

# HISTORY OF GREECE.

---

## CHAPTER XXVII.

FROM THE CLOSE OF THE SICILIAN EXPEDITION TO  
THE BEGINNING OF THE RUPTURE BETWEEN THE  
SPARTANS AND ALCIBIADES.

THE news of the disaster which had befallen the Athenian arms in Sicily, was no doubt soon conveyed by many channels to Greece; but, if we may believe an anecdote preserved by Plutarch<sup>1</sup>, it did not reach Athens until it was generally known elsewhere. He relates, that a foreigner who had landed at Piræus, as he took his seat in a barber's shop, happened to mention the event of the Sicilian expedition as a subject of conversation which he supposed to be commonly notorious; and the barber, having hastened to the city to convey the intelligence to the archons, was immediately brought before an assembly of the people, which they summoned to hear his report but as he was unable to give any account of his informer, he was put to the rack, as the author of a false alarm, until the truth was confirmed by other witnesses. According to another story<sup>2</sup>, in itself not more improbable, the multitude was assembled in the theatre, listening with unusual delight to a burlesque poem of the Thasian Hegemon, the

<sup>1</sup> Nic. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Chamæleon in Athenæus, ix. p. 407

client of Alcibiades<sup>1</sup>, which by a singular coincidence turned on the overthrow of the Giants, when the sad tidings arrived, and soon spread through the spectators: yet, though almost each had some private loss to bewail, beside the public calamity, they both kept their seats, and hid their tears, that their grief might not be observed by the foreigners present, and would not even suffer the poet to leave off. But Thucydides informs us, that it was only after repeated accounts had been brought by eye-witnesses who had escaped from the scene of action, that the people could be induced to believe the whole extent of the catastrophe, the most signal and complete that had ever befallen any Grecian armament.

The first emotions of grief were accompanied by bitter reflections on the past, under which the people sought relief by throwing the blame on the orators who had counselled the ill-starred expedition—as if it had not been impelled by its own ambition and cupidity—and on the soothsayers who had promised a happy issue—as if their predictions might not have been fulfilled, if it had not blindly deprived itself of the services of the man who was best fitted for conducting the enterprise, or had placed less confidence in a general who was unequal to his station. But recrimination and regret were speedily stifled by the magnitude of the impending danger. The victorious enemy might soon be expected from Sicily before Piræus, while the Peloponnesians prosecuted the war with renewed ardour and redoubled forces both by sea and land, aided by the revolted subjects of the commonwealth. And there were neither troops on the muster-rolls, nor ships and stores in the arsenals, to replace what had been lost. The treasury was drained, and most of the sources from which it had hitherto been supplied were now likely to fail. On every side the prospect was gloomy, no less than the retrospect was painful; yet, though scarcely a ray of hope was visible, the strong heart of the people, which had sustained it in so many desperate conflicts,

<sup>1</sup> Vol. III. p. 332.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01266-9 - A History of Greece, Volume 4

Connop Thirlwall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## CHAP. XXVII. ATHENIAN PREPARATIONS.

3

did not sink even now ; and with a spirit worthy of the best days of the Persian wars they calmly applied themselves to examine their wants and their resources, and to prepare, as well as they could, for the new emergency. It was necessary to procure timber for the building of a new navy, to raise funds for fitting it out. The utmost vigilance was requisite to keep down the disposition to revolt among their allies, more particularly in Eubœa, on which their very subsistence might sometimes depend. The indispensable service of the state demanded the retrenchment of all superfluous expenses. It was a juncture which called for great exertions and many sacrifices : and the people was ready for them all. As prosperity had elated it with arrogance and presumption, and had rendered it passionate and headstrong, its misfortunes made it for a time sober, diffident, and tractable. The ordinary council was not thought sufficient to meet the dangers and difficulties of this crisis ; and a new board of elderly citizens was created<sup>1</sup> for the special purpose of providing for the present exigencies. Thucydides does not enter into any details on the constitution of this body, which, though limited to certain objects, and not designed to be permanent, bears the aspect of an oligarchical institution ; but subsequent events render it probable that the measure may have been proposed with views different from those which its authors professed. It seems however to have applied itself actively to the discharge of its proper functions. In the course of the ensuing winter, while a new fleet was on the stocks, the headland of Sunium was fortified for the protection of their corn-ships, and among other economical measures, the fortress erected on the coast of Laconia by Charicles and Demosthenes on the last voyage to Sicily, was evacuated. At the

<sup>1</sup> Under the title of *πρόβουλοι*. There were probably ten. Aristotle, Pol. vi. 5., speaks of *πρόβουλοι* as an oligarchical institution contrasted to the democratical *βουλή*. He is therefore not alluding to a case where, as at Athens, the two existed together. Yet it seems probable, that this innovation was designed by its authors as a step to further changes of an oligarchical tendency.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-01266-9 - A History of Greece, Volume 4

Connop Thirlwall

Excerpt

[More information](#)

same time the proceedings of the subject states were observed with jealous attention.

It was in fact the opinion which prevailed throughout Greece of the hopelessness of the condition to which Athens was reduced, that rendered it most alarming. It was generally believed that she could not hold out another summer. The states which had hitherto remained neutral, and had viewed the attempt upon Sicily with apprehension for their own independence, now hastened to revenge themselves for their fears, and to share the triumph of her enemies which they supposed to be at hand. The allies of Sparta were eager to exert themselves for the purpose of putting a speedy end to the tedious and wasting struggle. Those of Athens, or at least the party in each state which was adverse to her interests, were still more impatient to shake off her dominion, and, measuring their prospects by their desires, were still more sanguine as to the certainty and nearness of the event. The Spartans themselves with all their coolness and caution, could not help sharing this confidence, which seemed to be especially justified by the naval reinforcement which they had to expect from Sicily, and they prepared to make an unusually strenuous effort, to urge their rival's downfall, and to secure their own ascendancy. They sent a requisition to their allies for the fitting out of a fleet of a hundred galleys. Of this number one half was to be furnished by themselves and the Bœotians, twenty-five by each: fifteen were assigned to Corinth, as many to the Phocians and Locrians: ten to the Arcadians, and the Achæans of Pellene and Sicyon; Megara, Trœzen, Epidaurus, and Hermione, were to contribute the rest. While these preparations were going forward, Agis made an expedition northward from Decelea, to levy pecuniary contributions on the allies of Sparta, and suddenly entering the territories of the hostile Cœtæans, collected a large booty, which they were fain to redeem with a sum of money. He next ventured on a still bolder step, which might have served to warn those who trusted Spartan pro-

fessions of moderation and justice. In spite of the expostulations of the Thessalians<sup>1</sup>, he exacted money, and hostages, whom he deposited at Corinth, from the Achæans of Phthia, and the rest of the dependent tribes in the south of Thessaly, and endeavoured to bring them over to the Peloponnesian confederacy.

In this affair however he seems to have acted on his own discretion, though his conduct was apparently sanctioned by his government. So long as he commanded at Decelea, he was in a great measure free from superintendence and restraint, employed the force entrusted to him according to his own judgment, and exercised an almost independent authority over the allies. And hence when the general tendency to revolt began to manifest itself among the subjects of Athens, the first application for assistance was made to him. Eubœa took the lead, and in the course of the winter sent an embassy to Agis, who promised support; and on his demand two Spartan officers, Alcamenes and Melanthus, were despatched from Sparta to take the command in the island, with about 300 neodamode troops. But while they were at Decelea, concerting the plan of their operations with Agis, envoys came to him on a like commission from Lesbos. Their solicitations were warmly seconded by the Bœotians<sup>2</sup>, who prevailed on Agis for the present to drop the expedition to Eubœa, and to send Alcamenes to Lesbos with a squadron of twenty galleys, half of which they engaged to furnish themselves. But in the mean while other embassies came from the east with similar proposals to Sparta, holding out still more inviting prospects. A strong party at Chios and at Erythræ was eager to renounce the Athenian alliance; and the envoys whom they sent to Sparta for aid, were accompanied by a still more important ambassador from the Persian satrap Tissaphernes, who had been recently appointed by Darius to the government of the maritime provinces in the south-

<sup>1</sup> Compare the professions of Brasidas, Thucyd. iv. 78. (Vol. III. p. 272.)

<sup>2</sup> Compare Vol. III. p. 170., and Vol. II. p. 82.

west of Asia Minor, including Caria and Ionia. The court of Persia saw a favourable opportunity now offered for recovering its ancient dominion over the Greek cities on this coast; and, to ensure the zealous exertions of Tissaphernes for this purpose, Darius had called upon him for the tribute due from his government, without any abatement for that portion of it which he had hitherto been unable to raise from the towns which were under the protection of Athens. Tissaphernes had likewise been ordered by his master to secure the person of Amorges, a natural son of Pissuthnes, formerly satrap of Ionia. Pissuthnes had rebelled against Darius, and had for some time maintained himself against Tissaphernes and two other generals, who were sent against him, chiefly with the aid of some Greek auxiliaries commanded by an Athenian named Lycon. The Persian generals were obliged to buy off the Greek mercenaries and their leader, and then induced Pissuthnes to surrender himself by solemn assurances of personal safety. But when he was led to court, Darius condemned him to a death of lingering torture.<sup>1</sup> Tissaphernes was rewarded with the vacant satrapy. It was no doubt this treacherous cruelty that kept Amorges, son of Pissuthnes, in rebellion after his father's death; and he had fortified himself in the town of Iasus, on the coast of Caria, where he might receive succours from Athens. Tissaphernes therefore had many motives for wishing to deprive the Athenians of all footing in Asia; and his envoy was instructed to second the application of the Chians, and to offer Persian pay for any forces which the Peloponnesians might send to

<sup>1</sup> The *σποδός*, (Ctesias, 52.) one of the torments in which Persian ingenuity was so peculiarly fertile. It is said to have been the invention of Darius himself, contrived to ease the royal conscience, and at the same time to gratify the keenest appetite for revenge. The victim was first entertained with a plentiful meal, and was allowed to fall asleep. If he then sank through a trapdoor into a pit filled with cinders, where he rotted and starved, this was probably held by the Magian casuists to be no fault of the king's (Valerius Max. ix. 2. E. 7.), and so the promise given by the royal generals to Pissuthnes was not broken. The reader may contrast this instance of good faith with the dishonourable conduct of the Syracusans mentioned in the notes, Vol. III. p. 456.

## CHAP. XXVII. NEGOTIATIONS AT SPARTA.

7

Ionia for that purpose. This he hoped would be the first step toward an alliance which he aimed at concluding between his master and Sparta.

But at the same time two Greeks, Calligitus a Megarian, and Timagoras of Cyzicus, both exiles from their native cities, arrived with proposals from Pharnabazus, the hereditary satrap of the provinces near the Hellespont, at whose court they had sought shelter. Pharnabazus was hostile to Athens on like grounds with Tissaphernes, in respect to the tribute of the Greek towns on his part of the Asiatic coast; and he was no less anxious for the honour of gaining the alliance of Sparta for the king. His agents therefore urged the Spartan government to send a fleet to the Hellespont, and they brought five and twenty talents to defray a part of the cost. Sparta became the scene of an active competition between the ministers of the rival satraps. But the cause of Tissaphernes and the Chians was supported by an abler and more powerful advocate. Alcibiades, who was still residing at Sparta, had private motives for desiring that the Peloponnesian arms should be turned towards Ionia, and one of the ephors, Endius son of Alcibiades, was the hereditary ally of his house. Through this interest the Ionian ministers prevailed. Yet the Spartan government would not take any active step, until they had sent an agent to Chios, to ascertain whether the state of its navy, and its strength in other respects, corresponded with the representations of its envoys. But on receiving a favourable report, they admitted the Chians and Erythræans into their alliance, and engaged to support them with a squadron of forty galleys, to which the Chians undertook to add sixty of their own. Sparta herself was to furnish ten out of the forty, and they were to be placed under the command of the admiral Melancredas. But before they were fitted out, the Spartan superstition was alarmed by an earthquake, which induced the government not only to substitute another officer, named Chalcideus, in the room of Melancredas, but to reduce the numbers of the

first squadron to five ; perhaps— unless it merely served as a pretext for saving expense—that the malignity of the omen, if it was not to be averted, might be spent on a comparatively unimportant object.

All these embassies were kept carefully concealed from the Athenians ; and the Chian ministers, anxious to avoid a discovery, pressed the departure of the ships early in the spring of 412. Accordingly three Spartans were sent to Corinth, with orders that all the ships lying there, including those which Agis had prepared for the expedition to Lesbos, should be transported with all speed across the isthmus into the Saronic gulf, and sail to Chios : they amounted in all to thirty-nine. A congress was held at Corinth, in which the plan of operations in the *Ægean* was more distinctly traced out. It was resolved that Chios should be the first object, and that Chalcideus should command there ; and that as soon as Chios should be sufficiently secured, the expedition should proceed, conducted by Alcámenes, to Lesbos ; and finally that a squadron should sail under the command of Clearchus to the Hellespont. But to divide the attention of the Athenians it was ordered that twenty-one out of the thirty-nine galleys should put to sea first. The weakness of Athens was supposed to be such that no resistance would be offered to the sailing of this division, and that the one left behind would be sufficient to keep her in fear and suspense. The first squadron was immediately drawn over the isthmus, and the Spartans and most of their allies were anxious that it should sail without delay. But the Corinthians refused to embark on this expedition before they should have celebrated the Isthmian festival, which was to take place in May, and would not even consent to a proposal of Agis, who thought to remove this impediment by taking the responsibility of the voyage upon himself. During the delay caused by this scruple, the Athenians heard some rumours which roused their suspicions of the Chians, and they sent Aristocrates, one of their Generals, to Chios, to demand explanation and securities. The mass of the people there had no intention or



## CHAP. XXVII. OPERATIONS IN THE SARONIC GULF. 9

wish to revolt, and was entirely ignorant of the negotiations which the oligarchical party was carrying on with Sparta; and the enemies of Athens, though apparently the government was in their hands, did not venture to avow their designs, especially as they began to despair of the succours they had been so long expecting from Peloponnesus. They therefore sent seven galleys with Aristocrates to Athens as a pledge of their loyalty.

But at the Isthmian festival the Athenians, who by virtue of the sacred truce were permitted to attend it, gained information which confirmed their suspicions; and they immediately prepared to stop the passage of the Peloponnesian squadron, which was ready to sail from the port of Cenchreæ under the command of Alcamenes. They manned an equal number of galleys, including the seven Chians, and, when the enemy appeared, retired before him into the open sea, as to invite an engagement. But the Peloponnesians, who had not expected this challenge, did not accept it, and turned back. The Athenians however, who after the discoveries they had just made could not trust their Chian allies, were well pleased for the present to avoid a battle, and took advantage of the enemy's retreat to strengthen their squadron with sixteen additional galleys.<sup>1</sup> With this force they suddenly presented themselves when the Peloponnesians next ventured out, keeping close to the south coast of the gulf, and chased them as far as a desert harbour, named Piræus, on the confines of the Corinthian and Epidaurian territories. One galley was overtaken; and when the remaining twenty were moored in the harbour, they had to sustain a warm attack, both by sea and land, in which most of them suffered great damage, and Alcamenes with some of his people was killed. The Athenians at length withdrew for the night, leaving a part of their squadron to guard the harbour, to a small

<sup>1</sup> It seems sater to adopt this interpretation of the words of Thucydides, viii. 10. *ἄλλας προσπληρώσαντες ἑπτὰ καὶ τριάκοντα*, than with Krueger (Comment. ad Dionys. Histor. p. 312.) to strike out the words *καὶ τριάκοντα*, though, as he observes, they may have crept into the text from c. 15., and if omitted they would leave the context perfectly intelligible and probable.

island not far from it, and sent to Athens for reinforcements. The next day troops marched from Corinth and other adjacent points to protect the squadron at Piræus ; but the duty of keeping guard over it on that desert coast seemed likely to prove so inconvenient, that the first inclination of the commanders was to get rid of it by burning the ships. On second thoughts however they resolved to haul them up on shore, and to leave a force sufficient to protect them, until some opportunity of escape should present itself.

But the Spartans were completely disheartened when they received the tidings of this disaster. They had been apprised by a courier from Alcámenes of the sailing of the squadron from Cenchreæ, and were on the point of sending their five galleys to join it under the command of Chalcideus, who was to be accompanied by Alcibiades. But the occurrences at Piræus which were next reported to them, seemed so inauspicious an omen at the outset of an expedition, that they began to think of abandoning their designs upon Ionia ; and it required all the influence of Alcibiades with his friend Endius and the other ephors, to counteract this premature despondency. He represented to them, that their five galleys, if they sailed immediately, would reach Chios before the disaster of the other squadron was known there ; and that nothing was necessary but the assurances which he would give, and which would be received with more confidence from him than from any one else, of the weakness of Athens, and of the zeal with which Sparta espoused their cause, to kindle a general revolt among the Ionian cities. With Endius, in private, he enlarged upon the honour which would result to his administration, if, with a force sent exclusively from home, he should accomplish the two great objects, of detaching Ionia from Athens, and of uniting Persia in alliance with Sparta : an honour which might otherwise be earned by Agis. Agis, as king, was viewed with some degree of jealousy by every ephor, and perhaps was more particularly on ill terms with Endius. Alcibiades himself was his personal enemy ;