

CHAPTER XVII

THE DELIAN CONFEDERACY AND THE ATHENIAN EMPIRE

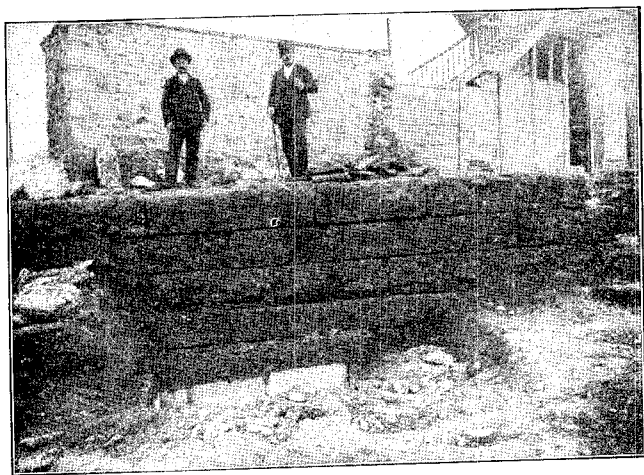
479-461 B.C.

211. Fortification of Athens and of Peiraeus (479, 476 B.C.). — As soon as all danger from the Persians was over, the Athenians returned home and began to rebuild their city and its walls. They had sacrificed more than all the other Greeks together in the cause of Hellenic freedom. But instead of sympathizing with them in their misfortune, some of the Greek states, doubtless through jealousy, complained of Athens to Sparta, and asked that the building of the defences be stopped. It was urged that the Athenian walls would be merely a protection to the Persians on another invasion, and that Peloponnesians would afford a sufficient refuge for all. The Spartan ephors acted readily on the suggestion. They sent envoys who advised the Athenians to stop fortifying their city and to join the Lacedaemonians rather in tearing down the walls of all the communities north of the Isthmus of Corinth. The policy of Lacedaemon was evidently to rule Greece if convenient, and to protect only Peloponnesians; but the Athenians would not submit to an arrangement so unjust. As they were in no condition to face a Peloponnesian army, the resourceful Themistocles provided a way out of the difficulty.

Following his advice, the Athenians appointed him and two others ambassadors to Sparta to discuss the question at issue. Before setting out, he directed the Athenians to build the wall with the utmost speed. Following his advice, the whole population worked restlessly on the building of the walls, using whatever material they could most easily find. Some remnants of the fortification, still extant, contain gravestones and fragments of earlier buildings. It embraced a wider area than had formerly been en-

closed, the object being to give the city room for expansion. Though hastily constructed, the wall proved strong enough for every emergency.

Meanwhile Themistocles had a work to do at Sparta. Day after day he invented excuses for delaying the business on hand. When a report came that the Athenians were at work on the fortifications, he stoutly denied it, and urged the ephors to send envoys to Athens



A REMNANT OF THE WALL OF ATHENS

(From a photograph)

to find out the truth for themselves. They did as he suggested; but the Athenians, secretly advised by Themistocles, detained the envoys. When at last he heard that the work was finished, he informed the ephors that Athens was now fortified and that Sparta must treat her as an equal. It was a bold game well played. The ephors replied that their proposal to Athens had been intended merely as friendly advice. The outcome of the matter was that, although the Spartans were thoroughly indignant with Themistocles, the alliance between the two states remained intact.¹

As soon as the Athenians had finished rebuilding their city,

Themistocles began to fortify Peiraeus. He surrounded it with a massive wall seven miles in circuit. On the side toward the sea it followed the windings of the shore. There were three natural harbors, which Themistocles in his archonship many years earlier had brought into use.¹ He was in fact the founder of Peiraeus. It soon became famous for industry and trade. In its markets all the known products of the world were bought and sold. For ages it remained one of the most flourishing commercial cities of the Mediterranean.

212. The Naval Leadership passes from Sparta to Athens. — While the Athenians were rebuilding and fortifying their city and port, interesting events were happening elsewhere. The year after the battles of Plataea and Mycale the Lacedaemonians sent out Pausanias to command the fleet of the allies in their war for the liberation of the colonies. He laid siege to Byzantium, which was still occupied by the enemy (478 B.C.); but while engaged in this work he offered to betray Greece into Persian hands on condition that he might become tyrant of his country and son-in-law of the king. Meantime he was cruel and arrogant to those under his authority. The Asiatic Greeks who had joined the expedition, resenting such treatment, begged the Athenian generals, Aristides and Cimon,² to take charge of the fleet. The gentleness and courtesy of the commanders from Athens contrasted strikingly with the brutality of Pausanias. They accepted the invitation. The Lacedaemonians recalled Pausanias to answer the charges against him, and soon afterward yielded the leadership at sea to Athens. They saw no advantage to themselves in continuing the war with Persia, and believed that they would lose none of their prestige by this arrangement, for Athens was still their ally. The Athenians, on the other hand, gladly accepted the burden of the war with Persia, for they hoped by means of their great navy to gain both wealth and political power.

213. Organization of the Delian Confederacy (477 B.C.). — The allies whom Athens thus acquired included from the first nearly all the Ionian and Aeolian colonies of the Aegean islands and eastern coast,³ many Greek cities on the Hellespont, those of *Chalcidice*,

¹ § 192.² § 198.³ § 92 f.

and a few in Thrace. Some of them, as Naxos, Thasos, Samos, and Chios, were from the Greek point of view important states, able to equip and man about thirty triremes each, whereas the great majority were too small to equip individually a single trireme, or at best but one or two. These wide differences in their financial and military capacities, added to the love of the towns for complete independence, made it exceedingly difficult for them to form a self-governing union on the basis of perfect equality. Such a union, however, Athens now attempted to organize. Each state had an equal voice. The council deliberated on all matters of common interest, whether of peace or of war.

The object of the confederacy was chiefly the protection of the allies from Persia. It centred at the shrine of Apollo on the island of De'los, and was named therefore the Delian Confederacy. Its organization was patterned after that of the Peloponnesian League.¹ The allies were to furnish ships and crews led by Athenian generals, and a congress of deputies from all the allied states was to meet at Delos under the presidency of representatives from Athens. In important respects the Confederacy of Delos differed from the Peloponnesian League. It was necessary to maintain a large fleet in the Aegean Sea as a defence against the Persians, whereas no standing force was needed for the protection of Peloponnesse. Money is absolutely necessary for the support of a fleet; hence the Delian Confederacy, unlike the Peloponnesian League, levied annual taxes. Aristides, who was commissioned to make the first assessment, decided which states should furnish ships with their crews, and which should contribute money. The larger communities generally provided naval forces, while the smaller paid taxes. The total annual cost of maintaining the Confederacy amounted, by the assessment of Aristides, to four hundred and sixty talents.² The treasury, in the temple of the Delian Apollo, was managed by treasurers who were exclusively Athenians.

The union was to be perpetual. Aristides and the representatives of the league exchanged oaths to abide by the original terms and never to secede. As a part of the oath-taking ceremony they let hot pieces of iron sink into the sea, with the idea that the agree-

¹ § 145.

² The value of the talent was a little less than \$1200.

ment should be binding till the metal rose of its own accord to the surface.

214. The Growth of the Confederacy. — With Cimon as leader the Delian Confederacy rapidly expanded. He annexed the remaining islands in the north Aegean, and dislodged the Persians from the Thracian coast and from the whole country about the Hellespont and Propontis, including Byzantium. Then he turned his attention to the southeastern Aegean. In 468 B.C., at the mouth of the Eu-rym'e-don on the coast of Asia Minor, Cimon gained a double victory over a Phoenician fleet and a land force of Persians. It was the most brilliant success of his life. The booty was enormous, and the glory of Athens was greatly heightened. As a result of this battle, the Carian and Lycian coasts came into the confederacy of Delos, bringing the number of cities up to about two hundred. The Persians were dislodged from the whole Aegean region, and there was little apparent danger from them for the present.

215. The Revolts of Allies and the Beginning of the Athenian Empire. — But this very feeling of security proved to be extremely mischievous. Many of the allies, finding military service irksome, offered to pay taxes instead. Cimon advised the Athenians to accept these payments, as they could build and equip triremes at less expense than the separate allied towns, and hence could fulfil their agreement to protect the Aegean Sea, give work to the laboring class among themselves, and have money left for their own public use. But some grew tired even of paying the tribute. Indeed, they could no longer see the need of a confederacy since the Persians had ceased to trouble them.

Even before the battle of Eurymedon, Nax'os took the lead in revolting. It had a strong navy and expected aid from Persia; but Cimon besieged the island and reduced it before help could arrive. The Naxians were compelled to tear down their walls, surrender their fleet, and pay henceforth an annual tribute. Thus Naxos lost its freedom and became dependent on Athens (469 B.C.).

A dependent state within the Confederacy was one (1) which could not enter into relations of any kind with other states except by permission of Athens, and (2) which had to accept a constitu-

tion dictated by Athens. The form of government thus imposed was always more or less democratic.

Next came the revolt of Thasos, the cause of which was a quarrel between the Athenians and the Thasians over certain gold mines of Thrace, in which both had an interest. Thasos was one of the strongest of the allies; it had a fleet of thirty-three ships and valuable possessions in Thrace. After a siege of two years, Cimon reduced the island, and punished it just as he had Naxos (463 B.C.).

It is necessary now to consider in what way these transactions violated the original treaty of alliance. The change from naval service to money payments, brought about by mutual agreement, was perfectly legal. And it was the duty of Athens to compel reluctant states to bear their share of the burden. The first violation of the treaty was committed by the states which revolted. Here, too, Athens acted legally in compelling the seceding states to return to their allegiance. She exceeded her right, however, in depriving them of their autonomy. Although still allies in law, the dependent states formed in fact an Athenian empire. As conditions then were, only two lines of policy were open to Athens: she could either allow the Confederacy to dissolve or she would be compelled to convert it into an empire. The latter policy was in every way to her interest, and she readily adopted it. Gradually the states were subjected, till, in the Age of Pericles, the entire confederacy became an empire.¹ The great majority of citizens in all the allied cities were pleased with the change, as it gave them control of their local governments. But the coercion of a free state offended the sentiment of the Greeks in general, who therefore began to look upon Athens as a tyrant city.

216. Political Parties at Athens and their Relations with Sparta.—The Spartans were accustomed to control the affairs of their allies by interfering in their politics. They always took sides with the conservative party.² In the case of Athens they had been displeased with Themistocles ever since he had outwitted them in regard to the building of the walls.³ In opposition to him they therefore urged Cimon forward as leader of the conservatives. Several prominent men joined Cimon against Themistocles. Representing

¹ Cf. § 222.

² Cf. § 145.

³ § 211.

their great opponent as dangerous to the state, they had him ostracized (about 472 B.C.), and he finally died an exile in Asia Minor.

For a few years after the banishment of Themistocles the Lacedaemonians remained friendly to Athens. But when the battle of Eurymedon had been won, and they saw the victorious city continually adding to her possessions and power, fear and jealousy turned them against her. By promising to invade Attica they secretly encouraged the Thasians to hold out against Athens. This agreement, however, they were prevented from fulfilling by a terrible earthquake, which nearly destroyed Sparta. Only a few houses were left standing, and thousands of lives were lost. To add to the misfortune, the helots revolted, and in the general confusion caused by earthquake and superstition they nearly captured Sparta by surprise. But most of the perioeci remained loyal, and the shattered city was saved by the promptness of King Ar-chi-da'mus. The insurgents, who were mostly Messenians, seized and fortified, in their own country, Mount Ithome,¹ one of the strongest military positions in Peloponnese. As the Lacedaemonians could accomplish nothing against them single-handed, they asked help of their allies, including the Athenians. When the envoys reached Athens, a hot debate ensued as to whether aid should be sent. After the banishment of Themistocles, the democratic party, believing that Sparta was a dead weight attached to Athens, continued to uphold his policy of cutting loose from Peloponnese. Its leader was now Themistocles' friend, Eph-i-al'tes, a good citizen and an upright statesman. He vehemently opposed the resolution to send assistance to the Lacedaemonians, and advised that "the pride and arrogance of Sparta be trodden under." Cimon, who was present, was of the opposite opinion. In the debate with Ephialtes, he urged the Athenians "not to suffer Greece to be lamed or Athens to be deprived of her yoke-mate," meaning that the alliance between these two states should be preserved at every cost. It was his conviction that the strength of Hellas should be united in continual war against Persia. The assembly adopted his proposal, and sent him with an army against Ithome.

¹ §§ 78, 141.

217. Rupture between Athens and Sparta (462 B.C.); Ostracism of Cimon (461 B.C.). — During the absence of Cimon the popular party, led by Ephialtes, held complete control of the government, and proceeded to make it more democratic than it had ever been before.¹ Meanwhile the Athenian troops at Ithome were unsuccessful; and the Lacedaemonian authorities, suspecting them of treachery, insolently dismissed them. Cimon returned to Athens an unpopular man. In trying to check the rising tide of democracy, he was met with taunts of over-fondness for Sparta. Athens abandoned his policy, broke loose from Sparta, and began to form an alliance of her own, wholly independent of the Peloponnesian League. Cimon's resistance to these new movements caused his ostracism in 461 B.C.

For fifteen years (476-461 B.C.) he had been leading the Athenian fleets to victory or upholding the principles of old Athens against what he believed to be the dangerous tendencies of demagogues, such as Themistocles and Ephialtes; during this time his influence maintained friendship between his city and Sparta and harmony among the states of Greece. Under his patronage Athens advanced beyond all other Hellenic cities in civilization. But with his ostracism the political leadership of his state passed into other hands.

Summary

(1) After the war the Athenians rebuilt the defences of their city against the will of the Lacedaemonians. (2) Themistocles then fortified Peiraeus, and laid the foundation of its commercial greatness. (3) The naval leadership passed from Sparta to Athens. (4) Thereupon the latter organized the Confederacy of Delos. (5) This league expanded rapidly under the leadership of Cimon. (6) Discontented with the union, some of the allies revolted, whereupon Athens reduced the offending states to subjection. Gradually the confederacy was converted into an empire. (7) Meantime the democratic party at Athens, making great gains, strove to cut loose from Sparta, whereas the conservatives clung to the Lacedaemonian alliance. (8) Finally the insolence of the Spartan authorities toward the Athenian contingent of their army caused a rupture between the two states.

¹ Down to this time, the Council of the Areopagus, a conservative body, had exercised a supervision over the magistrates and over the morals of the citizens (§ 149). Ephialtes, supported by Pericles (see next chapter), deprived it of this power.

Suggestive Questions

1. Had Athens remained unfortified, what would probably have been her relations with Sparta? 2. Did Sparta really wish to yield to Athens the naval leadership? If so, why? 3. What is a confederacy? 4. Compare in detail the Delian Confederacy with the Peloponnesian League. 5. What would have happened to the allied states, had the Confederacy been dissolved? 6. Was Athens justified in holding the Confederacy together by force? in subjecting the rebellious states? 7. Trace the events which led to the rupture between Athens and Sparta. 8. What part had Aristeides in the organization of the Confederacy? 9. Describe the location of Peiraeus, Delos, Naxos, Samos, Chios, Byzantium, and Eurymedon River.

Note-book Topics

I. **The Founding of the Delian Confederacy.** — Fling, *Source Book of Greek History*, 148-151 (Thucydides); Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, ch. xxiii; Bury, *History of Greece*, ch. viii. §§ 1, 2; Holm, *History of Greece*, ii. ch. vii.

II. **Aristeides.** — Aristotle, chs. xxiii, xxiv; Plutarch, *Aristeides*.

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