the Scottish Highlanders marching southward in order to set the Stuarts on the British throne.) They conquered the native race without much difficulty, and set up three kingdoms in the three cities of Argos, Messené and Sparta. It is with the last of these that we are now concerned.

In course of time Sparta fell into great disorders, from which it was saved by a certain Lycurgus, This Lycurgus was a member of the Spartan royal family and acted as regent during the infancy of his nephew, one of the two Kings who, according to a curious custom, occupied the throne together.

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After a while he thought it well to leave his country. He was absent for some years, spending his time in visiting various countries and observing the good and the bad in their systems of government.

When he returned to Sparta he found it in worse confusion than ever. All parties were weary of this state of things, and invited him to establish a new order. A few words will suffice to describe the form of government now set up. The two Kings were the commanders-in-chief. It was their business to lead the Spartan army.

There was a Senate of twenty-eight men who had to be above a certain age. In this body the two Kings had seats. And there was a General Assembly in which all citizens of full age could take part. This Assembly, however, could only approve or disapprove of the resolutions of the Senate. And even this disapproval could, on occasion, be set aside. Finally there was a body of five men called Ephors, who came in process of time to be the real rulers of the State.

But what made Sparta what it was, was the way in which its citizens lived. They were all equal: each man had his own plot of land, which was cultivated for him in a way of which I shall have something to say hereafter. They lived in common, being divided into companies, each of which had a table of its own, this table being supplied by a contribution of barley-meal, wine,

cheese, and figs from each member. Game was procured by hunting in the State forests, and any member who offered a sacrifice was expected to send a portion of the flesh. These common meals all Spartan men were compelled to share all their lives, or, at least, till the weakness of old age made it necessary to excuse them. They slept also in the barrack, as it may be called, till they reached middle age. They were like soldier-monks, though they were allowed—indeed, were compelled—to marry.

All the day was spent in drill, in practising the use of swords and spears, and in games which exercised their bodies, such as running, leaping, and quoit throwing. This training began at a very early age. At seven a boy was taken from his mother and brought into the barrack. He had very little food allowed him. He might make up what was wanted by hunting, or he might steal it. No questions were asked, but if he was found out he was severely punished.

As he grew up, the discipline became more and more severe. It was usual to go barefoot, however rough the ground, and to wear but one garment all the year round. Sham fights took place from time to time between chosen companies; no weapons were allowed, but the fighters were encouraged to maul and maim each other as much as they could. Their officers and teachers looked on—teachers of military matters, of course, for the young Spartan learnt nothing else—and the lad who showed himself most savage was the most

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highly praised. At certain times lads—possibly chosen by lot, possibly volunteers—were publicly scourged before the altar of the goddess Artemis (Diana). It was not “good form” to shrink from the scourge, far less to make any outcry; the more severe the whipping, the better the lad was pleased. Some were known actually to die without making any sign.

This, it must be allowed, was the way to make good soldiers, and the Spartans were the best soldiers in the world—for a time. For there were many things that were bad in this way of life. The Spartan was a fighting man, and nothing more; he was like the soldier ants who are so helpless in everything except fighting that they cannot feed themselves, but have slave ants to do this for them. The Spartans had slaves—Helots they were called (what the word means no one knows for certain, but it may have something to do with a word which means “captured”). These men used to cultivate the land for them; often they used to go with them to war—each Spartan at the great battle of Plateæa had seven Helots with him. As they were Greeks—the old owners, in fact, of the land—they were not satisfied with their lot; and their masters, while they could not do without them, were continually in fear of them. So there grew up a dreadful custom of getting rid of them when they seemed to be dangerous. It was called the *Crypteia*.*

* From *Krupto*, “to conceal;” so the word “crypt” is the *concealed* part of a Church or other building.

The young Spartans had "a secret commission," part of which was to waylay or otherwise get rid of Helots who were supposed to be thinking of how they might improve their condition. The most shocking example of this practice happened in the year 424 B.C. The Spartans in that year had suffered a great disaster. More than four hundred of them had been taken prisoners, and their enemies held a strong position on their coast.

They put forth a notice that any Helot who thought that he had served the State should come forward; they promised to set the most deserving free. Many offered themselves, and of these two thousand were chosen. They were set free, led, with garlands on their heads, round the temples, and then secretly killed—how, no one ever knew. If the story had not been told by a historian whose knowledge and truthfulness are beyond all doubt, we could not believe it. But a nation, or rather a clan, which felt itself compelled to do such things could not prosper.

The fact is that the Spartan's life was too narrow. He did nothing, he knew nothing, but soldiering. He cared nothing for art, or for books, or for knowledge. And when he left home—when the compulsion which made him temperate and orderly, we may say against his will, was removed—he commonly fell into excesses, misused his power, and made himself hateful to every one. A remarkable example of this is to be found in the story of a certain Pausanias, who was one of the two

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Kings of Sparta at the time of the second Persian war.

When the Persian invaders had been defeated, Sparta was without question the first State in Greece. It had not really done as much as Athens to save Greece, but that was not as clear then as it is now; and it certainly stood higher than Athens in common reputation, while the final victory over the Persians at Plataea could not have been won without its very strong contingent—five thousand Spartans, each attended by seven armed Helots. When a great league of Greek States was made as a permanent defence against the Persians, Sparta naturally took the lead, and Pausanias was chief in command; but his misconduct spoilt his country's chances. There was no end to his vanity and folly. And he was worse than vain and foolish; he actually sent a message to the Persian King, to the effect that he would make him master of Sparta and all Greece if he was paid sufficiently well for doing it. Among other demands was that he should marry one of the King's daughters. He is said actually to have received a vast sum in gold, as much as £300,000. His countrymen put up with him as long as they could.

But at last his crimes became notorious. A messenger whom he was sending with a letter to the Persian King had noticed that no one who had gone on this errand had ever come back. He opened the letter and found directions in it that he was to be put to death. He handed

the letter to the Ephors. They were about to arrest Pausanias, but he was warned by a friend of his danger and managed to escape to a sanctuary. The Ephors did not like to drag him thence, but they built up the door, Pausanias's mother being the first to lay a stone, and he perished miserably of starvation.

Again and again in the after history of Sparta the generals and governors who were sent out to manage affairs abroad showed themselves unfit for their work, and brought themselves and their country into disgrace.

Something must be said about the Spartan women, for they were partly to blame for this state of things. It was said that Lycurgus wished to deal with them as he dealt with the men and to compel them to lead simple lives, but that they opposed him so fiercely that he gave up the plan. Anyhow, while a Spartan husband was living in the plainest way his wife would often have a luxurious home.

This could not be done without expense, and so the Spartans grew to be notoriously fond of money and not careful how they obtained it. The women had some of the soldierly virtues. They were trained to run and jump and box as well as the men. They were equally skilful in hunting and equally ready to bear hardship. And they did all they could to make their husbands and brothers and sons the bravest of the brave. "With your shield or on it," was the parting command of a Spartan mother to her son when

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he left home to serve in the army. But they were wanting in many of the good qualities which are the glory of woman. Aristotle says, writing of Sparta, that half of a State, where the women are not well governed, is out of order. Altogether Sparta was "one-sided."



MAP OF ANCIENT GREECE.

CHAPTER II.

A FIGHT FOR FREEDOM.

I. — Marathon.

A-ge'-an; *Da*-ri'-us; *I*-on'-ian; *Mil*-ti'-a des; *The*bes
A-gi'-na; *E*-phi'-al'-tes; *Lyd*'-ian; *Pla*-tō'-a; *The*s'pis.
*E*ce'-o'-tian; *Hip*'-pi-as; *M*·*r*'a'-then;

EARLY in the sixth century B.C. a tribe of mountaineers called Persians, from the region now known as Farsistan, became the rulers in Western Asia. Their power reached eastward to India and southward to Egypt, but it is with their westward movement that I am now concerned. In Asia Minor (Lesser Asia) there had been for some two hundred years a Lydian Empire. This the Persians conquered, and they thus became masters of a number of cities on or near the western coast which were inhabited by the Greeks.

The Lydians had been, on the whole, easy masters; the Persians were harsh and cruel. Some of the cities rebelled, and, as was natural, sought and received help from their kinsfolk in mainland Greece. The cities belonged to what was called the Ionian family of the Greek race, and the head of this family was Athens. Athens took a chief part in helping the rebels and so roused the anger of the Persian king, Darius by name. Every day a slave said to him: "Sire, remember the Athenians."

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For twelve years he made preparations for taking vengeance upon them, building a fleet and collecting an army. The first expedition failed. The second was despatched early in the summer of 490 B.C., being carried by a huge fleet across the Ægean Sea. Some of the cities of Greece had already made their submission to the King; Thebes, the neighbour of Athens on the west, was one of them. Ægina, which was on the south-east and only some twelve miles distant, was another; and Ægina had then the most powerful fleet in Greece. But Athens was determined to resist. One of her reasons was this: that the Persians had with them a certain Hippias, who had once been tyrant* in the city and had been driven out twenty years before. The Persians landed at Marathon, where the sea was deep close to the shore and where there was room for their great army to manœuvre. There were more than a hundred thousand of them, with a large force of cavalry.

The Athenians were there to meet them, they knew that it was the place to which Hippias would guide them. They numbered nine thousand, and a thousand more came from the little Bœotian town of Plataea—every male in the place who could bear arms. There never was a nobler thing done, especially as all the other Bœotian towns—except Thespiæ, of which we shall hear again—were on the side of the Persians.

* The Greek "tyrant" was a man who ruled against the will of the people, whether his rule was what we call "tyrannical" or not.

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"THE ENEMY WERE PUT TO FLIGHT."

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The Athenian army was under ten generals, each having his day of command. The question was—should they fight at once? One of the generals, Miltiades by name, was determined to do so, and he brought the others over to his opinion. The Persian infantry was drawn up in order of battle; the cavalry, it would seem, had not yet been landed. The Athenians and their allies charged at a run. Probably the first part of the ground over which they passed was down hill and the running was easy; but much was level, and the whole distance was a mile. When they reached the Persian line, they were tired and out of breath. This put them at a disadvantage, and the centre of their line was beaten back; for it was here that the very best of the Persian troops were posted. But on either wing the enemy were put to flight. The Persians, indeed, were amazed beyond measure at the charge. It seemed to them the act of madmen, but it frightened them. It was a deed of daring, but of wise daring. That run, more perhaps than any one other deed, changed the history of the world.

The Persians fled to their fleet: the Athenians followed and tried to burn the ships. That they could not do, and they lost many brave men in the attempt.

Then there happened a strange thing. Something was seen to flash from the top of a hill between Marathon and Athens. Miltiades knew what it meant. It was a signal from the tyrant's friends in Athens that the Persians were to make

their way thither. The thought of them was one of the things which made him eager to fight.

He made up his mind at once. He gave orders to the army to march back to Athens. The distance was more than twenty miles, but the Athenians made no halt on the way, and, reaching the city before the Persian fleet, Athens—and perhaps the freedom of the world—was saved.

II. - Thermopylæ.

Ar-te-mis'-ium; Le-on'-idas; Ther-mop'-y-læ; Xer-xēs.
 Bœ-o-tia; Tem'-pe; The-sa-ly;

Greece had an interval of rest after Marathon. Darius was more determined than ever to take vengeance on the Athenians and made immense preparations for another expedition. But in the year 485 he died, and his son and successor Xerxes was far less eager in the matter. But the war party was strong; Persian pride had been touched. Finally, a huge army and fleet were collected, and in 480 the expedition started.

I will tell first the story of how the Greeks met the army. They were not by any means united: Bœotia was friendly to the Persians as before; Argos, in Southern Greece, declined to give any help. None of the Greek colonies made any other effort to save their mother country.*

* It is only fair to say that the Sicilians had enough to do to save themselves, for the Carthaginians were about to invade them, probably by an arrangement with Persia.

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An army of ten thousand men, however, was collected and taken by sea to the north of Thessaly, where it occupied the pass of Tempe. But there was another pass, by which the Persians could enter Greece, at a place called Gonnus. Possibly this, too, might have been defended, but it was not. The Greeks saw that they could not safely stay where they were, and in a few days they retreated to their ships and were carried back to the south.

Almost the whole of Northern Greece now submitted to the Persians. The remainder, led by Athens and Sparta, still stood firm, and resolved to resist the invaders both by land and sea. The fleet took up its position at Artemisium; the army occupied the pass of Thermopylæ. It is of what happened at the latter place that I have now to speak. The army was but a small one, consisting of three hundred Spartans, about three thousand other troops from Southern Greece, four hundred Thebans (who came unwillingly), and seven hundred from the little Bœotian town of Thespiæ. The Athenians, as we shall soon find, were otherwise employed.

The pass of Thermopylæ consisted of two narrow straits, so to speak, with a broader part about a mile in length between them. Xerxes, when he reached the further end, could not believe that a few thousand men would dare to resist his army, and waited four days, expecting that they would submit. On the fifth day he ordered the Medes—the Medes had been once

the ruling race in the Empire—to attack. They advanced and fought with much courage, for their arms were far less effective than those of the Greeks; but they were driven back with great slaughter. After them came on the Persian guard, the picked men of the nation, named the “Immortals.” These fared no better than the Medes. But at Thermopylæ, as at Tempe, there was another way round—not a pass, but a mountain path. A native of the country, Ephialtes by name, is said to have told the Persians about it.

A division of the army at once set out, and at daybreak came in sight of the Greek force which had been set to guard it. They fled in terror—as a rule the Greeks were not especially brave—and the Persians made their way unhindered to the rear of the Thermopylæ garrison. But they were observed by scouts on the hills, and news was brought to Leonidas, the Spartan king, who was in command. It was clear that the pass could not be held, and there was still time to retreat. But retreat was forbidden by the Spartan code of honour. Her soldiers were bound to remain in any post which they had occupied. The other troops were bidden to depart, and they went not unwillingly—and who can blame them? The seven hundred men of Thespiæ elected to stay, and the Thebans were kept against their will.

The Spartans now felt that they had to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Accordingly,

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they advanced beyond the pass and charged the Persian host. They broke the line, slaying many and driving many into the sea. But at last they were overpowered by numbers; their spears were broken and even their swords damaged. The king was slain, and then they retired to the pass and occupied a hillock within it, defending themselves to the last with their daggers, their bare hands, and even their teeth.

Was this a useless sacrifice of life? Doubtless these men, if they had chosen to retreat, could have done good service to their country afterwards. But it may well be that they served it better by their death. The worth of such deeds cannot be measured. The things that are not seen, the things eternal, such as courage and devotion, count for more than the things that are seen. What is quite certain is that Xerxes and the Persians were deeply moved by what they had seen. They had learnt not only to respect the enemy, but to fear him. This, we may be quite sure, went a long way towards making the struggle end as it did.

III.—Salamis.

Ar-is-ti'-des; Pho-ni-cian; The-mis'-to-cles.
Cil-le'-ia; Sal'-a-mis;

So far I have had to speak of nothing that might not be matched in the history of other nations. We may read elsewhere of deeds like to the daring charge at Marathon, to the desperate defence at Thermopylæ. But to what I am now

about to relate there is scarcely a parallel to be found. We shall see that Athens was the real saviour of Greece, and now I have to show what there was to make her fit for this task.

About thirty years before the time of which I am now speaking Athens had become a free State. A family of tyrants that had ruled her for some forty years was driven out, and she was now under the government of her own people. It was, doubtless, a change for the better, but there were disadvantages. There were parties, as there must be in every free State, and party spirit ran very high.

This was the case in every Greek city. Athens was not worse in this respect than others; perhaps it was a little better. We have seen that there were traitors who, after the victory of Marathon, were ready to admit the Persians into the city; and what might have happened then occurred again and again in Greek history. The party not in power—what we commonly call the Opposition—was always ready to call in the enemies of the country to their help. Things never came quite to this, anyhow in the better days of Athens; still, party spirit was a serious danger, and a special remedy was devised to meet it.

Any party chief who seemed to have become too powerful might be *ostracised*—that is, summarily banished. If five thousand citizens—and we may reckon five thousand to be a half of the total number of grown men—wrote his name on an *strakoon*, or oyster-shell, he had to go. No reasons were given; there was no debate; the five thou-

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sand votes settled the matter, and the dangerous citizen went into exile for ten years.

Now this is just what had happened two years before to the leader of what we should call the Conservative party, Aristides by name; and his Radical opponent, Themistocles, had everything his own way. And now Themistocles showed what a great soul he had. He saw that if Athens was to save herself and Greece she must be of one mind—that there must be no dissension. Accordingly, he proposed, in the General Assembly of the People, that Aristides should be recalled. This was done. Thereafter, while the danger lasted, there were no parties among the Athenians.

And now I have to tell the story of what is one of the most marvellous instances of sagacity and foresight to be found in history. Themistocles, one of the Athenian leaders, saw that his country, if she would be safe herself and be able to help Greece, must have a strong fleet. We do not know what turned his thoughts this way. Perhaps it was the fact that the Persian fleet had brought a great army from Asia to Europe and had landed it only a few miles from Athens without any opposition. Anyhow, it was not long after the battle at Marathon that he began to urge shipbuilding on his countrymen. Two things helped him. Athens was always on bad terms with Ægina, and Ægina had what was then a powerful fleet. If Athens was to hold her own, she must have many more ships than she

then had. And then, by a most fortunate coincidence, the means for doing what was wanted came to hand.

The Athenians had in their territory some rich silver mines, and the profits from these were commonly divided among the citizens. Themistocles persuaded his countrymen to use the money for building and equipping a fleet, and also—for this was another work of his—for making a new harbour. Themistocles was the maker of the Athenian fleet, and the Athenian fleet was the saving of Greece.

I have said that the combined Greek fleet took up its position at Artemisium: of what happened there little need be said. The Greeks scarcely held their own. At one time they actually retreated in panic further south. If it had not been for the losses which the Persians suffered from storms, the result would have been even more disastrous.

When news came that the pass at Thermopylæ had been taken, the fleet finally left Artemisium, its commanders hardly feeling as hopeful as when they went there. They sailed south till they reached the Bay of Salamis. The Athenians were now in full force. They had abandoned their country to the enemy—their wives and children, with the aged and infirm men, being taken to such places of refuge as could be found, while all that were able-bodied were on board the ships. Of these, there were two hundred, considerably more than half of the whole fleet, which numbered some three hundred and sixty. Nine of

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these came from islands in the Ægean, four of them belonging to Naxos; they were sent to join the Persians, but their crews chose rather to help their countrymen. One solitary ship came from Greece beyond the seas.

And now some strange things came to pass. The southern Greeks were determined to retreat from Salamis. Their countrymen had been busy building a wall across the Isthmus of Corinth, and their plan was to make their great stand there, where the fleet and the army could help each other. But the plan meant ruin to Greece, for the two hundred ships of Athens, with fifty more which belonged to other northern cities, would probably leave the fleet. And this is what Themistocles threatened to do.

"If you leave Salamis," he said, "we Athenians will sail away at once to a city in Italy which is ours. What will you do then?"

For a time this seemed to settle the matter. The Spartan admiral, who was commander-in-chief, gave orders that the fleet should stay and fight. But the battle was not yet won. The men of the south went back to their old purpose and persuaded the Spartans again to order a retreat. Then Themistocles took a desperate resolve. He sent this message to the Persian King:

"The Greeks are going to fly from Salamis; they are at strife among themselves; block the way and prevent them from escaping."

Xerxes at once took the advice, had the passages on both north and south blocked; and

the Greeks had to fight. And they fought as men who must conquer or die. There may have been some hesitation at first; according to one account, some of the crews began to back water when they ought to have rowed forward at their top speed.

But, if there was such holding back, it was only by a few and for a short time. Whether it was a ship from Athens or from Ægina that first charged the enemy was never known; the third, everyone acknowledged, was one of the four Naxians, which had disobeyed orders in so noble a fashion. Some of the Persian ships resisted bravely enough, especially those manned by Phœnicians, old rivals of the Greeks in seamanship, and by the hardy rovers who inhabited the coast of Cilicia. But the Persians themselves were landsmen; if they served on shipboard they were out of their element and of little use. In the end, two hundred of the Persian ships were sunk or taken. The Athenians—and, among the Athenians, Themistocles first and foremost—had saved Greece.

IV.—Platæa.

A-so'-pus; Ci-thæ'-ron; Mar-do'-nius; Per-i-os'-ci; Te'-ge-a

We can now see plainly enough that the issue of the struggle between Persians and Greeks was practically decided at Salamis. But it is not likely that the Greeks saw it. King Xerxes had hurried home, but he had left a powerful army of two hundred thousand men, it is said, behind

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him. These were the picked troops of the Persian force; they were under the command of an experienced general, and they had as their base* the powerful and strongly fortified city of Thebes. As a matter of fact, all Northern Greece, except Attica, was, whether willingly or unwillingly, on their side.

The Persian general—Mardonius was his name—began by trying to bring over the Athenians to the Persian side. If they would make an alliance on equal terms—he no longer asked submission—with the Great King,† he would repair all the damage done to their city and country, make up to them for all their losses, and help them to become the chief power in Greece. This offer was made through Alexander, King of Macedonia, a prince who claimed descent from Achilles, the greatest of Greek heroes. The Athenians would not listen for a moment to these offers. "As long as the sun moves in the heavens from his rising to his setting, we will never make alliance with the Persian king. And do you never come again on such an errand. You are our friend, and we would not willingly do you a hurt." To the Spartans, who, hearing of what was going on, sent envoys to entreat them to remain loyal to Greece, they declared that as long as a single Athenian remained alive there should be no friendship with the Persians. They added that, as Mardonius

* The place from which an army advances to the attack or to which it retreats.

† "The King" was the title by which the Persian ruler was known.

would certainly attack them as soon as he knew that his offer had been refused, Sparta ought to come at once to their help. This the Spartans were strangely unwilling to do. They thought of nothing but their own safety, and this they believed to be provided for by a wall across the Isthmus of Corinth. When this was finished, they were ready to leave the Athenians to their fate.

Meanwhile, this much suffering people had again been compelled to leave their country, to which they had returned after the victory at Salamis. They were still resolved to be loyal to Greece, refusing another offer which Mardonius now made to them.* But they sent envoys to Sparta to remonstrate with them on account of their neglect. Even then the Spartans hesitated. Day after day, for ten days, they put off giving an answer to the envoys, and all the while continued to strengthen the fortifications on the Isthmus. Then an Arcadian friend told them the truth. "What good," he said, "will your walls do you if the Athenians lend their fleet to the Persians?" Then they made up their minds. That very night five thousand Spartans, each attended by seven armed Helots, set out. The same number of Pericæci † soon followed, each with one Helot.

* There is a story that the one Senator who advised that the offer should be accepted was stoned to death by his colleagues, and his wife and children suffered the same fate at the hands of the Athenian women. It was a shocking thing, but we can understand it when we think of what the people had suffered.

† The Pericæci were free inhabitants of the country, but without political power.

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Sparta thus put fifty thousand men in the field. It was by far the greatest effort that she ever made.

I must hasten on to tell the story of the battle. The Greek army, numbering in all about 110,000 men, marched by the Isthmus into Attica and crossed the range of Cithæron into Bœotia. The Spartan King Pausanias, who was in command, took up a position on the higher ground overlooking the plain of Plataea.

Encouraged by a successful action with the Persian cavalry, he left this vantage ground, and posted his army in the plain along the right bank of the Asopus. This second position he could not hold, for the simple reason that the army could get no water. The Persian archers on the other side of the river made it impossible for the Greeks to approach their own bank; a spring on the extreme right of the line became their only supply. This was choked by a sudden attack of the Persian cavalry. Pausanias had to move again, this time to a spot called the "Island" because it was nearly surrounded by water. But the movement might have ended in disaster. One of the Spartan generals of division refused to move. "He would not," he said, "fly from the enemy," and much valuable time was lost. The centre of the Greek line was seized with something like panic and hurried, beyond the post assigned to it, to what seemed a safer position.

When the Spartans at last began to move—the disobedient officer thought better of it when he saw that he was to be left alone—the Persians

fell upon them. So fierce was the attack that Pausanias sent a message to the Athenians that



"THE PERSIAN ARCHERS MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE GREEKS
TO APPROACH THEIR OWN BANK."

he was hard pressed and wanted help. But the Athenians had their hands full, for they had to

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encounter the Theban infantry, sturdy soldiers whose obstinate courage changed more than once the course of Greek history. The Thebans were compelled to retreat; but they retreated in good order under the protection of a powerful body of cavalry. Meanwhile, the Spartans had more than held their own. Mardonius, possessed with the idea that the Greeks were flying before him, had attacked in the most reckless fashion. One large division never came into action at all; others were not used as they should have been. And, brave as the Persians were, they were, man for man, inferior in strength, training, and equipment to their antagonists. They were routed; the fortified camp to which they fled was taken, not without help of the Athenians, and by the end of the day very few of the vast army were left alive.

The victory was won by the Spartans, with the help of three thousand men from the Arcadian town of Tegea, and the Athenians. The rest of the Greek army took no real part in the battle. Some of them hurried up when they saw how the day was going, but did this in so rash and disorderly a fashion that the Theban cavalry charged them with disastrous effect, killing as many as six hundred.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL.

The End of Themistocles.

Ar-tax-er'ces;
Eu-bes'a;

Lamp'sa-cus;
Mag-ne-sia;

Plu-tarch.

WE have seen in the Athenian general and statesman Themistocles an example of a more than human sagacity. He foresaw exactly what was wanted for Athens and Greece—he was one of the few men who could look beyond his own city to the interests of the nation—and he perceived, with a practical readiness which the men of great ideas do not always possess, how this necessary thing was to be obtained. But a great genius and a character marked by many fine qualities were marred by what is said by the highest authority to be the most mischievous of vices—the love of money. It is not difficult to see how this passion grew upon him and mastered him.

We find him early in his career familiar with methods of persuasion which men with a finer sense of honour would have shrunk from using, however desirable the object. It was suspected that the curiously apposite answer of the Oracle at Delphi, that Athens must trust to her wooden walls, was inspired by a gift to the managing priests. It is difficult to believe that

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counsel so exactly agreeing with the policy of Themistocles could have come either from chance or from the insight of the Delphic prophetess. Then we know that our hero more than once had recourse to bribes when he wished to commend his own views to other leaders of the Greek forces.

In one case, certainly, he contrived to make a very handsome profit for himself out of a transaction of this kind. When the Greek fleet was about to retreat from Artemisium,* the inhabitants of the island of Eubœa felt that this meant the loss of all that they had. They could not hope to change the purpose of the Greek generals, but they might at least delay its execution. This would give them time to remove some part of their property to a place of safety. They accordingly approached Themistocles, offering him a large sum of money if he would bring about the requisite delay. Themistocles purchased the support of the Spartan admiral with one fraction of their money and that of the Corinthian with another, retaining for his own use an amount much larger than what he had paid away. There was nothing in this act that could be described as directly injurious to Athens, but the man who could bring himself to do it was clearly untrustworthy.

It was after the triumphant conclusion of the Persian war that Themistocles found himself in such a position that he could safely indulge his

* See p. 25.

passion for gain. One obvious plan was to exact money from the island States which were more or less dependent upon Athens. He visited them one after another with the powerful fleet which was under his command and reaped a rich harvest from their fears. Plutarch tells a picturesque story of his reception at Andros. When he found the people unwilling to yield he remarked that he had on his side two powerful gods—*Persuasion* and *Force*. "That may be," said the Andrians, "but we have with us two that are even more powerful than yours—*Poverty* and *Despair*."

A still more serious matter was the complicity of Themistocles in the treasonable schemes of the Spartan King Pausanias.* How far this complicity went it is impossible to say. It is certain, however, that soon after the death of Pausanias, letters and other documents came into the possession of the Spartan authorities by which Themistocles was gravely compromised. He was then in exile, the victim of that same instrument of *ostracism* by which he had in years gone by got rid of his rival Aristides. He was summoned to stand his trial before a council of the Greek States. He felt, and possibly was right in feeling, that in such a trial he was not likely to find justice. He had made many enemies—the bitterest of them, we may well believe, by some of his most creditable acts. Anyhow, he did not feel that he could safely trust

* See p. 12.

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himself to his countrymen, and he resolved to put himself under the protection of the Persian King.

This seems the strangest of all courses that he could possibly have taken; yet he appears to have calculated on it long before as a thing that he might have to do. Perhaps the easiest way to explain what seems so strange is to give the substance of the speech which he is said to have made when, after many notable adventures, he at last found his way into the presence of the Great King. He had refused to give his name, and so the first question that the monarch—Xerxes had by this time been succeeded by his son Artaxerxes—put to him through the interpreter was, Who are you? "I am Themistocles the Athenian," was the answer. "The Persians, it is true, have suffered much from me, but they have also received a more than compensating benefit. When I had saved my country, I was the means of delivering what was left of your army. It was through me that the Greeks did not pursue you."

According to another account, he actually claimed credit for sending the message which had brought on the battle of Salamis. That battle had ended, it was true, in a Persian defeat. If the result had been a victory, that victory would have been due to him. The end was that the Persian King gave him a hearty welcome. "I have offered," he said, "a reward of two hundred talents to any one who should deliver you over to me; as you have done that yourself, it is only right that the reward

should be yours." Nor was this all. The revenues of three cities were assigned to the new favourite. Magnesia was to furnish him with bread, Lampsacus with wine, and Myus with flesh meat. This must have been a munificent provision if it is true, as we are told, that the yearly revenue derived from Lampsacus alone amounted to thirty talents.* By this time Themistocles' lust of money must have been satiated. His friends at Athens had contrived to send out to him his private property. The amount of this, though it was but a trifle in comparison with the munificence of the Persian King, was large enough to cause some suspicion of his integrity. He had but three talents, less than £1,000, before he entered upon public life, and his accumulations now amounted to thirty times as much or even more.

The Persian King naturally expected some return for his bounty, and the return was a service which Themistocles had virtually promised, but which he was resolved never to render—which, we can easily believe, he knew in his heart he was powerless to render—the subjugation of Greece. "If you destroy me," he said in concluding his address to the King, "you destroy an enemy of Greece."

For some time Artaxerxes was occupied with other things; then he turned his attention to Greece. He sent to Themistocles, who was then living at Magnesia, and reminded him that the time

* Nearly £7,000.

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was come when he must fulfil his engagements. His answer was to put an end to his life by taking poison. The Persian King, who certainly shows to advantage when compared with the Greek, was magnanimous enough to admire the patriotism of this act. It was a melancholy ending to a great career. The most gifted of Athenian statesmen died in exile, and by his own hand. It was only by stealth that his remains could be brought back to rest in his native country. So true is it that they who make haste to be rich fall into a great snare.



CHAPTER IV.

VAULTING AMBITION.

The Athenians in Sicily.

Al-ci-bi'a-des;
E-ryx;

Gy-lip'pus;
Lam'a-chus;

Leon-tini;
Mes-sa'na;

Nic'i-aa.

SIXTY-THREE years (479-416 B.C.) have passed since the events related in my second chapter, and Athens is beyond all question the most powerful of the Greek States. She had used—and, I am bound to say, had also abused—the opportunity which the faults of Sparta* had given her. The islands which lay between mainland Greece and Asia had made a league for mutual defence against Persia, with Athens at its head. Athens had gradually changed it into an Empire. Cities which began by furnishing ships ended by paying tribute, till, at the time of which I am writing, only one† had ships of her own. Athens had thus become an Imperial State, and the besetting sin of Imperialism brought her to ruin.

A great scheme of conquest, which would double or treble the Empire already possessed, was conceived. Such schemes are at such times “in the air”—that is, more or less present in many minds; but there was one man, a brilliant young noble, Alcibiades by name, who did more than

* See pp. 12 and 13.

† Chios, now Scio.

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anyone else to give it a definite shape. To put it into a few words, it was this—first to conquer Sicily, then to go on and acquire the Greek cities of Italy, and possibly Carthage itself. A pretext for war was soon found. Athens, as has been said before,* considered herself to be the leader and champion of all Ionian States, and Syracuse, a Dorian city, had destroyed the Ionian town of Leontini. This was a wrong, it was said, which ought to be set right. And to set it right, it was affirmed, would be to guard against a future danger. Only a few years before Athens had been fighting for her life in a great struggle with her enemies in mainland Greece, a struggle—to speak generally—of Dorians against Ionians.† When Dorian Syracuse has made all Sicily her own, she would come over with vastly increased forces and help her kinsmen to crush the Ionian Athens.

In the spring of 416 B.C. envoys from Egesta, a native Sicilian—*i.e.*, a non-Greek—town which had for some time been in alliance with Athens, came over to beg for help. Egesta had quarrelled with a neighbour, and this neighbour, with the assistance of Syracuse, was pressing her hard. The envoys were heard in the Athenian Assembly, and were backed by the war party. The people hesitated. The envoys declared that Egesta, though its army was small, had plenty of money.

* See p. 15.

† The Peloponnesian War, which began in 431 and was brought to an end for a time by the Peace of Nicias, concluded in 421.

If Athens would send a squadron, Egesta would furnish its pay. Relieved, it may well be, at not having to come to a decision, the Assembly resolved to send Commissioners to Egesta to make inquiries.

Thereupon follows a very curious story. The Commissioners were treated like so many children. They were taken into the Treasury and saw there jars said to be full of gold pieces, but really filled up with rubbish, with a layer of coins on the top. The wealth of the great temple at Eryx was displayed to them as if it belonged to the city. They were invited to banquets at which the same plate, said to be gold, but really silver-gilt, did duty over and over again. They came back with sixty talents in uncoined silver,* and made



THE ENVOYS IN THE TREASURY.

* Between £14,000 and £15,000.

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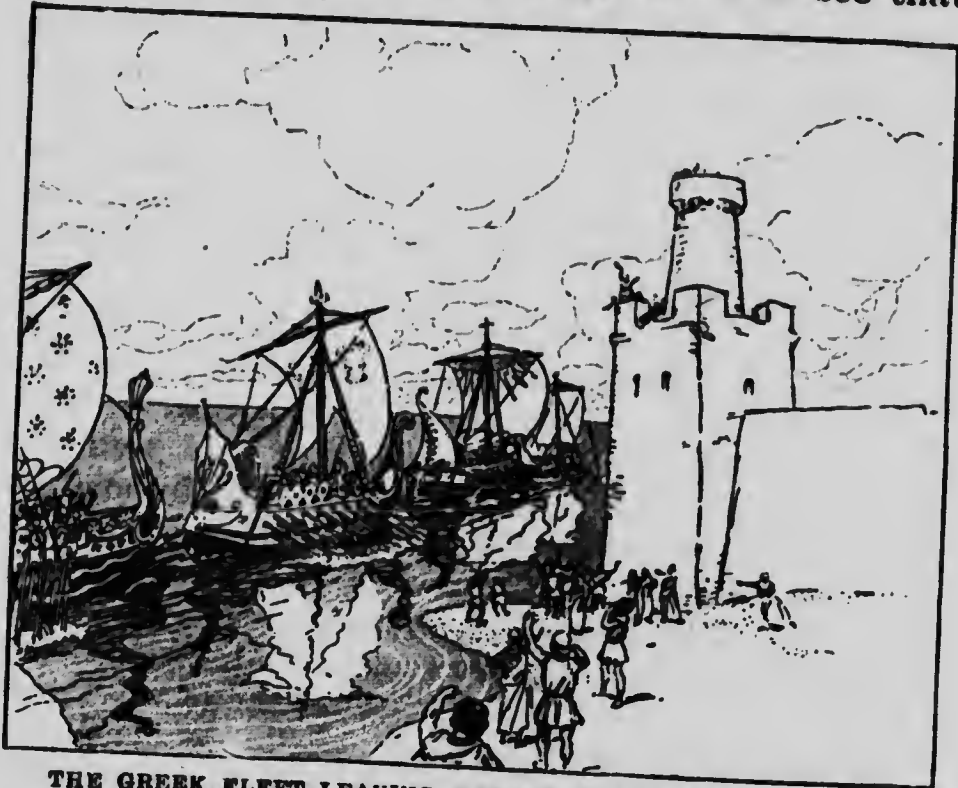
a glowing report of the wealth which they had seen. The Athenians resolved to proceed with the affair. They did not, indeed, grasp the whole scheme. To help Eggesta, to restore Leontini and to promote the general interests of Athens were the objects which they instructed the generals appointed to carry out.

A few days later another Assembly was called to vote supplies. Nicias, leader of the peace party, tried in vain to change his countrymen's purpose. Then he made a fatal mistake. He sought to frighten them by giving a list of what would be wanted in the way of soldiers, ships and stores. He was taken at his word. "You think," as his opponents put it, "that, with the forces that you describe, the work can be done. You shall have all you ask." Nicias had nothing to say. He had committed himself to the plan. He was appointed to the command along with Alcibiades and a brave officer of the name of Lamachus.

Early in the summer the expedition started. There were between six and seven thousand troops and one hundred and forty ships of war, and a great number of store ships and vessels owned by private adventurers. All the equipment was of the very best. It was a great effort, but all too small for the work which had to be done.

One great disappointment they soon had. The Greek cities of Italy, with one exception, refused to have any dealings with them. That one—Rhegium, on the Straits of Messina—allowed them

to buy food. At Rhegium they heard how Egesta had cheated them. The generals held a council of war. Nicias said: "Let us go to Egesta; if she can pay for the sixty ships, we will see that



THE GREEK FLEET LEAVING HARBOUR ON THE EXPEDITION TO SYRACUSE.

she gets her rights. Then we will see what can be done for Leontini." Alcibiades was for treating with the Greek cities and with the native tribes. Lamachus proposed to attack Syracuse at once, before it had time to complete its defences. He was probably in the right. But his opinion did not approve itself to his colleagues: he withdrew

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it and sided with Alcibiades. The next four months were almost wasted. One city became an ally; another was secured by a stroke of luck; but nothing more was done, except that a native town was taken and its inhabitants sold for slaves. This was hardly the right way to make friends of the Sicilian tribes.

And now there happened a great disaster. Through the influence of his enemies Alcibiades was recalled to stand his trial at Athens on certain charges that had been brought against him. I shall have more to say about this matter in my next chapter. It is enough at present to observe that the accused man did not stand his trial, but fled to Sparta, and there did all he could to injure his country. The invading army made a not very important demonstration before the walls of Syracuse, and had the better in an action which followed. After this they went into winter quarters for the next five months. By the end of that time three-quarters of a year had passed without any real progress having been made.

It is not part of my plan to tell at length the story of what followed. In the spring of 415 B.C. the siege of Syracuse really began. The Athenians set to work building a wall which was to shut in the city on the land side; of the sea they were for the present masters. They worked at this with great energy. If they had only started on it immediately on their arrival, it might have been finished and Syracuse might have been

compelled to surrender. But finished it never was. The amount of labour was very much increased by the fact that during the winter the Syracusans had built a new wall of their own. Frequent interruptions and attacks were made; and, though the Athenians generally came off victorious, much time was lost. They had the misfortune, too, to lose their general Lamachus, who was killed in a skirmish. His energy was never more wanted; for Nicias, who was now left in sole command, was suffering from disease—a disease, too, that is especially apt to cloud the brain.

The fact is that even now, in spite of all the loss of time and opportunity, the Athenians were within a very little of succeeding. Syracuse was given up for lost by her friends outside, and a party that urged surrender was making itself heard within the walls. If Nicias had bestirred himself a little and finished the investing wall, the city might have fallen. It was definitely saved from this fate by the next event that I have to record. In the late summer a Spartan officer named Gylippus, with a force of three thousand men, made his way through the Athenian lines and entered Syracuse. Nicias made no attempt to stop him. There were no ships on guard at the Strait of Messana through which he had to pass, and he was allowed to march across the whole breadth of the island without hindrance.

From this time the strength of the Athenians

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steadily declined. They had their successes—Gylippus, who was now in command of the Syracusan forces, was even beaten in a pitched battle—but their losses also were great. An army in the field always suffers waste, and the Athenians had been away from home for more than a year. With the ships' crews things were worse. Many of the rowers were slaves, and these had chances of deserting; others were hired foreigners, and these did not care to remain on the losing side. The ships, too, became unfit for use, as ships will when they are not laid up from time to time; this could not be done because the whole of the fleet had to be kept afloat, if it was to remain in command of the sea. Nicias sent home a despatch, of which we have the very words, describing the condition of affairs and begging to be relieved of the command.

Twelve ships were at once sent out. Sixty more followed in the spring of the year 413, carrying some four thousand men. Before the reinforcements arrived the Athenian fleet had suffered a severe repulse, and the new fleet and army did not really change the situation. Very soon after their arrival the Athenians delivered a night attack on the Syracusan position, especially on a cross wall which had been built to cut across the wall of investment. At first everything went well. A fort was occupied; the wall was seized and partly pulled down. More than one division of the Syracusan forces was routed. It was a contingent of Bœotians, old



"THE ATHENIAN FLEET WAS DECISIVELY BEATEN."

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enemies of Athens, that at last stood firm and changed the fortunes of the day. Before six weeks had passed all was over. First the Athenian fleet was decisively beaten in a great battle fought in the Great Harbour. Then the army, while vainly endeavouring to make its way into the interior where it might get help from the native tribes, was compelled to surrender. The Athenians had made their great cast for Empire and lost.



CHAPTER V.

THE LION'S CUB.

Alcibiades.

Alc-mæ'on;
Æ-ges-pot'a-mus;

Hæ-r-môs;
O-lym'pi-a;

Peri-cles;
Tel'a-mon.

"It would be well," said a wise man of Athens to his countrymen, "not to rear a lion's cub in your city; but if you have reared him, you must humour him." I am now going to tell the story of the "cub."

Alcibiades, son of Cleinias, came of the best blood of Athens and, indeed, of Greece. On the father's side he traced up his pedigree to the hero Ajax, son of Telamon; on the mother's he was of the race of Alcmaeon, and so a kinsman of the great statesman Pericles. He had all the gifts and qualities which, rightly used, may make a man a great and useful citizen, but will bring ruin, if they are abused, on himself and his country. He was—as we have seen—well born, and to be well born gives a man a great start in life. He was wealthy, he was singularly handsome, and, when he chose to be so, most attractive in manner; an eloquent speaker, thoroughly well educated, and a man of dauntless courage. The story of how all these good things were turned to bad uses is as instructive as it is sad.

One of the lessons that the world has learnt from the Greeks—perhaps the greatest of these

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lessons—is the duty of citizenship. They held that every man was bound to serve his country—to serve it as a soldier, to serve it as a member of the Assembly in which political matters were discussed and decided. The man who held aloof from these things, who occupied himself with his own private affairs, was regarded with something like contempt.* But this feeling was apt to become excessive. It seems impossible to have politics without parties, and party spirit in a Greek city was apt to run dangerously high. Alcibiades was just the man to rouse it to its very worst excesses. He was that very dangerous character—the high-born demagogue. A rich man at Athens had special opportunities of making himself popular.

For example, it was one of his duties to provide a ship of war for the service of the State. To do this in a splendid way, to give extra pay to the crew—it was customary to increase the wages of those who pulled the heaviest oars, but some open-handed persons went beyond this—to spend money on gilding and painting and decorating in other ways, was a highly popular thing. Then the honour of the State could be maintained by expensive displays at the Public Games. On a critical occasion, when Alcibiades had to defend himself from a charge of extravagance and to win his countrymen over to a certain line of policy, he took great credit to himself for having made such a

* He was spoken of as an *idiotes*, a word with which our own *idiot* is curiously connected.

display. He had sent, he said, no less than seven chariots to compete at Olympia, and had won the first, second, and fourth prizes. Such a thing had never been done before—even by the wealthy Sicilian Greeks; it was the more wonderful when done by an Athenian, in view of all that Athens had suffered during the Peloponnesian War.*

It is easy to see that a man who had plenty of money and was willing to spend it in this way would become popular with a certain class. But, if he made friends, he also made enemies. He was haughty; he was insolent; his equals often found him unbearable: respectable citizens were shocked at his profligacy and profanity. As a politician he was quite untrustworthy. He was always ready to betray his party, his friends, even his country, to serve his private ends or even to gratify himself.

* The country had been laid waste year after year by the Spartan army.

† It is worth while to give a remarkable instance of this "shiftiness." In the year 419 Sparta sent envoys to treat for peace, which she was ready to make on terms very favourable to Athens. Alcibiades thought that the envoys ought to have employed him to state their case to the Assembly; they preferred to employ his rival, Nicias. To revenge himself for this slight, as he took it to be, he played them this trick. They had come with full powers to treat, and had instructed Nicias to say so. Alcibiades went privately to them and said: "You will do better not to say that you have full powers. Just now the people are in a mind to ask more than you could really give. In a short time they will become more reasonable." The Assembly was called. Nicias introduced the Spartans as having full power. Then Alcibiades stood up and said to the Assembly: "You are being deceived; these men have not really got full powers. Ask them and they will tell you." Of course they gave the answer which Alcibiades had suggested. The Assembly was not unnaturally annoyed, and the negotiations were broken off.

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I described in the last chapter how he was the chief advocate of the disastrous expedition to Sicily. This was the turning point of his life; after this, though he had times of success, his fortunes continued to decline and the fortunes of his country with them. One night, just before the expedition started, all Athens was shocked by a very outrageous act. All the statues of the god Hermes—and every street in the city contained one or more—were found mutilated. It was just such a thing as Alcibiades and the reckless young men who flattered and followed him were likely to have done, and it was immediately laid to his charge.

It is not in the least likely that he was really guilty; he was not so foolish as to run such a risk when he had just got what he had long desired—the command of a great expedition. But he had done things not unlike it—had acted a parody, for instance, of some sacred rites; and his enemies, who, as I have said, were numerous, could at least point to this notorious fact. Alcibiades asked to be put upon his trial at once. His enemies refused. They felt sure that he would be acquitted. It was likely that some of the judges who would have to try him would be soldiers who were serving under him and with whom he was popular.* The expedition sailed, and some three or four months afterwards Alcibiades was sent for to take his trial. But he saw

* The judges in such a trial would be five hundred members of the Public Assembly.

plainly enough that his condemnation was as probable as his acquittal had been before. The officers who were sent to fetch him did not venture to put him under arrest, and he was allowed to return in his own ship. On his way home he escaped and took refuge in Sparta. So far we can hardly blame him. But when we find that he used his knowledge of the Athenian plans to injure his own country, there is only one thing to be said—that he was a traitor of the very worst kind.

It is very doubtful whether in any case the expedition to Sicily could have obtained a real success; but it is certain that its failure was made more speedy and more complete by the conduct of Alcibiades. The "lion's cub" had turned against those who had reared him and torn them savagely. Perhaps we may say that he was acting after his kind, and that they suffered for their folly.

The rest of the story may be briefly told. It was not very long before Alcibiades fell out of favour with his Spartan friends. They did not find him as useful as they had hoped, and, indeed, when he had no more secrets to tell he could not do them much service. His character, too, and his manners were not at all such as would please in such a place as Sparta; and he gave special offence to some important people. He then made his way to the Persian governor of Western Asia Minor and rose into high favour with him. It is clear that he was a most

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fascinating person—till he was found out. It was now his interest to make his peace with Athens, and he contrived to do so. After serving for a while with the fleet and helping it to win some successes, he went home and was received with enthusiasm.

And now for a time things went well with him and with the State; for, in spite of all his faults, he was a man of wonderful ability. Then, at the end of four years, his luck seemed to turn. He made an unsuccessful attempt to take one of the islands in the Ægean, and his second in command, during his temporary absence, brought on a great disaster by his rashness. His enemies—he was sure always to have enemies—seized the opportunity; the people turned against him, and he was once more banished. This time he fled to a castle which he possessed on the coast of Thrace.

The fall of Athens was now drawing near, and it came in 404, when the fleet on which her last hopes rested was destroyed at Ægospotamus. Alcibiades, exile though he was, had done his best to save it. He saw that the Athenian commanders were incompetent and careless and warned them of the risk which they were running. Naturally they would not listen to him. It was their business, they said—not his—to manage the fleet. Alcibiades took refuge with his Persian friends. These, however, were friends no longer. Athens now counting for nothing, Sparta was supreme in Greece, and to Sparta

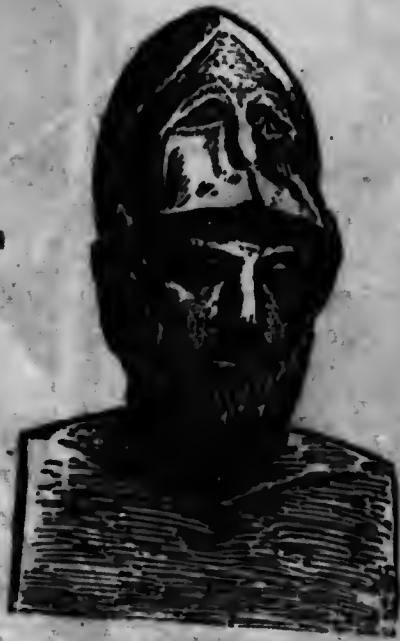


H. R. MILLAR.

THE DEATH OF ALCIBIADES.

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Alcibiades was hateful. A party of Persian troops, who were practically in Spartan pay, surrounded his house by night and killed him. Such was the miserable end of the "Lion's Cub."



PERICLES.

From the Bust in the Louvre.

CHAPTER VI.

SOCRATES.

I.—The Rejected Prophet.

Ar-gi-nu'sen; De'll-am; Gor'gi-as; Pla'to; Soc'ra-tes.

WE hear again and again in the Bible of prophets sent by God to His people: we are told that these men had a message to deliver, and that those who heard this message received a blessing or a curse according as they heeded or did not heed it. We are not to suppose that this experience, this dealing of God with man, was limited to the Jewish nation. One book of the Old Testament, indeed—the Book of the Prophet Jonah—relates how one of these messengers was sent to the great heathen city of Nineveh, how he preached repentance to its king and people, how they listened to the message and were saved from the threatened destruction.

We may venture to say that no nation is left without such warnings. Often, doubtless, history has preserved no record of these things; often, it may be, we do not discern the character of these men or the meaning of what they said. Sometimes, it may be, they were not understood even in their own day. It has happened with others besides the Jews that ears have been stopped and hearts hardened against the truth. It seems to

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me that we may perceive the likeness of such a prophet in the famous Socrates.

The outward events in the man's life are few and easily told. He was the son of a sculptor, one who rose to no eminence in his art, and he is said to have followed the same occupation, at least in his earlier years. He served, as all able-bodied citizens were bound to serve, in the army, and distinguished himself by his courage. In the headlong flight which followed the defeat at Delium*—citizen soldiers are specially liable to such panics—he showed a notable intrepidity. In politics he took as small a part as was possible; still, when he had to act he acted according to a most rigorous sense of duty. In 406 he happened to be one of the presiding officers of the Assembly, and resisted what he conceived to be an illegal proceeding at the greatest peril to his life.

It was after a battlet in which the Athenian fleet was victorious, but at a great cost of life. The officers in command were accused of having neglected to save their countrymen—the crews of ships which had been sunk by the enemy. A motion was made that all the accused should be put on their trial at once and that one verdict should be given for all. Socrates declared that such a motion was illegal and refused to put it to the Assembly. His fellow presidents did not support him and his protest was neglected; but for a time his life was in imminent danger. Four

* Where the Athenians were routed by the Boeotians.

† Arginussæ.

SOCRATES.

years afterwards, when popular government had been overthrown at Athens and an oligarchy* nicknamed "The Thirty Tyrants" was in power, he was ordered to arrest a certain Leon who had incurred the displeasure of the authorities. He boldly refused to do so, and would certainly have suffered but for the fact that the "Thirty" were driven from power before they had time to act.

What, it will be asked, did this man seek to do for his countrymen? And how did he set about doing it? The latter question I will try to answer first. We have got to imagine a state of things quite unlike anything that we are accustomed to see or hear of nowadays. St. Luke helps us to do this when he describes in the Book of the Acts St. Paul's visit to the city where Socrates had been so well known a figure some four hundred and fifty years before. "All the Athenians," he says,† "and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing." We should think it strange if some person with whom we had a very slight acquaintance, or perhaps no acquaintance at all, should stop us in the street to ask us some question about a point in morals or politics.

In Athens, however, it was not thought strange at all. And the habits of the people made such a thing very easy and natural. In the first place, there were a great many more people of leisure, in proportion to the whole population, than there

* Government by a few.

† Acts xvii. 21.

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are among us. There were a great many slaves in the city, and these did the greater part of the common business of life. And these leisured persons were accustomed to meet in the market place and to discuss all kinds of questions in politics, philosophy and morals. And then we must remember the strangers. Athens, the most beautiful and the most interesting city in the world, attracted crowds of them. Some came on business; some had something they thought to teach or to advertise; some came out of curiosity. These soon came to be known—we see how St. Paul was at once recognised as a person who had something to say—and they talked or were talked to. There were, we must remember, no newspapers, no magazines, and very few books. News and knowledge which would now be communicated by these means passed in ancient Athens by word of mouth. Where we write, the Athenians talked.

And here comes in the answer to the first question: What did this man try to do for his countrymen? In this crowd of talkers Socrates was wont to spend his time day after day from morning to night. He was a talker, too, but of no common kind. He had a definite aim, and this aim, it is not too much to say, was the promoting of truth and righteousness. He took the words which men used, the names which they gave to things, the maxims by which they professed to live, and examined them. His method was to ask questions, to make men give reasons for what

they did and believed, and so to convict them if they were consciously or unconsciously inconsistent and false.

It will be well to give an example of this way of his, and the example shall be one which will show him at his best, setting forth an ideal of morals to which it is not easy to find a match elsewhere.

One day Socrates meets in the market-place a very distinguished stranger who has lately come to Athens. His name is Gorgias, a teacher of rhetoric—that is, of the art of persuasive speech. Socrates at once engages him on the subject of his art. “You profess,” he says, “to teach all things that men need to learn, is it not so?” Gorgias allows that it is so. “You teach a man, for instance, to know about justice?” “Yes.” “And the man who knows about justice will be just?” “Certainly.” “Then neither the teacher nor the pupil will ever wish to act unjustly?” And Gorgias allows it—not, perhaps, very willingly. At this point a younger man takes up the argument, which Gorgias is content to drop. “The man who can use persuasive speech is powerful, for can he not bend an Assembly to his will? And if he is powerful, he is happy.” Here Socrates joins issue with him. “No; to be powerful and at the same time unjust is not happiness, but misery. If a man can protect himself or others from the punishment due to wrong-doing, he is making himself and them not less but more unhappy.” This seems most monstrous to the young

disputant. "What?" he says, "do you mean that if one man aims at making himself a tyrant in his native city and fails, and, failing, is put to death in the most shameful way after being most cruelly tortured—seeing, perhaps, those dearest to him treated in the same way; and another man succeeds and lives to the end of his days in the peaceful enjoyment of all the pleasures that he can desire—do you mean to say that the successful man is not more fortunate than the unsuccessful?" "Well," answers Socrates, "I should not call either of them fortunate; but I should certainly say that the successful man is the more miserable of the two." And this he compels his antagonist to confess, forcing him on, so to speak, from step to step without leaving him a chance of escaping. And so, to revert to the subject from which the discussion started, it follows that the real use of rhetoric is not to protect the persuasive speaker or his clients from due punishment, but to compel the wrong-doer, be he another or the speaker himself, to submit to whatever penalty may be due that he may not suffer the worse evil of impunity.

This truth is graphically put in a description of the things which happen to the souls of men after that they have passed from this world into another. There had been a time, according to Socrates, when men had been judged for the deeds done in the body while they were yet alive, and by living judges. But in those days much injustice had been done. Some who were wicked had been

sent to the isles of the blest, and some—though, indeed, not many—to the place of punishment, who were in truth deserving of happiness. The cause of this, he said, was that they came clothed before their judges. They made a fair show without, though they were evil within. Beauty, or noble birth, or wealth—all the things, in short, that deceived the eyes of men—made them seem fairer than they were. So the great Ruler of the world ordained that thenceforward men should be judged after death, when all the shows of life have passed away and the soul stands naked, as it were, and can be seen as it really is. So it would be that the soul, say, of the greatest king upon earth would come before the judgment seat all stripped and bare and not differing one whit, so far as outward circumstances are concerned, from the soul of the poorest man upon earth. But what would really be seen on it would be the marks left behind by evil actions. If it had been given to falsehood and vanity, then it would be mis-shapen and distorted; perjury and cruelty would have left stripes and scars upon it; power ill used and luxury and pride would make it hideous to behold.

“And so,” said the wise man, turning to the foolish youth who had talked as if the good things of this world were all that a man need care for, “so I strive to make my soul as clean and pure and free from sinful blemish as I may, against the day when it shall appear before the Judge. And the counsel that I give to others is to do even as

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I do. For they will surely have some day to face this judgment, and if they do not heed the things which are alone worthy to be heeded—honour and justice and truth—then they will be as feeble and helpless in that court as I, lacking this power of persuasive speech, may well be in the courts of this world.”

II.—The Prophet Before His Judges.

Ar-is-teph'a-nos.

In 399 B.C. Socrates was put on his trial before the Athenian people. The charges against him were that he had corrupted the young by his teaching and that he did not believe in the gods. It is not easy to imagine what was the evidence by which his accusers sought to prove these charges. It is likely enough that the philosopher had made himself disliked by many of his fellow-citizens; he had gone about exposing shams and false pretences. Not a few persons who had acquired great reputations for wisdom or learning had been made to appear ridiculous in their own eyes or their countrymen's. Others may really have believed that he was a revolutionary person who was bent on upsetting old beliefs. This, indeed, is the substance of a fierce attack which had actually been made upon him some years before.

It was the custom at Athens for the writers of comedy to bring living men into their plays, to represent them on the stage under their actual



SOCRATES DEFENDING HIMSELF.

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names. Socrates had been so treated by the comic poet Aristophanes in a play entitled *The Clouds*. We see him there as the proprietor of a "Thinking Shop," in which he teaches all that choose to put themselves into his hands strange doctrines about truth and falsehood, right and wrong—in short, about all things in heaven and earth. The main plot of the play, very briefly put, is this. An old Athenian gentleman, finding himself overwhelmed by debts—his son has been terribly extravagant, and he cannot get any rent from his farms—thinks whether he cannot contrive to cheat his creditors. He hears of the "Thinking Shop" as a place where such old-fashioned things as honesty and the like can be got rid of, and he enters himself as a pupil. He is too old and stupid to learn; accordingly, he gets his son to take his place. The young man learns his lesson only too readily. Filial duty is one of the things which he unlearns, and he proceeds to give his father a sound beating. The play ends by the father setting the "Thinking Shop" on fire.

When we read this, and also find the Socrates of the play telling his pupil that the old gods have ceased to rule and that new ones have taken their place, we may think that we have found what we are looking for. The Socrates of the play is a person who does not believe in the gods and who corrupts the young. But then *The Clouds* was put upon the stage not less than twenty-five years before Socrates was brought to trial. During all this time,

therefore, he had been allowed to speak his mind without any hindrance, and then, when he is an old man—for he had reached his seventieth year—he is tried for his life. This is certainly strange. We can only say that during all these years he had been giving offence by his plain speaking, and that at this time the Athenians were less disposed to put up with reproof and disagreeable truths than they had been a quarter of a century before. They had lost their pre-eminence in Greece; they had suffered defeat and humiliation—in 403 the city had been compelled to capitulate to its enemies—and they were disposed, it may well be, to throw upon someone the blame for their troubles.

This, however, is not of any great importance. The interesting thing is—what answer did Socrates make to these accusations? The truth is that he scarcely made any answer at all. His defence, which we have as it is given by the greatest of his disciples, Plato, was a statement of the principles on which he had acted and on which he should continue to act.

“I know,” he said (for this is the substance of his defence), “I know why I am unpopular. In the first place, people have in their minds a certain caricature of me that was put upon the stage many years ago. They think of me as a restless kind of man who is always inquiring into things that do not concern him. This is quite a false notion: I have never occupied myself with speculations about such things. Then, in the

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second place, there is this cause for my being disliked. Some years ago some friends of mine—for it was not my doing—inquired of the Oracle at Delphi who was the wisest man upon earth, and the Oracle answered: 'The wisest man upon earth is Socrates.' Now, I could not understand how this could be. So I talked with various persons who had a reputation for wisdom and whom I should have thought much wiser than myself, wishing to see if they were really less wise than they seemed to be. And I found that they were less wise, and having found this, I did my best to convince them that this was so. And this has been my business—to go about and make things and persons appear to be what they really are. Of course, this has made me many enemies.

"Again, there is this to be considered: Though I do not seek for disciples, many young men, well born and rich, follow me about and listen to what I say, and hear me cross-examining these pretenders to wisdom. Then they, too, go about and do the same, and when they give offence, it is I who get the blame. It is Socrates, men say, who is corrupting the young. But someone will say—why do you go on doing this if it causes men to dislike you? Why do you run the risk of death by making enemies who will bring these very serious charges against you? To this I answer: First, I do not fear death; why should I say that death is a terrible thing? Would not that be to assert for truth something that I do not know to

be true? Secondly, I hold that God has laid upon me this duty to search for truth, and I am determined to perform it. Whether you find me guilty or acquit me, this and nothing but this will I do, even should I have to suffer many deaths on account of it."

Such a defence as this was not likely to win the votes of the judges. They were accustomed to have accused persons begging for mercy and trying in all possible ways to move their pity; this defence had more the look of a defiance. The verdict of "Guilty" was pronounced, but only by a small majority. Now came the question of penalty. It was the custom that the prosecutor should demand such a punishment as he thought fitting, and that the accused, if the verdict went against him, should propose an alternative. The prosecutors had demanded the punishment of death, and Socrates was called upon to answer. He said that he had nothing of his own, but that some of his friends undertook to pay a fine of thirty *minæ*.* Accordingly, he proposed a fine of so much. "But," he went on, "if you are to give me my deserts, you will not inflict any punishment at all, but you will pay me the honour that you pay to those citizens who have deserved well of their country—the right to dine for the rest of my life in the Public Hall of Athens."

This, again, was not likely to conciliate the

* Equal to about £120 in our money, as measured by the weight of metal, a *mina* weighing a little more than an ounce of gold; but, as measured by purchasing power, not less than £1,000.

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judges, and the sentence of death was pronounced—again by a small majority. Then Socrates stood up again to speak. He turned to those who had voted against him and told them that by killing him they would not rid themselves of teachers who would tell them disagreeable truths. They would rather by such action increase their number. To those who had voted for his acquittal he said:

“Do not suppose that I am about to suffer something from which your friendship or your sense of justice has not been able to protect me. Death is either nothing at all, the blotting out of all sense and feeling, or else it is, at least to the righteous man, the greatest of all blessings. And now,” he went on, “now we must part. I go to death, you to life. But God only knows whether your lot or mine is the happier.”

III.—The Prophet in Prison.

Æs-cu-la'pi-us; De'los; The'seus.

It was usual in Athens that a prisoner condemned to death should be executed within the twenty-four hours following. But, by what we cannot but call a happy chance, this was not done in the case of Socrates. The reason was this. There was a legend in Athens that the hero Theseus—whom the city honoured as having united in one country all the scattered inhabitants of Attica—had vowed a yearly thank-offering to

the god Apollo.* This offering was sent in a State ship used for solemn occasions to the island of Delos, which was supposed to be the favourite abode of the god. While this ship was on its voyage nothing was allowed to take place in Athens which could cause any defilement; no execution, for instance, could take place. It so happened that the ship had sailed on the day before the trial of Socrates. The philosopher, accordingly, was kept in prison till it should return. This meant that his execution was postponed for as much as forty days. During this time his friends were allowed to visit him. Of these visits two records are preserved. I have now to say something about the first of the two.

Very early on the morning of the last day but one of the prophet's imprisonment, Crito—one of his oldest and dearest friends—was admitted into his cell. Socrates was still asleep, and Crito, as he sat and watched him, wondered that, with the sentence of death hanging over his head, he could rest so peacefully. After a while Socrates awoke and, seeing that his friend had come much before the usual time for the admission of visitors, naturally supposed that he had some important news to give him.

* The occasion was that the city had been condemned by Minos, king of Crete, the overlord of Greece, to pay a yearly tribute of seven youths and seven maidens as penalty for the death of Minos' son, Theseus, to whom the lot of being one of the seven had fallen, had delivered his companions, slaying the monster by whom they were to be devoured

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"Well, Crito," he asked, "has the ship arrived?"

"No," replied Crito, "it has not actually arrived, but I hear that it has been seen off Cape Sunium. So it will be here in the course of the day, and to-morrow, therefore, we shall lose you."

"Not to-morrow, I am sure," said Socrates, "will be the day of my death, but the day after. I know this, because this night a heavenly messenger stood by me, and said to me in the words of Homer:

"The third day hence shall Phthia greet our sails."*

"It may be so," said Crito, "but, anyhow, the time is short and the business on which I am come is urgent. Some of your friends have contrived a way by which you may escape from prison and so prolong your life. You know that you have been unjustly condemned, and you should not miss the opportunity of preventing an injustice being done. You will also have more time for that work of finding out truth which you hold to be the duty of your life. Nor must you forget the interests of your children, who will suffer if they are deprived of their father's support."

The reply of Socrates was in substance to this effect:

"Do you think that it would really be a gain

* The days are reckoned, as usual, inclusively. The day on which the words are spoken is the first, the morrow is the second, and the day after the morrow the third. The interval is reckoned as three days: we should rather call it two.

to me to prolong my life on these terms? To what country should I make my escape? If I go to Thebes, which is a well-ordered city"—it is curious to find him thinking in this way of the hereditary enemy of Athens—"should I, being an outlaw, be welcome there? You speak of Thessaly as a place to which I might go. Well, Thessaly, I understand, is not a well-ordered country. There is much licence there—and perhaps for that reason they would be more ready to receive me. It would interest such people to hear that I had escaped from prison. Perhaps they would make up an amusing story of how I had disguised myself in a goat-skin or in some other way such as those use who do such things.

"But would this accord with my work as a seeker after truth and righteousness? Would it become me—being such as I am or seek to be—to look for friends or patrons to whom such behaviour would commend me? And as for my children, would it be for their advantage that they should cease to be citizens of Athens and become citizens of a land of licence? But there is another reason still more important why I should not do this thing which you suggest. Suppose that I resolve to do it, would not the Laws of my country come to me and say: 'Socrates, you have lived under our protection and by our help for seventy years. You might have gone away and lived elsewhere and put yourself under other protection, but you have not done so. On the contrary, you have chosen to remain here more continuously

and with fewer and shorter intervals of absence, than other citizens. It was under our countenance that you yourself were educated in this country, that you married a wife, that you became the father of children, and that you, in their turn, educated them. And are you going thus to break the covenant that you made with us? Do you think that any State can continue to exist in which the decrees of law have no lasting power, but are set aside and overthrown at the pleasure of individual citizens? Assuredly it cannot; any citizen who seeks to do such a thing commits a great wrong, and not only the laws of this world, but the Powers which are closely akin to them—the Laws of the world unseen—will regard him as an enemy.' Have you anything to say in a contrary sense?" asked Socrates of his friend, when he had driven him, after his manner, from place to place—never giving him, so to speak, an opportunity of escape. Crito confessed that he had nothing to say. Then said Socrates:

"If that be so, leave me to follow whithersoever God shall lead me."

IV.—The Prophet's Last Day.

Xan-tip'-pe.

The ship has come back from Delos, arriving on the day of which Socrates had been warned in a dream, and he must die before sunset. His friends have assembled as usual in the early morning, but

they are kept waiting outside for a while. The jailor explains the cause. The Eleven* are with Socrates; they have come to tell him that he must die to-day, and they are taking off the fetters. Very soon he returns and throws open the door. "You may enter, gentlemen," he says; and they go in. There they find Xantippe, the philosopher's wife, sitting by him with his youngest boy. She bursts into loud crying when she sees them, sobbing out:

"Alas, Socrates! This is the last time that you and your friends will talk together!"

Socrates, whom one cannot help thinking a little hard, is impatient of this display. "Let someone take her away," he says to Crito, and the poor wife is led away by some of Crito's servants, loudly lamenting. This done, he addresses himself to the discussion of the great question: Is there a life after death? He takes it up, one may say, at the point at which he had left it in his last words to his judges—that God only knew whether he, going to death, or they to life, were the better off. He has thought much about the matter; the near approach of his deliverance has cleared away doubts that he may have had: he is now quite sure that death is a better thing than life. He proceeds to answer objections and to dispose of difficulties which his friends advance. Of this part of the narrative I shall give very little. He maintains that it is a law of Nature that each state should be succeeded by its

* The "Eleven" may be described as performing the functions of an under-sheriff. The name is an instance of the Greek way of avoiding the mention of unpleasant things.

opposite: sleep comes after waking, waking after sleep; so death follows life, and life, again, must follow death. Then the soul is a simple essence and so fit to survive. The body is made up of many things and perishes. In the same fashion he disposes of the adverse arguments that the soul may be as the harmony which is called forth from the strings of the harp, but ceases to be when the strings are broken; or that it is like the human being who wears out in his lifetime many suits of clothing, but is itself out-lasted by the one which he wears at the end of his days.

This reasoning may not impress us very much; it may be said that it is outweighed by the opposing evidence, by the manifest fact that the man does perish, disappears from the world and leaves nothing surviving out of all his acquisitions and energy. What does impress us, as doubtless it impressed those who were with Socrates on that day, is the calm conviction of the man that he will survive—the absolute certainty with which he plans out, so to speak, the future existence which he knows to be reserved for him. This conviction never wavered for a moment; the courage that was born of it never flagged. That there is a life beyond death, that it carries on the life here, that it is present happiness or suffering according as the man has been a lover of goodness or an evildoer here, he believed as absolutely as he did any of the manifest facts of life. The last scene, every detail of which is instinct with this conviction, must be described in full.

Socrates first disposes of his worldly affairs. He sends for his wife and children and gives them such directions for their future as he thinks fit—all in the presence of his friend Crito. Then he sends them away, and gives the last moments of his life to his friends.* A few minutes after, the servant of the Eleven came in and said: "O Socrates, it is not with you as it is with some men, who break out into angry words and curses when I come, as I am bound to do by those who are over me, and bid them drink the poison. Of all that have ever come to this place, you surely are the most gentle and kindly. And now I know that it is not me, but those whom I have to obey that you will blame, for you know that it is not I, but they, who are in fault. And now you know the message that I bring; take, therefore, my best wishes and bear your fate as easily as may be." When he had said so much, he burst into tears and turned to go.

Socrates looked at him and said: "Do you, too, take my best wishes, and as for your bidding, I will readily do it." Then he turned to his friends and said: "Now is not this man a gentle and well-mannered creature? Such has he showed himself all the time that I have been here. He has come to see me, talking with me, and showing himself to be the kindest of men. And now, you see, he actually weeps for me. Well, Crito, let me do

* It may be noted how friendship is preferred to family affection. It would seem inhuman to us for a dying man to send away wife and children at the last and keep his friends about him. Here Christianity has changed the relations of human life.

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what he says. If the poison* is ground, let him bring it in. But if not, let someone grind it as quickly as may be."

"Nay," said Crito, "why this haste, Socrates? See, the sun is still upon the hills and has not yet set. I have known, too, some who, after this notice has been given them by the servant of the Eleven, sit down to a sumptuous feast and eat and drink their fill, putting off the draught as long as may be. Why, then, do you make such haste? There is yet time enough."

"Well, Crito," answered Socrates, "these people act after their kind; they think that the longer they live the greater the gain. But it is not so with me; surely, if I were to put off taking the poison in their fashion, I should be making myself ridiculous. Why should I seek to hoard up the fragments of that of which I have nothing left? Do as I have bidden you."

Then Crito gave the directions to the servant, as Socrates had bidden him. After a while the servant came back with yet another man, whose office it was to administer the poison, and this man carried the poison, ready ground, in a cup. Socrates said to him:

"You are accustomed to these things; tell me now what I must do?"

"Drink," said the man, "and walk about till your legs begin to feel heavy. Then lie down; the poison will work."

And he handed the cup to Socrates. Socrates

* The condemned man had to drink a preparation of hemlock.

took it without so much as a shiver or the least change of colour or look. Then he regarded the man with a smile and said:

"May I now use some of this draught as a libation to the gods? Is it permitted so to do?"

"Well," answered the man, "we do not grind more than we think to be sufficient for the purpose."

"I understand," said Socrates. "Nevertheless, it is not only lawful, but expedient, I take it, that I should pray to the gods that, in thus changing my home in this world for another elsewhere, I may prosper. This I pray, therefore."

And when he had so spoken, he put the



SOCRATES DRINKS THE HEMLOCK.

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cup to his lips and drank it quite calmly and easily.

When his friends saw him do this they could no longer restrain their tears and burst out into loud weeping—lamenting, it may be, not so much his lot as theirs, seeing that they were about to lose so dear a friend,

“Nay,” said Socrates, “but this is strange behaviour. Did I not send the women away lest they should distress us, after their wont, by lamentations and tears? Should not a man be suffered to die in peace? Be still, therefore, and show patience.”

When they heard this, those that were present somehow contrived to check their tears. As for Socrates, he walked about as the man had bidden him till he felt his legs growing heavy. Then he lay down as he had been told. On this, the man who gave him the draught touched him, examining his hands and feet. Also he pinched one of his feet, using some force.

“Do you feel this?” he said. And Socrates answered “No.”

And he continued to feel him in the same way.

“When the poison reaches the heart,” said he, “the end will have come.”

Now Socrates had covered his face, but when the numbness had reached to his stomach he uncovered his face and said:

“Crito, we owe a cock to *Æsculapius*; do not forget to pay it.”

These were his last words.

"So died," said he who told the story, "the best and wisest and most just of men."

And we of this twentieth century, with the history of another two thousand years before us, may assent, saving only one Holy Name, to this judgment.



THE MACEDONIAN EMPIRE.

CHAPTER VII.

A DEGENERATE PEOPLE.

Cha'bi-as; Char-e-ne'a; Meg'a-ra; Pho'ci-on.

WHEN Socrates suffered death at the hands of his countrymen there was living at Athens a child whose career was to be curiously like, and yet unlike, that of the great philosopher. The two lives, which make up together a total of just a century and a half, include the most critical period in the history of Athens. In 469, when Socrates was born, she was at the height of her power and glory: in 319, when Phocion died, she had fallen for ever from her high estate. And this fall was no sudden catastrophe; it was the natural ending of a long process of degradation and decay. In the story which I am about to tell we seem to see everything on a lower level: the nation has lost its old heroic temper; the statesman, though he cherishes some of the virtues of better days, is manifestly content with lower ideals of public life.

Of Phocion's early days there is but little to be said. He was one of the pupils of Plato, the teacher to whom we owe all, or nearly all, that we know about the philosophy of Socrates. But his life was not to be given to study. The career which lay before him was that of the soldier and politician. As a soldier he soon began to distin-

guish himself. He won the respect and confidence of Chabrias, the best general that Athens possessed in the days of her decline. Chabrias was wont to carry the virtue of courage to excess. He was one of the men whom danger seems to exhilarate,* and was apt to expose his life recklessly—a thing which the hand-to-hand fighting of a Greek battle made very easy. Here Phocion was a moderating influence. His own temper was undemonstrative and almost cold. It is said that he was never seen to laugh or to weep; the Greek, and even the more self-restrained Roman, saw nothing unmanly in tears. His habits had something of the Spartan about them. When he was campaigning he was accustomed to go barefoot; only an extreme severity of cold could make him wear his cloak. It became a common saying among his soldiers: "It is going to be a very hard winter; Phocion is wearing his cloak."

Generous, kindly, and humane as he was, he had yet, by one of the curious anomalies of nature, a forbidding look. Strangers, we are told, were often afraid to accost him unless they were backed up by company. His speech, as we might suppose, was singularly brief and unadorned, studiously stripped of anything that could be supposed to attract. A friend one day, seeing him lost in thought, wanted to know what he was meditating. "I am thinking," answered Phocion, "how I may make the

* So it was said of Henry Havelock that, while he was commonly somewhat reserved and taciturn, he became almost gay and cheerful when he came under heavy fire.

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words which I have to say to the Athenians as few as possible." Naturally his language was sometimes caustic and bitter. On one occasion something that he uttered in the Assembly was received with general applause. He paused in dismay. "What folly have I spoken?" he asked of the friends who sat by him. "You can go to war," he said to the noisy advocates of war, "when your young men are ready to serve, when your rich men will give up their luxuries, when your politicians cease to enrich themselves." These last words let us into the secret of the great influence which Phocion exercised at Athens.

Popular, in the ordinary sense of the word, he never was. Manners, so austere, speech so plain and direct, were not likely to attract popular favour. But he was a politician who did not "seek to enrich himself,"—who, therefore, was absolutely free from the prevailing fault of Greek political life. Again and again he refused splendid gifts. Everyone knew that he was content with the simplest life, that he was absolutely proof against all corrupting influences. He was not even ambitious. It was the pleasure of his life to fill the highest offices of State and to fulfil the duties which they entailed. But he would never canvass for the votes of his fellow-citizens. Forty-five times was he elected to the office of General (*Strategos*),* but he was never on any occasion

* Ten *Strategoi* were appointed every year. It was their business to command any fleet or army that might be sent on the public service and to take part in the civil administration of the State.

present at the Assembly at which the appointment was made. He was always ready and even glad to serve, but he refused to ask for office as a favour.

I do not propose to tell the story of his campaigns. Such a story would not be of much interest or importance. The days were long past when the action of Athens influenced, as it had done at Marathon and Salamis, the history of the world. Whether Phocion had real military genius we cannot say. He was certainly a brave and sagacious general, who was almost invariably successful in the field. And he never abused his power. The fleets of Athens were not always welcome visitors even to cities that were in alliance with her. When other generals were in command* the allies brought all their possessions within the shelter of their walls: Phocion they were wont to greet with all expressions of confidence and delight. It is by his conduct in the matter of the relations between Athens and the Macedonian power that Phocion must be judged.

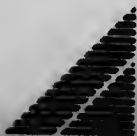
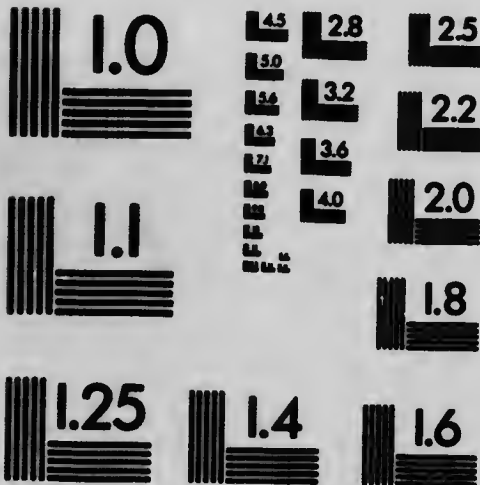
Philip II., King of Macedonia, came to the throne in 359 B.C., after some years spent in Greece —years which he doubtless employed in making himself acquainted with the politics and resources of the Greek States. It was not long before he applied himself to realizing his great ambition of making himself over-lord of Greece.

* The same men commanded armies and fleets indifferently, as indeed was the practice in our own country far on into the seventeenth century.



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Possibly he had in his mind the hope which more than one powerful prince in Greece had cherished—of leading the united force of the nation in a great assault on the Persian Empire. This ideal of revenge for wrongs suffered from the Persians in past time was never wholly lost sight of, but it probably was postponed by Philip for schemes of immediate aggrandisement. His action soon brought him into collision with Athens, which had many interests on the northern coasts of the Aegean Sea.

During the first twenty years of Philip's reign Phocion was frequently in command of the Athenian forces opposed to the Macedonian King and achieved considerable successes. But the experiences thus gained taught him much about the weakness of his own country and the strength of the new power which was disturbing the course of Greek politics. The Athenian of Phocion's day was a different man from the heroes of Marathon or even from the impetuous race which had attempted the grand scheme of Sicilian conquest. He was a cultured, comfort-loving, stay-at-home citizen, little disposed to serve in his own person, ever more and more ready to call in the help of the mercenary soldier.

No man, indeed, knew this better—for no man had more opportunities for learning it—than Phocion. And he knew also equally well what the Macedonian soldier was worth. True, he had beaten him in the field again and again. That was to be expected. When Philip came to

the throne the Macedonian troops were peasants, hunters, fishermen, hastily taken from their work and pressed into the ranks. For some years everything was against them. They were without skill in arms, without discipline, and but poorly equipped with the material of war. But Phocion saw that they were the raw material out of which the most magnificent soldiery that the world had ever seen was soon to be made, the army which was to make its way within another decade from the western coast of Asia to the mountain fastnesses of Chitral. And he became what, in the language of the day, was described as a friend of Philip. Philip had other friends of a far less honourable kind. He was a master in the art of corruption. "No citadel is impregnable," he is reported to have said, "into which you can drive an ass laden with gold." But Phocion, as we know, was not a man who could be bought. He sincerely believed that friendship with the Macedonian power was the only policy for Athens, and he said so with his customary courage and honesty.

We can find, I think, a similar case in the history of the Jewish nation. The prophet Jeremiah was a friend of the Chaldeans. We know that this was made a very grave charge against him, that it roused kings and priests and people to indignation, that again and again it brought him into danger of his life. Nor is it difficult to put oneself into the place of those who thought that the prophet's conduct was highly unpatriotic

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We can imagine what a zealous Jew, who prized above all things the independence of his nation, must have thought when he found that Jeremiah advised submission to the enemy. For a year and a half King Zedekiah and his people defended Jerusalem with the tenacious courage which the Jewish people has displayed again and again; with what wrath must the leaders of the patriot party have heard the prophet's counsel—Go forth and surrender to the King of Babylon, and you will save yourselves and your city! It may well have seemed mean-spirited and base, and yet it was the right counsel: this was the only possible policy that could be followed with safety. Jeremiah knew his countrymen; he knew that they were not fit for independence, and this knowledge determined the policy which he advocated.

It was with Phocion as it was with Jeremiah: he was the champion of an unpopular policy, a policy which was peculiarly galling to Athenian pride. His countrymen would not listen to him. They rejected the offers of the Macedonian King—offers which showed the friendly feeling which Philip had, or affected to have, for Athens—and embarked on the disastrous campaign which ended in the defeat of Chæronea. If a policy is ever to be judged by the result, Phocion found an ample justification.

Two years after Chæronea Philip died by the hand of an assassin. Some one at Athens proposed that there should be public rejoicings. Phocion opposed the motion with success. "Such

joy," he said, "would be mean; and, besides, the army which was victorious at Chæronea is diminished by only a single man." He meant that the situation was not really changed; the death of the Macedonian King would not make Athens sensibly more powerful. Nothing could be more true; for Philip was succeeded by Alexander.

If the Greek statesmen imagined that the young King was a less formidable opponent than his father, they soon found out their mistake. The Thebans ventured to provoke him: they were vanquished, and their city was razed to the ground. Alexander proceeded to demand from the Athenians the surrender of four of the politicians who had been most active in opposing him. When the matter was brought before the Assembly Phocion sat silent. There was a general cry for him, and he rose to speak.

"These men," he said with his usual directness, "have brought Athens into trouble, and it is right that they should suffer for it. If Alexander were to demand my dearest friend, I should vote for his surrender had he acted in this way. For myself, I should count it my greatest happiness to die for you. I lament the fate of Thebes; do not let us have to lament the fate of Athens. The best thing that we can do is to intercede with the conqueror. It would be madness to go to war with him." An embassy, accordingly, was sent with this object, with Phocion at the head of it, and, thanks to Alexander's respect for the veteran statesman, was successful. The King

granted his request and asked for his counsel. "Leave the Greeks in peace," he replied, "and turn your arms against the barbarians." Phocion returned to Athens and was followed within a few days by envoys from Alexander bringing a magnificent present, equivalent to something like a quarter of a million pounds in our money. "Why does your King single me out in this way?" asked Phocion of the envoys. "Because," they said, "he thinks you the only honest man in Athens." "Then let me remain so," was his reply. "As for this money, if I do not use it, how will it profit me? If I do use it, it will bring shame both upon me and upon the King." Plutarch, who tells the story, draws from it the admirable moral—*the man who does not desire such wealth is richer than the man who can give it.*

As long as Alexander lived the peace of Athens remained undisturbed. Phocion continued to give counsels of prudence, and the people, though their pride occasionally rebelled, continued to heed them. "You should either have yourselves the sharpest sword or keep on good terms with those who have it," summed up the policy which he recommended.

The death of Alexander threw everything into confusion. "I shall have fine funeral games," the dying king is reported to have said; and the struggle for the Empire which he had built up did indeed convulse the world. The Greek States again began to dream of independence. They combined to throw off the Macedonian yoke, and

for a time they met with a measure of success. Then came reverses and Athens was compelled to submit. Phocion did his best to appease the conquerors, but could accomplish little. A wholesale banishment of citizens was decreed, and Phocion seems to have acquiesced in it. It may well be that he would have done better to have gone into exile himself. It was just the situation to bring out the weakness of his policy. He was ever for making the best of things, and this is a rule which it is sometimes hard to reconcile with honour.

Then followed a revolution in Macedonia. The new rulers reversed the policy of their predecessors and recalled the Athenian exiles. Phocion, sincerely believing that the old *régime* made for peace—with sincerity we are bound to credit him—endeavoured to put the Piræus, the port of Athens, into the hands of one of its partisans. He failed, and had to fly for his life. He was surrendered by the general with whom he took refuge, and was put upon his trial. He made no effort to save himself, but did his best for his friends. When the judges had pronounced the verdict of "Guilty"—and this they did almost unanimously—and it was his turn to propose the penalty,* he said: "Men of Athens, I acknowledge that I have done you wrong, and I propose for myself the penalty of death. But it is I who am to blame: these men have done you no harm." The appeal was vain, and all the condemned—five

* See p. 69.

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in number—were hurried to the place of execution. They were to die by drinking hemlock, and the executioner, who had not prepared enough for so many victims, demanded an extra fee. "Since one cannot even die at Athens without paying for it," said Phocion, "give him his money." He was in his eighty-sixth year.

The resentment of the Athenians was carried



SHE CAREFULLY GATHERED UP
THE BONES.

to the length of decreeing that no one within the boundaries of Attica should furnish fire for the pile on which his body was to be burnt. A lady of the neighbouring State of Megara performed the ceremony. She carefully gathered up the bones, carried them home in her lap, and buried them under her hearth. "Guardians of this place"—so she addressed

the household gods—"to you I commit the remains of this good man. Restore them to the sepulchre of his fathers when the Athenians shall again be willing to listen to the voice of Wisdom."

The sadness of the story lies, not so much in the ingratitude of the people—it must be confessed that they had some justification for their anger—as in the fact that the corruption of a decaying nation has power to touch the virtue of even its best citizens.

THE END.

