

monarchy seemed to threaten a revolution. The Asiatic provinces began to court the alliance of Lacedæmon; the barbarians flocked to her standards from all quarters. Artaxerxes thought it advisable to attempt a diversion in Greece. He employed Timocrates, a Rhodian, to negotiate with some of the tributary states belonging to Lacedæmon, and to excite them to throw off her yoke, and assert their independence. He found the most of them well-disposed to this attempt, and a proper application of the Persian gold hastened their insurrection. A league was formed against Sparta by the states of Argos, Thebes, and Corinth; and Athens soon after joined the confederacy, which gave a sudden turn to the fortunes of Lacedæmon.

The Spartans raised two considerable armies, and commenced hostilities by entering the territory of Phocis. They were defeated; Lysander, one of their generals, being killed in battle, and Pausanias, the other, condemned to death for his misconduct. Much about the same time, the Persian fleet under the command of Conon vanquished that of Sparta, near Cnidus, a city of Caria. This defeat deprived the Lacedæmonians of the command of the sea. Their allies took the opportunity of this turn of affairs to throw off their yoke, and Sparta, almost in a single campaign, saw herself without allies, without power, and without resources. The reverse of fortune experienced by this republic was truly remarkable. Twenty years had not elapsed since she was absolute mistress of Greece, and held the whole of her states either as tributaries or allies, who found it their highest interest to court her favor and protection. So changed was her present situation, that the most inconsiderable of the states of Peloponnesus spurned at her authority, and left her singly to oppose the united power of Persia and the league of Greece.

To escape total destruction, the Lacedæmonians made an overture of peace to the Persians. Antalcidas, commissioned for that purpose, applied to Terebasus, the governor of Lydia. He laid before him three articles as the conditions of amity and alliance. By the first, the Spartans abandoned to Persia all the Asiatic colonies; by the second, it was proposed that all the allied states of Greece should enjoy their liberty, and the choice of their own laws and form of government; and by the last, it was agreed that such of the states as might acquiesce in these conditions should unite in arms, and compel the others to accede to them. Artaxerxes accepted these propositions, but stipulated further, that he should be put in possession of Cyprus and Clazomene, and that the Athenians should get possession of the islands of Scyros, Lemnos, and Imbros. Some of the principal states of Greece, and Thebes in particular, refused at first to consent to this, which they justly regarded as a humiliating treaty; but, too weak to make an effectual opposition, they yielded to the necessity of their situation.

CHAPTER III.

REPUBLIC OF THEBES—Pelopidas and Epaminondas—Battle of Leuctra—of Mantinea—General Peace and its consequences—Philip of Macedon—The Sacred War—Demosthenes—Battle of Chæronea—Designs of Philip against Persia—His death.

WHILE the two great republics of Greece, Sparta and Athens, were thus visibly tending to decline, another of the Grecian commonwealths, which had hitherto made no conspicuous figure, now suddenly rose to a degree of splendor which eclipsed all her contemporary states. This was the republic of Thebes, whose sudden elevation from obscurity to the command of Greece is one of the most remarkable occurrences in history.

As Sparta, by the late treaty with Persia, seemed to be regarded as the predominant power in Greece, and to have negotiated (as it may be termed) the fall of the nation, she was naturally induced to endeavor by every means to maintain this character of ascendancy, and for that end had her partisans and political agents in all the principal states. The natural consequence of this policy was to excite and maintain in all of them two separate factions; the one the patriotic supporters of liberty and independence, and the other the mean slaves of Lacedæmonian interest. Such, among the rest, was, at this time, the situation of Thebes. The patriotic party in this republic which supported its ancient constitution and independence, was headed by Ismenias; while the opposite faction, which aimed at the establishment of an oligarchy, had for its chief supporter Leontiades, a man firmly devoted to the interest of Sparta. It happened, at this time, that Phæbidas, a Lacedæmonian general, was sent with an army to punish the people of Olynthus, a Thracian city, for an alleged infraction of the late treaty of peace, by making conquests over some of the neighboring states. The Spartans considered themselves as the guaranties of that treaty which they had so main a hand in negotiating, and which professed to secure the independence of the several republics. We shall see how faithfully they discharged this guarantee. Leontiades, the head of the party of the oligarchy at Thebes, prevailed on Phæbidas to second his attempts against the liberties of his country. The Spartan general readily gave his aid, and introducing his army, took possession of the citadel; while the unsuspecting Thebans, trusting to the faith of the treaty, were employed in celebrating the festival of Ceres. Ismenias,

the chief of the democratic interest, was seized and put to death; and the principal men of his party escaped with precipitation from the city.

The conduct of the Spartans, in this juncture, shows how unequal is the conflict between virtue and self-interest. They acknowledged it an act of treason in Leontiades to have thus betrayed his country, and they reprobated the conduct of Phæbidas in giving his aid to a measure which was a direct infraction of a national treaty; but being now masters of Thebes, they did not choose to abandon their acquisition. This shameful conduct was justly censured by all Greece. Four hundred of the chief citizens of Thebes had fled for protection to Athens. Among these was Pelopidas, the avenger and deliverer of his country. Maintaining a regular intelligence with such of the citizens as were friends to the cause of justice and patriotism, at the head of whom was the great Epaminondas, a plan was concerted for the recovery of Thebes, which succeeded to the utmost of their wishes. Pelopidas, with eleven of his friends in the disguise of peasants, entered the city in the dusk of the evening, and joined the rest of the conspirators in the house of a principal citizen, of the name of Charon. Philidas, who acted as secretary to the polemarchs or chief magistrates of Thebes, was, secretly, a steady friend to the design; and had purposely invited the chiefs of the oligarchy, and the principal of the Spartan commanders, to a magnificent supper at his house; where, as a part of the entertainment, he promised to regale his guests with the company of some of the handsomest of the Theban courtesans. While the guests, warm with wine, eagerly called for the introduction of the ladies, a courier arrived from Athens, and brought a letter to Archias, the chief governor, desiring it to be instantly read, as containing important business. "This is no time," said the voluptuary, "to trouble us with business: we shall consider of that to-morrow." This letter contained a full discovery of the plot. Meantime, Pelopidas and his companions, dressed in female attire, entered the hall, and each drawing a dagger from under his robe, massacred the governor and the whole of the Spartan officers, before they had time to stand upon their defence. The principal of their enemies thus despatched, they entered the houses of several others whom they knew to be hostile to their purpose, and put them likewise to death. Such were the transactions of this busy night. But a strong garrison of 1500 Spartans were in possession of the citadel. Fortunately, a body of 5000 foot and 2000 horse, despatched from Athens, arrived early next morning to the aid of Pelopidas. Epaminondas called to arms all the citizens who wished the deliverance of their country, and put himself at their head: the associated troops laid siege to the citadel; and in a very short time, the Spartans, seeing all resistance vain, agreed to open the gates and save the effusion of blood by instantly evacuating Thebes. The capitulation was

agreed to; and Pelopidas and Epaminondas were hailed the deliverers of their country.*

Thebes was now necessarily involved in a war with Sparta; but she had the assistance of Athens. With this respectable aid, she was, perhaps, a match for her powerful antagonist, but she did not long enjoy the advantage of that alliance: Persia, which since the last peace had acquired a title to mediate in the affairs of Greece, brought about an overture of accommodation between the contending states. All articles were agreed upon, when a small punctilio exasperated the Thebans. They could not bear that their name should be classed among the inferior states of Greece; and Sparta was determined that it should. Neither party would yield, and Thebes was entirely struck out of the treaty, which was acceded to by all the other republics.

Thus the Thebans stood alone, in opposition to the league of Greece: but Epaminondas and Pelopidas were their generals. The battle of Leuctra showed how much may be achieved by the patriotic exertions and abilities of a few distinguished individuals. The Theban army, amounting only to 6000 men, commanded by Epaminondas, entirely defeated 25,000 Lacedæmonians, and left 4000, with their king, Cleombrotus, dead upon the field. By the law of Sparta, all who fled from the enemy were doomed to suffer a capital punishment; but Agesilaus prudently suspended the law for a single day: the Spartans, otherwise, must have lost their whole army.

It is remarkable, that when the news of this great defeat reached Lacedæmon, the citizens were engaged in celebrating the public games, and an immense concourse of strangers attended that solemnity. The fatal intelligence spread a general alarm; but the Ephori, with admirable presence of mind, ordered the games to proceed without interruption. The best method of blunting the edge of misfortune is to brave it. The parents and relations of those who had fallen in battle went, next day, in solemn procession, to thank the gods that their sons had died in the bed of glory: while the relatives of those who had escaped, were overwhelmed with shame and affliction.

The petty states of Greece always took part with a victorious power. Epaminondas, determined to push his success, and to penetrate into Laconia, found his little army speedily increased to 70,000 men. With this force he might have razed Lacedæmon

* In this account of the revolution of Thebes, I have followed the authority of Plutarch in preference to that of Xenophon, though, in general, I admit that the credit of the latter is higher than that of the former. But Xenophon, with all his talents and virtues, was a man of strong prejudices; of which there cannot be a more striking example than this very narrative, in the whole of which he never once mentions the name of either Pelopidas or Epaminondas, to whom, not only Plutarch, but the general voice of the ancient authors, has attributed the principal agency in this revolution.

to the ground, and abolished the Spartan name: but he was satisfied with having checked their insolence and perfidy; and he returned to Thebes, after having rebuilt the city of Megalopolis, where he collected the Arcadians, and repeopled Messene, from which the Spartans had driven out the inhabitants; thus re-establishing, almost under the walls of Sparta, two of her ancient and most inveterate enemies.

The history of the Grecian states affords too many examples that, under a constitution purely democratic, the public mind is so fickle that the highest efforts of virtue and patriotism are more frequently repaid with ingratitude than with the rewards of honor and popularity. Epaminondas and Pelopidas, on their return to Thebes, were accused of having retained their command four months beyond the term of their commissions, while engaged in the Peloponnesian expedition. This, on the specious pretext of a strict regard to military duty, was adjudged to be a capital offence, and the people were on the point of condemning to death those men who had not only rescued their country from servitude, but raised the Theban name to the highest pitch of glory. Epaminondas undertook to defend the conduct of Pelopidas by taking the whole blame upon himself. "I was," said he, "the author of those measures for which we stand here accused. I had indulged a hope that the signal success which, under our conduct, has attended the Theban arms, would have entitled us to the gratitude, and not to the censure of our country. Well! let posterity, then, be informed of our crimes and of our punishment. Let it be known that Epaminondas led your troops into the heart of Laconia, which no hostile power till then had ever penetrated; that his crime was that he abased the glory of Sparta, and brought her to the brink of ruin; that he made Thebes the most illustrious of the Grecian states; let it be inscribed on his tomb, that death was the reward which his country decreed for these services." The Thebans were ashamed of their own conduct; the judges dismissed the charge, and the people atoned for their ingratitude by the strongest expressions of praise and admiration.

Yet this rectitude of feeling was only temporary. All the states of Peloponnesus supported by Thebes were at war with Sparta. The other republics, however, and principally Athens, were inflamed with jealousy of the Theban power, and, uniting in a league to curb its ascendancy, they applied for aid from Persia. To counteract this coöperation the Thebans sent Pelopidas to Artaxerxes, who convinced him that it was more for his real interest to countenance and support their infant power, which could give no jealousy or alarm to his empire, than to add weight to those great republics, which had always been at variance with him. Artaxerxes declared himself the ally of Thebes. The Greek ambassadors were all dismissed, loaded with magnificent presents; Pelopidas alone refused them. In the assembly of the

people at Athens, a porter ludicrously proposed that, instead of nine annual archons, they should elect nine ambassadors of the poorest of the people, and send them every year to Persia.

Epaminondas, at this time, made another descent upon Peloponnesus, when he was opposed by the Spartans, the Athenians, and Corinthians. He was at first successful, but, overpowered at last and obliged to retreat, he returned to Thebes, where his ill fortune was construed into treason, and he was deprived of all command. We shall presently see his fickle countrymen once more disposed to rate his services at their true value.

Macedonia, a few years before this period, was in a state of civil war, from the quarrels for sovereignty which arose between the two sons of Amyntas, upon the death of their father. The Macedonians solicited aid from the Thebans to compose the disorders of their country, and Pelopidas was for that purpose sent thither with an army. He effected the object of his mission by placing Perdiccas on the throne of Macedonia, and he carried with him to Thebes, Philip, the brother of Perdiccas, with thirty of the young nobility, as hostages for the security of this settlement. This was Philip, afterwards the King of Macedon, and father of Alexander the Great; a youth who so profitably employed his time in the study of the art of war under those two able masters, Pelopidas and Epaminondas, that from them he acquired that military knowledge which afterwards proved so fatal to the liberties of Greece.

The people of Thessaly, alarmed at the ambitious designs of Alexander, the *tyrant* of Pheræ, who aimed at reducing the whole states under his own dominion, solicited the aid of the Thebans to protect their liberties. The Thebans complied with their request, and Pelopidas, sent into Thessaly as an ambassador, to hear the subject of complaint, and to mediate on the part of Thebes, was, in contempt of the law of nations, seized by Alexander and thrown into prison. The Thebans justly resenting this gross outrage, sent an army against the tyrant, and Epaminondas, eager to cooperate in the delivery of his friend Pelopidas, but debarred by the late decree from all military command, joined himself as a private soldier to the expedition. The Theban forces were encountered in the field by an army greatly superior in numbers; and such was the pusillanimity of their generals, that they were on the point of making an ignominious retreat, when the spirit of the troops was roused by the strong feeling of impending disgrace. They compelled their generals to yield the command to Epaminondas, who very speedily turned the fortune of the day, and, after repulsing the tyrant, obliged him to offer terms of accommodation, of which the first condition was the release and restitution of Pelopidas. This signal service of Epaminondas, though performed, as we have seen, at the expense of a new infringement of military duty, the very offence for which he had lately so severely suffered, was now

rewarded by the universal applause of his country, and a complete reinstatement in all his former honors and popularity.

Pelopidas had no sooner recovered his liberty than he resolved to wreak his vengeance against the *tyrant* of Pheræ. At the head of a new expedition for this purpose, he encountered Alexander at Cynocephalæ, and gave him a complete defeat; but eager to engage the tyrant, whom he challenged to single combat in the field, he unwarily exposed himself to a shower of javelins from the enemy, and fell pierced with numberless wounds. The Thebans justly considered their victory as dearly purchased by the loss of this most brave and virtuous citizen. The Thebans and Thessalonians jointly performed his funeral obsequies with the most distinguished pomp and magnificence. The tyrant of Pheræ was soon after assassinated by his wife and her brothers, who avenged by this blow their own and their country's injuries.

A new war now broke out between Thebes and Sparta, on account of a quarrel between the Tegeans and Mantineans, the former protected by the Thebans, the latter by the Lacedæmonians and Athenians. Epaminondas made another attempt upon Lacedæmon, which owed its preservation to the conduct and bravery of Agesilaus. The Theban general, on receiving intelligence that the best of the Spartan troops, with Agesilaus at their head, were on their march to Mantinea, judged this a most seasonable opportunity for an attack on Sparta, which, having no walls, he expected to seize in the night without any opposition. Agesilaus, however, getting a hint of his design, had just time to apprise the city of its danger, and the Thebans had already penetrated into the heart of it; when, to the surprise of Epaminondas, he found himself vigorously attacked by Agesilaus himself and his brave son, Archidamus, with the flower of the Spartan youth, who displayed the greatest courage in making head against the invaders. The Thebans were now forced to make a precipitate retreat. This unsuccessful enterprise was the more galling to Epaminondas, that the term of his military command was just about to expire. He earnestly wished to compensate for his failure by some splendid stroke against the enemy. The Spartan troops, as we have seen, had been suddenly called off from Mantinea to defend their city. Epaminondas now attempted, by a rapid march, to surprise and seize Mantinea; but in the meantime its garrison had been reinforced by an Athenian army, which met the Thebans in front, on their approach to the town, while the Spartans, aware of their design, were following close upon their rear. An engagement now ensued, one of the most celebrated in the Grecian history. The army of the Thebans amounted to 30,000 foot and 3000 horse; that of the Lacedæmonians and their allies to 20,000 foot and 2000 horse.

The battle was fought with the most desperate courage on both sides. The detail of particulars is to be found in Xenophon,

Diodorus, and other historians. The judicious disposition of the Theban army, and their movements during the engagement, showed the profound military skill of their general. In the heat of the battle, the Thebans having broken and repulsed the Lacedæmonian phalanx, Epaminondas, too rashly pursuing his success, had advanced beyond the line of his troops, when the enemy rallying, he was exposed to a whole shower of darts, and fell, pierced with numberless wounds. His faithful Thebans found means to rescue his body while life yet remained, and to bring him to his tent. A javelin stuck fast in his breast, and his physician declared that on extracting it he would immediately expire. In this extremity, breathless and fainting, while his friends stood weeping around him, he first inquired what was become of his shield, and being told that it was safe, he beckoned to have it brought to him, and kissed it. He then asked which side had gained the victory, and being told it was the Thebans, "Then," said he, "all is well." While some of his friends were lamenting his untimely fall, and regretting that he had left no children to perpetuate his memory; "Yes," said he, "I have left two fair daughters, *Leuctra* and *Mantineia*—these will perpetuate my memory;"—so saying, with his own hands he drew forth the javelin from his breast, and instantly expired.

The ancient historians have ranked Epaminondas among the greatest heroes and most illustrious characters of antiquity. *Epaminondas princeps meo judicio Græciæ*, says Cicero. As a general, there needs no other criterion of his merit than to compare the situation in which he found his country, enslaved, oppressed, weak, and inconsiderable, with that in which he left it, the most formidable power in Greece. As a private citizen, his social virtues, the generosity of his disposition, a total disregard of wealth, which his high employments gave him an easy opportunity of accumulating; his eminent philosophical and literary genius, and above all, a modest simplicity of demeanor, which added lustre to all his numerous accomplishments, were the distinguishing features of his character. With him the glory of his country may be said to have been born and to have died; for, from the inauspicious day of his death, the Theban power vanished at once, and that Bœotian republic sunk again into its original obscurity.

Athens and Sparta were humbled in the battle of Mantinea. Thebes was victorious, but she was undone by the death of Epaminondas. All parties were now disposed to peace, and Artaxerxes, more powerful among those infatuated states than in his own dominions of Persia, dictated the terms of the treaty. It was stipulated that each of the states should retain what it then possessed, and that all should enjoy their liberties independent of each other. The Spartans alone refused their assent to this treaty, unwilling to relinquish that control which they considered as their right over some of their tributary cities.

Artaxerxes soon after died of a broken heart. Darius, his eldest son, together with fifty of his natural brothers, had conspired against their father, but their designs were defeated, and they were all put to death. Ochus, the third of his lawful sons, succeeded him. This monster had made his way to the throne by murdering his elder brother, and, to secure his possession, he murdered all that remained of his kindred.

The treaty recently concluded among the states of Greece was fatal in its consequences to the glory of the nation. The greater republics, exhausted and weakened by the war, and now abridged in their power and resources by the independence of the smaller states, were alternately sunk in indolence and apathy, and embroiled by civil contentions. The inferior republics, who derived weight and consideration chiefly from their alliance with the great states who were their protectors, were now forced, in all their quarrels with each other, to rely upon their own strength. No general object united the nation, which now became a discordant mass of unequal and independent parts. In addition to these symptoms of decline, luxury was extending her baneful influence, in enervating and corrupting the patriotic spirit. A taste for the productions of the fine arts, and a passionate pursuit of pleasure, had, in the Athenian republic particularly, entirely supplanted heroic virtue. Poets, musicians, sculptors, and comedians, were now the only great men of Attica. While the bewitching dramas of Sophocles and Euripides charmed the ears, and the sculptures of Phidias, of Glycon, and Praxiteles fascinated the eyes of the refined and voluptuous Athenians, military glory was forgotten; and the defence of the state, no longer the care of its citizens, was committed to mercenaries, who filled both its fleets and its armies. Even in Sparta, luxury had begun to spread her contagion; while her power was shaken by the general treaty, which, though rejected on her part, gave sufficient warrant to all her dependent cities to renounce their allegiance.

In this declining situation of Greece, while she offered a tempting object of ambition to the designs either of a foreign conqueror or a domestic tyrant, the prince of a small monarchy, hitherto quite inconsiderable, began to meditate an attack against her general liberties. This was Philip of Macedon; the same youth whom, as we have observed, a few years before, Pelopidas had carried a hostage to Thebes in security of that establishment he had made, in placing Perdiccas II. on the throne, and composing the disorders of his kingdom.

Philip, while in Thebes, had been the companion of Epaminondas, the pupil of his father Polymnis, and had shared in those excellent lessons which formed the illustrious Theban to be the support and glory of his country. The house of Polymnis, at Thebes, was the resort of the most learned and virtuous men of that country. There Lysidas, of Tarentum, read his lectures on

philosophy; a science in which Epaminondas was no less eminent, by the testimony of all antiquity, than he was in the talents of a great military leader. It was in the latter character rather than the former that he served as a model to the young Philip, who, though of acute talents, had neither the virtues nor the cultivated mind of the illustrious Theban. The abilities of Philip raised him to the throne, which was then filled by his nephew Amyntas, the son of his elder brother Perdiccas. The Macedonians declared they wanted not a child, but a man, to be their governor. If great military talents, unbounded ambition, with profound political sagacity, could, in a sovereign, compensate for the want of moral qualities and the absence of every generous virtue, Philip was not unworthy to wear a crown.

Scarcely was he seated on the throne, when he was attacked from every quarter. The Illyrians and the Pæonians made inroads upon his territories. Two rival princes, Pausanias and Argæus, relations of the last monarch, disputed his title, each claiming the sovereignty for himself. The Thracians armed for Pausanias, the Athenians for Argæus. Philip disarmed the Pæonians by bribes and promises. The Thracians were won by a similar policy. He gained a victory over the Athenians, in which his rival Argæus lost his life; and having thus accomplished the security of his title to the throne, he attained with the people of Athens the character of extreme moderation and generosity, by sending back to their country without ransom, all the prisoners he had taken in battle.

In this manner, by the most dexterous policy, he removed a part of his enemies, that he might have the rest at his mercy. Hitherto his conduct might in general be justified; for, as yet, his interest had not prompted him to act a dishonorable part. No man wantonly, or through choice, throws away his character. But Philip knew no other motive of action but his own interest; and he had no scruples as to the means of accomplishing it. Artifices of every kind, dissimulation, perfidy, breach of promises, and oaths, were with Philip the ordinary and the necessary engines of government. Corruption was his favorite instrument. It was a maxim of his, that no fortification was impregnable into which a mule could make its way with a bag of money. Philip, in his designs against the liberties of Greece, found occasion to employ the utmost extent of his political address, and to exercise, alternately every talent of which he was possessed. He had his pensionaries in all the republics, whose care it was to give him intelligence of every measure, to form a party in his interest, and on all occasions when his enterprises were called in question, to justify his designs and vindicate his proceedings. In Athens, he had in this character Æschines the orator devoted to his interest, and two comedians, Aristodemus and Neoptolemus, men of high influence in the public assemblies. With these illustrious characters in his interest, Philip was at ease with respect to the Athenians.