WHETHER THE ATHENIANS WERE MORE RENOWNED FOR THEIR WARLIKE ACHIEVEMENTS OR FOR THEIR LEARNING.

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1. . . . These things he rightly spoke to the commanders that accompanied him, to whom he opened the way for future performances, while he expelled the barbarians and restored Greece to her ancient liberty. And the same thing may be said to those that magnify themselves for their writings. For if there were none to act, there would be none to write. Take away the political government of Pericles, and the naval trophies of Phormio at Rhium, and the brave achievements of Nicias at Cythera, Megara, and Corinth, Demosthenes's Pylos, and the four hundred captives taken by Cleon, Tolmides sailing round the Peloponnesus, and Myronidas vanquishing the Boeotians at Oenophyta: and you murder Thucydides. Take away the daring braveries of Alcibiades in the Hellespont, and of Thrasyllus near Lesbos; the dissolution of the oligarchy by Theramenes; Thrasybulus, Archippus, and the seventy that from Phylae ventured to attack the Lacedaemonian tyranny; and Conon again enforcing Athens to take the sea: and then there is an end of Cratippus. For as for Xenophon, he was his own historian, relating the exploits of the army under his command, but saying that Themistogenes the Syracusan had written the history of them; dedicating the honor of his writing to another, that writing of himself as of another, he might gain the more credit. But all the other historians, as the Clinodemi,

Diyli, Philochorus, Philarchus, were but the actors of other men's deeds, as of so many plays, while they compiled the acts of kings and great generals, and thrusting themselves into the memory of their fame, partake of a kind of lustre and light from them. For there is a certain shadow of glory which reflects from those that act to those that write, while the actions of another appear in the discourse as in a mirror.

2. But this city was the mother and charitable nurse of many other arts and sciences; some of which she first invented and illustrated, to others she gave both efficacy, honor, and increase. More especially to her is painting beholden for its first invention, and the perfection to which it has attained. For Apollodorus the painter, who first invented the mixing of colors and the softening of shadows, was an Athenian. Over whose works there is this inscription:

> 'Tis no hard thing to reprehend me;
> But let the men that blame me mend me.

Then for Euphranor, Nicias, Asclepiodorus, and Plistaenetus the brother of Phidias, some of them painted the victories, others the battles of great generals, and some of them heroes themselves. Thus Euphranor, comparing his own Theseus with another drawn by Parrhasius, said, that Parrhasius's Theseus ate roses, but his fed upon beef. For Parrhasius's piece was daintily painted, and perhaps it might be something like the original. But he that beheld Euphranor's Theseus might well exclaim,

> Race of Erechtheus bold and stout,
> Whom Pallas bred.*

Euphranor also painted with great spirit the battle of Mantinea, fought by the cavalry between the Athenians and Epaminondas. The story was thus. The Theban

* Il. II. 547.

Epaminondas, puffed up with his victory at Leuctra, and designing to insult and trample over fallen Sparta and the glory of that city, with an army of seventy thousand men invaded and laid waste the Lacedaemonian territory, stirred up the subject people to revolt, and not far from Mantinea provoked the Spartans to battle; but they neither being willing nor indeed daring to encounter him, being in expectation of a reinforcement from Athens, Epaminondas dislodged in the night-time, and with all the secrecy imaginable fell into the Lacedaemonian territory; and missed but little of taking Sparta itself, being destitute of men to defend it. But the allies of the Lacedaemonians made haste to its relief; whereupon Epaminondas made a show as if he would again return to spoiling and laying waste the country; and by this means deceiving and amusing his enemies, he retreats out of Laconia by night, and with swift marches coming upon the Mantineans unexpectedly, at what time they were deliberating to send relief to Sparta, presently commanded the Thebans to prepare to storm the town. Immediately the Thebans, who had a great conceit of their warlike courage, took their several posts, and began to surround the city. This put the Mantineans into a dismal consternation, and filled the whole city with dreadful outcries and hurly-burly, as being neither able to withstand such a torrent of armed men ready to rush in upon them, nor having any hopes of succor.

But at the same time, and by good fortune, the Athenians came down from the hills into the plains of Mantinea, not knowing any thing of the critical moment that required more speedy haste, but marching leisurely along. However, so soon as they were informed of the danger of their allies, by one that scouted out from the rest, though but few in respect of the number of their enemies, single of themselves, and tired with their march, yet they presently drew up into order of battle; and the cavalry charging up to

the very gates of Mantinea, there happened a terrible battle betweeen the horse on both sides; wherein the Athenians got the better, and so saved Mantinea out of Epaminondas's hands. This conflict was painted by Euphranor, and you see in the picture with what strength, what fury and vigor they fought. And yet I do not believe that any one will compare the skill of the painter with that of the general; or would endure that any one should prefer the picture before the trophy, or the imitation before the truth itself.

3. Though indeed Simonides calls painting silent poetry, and poetry speaking painting. For those actions which painters set forth as they were doing, those history relates when they were done. And what the one sets forth in colors and figures, the other relates in words and sentences; only they differ in the materials and manner of imitation. However, both aim at the same end, and he is accounted the best historian, who can make the most lively descriptions both of persons and passions. Therefore Thucydides always drives at this perspicuity, to make the hearer (as it were) a spectator, and to inculcate the same passions and perturbations of mind into his readers as they were in who beheld the causes of those effects. For Demosthenes embattling the Athenians near the rocky shore of Pylos; Brasidas hastening the pilot to run the ship aground, then going to the rowers' seats, then wounded and fainting, sinking down in that part of the vessel where the oars could not trouble him; the land fight of the Spartans from the sea, and the sea engagement of the Athenians from the land; then again in the Sicilian war, both a land fight and sea engagement, so fought that neither had the better,* . . . So that if we may not compare painters with generals, neither must we equal historians to them.

* The text of several lines which follow here is hopelessly corrupt, but it is evident that Plutarch refers to the description in Thucyd. VII. 71. (G.)

Thersippus of Eroeadae brought the first news of the victory at Marathon, as Heraclides of Pontus relates. But most report that Eucles, running armed with his wounds reeking from the fight, and falling through the door into the first house he met, expired with only these words in his mouth, "God save ye, we are well." Now this man brought the news himself of the success of a fight wherein he was present in person. But suppose that any of the goat-keepers or herd-men had beheld the combat from some high hill at a distance, and seeing the success of that great achievement, greater than by words can be expressed, should have come to the city without any wound or blood about him, and should have claimed the honors done to Cynaegirus, Callimachus, and Polyzelus, for giving an account of their wounds, their bravery and deaths, wouldst thou not have thought him impudent above impudence itself; seeing that the Lacedaemonians gave the messenger that brought the news of the victory at Mantinea* no other reward than a quantity of victuals from the public mess? But historians are (as it were) well-voiced relators of the actions of great men, who add grace and beauty and dint of wit to their relations, and to whom they that first light upon them and read them are indebted for their pleasing tidings. And being read, they are applauded for transmitting to posterity the actions of those that do bravely. For words do not make actions, though we give them the hearing.

4. But there is a certain grace and glory of the poetic art, when it resembles the grandeur of the actions themselves; according to that of Homer,

> And many falsities he did unfold,
> That looked like truth, so smoothly were they told. †

It is reported also, that when one of his familiar friends said to Menander, The feasts of Bacchus are at hand, and

* Thuycd. V. 73.

† Odyss. XIX. 203.

thou hast made ne'er a comedy; he made him this answer: By all the Gods, I have made a comedy, for I have laid my plot; and there remains only to make the verses and measures to it. So that the poets themselves believe the actions to be more necessary than the words, and the first things to be considered. Corinna likewise, when Pindar was but a young man and made too daring a use of his eloquence, gave him this admonition, that he was no poet, for that he never composed any fables, which was the chiefest office of poetry; in regard that strange words, figures, metaphors, songs, and measures were invented to give a sweetness to things. Which admonition Pindar laying up in his mind, wrote a certain ode which thus begins:

Shall I Ismenus sing,
Or Melia, that from spindles all of gold
Her twisted yarn unwinds,
Or Cadmus, that most ancient king,
Or else the sacred race of Sparti bold,
Or Hercules, that far in strength transcends.

Which when he showed to Corinna, she with a smile replied: When you sow, you must scatter the seed with your hand, not empty the whole sack at once. And indeed we find that Pindar intermixes in his poetic numbers a collection of all sorts of fables. Now that poetry employs itself in mythology is agreed by Plato likewise. For a fable is the relation of a false story resembling truth, and therefore very remote from real actions; for relation is the image of action, as fable is the image of relation. And therefore they that feign actions fall as far behind historians as they that speak differ from those that act.

5. Athens therefore never bred up any true artist in epic or lyric verse. For Cinesias was a troublesome writer of dithyrambics, a person of mean parentage and of no repute; and being jeered and derided by the comedians, proved very unfortunate in the pursuit of fame.

Now for the dramatic poets, the Athenians looked upon comedy to be so ignoble and troublesome, that they published a law that no Areopagite should make any comedies. But tragedy flourished and was cried up, and with wonder and admiration heard and beheld by all people in those days, deceiving them with fables and the display of various passions; whereby, as Gorgias says, he that deceived was more just than he that deceived not, and he that was deceived was wiser than he who was not deceived. He that deceived was more just, because it was no more than what he pretended to do; and he that was deceived was wiser, for that he must be a man of no sense that is not taken with the sweetness of words. And yet what benefit did those fine tragedies procure the Athenians? But the shrewdness and cunning of Themistocles walled the city, the industry of Pericles adorned their citadel, and Cimon advanced them to command their neighbors. But as for the wisdom of Euripides, the eloquence of Sophocles, the lofty style of Aeschylus, what calamity did they avert from the city; or what renown or fame did they bring to the Athenians? Is it fitting then that dramatic poems should be compared with trophies, the stage with the generals' office, or lists of dramas with noble achievements?

6. Would ye that we should introduce the men themselves carrying before them the marks and signals of their own actions, permitting them to enter in order, like the actors upon the stage? But then poets must go before them, with flutes and lyres, saying and singing:

> Far from our choirs who in this lore's unskilled,
> Or does not cherish pure and holy thoughts,
> Nor views nor joins the Muses' generous rites,
> Nor is perfected in the Bacchic tongue,
> With which Cratinus bull-devourer sang.*

And then there must be scenes, and vizards, and altars, and versatile machines. There must be also the tragedy-

* Aristophanes, Frogs, 354.

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