

Source: The Histories of Polybius V2 by Polybius □ (translated by Evelyn S. Shuckburgh 1889)

BOOK XX

GREECE

1. THE Aetolians chose thirty of the Apocleti¹ to confer with King Antiochus. . . .
Antiochus the Great at a meeting of Aetolians at Lamia, autumn of B.C. 192. Livy, 35, 43-46.

2. When Antiochus sent an embassy to the Boeotians, they answered that they would not consider his proposals until the king came in person. . . .

3. As Antiochus was staying at Chalcis, just as the winter was beginning, two ambassadors came to visit him, Charops from Epirus, and Callistratus from Elis. The prayer of the Epirotes was that "The king would not involve them in the war with Rome, for they dwelt on the side of Greece immediately opposite Italy; but that, if he could, he would secure their safety by defending the frontier of Epirus: in that case he should be admitted into all their towns and harbours: but if he decided not to do so at present, they asked his indulgence if they shrank from a war with Rome." The Eleans, in their turn, begged him "To send a reinforcement to their town; for as the Achaeans had voted war against them, they were in terror of an attack from the troops of the league." The king answered the Epirotes by saying that he would send envoys to confer with them on their mutual

¹ The Apocleti, of the numbers of whom we have no information, acted as a consultative senate to prepare measures for the Aetolian Assembly. See Freeman, *History of Federal Government*, p. 335. Livy, 35. 34.

interests ; but to Elis he despatched a thousand foot soldiers under the command of Euphanes of Crete. . . .

4. The Boeotians had long been in a very depressed state, which offered a strong contrast to the former prosperity and reputation of their country. The decline of Boeotia, They had acquired great glory as well as great material prosperity at the time of the battle of Leuctra ; but by some means or another from that time forward they steadily diminished both the one from B.C. 371-361. and the other under the leadership of Amaeocritus ; and subsequently not only diminished them, but underwent a complete change of character, and did all that was possible to wipe out their previous reputation. For having been incited by the Achaeans to go to war with the Aetolians, they adopted the policy of the former and made an alliance with them, and thenceforth maintained a steady war with the B.C. 245. Aetolians. But on the Aetolians invading See Plutarch, Arat. 16. Boeotia, they marched out with their full available force, and without waiting for the arrival of the Achaeans, who had mustered their men and were on the point of marching to their assistance, they attacked the Aetolians ; and being worsted in the battle were so completely demoralised, that, from the time of that campaign, they never plucked up spirit to claim any position of honour whatever, and never shared in any enterprise or contest undertaken by the common consent of the Greeks. They devoted themselves entirely to eating and drinking, and thus became effeminate in their souls as well as in their bodies.

5. Such were, briefly, the steps in the degeneracy of Boeotia. Immediately after the battle just mentioned they abandoned the Achaeans and joined the Aetolians.¹ But on the latter presently going to war with Philip's father Demetrius, they once more abandoned Demetrius II. B.C. 239-229. the Aetolians ; and upon Demetrius entering Boeotia with an army, without attempting resistance they submitted completely to the Macedonians. But as a spark of

¹ *προσέειμαν* Αἰτωλοῖς τὸ ἔθνος, cp. 2, 43. Some have thought that a regular political union with the Aetolian League is meant. But the spirit of the narrative seems to point rather to an alliance.

their ancestral glory still survived, there were found some who disliked the existing settlement and the complete subservience to Macedonia: and they accordingly maintained a violent opposition to the policy of Ascondas and

Neon, the ancestors of Brachylles, who were the most prominent in the party which favoured Macedonia. However, the party of Ascondas

eventually prevailed, owing to the following circumstance. Antigonus (Doson), who, after the death of Demetrius, was Philip's guardian, happened to be sailing on some business along the coast of Boeotia; when off Larymna he was surprised by a sudden ebb of the tide, and his ships were left high and dry. Now just at that time a rumour had been spread that Antigonus meant to make a raid upon the country; and therefore Neon, who was Hipparch at the time, was patrolling the country at the head of all the Boeotian cavalry to protect it, and came upon Antigonus in this helpless and embarrassed position: and having it thus in his power to inflict a serious blow upon the Macedonians, much to their surprise he resolved to spare them. His conduct in so doing was approved by the other Boeotians, but was not at all pleasing to the Thebans. Antigonus, however, when the tide flowed again and his ships floated, proceeded to complete the voyage to Asia on which he was bound, with deep gratitude to Neon for having abstained from attacking him in his awkward position.

Accordingly, when at a subsequent period he conquered the Spartan Cleomenes and became master of Lacedaemon, he left Brachylles in charge of the town, by way of paying him for the kindness done him by his father Neon. This proved to be the beginning of a great rise in importance of the family of Brachylles. But this was not all that Antigonus did for him: from that time forward either he personally, or king Philip, continually supported him with money and influence; so that before long this family entirely overpowered the political party opposed to them in Thebes, and forced all the citizens, with very few exceptions, to join the party of Macedonia. Such was the origin of the political adherence to Macedonia of the family of Neon, and of its rise to prosperity.

B.C. 222.

6. But Boeotia as a nation had come to such a low pitch, that for nearly twenty-five years the administration of justice had been suspended in private and public suits alike. Their magistrates were engaged in despatching bodies of men to guard the country or in proclaiming national expeditions, and thus continually postponed their attendance at courts of law. Some of the Strategi also dispensed allowances to the needy from the public treasury; whereby the common people learnt to support and invest with office those who would help them to escape the penalties of their crimes and undischarged liabilities, and to be enriched from time to time with some portion of the public property obtained by official favour. No one contributed to this lamentable state of things more than Opheltas, who was always inventing some plan calculated to benefit the masses for the moment, while perfectly certain to ruin them in the future. To these evils was added another unfortunate fashion. It became the practice for those who died childless not to leave their property to the members of their family, as had been the custom of the country formerly, but to assign it for the maintenance of feasts and convivial entertainments to be shared in by the testator's friends in common; and even many who did possess children left the larger part of their property to the members of their own club. The result was that there were many Boeotians who had more feasts to attend in the month than there were days in it. The people of Megara therefore, disliking this habit, and remembering their old connexion with the Achaean league, were inclined once more to renew their political alliance with it. For the Megarians had been members of the Achaean league since the time of Antigonus Gonatas; but upon Cleomenes blockading the Isthmus, finding themselves cut off from the Achaeans they joined the Boeotians, with the consent of the former. But a little before the time of which we are now speaking, becoming dissatisfied with the Boeotian constitution, they again joined the Achaeans. The Boeotians, incensed at what they considered acts of contempt, sallied out in full force to attack Megara; and on the Megarians declining to listen to

Disorganised
state of Boeotia.

Antigonus
Gonatas, *ob.*
B. C. 239.

Cleomenic war
B. C. 227-221.

them, they determined in their anger to besiege and assault their city. But being attacked by a panic, on a report spreading that Philopoemen was at hand at the head of a force of Achaeans, they left their scaling ladders against the walls and fled back precipitately to their own country.

7. Such being the state of Boeotian politics, it was only by extraordinary good fortune that they evaded destruction in the dangerous periods of the wars of Philip and Antiochus. But in the succeeding period they did not escape in the same way. Fortune, on the contrary, seemed determined to make them pay for their former good luck by a specially severe retribution, as I shall relate hereafter. . . .

Many of the Boeotians defended their alienation from Antiochus re- the Romans by alleging the assassination of ceived in Thebes, Brachylles,¹ and the expedition made by Flaminius upon Coronea owing to the murders of Romans on the roads.² But the real reason was their moral degeneracy, brought about by the causes I have mentioned. For as soon as the king approached, the Boeotian magistrates went out to meet him, and after holding a friendly conversation with him conducted him into Thebes. . . .

8. Antiochus the Great came to Chalcis in Euboea, and there completed his marriage, when he was fifty years old, and had already undertaken his two most important labours, the liberation of Greece—as he called it—and the war with Rome. However, having fallen in love with a young lady of Chalcis, he was bent on marrying her, though the war was still going on; for he was much addicted to wine and delighted in excesses. The lady was a daughter of Cleoptolemus, a man of rank, and was possessed of extraordinary beauty. He remained in Chalcis all the winter occupied in marriage festivities, utterly regardless of the pressing business of the time. He gave the girl the name of Euboea, and after his defeat³ fled with his bride to Ephesus. . . .

¹ Brachylles, when a Boeotarch in B.C. 196, was assassinated by a band of six men, of whom three were Italians and three Aetolians, on his way home from a banquet. Livy, 33, 23.

² Livy, 33, 29.

³ At Thermopylae, in which battle Livy (36, 19) states on the authority of Polybius that only 500 men out of 10,000 brought by Antiochus into Greece escaped, B.C. 191.

9. When the Romans took Heracleia, Phaeneas the Aetolian Strategus, in view of the danger threatening Aetolia, and seeing what would happen to the other towns, determined to send an embassy to Manius Acilius to demand a truce and treaty of peace. With this purpose he despatched Archidamus, Pantaleon and Chalesus, who on meeting the Roman consul were intending to enter upon a long argument, but were interrupted in the middle of their speech and prevented from finishing it. For Acilius remarked that "For the present he had no leisure to attend to them, being much engaged with the distribution of the spoils of Heracleia : he would, however, grant a ten days' truce and send Lucius Valerius Flaccus with them, with instructions as to what he was to say." The truce being thus made, and Valerius having come to Hypata, a lengthened discussion took place on the state of affairs. The Aetolians sought to establish their case by referring to their previous services to Rome. But Valerius cut this line of argument short by saying that "Such justification did not apply to the present circumstances; for as these old friendly relations had been broken off by them, and the existing hostility was owing entirely to the Aetolians themselves, the services of the past could be of no assistance to them in the present. They must therefore abandon all idea of justification, and adopt a tone of supplication, and beseech the consul's pardon for their transgressions." After a long discussion on various details, the Aetolians eventually decided to leave the whole matter to Acilius, and commit themselves without reserve to the good faith of the Romans. They had no comprehension of what this really involved; but they were misled by the word "faith" into supposing that the Romans would thereby be more inclined to grant them terms. But with the Romans for a man "to commit himself to their good faith" is held to be equivalent to "surrendering unconditionally."

10. Having come to this resolution, Phaeneas despatched legates with Valerius to announce the decision of the Aetolians to Acilius. On being admitted to the presence of the Consul, these legates, after

Heracleia
Trachinia taken
by Acilius after
the battle of
Thermopylae,
B.C. 191.

Embassy of the
Aetolians.

Aetolian embassy
to Acilius.

once more entering upon a plea of self-justification, ended by announcing that the Aetolians had decided to commit themselves to the good faith of the Romans. Hereupon Acilius interrupted them by saying, "Is this really the case, men of Aetolia?" And upon their answering in the affirmative, he

Roman terms. said: "Well then, the first condition is that none of you, individually or collectively, must cross to Asia; the second is that you must surrender Menestratus the Epirote" (who happened at that time to be at Naupactus, where he had come to the assistance of the Aetolians), "and also King Amynder, with such of the Athamanians as accompanied him in his desertion to your side." Here Phaeneas interrupted him by saying: "But it is neither just nor consonant with Greek customs, O Consul, to do what you order." To which Acilius replied,—not so much because he was angry, as because he wished to show him the dangerous position in which he stood, and to thoroughly frighten him,— "Do you still presume to talk to me about Greek customs, and about honour and duty, after having committed yourselves to my good faith? Why, I might if I chose put you all in chains and commit you to prison!" With these words he ordered his men to bring a chain and an iron collar and put it on the neck of each of them. Thereupon Phaeneas and his companions stood in speechless amazement, as though bereft of all power of thought or motion, at this unexpected turn of affairs. But Valerius and some others who were present besought Acilius not to inflict any severity upon the Aetolians then before him, as they were in the position of ambassadors. And on his yielding to these representations, Phaeneas broke silence by saying that "He and the Apocleti were ready to obey the injunctions, but they must consult the general assembly if they were to be confirmed." Upon Acilius agreeing to this, he demanded a truce of ten days to be granted. This also having been conceded, they departed with these terms, and on arrival at Hypata told the Apocleti what had been done and the speeches that had been made. This report was the first thing which made their error, and the compulsion under which they were placed, clear to the Aetolians. It was therefore decided to write round to the various cities

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