

HISTORY OF GREECE.

PART II.

CONTINUATION OF HISTORICAL GREECE.

CHAPTER LV.

FROM THE PEACE OF NIKIAS TO THE OLYMPIC FESTIVAL OF OLYMPIAD 90.

MY last chapter, and last volume, terminated with the peace called the Peace of Nikias, concluded in March 421 B.C.—between Athens and the Spartan confederacy, for fifty years.

This peace—negotiated during the autumn and winter succeeding the defeat of the Athenians at Amphipolis, wherein both Kleon and Brasidas were slain—resulted partly from the extraordinary anxiety of the Spartans to recover their captives who had been taken at Sphakteria, partly from the discouragement of the Athenians, leading them to listen to the peace party who acted with Nikias. The general principle adopted for the peace was, the restitution by both parties of what had been acquired by

Negotiations for peace during the winter after the battle of Amphipolis.

Peace called
the peace
of Nikias—
concluded
in March
421 B.C.
Conditions
of peace.

war—yet excluding such places as had been surrendered by capitulation: according to which reserve, the Athenians, while prevented from recovering Plataea, continued to hold Nisæa, the harbour of Megara. The Lacedæmonians engaged to restore Amphipolis to Athens, and to relinquish their connection with the revolted allies of Athens in Thrace—that is, Argilus, Stageirus, Akanthus, Skôlus, Olynthus, and Spartôlus. These six cities, however, were not to be enrolled as allies of Athens unless they chose voluntarily to become so—but only to pay regularly to Athens the tribute originally assessed by Aristeidês, as a sort of recompense for the protection of the Ægean sea against private war or piracy. Any inhabitant of Amphipolis or the other cities, who chose to leave them, was at liberty to do so and to carry away his property. Farther, the Lacedæmonians covenanted to restore Panaktum to Athens, together with all the Athenian prisoners in their possession. As to Skiônê, Torônê, and Sermylus, the Athenians were declared free to take their own measures. On their part, they engaged to release all captives in their hands, either of Sparta or her allies; to restore Pylus, Kythêra, Methônê, Pteleon, and Atalantê; and to liberate all the Peloponnesian or Brasidean soldiers now under blockade in Skiônê.

Provision was also made, by special articles, that all Greeks should have free access to the sacred Pan-hellenic festivals, either by land or sea; and that the autonomy of the Delphian temple should be guaranteed.

The contracting parties swore to abstain in future

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-00956-0 - A History of Greece, Volume 7

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Excerpt

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from all injury to each other, and to settle by amicable decision any dispute which might arise¹.

Lastly, it was provided that if any matter should afterwards occur as having been forgotten, the Athenians and Lacedæmonians might by mutual consent amend the treaty as they thought fit. So prepared, the oaths were interchanged between seventeen principal Athenians and as many principal Lacedæmonians.

Earnestly bent as Sparta herself was upon the peace—and ratified as it had been by the vote of a majority among her confederates—still there was a powerful minority who not only refused their assent, but strenuously protested against its conditions. The Corinthians were discontented because they did not receive back Sollium and Anaktorium; the Megarians, because they did not regain Nisæa; the Bœotians, because Panaktum was to be restored to Athens: the Eleians also, on some other ground which we do not distinctly know. All of them moreover took common offence at the article which provided that Athens and Sparta might by mutual consent, and without consulting the allies, amend the treaty in any way that they thought proper². Though the peace was sworn, therefore, the most powerful members of the Spartan confederacy remained all recusant.

Peace accepted at Sparta by the majority of members of the Peloponnesian alliance.

The most powerful members of the alliance refuse to accept the truce—Bœotians, Megarians, Corinthians, and Eleians.

So strong was the interest of the Spartans themselves, however, that having obtained the favourable vote of the majority, they resolved to carry the peace through, even at the risk of breaking up the

¹ Thucyd. v. 17-29.

² Thucyd. v. 18.

Cambridge University Press

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Position and feelings of the Lacedæmonians—their great anxiety for peace—their uncertain relations with Argos.

confederacy. Besides the earnest desire of recovering their captives from the Athenians, they were farther alarmed by the fact that their truce for thirty years concluded with Argos was just now expiring. They had indeed made application to Argos for renewing it, through Lichas the Spartan proxenus of that city. But the Argeians had refused, except upon the inadmissible condition that the border territory of Kynuria should be ceded to them: there was reason to fear therefore that this new and powerful force might be thrown into the scale of Athens, if war were allowed to continue¹.

Steps taken by the Lacedæmonians to execute the peace—Amphipolis is not restored to Athens—the great allies of Sparta do not accept the peace.

Accordingly, no sooner had the peace been sworn, than the Spartans proceeded to execute its provisions. Lots being drawn to determine whether Sparta or Athens should be the first to make the cessions required, the Athenians drew the favourable lot:—an advantage so very great, under the circumstances, that Theophrastus affirmed Nikias to have gained the point by bribery. There is no ground for believing such alleged bribery; the rather, as we shall presently find Nikias gratuitously throwing away most of the benefit which the lucky lot conferred².

The Spartans began their compliance by forthwith releasing all the Athenian prisoners in their hands, and despatching Ischagoras with two other envoys to Amphipolis and the Thracian towns. These envoys were directed to proclaim the peace as well as to enforce its observance upon the

¹ Thucyd. v. 14, 22, 76.

² Plutarch, Nikias, c. 10.

Thracian towns, and especially to command Klearidas, the Spartan commander in Amphipolis, that he should surrender the town to the Athenians. But on arriving in Thrace, these envoys met with nothing but unanimous opposition: and so energetic were the remonstrances of the Chalkidians, both in Amphipolis and out of it, that even Klearidas refused obedience to his own government, pretending that he was not strong enough to surrender the place against the resistance of the Chalkidians. Thus completely baffled, the envoys returned to Sparta, whither Klearidas thought it prudent to accompany them, partly to explain his own conduct, partly in hopes of being able to procure some modification of the terms. But he found this impossible, and he was sent back to Amphipolis with peremptory orders to surrender the place to the Athenians, if it could possibly be done; if that should prove beyond his force, then to come away, and bring home every Peloponnesian soldier in the garrison. Perhaps the surrender was really impracticable to a force no greater than that which Klearidas commanded, since the reluctance of the population was doubtless obstinate. At any rate, he represented it to be impracticable: the troops accordingly came home, but the Athenians still remained excluded from Amphipolis, and all the stipulations of the peace respecting the Thracian towns remained unperformed. Nor was this all. The envoys from the recusant minority (Corinthians and others), after having gone home for instructions, had now come back to Sparta with increased repugnance and protest against the injustice of the

peace, so that all the efforts of the Spartans to bring them to compliance were fruitless¹.

Separate
alliance for
mutual de-
fence con-
cluded be-
tween
Sparta and
Athens.

The latter were now in serious embarrassment. Not having executed their portion of the treaty, they could not demand that Athens should execute hers: and they were threatened with the double misfortune of forfeiting the confidence of their allies without acquiring any one of the advantages of the treaty. In this dilemma they determined to enter into closer relations, and separate relations, with Athens, at all hazard of offending their allies. Of the enmity of Argos, if unaided by Athens, they had little apprehension; while the moment was now favourable for alliance with Athens, from the decided pacific tendencies reigning on both sides, as well as from the known philo-Laconian sentiment of the leaders Nicias and Lachês. The Athenian envoys had remained at Sparta ever since the swearing of the peace—awaiting the fulfilment of the conditions; Nicias or Lachês, one or both, being very probably among them. When they saw that Sparta was unable to fulfill her bond, so that the treaty seemed likely to be cancelled, they would doubtless encourage, and perhaps may even have suggested, the idea of a separate alliance between Sparta and Athens, as the only expedient for covering the deficiency; promising that under that alliance the Spartan captives should be restored. Accordingly a treaty was concluded between the two, for fifty years—not merely of peace, but of defensive alliance. Each party pledged itself to assist in repelling any invaders of the territory of the other,

Terms of
the alliance.

¹ Thucyd. v. 21, 22.

to treat them as enemies, and not to conclude peace with them without the consent of the other. This was the single provision of the alliance,—with one addition, however, of no mean importance, for the security of Lacedæmon. The Athenians engaged to lend their best and most energetic aid in putting down any rising of the Helots which might occur in Laconia. Such a provision indicates powerfully the uneasiness felt by the Lacedæmonians respecting their serf-population: but at the present moment it was of peculiar value to them, since it bound the Athenians to restrain, if not to withdraw, the Messenian garrison of Pylus, planted there by themselves for the express purpose of provoking the Helots to revolt.

An alliance with stipulations so few and simple took no long time to discuss. It was concluded very speedily after the return of the envoys from Amphipolis—probably not more than a month or two after the former peace. It was sworn to by the same individuals on both sides; with similar declaration that the oath should be annually renewed,—and also with similar proviso that Sparta and Athens might by mutual consent either enlarge or contract the terms, without violating the oath¹: Moreover the treaty was directed to be inscribed on two columns: one to be set up in the temple of

¹ Thucyd. v. 23. The treaty of alliance seems to have been drawn up at Sparta, and approved or concerted with the Athenian envoys; then sent to Athens, and there adopted by the people; then sworn to on both sides. The interval between this second treaty and the first (*ὁ πολλῶ ἕσπερον*, v. 24) may have been more than a month; for it comprised the visit of the Lacedæmonian envoys to Amphipolis and the other towns of Thrace—the manifestation of resistance in those towns, and the return of Klearidas to Sparta to give an account of his conduct.

Apollo at Amyklæ, the other in the temple of Athênê in the acropolis of Athens.

Athens restores the Spartan captives.

The most important result of this new alliance was something not specified in its provisions, but understood, we may be well assured, between the Spartan Ephors and Nicias at the time when it was concluded. All the Spartan captives at Athens were forthwith restored¹.

Mismanagement of the political interests of Athens by Nicias and the peace party.

Nothing can demonstrate more powerfully the pacific and acquiescent feeling now reigning at Athens, as well as the strong philo-Laconian inclinations of her leading men, (at this moment Alkibiadês was competing with Nicias for the favour of Sparta, as will be stated presently,) than the terms of this alliance, which bound Athens to assist in keeping down the Helots—and the still more important after-proceeding, of restoring the Spartan captives. Athens thus parted irrevocably with her best card, and promised to renounce her second best—without obtaining the smallest equivalent beyond what was contained in the oath of Sparta to become her ally. For the last three years and a half, ever since the capture of Sphacteria, the possession of these captives had placed her in a position of decided advantage in regard to her chief enemy—advantage, however, which had to a certain extent been countervailed by subsequent losses. This state of things was fairly enough represented by the treaty of peace deliberately discussed during the winter, and sworn to at the commencement of spring, whereby a string of concessions, reciprocal and balancing, had been imposed on both parties.

¹ Thucyd. v. 24.

Moreover, Athens had been lucky enough in drawing lots to find herself enabled to wait for the actual fulfilment of such concessions by the Spartans, before she consummated her own. Now the Spartans had not as yet realised any one of their promised concessions: nay more—in trying to do so, they had displayed such a want either of power or of will, as made it plain, that nothing short of the most stringent necessity would convert their promises into realities. Yet under these marked indications, Nikias persuades his countrymen to conclude a second treaty which practically annuls the first, and which ensures to the Spartans gratuitously all the main benefits of the first, with little or none of the correlative sacrifices. The alliance of Sparta could hardly be said to count as a consideration: for that alliance was at this moment (under the uncertain relations with Argos) not less valuable to Sparta herself than to Athens. There can be little doubt that if the game of Athens had now been played with prudence, she might have recovered Amphipolis in exchange for the captives: for the inability of Klearidas to make over the place, even if we grant it to have been a real fact and not merely simulated, might have been removed by decisive co-operation on the part of Sparta with an Athenian armament sent to occupy the place. In fact, that which Athens was now induced to grant was precisely the original proposition transmitted to her by the Lacedæmonians four years before, when the hoplites were first enclosed in Sphakteria, but before the actual capture. They then tendered no equivalent,

but merely said, through their envoys, “Give us the men in the island, and accept, in exchange, peace, together with our alliance¹.” At that moment there were some plausible reasons in favour of granting the proposition: but even then, the case of Kleon against it was also plausible and powerful, when he contended that Athens was entitled to make a better bargain. But *now*, there were no reasons in its favour, and a strong concurrence of reasons against it. Alliance with the Spartans was of no great value to Athens: peace was of material importance to her—but peace had been already sworn to on both sides, after deliberate discussion, and required now only to be carried into execution. That equal reciprocity of concession, which presented the best chance of permanent result, had been agreed on; and fortune had procured for her the privilege of receiving the purchase-money before she handed over the goods. Why renounce so advantageous a position, accepting in exchange a hollow and barren alliance, under the obligation of handing over her most precious merchandise upon credit—and upon credit as delusive in promise as it afterwards proved unproductive in reality? The alliance in fact prevented the peace from being fulfilled: it became (as Thucydidês himself² admits) no peace, but a simple suspension of direct hostilities.

Thucydidês states on more than one occasion,—

¹ Thucyd. iv. 19. Λακεδαιμόνιοι δὲ ὑμᾶς προκαλοῦνται ἐς σπονδὰς καὶ διάλυσιν πολέμου, δίδόντες μὲν εἰρήνην καὶ ξυμμαχίαν καὶ ἄλλην φιλίαν πολλήν καὶ οἰκειότητα ἐς ἀλλήλους ὑπάρχειν, ἀνταιτοῦντες δὲ τοὺς ἐκ τῆς νῆσου ἄνδρας.

² Thucyd. v. 26. οὐκ εἰκὸς ὄν εἰρήνην αὐτὴν κριθῆναι, &c.