

75 AD

NICIAS ?-413 B.C.

Plutarch

translated by John Dryden

Plutarch (46-120) - Greek biographer, historian, and philosopher, sometimes known as the encyclopaedist of antiquity. He is most renowned for his series of character studies, arranged mostly in pairs, known as "Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans" or "Parallel Lives." Nicias (75 AD) - A study of the life of Nicias, an Athenian general and politician.

NICIAS

CRASSUS, in my opinion, may most properly be set against Nicias, and the Parthian disaster compared with that in Sicily. But here it will be well for me to entreat the reader, in all courtesy, not to think that I contend with Thucydides in matters so pathetically, vividly, and eloquently, beyond all imitation, and even beyond himself, expressed by him; nor to believe me guilty of the like folly with Timaeus, who, hoping in his history to surpass Thucydides in art, and to make Philistus appear a trifler and a novice, pushes on in his descriptions, through all the battles, sea-fights, and public speeches, in recording which they have been most successful, without meriting so much as to be compared, in Pindar's phrase, to "One that on his feet Would with the Lydian cars compete."

He simply shows himself all along a half-lettered, childish writer; in the words of Diphilus "—of wit obese, O'erlarded with Sicilian grease."

Often he sinks to the very level of Xenarchus, telling us that he thinks it ominous to the Athenians that their general, who had victory in his name, was unwilling to take command in the expedition; and that the defacing of the Hermae was a divine intimation that they should suffer much in the war by Hermocrates, the son of Hermon; and, moreover, how it was likely that Hercules should aid the Syracusans for the sake of Proserpine, by whose means he took Cerberus, and should be angry with the Athenians for protecting the Eggesteans, descended from Trojan ancestors, whose city he, for an injury of their king Laomedon, had overthrown. However, all these may be merely other instances of the same happy taste that makes him correct the diction of Philistus, and abuse Plato and Aristotle.

This sort of contention and rivalry with others in matter of style, to my mind, in any case, seems petty and pedantic, but when its objects are works of inimitable excellence, it is absolutely senseless. Such actions in Nicias's life as Thucydides and Philistus have related, since they cannot be passed by, illustrating as they do most especially his character and temper, under his many and great troubles, that I may not seem altogether negligent, I shall briefly run over. And such things as are not commonly known, and lie scattered here and there in other men's writings, or are found amongst the old monuments and archives, I shall endeavour to bring together; not collecting mere useless pieces of learning, but

adducing what may make his disposition and habit of mind understood.

First of all, I would mention what Aristotle has said of Nicias, that there had been three good citizens eminent above the rest for their hereditary affection and love to the people, Nicias the son of Niceratus, Thucydides the son of Melesias, and Theramenes the son of Hagnon, but the last less than the others; for he had his dubious extraction cast in his teeth, as a foreigner from Ceos, and his inconstancy, which made him side sometimes with one party, sometimes with another, in public life, and which obtained him the nickname of the Buskin.

Thucydides came earlier, and, on the behalf of the nobility, was a great opponent of the measures by which Pericles courted the favour of the people.

Nicias was a younger man, yet was in some reputation even whilst Pericles lived; so much so as to have been his colleague in the office of general, and to have held command by himself more than once. But on the death of Pericles, he presently rose to the highest place, chiefly by the favour of the rich and eminent citizens, who set him up for their bulwark against the presumption and insolence of Cleon nevertheless, he did not forfeit the good-will of the commonalty, who, likewise, contributed to his advancement. For though Cleon got great influence by his exertions “—to please The old men, who trusted him to find them fees,” yet even those, for whose interest and to gain whose favour he acted, nevertheless observing the avarice, the arrogance, and the presumption of the man, many of them supported Nicias. For his was not that sort of gravity which is harsh and offensive, but he tempered it with a certain caution and deference, winning upon the people, by seeming afraid of them. And being naturally diffident and unhopeful in war, his good-fortune supplied his want of courage, and kept it from being detected, as in all his commands he was constantly successful. And his timorousness in civil life, and his extreme dread of accusers, was thought very suitable in a citizen of a free state; and from the people’s good-will towards him, got him no small power over them, they being fearful of all that despised them, but willing to promote one who seemed to be afraid of them; the greatest compliment their betters could pay them being not to condemn them.

Pericles, who by solid virtue and the pure force of argument ruled the commonwealth, had stood in need of no disguises nor persuasions with the people. Nicias, inferior in these respects, used

his riches, of which he had abundance, to gain popularity. Neither had he the nimble wit of Cleon to win the Athenians to his purposes by amusing them with bold jests; unprovided with such qualities, he courted them with dramatic exhibitions, gymnastic games, and other public shows, more sumptuous and more splendid than had been ever known in his or in former ages. Amongst his religious offerings, there was extant, even in our days, the small figure of Minerva in the citadel, having lost the gold that covered it; and a shrine in the temple of Bacchus, under the tripods, that were presented by those who won the prize in the shows or plays. For at these he had often carried off the prize, and never once failed. We are told that on one of these occasions, a slave of his appeared in the character of Bacchus, of a beautiful person and noble stature, and with as yet no beard upon his chin; and on the Athenians being pleased with the sight, and applauding a long time, Nicias stood up, and said he could not in piety keep as a slave one whose person had been consecrated to represent a god.

And forthwith he set the young man free. His performances at Delos are, also, on record, as noble and magnificent works of devotion. For whereas the choruses which the cities sent to sing hymns to the god were wont to arrive in no order, as it might happen, and, being there met by a crowd of people crying out to them to sing, in their hurry to begin, used to disembark confusedly, putting on their garlands, and changing their dresses as they left the ships, he, when he had to convoy the sacred company, disembarked the chorus at Rhenea, together with the sacrifice, and other holy appurtenances. And having brought along with him from Athens a bridge fitted by measurement for the purpose, and magnificently adorned with gilding and colouring, and with garlands and tapestries: this he laid in the night over the channel betwixt Rhenea and Delos, being no great distance. And at break of day he marched forth with all the procession to the god, and led the chorus, sumptuously ornamented, and singing their hymns, along over the bridge.

The sacrifices, the games, and the feast being over, he set up a palm-tree of brass for a present to the god, and bought a parcel of land with ten thousand drachmas which he consecrated; with the revenue the inhabitants of Delos were to sacrifice and to feast, and to pray the gods for many good things to Nicias. This he engraved on a pillar, which he left in Delos to be a record of his bequest. This same palm-tree, afterwards broken down by the wind, fell on the great statue which the men of Naxos presented, and struck it to the ground.

It is plain that much of this might be vainglory, and the mere desire of popularity and applause; yet from other qualities and carriages of the man one might believe all this cost and public display to be the effect of devotion. For he was one of those who dreaded the divine powers extremely, and, as Thucydides tells us, was much given to arts of divination. In one of Pasiphon's dialogues, it is stated that he daily sacrificed to the gods, and keeping a diviner at his house, professed to be consulting always about the commonwealth, but for the most part inquired about his own private affairs, more especially concerning his silver mines; for he owned many works at Laurium, of great value, but somewhat hazardous to carry on. He maintained there a multitude of slaves, and his wealth consisted chiefly in silver. Hence he had many hangers-on about him, begging and obtaining. For he gave to those who could do him mischief no less than to those who deserved well.

In short, his timidity was a revenue to rogues, and his humanity to honest men.

We find testimony in the comic writers, as when Teleclides, speaking of one of the professed informers, says "Charicles gave the man a pound, the matter not to name, That from inside a money-bag into the world he came; And Nicias, also, paid him four; I know the reason well, But Nicias is a worthy man, and so I will not tell."

So, also, the informer whom Eupolis introduces in his *Maricas*, attacking a good, simple, poor man: "How long ago did you and Nicias meet? I did but see him just now in the street. The man has seen him and denies it not, 'Tis evident that they are in a plot. See you, O citizens! 'tis fact, Nicias is taken in the act. Taken, Fools! take so good a man In aught that's wrong none will or can."

Cleon, in *Aristophanes*, makes it one of his threats: "I'll outscreech all the speakers, and make Nicias stand aghast."

Phrynichus also implies his want of spirit and his easiness to be intimidated in the verses "A noble man he was, I well can say, Nor walked like Nicias, cowering on his way."

So cautious was he of informers, and so reserved, that he never would dine out with any citizen, nor allowed himself to indulge in talk and conversation with his friends, nor give himself any leisure for such amusements; but when he was general he used to stay at the office till night, and was the first that came to the council-house, and the last that left it. And if no public business engaged

him, it was very hard to have access, or to speak with him, he being retired at home and locked up. And when any came to the door, some friend of his gave them good words, and begged them to excuse him, Nicias was very busy; as if affairs of state and public duties still kept him occupied. He who principally acted this part for him, and contributed most to this state and show, was Hiero, a man educated in Nicias's family, and instructed by him in letters and music. He professed to be the son of Dionysius, surnamed Chalcus, whose poems are yet extant, and had led out the colony to Italy and founded Thurii. This Hiero transacted all his secrets for Nicias with the diviners; and gave out to the people what a toilsome and miserable life he led for the sake of the commonwealth. "He," said Hiero, "can never be either at the bath or at his meat but some public business interferes. Careless of his own and zealous for the public good, he scarcely ever goes to bed till after others have had their first sleep. So that his health is impaired and his body out of order, nor is he cheerful or affable with his friends, but loses them as well as his money in the service of the state, while other men gain friends by public speaking, enrich themselves, fare delicately and make government their amusement." And in fact this was Nicias's manner of life, so that he well might apply to himself the words of Agamemnon: "Vain pomp's the ruler of the life we live, And a slave's service to the crowd we give."

He observed that the people, in the case of men of eloquence, or of eminent parts, make use of their talents upon occasion, but were always jealous of their abilities, and held a watchful eye upon them, taking all opportunities to humble their pride and abate their reputation; as was manifest in their condemnation of Pericles, their banishment of Damon, their distrust of Antiphon the Rhamnusian, but especially in the case of Paches who took Lesbos, who having to give an account of his conduct, in the very court of justice unsheathed his sword and slew himself. Upon such considerations, Nicias declined all difficult and lengthy enterprises; if he took a command, he was for doing what was safe; and if, as thus was likely, he had for the most part success, he did not attribute it to any wisdom, conduct, or courage of his own, but, to avoid envy, he thanked fortune for all, and gave the glory to the divine powers. And the actions themselves bore testimony in his favour; the city met at that time with several considerable reverses, but he had not a hand in any of them. The Athenians were routed in Thrace by the Chalcidians, Calliades and Xenophon commanding in chief. Demosthenes was the general when they were unfortunate in

Aetolia. At Delium they lost a thousand citizens under the conduct of Hippocrates; the plague was principally laid to the charge of Pericles, he, to carry on the war, having shut up close together in the town the crowd of people from the country who, by the change of place, and of their usual course of living, bred the pestilence. Nicias stood clear of all this; under his conduct was taken Cythera, an island most commodious against Laconia, and occupied by the Lacedaemonian settlers; many places, likewise, in Thrace, which had revolted, were taken or won over by him; he shutting up the Megarians within their town, seized upon the isle of Minoa; and soon after, advancing from thence to Nisaea, made himself master there, and then making a descent upon the Corinthian territory, fought a successful battle, and slew a great number of the Corinthians with their captain Lycophron. There it happened that two of his men were left by an oversight, when they carried off the dead, which when he understood, he stopped the fleet, and sent a herald to the enemy for leave to carry off the dead; though by law and custom, he that by a truce craved leave to carry off the dead was hereby supposed to give up all claim to the victory. Nor was it lawful for him that did this to erect a trophy, for his is the victory who is master of the field, and he is not master who asks leave, as wanting power to take. But he chose rather to renounce his victory and his glory than to let two citizens lie unburied. He scoured the coast of Laconia all along, and beat the Lacedaemonians that made head against him. He took Thyrea, occupied by the Aeginetans, and carried the prisoners to Athens.

When Demosthenes had fortified Pylos, and the Peloponnesians brought together both their sea and land-forces before it, after the fight, about the number of four hundred native Spartans were left ashore in the isle Sphacteria. The Athenians thought it a great prize, as indeed it was, to take these men prisoners. But the siege, in places that wanted water, being very difficult and untoward, and to convey necessaries about by sea in summer tedious and expensive, in winter doubtful, or plainly impossible, they began to be annoyed, and to repent their having rejected the embassy of the Lacedaemonians, that had been sent to propose a treaty of peace, which had been done at the importunity of Cleon, who opposed it chiefly out of a pique to Nicias; for, being his enemy, and observing him to be extremely solicitous to support the offers of the Lacedaemonians, he persuaded the people to refuse them.

Now, therefore, that the siege was protracted, and they heard of the difficulties that pressed their army, they grew enraged against Cleon. But he turned all the blame upon Nicias, charging it on his

softness and cowardice, that the besieged were not yet taken. "Were I general," said he, "they should not hold out so long." The Athenians not unnaturally asked the question, "Why, then, as it is, do not you go with a squadron against them?" And Nicias standing up resigned his command at Pylos to him, and bade him take what forces he pleased along with him, and not be bold in words, out of harm's way, but go forth and perform some real service for the commonwealth. Cleon, at the first, tried to draw back, disconcerted at the proposal, which he had never expected; but the Athenians insisting, and Nicias loudly upbraiding him, he thus provoked, and fired with ambition, took upon him the charge, and said further, that within twenty days after he embarked, he would either kill the enemy, upon the place, or bring them alive to Athens. This the Athenians were readier to launch at than to believe, as on other occasions, also, his bold assertions and extravagances used to make them sport, and were pleasant enough. As, for instance, it is reported that once when the people were assembled, and had waited his coming a long time, at last he appeared with a garland on his head, and prayed them to adjourn to the next day. "For," said he, "I am not at leisure to-day; I have sacrificed to the gods, and am to entertain some strangers." Whereupon the Athenians, laughing, rose up, and dissolved the assembly. However, at this time he had good-fortune, and in conjunction with Demosthenes, conducted the enterprise so well that, within the time he had limited, he carried captive to Athens all the Spartans that had not fallen in battle.

This brought great disgrace on Nicias; for this was not to throw away his shield, but something yet more shameful and ignominious, to quit his charge voluntarily out of cowardice, and voting himself, as it were, out of his command of his own accord, to put into his enemy's hand the opportunity of achieving so brave an action. Aristophanes has a jest against him on this occasion in the *Birds*: "Indeed, not now the word that must be said is, do like Nicias, or retire to bed." -

And, again, in his *Husbandmen*: "I wish to stay at home and farm, What then?

Who should prevent you? You, my countrymen; Whom I would pay a thousand drachmas down, To let me give up office and leave town.

Enough; content; the sum two thousand is, With those that Nicias paid to give up his."

Besides all this, he did great mischief to the city by suffering the accession of so much reputation and power to Cleon, who now assumed such lofty airs, and allowed himself in such intolerable audacity, as led to many unfortunate results, a sufficient part of which fell to his own share. Amongst other things, he destroyed all the decorum of public speaking; he was the first who ever broke out into exclamations, flung open his dress, smote his thigh, and ran up and down whilst he was speaking, things which soon after introduced, amongst those who managed the affairs of state, such licence and contempt of decency as brought all into confusion.

Already, too, Alcibiades was beginning to show his strength at Athens, a popular leader, not, indeed, as utterly violent as Cleon, but as the land of Egypt, through the richness of its soil, is said “— great plenty to produce, Both wholesome herbs, and drugs of deadly juice,” so the nature of Alcibiades was strong and luxuriant in both kinds, and made way for many serious innovations. Thus it fell out that after Nicias had got his hands clear of Cleon, he had not opportunity to settle the city perfectly into quietness. For having brought matters to a pretty hopeful condition, he found everything carried away and plunged again into confusion by Alcibiades, through the wildness and vehemence of his ambition, and all embroiled again in war worse than ever. Which fell out thus. The persons who had principally hindered the peace were Cleon and Brasidas. War setting off the virtue of the one and hiding the villainy of the other, gave to the one occasions of achieving brave actions, to the other opportunity of committing equal dishonesties. Now when these two were in one battle both slain near Amphipolis, Nicias was aware that the Spartans had long been desirous of a peace, and that the Athenians had no longer the same confidence in the war. Both being alike tired, and, as it were by consent, letting fall their hands, he, therefore, in this nick of time, employed his efforts to make a friendship betwixt the two cities, and to deliver the other states of Greece from the evils and calamities they laboured under, and so establish his own good name for success as a statesman for all future time. He found the men of substance, the elder men, and the land-owners and farmers pretty generally all inclined to peace.

And when, in addition to these, by conversing and reasoning, he had cooled the wishes of a good many others for war, he now encouraged the hopes of the Lacedaemonians, and counselled them to seek peace. They confided in him, as on account of his general character for moderation and equity, so, also, because of the kindness and care he had shown to the prisoners taken at Pylos

and kept in confinement, making their misfortune the more easy to them.

The Athenians and the Spartans had before this concluded a truce for a year, and during this, by associating with one another, they had tasted again the sweets of peace and security and unimpeded intercourse with friends and connections, and thus longed for an end of that fighting and bloodshed, and heard with delight the chorus sing such verses as “—my lance I’ll leave Laid by, for spiders to o’erweave,” and remembered with joy the saying, In peace, they who sleep are awaked by the cock-crow, not by the trumpet. So shutting their ears, with loud reproaches, to the forebodings of those who said that the Fates decreed this to be a war of thrice nine years, the whole question having been debated, they made a peace. And most people thought, now, indeed, they had got an end of all their evils. And Nicias was in every man’s mouth, as one especially beloved of the gods, who, for his piety and devotion, had been appointed to give a name to the fairest and greatest of all blessings. For in fact they considered the peace Nicias’s work, as the war the work of Pericles; because he, on light occasions, seemed to have plunged the Greeks into great calamities, while Nicias had induced them to forget all the evils they had done each other and to be friends again; and so to this day it is called the Peace of Nicias.

The articles being, that the garrisons and towns taken or, either side and the prisoners should be restored, and they to restore the first to whom it should fall by lot. Nicias, as Theophrastus tells us, by a sum of money procured that the lot should fall for the Lacedaemonians to deliver the first. Afterwards, when the Corinthians and the Boeotians showed their dislike of what was done, and by their complaints and accusations were well-nigh bringing the war back again, Nicias persuaded the Athenians and the Lacedaemonians, besides the peace, to make a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, as a tie and confirmation of the peace, which would make them more terrible to those that held out, and the firmer to each other. Whilst these matters were on foot, Alcibiades, who was no lover of tranquillity, and who was offended with the Lacedaemonians because of their applications and attentions to Nicias, while they overlooked and despised himself, from first to last, indeed, had opposed the peace, though all in vain, but now finding that the Lacedaemonians did not altogether continue to please the Athenians, but were thought to have acted unfairly in having made a league with the Boeotians, and had not given up Panactum, as they should have done, with its

fortifications unrazed, nor yet Amphipolis, he laid hold on these occasions for his purpose, and availed himself of every one of them to irritate the people. And, at length, sending for ambassadors from the Argives, he exerted himself to effect a confederacy between the Athenians and them. And now, when Lacedaemonian ambassadors were come with full powers, and at their preliminary audience by the council seemed to come in all points with just proposals, he, fearing that the general assembly, also, would be won to their offers, overreached them with false professions and oaths of assistance, on the condition that they would not avow that they came with full powers; this, he said, being the only way for them to attain their desires. They being over-persuaded and decoyed from Nicias to follow him, he introduced them to the assembly, and asked them presently whether or no they came in all points with full powers, which, when they denied, he, contrary to their expectation, changing his countenance, called the council to witness their words, and now bade the people beware how they trust or transact anything with such manifest liars, who say at one time one thing, and at another the very opposite upon the same subject. These plenipotentiaries were, as well they might be, confounded at this, and Nicias, also being at a loss what to say, and struck with amazement and wonder, the assembly resolved to send immediately for the Argives, to enter into a league with them. An earthquake, which interrupted the assembly, made for Nicias's advantage; and the next day the people being again assembled, after much speaking and soliciting, with great ado he brought it about that the treaty with the Argives should be deferred, and he be sent to the Lacedaemonians, in full expectation that so all would go well.

When he arrived at Sparta, they received him there as a good man, and one well inclined towards them; yet he effected nothing, but, baffled by the party that favoured the Boeotians, he returned home, not only dishonoured and hardly spoken of, but likewise in fear of the Athenians, who were vexed and enraged that through his persuasions they had released so many and such considerable persons, their prisoners, for the men who had been brought from Pylos were of the chiefest families of Sparta, and had those who were highest there in place and power for their friends and kindred. Yet did they not in their heat proceed against him, otherwise than that they chose Alcibiades general, and took the Mantineans and Eleans, who had thrown up their alliance with the Lacedaemonians, into the league, together with the Argives, and

sent to Pylos freebooters to infest Laconia, whereby the war began to break out afresh.

But the enmity betwixt Nicias and Alcibiades running higher and higher, and the time being at hand for decreeing the ostracism or banishment, for ten years, which the people, putting the name on a sherd, were wont to inflict at certain times on some person suspected or regarded with jealousy for his popularity or wealth, both were now in alarm and apprehension, one of them, in all likelihood, being to undergo this ostracism; as the people abominated the life of Alcibiades, and stood in fear of his boldness and resolution, as is shown particularly in the history of him; while as for Nicias, his riches made him envied, and his habits of living, in particular his unsociable and exclusive ways, not like those of a fellowcitizen, or even a fellow-man, went against him, and having many times opposed their inclinations, forcing them against their feelings to do what was their interest, he had got himself disliked.

To speak plainly, it was a contest of the young men who were eager for war, against the men of years and lovers of peace, they turning the ostracism upon the one, these upon the other. But "In civil strife e'en villains rise to fame."

And so now it happened that the city, distracted into two factions, allowed free course to the most impudent and profligate persons, among whom was Hyperbolus of the Perithoedae, one who could not, indeed, be said to be presuming upon any power, but rather by his presumption rose into power, and by the honour he found in the city, became the scandal of it. He, at this time, thought himself far enough from the ostracism, as more properly deserving, the slave's gallows, and made account, that one of these men being, despatched out of the way he might be able to play a part against the other that should be left, and openly showed his pleasure at the dissension, and his desire to inflame the people against both of them. Nicias and Alcibiades, perceiving his malice, secretly combined together, and setting both their interests jointly at work, succeeded in fixing the ostracism not on either of them, but even on Hyperbolus. This, indeed, at the first made sport, and raised laughter among the people; but afterwards it was felt as an affront, that the thing should be dishonoured by being employed upon so unworthy a subject; punishment, also, having its proper dignity, and ostracism being one that was appropriate rather for Thucydides, Aristides, and such like persons; whereas for Hyperbolus it was a glory, and a fair ground for boasting on his part, when for his villainy he suffered the same with the best men. As Plato, the comic poet, said of him: "The man deserved the fate,

deny who can; Yes, but the fate did not deserve the man; Not for the like of him and his slave-brands, Did Athens put the sherd into our hands.”

And, in fact, none ever afterwards suffered this sort of punishment, but Hyperbolus was the last, as Hipparchus the Cholargian, who was kin to the tyrant, was the first.

There is no judgment to be made of fortune; nor can any reasoning bring us to a certainty about it. If Nicias had run the risk with Alcibiades whether of the two should undergo the ostracism, he had either prevailed, and, his rival being expelled the city, he had remained secure; or, being overcome, he had avoided the utmost disasters, and preserved the reputation of a most excellent commander.

Meantime I am not ignorant that Theophrastus says, that when Hyperbolus was banished, Phaeax, not Nicias, contested it with Alcibiades; but most authors differ from him.

It was Alcibiades, at any rate, whom when the Aegestean and Leontine ambassadors arrived and urged the Athenians to make an expedition against Sicily, Nicias opposed, and by whose persuasions and ambition he found himself overborne, who, even before the people could be assembled, had preoccupied and corrupted their judgment with hopes and with speeches; insomuch that the young men at their sports, and the old men in their workshops, and sitting together on the benches, would be drawing maps of Sicily, and making charts showing the seas, the harbours, and general character of the coast of the island opposite Africa. For they made not Sicily the end of the war but rather its starting-point and headquarters from whence they might carry it to the Carthaginians, and possess themselves of Africa, and of the seas as far as the pillars of Hercules. The bulk of the people, therefore, pressing this way, Nicias, who opposed them, found but few supporters, nor those of much influence; for the men of substance, fearing lest they should seem to shun the public charges and ship-money, were quiet against their inclination; nevertheless he did not tire nor give it up, but even after the Athenians decreed a war and chose him in the first place general, together with Alcibiades and Lamachus, when they were again assembled, he stood up, dissuaded them, and protested against the decision, and laid the blame on Alcibiades, charging him with going about to involve the city in foreign dangers and difficulties, merely with a view to his own private lucre and ambition. Yet it came to nothing. Nicias, because of his experience, was looked upon as the fitter for the

employment, and his wariness with the bravery of Alcibiades, and the easy temper of Lamachus, all compounded together, promised such security, that he did but confirm the resolution. Demostratus, who, of the popular leaders, was the one who chiefly pressed the Athenians to the expedition, stood up and said he would stop the mouth of Nicias from urging any more excuses, and moved that the generals should have absolute power, both at home and abroad, to order and to act as they thought best; and this vote the people passed.

The priests, however, are said to have very earnestly opposed the enterprise.

But Alcibiades had his diviners of another sort, who from some old prophecies announced that "there shall be great fame of the Athenians in Sicily," and messengers came back to him from Jupiter Ammon with oracles importing that "the Athenians shall take all the Syracusans." Those, meanwhile, who knew anything that boded ill, concealed it lest they might seem to fore-speak ill-luck. For even prodigies that were obvious and plain would not deter them; not the defacing of the Hermae, all maimed in one night except one, called the Hermes of Andocides, erected by the tribe of Aegeus, placed directly before the house then occupied by Andocides; or what was perpetrated on the altar of the twelve gods, upon which a certain man leaped suddenly up, and then turning round mutilated himself with a stone. Likewise at Delphi there stood a golden image of Minerva, set on a palmtree of brass, erected by the city of Athens from the spoils they won from the Medes; this was pecked at several days together by crows flying upon it, who also plucked off and knocked down the fruit, made of gold, upon the palm-tree. But the Athenians said these were all but inventions of the Delphians, corrupted by the men of Syracuse. A certain oracle bade them bring from Clazomenae the priestess of Minerva there; they sent for the woman and found her named Hesychia, Quietness, this being, it would seem, what the divine powers advised the city at this time, to be quiet. Whether, therefore, the astrologer Meton feared these presages, or that from human reason he doubted its success (for he was appointed to a command in it), feigning himself mad, he set his house on fire. Others say he did not counterfeit madness, but set his house on fire in the night, and the next morning came before the assembly in great distress, and besought the people, in consideration of the sad disaster, to release his son from the service, who was about to go captain of a galley for Sicily. The genius, also, of the philosopher Socrates, on this occasion, too, gave him intimation by the usual

tokens, that the expedition would prove the ruin of the commonwealth; this he imparted to his friends and familiars, and by them it was mentioned to a number of people. Not a few were troubled because the days on which the fleet set sail happened to be the time when the women celebrated the death of Adonis; there being everywhere then exposed to view images of dead men, carried about with mourning and lamentation, and women beating their breasts. So that such as laid any stress on these matters were extremely troubled, and feared lest that all this warlike preparation, so splendid and so glorious, should suddenly, in a little time, be blasted in its very prime of magnificence, and come to nothing.

Nicias, in opposing the voting of this expedition, and neither being puffed up with hopes, nor transported with the honour of his high command so as to modify his judgment, showed himself a man of virtue and constancy. But when his endeavours could not diverge the people from the war, nor get leave for himself to be discharged of the command, but the people, as it were, violently him took up and carried him, and against his will put him in the office of general, this was no longer now a time for his excessive caution and his delays, nor was it for him, like a child, to look back from the ship, often repeating and reconsidering over and over again how that his advice had not been over-ruled by fair arguments, thus blunting the courage of his fellow-commanders and spoiling the season of action. Whereas, he ought speedily to have closed with the enemy and brought the matter to an issue, and put fortune immediately to the test in battle. But, on the contrary, when Lamachus counselled to sail directly to Syracuse, and fight the enemy under their city walls, and Alcibiades advised to secure the friendship of the other towns, and then to march against them, Nicias dissented from them both, and insisted that they should cruise quietly around the island and display their armament, and having landed a small supply of men for the Egesteans, return to Athens, weakening at once the resolution and casting down the spirits of the men.

And while, a little while after, the Athenians called home Alcibiades in order to his trial, he being, though joined nominally with another in commission, in effect the only general, made now no end of loitering, of cruising, and considering, till their hopes were grown stale, and all the disorder and consternation which the first approach and view of their forces had cast amongst the enemy was worn off and had left them.

Whilst yet Alcibiades was with the fleet, they went before Syracuse with a squadron of sixty galleys, fifty of them lying in array without the harbour, while the other ten rowed in to reconnoitre, and by a herald called upon the citizens of Leontini to return to their own country. These scouts took a galley of the enemy's, in which they found certain tablets, on which was set down a list of all the Syracusans, according to their tribes. These were wont to be laid up at a distance from the city, in the temple of Jupiter Olympius, but were now brought forth for examination to furnish a muster-roll of young men for the war. These being so taken by the Athenians, and carried to the officers, and the multitude of names appearing, the diviners thought it unpropitious, and were in apprehension lest this should be the only destined fulfillment of the prophecy, that "the Athenians shall take all the Syracusans." Yet, indeed, this was said to be accomplished by the Athenians at another time, when Callippus the Athenian, having slain Dion, became master of Syracuse, But when Alcibiades shortly after sailed away from Sicily, the command fell wholly to Nicias. Lamachus was, indeed, a brave and honest man, and ready to fight fearlessly with his own hand in battle, but so poor and ill-off that, whenever he was appointed general, he used always, in accounting for his outlay of public money, to bring some little reckoning or other of money for his very clothes and shoes. On the contrary, Nicias, as on other accounts, so, also, because of his wealth and station, was very much thought of. The story is told that once upon a time the commission of generals being in consultation together in their public office, he bade Sophocles the poet give his opinion first, as the senior of the board. "I," replied Sophocles, "am the older, but you are the senior." And so now, also, Lamachus, who better understood military affairs, being quite his subordinate, he himself, evermore delaying and avoiding risk, and faintly employing his forces, first by his sailing about Sicily at the greatest distance aloof from the enemy, gave them confidence, then by afterwards attacking Hybla, a petty fortress, and drawing off before he could take it, make himself utterly despised. At the last he retreated to Catana without having achieved anything, save that he demolished Hyccara, an humble town of the barbarians, out of which, the story goes, that Lais the courtesan, yet a mere girl, was sold amongst the other prisoners, and carried thence away to Peloponnesus.

But when the summer was spent, after reports began to reach him that the Syracusans were grown so confident that they would come first to attack him, and troopers skirmishing to the very camp

twitted his soldiers, asking whether they came to settle with the Catanians, or to put the Leontines in possession of their city, at last, with much ado, Nicias resolved to sail against Syracuse. And wishing to form his camp safely and without molestation, he procured a man to carry from Catana intelligence to the Syracusans that they might seize the camp of the Athenians unprotected, and all their arms, if on such a day they should march with all their forces to Catana; and that, the Athenians living mostly in the town, the friends of the Syracusans had concerted, as soon as they should perceive them coming, to possess themselves of one of the gates, and to fire the arsenal; that many now were in the conspiracy and awaited their arrival. This was the ablest thing Nicias did in the whole of his conduct of the expedition. For having drawn out all the strength of the enemy, and made the city destitute of men, he set out from Catana, entered the harbour, and chose a fit place for his camp, where the enemy could least incommode him with the means in which they were superior to him, while with the means in which he was superior to them he might expect to carry on the war without impediment.

When the Syracusans returned from Catana, and stood in battle array before the city gates, he rapidly led up the Athenians and fell on them and defeated them, but did not kill many, their horse hindering the pursuit. And his cutting and breaking down the bridges that lay over the river gave Hermocrates, when cheering up the Syracusans, occasion to say that Nicias was ridiculous, whose great aim seemed to be to avoid fighting, as if fighting were not the thing he came for.

However, he put the Syracusans into a very great alarm and consternation, so that instead of fifteen generals then in service, they chose three others, to whom the people engaged by oath to allow absolute authority.

There stood near them the temple of Jupiter Olympius, which the Athenians (there being in it many consecrated things of gold and silver) were eager to take, but were purposely withheld from it by Nicias, who let the opportunity slip, and allowed a garrison of the Syracusans to enter it, judging that if the soldiers should make booty of that wealth it would be no advantage to the public, and he should bear the guilt of the impiety. Not improving in the least this success, which was everywhere famous, after a few days' stay, away he goes to Naxos, and there winters, spending largely for the maintenance of so great an army, and not doing anything except some matters of little consequence with some native Sicilians that revolted to him. Insomuch that the Syracusans took heart again,

made excursions to Catana, wasted the country, and fired the camp of the Athenians. For which everybody blamed Nicias, who, with his long reflection, his deliberateness, and his caution, had let slip the time for action. None ever found fault with the man when once at work, for in the brunt he showed vigour and activity enough, but was slow and wanted assurance to engage.

When, therefore, he brought again the army to Syracuse, such was his conduct, and with such celerity, and at the same time security, he came upon them, that nobody knew of his approach, when already he, had come to shore with his galleys at Thapsus, and had landed his men; and before any could help it, he had surprised Epipolae, had defeated the body of picked men that came to its succour, took three hundred prisoners, and routed the cavalry of the enemy, which had been thought invincible. But what chiefly astonished the Syracusans, and seemed incredible to the Greeks, was in so short a space of time the walling about of Syracuse, a town not less than Athens, and far more difficult, by the unevenness of the ground, and the nearness of the sea and the marshes adjacent, to have such a wall drawn in a circle round it; yet this, all within a very little, finished by a man that had not even his health for such weighty cares, but lay ill of the stone, which may justly bear the blame for what was left undone. I admire the industry of the general, and the bravery of the soldiers for what they succeeded in.

Euripides, after their ruin and disaster, writing their funeral elegy, said that "Eight victories over Syracuse they gained, While equal yet to both the gods remained."

And in truth one shall not find eight, but many more victories, won by these men against the Syracusans, till the gods, in real truth, or fortune intervened to check the Athenians in this advance to the height of power and greatness.

Nicias, therefore, doing violence to his body, was present in most actions. But once, when his disease was the sharpest upon him, he lay in the camp with some few servants to attend him. And Lamachus having the command fought the Syracusans, who were bringing a cross-wall from the city along to that of the Athenians, to hinder them from carrying it round; and in the victory, the Athenians hurrying in some disorder to the pursuit, Lamachus getting separated from his men, had to resist the Syracusan horse that came upon him. Before the rest advanced Callicrates, a man of good courage and skill in war. Lamachus, upon a challenge, engaged with him in single combat, and receiving the first wound,

returned it so home to Callicrates, that they both fell and died together. The Syracusans took away his body and arms, and at full speed advanced to the wall of the Athenians, where Nicias lay without any troops to oppose to them, yet roused by this necessity, and seeing the danger, he bade those about him go and set on fire all the wood and materials that lay provided before the wall for the engines, and the engines themselves; this put a stop to the Syracusans, saved Nicias, saved the walls and all the money of the Athenians. For when the Syracusans saw such a fire blazing up between them and the wall, they retired.

Nicias now remained sole general, and with great prospects; for cities began to come over to alliance with him, and ships laden with corn from every coast came to the camp, every one favouring when matters went well. And some proposals from among the Syracusans despairing to defend the city, about a capitulation, were already conveyed to him. And in fact Gylippus, who was on his way with a squadron to their aid from Lacedaemon, hearing on his voyage of the wall surrounding them, and of their distress, only continued his enterprise thenceforth, that, giving Sicily up for lost, he might, if even that should be possible, secure the Italians their cities. For a strong report was everywhere spread about that the Athenians carried all before them, and had a general alike for conduct and for fortune invincible.

And Nicias himself, too, now against his nature grown bold in his present strength and success, especially from the intelligence he received underhand of the Syracusans, believing they would almost immediately surrender the town upon terms, paid no manner of regard to Gylippus coming to their assistance, nor kept any watch of his approach, so that, neglected altogether and despised, Gylippus went in a long-boat ashore without the knowledge of Nicias, and, having landed in the remotest parts from Syracuse, mustered up a considerable force, the Syracusans not so much as knowing of his arrival nor expecting him; so that an assembly was summoned to consider the terms to be arranged with Nicias, and some were actually on the way, thinking it essential to have all despatched before the town should be quite walled round, for now there remained very little to be done, and the materials for the building lay all ready along the line.

In this very nick of time and danger arrived Gongylus in one galley from Corinth, and every one, as may be imagined, flocking about him, he told them that Gylippus would be with them speedily, and that other ships were coming to relieve them. And, ere yet they could perfectly believe Gongylus, an express was brought from

Gylippus, to bid them go forth to meet him. So now taking good heart, they armed themselves; and Gylippus at once led on his men from their march in battle array against the Athenians, as Nicias also embattled these. And Gylippus, piling his arms in view of the Athenians, sent a herald to tell them he would give them leave to depart from Sicily without molestation. To this Nicias would not vouchsafe any answer, but some of his soldiers laughing, asked if with the sight of one coarse coat and Laconian staff the Syracusan prospects had become so brilliant that they could despise the Athenians, who had released to the Lacedaemonians three hundred, whom they held in chains, bigger men than Gylippus, and longer-haired? Timaeus, also, writes that even the Syracusans made no account of Gylippus, at the first sight mocking at his staff and long hair, as afterwards they found reason to blame his covetousness and meanness. The same author, however, adds that on Gylippus's first appearance, as it might have been at the sight of an owl abroad in the air, there was a general flocking together of men to serve in the war. And this is the truer saying of the two; for in the staff and the cloak they saw the badge and authority of Sparta, and crowded to him accordingly. And not only Thucydides affirms that the whole thing was done by him alone, but so, also, does Philistus, who was a Syracusan and an actual witness of what happened.

However, the Athenians had the better in the first encounter, and slew some few of the Syracusans, and amongst them Gongylus of Corinth. But on the next day Gylippus, showed what it is to be a man of experience; for with the same arms, the same horses, and on the same spot of ground, only employing them otherwise, he overcame the Athenians; and they fleeing to their camp, he set the Syracusans to work, and with the stone and materials that had been brought together for finishing the wall of the Athenians, he built a cross-wall to intercept theirs and break it off, so that even if they were successful in the field, they would not be able to do anything. And after this the Syracusans taking courage manned their galleys, and with their horse and followers ranging about took a good many prisoners; and Gylippus going himself to the cities, called upon them to join with him, and was listened to and supported vigorously by them. So that Nicias fell back again to his old views, and, seeing the face of affairs change, desponded, and wrote to Athens, bidding them either send another army, or recall this out of Sicily, and that he might, in any case, be wholly relieved of the command, because of his disease.

Before this the Athenians had been intending to send another army to Sicily, but envy of Nicias's early achievements and high fortune had occasioned, up to this time, many delays; but now they were all eager to send off succours. Eurymedon went before, in midwinter, with money, and to announce that Euthydemus and Menander were chosen out of those that served there under Nicias to be joint commanders with him. Demosthenes was to go after in the spring with a great armament. In the meantime Nicias was briskly attacked, both by sea and land; in the beginning he had the disadvantage on the water, but in the end repulsed and sunk many galleys of the enemy. But by land he could not provide succour in time, so Gylippus surprised and captured Plemmyrium, in which the stores for the navy, and a great sum of money being there kept, all fell into his hands, and many were slain, and many taken prisoners. And what was of greatest importance, he now cut off Nicias's supplies, which had been safely and readily conveyed to him under Plemmyrium, while the Athenians still held it, but now that they were beaten out, he could only procure them with great difficulty, and with opposition from the enemy, who lay in wait with their ships under that fort. Moreover, it seemed manifest to the Syracusans that their navy had not been beaten by strength, but by their disorder in the pursuit. Now, therefore, all hands went to work to prepare for a new attempt that should succeed better than the former. Nicias had no wish for a sea-fight, but said it was mere folly for them, when Demosthenes was coming in all haste with so great a fleet and fresh forces to their succour, to engage the enemy with a less number of ships and ill provided. But, on the other hand, Menander and Euthydemus, who were just commencing their new command, prompted by a feeling of rivalry and emulation of both the generals, were eager to gain some great success before Demosthenes came, and to prove themselves superior to Nicias. They urged the honour of the city, which, said they, would be blemished and utterly lost if they should decline a challenge from the Syracusans. Thus they forced Nicias to a sea-fight; and by the stratagem of Ariston, the Corinthian pilot (his trick, described by Thucydides, about the men's dinners), they were worsted, and lost many of their men, causing the greatest dejection to Nicias, who had suffered so much from having the sole command, and now again miscarried through his colleagues.

But now by this time Demosthenes with his splendid fleet came in sight outside the harbour, a terror to the enemy. He brought along, in seventy-three galleys, five thousand men-at-arms; of darters, archers, and slingers, not less than three thousand with the

glittering of their armour, the flags waving from the galleys, the multitude of coxswains and flute-players giving time to the rowers, setting off the whole with all possible warlike pomp and ostentation to dismay the enemy. Now one may believe the Syracusans were again in extreme alarm, seeing no end or prospect of release before them, toiling, as it seemed, in vain, and perishing to no purpose. Nicias, however, was not long overjoyed with the reinforcement; for the first time he conferred with Demosthenes, who advised forthwith to attack the Syracusans, and to put all to the speediest hazard, to win Syracuse, or else return home, afraid, and wondering at his promptness and audacity, he besought him to do nothing rashly and, desperately, since delay would be the ruin of the enemy, whose money would not hold out, nor their confederates be long kept together; that when once they came to be pinched with want, they would presently come again to him for terms, as formerly. For, indeed, many in Syracuse held secret correspondence with him, and urged him to stay, declaring that even now the people were quite worn out with the war and weary of Gylippus. And if their necessities should the least sharpen upon them they would give up all.

Nicias glancing darkly at these matters, and unwilling to speak out plainly, made his colleagues imagine that it was cowardice which made him talk in this manner. And saying that this was the old story over again, the well-known procrastinations and delays and refinements with which at first he let slip the opportunity in not immediately falling on the enemy, but suffering the armament to become a thing of yesterday, that nobody was alarmed with, they took the side of Demosthenes, and with ado forced Nicias to comply. And so Demosthenes, taking the land-forces, by night made an assault upon Epipolae; part of the enemy he slew ere they took the alarm, the rest defending themselves he put to flight. Nor was he content with this victory there, but pushed on further, till he met the Boeotians. For these were the first that made head against the Athenians, and charged them with a shout, spear against spear, and killed many on the place. And now at once there ensued a panic and confusion throughout the whole army; the victorious portion got infected with the fears of the flying part, and those who were still disembarking and coming forward falling foul of the retreaters, came into conflict with their own party, taking the fugitives for pursuers, and treating their friends as if they were the enemy.

Thus huddled together in disorder, distracted with fear and uncertainties, and unable to be sure of seeing anything, the night

not being absolutely dark, nor yielding any steady light, the moon then towards setting, shadowed with the many weapons and bodies that moved to and fro, and glimmering so as not to show an object plain, but to make friends through fear suspected for foes, the Athenians fell into utter perplexity and desperation. For, moreover, they had the moon at their backs, and consequently their own shadows fell upon them, and both hid the number and the glittering of their arms; while the reflection of the moon from the shields of the enemy made them show more numerous and better appointed than, indeed, they were. At last, being pressed on every side, when once they had given way, they took to rout, and in their flight were destroyed, some by the enemy, some by the hand of their friends, and some tumbling down the rocks, while those that were dispersed and straggled about were picked off in the morning by the horsemen and put to the sword. The slain were two thousand; and of the rest few came off safe with their arms.

Upon this disaster, which to him was not wholly an unexpected one, Nicias accused the rashness of Demosthenes; but he, making his excuses for the past, now advised to be gone in all haste, for neither were other forces to come, nor could the enemy be beaten with the present. And, indeed, even supposing they were yet too hard for the enemy in any case, they ought to remove and quit a situation which they understood to be always accounted a sickly one, and dangerous for an army, and was more particularly unwholesome now, as they could see themselves, because of the time of year. It was the beginning of autumn, and many now lay sick, and all were out of heart.

It grieved Nicias to hear of flight and departing home, not that he did not fear the Syracusans, but he was worse afraid of the Athenians, their impeachments and sentences; he professed that he apprehended no further harm there, or if it must be, he would rather die by the hand of an enemy than by his fellow-citizens.

He was not of the opinion which Leo of Byzantium declared to his fellow-citizens: "I had rather," said he, "perish by you, than with you." As to the matter of place and quarter whither to remove their camp, that, he said, might be debated at leisure. And Demosthenes, his former counsel having succeeded so ill, ceased to press him further; others thought Nicias had reasons for expectation, and relied on some assurance from people within the city, and that this made him so strongly oppose their retreat, so they acquiesced. But fresh forces now coming to the Syracusans and the sickness growing worse in his camp, he, also, now approved of their retreat, and commanded the soldiers to make ready to go aboard.

And when all were in readiness, and none of the enemy had observed them, not expecting such a thing, the moon was eclipsed in the night, to the great fright of Nicias and others, who, for want of experience, or out of superstition, felt alarm at such appearances. That the sun might be darkened about the close of the month, this even ordinary people now understood pretty well to be the effect of the moon; but the moon itself to be darkened, how that could come about, and how, on the sudden, a broad full moon should lose her light, and show such various colours, was not easy to be comprehended; they concluded it to be ominous, and a divine intimation of some heavy calamities. For he who the first, and the most plainly of any, and with the greatest assurance committed to writing how the moon is enlightened and overshadowed, was Anaxagoras; and he was as yet but recent, nor was his argument much known, but was rather kept secret, passing only amongst a few, under some kind of caution and confidence. People would not then tolerate natural philosophers, and theorists, as they then called them, about things above; as lessening the divine power, by explaining away its agency into the operation of irrational causes and senseless forces acting by necessity, without anything of Providence or a free agent. Hence it was that Protagoras was banished, and Anaxagoras cast in prison, so that Pericles had much difficulty to procure his liberty; and Socrates, though he had no concern whatever with this sort of learning, yet was put to death for philosophy. It was only afterwards that the reputation of Plato, shining forth by his life, and because he subjected natural necessity to divine and more excellent principles, took away the obloquy and scandal that had attached to such contemplations, and obtained these studies currency among all people. So his friend Dion, when the moon, at the time he was to embark from Zacynthus to go against Dionysius, was eclipsed, was not in the least disturbed, but went on, and arriving at Syracuse, expelled the tyrant. But it so fell out with Nicias, that he had not at this time a skilful diviner with him; his former habitual adviser who used to moderate much of his superstition, Stilbides, had died a little before. For, in fact, this prodigy, as Philochorus observes, was not unlucky for men wishing to fly, but on the contrary very favourable; for things done in fear require to be hidden, and the light is their foe. Nor was it usual to observe signs in the sun or moon more than three days, as Autocledes states in his Commentaries. But Nicias persuaded them to wait another full course of the moon, as if he had not seen it clear again as soon as ever it had passed the region of shadow where the light was obstructed by the earth.

In a manner abandoning all other cares, he betook himself wholly to his sacrifices, till the enemy came upon them with their infantry, besieging the forts and camp, and placing their ships in a circle about the harbour. Nor did the men in the galleys only, but the little boys everywhere got into the fishing-boats and rowed up and challenged the Athenians, and insulted over them. Amongst these a youth of noble parentage, Heraclides by name, having ventured out beyond the rest, an Athenian ship pursued and well-nigh took him. His uncle Pollichus, in fear for him, put out with ten galleys which he commanded, and the rest, to relieve Pollichus, in like manner drew forth; the result of it being a very sharp engagement, in which the Syracusans had the victory, and slew Eurymedon, with many others.

After this the Athenian soldiers had no patience to stay longer, but raised an outcry against their officers, requiring them to depart by land; for the Syracusans, upon their victory, immediately shut and blocked up the entrance of the harbour; but Nicias would not consent to this, as it was a shameful thing to leave behind so many ships of burden, and galleys little less than two hundred. Putting, therefore, on board the best of the foot, and the most serviceable darters, they filled one hundred and ten galleys; the rest wanted oars. The remainder of his army Nicias posted along by the seaside, abandoning the great camp and the fortifications adjoining the temple of Hercules; so the Syracusans, not having for a long time performed their usual sacrifice to Hercules, went up now, both priests and captains, to sacrifice.

And their galleys being manned, the diviners predicted from their sacrifices victory and glory to the Syracusans, provided they would not be the aggressors, but fight upon the defensive; for so Hercules overcame all, by only defending himself when set upon. In this confidence they set out; and this proved the hottest and fiercest of all their sea-fights, raising no less concern and passion in the beholders than in the actors; as they could oversee the whole action with all the various and unexpected turns of fortune which, in a short space, occurred in it; the Athenians suffering no less from their own preparations, than from the enemy; for they fought against light and nimble ships, that could attack from any quarter, with theirs laden and heavy. And they were thrown at with stones that fly indifferently any way, for which they could only return darts and arrows, the direct aim of which the motion of the water disturbed, preventing their coming true, point foremost to their mark. This the Syracusans had learned from Ariston the Corinthian

pilot, who, fighting stoutly, fell himself in this very engagement, when the victory had already declared for the Syracusans.

The Athenians, their loss and slaughter being very great, their flight by sea cut off, their safety by land so difficult, did not attempt to hinder the enemy towing away their ships, under their eyes, nor demanded their dead, as, indeed, their want of burial seemed a less calamity than the leaving behind the sick and wounded which they now had before them. Yet more miserable still than those did they reckon themselves, who were to work on yet, through more such sufferings, after all to reach the same end.

They prepared to dislodge that night. And Gylippus and his friends seeing the Syracusans engaged in their sacrifices and at their cups, for their victories, and it being also a holiday, did not expect either by persuasion or by force to rouse them up and carry them against the Athenians as they decamped. But Hermocrates, of his own head, put a trick upon Nicias, and sent some of his companions to him, who pretended they came from those that were wont to hold secret intelligence with him, and advised him not to stir that night, the Syracusans having laid ambushes and beset the ways. Nicias, caught with this stratagem, remained, to encounter presently in reality what he had feared when there was no occasion. For they, the next morning, marching before, seized the defiles, fortified the passes where the rivers were fordable, cut down the bridges, and ordered their horsemen to range the plains and ground that lay open, so as to leave no part of the country where the Athenians could move without fighting. They stayed both that day and another night, and then went along as if they were leaving their own, not an enemy's country, lamenting and bewailing for want of necessaries, and for their parting from friends and companions that were not able to help themselves; and, nevertheless, judging the present evils lighter than those they expected to come.

But among the many miserable spectacles that appeared up and down in the camp, the saddest sight of all was Nicias himself, labouring under his malady, and unworthily reduced to the scantiest supply of all the accommodations necessary for human wants, of which he in his condition required more than ordinary, because of his sickness, yet bearing up under all this illness, and doing and undergoing more than many in perfect health. And it was plainly evident that all this toil was not for himself, or from any regard to his own life, but that purely for the sake of those under his command he would not abandon hope. And, indeed, the rest were given over to weeping and lamentation through fear or

sorrow, but he, whenever he yielded to anything of the kind, did so, it was evident, from reflection upon the shame and dishonour of the enterprise, contrasted with the greatness and glory of the success he had anticipated, and not only the sight of his person, but, also, the recollection of the arguments and the dissuasions he used to prevent this expedition enhanced their sense of the undeservedness of his sufferings, nor had they any heart to put their trust in the gods, considering that a man so religious, who had performed to the divine powers so many and so great acts of devotion, should have no more favourable treatment than the wickedest and meanest of the army.

Nicias, however, endeavoured all the while by his voice, his countenance, and his carriage, to show himself undefeated by these misfortunes. And all along the way shot at, and receiving wounds eight days continually from the enemy, he yet preserved the forces with him in a body entire, till that Demosthenes was taken prisoner with the party that he led, whilst they fought and made a resistance, and so got behind and were surrounded near the country house of Polyzelus. Demosthenes thereupon drew his sword, and wounded but did not kill himself, the enemy speedily running in and seizing upon him. So soon as the Syracusans had gone and informed Nicias of this, and he had sent some horsemen, and by them knew the certainty of the defeat of that division, he then vouchsafed to sue to Gylippus for a truce for the Athenians to depart out of Sicily, leaving hostages for payment of money that the Syracusans had expended in the war.

But now they would not hear of these proposals, but threatening and reviling them, angrily and insultingly continued to ply their missiles at them, now destitute of every necessary. Yet Nicias still made good his retreat all that night, and the next day, through all their darts, made his way to the river Asinarus. There, however, the enemy encountering them, drove some into the stream, while others, ready to die for thirst, plunged in headlong, while they drank at the same time, and were cut down by their enemies. And here was the cruellest and the most immoderate slaughter. Till at last Nicias falling down to Gylippus, "Let pity, O Gylippus," said he, "move you in your victory; not for me, who was destined, it seems, to bring the glory I once had to this end but for the other Athenians; as you well know that the chances of war are common to all, and the Athenians used them moderately and mildly towards you in their prosperity." At these words, and at the sight of Nicias, Gylippus was somewhat troubled, for he was sensible that the Lacedaemonians had received good offices from Nicias in

the late treaty, and he thought it would be a great and glorious thing for him to carry off the chief commanders of the Athenians alive. He therefore raised Nicias with respect, and bade him be of good cheer, and commanded his men to spare the lives of the rest. But the word of command being communicated slowly, the slain were a far greater number than the prisoners. Many, however, were privately conveyed away by particular soldiers. Those taken openly were hurried together in a mass; their arms and spoils hung up on the finest and largest trees along the river. The conquerors, with garlands on their heads, with their own horses splendidly adorned, and cropping short the manes and tails of those of their enemies, entered the city, having, in the most signal conflict ever waged by Greeks against Greeks, and with the greatest strength and the utmost effort of valour and manhood won a most entire victory.

And a general assembly of the people of Syracuse and their confederates sitting, Eurycles, the popular leader, moved, first, that the day on which they took Nicias should from thenceforward be kept holiday by sacrificing and forbearing all manner of work, and from the river he called the Asinarian Feast. This was the twenty-sixth day of the month Carneus, the Athenian Metagitnion. And that the servants of the Athenians with the other confederates be sold for slaves, and they themselves and the Sicilian auxiliaries be kept and employed in the quarries, except the generals, who should be put to death. The Syracusans favoured the proposals, and when Hermocrates said, that to use well a victory was better than to gain a victory, he was met with great clamour and outcry. When Gylippus, also, demanded the Athenian generals to be delivered to him, that he might carry them to the Lacedaemonians, the Syracusans, now insolent with their good-fortune, gave him ill words. Indeed, before this, even in the war, they had been impatient at his rough behaviour and Lacedaemonian haughtiness, and had, as Timaeus tells us, discovered sordidness and avarice in his character, vices which may have descended to him from his father Cleandrides, who was convicted of bribery and banished. And the very man himself, of the one thousand talents which Lysander sent to Sparta, embezzled thirty, and hid them under the tiles of his house, and was detected and shamefully fled his country. But this is related more at large in the life of Lysander. Timaeus says that Demosthenes and Nicias did not die, as Thucydides and Philistus have written, by the order of the Syracusans, but that upon a message sent them from Hermocrates, whilst yet the assembly were sitting, by the connivance of some of

their guards, they were enabled to put an end to themselves. Their bodies, however, were thrown out before the gates and offered for a public spectacle. And I have heard that to this day in a temple at Syracuse is shown a shield, said to have been Nicias's, curiously wrought and embroidered with gold and purple intermixed. Most of the Athenians perished in the quarries by diseases and ill diet, being allowed only one pint of barley every day, and one half pint of water. Many of them, however, were carried off by stealth, or, from the first, were supposed to be servants, and were sold as slaves. These latter were branded on their foreheads with the figure of a horse. There were, however, Athenians who, in addition to slavery, had to endure even this. But their discreet and orderly conduct was an advantage to them; they were either soon set free, or won the respect of their masters with whom they continued to live. Several were saved for the sake of Euripides, whose poetry, it appears, was in request among the Sicilians more than among any of the settlers out of Greece. And when any travellers arrived that could tell them some passage, or give them any specimen of his verses, they were delighted to be able to communicate them to one another.

Many of the captives who got safe back to Athens are said, after they reached home, to have gone and made their acknowledgments to Euripides, relating how that some of them had been released from their slavery by teaching what they could remember of his poems, and others, when straggling after the fight, been relieved with meat and drink for repeating some of his lyrics. Nor need this be any wonder, for it is told that a ship of Caunus fleeing into one of their harbours for protection, pursued by pirates, was not received, but forced back, till one asked if they knew any of Euripides's verses, and on their saying they did, they were admitted, and their ship brought into harbour.

It is said that the Athenians would not believe their loss, in a great degree because of the person who first brought them news of it. For a certain stranger, it seems, coming to Piraeus, and there sitting in a barber's shop, began to talk of what had happened, as if the Athenians already knew all that had passed; which the barber hearing, before he acquainted anybody else, ran as fast as he could up into the city, addressed himself to the Archons, and presently spread it about in the public Place. On which, there being everywhere, as may be imagined, terror and consternation, the Archons summoned a general assembly, and there brought in the man and questioned him how he came to know. And he, giving no

satisfactory account, was taken for a spreader of false intelligence and a disturber of the city, and was, therefore, fastened to the wheel and racked a long time, till other messengers arrived that related the whole disaster particularly.

So hardly was Nicias believed to have suffered the calamity which he had often predicted.

THE END