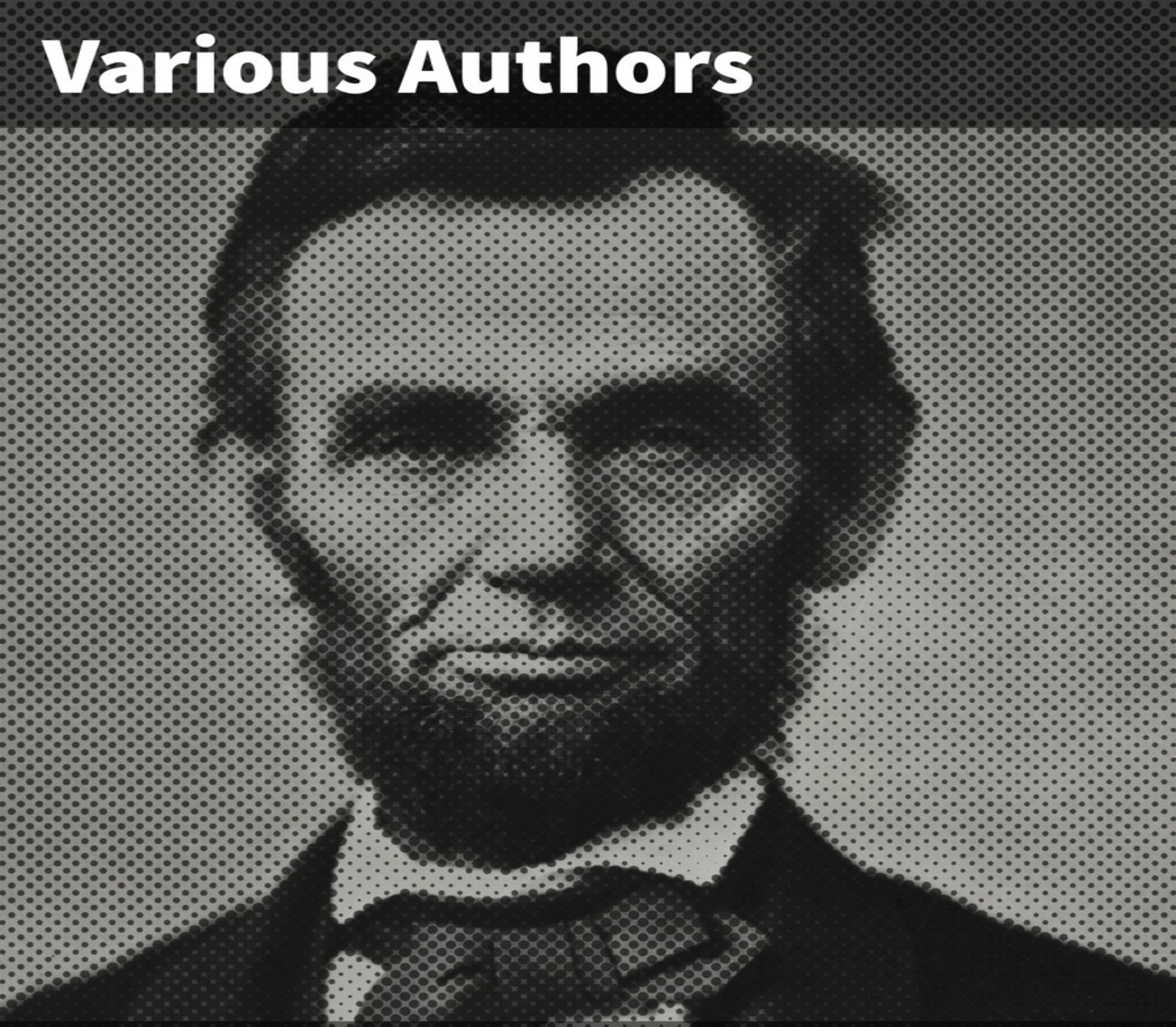
Various Authors



Great leaders: Historic portraits from the great historians

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PREFACE.

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EVERY one perusing the pages of the historians must have been impressed with the graphic and singularly penetrative character of many of the sketches of the distinguished persons whose doings form the staple of history. These pen-portraits often stand out from the narrative with luminous and vivid effect, the writers seeming to have concentrated upon them all their powers of penetration and all their skill in graphic delineation. Few things in literature are marked by analysis so close, discernment so keen, or by effects so brilliant and dramatic. In some of the later historians this feature is specially noticeable, but it was Hume's admirable portrayal of the character of Alfred the Great that suggested the compilation of the present volume.

A selection such as this of the more striking passages in the great historians will serve, it is believed, a double purpose—first as a suitable introduction to these distinguished writers for those not acquainted with them, and next as a means of stimulating a taste for the study of history itself. It must be remembered that it is largely through their sympathies for persons that readers generally find pleasure in history. The sometimes noble and sometimes startling personality of great leaders exerts a fascinating effect upon all susceptible minds, and whatever brings this personality vividly before us greatly strengthens our interest in the records of the past. For these reasons this compilation will be found well adapted for the reading class in high schools and seminaries.

It is desirable to explain that in some instances the selections do not appear here exactly in the form of the original. Passages from different pages are sometimes brought together, so as to give completeness to the portrait, but in no other way has any liberty been taken with the text of the authors.

In making the selections, the primary object was to secure, in each instance, the most vivid and truthful portrait obtainable, but it was also thought desirable to render the volume as representative of historical literature as possible, and hence to include a wide range of writers. The work will be found to be tolerably representative in this particular, but some well-known historians do not appear, for the reason that their methods did not yield suitable material.

The selections terminate with the period of Waterloo, because, while great leaders have flourished since those days, the historical perspective is not sufficient to permit that judicial estimate so necessary for a truly valuable portrait.

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GREAT LEADERS.

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THEMISTOCLES AND ARISTIDES.

By GEORGE GROTE.

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[Athenian statesmen and soldiers, the first named born 514 B.C., died about 449; the second, surnamed "the Just," died about 468 B.C., date of birth unknown. During the Persian invasions of Greece, Themistocles was the most brilliant figure among the Greek leaders; his genius was omnipresent, his resources boundless. He created the maritime supremacy of Athens, and through him the great victory of Salamis was won. His political ascendency was finally lost through the distrust created by his unscrupulous and facile character, and he died an exile in Persia, intriguing against his native land. Aristides, less brilliant than his rival, was famous for the stainless integrity and uprightness of his public life, and his name has passed into history as the symbol of unswerving truth and justice. He also contributed largely to the successful leadership of the Hellenic forces against their Asiatic invaders. References: Plutarch's "Lives," Grote's "History of Greece," Curtius's "History of Greece."]

NEITHER Themistocles nor Aristides could boast of a lineage of gods and heroes like the Æacid Miltiades;[3] both were of middling station and circumstances. Aristides, son of Lysimachus, was on both sides of pure Athenian blood. But the wife of Neocles, father of Themistocles, was a foreign woman of Thrace or Caria; and such an alliance is the less surprising since Themistocles must have been born in the time of the Peisistratids,[4] when the status of an Athenian citizen had not yet acquired its political value. There was a marked contrast between these two eminent men—those points which stood most conspicuous in one being comparatively deficient in the other.

In the description of Themistocles, which we have the advantage of finding briefly sketched by Thucydides, the circumstance most emphatically brought out is his immense force of spontaneous invention and apprehension, without any previous aid either from teaching or actual practice. The might of unassisted nature was never so strikingly exhibited as in him; he conceived the complications of a present embarrassment and divined the chances of a mysterious future with equal sagacity and equal quickness. The right expedient seemed to flash on his mind *extempore*, even in the most perplexing contingencies, without the least necessity for premeditation.

Nor was he less distinguished for daring and resource in action. When engaged on any joint affairs his superior competence marked him out as the leader for others to follow; and no business, however foreign to his experience, ever took him by surprise or came wholly amiss to him. Such is the remarkable picture which Thucydides draws of a

countryman whose death nearly coincided in time with his own birth. The untutored readiness and universality of Themistocles probably formed in his mind a contrast to the more elaborate discipline and careful preliminary study with which the statesmen of his own day—and Pericles specially the greatest of them—approached the consideration and discussion of public affairs. Themistocles had received no teaching from philosophers, sophists, and rhetors, who were the instructors of well-born youth in the days of Thucydides, and whom Aristophanes, the contemporary of the latter, so unmercifully derides—treating such instruction as worse than nothing, and extolling in comparison with it the unlettered courage, the more gymnastic accomplishments of the victors at Marathon.

The general character given in Plutarch, though many of his anecdotes are both trifling and apocryphal, is quite consistent with the brief sketch just cited from Thucydides. Themistocles had an unbounded passion, not merely for glory—insomuch as the laurels of Miltiades acquired at Marathon deprived him of rest—but also for display of every kind. He was eager to vie with men richer than himself in showy exhibition—one great source, though not the only source of popularity at Athens; nor was he at all scrupulous in procuring the means of doing it. Besides being scrupulous in attendance on the ecclesia and dicastery, he knew most of the citizens by name, and was always ready for advice to them in their private affairs. Moreover, he possessed all the tactics of the expert party-man in conciliating political friends and in defeating personal enemies; and though in the early part of his life sincerely bent upon the upholding

and aggrandizement of his country, and was on some most critical occasions of unspeakable value to it, yet on the whole his morality was as reckless as his intelligence was eminent.

He was grossly corrupt in the exercise of power and employing tortuous means, sometimes, indeed, for ends in themselves honorable and patriotic, but sometimes also merely for enriching himself. He ended a glorious life by years of deep disgrace, with the forfeiture of all Hellenic esteem and brotherhood—a rich man, an exile, a traitor, and a pensioner of the Great King, pledged to undo his own previous work of liberation accomplished at the victory of Salamis.

Of Aristides, unfortunately, we possess no description from the hand of Thucydides; yet his character is so simple and consistent that we may safely accept the brief but unqualified encomium of Herodotus and Plato, expanded as it is in the biography of Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos, however little the details of the latter can be trusted. Aristides was inferior to Themistocles in resource, quickness, flexibility, and power of coping with difficulties; but incomparably superior to him—as well as to other rivals and contemporaries—in integrity, public as well as private; inaccessible to pecuniary temptation as well as to other seductive influences, and deserving as well as enjoying the highest measure of personal confidence.

He is described as the peculiar friend of Clisthenes, the first founder of the democracy; as pursuing a straight and single-handed course in political life, with no solicitude for party-ties, and with little care either to conciliate friends or

to offend enemies; as unflinching in the exposure of corrupt practices by whomsoever committed or upheld; as earning for himself the lofty surname of the Just, not less by his judicial decisions in the capacity of archon, than by his equity in private arbitrations, and even his candor in public dispute; and as manifesting throughout a long public life, full of tempting opportunities, an uprightness without a flaw and beyond all suspicion, recognized equally by his bitter contemporary the poet Timocreon, and by the allies of Athens, upon whom he first assessed the tribute.

Few of the leading men in any part of Greece were without some taint on their reputation, deserved or undeserved, in regard to pecuniary probity; but whoever became notoriously recognized as possessing this vital quality, acquired by means of it a firmer hold on the public esteem than even eminent talents could confer. Thucydides ranks conspicuous probity among the first of the many ascendant qualities possessed by Pericles; and Nicias, equal to him in this respect, though immeasurably inferior in every other, owed to it a still larger proportion of that exaggerated confidence which the Athenian people continued so long to repose in him.

The abilities of Aristides, though apparently adequate to every occasion on which he was engaged, and only inferior when we compare him with so remarkable a man as Thucydides, were put in the shade by this incorruptible probity, which procured for him, however, along with the general esteem, no inconsiderable amount of private enmity from jobbers, whom he exposed, and even some jealousy

from persons who heard it proclaimed with offensive ostentation.

We are told that a rustic and unlettered citizen gave his ostracizing vote and expressed his dislike against Aristides on the simple ground that he was tired of hearing him always called the Just. Now the purity of the most honorable man will not bear to be so boastfully talked of, as if he were the only honorable man in the country; the less it is obtruded the more deeply and cordially will it be felt; and the story just alluded to, whether true or false, illustrates that natural reaction of feeling produced by absurd encomiasts or perhaps by insidious enemies under the mask of encomiasts, who trumpeted for Aristides as the *Just* man at Attica so as to wound the legitimate dignity of every one else.

Neither indiscreet friends nor artful enemies, however, could rob him of the lasting esteem of his countrymen, which he enjoyed with intervals of their displeasure to the end of his life. Though he was ostracized during a part of the period between the battles of Marathon and Salamis—at a time when the rivalry between him and Themistocles was so violent that both could not remain at Athens without peril—yet the dangers of Athens during the invasion of Xerxes brought him back before the ten years of exile were expired. His fortune, originally very moderate, was still further diminished during the course of his life, so that he died very poor, and the state was obliged to lend aid to his children.

PERICLES.

By ERNST CURTIUS.

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[A distinguished statesman, who built up and consolidated the power of Athens immediately after the Persian wars, born 495 B.C., died 429. His career was contemporaneous with the highest glory of Athens in art, arms, literature, and oratory. As an orator Pericles was second only to Demosthenes, as a statesman second to none. References: Grote's "History of Greece," Curtius's "History of Greece," Plutarch's "Lives," Bulwer's "Athens."]

Aspasia came to Athens when everything new and extraordinary, everything which appeared to be an enlargement of ancient usage, a step forward and a new acquisition, was joyously welcomed. Nor was it long before it was recognized that she enchanted the souls of men by no mere arts of deception of which she had learned the trick. Hers was a lofty and richly endowed nature with a perfect sense of all that is beautiful, and hers a harmonious and felicitous development. For the first time the treasures of Hellenic culture were found in the possession of a woman surrounded by the graces of her womanhood—a phenomenon which all men looked on with eyes of wonder. She was able to converse with irresistible grace on politics, philosophy, and art, so that the most serious Athenians—even such men as Socrates—sought her out in order to listen to her conversation.

But her real importance for Athens began on the day when she made the acquaintance of Pericles, and formed

with him a connection of mutual love. It was a real marriage, which only lacked the civil sanction because she was a foreigner; it was an alliance of the truest and tenderest affection which death alone dissolved—the endless source of a domestic felicity which no man needed more than the statesman, who lived retired from all external recreations and was unceasingly engaged in the labors of his life.

Doubtless the possession of this woman was in many respects invaluable for Pericles. Not only were her accomplishments the delights of the leisure hours which he allowed himself and the recreation of his mind from its cares, but she also kept him in intercourse with the daily life around him. She possessed what he lacked—the power of being perfectly at ease in every kind of society; she kept herself informed of everything that took place in the city; nor can distant countries have escaped her attention, since she is said to have first acquainted Pericles with Sicilian oratory, which was at that time developing itself.

She was of use to him through her various connections at home and abroad as well as by the keen glance of her feminine sagacity and by her knowledge of men. Thus the foremost woman of her age lived in the society of the man whose superiority of mind had placed him at the head of the first city of the Hellenes, in loyal devotion to her friend and husband; and although the mocking spirits at Athens eagerly sought out every blemish which could be discovered in the life of Pericles, yet no calumny was ever able to vilify this rare union and to blacken its memory.

Pericles had no leisure for occupying himself with the management of his private property. He farmed out his

lands and intrusted the money to his faithful slave Evangelus, who accurately knew the measure which his master deemed the right one, and managed the household accordingly; which, indeed, presented a striking contrast to those of the wealthy families of Athens, and ill corresponded to the tastes of Pericles's sons as they grew up. For in it there was no overflow, no joyous and reckless expenditure, but so careful an economy that everything was calculated down to drachm and obolus.

Pericles was perfectly convinced that nothing short of a perfectly blameless integrity and the severest self-abnegation could render possible the permanency of his influence over his fellow-citizens and prevent the exposure of even the smallest blot to his cavilers and enemies. After Themistocles had for the first time shown how a statesman and general might enrich himself, Pericles was in this respect the admirer and most faithful follower of Aristides, and in the matter of conscientiousness went even much further than Cimon, spurning on principle every opportunity offered by the office of general for a perfectly justifiable personal enrichment.

All attempts to bribe him remained useless. His lofty sentiments are evidenced by the remark which he addressed to Sophocles, who fell in love even in his old age: "Not only the hands, but the eyes also of a general should practice continence." The more vivid the appreciation he felt for female charms the more highly must we esteem the equanimity to which he had attained by means of a self-command which had become a matter of habit with him; nor did anything make so powerful an impression upon the

changeable Athenians as the immovable calm of this great man.

Pericles was neither a lengthy nor a frequent speaker. He avoided nothing more scrupulously than superfluous words, and therefore as often as he appeared before the people he prayed to Zeus to guard him from useless words. But the brief words which he actually spoke made a proportionately deep impression upon the citizens. His conception of his calling was too solemn and lofty to permit him to consent to talk as the multitude liked. He was not afraid when he found the citizens weak and irresolute to express to them bitter truths and serious blame.

His speeches always endeavored to place every case in connection with facts of a more general kind, so as to instruct and elevate the minds of the citizens; he never grew weary of pointing out how no individual happiness was conceivable from the welfare of the entire body; he proved to the citizens the claim which he had established upon their confidence; he clearly and concisely developed his political views, endeavoring not to talk over his hearers, but to convince them; and when the feeling of his own superiority was about to tempt him to despise the multitude, he admonished himself to be patient and long suffering. “Take heed, Pericles,” he cried to himself, “those whom thou rulest are Hellenes, citizens of Athens.”

The principles of the statesmanship of Pericles were so simple that all citizens were perfectly capable of understanding them; and he attached a particular value to the idea that the Athenians instead of, like the Lacedæmonians, seeking their strength in an affectation of

secrecy, were unwilling to overcome their enemies by deception and cunning stratagems. As the Persian war had seemed inevitable to Themistocles, so the struggle with Sparta loomed as certain before the eyes of Pericles. The term of peace allowed before its outbreak had accordingly to be employed by Athens in preparing herself for the struggle awaiting her forces. When at last the critical hour arrived Athens was to stand before her assailants firm and invincible, with her walls for a shield and her navy for a sword.

The long schooling through which Pericles had passed in the art of war and the rare combination of caution and energy which he had displayed in every command held by him had secured him the confidence of the citizens. Therefore they for a succession of years elected him general, and as such invested him with an extraordinary authority, which reduced the offices of the other nine generals to mere posts of honor which were filled by persons agreeable to him. During the period of his administration the whole centers of gravity of public life lay in this office.

Inasmuch as Pericles, besides the authority of a “strategy” prolonged to him in an extraordinary degree, also filled the office of superintendent of the finances; inasmuch as he was repeatedly and for long periods of years superintendent of public works; inasmuch as his personal influence was so great that he could in all important matters determine the civic elections according to his wish; it is easy to understand how he ruled the state in time of war and

peace, and how the power of both the council and of the whole civic body in all essentials passed into his hands.

He was the type of temperance and sobriety. He made it a rule never to assist at a festive banquet; and no Athenian could remember to have seen Pericles, since he stood at the head of the state, in the company of friends over the wine-cup. He was known to no man except as one serious and collected, full of grave thoughts and affairs. His whole life was devoted to the service of the state, and his power accompanied by so thorough a self-denial and so full a measure of labor that the multitude in its love of enjoyment could surely not regard the possession of that power as an enviable privilege. For him there existed only one road, which he was daily seen to take, the road leading from his house to the market-place and the council-hall, the seat of the government, where the current business of state was transacted.

EPAMINONDAS.

By ERNST CURTIUS.

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[The greatest of the Theban generals and statesmen, and one of the greatest men of antiquity; born about 418 B.C., killed on the battle-field of Mantinea in the hour of victory, 362. He raised Thebes from a subordinate place to the leadership of Greece by his genius in arms and wisdom in council. Eminent as soldier, statesman, and orator, Epaminondas was a

model of virtue in his private life, and was not only devoted to his native republic, but in the largest sense a Greek patriot. References: Grote's "History of Greece," Curtius's "History of Greece," Plutarch's "Lives."]

It would be difficult to find in the entire course of Greek history any two statesmen who, in spite of differences in character and outward conditions of life, resembled one another so greatly and were as men so truly the peers of one another as Pericles and Epaminondas. In the case of both these men the chief foundation of their authority was their lofty and varied mental culture; what secured to them their intellectual superiority was the love of knowledge which pervaded and ennobled the whole being of either. Epaminondas like Pericles directs his native city as the man in whom the civic community places supreme confidence, and whom it therefore re-elects from year to year as general. Like Pericles, Epaminondas left no successor behind him, and his death was also the close of an historical epoch.

Epaminondas stood alone from the first; and while Pericles with all his superiority yet stood essentially on the basis of Attic culture, Epaminondas, on the other hand, was, so to speak, a stranger in his native city. Nor was it ever his intention to be a Theban in the sense in which Pericles was an Athenian. The object of his life was rather to be a perfect Hellene, while his efforts as a statesman were likewise simply an endeavor to introduce his fellow-citizens to that true Hellenism which consisted in civic virtue and in love of wisdom.

In the very last hour of his life, when he was delighted by the preservation of his shield, he showed himself a genuine Hellene; thus again it was a genuinely Greek standpoint from which he viewed the war against Sparta and Athens as a competitive contest for the honor of the hegemony in Hellas, an honor which could only be justly won by mental and moral superiority. The conflict was inevitable; it had become a national duty, because the supremacy of Sparta had become a tyranny dishonorable to the Hellenic nation. After Epaminondas liberated the Greek cities from the Spartan yoke it became the object of his Bœotian patriotism to make his own native city worthy and capable of assuming the direction.

How far Epaminondas might have succeeded in securing a permanent hegemony[5] over Greek affairs to the Thebans who shall attempt to judge? He fell in the full vigor of his manhood on the battle-field where the states, which withstood his policy, had brought their last resources to bear. Of all statesmen, therefore, he is least to be judged by the actual results of his policy. His greatness lies in this—that from his childhood he incessantly endeavored to be to his fellow-citizens a model of Hellenic virtue. Chaste and unselfish he passed, ever true to himself, through a most active life, through all the temptations of the most unexampled success in war, through the whole series of trials and disasters.

Epaminondas was not merely the founder of a military organization. He equally proved the inventiveness of his mind in contriving to obtain for his country, which was wealthy neither by trade nor manufactures, pecuniary

resources sufficient for maintaining a land-army and a war-navy commensurate with the needs of a great power. He made himself master of all the productive ideas of earlier state administrations; and in particular the Athenians naturally stood before his eyes as models and predecessors.

On the one hand, he turned to account for his native city the improvements made in arms and tactics, which were due to Xenophon, Chabrias, and Iphicrates; on the other, the example of the Athenians taught him that the question of the hegemony over Greece could only be settled by sea. Finally, Epaminondas, more than any other Greek statesman, followed in the footsteps of Periclean Athens in regarding the public fostering of art and science as a main duty of that state which desired to claim a position of primacy.

Personally he did his utmost to domesticate philosophy at Thebes, not only as intellectual discourse carried on in select circles, but as the power of higher knowledge which elevates and purifies the people. Public oratory found a home at Thebes, together with the free constitution; and not only did Epaminondas personally prove himself fully the equal of the foremost orators in Athens—of Callistratus in particular—in power of speech and in felicitous readiness of mind, but, as the embassy at Susa shows, his friends too learned in a surprisingly short time to assert the interests of Thebes by the side of the other states, which had long kept up foreign relations with vigor, skill, and dignity.

In every department there were perceptible intellectual mobility and vigorously sustained effort. Of the fine arts painting received a specially successful development,

distinguished by a thoughtful and clear treatment of intellectual ideas. Of the architecture of this period honorable evidence is to this day given by the well-preserved remains of the fortifications of Messene, constructed under the direction of Epaminondas—typical specimens of architecture constructed in the grandest style. Plastic art likewise found a home at Thebes. It was the endeavor of Epaminondas—although with prudent moderation—to transfer the splendor of Periclean Athens to Thebes.

Through Epaminondas Thebes was raised to an equality with the city of the Athenians, as a seat of a policy aiming at freedom and national greatness. It thus became possible for the two cities to join hands in the subsequent struggle for the independence of Greece. And, in this sense, Epaminondas worked beforehand for the objects of Demosthenes. If it is considered how, with his small resources, Epaminondas founded or helped to found Mantinea, Messene, and Megalopolis; how through him other places, such as Corone and Heraclea, likewise received Theban settlers—the honor will not be denied him of having been in the royal art of the foundation of cities the predecessor of Alexander and his successors.

But he was also their predecessor in another point. By spreading Greek manners and ways of life he enlarged the narrow boundaries of the land of the Greeks, and introduced the peoples of the North into the sphere of Greek history. In his own person he represented the ideas of a general Hellenic character, which, unconditioned by local accidents, was freely raised aloft above the distinction of states and

tribes. Hitherto only great statesmen had appeared who were great Athenians or Spartans. In Epaminondas this local coloring is of quite inferior importance; he was a Hellene first, and a Theban only in the second place. Thus he prepared the standpoint from which to be a Hellene was regarded as an intellectual privilege, independent of the locality of birth; and this is the standpoint of Hellenism.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

By GEORGE GROTE.

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[Son of Philip, King of Macedon, born 356 B.C., died 323. The greatest of the world's conquerors in the extent and rapidity of his conquests, he began with the consolidation of his father's conquests over the republics of Greece, overthrew the great Persian Empire, and carried his arms to farther India, within a period of thirteen years. At his death his dominions were divided among his principal generals. References: Grote's "History of Greece," Curtius's "History of Greece," Plutarch's "Lives."]

The first growth and development of Macedonia during the twenty-two years preceding the battle of Chæronea, from an embarrassed secondary state into the first of all known powers, had excited the astonishment of contemporaries and admiration for Philip's organizing genius; but the achievements of Alexander during the

twelve years of his reign, throwing Philip into the shade, had been on a

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

scale so much grander and vaster, and so completely without serious reverse or even interruption, as to transcend the measure, not only of human expectation, but almost of human belief. All antecedent human parallels—the ruin and captivity of the Lydian Crœsus, the expulsion and mean life of the Syracusan Dionysius, both of them impressive examples of the mutability of human condition—sunk into trifles compared with the overthrow of the towering Persian Colossus.

Such were the sentiments excited by Alexander's career even in the middle of 330 B.C., more than seven years before his death. During the following seven years his additional achievements had carried astonishment yet further. He had mastered, in defiance of fatigue, hardship, and combat, not merely all the eastern half of the Persian Empire, but unknown Indian regions beyond its easternmost limits. Besides Macedonia, Greece, and Thrace, he possessed all that immense treasure and military force which had once made the Great King so formidable. By no contemporary man had any such power ever been known or conceived. With the turn of imagination then prevalent, many were doubtless disposed to take him for a god on earth, as Grecian spectators had once supposed with regard to Xerxes, when they beheld the innumerable Persian host crossing the Hellespont.

Exalted to this prodigious grandeur, Alexander was at the time of his death little more than thirty-two years old—the age at which a citizen of Athens was growing into important commands; ten years less than the age for a consul at Rome; two years younger than the age at which Timour first