

The naval and military power of Persia was completely broken by these repeated defeats; and all further hostile operations against their formidable enemy were abandoned for a considerable length of time. The military glory of the Greeks seems at this period to have been at its highest elevation. They had maintained a long and successful war, and at length established an undisputed superiority over the greatest and most flourishing of the contemporary empires of antiquity. The causes of this superiority are sufficiently apparent. Greece undoubtedly owed many of her triumphs to those illustrious men who had the command of her fleets and armies; to Miltiades, to Aristides, to Themistocles, and to Cimon. But the noblest exertions of individuals would have availed little, without that spirit of union which bound together her separate states in defence of their common liberties. Greece was only formidable while united. The Persian empire infinitely superior in power, and inexhaustible in resources, derived from the force of a despot an involuntary and reluctant species of association, very different from an union arising from the spirit of patriotism. The armies of the Persians, immense in their numbers, were like the heavy and inanimate limbs of a vast and ill-organized body. They yielded a sluggish obedience to the will of the head, but were totally incapable of any spirited and vigorous exertion.

But a season of rest from the annoyance of a foreign foe was ever fatal to the prosperity and to the real glory of the Greeks. Their bond of union was no longer in force. The petty jealousies and quarrels of the different states broke out afresh, with an acrimony increased from their temporary suspension.

Athens, which during the war had firmly attached to her alliance a great many of the smaller states, who, in return for protection, cheerfully contributed their supplies for carrying it on, was equally desirous of maintaining the same ascendant in a season of peace, and thus gradually sought to extinguish the original independence of the smaller states, and perpetuate their vassalage. But these were jealous of their freedom, and utterly scorned to become the slaves or tributaries of that ambitious republic. Unable, however, to withstand her power, they had no other means of withdrawing themselves from her dominion, than by courting an alliance with her rival Lacedæmon: for to show that they could at pleasure join themselves to either of these rival states, was, as they flattered themselves, a demonstration that they were not dependent on either. The smaller republics were therefore continually fluctuating between the scales of Athens and Lacedæmon; a circumstance which fomented the rivalry of the latter states, and embittered their animosities; while it increased the national dissensions, and ultimately induced that general weakness which paved the way for the reduction and slavery of Greece.

From this period, too, the martial and the patriotic spirit began

alike to decline in the Athenian republic. An acquaintance with Asia, and the importation of a part of her wealth, had introduced an imitation of her manners, and a taste for her luxuries. But the Athenian luxury was widely different from that of the Persians. With the latter it was only unmeaning splendor and gross sensuality; with the former it took its direction from taste and genius: and while it insensibly corrupted the severer virtues, it is not to be denied that it led to the most elegant and refined enjoyments of life. The age of Pericles was the era of a change in the national spirit of the Athenians: a taste for the *fine arts*, which had hitherto lain dormant from the circumstance of the national danger engrossing all the feelings and passions of men, began, now that this danger had ceased, to break forth with suprising lustre. The sciences, which are strictly allied to the arts, and which always find their chief encouragement from ease and luxury, rose at the same time to a great pitch of eminence.

The age of Pericles is not the era of the highest national glory of the Greeks, if we understand that term in its best and proudest signification; but it is at least the era of their highest internal splendor. Under this striking change, which is evidently preparatory to their downfall, we shall proceed to consider them.

CHAPTER II.

Administration of Pericles—Peloponnesian War—Siege of Platæa—Alcibiades—Lysander—The Thirty Tyrants—Thrasybulus—Death of Socrates—Retreat of the Ten Thousand—War with Persia terminated by the Peace of Antalcidas.

THE death of Cimon left Pericles for some time an unrivalled ascendancy in the republic of Athens; but as the more his power increased, he used the less art to disguise his ambitious spirit, a faction was gradually formed to oppose him, at the head of which was Thucydides, the brother-in-law of Cimon, a man no less eminent for his wisdom and abilities than estimable for his integrity. He had powerful talents as an orator, which he nobly exerted in the cause of virtue and the true interest of his country; but he was deficient in those arts of address in which his rival Pericles so eminently excelled. While Pericles amused the people with shows, or gratified them with festivals, and while he dissipated the

public treasure in adorning the city with magnificent buildings, and the finest productions of the arts, it was in vain that Thucydides, ardent in the cause of virtue, presented to their minds the picture of ancient frugality and simplicity, or urged the weakening of the power and resources of the state by this prodigal expenditure of her treasure. Pericles flattered the vanity of his countrymen by representing their power as insuperable, and their resources as inexhaustible. It is probable that he was himself blinded by his ambition and vanity. He published an edict, requiring all the states of Greece to send against a certain day their deputies to Athens, to deliberate on the common interest of the nation. The Athenians looked on themselves as the masters of all Greece; but they had the mortification to find that no attention was paid to their presumptuous mandate. Pericles, to palliate this wound to their vanity, from which his own credit was in some danger of suffering, ordered the whole fleet of the republic to be immediately equipped, and hastened to make an ostentatious parade through the neighboring seas, by way of evincing the power and naval superiority of the Athenians. This, however, was a wise policy, and shows that Pericles knew human nature, as well as the peculiar character of the people whom he ruled. It was necessary to keep the Athenians constantly engaged, either with their amusements or some active enterprise; and in dexterously furnishing this alternate occupation lay the art of his government of a people which surpassed any other in fickleness of character.

Fostered in their favorite passions, the Athenians grew every day more vain and presumptuous. They planned the most absurd schemes of conquest; no less than the reduction of Egypt, of Sicily, of that part of Italy called *Magna Græcia*—and the subjection of all their own colonies to an absolute dependence on the mother state. Pericles now perceived that he had gone too far, and that, in flattering their vanity, he had given rise to schemes which must terminate in national disgrace and in his own ruin. It was fortunate, both for him and for his country, that a seasonable rupture with Sparta gave a check to these romantic projects; and the sagacious demagogue, from that time, discovered that to cherish the luxurious spirit of his countrymen was a safer means of maintaining his power than to rouse their vanity and ambition. The finances, however, of the republic were exhausted, and the taxes of course increased. The party of Thucydides complained of this in loud terms, and with great justice. But Pericles had the address to ward off this blow, by proudly offering to defray from his own fortune the expense of those magnificent structures which he had reared for the public. This was touching the right cord; for neither the generosity nor the vanity of the Athenians would allow this offer to be accepted; and the result was a great increase of popularity to Pericles, and the complete humiliation of the party of his enemies. He now signaled his triumph by

procuring the banishment of Thucydides; and on the pretence of establishing a few new colonies, he dexterously got rid of the most turbulent of the citizens who traversed and opposed his government.

The allies of the commonwealth, however, loudly complained that the public treasures, to which they had largely contributed, and which were intended for their common defence and security against the barbarous nations, were entirely dissipated, in gratifying the Athenian populace with feasts and shows, or in decorating their city with ornamental buildings. Pericles haughtily answered, that the republic was not accountable to them for the employment of their money, which was nothing more than the price they paid for the protection which they received. The allies might have replied with justice, that in contributing supplies, they did not discharge a debt or make a purchase, but conferred a deposit, to be faithfully employed for their advantage, and of the expenditure of which they were entitled to demand a strict account: but they durst not call Athens to account; and Pericles and Athens were of one opinion.

But an event now took place, which silenced all inquiries of this nature, and bound the subordinate and confederate states in humble submission to the principal,—this was the war of Peloponnesus.

The state of Corinth had been included in the last treaty between Athens and Lacedæmon. The Corinthians had for some time been at war with the people of Corcyra, when both these states solicited the aid of the Athenians. This republic, after some deliberation, was persuaded by Pericles to take part with Corcyra; a measure which the Corinthians with great justice complained of, not only as an infraction of the treaty with Sparta, but on the ground that Corcyra was their own colony; and it was a settled point in the general politics of Greece, that a foreign power should never interfere in the disputes between a parent state and its colony. A less important cause was sufficient to exasperate the Lacedæmonians against their ancient rival, and war was solemnly proclaimed between the two republics.

The detail of this war, which has been admirably written by Thucydides, one of the best historians as well as one of the greatest generals of antiquity, though it concerned only the states of Greece, becomes, by the pen of that illustrious writer, one of the most interesting subjects which history has recorded. Our plan excluding all minute details, as violating the due proportions in the comprehensive picture of ancient history, necessarily confines us to a delineation of outlines.

The greater part of the continental states of Greece declared for Sparta. The Isles, dreading the naval power of Athens, took part with that republic. Thus the principal strength of Sparta was on land, and that of Athens at sea; whence it may be judged,

that the opposing states might long annoy each other, before any approach to a decisive engagement.

The army of the Lacedæmonians, which amounted to above 60,000 men, was more than double that of the Athenians and their allies. But this inequality was balanced by the great superiority of the marine of Athens. Their plan of military operations was, therefore, quite different. The Athenian fleet ravaged the coasts of Peloponnesus; while the army of the Lacedæmonians desolated the territory of Attica and its allied states, and proceeded with little resistance almost to the gates of Athens. The Athenians, feeling the disgrace of being thus braved upon their own territory, insisted, with great impatience, that Pericles should allow them to face the enemy in the field; but he followed a wiser plan of operation. He bent his whole endeavor to fortify the city, while he kept the Lacedæmonians constantly at bay by skirmishing parties of horse; and, in the meantime, the Athenian fleet of 100 sail was desolating the enemies' coasts, and plundering and ravaging the Spartan territory. The consequence was, the Spartans, abandoning all hope, which they had at first conceived, of taking Athens by siege, ended the campaign by retreating into Peloponnesus. The Athenians, in honor of their countrymen who had fallen in battle, celebrated magnificent funeral games, and Pericles pronounced an animated eulogium to their memory, which is given at large by Thucydides.

In the next campaign, the Lacedæmonians renewed the invasion of Attica; and the invaded had to cope at once with all the horrors of war and pestilence; for Athens was at this time visited by one of the most dreadful plagues recorded in history. The particulars of this calamity are painted in strong and terrible colors by Thucydides, who speaks from his own experience, as he was among those who were affected, and survived the contagion. One extraordinary effect he mentions, which we know, likewise, to have happened in other times and places from the same cause. The general despair produced the grossest profligacy and licentiousness of manners. It seems to be common, too, to all democratic governments, that every public calamity is charged to the account of their rulers. Pericles was blamed as the occasion, not only of the war, but of the pestilence; for the great numbers cooped up in the city were supposed to have corrupted the air. The Athenians, losing all resolution to struggle with their misfortunes, sent ambassadors to Sparta to sue for peace; but this humiliating measure served only to increase the arrogance of their enemies, who refused all accommodation, unless upon terms utterly disgraceful to the suppliant state. Although Pericles had strongly dissuaded his countrymen from what he thought a mean and pusillanimous measure, they scrupled not to make him the victim of its failure, and with equal injustice and ingratitude, they deprived him of all command, and inflicted on him a heavy fine.

But they found no change for the better from his removal. Those factions which he had a matchless skill in managing and controlling, began to excite fresh disorders; and the very men who had solicited and procured his disgrace, were now the most eager to restore him to his former power. Such was the fickleness of the Athenian character; so fluctuating are the minds and the counsels of a mob—and so insignificant their censure and applause.

This extraordinary man did not long survive the recovery of his honors and ascendancy. On his death-bed he is said to have drawn comfort from this striking reflection, that he had never made one of his countrymen wear mourning; a glorious object of exultation for the man who had run a career of the most exalted ambition, who had sustained the character of the chief of his country, and in that capacity had at his command the lives and fortunes of all his fellow citizens. The eulogists of republican moderation and frugality have reproached Pericles with his ambition, his vanity, and his taste for the elegant arts subservient to luxury and corruption of manners; and these features of his mind, without doubt, had a sensible influence on the character of his country; but his integrity, his generosity of heart, the wisdom of his counsels, and the pure spirit of patriotism which dictated all his public measures, have deservedly ranked him among the greatest men of antiquity.

The celebrated Aspasia, first the mistress and afterwards the wife of Pericles, had from her extraordinary talents a great ascendancy over his mind, and was supposed frequently to have dictated his counsels in the most important concerns of the state. She was believed to have formed a society of courtesans, whose influence over their gallants, young men of consideration in the republic, she thus rendered subservient to the political views of Pericles. The adversaries of his measures employed the comic poets, Eupolis, Cratinus, and others, to expose these political intrigues to public ridicule on the stage; but Pericles maintained his ascendancy, and Aspasia her influence; for such were the powers of her mind, and the fascinating charms of her conversation, that even before her marriage and while exercising the trade of a courtesan, her house was the frequent resort of the gravest and most respectable of the Athenian citizens; among the rest, of the virtuous Socrates.

The age of Pericles is the era of the greatness, the splendor, and the luxury of Athens, and consequently the period from which we may date her decline. The power of Athens was not built on any solid basis. She was rich only from the contributions of her numerous allies; and when these withdrew their subsidies and shook off their dependence, which they were ever ready to do when they were not in danger, her power declined of course: for the territory of the republic was small and unproductive, and her internal resources extremely limited. Had Sparta adhered to the spirit of her constitution, she was much more independent than

Athens. Her situation naturally gave her the command of Peloponnesus. She could employ the subsidies of her allies to no other purposes than those for which they were destined; and therefore required no more than what the expenses of war necessarily demanded. Her confederate states, therefore, paid an easy price for protection, and consequently found it always their best interest to adhere to their allegiance. With these advantages, the balance was much in favor of Sparta, in her contest with Athens. But one false step threw the weight into the opposite scale.

The Spartans, eager to cope with the Athenians at sea as well as on land, solicited the aid of Persia to furnish them with a fleet. This measure, which opened Greece a second time to the barbarians, annihilated the patriotic reputation of Lacedæmon, and detached many of the states from her allegiance, through the just dread of subjection to a foreign power.

It is sufficient to give a general idea of the conduct of the Peloponnesian war; its detail must be sought in Thucydides and Xenophon. Thucydides lived only to complete the history of the first twenty-one years of the Peloponnesian war; the transactions of the remaining six years were detailed by Xenophon, in his Grecian History. Neither party seem to have pursued any fixed or uniform plan of operations. The theatre of war was continually shifting from one quarter of Greece to another, as occasional successes seemed to direct; but ignorant how to push advantages, and equally dispirited with trifling losses, the rival states were always alternately disposed to peace, or a renewal of hostilities.

One of the most remarkable transactions of this war was the gallant defence made by the little town of Plataea, which sustained a siege and blockade for near two years, against the power of the combined states of Peloponnesus. As this is the first regular siege of which history gives us any complete detail, a short narrative of its particulars, as described by Thucydides, will be useful, as illustrating the state of the military art at that period, in so far as regards the attack and defence of fortified places.

Plataea, in the Bœotian district of Greece, and not far distant from Thebes, being frequently harassed by that republic, had allied herself to Athens as her surest defence against servitude and oppression. This alliance brought on her the hostility of the Peloponnesian confederacy: but remembering the signal services of this small state at the time of the Persian invasion, the Spartans proposed to compromise matters with Plataea, provided she renounced her treaty of union with Athens, and put herself under the protection of Lacedæmon. The Athenians, in the meantime, sent the Plataeans an assurance of all their support, and this determined Plataea to keep firm to her ancient friends. The Spartans, thinking they had now fulfilled every obligation of honor, laid vigorous siege to the town, which contained only a miserable garrison of 400 citizens, 80 Athenians, and 110 women, besides children.

The city was surrounded with a wall and ditch, around which the besiegers first planted a strong circle of wooden palisades. Then filling up a part of the ditch to serve as a bridge, they proceeded to raise a mound of earth against the walls, which they strengthened on the outside with piles closely wattled with branches, to give stability to the mound which was to serve as a stage for the engines of attack. Meantime, the besieged, foreseeing that the enemy would soon be in possession of that part of the wall, while they took every means to annoy the assailants and impede their work by repeatedly undermining the mound, built a new wall in the inside, in the form of a crescent, so that, should the outer wall be gained, the enemy might still find an unforeseen impediment to their approach. The besiegers made small progress, and were daily losing great numbers of men; they therefore tried a new plan, which was, by heaping great quantities of wood covered with pitch and sulphur around the walls, to set fire to the city in different quarters at once. The experiment promised success, for there was an immense conflagration; but fortunately for the besieged, a torrent of rain extinguished the fire. On the failure of this attempt, the besiegers determined to turn the siege into a blockade; and they now built two strong walls of brick around the town, which they strengthened on either side with a ditch and towers at small intervals; and as the winter was at hand, the Bœotians were left to guard the walls and prevent all succors from without, while the Spartans and the rest of the allies returned to Peloponnesus. The situation of the Plataeans was now extremely hopeless; their stores were exhausted, and no resource remained but to force a passage through the enemy's works. This one half of the garrison attempted and executed in a very daring manner. They took advantage of a dark and stormy night, and mounting the enemy's inner wall by ladders, they surprised and cut to pieces the guards in the towers, and were descending the outer wall, when the alarm was given, and the Bœotians were in a moment all in arms; 300 of these with lighted torches, rushing to the place, served only to give more advantage to the Plataeans, by showing them where to direct their darts and stones while they passed by them in the dark. In a word, they made good their escape to Athens; while the remaining part of the garrison next day surrendered at discretion, and were barbarously massacred by the exasperated Lacedæmonians. The whole operations of this siege indicate the very imperfect state to which the art of war had attained at that time, in the most warlike of the nations of antiquity.

A truce was now concluded between the belligerent powers for fifty years; but this was observed only for a few months. Alcibiades, who, after the death of Pericles, had obtained a high ascendant with the Athenian people, which he owed not less to his noble birth and great riches than to his insinuating manners

and powers of eloquence, at this time directed all the counsels of the republic. His ambition and his vanity were equal to those of his predecessor, but his measures were not always the result of equal prudence. It seemed to be ambition, and the desire of opposing his rival Nicias, that were the sole motives of his conduct in prompting a quarrel between the people of Argos and Lacedæmon, which engaged the Athenians in support of the Argives to renew the Peloponnesian war. The Argives, however, had more prudence than their new allies, and made a peace for themselves. Disappointed in this project, Alcibiades now turned his views to the conquest of Sicily—a more splendid object of ambition; but equally unsuccessful, and much more disastrous in its consequences. The plan of conquering Sicily had been among those wild projects cherished by the Athenians, but from which they had been dissuaded by the prudence of Pericles: it was now resumed on the frivolous ground that the Egestans and Leontines, two Sicilian states, had requested the Athenians to protect them against the oppression of Syracuse. Nicias attempted to convince his countrymen of the folly of embroiling themselves in this quarrel, which was a sufficient motive with Alcibiades to encourage it. The expedition was therefore undertaken, and committed to four generals, Nicias, Lamachus, Demosthenes, and Alcibiades; but the latter had scarcely landed in Sicily, when he was called back to Athens to defend himself against a charge of treason and impiety. As every thing there was carried by a faction, Alcibiades was condemned, and escaped a capital punishment only by taking refuge at Sparta, and offering his warmest services to the enemies of his country. Meantime the dissensions of the Athenian generals, the time wasted in besieging some small sea-ports, and the arrival of succors from Lacedæmon, which strengthened and inspirited the Syracusans, combined to the total failure of the enterprise. After a fruitless attempt upon Syracuse, in the course of which Lamachus was killed, and after various engagements both by sea and land, in which the invading fleet and army were always obliged to act upon the defensive, the Athenians were totally defeated. They now attempted a retreat, but being closely pursued they were forced at length to surrender prisoners of war, leaving their fleet in the hands of the enemy, and stipulating only that their lives should be spared. This condition the Syracusans fulfilled as to the army, but, with a refinement of barbarism, they scourged to death the two generals, Nicias and Demosthenes. Such was the miserable issue of this ill-concerted expedition.

The consequences of these disasters were, on the whole, not without some benefit to the Athenians. Their foolish pride was humbled, their inconsiderate ambition checked, and some wise and vigorous reforms were made in the constitution of the republic. Among these was the institution of a new council of elders, whose function was to digest and prepare the resolutions touching all

public measures, before they were proposed in the public assembly. This, as a judicious writer has remarked, “was providing for the prudence of executive government, but not for vigor, for secrecy, and for despatch:” a deficiency in these capital points is inseparable from a constitution purely democratical.

We have remarked that Alcibiades had taken refuge at Lacedæmon. Here he soon attained both confidence and high employment; but this glimpse of favor, which the traitor ill-deserved, was of short duration. The principal men among the Lacedæmonians could ill brook those marks of favor and preference to a stranger and a refugee. His character was known as that of a thorough-paced politician; his motives were therefore always suspected; and while ostensibly employed in the service of Sparta with the Greek states of Asia—a service which had no other end than his own private interest—a party at Lacedæmon had procured his condemnation for treason against the state. He got a seasonable intimation of his danger, and betook himself for protection to Tissaphernes, the Persian governor of Sardis.

In the eighth year of the Peloponnesian war, the Persian monarch, Artaxerxes Longimanus, died. He was succeeded by Xerxes the Second, his only legitimate son, who was soon after assassinated by his natural brother Sogdianus. This prince was dethroned a few months after, by his brother Ochus, who assumed the name of Darius, to which the Greeks added the surname of Nothus, or the Bastard. He was a weak prince, controlled entirely by his queen Parysatis, a woman of great artifice and ambition. His reign was a continued series of rebellion and disturbance.

The versatile character of Alcibiades could accommodate itself to all situations. At Athens he had alternately flattered the nobility and the populace. At Sparta he assumed, with admirable hypocrisy, the simple and austere manners of a Lacedæmonian. At Sardis, the easy companion of the luxury and debauchery of Tissaphernes, he gained over that satrap the most entire ascendancy. This situation he attempted to turn to his advantage, by making his peace with his countrymen of Athens. He offered them the alliance of Tissaphernes, and of consequence the superiority over Sparta, and a termination of the ruinous war of Peloponnesus; but he made the absolute conditions of these advantages his own recall, and a change of the Athenian constitution from a popular government to an oligarchy of the principal citizens. The spirit of Athens was broken; patriotic virtue was at low ebb; and a continuance of war, and of the triumphs of her rival state, offered a prospect of nothing but ruin. The terms of Alcibiades were complied with. The government of the republic was committed to four hundred of the nobles, who were vested with absolute authority.

No sooner was intelligence of this sudden and extraordinary revolution brought to the Athenian army at Samos, than they