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ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

THE ATHENIAN CAVALRY IN THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR AND AT AMPHIPOLIS.

AN interesting feature of the Peloponnesian War as recorded by Thucydides, to which, as far as I know, attention has not been directed, is the treatment by the Athenians of their cavalry, especially in the Sicilian expedition.

Before the Sicilian expedition was resolved upon, Nicias informed the Athenians of their inferiority in cavalry (Thuc. VI. 20, 22). So well known was this weakness that in VI. 37 Athenagoras is represented as saying in Syracuse: 'I know that they will not bring cavalry with them, and they will find none here.' When the expedition did start, it comprised 5,100 hoplites and a single horse transport with 30 horsemen (VI. 43). During the siege of Syracuse, the Athenians were grievously harassed by the Syracusan cavalry, which amounted to 1,200 (VI. 66, 68, 70). At the end of 415 B.C. the generals sent home for money and cavalry (VI. 74, 93), and in 414 B.C. 250 horsemen arrived, expecting to procure horses on the spot (VI. 94). With local additions the Athenian cavalry now amounted to 650, but still these were too few against the Syracusans (VII. 4, 6, 13). Yet when further reinforcements of 5,000 hoplites and numerous light-armed troops were sent from Athens, no cavalry were added (VII. 20, 42). It is true that cavalry were needed to make descents upon Decelea (VII. 27). But

even if it could be shown that the need of them to act against Decelea was greater than the need of them against Syracuse, why were cavalry not sent to Sicily at the outset, before danger from Decelea was apprehended? It was not because the Athenians were without means of training men or horses, for presumably they could not then have supported cavalry from 431 to 421, as they did.

These are the cavalry contingents as given by Thucydides up to the time of the Sicilian expedition: In 431 B.C. the Athenian forces numbered 13,000 hoplites for foreign service and 1,200 cavalry (II. 13). In 430 B.C. Pericles invaded the Peloponnesus with 4,000 hoplites and 300 cavalry (II. 56). In 429 Athens sent an expedition against the Chalcidians of Thrace, consisting of 2,000 hoplites and 200 cavalry (II. 79). In 425 against the Corinthians they employed 2,000 hoplites and 200 cavalry (IV. 42); in 424 against the Megarians, 4,000 hoplites and 600 cavalry (IV. 68); at Delium in the same year against the Boeotians, who had 7,000 hoplites, 10,000 light-armed, 1,000 cavalry, Athens had 7,000 hoplites and a large number of irregulars; 300 cavalry were protecting Delium, but perhaps the Athenians could spare none for the battle, in which their defeat was due to the Boeotian cavalry (IV. 93, 94). Excluding the forces of Cleon at Amphipolis, of which

I shall speak presently, we find that in 418 the Athenians sent a reinforcement to Argos of 1,000 hoplites and 300 cavalry (V. 61); in 416 they sent to Methone 'cavalry of their own' (VI. 7); in their last efforts in Sicily they lost 70 horse before Syracuse (VII. 51), and all the remainder at the Assinarus (VII. 75). In Book VIII. there seems to be no mention of any cavalry force (see ch. 25).

Consider now the exceptional case of Cleon's force at Amphipolis in 422. His forces showed unusual proportions: 1,200 Athenian hoplites, 300 Athenian cavalry, and numerous allies¹ (V. 2). Brasidas had 2,000 hoplites, more than 1,000 light-armed, and 300 Hellenic cavalry (V. 6). It will be noticed that no other force sent from Athens for distant operations had so many cavalry in proportion to foot. The fact that Brasidas also had 300 cavalry is in itself not sufficient to explain the phenomenon, for (1) in the previous year Nicias had acted without cavalry against Brasidas (IV. 129); (2) if the object of the expedition was the recovery of Amphipolis, cavalry were unsuitable for the country around and for a siege such as might be anticipated. But it may be that Athens expected trouble from Macedonian cavalry (cp. I. 60). Whatever the reason for the presence of so many aristocratically-inclined *ἱππεῖς*, it was disastrous. For while both generals hesitated to engage, 'Cleon was soon compelled to do what Brasidas expected' (V. 7). 'The soldiers, disgusted at their inaction, drew comparisons between the generals, reflecting how ignorant and cowardly Cleon was, how experienced and courageous his opponent. *They remembered how unwillingly they had followed Cleon from home.*' Here Thucydides quotes with obvious approval a most unfair and disloyal opinion. Cleon was justified in waiting

for the reinforcements from native princes, which he had required of them in accordance with the terms of their alliance. To prove his ignorance and cowardice we have only the biased statements of Thucydides and Aristophanes, which attribute to him such contradictory qualities as ignorance and astuteness, cowardice and recklessness.² The result of this insubordination is well known. According to Thucydides, Cleon noticed this murmuring, and in order to check the depression, went out 'to have a look at the place' (*κατὰ θέαν*); when he was so imprudent as to march past the gates of Amphipolis, Brasidas made a sortie and routed the Athenians, Cleon and he being killed.

Among other strange features of Thucydides' account, critics have pointed to the statement that the feet of many horses and men about to sally forth were visible under the gate. But no mention is made of either Lacedaemonian or Athenian cavalry in the engagement. When Cleon determined to retreat, says Thucydides, he ordered his forces to retire slowly on the left wing. *They appeared to linger*,³ whereupon he caused his own right wing to face round. When the unexpected attack came, the right wing on which Cleon and the hoplites had been stationed stood its ground; the left *broke off and instantly fled*.

Now it is almost certain that on the left wing was stationed the cavalry. It would have to be on one wing or the other. At Solygea in 425 the Athenian cavalry was on the left (IV. 43-4); at Mantinea the Athenians were on the left wing, and were supported by their cavalry; the Lacedaemonian cavalry was placed on both wings (V. 67); the Boeotian cavalry also was placed on both wings at Delium (IV. 93).

¹ This force was packed into 30 ships, though Pericles' force of 4,000 hoplites and 300 cavalry went forth in 100 ships (II. 56). In IV. 42 we read of 2,000 hoplites and 200 horse in 80 ships; in VI. 43 of 5,000 hoplites and 1,300 light-armed in 134; in VII. 42 of 5,000 hoplites and numerous light-armed in 73; in VIII. 25 of 2,500 hoplites and 1,000 allies in 48 ships. Obviously the tightness of packing varied.

² If Thucydides had applied the same prejudice to the actions of Nicias, *ὁ μελλονικίων* (Aristoph. *Birds*, 640), how would Nicias' weakness have come out! Cleon is too often credited, by analogy with modern days, with ignorance and ill-breeding arising from want of a 'liberal education.' But we have no proof that Nicias or Alcibiades were better trained than Cleon. See on this point Holm's *History of Greece*, II. ch. ii. n. 1, ch. xxviii. n. 8.

³ I read *σχολλῆ*; cp. III. 46.

Two inferences may be drawn. First, that Thucydides got his account of the battle from one of the *ἱππεῖς*, who saved themselves disgracefully; his bias against Cleon kept him from moderating in a critical spirit the partisan account of his informant. Second, that the Athenian democracy, indignant at the insubordination and cowardice of the *ἱππεῖς*, avoided using them afterwards unless in operations very near Athens, as against Decelea, or in conjunction with a democracy such as Argos. To their political fears they sacrificed even

great military advantage. This latter inference finds support in Aristophanes. In *Wasps* 288 (produced 422 B.C.), we read: 'There will come along a rich man, one of those who are betraying Chalcidice'; in l. 475 Bdelycleon, representative of young aristocratic Athens, is described as *ξυνὸν Βρασίδα*; in the Peace (421 B.C.) l. 640 the charge is said to have been brought against any aristocrats among the allies *ὡς φρονοῖ τὰ Βρασίδου*.

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THE SIN OF OEDIPUS.

(A defence of Professor Murray's translation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, ll. 1183-1185.)

ὦ φῶς, τελευταῖόν σε προσβλέψαιμι νῦν,
ὅστις πέφασμαι φύς τ' ἀφ' ὧν οὐ χρῆν,
σὺν οἷς τ'
οὐ χρῆν ὁμιλῶν, οὓς τέ μ' οὐκ ἔδει κτανών.

THE *Spectator* for May 13, 1911, contains a review of Professor Murray's new translation of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*,¹ in which exception is taken to his rendering of the above lines.

'Thou Light, never again
May I behold thee, I in the eyes of men
Made naked, how from sin my being grew,
In sin I wedded and in sin I slew.'

'The attribution of sin to Oedipus,' says the reviewer, 'destroys at once the entire interest of the drama. The idea of "sin" essentially involves that of moral guilt, and from moral guilt he is throughout absolutely free. The fact of his freedom is the very thing that makes his fate so tragic, and to put into his lips words which are an open confession of crime is to mar the whole effect of a great and almost stupendous work.'

This criticism makes somewhat lightly two large assumptions: (1) That Oedipus is 'absolutely free from moral guilt'; (2) that the idea of 'sin' is equivalent to that of 'crime.' In his first assumption the critic seems to have ignored the important allusion

to the case of Oedipus in Aristotle's *Poetics*, c. xiii., where the philosopher discusses the character of the ideal tragic hero. We must not be presented with the spectacle of virtuous men (τοὺς ἐπικεικίς ἀνδρας) brought from prosperity to adversity, 'οὐ γὰρ φοβερὸν οὐδὲ ἐλεεινὸν τοῦτο ἀλλὰ μιαιφόν ἐστιν.' In the view of Aristotle the character of the ideal tragic hero should lie between the two extremes of perfect uprightness and utter villainy:

ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μῆτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων
καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ μῆτε διὰ κακίαν καὶ μο-
χθηρίαν μεταβάλλον εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν
ἀλλὰ δι' ἁμαρτίαν τινα τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ
δόξῃ καὶ εὐτυχίᾳ, οἷον Οἰδίπους. . . .

In an essay appended to his edition of the *Poetics*,² the late Professor Butcher has exhaustively discussed the possible range of meaning which the term *ἁμαρτία*, especially as used by Aristotle, can cover. He finds Aristotelian authority for the use of the term *ἁμαρτία* in four distinct senses. (1) An error due to unavoidable ignorance of circumstances. (2) An error due to ignorance of circumstances which might have been known, and therefore to some degree morally culpable. Both of these would be classed as cases of ἡ καθ' ἑκάστα

¹ *Oedipus, King of Thebes*. Translated by Gilbert Murray, D.Litt., LL.D. London: Geo. Allen and Sons.

² *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*. By S. H. Butcher. Second edition, pp. 310-15.