

## Pelopidas

By Plutarch

(legendary, died 364 B.C.E.)

Translated by John Dryden

CATO major, hearing some commend one that was rash, and inconsiderately daring in a battle, said, "There is a difference between a man's prizing valour at a great rate, and valuing life at little; a very just remark.

Antigonus, we know, at least, had a soldier, a venturous fellow, but of wretched health and constitution; the reason of whose ill-look he took the trouble to inquire into; and, on understanding from him that it was a disease, commanded his physicians to employ their utmost skill, and if possible recover him; which brave hero, when once cured, never afterwards sought danger or showed himself venturous in battle; and, when Antigonus wondered and upbraided him with his change, made no secret of the reason, and said, "Sir, you are the cause of my cowardice,

by freeing me from those miseries which made me care little for life." With the same feeling, the Sybarite seems to have said of the Spartans, that it was no commendable thing in them to be so ready to die in the wars, since by that they were freed from such hard labour and miserable living. In truth, the Sybarites, a soft and dissolute people, might well imagine they hated life, because in their eager pursuit of virtue and glory they were not afraid to die; but, in fact, the Lacedaemonians found their virtue secured them happiness alike in living or in dying; as we see in the epitaph that says-

"They died, but not as lavish of their blood,  
Or thinking death itself was simply good;  
Their wishes neither were to live nor die,  
But to do both alike commendably."

An endeavour to avoid death is not blamable, if we do not basely desire to live; nor a willingness to die good and virtuous, if it proceeds from a contempt of life. And therefore Homer always takes care to bring his bravest and most daring heroes well armed into battle; and the Greek law-givers punished those that threw away their shields, but not him that lost his sword or spear; intimating that self-defence

is more a man's business than offence. This is especially true of a governor of a city, or a general; for it, as Iphicrates divides it out, the light-armed are the hands; the horse the feet; the infantry the breast; and the general the head; and, when he puts himself upon danger, not only ventures his own person, but all those whose safety depends on his; and so on the contrary. Callicratidas, therefore, though otherwise a great man, was wrong in his answer to the augur who advised him, the sacrifice being unlucky, to be careful of his life; "Sparta," said he, "will not miss one man." It is true, Callicratidas, when simply serving in any engagement either at sea or land, was but a single person, but as a general, he united in his life the lives of all, and could hardly be called one when his death involved the ruin of so many. The saying of old Antigonus was better, who, when he was to fight at Andros, and one told him, "The enemy's ships are more than ours;" replied, "For how many then wilt thou reckon me?" intimating that a brave and experienced commander is to be highly valued, one of the first duties of whose office indeed it is to save him on whose safety depends that of others. And therefore I applaud Timotheus, who, when Chares showed the wounds he had received, and his shield pierced by a dart, told him, "Yet how ashamed I was, at the siege of Samos, when a dart fell near me, for exposing myself,

more like a boy than like a general in command of a large army." Indeed, where the general's hazarding himself will go far to decide the result, there he must fight and venture his person, and not mind their maxims, who would have a general die, if not of, at least in old age; but when the advantage will be but small if he gets the better, and the loss considerable if he falls, who then would desire, at the risk of the commander's life, a piece of success which a common soldier might obtain? This I thought fit to premise before the lives of Pelopidas and Marcellus, who were both great men, but who both fell by their own rashness. For, being gallant men, and having gained their respective countries great glory and reputation by their conduct in war against terrible enemies, the one, as history relates, overthrowing Hannibal, who was till then invincible; the other, in a set battle beating the Lacedaemonians, then supreme both at sea and land; they ventured at last too far, and were heedlessly prodigal of their lives, when there was the greatest need of men and commanders such as they. And this agreement in their characters and their deaths is the reason why I compare their lives.

Pelopidas, the son of Hippoclus, was descended, as likewise Epaminondas was, from an honourable family in Thebes; and, being brought up to

opulence, and having a fair estate left him whilst he was young, he made it his business to relieve the good and deserving amongst the poor, that he might show himself lord and not slave of his estate. For amongst men, as Aristotle observes, some are too narrow-minded to use their wealth, and some are loose and abuse it; and these live perpetual slaves to their pleasures, as the others to their gain. Others permitted themselves to be obliged by Pelopidas, and thankfully made use of his liberality and kindness; but amongst all his friends he could never persuade Epaminondas to be a sharer in his wealth. He, however, stepped down into his poverty, and took pleasure in the same poor attire, spare diet, unwearied endurance of hardships, and unshrinking boldness in war; like Capaneus in Euripides, who had-

"Abundant wealth and in that wealth no pride," he was ashamed any one should think that he spent more upon his person than the meanest Theban. Epaminondas made his familiar and hereditary poverty more light and easy by his philosophy and single life; but Pelopidas married a woman of good family, and had children; yet still thinking little of his private interests, and devoting all his time to the public, he ruined his estate: and, when his friends admonished and told him how necessary that money which he neglected was: "Yes," he replied,

"necessary to Nicodemus," pointing to a blind cripple.

Both seemed equally fitted by nature for all sorts of excellence; but bodily exercises chiefly delighted Pelopidas, learning Epaminondas; and the one spent his spare hours in hunting and the Palaestra, the other in hearing lectures or philosophizing. And, amongst a thousand points for praise in both, the judicious esteem nothing equal to that constant benevolence and friendship, which they inviolably preserved in all their expeditions, public actions, and administration of the commonwealth. For if any one looks on the administrations of Aristides and Themistocles, of Cimon and Pericles, of Nicias and Alcibiades, what confusion, what envy, what mutual jealousy appears? And if he then casts his eye on the kindness and reverence that Pelopidas showed Epaminondas, he must needs confess that these are more truly and more justly styled colleagues in government and command than the others, who strove rather to overcome one another than their enemies. The true cause of this was their virtue; whence it came that they did not make their actions aim at wealth and glory, an endeavour sure to lead to bitter and contentious jealousy; but both from the beginning being inflamed with a divine desire of seeing their country glorious by their exertions, they used to that end one another's excellences

as their own. Many, indeed, think this strict and entire affection is to be dated from the battle at Mantinea, where they both fought, being part of the succours that were sent from Thebes to the Lacedaemonians, their then friends and allies. For, being placed together amongst the infantry, and engaging the Arcadians, when the Lacedaemonian wing, in which they fought, gave ground, and many fled, they closed their shields together and resisted the assailants. Pelopidas, having received seven wounds in the forepart of his body, fell upon an heap of slain friends and enemies; but Epaminondas, though he thought him past recovery, advanced to defend his arms and body, and singly fought a multitude, resolving rather to die than forsake his helpless Pelopidas. And now, he being much distressed, being wounded in the breast by a spear, and in the arm by a sword, Agesipolis, the King of the Spartans, came to his succour from the other wing, and beyond hope delivered both.

After this the Lacedaemonians pretended to be friends to Thebes, but in truth looked with jealous suspicions on the designs and power of the city, and chiefly hated the party of Ismenias and Androclides, in which Pelopidas also was an associate, as tending to liberty and the advancement of the commonalty. Therefore Archias, Leontidas, and Philip, all rich men, and of oligarchical principles, and immoderately

ambitious, urged Phoebidas the Spartan, as he was on his way past the city with a considerable force, to surprise the Cadmea, and, banishing the contrary faction, to establish an oligarchy, and by that means subject the city to the supremacy of the Spartans. He, accepting the proposal, at the festival of Ceres unexpectedly fell on the Thebans, and made himself master of the citadel. Ismenias was taken, carried to Sparta, and in a short time murdered; but Pelopidas, Pherenicus, Androclides, and many more that fled were publicly proclaimed outlaws. Epaminondas stayed at home, being not much looked after, as one whom philosophy had made inactive and poverty incapable.

The Lacedaemonians cashiered Phoebidas, and fined him one hundred thousand drachmas, yet still kept a garrison in the Cadmea; which made all Greece wonder at their inconsistency, since they punished the doer, but approved the deed. And though the Thebans, having lost their polity, and being enslaved by Archias and Leontidas, had no hopes to get free from this tyranny, which they saw guarded by the whole military power of the Spartans, and had no means to break the yoke, unless these could be deposed from their command of sea and land; yet Leontidas and his associates, understanding the exiles lived at Athens in favour with the people, and with honour from all the



good and virtuous, formed secret designs against their lives, and, suborning some unknown fellows, despatched Androclides, but were not successful on the rest. Letters, besides, were sent from Sparta to the Athenians, warning them neither to receive nor countenance the exiles, but expel them as declared common enemies of the confederacy. But the Athenians, from their natural hereditary inclination to be kind, and also to make a grateful return to the Thebans, who had very much assisted them in restoring their democracy, and had publicly enacted, that if any Athenian would march armed through Boeotia against the tyrants, that no Boeotian should either see or hear it, did the Thebans no harm.

Pelopidas, though one of the youngest, was active in privately exciting each single exile; and often told them at their meetings that it was both dishonourable and impious to neglect their enslaved and engarrisoned country, and, lazily contented with their own lives and safety, depend on the decree of the Athenians, and through fear fawn on every smooth-tongued orator that was able to work upon the people: no, they must venture for this great prize, taking Thrasybulus's bold courage for example, and as he advanced from Thebes and broke the power of the Athenian tyrants, so they should march from Athens and free Thebes. When by

this method he had persuaded them, they privately despatched some persons to those friends they had left at Thebes, and acquainted them with their designs. Their plans being approved, Charon, a man of the greatest distinction, offered his house for their reception; Phillidas contrived to get himself made secretary to Archias and Philip, who then held the office of polemarch or chief captain; and Epaminondas had already inflamed the youth. For, in their exercises, he had encouraged them to challenge and wrestle with the Spartans, and again, when he saw them puffed up with victory and success, sharply told them, that it was the greatest shame to be such cowards as to serve those whom in strength they so much excelled.

The day of action being fixed, it was agreed upon by the exiles that Pherenicus with the rest should stay at the Thriasian plain, while some few of the younger men tried the first danger, by endeavouring to get into the city; and, if they were surprised by their enemies, the others should take care to provide for their children and parents. Pelopidas first offered to undertake the business; then Melon, Damoclidides, and Theopompus, men of noble families, who, in other things loving and faithful to one another, were rivals constant only in glory and courageous exploits. They were twelve in all, and having taken leave

of those that stayed behind sent a messenger to Charon, they went forward, clad in short coats, and carrying hounds and hunting-poles with them, that they might be taken for hunters beating over the fields, and prevent all suspicion in those that met them on the way. When the messenger came to Charon, and told him they were approaching, he did not change his resolution at the sight of danger, but, being a man of his word, offered them his house. But one Hipposthenidas, a man of no ill principles, a lover of his country, and a friend to the exiles, but not of as much resolution as the shortness of time and the character of the action required, being as it were dizzied at the greatness of the approaching enterprise; and beginning now for the first time to comprehend that, relying on that weak assistance which could be expected from the exiles, they were undertaking no less a task than to shake the government, and overthrow the whole power of Sparta; went privately to his house and sent a friend to Melon and Pelopidas, desiring them to forbear for the present, to return to Athens and expect a better opportunity. The messenger's name was Chlidon, who, going home in haste and bringing out his horse, asked for the bridle; but, his wife not knowing where it was, and, when it could not be found, telling him she had lent it to a friend, first they began to chide, then to curse one another, and his wife

wished the journey might prove ill to him and those that sent him; insomuch that Chlidon's passion made him waste a great part of the day in this quarrelling, and then, looking on this chance as an omen, he laid aside all thoughts of his journey, and went away to some other business. So nearly had these great and glorious designs, even in their very birth, lost their opportunity.

But Pelopidas and his companions, dressing themselves like countrymen, divided, and, whilst it was yet day, entered at different quarters of the city. It was, besides, a windy day, and now it just began to snow, which contributed much to their concealment, because most people were gone indoors to avoid the weather. Those, however, that were concerned in the design received them as they came, and conducted them to Charon's house, where the exiles and others made up forty-eight in number. The tyrant's affairs stood thus: the secretary, Phillidas, as I have already observed, was an accomplice in and privy to all the contrivance of the exiles, and he a while before had invited Archias, with others, to an entertainment on that day, to drink freely, and meet some women of the town, on purpose that when they were drunk, and given up to their pleasures, he might deliver them over to the conspirators. But before Archias was thoroughly heated notice was

given him that the exiles were privately in the town; a true report indeed, but obscure, and not well confirmed: nevertheless, though Phillidas endeavoured to divert the discourse, Archias sent one of his guards to Charon, and commanded him to attend immediately. It was evening, and Pelopidas and his friends with him in the house were putting themselves into a fit posture for action, having their breastplates on already, and their swords girt: but at the sudden knocking at the door, one stepping forth to inquire the matter, and learning from the officer that Charon was sent for by the polemarch, returned in great confusion and acquainted those within; and immediately conjectured that the whole plot was discovered, and they should be cut in pieces, before so much as achieving any action to do credit to their bravery: yet all agreed that Charon should obey and attend the polemarch to prevent suspicion. Charon was, indeed, a man of courage and resolution in all dangers, yet in this case he was extremely concerned, lest any should suspect that he was the traitor and the death of so many brave citizens he laid on him. And, therefore, when he was ready to depart, he brought his son out of the women's apartment, a little boy as yet, but one of the best looking and strongest of all those of his age, and delivered him to Pelopidas with these words: "If you find me a traitor, treat the boy as an enemy without any mercy." The

concern which Charon showed drew tears from many; but all protested vehemently against his supposing any one of them so mean-spirited and base, at the appearance of approaching danger, as to suspect or blame him; and therefore desired him not to involve his son, but to set him out of harm's way: that so he, perhaps escaping the tyrant's power, might live to revenge the city and his friends. Charon, however, refused to remove him, and asked, "What life, what safety could be more honourable, than to die bravely with his father and such generous companions?" Thus, imploring the protection of the gods, and saluting and encouraging them all, he departed, considering with himself, and composing his voice and countenance, that he might look as little like as possible to what in fact he really was.

When he was come to the door, Archias with Phillidas came out to him, and said, "I have heard, Charon, that there are some men just come, and lurking in the town, and that some of the citizens are resorting to them." Charon was at first disturbed, but asking, "Who are they? and who conceals them?" and finding Archias did not thoroughly understand the matter, he concluded that none of those privy to the design had given this information, and replied, "Do not disturb yourselves for an empty rumour: I will look into it, however, for no report in such

a case is to be neglected." Phillidas, who stood by, commended him, and leading back Archias, got him deep in drink, still prolonging the entertainment with the hopes of the women's company at last. But when Charon returned, and found the men prepared, not as if they hoped for safety and success, but to die bravely and with the slaughter of their enemies, he told Pelopidas and his friends the truth, but pretended to others in the house that Archias talked to him about something else, inventing a story for the occasion. This storm was just blowing over, when fortune brought another; for a messenger came with a letter from one Archias, the Hierophant at Athens, to his namesake Archias, who was his friend and guest. This did not merely contain a vague conjectural suspicion, but, as it appeared afterwards, disclosed every particular of the design. The messenger being brought in to Archias, who was now pretty well drunk, and delivering the letter, said to him, "The writer of this desired it might be read at once; it is on urgent business." Archias, with a smile, replied, "Urgent business tomorrow," and so receiving the letter, he put it under his pillow, and returned to what he had been speaking of with Phillidas, and these words of his are a proverb to this day amongst the Greeks.

Now when the opportunity seemed convenient for action, they set out

in two companies; Pelopidas and Damocles with their party went against Leontidas and Hypates, that lived near together; Charon and Melon against Archias and Philip, having put on women's apparel over their breastplates, and thick garlands of fir and pine to shade their faces; and so, as soon as they came to the door, the guests clapped and gave an huzza, supposing them to be the women they expected. But when the conspirators had looked about the room, and carefully marked all that were at the entertainment, they drew their swords, and making at Archias and Philip amongst the tables, disclosed who they were. Phillidas persuaded some few of his guests to sit still, and those that got up and endeavoured to assist the polemarch, being drunk, were easily despatched. But Pelopidas and his party met with a harder task; as they attempted Leontidas, a sober and formidable man, and when they came to his house found his door shut, he being already gone to bed. They knocked a long time before any one would answer, but at last, a servant that heard them, coming out and unbarring the door, as soon as the gate gave way, they rushed in, and, overturning the man, made all haste to Leontidas's chamber. But Leontidas, guessing at the matter by the noise and running, leaped from his bed and drew his dagger, but forgot to put out the lights, and by that means made them fall foul of one another in the dark. As it was, being easily seen by reason



of the light, he received them at his chamber door and stabbed Cephisodorus, the first man that entered: on his falling, the next that he engaged was Pelopidas; and the passage being narrow and Cephisodorus's body lying in the way, there was a fierce and dangerous conflict. At last Pelopidas prevailed, and having killed Leontidas, he and his companions went in pursuit of Hypates, and after the same manner broke into his house. He perceived the design and fled to his neighbours; but they closely followed, and caught and killed him.

This done they joined Melon and sent to hasten the exiles they had left in Attica: and called upon the citizens to maintain their liberty, and taking down the spoils from the porches, and breaking open all the armourers' shops that were near, equipped those that came to their assistance. Epaminondas and Gorgidas came in already armed, with a gallant train of young men and the best of the old. Now the city was in a great excitement and confusion, a great noise and hurry, lights set up in every house, men running here and there; however, the people did not as yet gather into a body, but, amazed at the proceedings, and not clearly understanding the matter, waited for the day. And, therefore, the Spartan officers were thought to have been in fault for not falling on at once, since their garrison consisted of about

fifteen hundred men, and many of the citizens ran to them; but, alarmed with the noise, the fires, and the confused running of the people, they kept quietly within the Cadmea. As soon as day appeared, the exiles from Attica came in armed, and there was a general assembly of the people. Epaminondas and Gorgidas brought forth Pelopidas and his party, encompassed by the priests, who held out garlands, and exhorted the people to fight for their country and their gods. The assembly, at their appearance, rose up in a body and with shouts and acclamations received the men as their deliverers and benefactors.

Then Pelopidas, being chosen chief captain of Boeotia, together with Melon and Charon, proceeded at once to blockade the citadel and stormed it on all sides, being extremely desirous to expel the Lacedaemonians, and free the Cadmea, before an army could come from Sparta to their relief. And he just so narrowly succeeded, that they, having surrendered on terms and departed, on their way home met Cleombrotus at Megara marching towards Thebes with a considerable force. The Spartans condemned and executed Herippidas and Arcissus, two of their governors, at Thebes, and Lysanoridas the third, being severely fined, fled to Peloponnesus. This action so closely resembling that of Thrasybulus, in the courage of the actors, the danger, the encounters, and equally crowned with

success, was called the sister of it by the Greeks. For we can scarcely find any other examples where so small and weak a party of men by bold courage overcame such numerous and powerful enemies, or brought greater blessings to their country by so doing. But the subsequent change of affairs made this action the more famous; for the war which forever ruined the pretensions of Sparta to command, and put an end to the supremacy she then exercised alike by sea and by land, proceeded from that night, in which Pelopidas not surprising any fort, or castle, or citadel, but coming, the twelfth man, to a private house, loosed and broke, if we may speak truth in metaphor, the chains of the Spartan sway, which before seemed of adamant and indissoluble.

But now the Lacedaemonians invading Boeotia with a great army, the Athenians, affrighted at the danger, declared themselves no allies to Thebes, and prosecuting those that stood for the Boeotian interest, executed some, and banished and fined others: and the cause of Thebes, destitute of allies, seemed in a desperate condition. But Pelopidas and Gorgidas, holding the office of captains of Boeotia, designing to breed a quarrel between the Lacedaemonians and Athenians, made this contrivance. One Sphodrias, a Spartan, a man famous indeed for courage in battle, but of no sound judgment, full of ungrounded hopes

and foolish ambition, was left with an army at Thespieae, to receive and succour the Theban renegades. To him Pelopidas and his colleagues privately sent a merchant, one of their friends, with money, and, what proved more efficient, advice- that it more became a man of his worth to set upon some great enterprise, and that he should, making a sudden incursion on the unprotected Athenians, surprise the Piraeus; since nothing could be so grateful to Sparta as to take Athens; and the Thebans, of course, would not stir to the assistance of men whom they now hated and looked upon as traitors. Sphodrias, being at last wrought upon, marched into Attica by night with his army, and advanced as far as Eleusis; but there his soldiers' hearts failing, after exposing his project and involving the Spartans in a dangerous war, he retreated to Thespieae. After this the Athenians zealously sent supplies to Thebes, and putting to sea, sailed to many places, and offered support and protection to all those of the Greeks who were willing to revolt.

The Thebans, meantime, singly, having many skirmishes with the Spartans in Boeotia, and fighting some battles, not great indeed, but important as training and instructing them, thus had their minds raised, and their bodies inured to labour, and gained both experience and courage by these frequent encounters, insomuch that we have it related that

Antalcidas, the Spartan, said to Agesilaus, returning wounded from Boeotia, "Indeed, the Thebans have paid you handsomely for instructing them in the art of war, against their wills." In real truth, however, Agesilaus was not their master in this, but those that prudently and opportunely, as men do young dogs, set them on their enemies, and brought them safely off after they had tasted the sweets of victory and resolution. Of all those leaders, Pelopidas deserves the most honour: as after they had once chosen him general, he was every year in command as long as he lived; either captain of the sacred band, or, what was most frequent, chief captain of Boeotia. About Plataea and Thespieae the Spartans were routed and put to flight, and Phoebidas, that surprised the Cadmea, slain; and at Tanagra a considerable force was worsted, and the leader Panthoides killed. But these encounters, though they raised the victors' spirits, did not thoroughly dishearten the unsuccessful; for there was no set battle, or regular fighting, but mere incursions on advantage, in which, according to occasion, they charged, retired again, or pursued. But the battle at Tegyrae, which seemed a prelude to Leuctra, won Pelopidas great reputation; for none of the other commanders could claim any hand in the design, nor the enemies any show of victory. The city of the Orchomenians siding with the Spartans, and having received two companies for its

guard, he kept a constant eye upon it, and watched his opportunity. Hearing that the garrison had moved into Locris, and hoping to find Orchomenus defenceless, he marched with his sacred band and some few horsemen. But when he approached the city, and found that a reinforcement of the garrison was on its march from Sparta, he made a circuit round the foot of the mountains, and retreated with his little army through Tegyrae, that being the only way he could pass. For the river Melas, almost as soon as it rises, spreads itself into marshes and navigable pools, and makes all the plain between impassable. A little below the marshes stands the temple and oracle of Apollo Tegyraeus, forsaken not long before that time, having flourished till the Median wars, Echeocrates then being priest. Here they profess that the god was born; the neighbouring mountain is called Delos, and there the river Melas comes again into a channel; beyond the temples rises two springs, admirable for the sweetness, abundance, and coolness of the streams; one they called Phoenix, the other Elaea, even to the present time, as if Lucina had not been delivered between two trees, but fountains. A place hard by, called Ptoum, is shown, where they say she was affrighted by the appearance of a boar; and the stories of the Python and Tityus are in like manner appropriated by these localities. I omit many of the points that are used as arguments. For our tradition does not

rank this god amongst those that were born, and then made immortal, as Hercules and Bacchus, whom their virtue raised above a mortal and passable condition; but Apollo is one of the eternal unbegotten deities, if we may collect any certainty concerning these things, from the statements of the oldest and wisest in such subjects.

As the Thebans were retreating from Orchomenus towards Tegyrae, the Spartans, at the same time marching from Locris, met them. As soon as they came in view, advancing through the straits, one told Pelopidas, "We are fallen into our enemy's hands;" he replied, "And why not they into ours?" and immediately commanded his horse to come up from the rear and charge, while he himself drew his infantry, being three hundred in number, into a close body, hoping by that means, at whatsoever point he made the attack, to break his way through his more numerous enemies. The Spartans had two companies (the company consisting, as Ephorus states, of five hundred; Callisthenes says seven hundred; others, as Polybius, nine hundred); and their leaders, Gorgoleon and Theopompus, confident of success, advanced upon the Thebans. The charge being made with much fury, chiefly where the commanders were posted, the Spartan captains that engaged Pelopidas were first killed; and those immediately around them suffering severely, the whole army was

thus disheartened, and opened a lane for the Thebans as if they desired to pass through and escape. But when Pelopidas entered, and turning against those that stood their ground, still went with a bloody slaughter, an open flight ensued amongst the Spartans. The pursuit was carried but a little way, because they feared the neighbouring Orchomenians and the reinforcements from Lacedaemon; they had succeeded, however, in fighting a way through their enemies, and overpowering their whole force; and, therefore, erecting a trophy, and spoiling the slain, they returned home extremely encouraged with their achievements. For in all the great wars there had ever been against Greeks or barbarians, the Spartans were never before beaten by a smaller company than their own; nor, indeed, in a set battle, when their number was equal. Hence their courage was thought irresistible, and their high repute before the battle made a conquest already of enemies, who thought themselves no match for the men of Sparta even on equal terms. But this battle first taught the other Greeks, that not only Eurotas, or the country between Babyce and Cnacion, breeds men of courage and resolution, but that where the youth are ashamed of baseness, and ready to venture in a good cause, where they fly disgrace more than danger, there, wherever it be, are found the bravest and most formidable opponents.



Gorgidas, according to some, first formed the Sacred Band of three hundred chosen men, to whom, as being a guard for the citadel, the State allowed provision, and all things necessary for exercise: and hence they were called the city band, as citadels of old were usually called cities. Others say that it was composed of young men attached to each other by personal affection, and a pleasant saying of Pammenes is current, that Homer's Nestor was not well skilled in ordering an army, when he advised the Greeks to rank tribe and tribe, and family and family together, that-

"So tribe might tribe, and kinsmen kinsmen aid." but that he should have joined lovers and their beloved. For men of the same tribe or family little value one another when dangers press; but a band cemented by friendship grounded upon love is never to be broken, and invincible; since the lovers, ashamed to be base in sight of their beloved, and the beloved before their lovers, willingly rush into danger for the relief of one another. Nor can that be wondered at since they have more regard for their absent lovers than for others present; as in the instance of the man who, when his enemy was going to kill him, earnestly requested him to run him through the breast, that his lover might not blush to see him wounded in the back. It is a tradition

likewise that Iolaus, who assisted Hercules in his labours and fought at his side, was beloved of him; and Aristotle observes that, even in his time, lovers plighted their faith at Iolaus's tomb. It is likely, therefore, that this band was called sacred on this account; as Plato calls a lover a divine friend. It is stated that it was never beaten till the battle at Chaeronea: and when Philip, after the fight, took a view of the slain, and came to the place where the three hundred that fought his phalanx lay dead together, he wondered, and understanding that it was the band of lovers, he shed tears and said, "Perish any man who suspects that these men either did or suffered anything that was base."

It was not the disaster of Laius, as the poets imagine, that first gave rise to this form of attachment amongst the Thebans, but their lawgivers, designing to soften whilst they were young their natural fierceness, brought, for example, the pipe into great esteem, both in serious and sportive occasions, and gave great encouragement to these friendships in the Palaestra, to temper the manners and characters of the youth. With a view to this they did well, again, to make Harmony, the daughter of Mars and Venus, their tutelar deity; since, where force and courage is joined with gracefulness and winning behaviour,

a harmony ensues that combines all the elements of society in perfect consonance and order. Gorgidas distributed this Sacred Band all through the front ranks of the infantry, and thus made their gallantry less conspicuous; not being united in one body, but mingled with so many others of inferior resolution, they had no fair opportunity of showing what they could do. But Pelopidas, having sufficiently tried their bravery at Tegyrae, where they had fought alone and around his own person, never afterward divided them, but, keeping them entire, and as one man, gave them the first duty in the greatest battles. For as horses ran brisker in a chariot than singly, not that their joint force divides the air with greater ease, but because being matched one against the other emulation kindles and inflames their courage; thus he thought brave men, provoking one another to noble actions, would prove most serviceable, and most resolute, where all were united together.

Now when the Lacedaemonians had made peace with the other Greeks, and united all their strength against the Thebans only, and their king, Cleombrotus, had passed the frontier with ten thousand foot and one thousand horse, and not only subjection, as heretofore, but total dispersion and annihilation threatened, and Boeotia was in a

greater fear than ever- Pelopidas, leaving his house, when his wife followed him on his way, and with tears begged him to be careful of his life, made answer, "Private men, my wife, should be advised to look to themselves, generals to save others." And when he came to the camp, and found the chief captains disagreeing, he, first, joined the side of Epaminondas, who advised to fight the enemy; though Pelopidas himself was not then in office as chief captain of Boeotia, but in command of the Sacred Band, and trusted as it was fit a man should be, who had given his country such proofs of his zeal for its freedom. And so when a battle was agreed on, and they encamped in front of the Spartans at Leuctra, Pelopidas saw a vision, which much discomposed him. In that plain lie the bodies of the daughters of one Scedasus, called from the place Leuctridae, having been buried there after having been ravished by some Spartan strangers. When this base and lawless deed was done, and their father could get no satisfaction at Lacedaemon, with bitter imprecations on the Spartans, he killed himself at his daughters' tombs: and from that time the prophecies and oracles still warned them to have a great care of the divine vengeance at Leuctra. Many, however, did not understand the meaning, being uncertain about the place, because there was a little maritime town of Laconia called Leuctron, and near Megalopolis in Arcadia a place of the same name;

and the villainy was committed long before this battle.

Now Pelopidas, being asleep in the camp, thought he saw the maidens weeping about their tombs, and cursing the Spartans, and Scedasus commanding, if they desired the victory, to sacrifice a virgin with chestnut hair to his daughters. Pelopidas looked on this as an harsh and impious injunction, but rose and told it to the prophets and commanders of the army, some of whom contended that it was fit to obey, and adduced as examples from the ancients, Menoeceus, son of Creon; Macaria, daughter of Hercules; and from later times, Pherecydes the philosopher, slain by the Lacedaemonians, and his skin, as the oracles advised, still kept by their kings. Leonidas, again, warned by the oracle, did as it were sacrifice himself for the good of Greece; Themistocles offered human victims to Bacchus Omestes, before the engagement at Salamis; and success showed their actions to be good. On the contrary, Agesilaus, going from the same place, and against the same enemies that Agamemnon did, and being commanded in a dream at Aulis to sacrifice his daughter, was so weak as to disobey; the consequence of which was, that his expedition was unsuccessful and inglorious. But some on the other side urged that such a barbarous and impious obligation could not be pleasing to any Superior Beings; that typhons and giants did not

preside over the world, but the general father of gods and men; that it was absurd to imagine any divinities or powers delighted in slaughter and sacrifices of men; or, if there were such, they were to be neglected as weak and unable to assist; such unreasonable and cruel desires could only proceed from, and live in, weak and depraved minds.

The commanders thus disputing, and Pelopidas being in a great perplexity, a mare colt breaking from the herd, ran through the camp, and when she came to the place where they were stood still; and whilst some admired her bright chestnut colour, others her mettle, or the strength and fury of her neighing, Theocritus, the augur, took thought, and cried out to Pelopidas, "O good friend! look, the sacrifice is come; expect no other virgin, but use that which the gods have sent thee." With that they took the colt, and, leading her to the maidens' sepulchres, with the usual solemnity and prayers, offered her with joy, and spread through the whole army the account of Pelopidas's dream, and how they had given the required sacrifice.

In the battle, Epaminondas, bending his phalanx to the left, that, as much as possible, he might divide the right wing, composed of Spartans, from the other Greeks, and distress Cleombrotus by a fierce charge

in column on that wing, the enemies perceived the design, and began to change their order, to open and extend their right wing, and, as they far exceeded him in number, to encompass Epaminondas. But Pelopidas with the three hundred came rapidly up, before Cleombrotus could extend his line, and close up his divisions, and so fell upon the Spartans while in disorder; though the Lacedaemonians, the expertest and most practised soldiers of all mankind, used to train and accustom themselves to nothing so much as to keep themselves from confusion upon any change of position, and to follow any leader, or right-hand man, and form in order, and fight on what part soever dangers press. In this battle, however, Epaminondas with his phalanx, neglecting the other Greeks, and charging them alone, and Pelopidas coming up with such incredible speed and fury, so broke their courage and baffled their art that there began such a flight and slaughter amongst the Spartans as was never before known. And so Pelopidas, though in no high office, but only captain of a small band, got as much reputation by the victory as Epaminondas, who was general and chief captain of Boeotia.

Into Peloponnesus, however, they both advanced together as colleagues in supreme command, and gained the greater part of the nations there from the Spartan confederacy; Elis, Argos, all Arcadia, and much of

Laconia itself. It was the dead of winter, and but few of the last days of the month remained, and, in the beginning of the next, few officers were to succeed, and whoever failed to deliver up his charge forfeited his head. Therefore, the other chief captains fearing the law, and to avoid the sharpness of the winter, advised a retreat. But Pelopidas joined with Epaminondas, and, encouraging his countrymen, led them against Sparta, and, passing the Eurotas, took many of the towns, and wasted the country as far as the sea. This army consisted of seventy thousand Greeks, of which number the Thebans could not make the twelfth part; but the reputation of the men made all their allies contented to follow them as leaders, though no articles to that effect had been made. For, indeed, it seems the first and paramount law, that he that wants a defender is naturally a subject to him that is able to defend: as mariners, though in a calm or in the port they grow insolent, and brave the pilot, yet when a storm comes, and danger is at hand, they all attend, and put their hopes in him. So the Argives, Eleans, and Arcadians, in their congresses, would contend with the Thebans for superiority in command, yet in a battle, or any hazardous undertaking, of their own will followed their Theban captains. In this expedition they united all Arcadia into one body, and expelling the Spartans that inhabited Messenia, they called back the old Messenians,



and established them in Ithome in one body;- and, returning through Cenchreae, they dispersed the Athenians, who designed to set upon them in the straits, and hinder their march.

For these exploits, all the other Greeks loved their courage and admired their success; but among their own citizens, envy, still increasing with their glory, prepared them no pleasing nor agreeable reception. Both were tried for their lives, because they did not deliver up their command in the first month, Bucatius, as the law required, but kept it four months longer, in which time they did these memorable actions in Messenia, Arcadia, and Laconia. Pelopidas was first tried, and therefore in greatest danger, but both were acquitted. Epaminondas bore the accusation and trial very patiently, esteeming it a great and essential part of courage and generosity not to resent injuries in political life. But Pelopidas, being a man of a fiercer temper, and stirred on by his friends to revenge the affront, took the following occasion. Meneclidas, the orator, was one of those that had met with Melon and Pelopidas at Charon's house; but not receiving equal honour, and being powerful in his speech, but loose in his manners, and ill-natured, he abused his natural endowments, even after this trial, to accuse and calumniate his betters. He excluded Epaminondas from the chief

captaincy, and for a long time kept the upper hand of him, but he was not powerful enough to bring Pelopidas out of the people's favour, and therefore endeavoured to raise a quarrel between him and Charon. And since it is some comfort to the envious to make those men, whom themselves cannot excel, appear worse than others, he studiously enlarged upon Charon's actions in his speeches to the people, and made panegyrics on his expeditions and victories; and, of the victory which the horsemen won at Plataea, before the battle at Leuctra, under Charon's command, he endeavoured to make the following sacred memorial. Androcydes, the Cyzicene, had undertaken to paint a picture of the battle for the city, and was at work in Thebes: and when the revolt began, and the war came on, the Thebans kept the picture that was then almost finished. This picture Meneclidas persuaded them to dedicate, inscribed with Charon's name, designing by that means to obscure the glory of Epaminondas and Pelopidas. This was a ludicrous piece of pretension, to set a single victory, where only one Gerandas, an obscure Spartan, and forty more were slain, above such numerous and important battles. This motion Pelopidas opposed, as contrary to law, alleging that it was not the custom of the Thebans to honour any single man, but to attribute the victory to their country; yet in all the contest he extremely commended Charon, and confined himself to showing Meneclidas to be a troublesome

and envious fellow, asking the Thebans, if they had done nothing that was excellent insomuch that Meneclidas was severely fined; and he, being unable to pay, endeavoured afterwards to disturb the government. These things give us some light into Pelopidas's life.

Now when Alexander, the tyrant of Pherae, made open war against some of the Thessalians, and had designs against all, the cities sent an embassy to Thebes, to desire succours and a general; and Pelopidas, knowing that Epaminondas was detained by the Peloponnesian affairs, offered himself to lead the Thessalians, being unwilling to let his courage and skill lie idle, and thinking it unfit that Epaminondas should be withdrawn from his present duties. When he came into Thessaly with his army, he presently took Larissa, and endeavoured to reclaim Alexander, who submitted, and bring him, from being a tyrant, to govern gently, and according to law; but finding him untractable and brutish, and hearing great complaints of his lust and cruelty, Pelopidas began to be severe, and used him roughly, insomuch that the tyrant stole away privately with his guard. But Pelopidas, leaving the Thessalians fearless of the tyrant, and friends amongst themselves, marched into Macedonia, where Ptolemy was then at war with Alexander the King of Macedon; both parties having sent for him to hear and determine their

differences, and assist the one that appeared injured. When he came, he reconciled them, calling back the exiles; and receiving for hostages Philip the king's brother, and thirty children of the nobles, he brought them to Thebes; showing the other Greeks how wide a reputation the Thebans had gained for honesty and courage. This was that Philip who afterwards endeavoured to enslave the Greeks; then he was a boy, lived with Pammenes in Thebes; and hence some conjecture that he took Epaminondas's actions for the rule of his own; and perhaps, indeed, he did take example from his activity and skill in war, which, however, was but a small portion of his virtues; of his temperance, justice, generosity, and mildness, in which he was truly great, Philip enjoyed no share either by nature or imitation.

After this, upon a second complaint of the Thessalians against Alexander of Pherae, as a disturber of the cities, Pelopidas was joined with Ismenias, in an embassy to him; but led no forces from Thebes not expecting any war, and therefore was necessitated to make use of the Thessalians upon the emergency. At the same time, also, Macedon was in confusion again, as Ptolemy had murdered the king, and seized the government: but the king's friends sent for Pelopidas, and he being willing to interpose in the matter, but having no soldiers of his

own, enlisted some mercenaries in that country, and with them marched against Ptolemy. When they faced one another Ptolemy corrupted these mercenaries with a sum of money, and persuaded them to revolt to him; but yet fearing the very name and reputation of Pelopidas, he came to him as his superior, submitted, begged his pardon, and protested that he kept the government only for the brothers of the dead king, and would prove a friend to the friends, and an enemy to the enemies of Thebes; and, to confirm this, he gave his son, Philoxenus, and fifty of his companions, for hostages. These Pelopidas sent to Thebes; but he himself, being vexed at the treachery of the mercenaries, and understanding that most of their goods, their wives, and children lay at Pharsalus, so that if he could take them the injury would be sufficiently revenged, got together some of the Thessalians, and marched to Pharsalus. When he just entered the city, Alexander, the tyrant, appeared before it with an army; but Pelopidas and his friends, thinking that he came to clear himself from those crimes that were laid to his charge, went to him; and though they knew very well that he was profligate and cruel, yet they imagined that the authority of Thebes, and their own dignity and reputation, would secure them from violence. But the tyrant, seeing them come unarmed and alone, seized them, and made himself master of Pharsalus. Upon this his subjects were much

intimidated, thinking that after so great and so bold an iniquity he would spare none, but behave himself toward all, and in all matters, as one despairing of his life.

The Thebans, when they heard of this, were very much enraged, and despatched an army, Epaminondas being then in disgrace, under the command of other leaders. When the tyrant brought Pelopidas to Pherae, at first he permitted those that desired it to speak with him, imagining that this disaster would break his spirit, and make him appear contemptible. But when Pelopidas advised the complaining Pheraeans to be comforted, as if the tyrant was now certain in a short time to smart for his injuries, and sent to tell him, "that it was absurd daily to torment and murder his wretched innocent subjects, and yet spare him, who, he well knew, if ever he got his liberty, would be bitterly revenged;" the tyrant, wondering at his boldness and freedom of speech, replied, "And why is Pelopidas in haste to die?" He, hearing of it, rejoined, "That you may be the sooner ruined, being then more hated by the gods than now." From that time he forbade any to converse with him; but Thebe, the daughter of Jason and wife to Alexander, hearing from the keepers of the bravery and noble behaviour of Pelopidas, had a great desire to see and speak with him. Now when she came into the prison,

and, as a woman, could not at once discern his greatness in his calamity, only judging by the meanness of his attire and general appearance, that he was used basely and not befitting a man of his reputation, she wept. Pelopidas, at first not knowing who she was, stood amazed; but when he understood, saluted her by her father's name- Jason and he having been friends and familiars- and she saying, "I pity your wife, sir," he replied, "And I you, that though not in chains, can endure Alexander." This touched the woman, who already hated Alexander for his cruelty and injustice, for his general debaucheries, and for his abuse of her youngest brother. She, therefore, often went to Pelopidas, and, speaking freely of the indignities she suffered, grew more enraged and more exasperated against Alexander.

The Theban generals that were sent into Thessaly did nothing, but, being either unskillful or unfortunate, made a dishonourable retreat, for which the city fined each of them ten thousand drachmas, and sent Epaminondas with their forces. The Thessalians, inspirited by the fame of this general, at once began to stir, and the tyrant's affairs were at the verge of destruction; so great was the fear that possessed his captains and his friends, and so eager the desire of his subjects to revolt, in hope of his speedy punishment. But Epaminondas, more

solicitous for the safety of Pelopidas than his own glory, and fearing that if things came to extremity Alexander would grow desperate, and, like a wild beast, turn and worry him, did not prosecute the war to the utmost; but, hovering still over him with his army, he so handled the tyrant as not to leave him any confidence, and yet not to drive him to despair and fury. He was aware of his savageness, and the little value he had for right and justice, insomuch that sometimes he buried men alive, and sometimes dressed them in bears' and boars' skins, and then baited them with dog, or shot at them for his divertisement. At Meliboea and Scotussa, two cities, his allies, he called all the inhabitants to an assembly, and then surrounded them and cut them to pieces with his guards. He consecrated the spear with which he killed his uncle Polyphron, and, crowning it with garlands, sacrificed to it as a god, and called it Tychon. And once seeing a tragedian act Euripides's Troades, he left the theatre; but sending for the actor, bade him not to be concerned at his departure, but act as he had been used to do, as it was not in contempt of him that he departed, but because he was ashamed that his citizens should see him, who never pitied any man that he murdered, weep at the sufferings of Hecuba and Andromache. This tyrant, however alarmed at the very name, report, and appearance of an expedition under the conduct of Epaminondas,



presently-

"Dropped like a craven cock his conquered wing." and sent an embassy to entreat and offer satisfaction. Epaminondas refused to admit such a man as an ally to the Thebans, but granted him a truce of thirty days, and Pelopidas and Ismenias being delivered up, returned home.

Now the Thebans, understanding that the Spartans and Athenians had sent an embassy to the Persians for assistance, themselves, likewise, sent Pelopidas; an excellent design to increase his glory, no man having ever before passed through the dominions of the king with greater fame and reputation. For the glory that he won against the Spartans did not creep slowly or obscurely; but, after the fame of the first battle at Leuctra was gone abroad, the report of new victories continually following, exceedingly increased, and spread his celebrity far and near. Whatever satraps or generals or commanders he met, he was the object of their wonder and discourse. "This is the man," they said, "who hath beaten the Lacedaemonians from sea and land, and confined that Sparta within Taygetus and Eurotas, which, but a little before, under the conduct of Agesilaus, was entering upon a war with the great king about Susa and Ecbatana." This pleased Artaxerxes, and he was

the more inclined to show Pelopidas attention and honour, being desirous to seem revered, and attended by the greatest. But when he saw him and heard his discourse, more solid than the Athenians, and not so haughty as the Spartans, his regard was heightened, and, truly acting like a king, he openly showed the respect that he felt for him; and this the other ambassadors perceived. Of all other Greeks he had been thought to have done Antalcidas, the Spartan, the greatest honour, by sending him that garland dipped in an unguent, which he himself had worn at an entertainment. Indeed, he did not deal so delicately with Pelopidas, but, according to the custom, gave him the most splendid and considerable presents, and granted him his desires- that the Grecians should be free, Messenia inhabited, and the Thebans accounted the king's hereditary friends. With these answers, but not accepting one of the presents, except what was a pledge of kindness and good-will, he returned. This behaviour of Pelopidas ruined the other ambassadors; the Athenians condemned and executed their Timagoras, and, indeed, if they did it for receiving so many presents from the king, their sentence was just and good; as he not only took gold and silver, but a rich bed, and slaves to make it, as if the Greeks were unskillful in that art; besides eighty cows and herdsmen, professing he needed cows' milk for some distemper; and, lastly, he was carried in a litter

to the seaside, with a present of four talents for his attendants. But the Athenians, perhaps, were not so much irritated at his greediness for the presents. For Epicrates the baggage-carrier not only confessed to the people that he had received gifts from the king, but made a motion, that instead of nine archons, they should yearly choose nine poor citizens to be sent ambassadors to the king, and enriched by his presents, and the people only laughed at the joke. But they were vexed that the Thebans obtained their desires, never considering that Pelopidas's fame was more powerful than all their rhetorical discourse, with a man who still inclined to the victorious in arms. This embassy, having obtained the restitution of Messenia, and the freedom of the other Greeks, got Pelopidas a great deal of good-will at his return.

At this time, Alexander the Pheraean falling back to his old nature, and having seized many of the Thessalian cities, and put garrisons upon the Achaeans of Phthiotis, and the Magnesians, the cities, hearing that Pelopidas was returned, sent an embassy to Thebes requesting succours, and him for their leader. The Thebans willingly granted their desire; and now when all things were prepared, and the general beginning to march, the sun was eclipsed, and darkness spread over the city at noonday. Now when Pelopidas saw them startled at the prodigy,

he did not think it fit to force on men who were afraid and out of heart, nor to hazard seven thousand of his citizens; and therefore with only three hundred horse volunteers, set forward himself to Thessaly, much against the will of the augurs and his fellow-citizens in general, who all imagined this marked portent to have reference to this great man. But he was heated against Alexander for the injuries he had received, and hoped likewise, from the discourse which formerly he had with Thebe, that his family by this time was divided and in disorder. But the glory of the expedition chiefly excited him; for he was extremely desirous at this time, when the Lacedaemonians were sending out military officers to assist Dionysius the Sicilian tyrant, and the Athenians took Alexander's pay, and honoured him with a brazen statue as a benefactor, that the Thebans should be seen, alone, of all the Greeks, undertaking the cause of those who were oppressed by tyrants, and destroying the violent and illegal forms of government in Greece.

When Pelopidas was come to Pharsalus, he formed an army, and presently marched against Alexander; and Alexander understanding that Pelopidas had few Thebans with him, and that his own infantry was double the number of the Thessalians, faced him at Thetidium. Some one told Pelopidas, "The tyrant meets us with a great army;" "So much the better," he

replied, "for then we shall overcome the more." Between the two armies lay some steep high hills about Cynoscephalae, which both parties endeavoured to take by their foot. Pelopidas commanded his horse, which were good and many, to charge that of the enemies; they routed and pursued them through the plain. But Alexander meantime took the hills, and charging the Thessalian foot that came up later, and strove to climb the steep and craggy ascent, killed the foremost, and the others, much distressed, could do the enemies no harm. Pelopidas, observing this, sounded a retreat to his horse, and gave orders that they should charge the enemies that kept their ground; and he himself, taking his shield, quickly joined those that fought about the hills, and advancing to the front, filled his men with such courage and alacrity, that the enemies imagined they came with other spirits and other bodies to the onset. They stood two or three charges, but finding these come on stoutly, and the horse, also, returning from the pursuit, gave ground, and retreated in order. Pelopidas now perceiving, from the rising ground, that the enemy's army was, though not yet routed, full of disorder and confusion, stood and looked about for Alexander; and when he saw him in the right wing, encouraging and ordering his mercenaries, he could not moderate his anger, but inflamed at the sight, and blindly following his passion, regardless alike of his own life and his command,

advanced far before his soldiers, crying out and challenging the tyrant who did not dare to receive him, but retreating, hid himself amongst his guard. The foremost of the mercenaries that came hand to hand were driven back by Pelopidas, and some killed; but many at a distance shot through his armour and wounded him, till the Thessalians, in anxiety for the result, ran down the hill to his relief, but found him already slain. The horse came up also, and routed the phalanx, and following the pursuit a great way filled the whole country with the slain, which were above three thousand.

No one can wonder that the Thebans then present should show great grief at the death of Pelopidas, calling him their father, deliverer, and instructor in all that was good and commendable. But the Thessalians and the allies, outdoing in their public edicts all the just honours that could be paid to human courage, gave, in their display of feeling, yet stronger demonstrations of the kindness they had for him. It is stated that none of the soldiers, when they heard of his death, would put off their armour, unbridle their horses, or dress their wounds, but still hot and with their arms on, ran to the corpse, and, as if he had been yet alive and could see what they did, heaped up spoils about his body. They cut off their horses' manes and their own hair,

many kindled no fire in their tents, took no supper, and silence and sadness was spread over all the army; as if they had not gained the greatest and most glorious victory, but were overcome by the tyrant and enslaved. As soon as it was known in the cities, the magistrates, youths, children, and priests came out to meet the body, and brought trophies, crowns, and suits of golden armour; and, when he was to be interred, the elders of the Thessalians came and begged the Thebans that they might give the funeral; and one of them said, "Friends, we ask a favour of you, that will prove both an honour and comfort to us in this our great misfortune. The Thessalians shall never again wait on the living Pelopidas, shall never give honours of which he can be sensible, but if we may have his body, adorn his funeral, and inter him, we shall hope to show that we esteem his death a greater loss to the Thessalians than to the Thebans. You have lost only a good general, we both a general and our liberty. For how shall we dare to desire from you another captain, since we cannot restore Pelopidas?"

The Thebans granted their request, and there was never a more splendid funeral in the opinion of those who do not think the glory of such solemnities consists only in gold, ivory, and purple; as Philistus did, who extravagantly celebrates the funeral of Dionysius, in which

his tyranny concluded like the pompous exit of some great tragedy. Alexander the Great, at the death of Hephaestion, not only cut off the manes of his horses and his mules, but took down the battlements from the city walls, that even the towns might seem mourners, and instead of their former beauteous appearance, look bald at his funeral. But such honours, being commanded and forced from the mourners, attended with feelings of jealousy towards those who received them, and of hatred towards those who exacted them, were no testimonies of love and respect, but of the barbaric pride, luxury, and insolence of those who lavished their wealth in these vain and undesirable displays. But that a man of common rank, dying in a strange country, neither his wife, children, nor kinsmen present, none either asking or compelling it, should be attended, buried, and crowned by so many cities that strove to exceed one another in the demonstrations of their love, seems to be the sum and completion of happy fortune. For the death of happy men is not, as Aesop observes, most grievous, but most blessed, since it secures their felicity, and puts it out of fortune's power. And that Spartan advised well, who, embracing Diagoras, that had himself been crowned in the Olympic Games, and saw his sons and grandchildren victors, said, "Die, Diagoras, for thou canst not be a god." And yet who would compare all the victories in the Pythian and Olympian Games



put together with one of those enterprises of Pelopidas, of which he successfully performed so many? Having spent his life in brave and glorious actions, he died at last in the chief command, for the thirteenth time, of the Boeotians, fighting bravely and in the act of slaying a tyrant, in defence of the liberty of the Thessalians.

His death, as it brought grief, so likewise it produced advantage to the allies; for the Thebans, as soon as they heard of his fall, delayed not their revenge, but presently sent seven thousand foot and seven hundred horse, under the command of Malcitas and Diogiton. And they, finding Alexander weak and without forces, compelled him to restore the cities he had taken, to withdraw his garrisons from the Magnesians and Achaeans of Phthiotis, and swear to assist the Thebans against whatsoever enemies they should require. This contented the Thebans, but punishment overtook the tyrant for his wickedness, and the death of Pelopidas was revenged by Heaven in the following manner. Pelopidas, as I have already mentioned, had taught his wife Thebe not to fear the outward splendour and show of the tyrant's defences, since she was admitted within them. She, of herself, too, dreaded his inconstancy, and hated his cruelty; and therefore, conspiring with her three brothers, Tisiphonus, Pytholaus, and Lycophron, made

the following attempt upon him. All other apartments were full of the tyrant's night guards, but their bed-chamber was an upper room, and before the door lay a chained dog to guard it, which would fly at all but the tyrant and his wife and one servant that fed him. When Thebe, therefore, designed to kill her husband, she hid her brothers all day in a room hard by, and she, going in alone, according to her usual custom, to Alexander, who was asleep already, in a little time came out again, and commanded the servant to lead away the dog, for Alexander wished to rest quietly. She covered the stairs with wool, that the young men might make no noise as they came up; and then, bringing up her brothers with their weapons, and leaving them at the chamber door, she went in, and brought away the tyrant's sword that hung over his head, and showed it them for confirmation that he was fast asleep. The young men appearing fearful, and unwilling to do the murder, she chid them, and angrily vowed she would wake Alexander and discover the conspiracy; and so, with a lamp in her hand, she conducted them in, they being both ashamed and afraid, and brought them to the bed; when one of them caught him by the feet, the other pulled him backwards by the hair, and the third ran him through. The death was more speedy, perhaps, than was fit; but, in that he was the first tyrant that was killed by the contrivance of his wife, and

as his corpse was abused, thrown out, and trodden under foot by the Pheraeans, he seems to have suffered what his villainies deserved.

THE END