

HISTORY OF GREECE.

PART II.

CHAPTER LXII.

TWENTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE WAR.—OLIGARCHY OF FOUR HUNDRED AT ATHENS.

ABOUT a year elapsed between the catastrophe of the Athenians near Syracuse and the victory which they gained over the Milêsians, on landing near Milêtus (from September 413 B.C., to September 412 B.C.). After the first of those two events, the complete ruin of Athens had appeared both to her enemies and to herself, impending and irreparable. But so astonishing, so rapid, and so energetic, had been her rally, that at the time of the second, she was found again carrying on a tolerable struggle, though with impaired resources and on a purely defensive system, against enemies both bolder and more numerous than ever. Nor is there any reason to doubt that her foreign affairs might have gone on thus improving, had they not been endangered at this critical moment by the treason of

Rally of Athens, during the year after the defeat at Syracuse. B.C. 412.

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George Grote

Excerpt

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a fraction of her own citizens—bringing her again to the brink of ruin, from which she was only rescued by the incompetence of her enemies.

Commence-
ment of the
conspiracy
of the Four
Hundred at
Athens—
Alkibiadês.

That treason took its first rise from the exile Alkibiadês. I have already recounted how this man, alike unprincipled and energetic, had thrown himself with his characteristic ardour into the service of Sparta, and had indicated to her the best means of aiding Syracuse, of inflicting positive injury upon Athens, and lastly, of provoking revolt among the Ionic allies of the latter. It was by his boldness and personal connections in Ionia that the revolt of Chios and Milêtus had been determined.

In the course of a few months, however, he had greatly lost the confidence of the Spartans. The revolt of the Asiatic dependencies of Athens had not been accomplished so easily and rapidly as he had predicted: Chalkideus, the Spartan commander with whom he had acted, was defeated and slain near Milêtus: the Ephor Endius, by whom he was chiefly protected, retained his office only for one year, and was succeeded by other Ephors¹ just about the end of September, or beginning of October, when the Athenians gained their second victory near Milêtus, and were on the point of blocking up the town; while his personal enemy King Agis still remained to persecute him. Moreover, there was in the character of this remarkable man something so essentially selfish, vain, and treacherous, that no one could ever rely upon his faithful co-operation. And as soon as any reverse occurred, that very energy and ability, which seldom failed

¹ See Thucyd. v. 36.

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him, made those with whom he acted the more ready to explain the mischance by supposing that he had betrayed them.

It was thus that, after the defeat of Milêtus, King Agis was-enabled to discredit Alkibiadês as a traitor to Sparta; upon which the new Ephors sent out at once an order to the general Astyochus, to put him to death¹. Alkibiadês had now an opportunity of tasting the difference between Spartan and Athenian procedure. Though his enemies at Athens were numerous and virulent,—with all the advantage, so unspeakable in political warfare, of being able to raise the cry of irreligion against him; yet the utmost which they could obtain was, that he should be summoned home to take his trial before the Dikastery. At Sparta, without any positive ground of crimination and without any idea of judicial trial, his enemies procure an order that he shall be put to death.

Order from Sparta to kill Alkibiadês.

Alkibiadês however got intimation of the order in time to retire to Tissaphernês. Probably he was forewarned by Astyochus himself, not ignorant that so monstrous a deed would greatly alienate the Chians and Milêsians, nor foreseeing the full mischief which his desertion would bring upon Sparta. With that flexibility of character which enabled him at once to master and take up a new position, Alkibiadês soon found means to insinuate himself into the confidence of the satrap. He began now to play a game neither Spartan, nor Athenian, but Persian and anti-Hellenic: a game of duplicity to which Tissaphernês himself was spontaneously dis-

He escapes, retires to Tissaphernês, and becomes adviser of the Persians.

¹ Thucyd. viii. 45. Καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἀφικομένης ἐπιστολῆς πρὸς Ἀστυόχον ἐκ Λακεδαιμόνος ὥστ' ἀποκτείνειν (ἦν γὰρ καὶ τῷ Ἀγιδί· ἐχθρὸς καὶ ἄλλως ἄπιστος ἐφαίνετο), &c.

posed, but to which the intervention of a dexterous Grecian negotiator was indispensable. It was by no means the interest of the Great King (Alkibiadès urged) to lend such effective aid to either of the contending parties as would enable it to crush the other: he ought neither to bring up the Phenician fleet to the aid of the Lacedæmonians, nor to furnish that abundant pay which would procure for them indefinite levies of new Grecian force. He ought so to feed and prolong the war, as to make each party an instrument of exhaustion and impoverishment against the other, and thus himself to rise on the ruins of both: first to breakdown the Athenian empire by means of the Peloponnesians, and afterwards to expel the Peloponnesians themselves—which might be effected with little trouble if they were weakened by a protracted previous struggle¹.

He advises the satrap to assist neither of the Grecian parties heartily—but his advice leans towards Athens, with a view to his own restoration.

Thus far Alkibiadès gave advice, as a Persian counsellor, not unsuitable to the policy of the court of Susa. But he seldom gave advice without some view to his own profit, ambition, or antipathies. Cast off unceremoniously by the Lacedæmonians, he was now driven to seek restoration in his own country. To accomplish this object, it was necessary not only that he should preserve her from being altogether ruined, but that he should present himself to the Athenians as one who could, if restored, divert the aid of Tissaphernês from Lacedæmon to Athens. Accordingly, he farther suggested to the satrap, that while it was essential to his interest not to permit land power and maritime power to be united in the same hands, whe-

¹ Thucyd. viii. 45, 46.

ther Lacedæmonian or Athenian—it would nevertheless be found easier to arrange matters with the empire and pretensions of Athens, than with those of Lacedæmon. The former (he argued) neither sought nor professed any other object than the subjection of her own maritime dependencies, in return for which she would willingly leave all the Asiatic Greeks in the hands of the Great King; while the latter, forswearing all idea of empire, and professing ostentatiously to aim at the universal enfranchisement of every Grecian city, could not with the smallest consistency conspire to deprive the Asiatic Greeks of the same privilege. This view appeared to be countenanced by the objection which Theramenês and many of the Peloponnesian officers had taken to the first convention concluded by Chalkideus and Alkibiadês with Tissaphernês: objections afterwards renewed by Lichas even against the second modified convention of Theramenês, and accompanied with an indignant protest against the idea of surrendering to the Great King all the territory which had been ever possessed by his predecessors¹.

All these latter arguments, whereby Alkibiadês professed to create in the mind of the satrap a preference for Athens, were either futile or founded on false assumptions. For on the one hand, even Lichas never refused to concur in surrendering the Asiatic Greeks to Persia—while on the other hand, the empire of Athens, so long as she retained any empire, was pretty sure to be more formidable to Persia than any efforts undertaken by Sparta under the disinterested pretence of liberating generally the

Alkibiadês acts as negotiator for Tissaphernês at Magnesia.

¹ Thucyd. viii. 16–52.

Grecian cities. Nor did Tissaphernês at all lend himself to any such positive impression ; though he felt strongly the force of the negative recommendations of Alkibiadês—that he should do no more for the Peloponnesians than was sufficient to feed the war, without ensuring to them either a speedy or a decisive success : or rather, this duplicity was so congenial to his Oriental mind, that there was no need of Alkibiadês to recommend it. The real use of the Athenian exile, was to assist the satrap in carrying it into execution ; and to provide for him those plausible pretences and justifications, which he was to issue as a substitute for effective supplies of men and money. Established along with Tissaphernês at Magnesia—the same place which had been occupied about fifty years before by another Athenian exile, equally unprincipled and yet abler, Themistoklês—Alkibiadês served as interpreter of his views in all his conversations with the Greeks, and appeared to be thoroughly in his confidence : an appearance of which he took advantage to pass himself off falsely upon the Athenians at Samos as having the power of turning Persian wealth to the aid of Athens.

Diminution of the rate of pay furnished by Tissaphernês to the Peloponnesians.

The first payment made by Tissaphernês, immediately after the capture of Iasus and of the revolted Amorgês, to the Peloponnesians at Milêtus, was at the rate of one drachma per head. But notice was given that for the future it would be reduced one half—and for this reduction Alkibiadês undertook to furnish a reason. The Athenians (he urged) gave no more than half a drachma ; not because they could not afford more, but because.

from their long experience of nautical affairs, they had found that higher pay spoiled the discipline of the seamen by leading them into excesses and over-indulgence, as well as by inducing too ready leave of absence to be granted, in confidence that the high pay would induce them to return when called for¹. As he probably never expected that such subterfuges (employed at a moment when Athens was so poor that she could not even pay the half drachma per head) would carry conviction to any one—so he induced Tissaphernês to strengthen their effect by individual bribes to the generals and trierarchs: a mode of argument which was found effectual in silencing the complaints of all, with the single exception of the Syracusan Hermokratês. In regard to other Grecian cities who sent to ask pecuniary aid, and especially Chios, Alkibiadês spoke out with less reserve. They had been hitherto compelled to contribute to Athens (he said), and now that they had shaken off this payment, they must not shrink from imposing upon themselves equal or even greater burthens in their own defence. Nor was it anything less (he added) than sheer impudence in the Chians, the richest people in Greece—if they required a foreign military force for their protection, to require at the samê time that others should furnish the means of paying it².

¹ Thucyd. viii. 45. Οἱ δὲ τὰς ναῦς ἀπολείπωσιν, ὑπολιπόντες ἐς ὁμήρειαν τὸν προσοφειλόμενον μισθόν.

This passage is both doubtful in the text and difficult in the translation. Among the many different explanations given by the commentators, I adopt that of Dr. Arnold as the least unsatisfactory, though without any confidence that it is right.

² Thucyd. viii. 45. Τὰς δὲ πόλεις δεομένας χρημάτων ἀπήλασεν, αὐτὸς ἀντιλέγων ὑπὲρ τοῦ Τισσαφέρνου, ὡς οἱ μὲν Χίοι ἀναίσχυντοι εἶεν, πλουσιώτατοι ὄντες τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ἐπικουρία δὲ ὁμῶς σωζόμενοι ἀξιούσι καὶ

At the same time, however, he intimated—by way of keeping up hopes for the future—that Tissaphernês was at present carrying on the war at his own cost ; but if hereafter remittances should arrive from Susa, the full rate of pay would be resumed, with the addition of aid to the Grecian cities in any other way which could be reasonably asked. To this promise was added an assurance that the Phenician fleet was now under equipment, and would shortly be brought up to their aid, so as to give them a superiority which would render resistance hopeless : an assurance not merely deceitful but mischievous, since it was employed to dissuade them from all immediate action, and to paralyse their navy during its moments of fullest vigour and efficiency. Even the reduced rate of pay was furnished so irregularly, and the Peloponnesian force kept so starved, that the duplicity of the satrap became obvious to every one, and was only carried through by his bribery to the officers¹.

Alkibiadês opens correspondence with the Athenian officers at Samos. He originates the scheme of an oligarchical revolution at Athens.

While Alkibiadês, as the confidential agent and interpreter of Tissaphernês, was carrying on this anti-Peloponnesian policy through the autumn and winter of 412–411 B.C.—partly during the stay of the Peloponnesian fleet at Milêtus, partly after it had moved to Knidus and Rhodes—he was at the same time opening correspondence with the Athenian officers at Samos. His breach with the Pello-

τοῖς σώμασι καὶ τοῖς χρήμασιν ἄλλους ὑπὲρ τῆς ἐκείνων ἐλευθερίας κινδυνεύειν.

¹ Thucyd. viii. 46. Τὴν τε τροφὴν κακῶς ἐπόριζε τοῖς Πελοποννησίοις καὶ ναυμαχεῖν οὐκ εἶα' ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς Φοινίσσας ναῦς φάσκων ἤξειν καὶ ἐκ περιόντος ἀγωνιεῖσθαι ἔφθειρε τὰ πράγματα καὶ τὴν ἀκμὴν τοῦ ναυτικοῦ αὐτῶν ἀφείλετο, γενομένην καὶ πάνυ ἰσχυρὰν, τὰ τε ἄλλα, καταφανέστερον ἢ ὥστε λανθάνειν, οὐ προθύμως ξυνεπολέμει.

ponnesians, as well as his ostensible position in the service of Tissaphernês, were facts well-known among the Athenian armament; and his scheme was, to procure both restoration and renewed power in his native city, by representing himself as competent to bring over to her the aid and alliance of Persia, through his ascendancy over the mind of the satrap. His hostility to the democracy, however, was so generally known, that he despaired of accomplishing his return unless he could connect it with an oligarchical revolution; which, moreover, was not less gratifying to his sentiment of vengeance for the past, than to his ambition for the future. Accordingly he sent over a private message to the officers and trierarchs at Samos, several of them doubtless his personal friends, desiring to be remembered to the “best men” in the armament¹—such was one of the standing phrases by which oligarchical men knew and described each other; and intimating his anxious wish to come again as a citizen among them, bringing with him Tissaphernês as their ally. But he would do this only on condition of the formation of an oligarchical government; nor would he ever again set foot amidst the odious democracy to whom he owed his banishment².

Such was the first originating germ of that temporary calamity, which so near brought Athens to absolute ruin, called the Oligarchy of Four Hundred: a suggestion from the same exile who had already so deeply wounded his country by sending

Conspiracy arranged between the Athenian officer and Alkibiadês.

¹ Thucyd. viii. 47. *Τὰ μὲν καὶ Ἀλκιβιάδου προσπέμφαντος λόγους ἐς τοὺς δυνατωτάτους αὐτῶν (Ἀθηναίων) ἄνδρας, ὥστε μνησθῆναι περὶ αὐτοῦ ἐς τοὺς βελτίστους τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅτι ἐπ’ ὀλιγαρχία βούλεται, καὶ οὐ πονηρία οὐδὲ δημοκρατία τῇ ἐαυτὸν ἐκβαλοῦση, κατελθὼν, &c.*

² Thucyd. viii. 47.

Gylippus to Syracuse, and the Lacedæmonian garrison to Dekeleia. As yet, no man in Samos had thought of a revolution; but the moment that the idea was thus started, the trierarchs and wealthy men in the armament caught at it with avidity. To subvert the democracy for their own profit, and to be rewarded for doing so with the treasures of Persia as a means of carrying on the war against the Peloponnesians—was an extent of good fortune greater than they could possibly have hoped. Amidst the exhaustion of the public treasure at Athens, and the loss of tribute from her dependencies, it was now the private proprietors, and most of all, the wealthy proprietors—upon whom the cost of military operations fell: from which burthen they here saw the prospect of relief, coupled with increased chance of victory. Elate with so tempting a promise, a deputation of them crossed over from Samos to the mainland to converse personally with Alkibiadês, who again renewed his assurances in person, that he would bring not only Tissaphernês, but the Great King himself, into active alliance and co-operation with Athens—provided they would put down the Athenian democracy, which he affirmed that the king could not possibly trust¹. He doubtless did not omit to set forth the other side of the alternative; that if the proposition were refused, Persian aid would be thrown heartily into the scale of the Peloponnesians—in which case, there was no longer any hope of safety for Athens.

On the return of the deputation with these fresh assurances, the oligarchical men in Samos came

¹ Thucyd. viii. 48.