

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

BOOK IV

1. IN my former book I explained the causes of the second war between Rome and Carthage; and described Hannibal's invasion of Italy, and the engagements which took place between them up to the battle of Cannae, on the banks of the Aufidus.

B.C. 220-216. I shall now take up the history of Greece during the same period, ending at the same date, and commencing from the 140th Olympiad. But I shall first recall to the recollection of my readers what I stated in my second book on the subject of the Greeks, and especially of the Achaeans; for the league of the latter has made extraordinary progress up to our own age and the generation immediately preceding.

I started, then, from Tisamenus, one of the sons of Orestes, and stated that the dynasty existed from his time to that of Ogygus: that then there was an excellent form of democratical federal government established: and that then the league was broken up by the kings of Sparta into separate towns and villages. Then I tried to describe how these towns began to form a league once more: which were the first to join; and the policy subsequently pursued, which led to their inducing all the Peloponnesians to adopt the general title of Achaeans, and to be united under one federal government. Descending to particulars, I brought my story up to the flight of Cleomenes, King of Sparta: then briefly summarising the events included in my prefatory sketch up to the deaths of Antigonos Doston, Seleucus Ceraunus, and Ptolemy Euergetes, who all three died at about the same time, I announced that my main history was to begin from that point.

Recapitulation of
Achaean history,
before B.C. 220,
contained in Book
II., cc. 41-71.

Ending with the
deaths of Anti-
gonos Doston, Sel-
eucus Ceraunus,
and Ptolemy
Euergetes, before
the 140th Olym-
piad, B.C., 220-
216,

2. I thought this was the best point ; first, because it is there that Aratus leaves off, and I meant my work, as far as it was Greek history, to be a continuation of his ; and, secondly, because the period thus embraced in my history would fall partly in the life of my father, and partly in my own ; and thus I should be able to speak as eye-witness of some of the events, and from the information of eye-witnesses of others. To go further back and write the report of a report, traditions at second or third hand, seemed to me unsatisfactory either with a view to giving clear impressions or making sound statements. But, above all, I began at this period because it was then that the history of the whole world entered on a new phase. Philip, son of Demetrius, had just become the boy king of Macedonia ; Achaeus, prince of Asia on this side of Taurus, had converted his show of power into a reality ; Antiochus the Great had, a short time before, by the death of his brother Seleucus, succeeded while quite a young man to the throne of Syria ; Ariarathes to that of Cappadocia ; and Ptolemy Philopator to that of Egypt. Not long afterwards Lycurgus became King of Sparta, and the Carthaginians had recently elected Hannibal general to carry on the war lately described. Every government therefore being changed about this time, there seemed every likelihood of a new departure in policy : which is but natural and usual, and in fact did at this time occur. For the Romans and Carthaginians entered upon the war I have described ; Antiochus and Ptolemy on one for the possession of Coele-Syria ; and the Achaeans and Philip one against the Aetolians and Lacedaemonians. The causes of this last war must now be stated.

3. The Aetolians had long been discontented with a state of peace and tired at living at their own charges ; for they were accustomed to live on their neighbours, and their natural ostentation required abundant means to support it. Inslaved by this passion they live a life as predatory as that of wild beasts, respecting no tie of friendship and regarding every one as an enemy to be plundered.

Reasons for starting from this point. (1.) The fact that the history of Aratus ends at that point. (2.) The possibility of getting good evidence. (3.) The changes in the various governments in the 139th Olympiad. B. C. 224-220.

Hitherto, however, as long as Antigonus Dosoⁿ was alive, their fear of the Macedonians had kept them quiet. But when he was succeeded at his death by the boy Philip, they conceived a contempt for the royal power, and at once began to look out for a pretext and opportunity for interfering in the Peloponnese: induced partly by an old habit of getting plunder from that country, and partly by the belief that, now the Achaeans were unsupported by Macedonia, they would be a match for them. While their thoughts were fixed on this, chance to a certain extent contributed to give them the opportunity which they desired.

B.C. 222.

There was a certain man of Trichonium¹ named Dorimachus, son of that Nicostratus who made the treacherous attack on the Pan-Boeotian congress.² This Dorimachus, being young and inspired with the true spirit of Aetolian violence and aggressiveness, was sent by the state to Phigalea in the Peloponnese, which, being on the borders of Arcadia and Messenia, happened at that time to be in political union with the Aetolian league. His mission was nominally to guard the city and territory of Phigalea, but in fact to act as a spy on the politics of the Peloponnese. A crowd of pirates flocked to him at Phigalea; and being unable to get them any booty by fair means, because the peace between all Greeks which Antigonus had concluded was still in force, he was finally reduced to allowing the pirates to drive off the cattle of the Messenians, though they were friends and allies of the Aetolians. These injurious acts were at first confined to the sheep on the border lands; but becoming more and more reckless and audacious, they even ventured to break into the farm-houses by sudden attacks at night. The Messenians were naturally indignant, and sent embassies to Dorimachus; which he at first disregarded, because he wanted not only to benefit the men under him, but himself also, by getting a share in their spoils. But when the arrival of such embassies became more and more frequent, owing to the perpetual

¹ A town on the lake of Trichonis, in Aetolia, but its exact situation is uncertain. Strabo (10, 2, 3) says that it was on a fertile plain, which answers best to a situation north of the lake.

² Cf. 9, 34. We know nothing of this incident.

recurrence of these acts of depredation, he said at last that he would come in person to Messene, and decide on the claims they had to make against the Aetolians. When he came, however, and the sufferers appeared, he laughed at some, threatened to strike others, and drove others away with abusive language.

4. Even while he was actually in Messene, the pirates came close to the city walls in the night, and by means of scaling-ladders broke into a country-house called Chiron's villa; killed all the slaves who resisted them; and having bound the others, took them and the cattle away with them. The Messenian Ephors had long been much annoyed by what was going on, and by the presence of Dorimachus in their town; but this they thought was too insolent: and they accordingly summoned him to appear before the assembled magistrates. There Sciron, who happened to be an Ephor at the time, and enjoyed a high reputation for integrity among his fellow-citizens, advised that they should not allow Dorimachus to leave the city, until he had made good all the losses sustained by the Messenians, and had given up the guilty persons to be punished for the murders committed. This suggestion being received with unanimous approval, as but just, Dorimachus passionately exclaimed that "they were fools if they imagined that they were now insulting only Dorimachus, and not the Aetolian league." In fact he expressed the greatest indignation at the whole affair, and said that "they would meet with a public punishment, which would serve them well right." Now there was at that time in Messene a man of disgraceful and effeminate character named Babyrtas, who was so exactly like Dorimachus in voice and person, that, when he was dressed in Dorimachus's sun-hat and cloak, it was impossible to tell them apart; and of this Dorimachus was perfectly aware. When therefore he was speaking in these threatening and insolent tones to the Messenian magistrates, Sciron lost his temper and said: "Do you think we care for you or your threats, *Babyrtas*?" After this Dorimachus was compelled for the present to yield to circumstances, and to give satisfaction for the injuries inflicted upon the Messenians: but when he

Dorimachus
leaves Messene.

returned to Aetolia, he nursed such a bitter and furious feeling of anger at this taunt, that, without any other reasonable pretext, but for this cause and this alone, he got up a war against the Messenians.

5. The Strategus of the Aetolians at that time was Ariston ;

but being from physical infirmities unable to serve in the field, and being a kinsman of Dorimachus and Scopas, he had somehow or another surrendered his whole authority to the former. In his public capacity Dorimachus could not venture to urge the Aetolians to undertake the Messenian war, because he had no reasonable pretext for so doing: the origin of his wish being, as everybody well knew, the wrongs committed by himself and the bitter gibe which they had brought upon him. He therefore gave up the idea of publicly advocating the war, but

He induces Scopas to go to war with Messenia, Epirus, Achaia, Acarnania, and Macedonia. tried privately to induce Scopas to join in the intrigue against the Messenians. He pointed out that there was now no danger from the side of Macedonia owing to the youth of the king (Philip being then only seventeen years old); that the Lacedaemonians were alienated from

the Messenians ; and that they possessed the affection and alliance of the Eleans ; and these circumstances taken together would make an invasion of Messenia perfectly safe. But the argument most truly Aetolian which he used was to put before him that a great booty was to be got from Messenia, because it was entirely unguarded, and had alone, of all the Peloponnesian districts, remained unravaged throughout the Cleomonic war. And, to sum up all, he argued that such a move would secure them great popularity with the Aetolians generally. And if the Achaeans were to try to hinder their march through the country, they would not be able to complain if they retaliated : and if, on the other hand, they did not stir, would be no hindrance to their enterprise. Besides, he affirmed that they would have plenty of pretext against the Messenians ; for they had long been in the position of aggressors by promising the Achaeans and Macedonians to join their alliance.

By these, and similar arguments to the same effect, he roused such a strong feeling in the minds of Scopas and his

friends, that, without waiting for a meeting of the Aetolian federal assembly, and without communicating with the Apocleti, or taking any of the proper constitutional steps, of their own mere impulse and opinion they committed acts of hostility simultaneously against Messenia, Epirus, Achaia, Acarnania, and Macedonia.

6. By sea they immediately sent out privateers, who, falling in with a royal vessel of Macedonia near Cythera, brought it with all its crew to Aetolia, and sold ship-owners, sailors, and marines, and finally the ship itself. Then they began sacking the seaboard of Epirus, employing the aid of some Cephallenian ships for carrying out this act of violence. They tried also to capture Thyrium in Acarnania. At the same time they secretly sent some men to seize a strong place called Clarium, in the centre of the territory of Megalopolis ; which they used thenceforth as a place of sale for their spoils, and a starting-place for their marauding expeditions. However Timoxenus, the Achaean Strategus, with the assistance of Taurion, who had been left by Antigonus in charge of the Macedonian interests in the Peloponnese, took the place after a siege of a very few days. For Antigonus retained Corinth, in accordance with his convention with the Achaeans, made at the time of the Cleomenic war ;¹ and had never restored Orchomenus to the Achaeans after he had taken it by force, but claimed and retained it in his own hands ; with the view, as I suppose, not only of commanding the entrance of the Peloponnese, but of guarding also its interior by means of his garrison and warlike apparatus in Orchomenus.

Dorimachus and Scopas waited until Timoxenus had a very short time of office left, and when Aratus, though elected by the Achaeans for the coming year, would not yet be in office ;² and then collecting a general levy of Aetolians at

¹ See 2, 53.

² The Achaean Strategus was elected in the middle of May, the Aetolian in the autumn. Aratus would be elected May 12, B.C. 220, and come into office some time before midsummer ; Ariston's Aetolian office would terminate in September B.C. 220. See v. 1.

Rhium, and preparing means of transport, with some Cephalelian ships ready to convoy them, they got their men across to the Peloponnese, and led them against Messenia. While marching through the territories of Patrae, Pharae, and Tritaea they pretended that they did not wish to do any injury to the Achaeans; but their forces, from their inveterate passion for plunder, could not be restrained from robbing the country; and consequently they committed outrages and acts of violence all along their line of march, till they arrived at Phigalea. Thence, by a bold and sudden movement, they entered Messenia; and without any regard for their ancient friendship and alliance with the Messenians, or for the principles of international justice common to all mankind, subordinating every consideration to their selfish greed, they set about plundering the country without resistance, the Messenians being absolutely afraid to come out to attack them.

7. This being the time, according to their laws, for the meeting of the Achaean federal assembly, the members arrived at Aegium. When the assembly met, the deputies from Patrae and Pharae made a formal statement of the injuries inflicted upon their territories during the passage of the Aetolians: an embassy from Messenia also appeared, begging for their assistance on the ground that the treatment from which they were suffering was unjust and in defiance of treaty. When these statements were heard, great indignation was felt at the wrongs of Patrae and Pharae, and great sympathy for the misfortunes of the Messenians. But it was regarded as especially outrageous that the Aetolians should have ventured to enter Achaia with an army, contrary to treaty, without obtaining or even asking for permission from any one to pass through the country. Roused to indignation by all these considerations, the assembly voted to give assistance to the Messenians: that the Strategus should summon a general levy of the Achaean arms: and that whatever was decided by this levy, when it met, should be done. Now Timoxenus, the existing Strategus, was just on the point of quitting office, and felt besides small confidence in the Achaeans, because martial exercise had been

Before mid-summer B.C. 220. Invasion of Messenia by Dorimachus and Scopas.

The Achaean league decide to assist the Messenians.

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