THUCYDIDES
History of the
PELOPONNESIAN WAR
Done into English by
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INTRODUCTION

I BEGAN this translation when I was still almost a schoolboy, very much in love with my author, and sufficiently simple to think that all the world must be eager to read 'Thucydides.' The publication of the first book very quickly convinced me of my error; nobody took the least notice of my labours, and I had not even the satisfaction of hearing them abused. Although not a little discouraged by this indifference, I nevertheless translated the second book some time afterwards, being now actuated, not by any idea of fame or usefulness, but merely by an instinctive wish to finish what I had once begun. In the course of the year 1873 I completed the remaining six books, and now offer the whole work to the public in the hope that it may meet with the attention which a fragment failed to obtain. It is not for me to say how it is executed; but I think I have bestowed more care on my work than is often given by labourers in so unprofitable a field, and if I have failed in doing justice to my original, it is from the innate difficulty of the task, or my own want of the proper ability, and not from any lack of diligence. I have throughout attempted to convey the meaning of my author, not only as faithfully but as clearly as possible, and to avoid the intrusion of the Greek idioms which so often disfigure translations, rendering them only fit for pedants or schoolboys. If I have not completely succeeded in this last endeavour, I hope the reader will consider the nature of the under-

taking, and hold me absolved for my good intention. I have also adopted a new arrangement of chapters, to provide the breaks to which use has accustomed us, and without which the most determined attention flags; though for convenience of reference I have retained at the top of each page the numbers of the original divisions.

Since the time when 'Thucydides' was first read in England, the number of good histories has so much increased, and the domain of history itself has been so much enlarged, that it would be vain to claim for his work the importance which it once possessed. The days are past in which the translation of a Greek author could attain to the proportions of a national event. The modern world has now teachers of its own; and classical literature, which might formerly have been called the Bible of all men, is rapidly becoming the book of a learned class. If Mr. Cobden really said that a file of the *Times* newspaper is worth all the works of Thucydides, he after all only expressed openly an opinion which a great number of educated men unconsciously assent to. There is, however, perhaps more resemblance between the newspaper and the historian than has been generally perceived. They both treat of contemporary events and of states of society, politically, very like each other. A lamented historian was able to fight the battle of English party politics under the names of 'Nicias' and 'Cleon,' and there are probably few books that have so much contributed to the spread of liberal opinions in modern England as Mr. Grote's reflections upon the affairs of ancient Greece. Indeed, as Arnold remarked, the portion of history dealt with by Thucydides is only ancient in the sense that the events related happened a long while ago; in all other respects it is more modern than the history of our own countrymen in the Middle Ages. If the reader of the news-

paper will condescend to cast an eye on my translation, he will find there the prototypes of many of the figures to which he is accustomed in his favourite journal. He will discover the political freedom which he glories in, and the social liberty which he sometimes sighs for, in full operation at Athens; factions as fierce as those of the Versaillais and Communists at Corcyra; and in the 'best men' of the Four Hundred oligarchs as self-seeking and unpatriotic as the *gens du bien* of the *Figaro*. He will see the doctrine of arbitration, welcomed as a newly-discovered panacea by our amiable enthusiasts, more firmly established in theory than it is yet likely to be in modern Europe, and as impotent to avert the evils of war from the communities who provided for it in every treaty, and invoked it whenever it seemed their interest to do so. In short, besides the practical lessons to be drawn for his own conduct, he will enjoy the philosophic pleasure of observing how the nature of man, in spite of all changes of time and circumstance, remains essentially the same, and how short is the distance from the civilised inhabitant of Athens or Corinth to the dweller in London or Vienna. The reader will also see that nature painted in its true colours, free from the varnish with which it is often decorated. The actors in our author's pages avow their motives with a plainness sometimes shocking to modern feeling; whether it be that we have an improved standard of right, to which even the most determined offenders must do homage, or that hypocrisy is more congenial to our artificial civilisation, and less difficult than it must have been in the intense political life of the small Greek communities. Finally, there are certain qualities in which the historian of the Peloponnesian war has never been surpassed. Apart from his profound knowledge of human nature, and the passion and dramatic interest which he infuses into the events which he relates, if brevity, impartiality, and a sparing use of the imagina-

tion are still regarded as merits in an historian, more than one eminent writer might well take a lesson from Thucydides. I may point, as an example, to his celebrated account of the Plague of Athens. In five short pages he has set forth the symptoms of the disorder with a precision which a physician might envy, and the suffering and moral anarchy which it produced with a vividness which may teach the lover of picturesque description how much force there lies in truth and simplicity. The troubles at Corcyra are related at not much greater length, with a few masterly touches that appeal to the imagination more powerfully than the most detailed history, and a fulness of philosophic reflection that has left little to be said by his successors on the evils of a time of revolution. Among the number of English men and women who, without being Greek scholars, take an interest in Grecian history, there may perhaps be some enough in earnest not to be deterred from testing the truth of these assertions by the unavoidable dulness of a translation.

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THE HISTORY OF
THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

The State of Greece from the earliest Times to the Commencement of the Peloponnesian War

Early history a blank.

THUCYDIDES, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war, and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it. This belief was not without its grounds. The preparations of both the combatants were in every department in the last state of perfection; and he could see the rest of the Hellenic race taking sides in the quarrel; those who delayed doing so at once having it in contemplation. Indeed this was the greatest movement yet known in history, not only of the Hellenes, but of a large part of the barbarian world—I had almost said of mankind. For though the events of remote antiquity, and even those that more immediately precede the war, could not from lapse of time be clearly ascertained, yet the evidences which an inquiry carried as far back as was practicable leads me to trust, all point to the conclusion

BOOK I. that there was nothing on a great scale, either in war or in other matters.

The future Hellenes are as yet nomad tribes,

For instance, it is evident that the country now called Hellas had in ancient times no settled population; on the contrary, migrations were of frequent occurrence, the several tribes readily abandoning their homes under the pressure of superior numbers. Without commerce, without freedom of communication either by land or sea, cultivating no more of their territory than the exigencies of life required, destitute of capital, never planting their land (for they could not tell when an invader might not come and take it all away, and when he did come they had no walls to stop him), thinking that the necessities of daily sustenance could be supplied at one place as well as another, they cared little for shifting their habitation, and consequently neither built large cities nor attained to any other form of greatness. The richest soils were always most subject to this change of masters; such as the district now called Thessaly, Bœotia, most of the Peloponnese, Arcadia excepted, and the most fertile parts of the rest of Hellas. The goodness of the land favoured the aggrandisement of particular individuals, and thus created faction which proved a fertile source of ruin. It also invited invasion. Accordingly Attica, from the poverty of its soil enjoying from a very remote period freedom from faction, never changed its inhabitants. And here is no inconsiderable exemplification of my assertion, that the migrations were the cause of there being no correspondent growth in other parts. The most powerful victims of war or faction from the rest of Hellas took refuge with the Athenians as a safe retreat; and at an early period, becoming naturalised, swelled the already large population of the city to such a height that Attica became at last too small to hold them, and they had to send out colonies to Ionia.

There is also another circumstance that contributes

Without common national ends, or even a common name.

not a little to my conviction of the weakness of ancient times. Before the Trojan war there is no indication of any common action in Hellas, nor indeed of the universal prevalence of the name; on the contrary, before the time of Hellen, son of Deucalion, no such appellation existed, but the country went by the names of the different tribes, in particular of the Pelasgian. It was not till Hellen and his sons grew strong in Phthiotis, and were invited as allies into the other cities, that one by one they gradually acquired from the connection the name of Hellenes; though a long time elapsed before that name could fasten itself upon all. The best proof of this is furnished by Homer. Born long after the Trojan war, he nowhere calls all of them by that name, nor indeed any of them except the followers of Achilles from Phthiotis, who were the original Hellenes: in his poems they are called Danaans, Argives, and Achæans. He does not even use the term barbarian, probably because the Hellenes had not yet been marked off from the rest of the world by one distinctive appellation. It appears therefore that the several Hellenic communities, comprising not only those who first acquired the name, city by city, as they came to understand each other, but also those who assumed it afterwards as the name of the whole people, were before the Trojan war prevented by their want of strength and the absence of mutual intercourse from displaying any collective action.

Indeed, they could not unite for this expedition till they had gained increased familiarity with the sea. And the first person known to us by tradition as having established a navy is Minos. He made himself master of what is now called the Hellenic sea, and ruled over the Cyclades, into most of which he sent the first colonies, expelling the Carians and appointing his own sons governors; and thus did his best to put down piracy in those waters, a necessary step to secure the revenues for his own use.

BOOK I.

Piracy in early times: its disappearance.

For in early times the Hellenes and the barbarians of the coast and islands, as communication by sea became more common, were tempted to turn pirates, under the conduct of their most powerful men; the motives being to serve their own cupidity and to support the needy. They would fall upon a town unprotected by walls, and consisting of a mere collection of villages, and would plunder it; indeed, this came to be the main source of their livelihood, no disgrace being yet attached to such an achievement, but even some glory. An illustration of this is furnished by the honour with which some of the inhabitants of the continent still regard a successful marauder, and by the question we find the old poets everywhere representing the people as asking of voyagers—'Are they pirates?'—as if those who are asked the question would have no idea of disclaiming the imputation, or their interrogators of reproaching them for it. The same rapine prevailed also by land.

And even at the present day many parts of Hellas still follow the old fashion, the Ozolian Locrians for instance, the Ætolians, the Acarnanians, and that region of the continent; and the custom of carrying arms is still kept up among these continentals, from the old piratical habits. The whole of Hellas used once to carry arms, their habitations being unprotected, and their communication with each other unsafe; indeed, to wear arms was as much a part of everyday life with them as with the barbarians. And the fact that the people in these parts of Hellas are still living in the old way points to a time when the same mode of life was once equally common to all. The Athenians were the first to lay aside their weapons, and to adopt an easier and more luxurious mode of life; indeed, it is only lately that their rich old men left off the luxury of wearing undergarments of linen, and fastening a knot of their hair with a tie of golden grasshoppers, a fashion which spread to their Ionian kindred,

and long prevailed among the old men there. On the contrary a modest style of dressing, more in conformity with modern ideas, was first adopted by the Lacedæmonians, the rich doing their best to assimilate their way of life to that of the common people. They also set the example of contending naked, publicly stripping and anointing themselves with oil in their gymnastic exercises. Formerly, even in the Olympic contests, the athletes who contended wore belts across their middles; and it is but a few years since that the practice ceased. To this day among some of the barbarians, especially in Asia, when prizes for boxing and wrestling are offered, belts are worn by the combatants. And there are many other points in which a likeness might be shown between the life of the Hellenic world of old and the barbarian of to-day.

The towns cease to be fortresses and become emporia.

With respect to their towns, later on, at an era of increased facilities of navigation and a greater supply of capital, we find the shores becoming the site of walled towns, and the isthmuses being occupied for the purposes of commerce, and defence against a neighbour. But the old towns, on account of the great prevalence of piracy, were built away from the sea, whether on the islands or the continent, and still remain in their old sites. For the pirates used to plunder one another, and indeed all coast populations, whether seafaring or not.

The islanders, too, were great pirates. These islanders were Carians and Phœnicians, by whom most of the islands were colonised, as was proved by the following fact. During the purification of Delos by Athens in this war all the graves in the island were taken up, and it was found that above half their inmates were Carians: they were identified by the fashion of the arms buried with them, and by the method of interment, which was the same as the Carians still follow. But as soon as Minos had formed his navy, communication by sea be-

BOOK I.

came easier, as he colonised most of the islands, and thus expelled the malefactors. The coast populations now began to apply themselves more closely to the acquisition of wealth, and their life became more settled; some even began to build themselves walls on the strength of their newly-acquired riches. For the love of gain would reconcile the weaker to the dominion of the stronger, and the possession of capital enabled the more powerful to reduce the smaller towns to subjection. And it was at a somewhat later stage of this development that they went on the expedition against Troy.

A great national effort, such as the war against Troy, is possible.

What enabled Agamemnon to raise the armament was more, in my opinion, his superiority in strength, than the oaths of Tyndareus, which bound the Suitors to follow him. Indeed, the account given by those Peloponnesians who have been the recipients of the most credible tradition is this. First of all Pelops, arriving among a needy population from Asia with vast wealth, acquired such power that, stranger though he was, the country was called after him; and this power fortune saw fit materially to increase in the hands of his descendants. Eurystheus had been killed in Attica by the Heraclids. Atreus was his mother's brother; and to the hands of his relation, who had left his father on account of the death of Chrysippus, Eurystheus, when he set out on his expedition, had committed Mycenæ and the government. As time went on and Eurystheus did not return, Atreus complied with the wishes of the Mycenæans, who were influenced by fear of the Heraclids,—besides, his power seemed considerable, and he had not neglected to court the favour of the populace,—and assumed the sceptre of Mycenæ and the rest of the dominions of Eurystheus. And so the power of the descendants of Pelops came to be greater than that of the descendants of Perseus. To all this Agamemnon succeeded. He had also a navy far stronger than his contemporaries, so that, in

my opinion, fear was quite as strong an element as love in the formation of the confederate expedition. The strength of his navy is shown by the fact that his own was the largest contingent, and that of the Arcadians was furnished by him; this at least is what Homer says, if his testimony is deemed sufficient. Besides, in his account of the transmission of the sceptre, he calls him

Power of Agamemnon enabled him to raise a larger force than any before known.

'Of many an isle, and of all Argos king.'

Now Agamemnon's was a continental power; and he could not have been master of any except the adjacent islands (and these would not be many), but through the possession of a fleet.

And from this expedition we may infer the character of earlier enterprises. Now Mycenæ may have been a small place, and many of the towns of that age may appear comparatively insignificant, but no exact observer would therefore feel justified in rejecting the estimate given by the poets and by tradition of the magnitude of the armament. For I suppose if Lacedæmon were to become desolate, and the temples and the foundations of the public buildings were left, that as time went on there would be a strong disposition with posterity to refuse to accept her fame as a true exponent of her power. And yet they occupy two-fifths of Peloponnese and lead the whole, not to speak of their numerous allies without. Still, as the city is neither built in a compact form nor adorned with magnificent temples and public edifices, but composed of villages after the old fashion of Hellas, there would be an impression of inadequacy. Whereas, if Athens were to suffer the same misfortune, I suppose that any inference from the appearance presented to the eye would make her power to have been twice as great as it is. We have therefore no right to be sceptical, nor to content ourselves with an inspection of a town to the exclusion of a consideration of its power; but we may

BOOK I.

The expedition on a small scale as compared with modern armaments.

safely conclude that the armament in question surpassed all before it, as it fell short of modern efforts; if we can here also accept the testimony of Homer's poems, in which, without allowing for the exaggeration which a poet would feel himself licensed to employ, we can see that it was far from equalling ours. He has represented it as consisting of twelve hundred vessels; the Bœotian complement of each ship being a hundred and twenty men, that of the ships of Philoctetes fifty. By this, I conceive, he meant to convey the maximum and the minimum complement: at any rate he does not specify the amount of any others in his catalogue of the ships. That they were all rowers as well as warriors we see from his account of the ships of Philoctetes, in which all the men at the oar are bowmen. Now it is improbable that many supernumeraries sailed if we except the kings and high officers; especially as they had to cross the open sea with munitions of war, in ships, moreover, that had no decks, but were equipped in the old piratical fashion. So that if we strike the average of the largest and smallest ships, the number of those who sailed will appear inconsiderable, representing, as they did, the whole force of Hellas. And this was due not so much to scarcity of men as of money. Difficulty of subsistence made the invaders reduce the numbers of the army to a point at which it might live on the country during the prosecution of the war. Even after the victory they obtained on their arrival—and a victory there must have been, or the fortifications of the naval camp could never have been built—there is no indication of their whole force having been employed; on the contrary, they seem to have turned to cultivation of the Chersonese and to piracy from want of supplies. This was what really enabled the Trojans to keep the field for ten years against them; the dispersion of the enemy making them always a match for the detachment left behind. If they had

brought plenty of supplies with them, and had persevered in the war without scattering for piracy and agriculture, they would have easily defeated the Trojans in the field; since they could hold their own against them with the division on service. In short, if they had stuck to the siege, the capture of Troy would have cost them less time and less trouble. But as want of money proved the weakness of earlier expeditions, so from the same cause even the one in question, more famous than its predecessors, may be pronounced on the evidence of what it effected to have been inferior to its renown and to the current opinion about it formed under the tuition of the poets.

Unsettled state of Hellas even after the Trojan War.

Even after the Trojan war Hellas was still engaged in removing and settling, and thus could not attain to the quiet which must precede growth. The late return of the Hellenes from Ilium caused many revolutions, and factions ensued almost everywhere; and it was the citizens thus driven into exile who founded the cities. Sixty years after the capture of Ilium the modern Bœotians were driven out of Arne by the Thessalians, and settled in the present Bœotia, the former Cadmeis; though there was a division of them there before, some of whom joined the expedition to Ilium. Twenty years later the Dorians and the Heraclids became masters of Peloponnese; so that much had to be done and many years had to elapse before Hellas could attain to a durable tranquillity undisturbed by removals, and could begin to send out colonies, as Athens did to Ionia and most of the islands, and the Peloponnesians to most of Italy and Sicily and some places in the rest of Hellas. All these places were founded subsequently to the war with Troy.

But as the power of Hellas grew, and the acquisition of wealth became more an object, the revenues of the states increasing, tyrannies were by their means established almost everywhere,—the old form of government being