CHAPTER XX

FROM THE SICILIAN EXPEDITION TO THE END OF THE WAR

415–404 B.C.

I. The Sicilian Expedition

256. Athens and the Western Greek (479–416 B.C.). — To understand how Sicily now came to be involved in the war, it is necessary to run rapidly over the history of the western Greeks from the time of their victory over Carthage.

After the battle of Himera (480 B.C.),[1] the Greeks of Sicily and Italy entered upon an era of great prosperity. The tyrants beautified their cities with temples and statues. Literature flourished, wealth abounded, and life was easy. Then tyranny was abolished, and before the middle of the century most of the cities of western Greece had introduced democratic governments. Syracuse, the greatest power in Sicily, led the Hellenic cities of the island in time of war, in some such way as Sparta had led the eastern Greeks during the Persian invasions. In this position Syracuse followed two nearly related lines of policy: (1) she maintained close friendship with Sparta and with her mother city, Corinth; and (2) she aimed to bring all the Sicilian cities as thoroughly under her control as those of Peloponnese were under Sparta. In consequence of this policy, (1) Syracuse was hostile to Athens, the enemy of Corinth and Sparta, and (2) the Sicilian cities which disliked the rule of Syracuse looked to Athens for protection.

From the time of Themistocles the Athenians took a more and more lively commercial interest in the West. They exported vases and other manufactured articles to Italy, Sicily, and Carthage. Commerce gradually led to political influence; Se-ges'ta, a foreign city, and the Ionian Rhegium and Le-on-ti'ni became their allies. When the Peloponnesian War began, the Dorians of the West gave

[1] § 208.

their sympathy to Sparta, and at the same time Syracuse found in the war an opportunity to encroach upon the Ionian cities, especially upon Leontini. Athens sent little aid, and Leontini was destroyed.

257. **Preparations for an Expedition to Sicily** (415 B.C.). — Naturally the Athenians looked upon this event as a great misfortune to themselves; they feared lest the Dorians, if they should gain control of Sicily, might furnish Sparta with troops and supplies in her war with Athens. Many Athenians even dreamed of adding Sicily to their empire. While they were in this mood, envoys came from Segesta, a city of Sicily, begging Athens for protection from Se-li'nus, a stronger state near by. All were therefore deeply interested in the request of the Segestaeans for aid. The latter promised to pay the expenses of an expedition, and grossly exaggerated the wealth of their city. Alcibiades urged the Athenians to conquer Sicily. His motive was doubtless selfish — to open a field in which he might display his talents and win fame. The project was unwise, for the Athenians could do little more than hold their empire together and defend it against the Peloponnesians. Nicias advised the citizens in their assembly to drop all thought of the scheme, but his warnings were unheeded. The Athenians made ready in the spring of 415 B.C. to send a magnificent land and naval armament to Sicily. Ar-is-toph'a-nes, the comic poet,[1] tells us how in Peiraeus the preparations for such an expedition —

> "Filled the city with a noise of troops:
> And crews of ships, crowding and clamoring
> About the muster-masters and paymasters;
> With measuring corn out at the magazine,
> And all the porch choked with the multitude;
> With figures of Athena newly furbished,
> Painted and gilt, parading in the streets;
> And wineskins, kegs, and firkins, leeks, and onions;
> With garlic crammed in pouches, nets, and pokes;
> With garlands, singing girls, and bloody noses.
> Our arsenal would have sounded and resounded,
> With bangs and thwacks of driving bolts and nails,
> With shaping oars, and holes to put the oars in;
> With hacking, hammering, clattering, and boring,
> Words of command, whistles, and pipes, and fifes."

[1] § 272.

Alcibiades, Nicias, and Lam'a-chus — an able officer of the school of Pericles — were to conduct the expedition. To say nothing of the evils of a divided command, Nicias and Alcibiades were so opposed to each other as to give no prospect of harmony in the councils of war.

258. **The Mutilation of the Hermae.** — It was customary for the Athenians to place on the street before the door of a private house or a temple, a square stone pillar, ending at the top in the head of Hermes or some other god. Whatever deity might be represented, the figures were called Hermae (plural of Hermes). One morning when the armament was nearly ready to sail, the Athenians were horrified to find that these Hermae, which they held in great reverence as the guardians of peace and public order, had been nearly all mutilated in the night. The citizens were overwhelmed with terror. They feared that a band of conspirators had attempted to deprive Athens of divine protection and would next try to overthrow the government. Some, without good cause, suspected Alcibiades. A court of inquiry was appointed to investigate the matter. It failed to discover the perpetrators of this sacrilege, but learned that certain men, among them Alcibiades, had been profaning the Eleusinian mysteries [1] by imitating them for amusement in private houses.

A "HERMES"

Believing that the welfare of the state depended upon keeping them secret, the citizens were greatly alarmed at hearing that they had been profaned and divulged. Alcibiades in vain demanded a trial. His enemies feared that he would be acquitted through the support of the soldiers, with whom he was very popular. It would be safer, his opponents thought, to wait till the armament had departed and then recall him for trial.

259. **The Voyage; the Plans of the Admirals** (415 B.C.). — The armament was to gather at Corcyra. The whole Athenian population thronged the wharves of Peiraeus to watch the departure of the imperial city's galleys. The moment was full of tears and prayers,

[1] § 179.

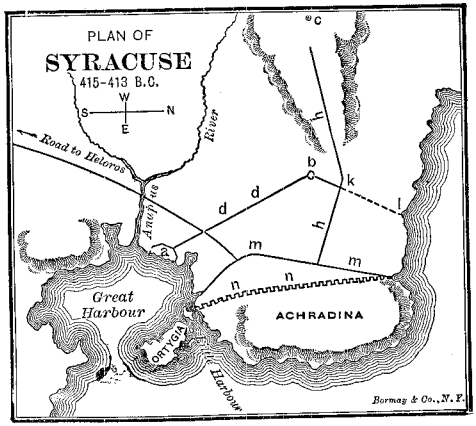
of anxiety and hope. The flower of Athenian strength was going forth to war, and some surmised that it would return no more.

One hundred and thirty-four triremes and a great number of transports and merchant ships assembled at Corcyra with five thousand heavy-armed men on board, besides light auxiliaries and the crews. Hellas had seen larger fleets than this, but none so splendid or so formidable. About the middle of the summer it began its voyage across the Ionian Sea toward Italy.

But the western Greeks now gave Athens a cold reception. Even Rhegium, which had always been friendly, would not admit the Athenians within its walls. The great armament seemed a menace to the liberties of all alike. It soon appeared, too, that Segesta could furnish little support. Disappointed by such news, the admirals were in doubt as to what they should do. Lamachus wished to attack Syracuse immediately; Nicias preferred to display the fleet along the Sicilian coasts and then return home. Either plan would have been good; but Alcibiades proposed instead to win over as many Sicilian cities as possible by negotiation. With all his genius for diplomacy, in this instance he miscalculated; the Greeks of the West could not be won over by mere discussion. His unwise plan, however, was adopted. Yet before it had been followed far, Alcibiades was recalled to Athens for trial. But on the way home he made his escape to Peloponnese, whereupon the Athenians sentenced him to death. The trick of his opponents had succeeded — probably to their satisfaction; but it made of Alcibiades as dangerous an enemy as Athens ever had.

260. **The Siege of Syracuse** (414–413 B.C.). — Nicias, who now held the superior command, trifled away the autumn in half-hearted undertakings, and then wasted the winter at Cat'a-na. Meantime the Syracusans were enclosing their city with strong walls. In the spring of 414 B.C. the Athenians entered the Great Harbor and laid siege to Syracuse; they began to build a wall which, if completed, would cut the city off from communication by land with the rest of the island. They were successful in several minor engagements; but Lamachus was killed, and with his death the command lost all energy. The Syracusans built and maintained against the besiegers a cross-wall extending from their outer line of defence on

the north to the height in the rear of the Athenian position. This prevented the besiegers from finishing the northern part of their wall, and secured a free communication with the country. At the same time the Syracusans were acquiring a navy sufficiently strong to venture battle with the Athenian fleet. There was no longer any reasonable hope of taking Syracuse; and Nicias would gladly have raised the siege, but dared not face the Athenian assembly after so great a failure. In the winter he wrote a letter to Athens, giving a

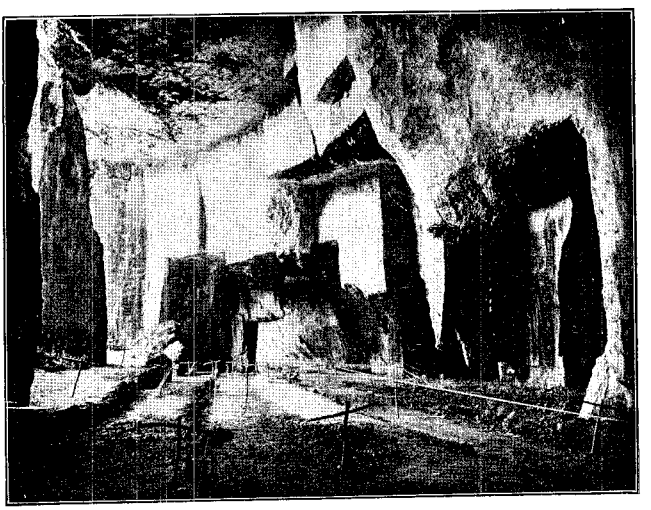


a. Athenian naval camp.
b. Athenian fort.
c. Height in rear of Athenian wall.
d, d. Athenian wall.
k, l. Unfinished part of Athenian wall.
n, n. Old city wall.
m, m. New city wall (415 B.C.).
h, h. Syracusan cross-wall.

detailed account of the situation, and asking that either the armament be withdrawn or strong reënforcements sent. The Athenians would take no thought of abandoning the enterprise, and prepared to send nearly as large a land and naval force as the original one, and this notwithstanding the fact that the war with Lacedaemon was now openly resumed.

261. Agis in Attica; Ruin of the Athenian Armament (413 B.C.). — In the spring of 413 B.C. A'gis, king of the Lacedaemonians, ravaged Attica, which for twelve years had seen no enemy. At the suggestion of Alcibiades, he seized and fortified Dec-e-le'a, a strong position in the north of Attica. The Lacedaemonians continued to hold it winter and summer to the end of the war. The Athenians could now do no farming except under their very walls. They were obliged to keep perpetual watch about the city to prevent

surprise, and their slaves deserted to the enemy in great numbers. But though they were themselves thus practically besieged by land, they sent to Syracuse a new fleet of seventy-three triremes and five thousand hoplites, commanded by Demosthenes, their ablest general. On his arrival at Syracuse he found the army in a sorry plight and the fleet already defeated in the Great Harbor by the Syracusans. He saw that the Athenians must either resume active



STONE QUARRIES AT SYRACUSE

(Interior view; the stakes and lines are modern rope-makers' works. From a photograph.)

operations at once or abandon the siege. In the following night, accordingly, he attempted to take the Syracusan cross-wall by surprise, but was repulsed with great loss. In spite of his advice to put the army on board the fleet and sail away, his slow colleague, Nicias, delayed for some days. When finally Nicias consented, and everything was ready for embarking, there was an eclipse of the moon, which filled him as well as the soldiers with superstitious fears. He would remain twenty-seven days longer, to avoid the effect of the evil omen. Before that time had elapsed, the Athenians lost another naval battle, and the disheartened crews would

fight no more. The Athenians then burned their ships and began to retreat by land, Nicias in advance and Demosthenes bringing up the rear. The two divisions were separated on the march, and both were compelled to surrender after severe losses. Probably forty thousand men had taken part in the Sicilian expedition, and twenty-five thousand were left to begin the retreat. Demosthenes and Nicias were both put to death. Many of the captives were sold into slavery; many were thrown into the stone quarries near Syracuse, where most of them perished of exposure and starvation. The failure of the expedition was due chiefly to the stupidity and the superstition of Nicias. It compelled the Athenians at once to abandon all hope of conquering other peoples, and to consider instead how they could save themselves and their empire from ruin.

II. The Closing Years of the War

413–404 B.C.

262. Effects of the Sicilian Disaster (413 B.C.). — At first the Athenians could not believe the news of the disaster in Sicily, even when they heard it from the survivors themselves. As they came to realize the truth, they vented their rage upon the orators and the soothsayers who had persuaded them to engage in the enterprise. For a time they seemed overwhelmed with despair: while mourning their losses they feared that they should now have to contend against the whole Greek world and they had no ships, no men, no money. But the spirit of Athens was elastic; her hopes revived, and her citizens determined in some way to build a new fleet. At the same time they resolved to cut down expenses and to hold fast to their empire. Fortunately they had the winter for preparation before the enemy could attack.

The Lacedaemonians and their allies, elated by the news, began to hope once more for success. They despatched aid to the Chians and other allies of Athens, who were revolting. Alcibiades himself went thither from Sparta to encourage rebellion against his native city. The Lacedaemonians then concluded an offensive and defensive alliance with Persia; they surrendered to that power the

cities of Asia Minor which Athens had protected from every enemy for nearly seventy years.

263. **Rebellion checked; Alcibiades** (412 B.C.). — The Athenians put forth every energy to prevent the revolt from spreading. To Samos, their most faithful ally, they granted independence, and made this island the base of their naval operations. The contending parties remained nearly balanced in strength, even after the arrival of a Syracusan fleet to help the Lacedaemonians; but the resources of Athens were gradually exhausted, while those of the enemy seemed limitless. Such was the state of affairs when an unexpected event turned the war for a time in favor of Athens. Alcibiades, hated by King Agis and fearing for his life, forsook Sparta, went over to the satrap of Sardis, and persuaded him to keep back the Phoenician fleet, which was daily expected in the Aegean Sea. He convinced the satrap that it would be well to let Lacedaemon and Athens wear each other out in war. Alcibiades sincerely desired to return to Athens; and in order to bring about his recall he aimed to win the gratitude of his countrymen by making them think he could gain for them the friendship of Persia. He wished, too, to recover on his return the leadership of the democratic party. But a serious obstacle was in the way, — An'dro-cles, the present head of the party, was the very man who had sent him into exile. To accomplish his object, Alcibiades felt that he must first persuade others to overthrow the popular government along with the chief, and then himself step in to restore it. In the light of a saviour of democracy he believed that he could return all-powerful to his native city.

264. **The Conspiracy of the Oligarchs** (412–411 B.C.). — The time was ripe for a change of government at Athens, as the Sicilian disaster seemed to prove the failure of democracy. Some of the officers of the Athenian army at Samos, who were themselves of the wealthier class, favored the establishment of oligarchy, in which they thought they should have more of the privileges naturally belonging to men of their standing. Accordingly, when Alcibiades sent them word that he would return and make the satrap an ally of Athens if they should set up an oligarchy, they readily consented. But when their spokesman came to Athens, the citizens

met his proposals with a storm of indignation. They objected equally to changing the government and to recalling the impious traitor Alcibiades. But the oligarch addressed the objectors one by one, and asked them what else could be done. "How are we to raise money to support the war against both Persia and our many Greek enemies?" he asked. Unable to meet this pointed argument, the people gave way, in the hope that they might renew the democracy at the close of the war. It soon appeared, however, that Alcibiades had grossly deceived the Athenians in making them believe he could win the help of Persia.

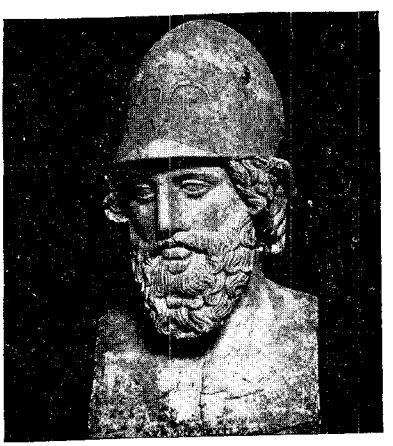
The oligarchs proceeded, nevertheless, to carry out their designs. As a part of the program, their clubs at Athens assassinated Androcles and other prominent democrats, and in this way terrorized the whole state. Overestimating the extent of the conspiracy, the people feared to talk on the subject with one another, lest in so doing they might betray themselves to an enemy. This mutual distrust among the citizens made the conspirators safe. They managed to place the state under the control of a Council of Four Hundred, which included the principal oligarchs. This body was to rule with absolute power.

265. The Rule of the Four Hundred (411 B.C.). — When organized, the Four Hundred assumed the reins of government. They ruled by force, assassinating, banishing, and imprisoning their opponents on mere suspicion. They showed their lack of patriotism by their willingness to make peace with Lacedaemon at any price, and their weakness by yielding Euboea to the enemy.

News of the violence and cruelty of the Four Hundred came to the Athenian army at Samos. The soldiers assembled, declared that Athens had revolted, and that they themselves constituted the true government of the empire. They deposed their oligarchic officers, and filled the vacant places with popular men; they prepared to carry on the war with vigor, and hoped through Alcibiades to win Persia to their side. Thras-y-bu'lus, one of the new commanders, brought the famous exile to their camp. A democrat once more, Alcibiades was immediately elected general and placed in chief command of the army. Now he was ready to use all the resources of his mind to save Athens from the ruin he had brought

upon her. To the envoys from the Four Hundred, he replied that this new council must abdicate immediately in favor of the old Council of Five Hundred. At the same time he prudently restrained the troops from going to Athens to punish the usurpers.

The Four Hundred began to feel insecure. Lacking a definite policy, they split into two factions: the extreme oligarchs and the moderates. With the help of the moderates the citizens overthrew the Four Hundred, after a three months' rule, and restored the democracy.

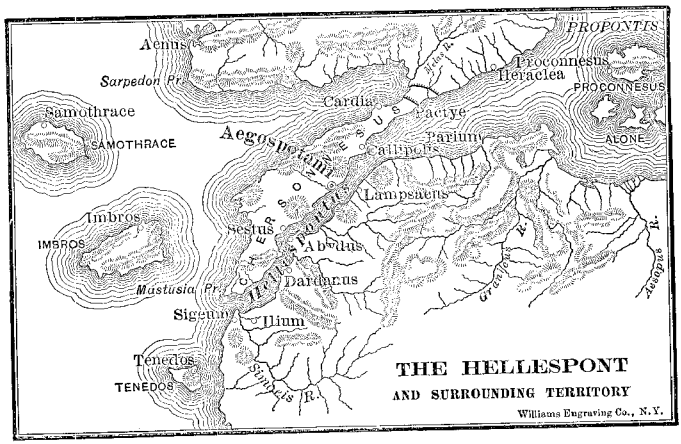


ALCIBIADES (?)
(Formerly supposed to be Themistocles. Vatican Museum, Rome)

266. Alcibiades General of the Athenians (411–407 B.C.). — The Four Hundred had brought only misfortune to Athens. Under their slack rule the war extended to the Hellespont, and most of the cities in that region revolted. Soon, however, the Athenians were cheered by news of victories, especially of that at Cyz'i-cus, gained by Alcibiades in 410 B.C. "Ships gone, our admiral dead, the men starving, at our wits' end what to do," was the laconic message which reached Sparta from Cyzicus. Lacedaemon then proposed a treaty of peace which should leave Athens the few possessions she still held; but the Athenians rejected the terms. It appeared doubtful whether a lasting peace could be secured without the complete triumph of one of the contending parties. The Athenians feared, too, that peace with Sparta would bring them another tyrannical oligarchy in place of their free constitution; and with Alcibiades as general they still hoped for success in the war.

267. The Battle of Notium (407 B.C.); **the Fall of Alcibiades.** — In 408 B.C., however, Darius, king of Persia, despatched Cyrus, the younger of his two sons, to take the satrapy of Sardis with large

powers and to give all possible aid to the enemies of Athens. About the same time Ly-san'der, a born leader of men, a general and diplomatist of surpassing ability, came from Sparta to the seat of war. He visited Cyrus, and easily won his way to the heart of the ambitious young prince. Next year he defeated a large Athenian fleet off No'ti-um, near Ephesus, capturing fifteen triremes. In the absence of Alcibiades, their admiral, the Athenians had risked a battle; and as a result they suffered their first reverse since the



time of the Four Hundred. As they held Alcibiades responsible for the misfortune, they failed to reëlect him general for the following year. Fearing to return home, he retired to a castle on the Hellespont which he had prepared for such an occasion. Thus the Athenians cast away a man who might have saved them. Though working to the end for his own glory, he was wiser now than in his youth, and would have served his country well; but the confidence of his fellow-citizens in one who had been so impious and so traitorous could not but be shaken by the slightest appearance of inattention to duty.[1]

268. The Battle of Arginusae (406 B.C.). — The contending powers now put forth enormous efforts. In 406 B.C. the Athenians,

[1] Afterward, while residing in Phrygia, he was assassinated by order of the Spartan authorities.

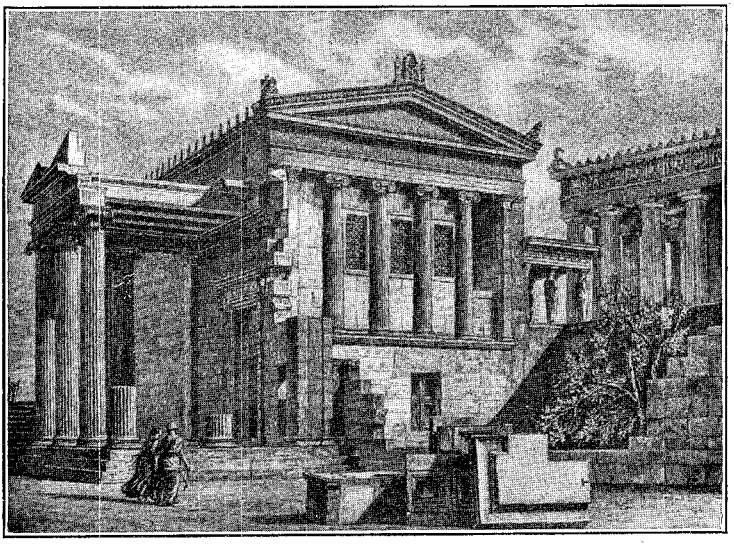
with a hundred and fifty triremes, met a Peloponnesian fleet of a hundred and twenty triremes near the islands of Ar-gi-nu'sae, and gained a complete victory. Athens lost twenty-five ships; the enemy seventy, with their commander and crews, amounting to about fourteen thousand men. This was the severest battle of the war. After hearing of their disaster, the Lacedaemonians were willing for the sake of peace to leave Athens what she still possessed; but the Athenians again rejected the conditions.

The Athenians disgraced themselves for all time by putting to death six of the generals who had won the victory at Arginusae, on the ground that they had neglected to rescue the crews of the triremes wrecked in the battle. The commanders had ordered two ship-captains to attend to the work, but a sudden storm had prevented the rescue of the unfortunate sailors. The Athenians violated the constitution in condemning the generals collectively and in refusing them a sufficient opportunity for defence. Soon repenting of their conduct, they prosecuted those who had persuaded them to commit the murder.

269. **The Battle of Aegospotami** (405 B.C.). — Athens and Sparta made one more desperate effort to gain the mastery of the Aegean Sea. The opposing fleets met in the Hellespont, — a hundred and eighty Athenian warships against two hundred from Peloponnese. The Athenians were on the European side at the mouth of the Ae-gos-pot'a-mi, the Peloponnesians on the opposite shore of the strait. Lysander, who was in command, surprised the Athenian fleet while the sailors were seeking provisions on shore. There was no resistance. It seems probable that the Athenians were betrayed to Lysander by one or more of their generals. Co'non alone of the commanders escaped with a few ships; and sending the official galley Par'a-lus to Athens with the news, he, though innocent, fled for his life with the rest of his ships to Cyprus.

270. **Effects of the Battle; the Terms of Peace** (404 B.C.). — "It was night when the Paralus reached Athens with her evil tidings, on receipt of which a bitter wail of woe broke forth. From Peiraeus, following the line of the Long Walls up to the heart of the city, it swept and swelled, as each man passed the news to his neighbor. That night no man slept. There was mourning and sorrow for

those who were lost, but the lamentation for the dead was merged in even deeper sorrow for themselves, as they pictured the evils they were about to suffer, the like of which they had inflicted upon the men of Melos," [1] and upon many others. Ships and men were lost, and they were soon besieged by land and sea. Finally, when



THE ERECHTHEUM

(Restoration. View from the west; two columns in north porch cut away to show interior; on right a corner of the Parthenon is seen)

on the point of starvation, they sent envoys to Sparta with full powers to treat for peace. Thereupon a Peloponnesian congress was held in Sparta, in which the Corinthians, the Thebans, and some others proposed to destroy Athens utterly, and to enslave the Athenians. But the Spartan ephors objected; they were unwilling, they said, that a city which had done such noble service for Greece in the perilous times of the Persian invasion should be enslaved. They would be content with milder conditions: that Athens should demolish the fortifications of Peiraeus and the Long

[1] Xenophon, *Hellenica*, ii. 2.

Walls, give up all her warships but twelve, follow Sparta in peace and in war, and permit the return of the exiled oligarchs. With these concessions, Athens might remain free and "under the constitution of the fathers." As the Athenian envoys entered their city, a great crowd gathered about them, trembling lest their mission should have proved fruitless; for many were dying of starvation. The majority ratified the treaty. Lysander entered Peiraeus with his fleet, the exiles were already coming home, and the Peloponnesians began the destruction of the walls to the music of pipes, with the idea that they were celebrating the return of liberty to Hellas.

III. The Progress of Culture; the New Learning

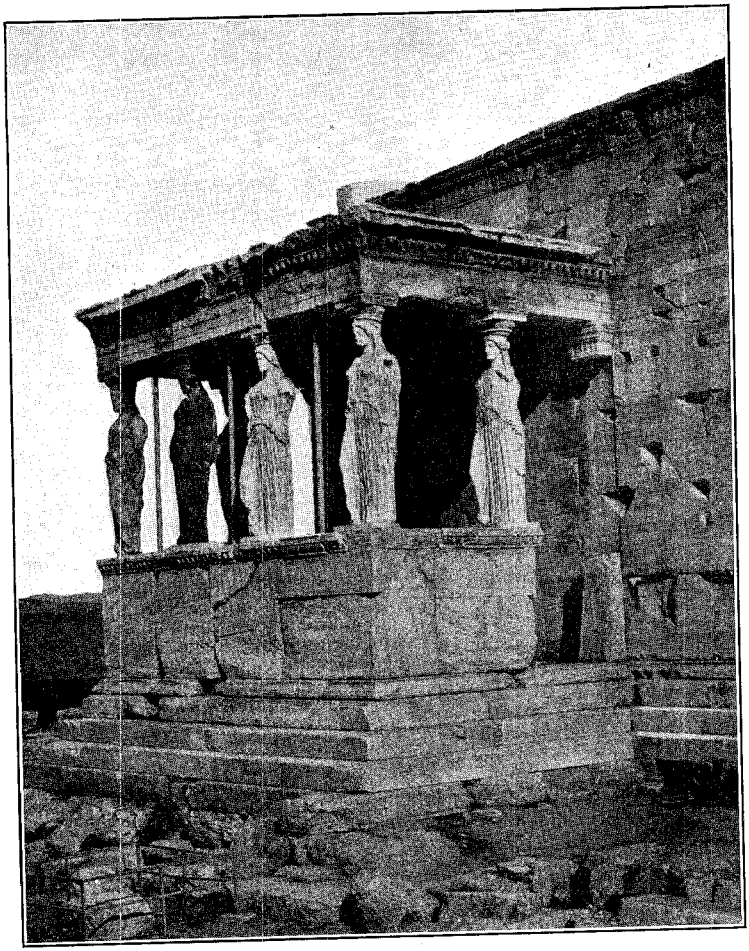
431–404 B.C.

271. Architecture and Sculpture. —In spite of the heavy expenses of the war, the Athenians built a new temple on the Acropolis — the E-rech-the'um — doubtless fulfilling a wish of Pericles. It stands north of the Parthenon. For two reasons it is irregular in plan, (1) the ground on which it was built is uneven, (2) it was intended for two divinities, Athena and Erechtheus. The Athena worshipped here was the guardian of the state, as distinguished from the imperial goddess of the Parthenon. She was represented by a log rudely carved in human form.[1] This archaic image the Athenians venerated more highly than all the artistic statues of more recent times. To her belonged the eastern portion of the temple. In the western part lived Erechtheus, the hero, who, as the Athenians supposed, had once been king of Athens. This temple is the most beautiful example of the Ionic order known to us.[2] The rich carvings which adorn it have been the admiration of all artists, but no one has been able to equal them. The Porch of the Maidens is especially attractive. Though bearing heavy weights on their heads, the maidens stand at perfect ease. In dignified grace of posture and drapery they are little inferior to the sculptures of the Parthenon.[3]

Through want of money the Athenians of this period accom-

[1] Cf. § 177. [2] § 174.

[3] A figure thus used as a support is sometimes termed a caryatid.



PORCH OF THE MAIDENS
(Present condition; from a photograph)

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