

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

BOOK V

1. THE year of office as Strategus of the younger Aratus had now come to an end with the rising of the May, B.C. 218. Pleiades; for that was the arrangement of time then observed by the Achaeans.¹ Accordingly he laid down his office and was succeeded in the command of the Achaeans by Eperatus; Dorimachus being still Strategus of the Aetolians.

It was at the beginning of this summer that Hannibal entered upon open war with Rome; started from New Carthage; and crossing the Iber, definitely began his expedition and march into Italy; while the Romans despatched Tiberius Sempronius to Libya with an army, and Publius Cornelius to Iberia.

This year, too, Antiochus and Ptolemy, abandoning diplomacy, and the support of their mutual claims upon Coele-Syria by negotiation, began actual war with each other.

As for Philip, being in need of corn and money for his army, he summoned the Achaeans to a general assembly by means of their magistrates. When the assembly had met, according to the federal law, at Aegium,² the king saw that Aratus and his son were indisposed to act for him, because of the intrigues against them in the matter of the election, which had been carried on by Apelles; and that Eperatus was naturally inefficient, and an object of general contempt. These

¹ From 4, 6, it appears that the election took place at the rising of the Pleiads (13th May) and that the new Strategus did not enter upon his office until some time afterwards, towards the middle of June or even midsummer. But the custom apparently varied, and the use of *τότε* seems to indicate a change.

² Later on the assemblies were held at the different cities in turn. See 23, 17; 24, 10, etc.

facts convinced the king of the folly of Apelles and Leontius, and he once more decided to stand by Aratus. He therefore persuaded the magistrates to transfer the assembly to Sicyon ; and there inviting both the elder and younger Aratus to an interview, he laid the blame of all that had happened upon Apelles, and urged them to maintain their original policy. Receiving a ready consent from them, he then entered the Achaean assembly, and being energetically supported by these two statesmen, carried all the measures that he desired. For the Achaeans past a vote decreeing "that five hundred talents should be paid to the king at once for his last campaign ; that three months' pay should be given to his army, and ten thousand medimni of corn : and that, for the future, so long as the king should remain in the Peloponnese as their ally in the war, he should receive seventeen talents a month from the Achaeans.

2. Having passed this decree, the Achaeans dispersed to their various cities. And now the king's forces The king prepares to carry on the war by sea. mustered again from their winter quarters ; and after deliberations with his friends, Philip decided to transfer the war to the sea. For he had become convinced that it was only by so doing that he would himself be able to surprise the enemy at all points at once, and would best deprive them of the opportunity of coming to each others' relief ; as they were widely scattered, and each would be in alarm for their own safety, because the approach of an enemy by sea is so silent and rapid. For he was at war with three separate nations,—Aetolians, Lacedaemonians, and Eleans.

Having arrived at this decision, he ordered the ships of the Achaeans as well as his own to muster at Lechaemum ; and there he made continual experiments in practising the soldiers of the phalanx to the use of the oar. The Macedonians answered to his instructions with ready enthusiasm : for they are in fact the most gallant soldiers on the field of battle, the promptest to undertake service at sea if need be, and the most laborious workers at digging trenches, making palisades, and all such engineering work, in the world : just such as Hesiod describes the Aeacidae to be

"Joying in war as in a feast."

The king, then, and the main body of the Macedonian army, remained in Corinth, busied with these practisings and preparations for taking the sea. But Apelles, being neither able to retain an ascendancy over Philip, nor to submit to the loss of influence which resulted from this disregard, entered into a conspiracy with Leontius and Megaleas, by which it was agreed that these two men should stay on the spot and damage the king's service by deliberate neglect; while he went to Chalcis, and contrived that no supplies should be brought the king from thence for the promotion of his designs. Having made this arrangement and mischievous stipulation with these two men, Apelles set out for Chalcis, having found some false pretexts to satisfy the king as to his departure. And while protracting his stay there, he carried out his sworn agreement with such determination, that, as all men obeyed him because of this former credit, the king was at last reduced by want of money to pawn some of the silver-

plate used at his own table, to carry on his affairs. However, when the ships were all collected, and the Macedonian soldiers already well trained to the oar; the king, giving out rations of corn and pay to the army, put to sea, and arrived at Patrae on the second day, with six thousand Macedonians and twelve hundred mercenaries.

3. Just at that time the Aetolian Strategus Dorimachus sent Agelaus and Scopas with five hundred Neo-Cretans¹ into Elis; while the Eleans, in fear of Philip's attempting the siege of Cyllene, were collecting mercenaries, preparing their own citizens, and carefully strengthening the defences of Cyllene. When Philip saw what was going on, he stationed a force at Dyme, consisting of the Achaean mercenaries, some of the Cretans serving with him, and some of the Gallic horse, together with two thousand picked Achaean infantry. These he left there as a reserve, as well as an advance guard to prevent the danger of an attack from Elis; while he himself, having first written to the Acarnanians and Scerdilaidas, that each of

¹ *Neokρήτες*, cf. cc. 65, 79. Livy (37, 40) transcribes the word *Neocretes*. It is uncertain what the exact meaning of the word is. It seems most reasonable to suppose that, like Tarentini, it had ceased to be an ethical term, and meant mercenary soldiers (*πρότοι*) armed like Cretans, that is, as archers.

their towns should man such vessels as they had and meet him at Cephallenia, put to sea from Patrae at the time arranged, and arrived off Pronni in Cephallenia. But when he saw that this fortress was difficult to besiege, and its position a contracted one, he coasted past it with his fleet and came to anchor at Palus. Finding that the country The siege of Palus. there was full of corn and capable of supporting an army, he disembarked his troops and encamped close to the city: and having beached his ships close together, secured them with a trench and palisade, and sent out his Macedonian soldiers to forage. He himself made a personal inspection of the town, to see how he could bring his siege-works and artillery to bear upon the wall. He wished to be able to use the place as a rendezvous for his allies; but he was also desirous of taking it: first, because he would thereby deprive the Aetolians of their most useful support,—for it was by means of Cephallenian ships that they made their descents upon the Peloponnese, and ravaged the sea-boards of Epirus and Acarnania,—and, secondly, that he might secure for himself and his allies a convenient base of operations against the enemy's territory. For Cephallenia lies exactly opposite the Corinthian Gulf, in the direction of the Sicilian Sea, and commands the north-western district of the Peloponnese, and especially Elis; as well as the south-western parts of Epirus, Aetolia, and Acarnania.

4. The excellent position, therefore, of the island, both as a rendezvous for the allies and as a base of attack against the hostile, or of defence for the friendly, territory, made the king very anxious to get it into his power. His survey of the town showed him that it was entirely defended by the sea and steep hills, except for a short distance in the direction of Zacynthus, where the ground was flat; and he accordingly resolved to erect his works and concentrate his attack at that spot.

While the king was engaged in these operations fifty galleys arrived from Scerdilaidas, who had been prevented from sending more by the plots and Arrival of the allies at Palus. civil broils throughout Illyria, caused by the despots of the various cities. There arrived also the appointed contingents of allies from Epirus, Acarnania, and even Messenia; for the Messenians had ceased to excuse them-

selves from taking part in the war ever since the capture of Phigalia.

Having now made his arrangements for the siege, and having got his catapults and ballistae in position to annoy the defenders on the walls, the king harangued his Macedonian troops, and, bringing his siege-machines up to the walls, began under their protection to sink mines.

The Macedonians worked with such enthusiastic eagerness that in a short time two hundred feet of the wall were undermined and underpinned: and the king then approached the walls and invited the citizens to come to terms. Upon their refusal, he set fire to the props, and thus brought down the whole part of the wall that rested upon them simultaneously. Into this breach he first sent his peltasts under the command of Leontius, divided into cohorts, and with orders to force their way over the ruin. But Leontius, in fulfilment of his compact with Apelles, three times running prevented the soldiers, even after they had carried the breach, from effecting the capture of the town. He had corrupted beforehand the most important officers of the several cohorts; and he himself deliberately affected fear, and shrunk from every service of danger; and finally they were ejected from the town with considerable loss, although they could have mastered the enemy with ease. When the king saw that the officers were behaving with cowardice, and that a considerable number of the Macedonian soldiers were wounded, he abandoned the siege, and deliberated with his friends on the next step to be taken.

5. Meanwhile Lycurgus had invaded Messenia; and Dorimachus had started for Thessaly with half the Aetolian army,—both with the idea that they would thus draw off Philip from the siege of Palus. Presently ambassadors arrived at the court to make representations on these subjects from Acarnania and Messenia: the former urging Philip to prevent Dorimachus's invasion of Macedonia by himself invading Aetolia, and traversing and plundering the whole country while there was no one to resist him; the latter begged him to come to their assistance, representing that in the

existing state of the Etesian winds the passage from Cephallenia to Messenia could be effected in a single day, whereby, so Gorgus of Messenia and his colleagues argued, a sudden and effective attack would be made upon Lycurgus. In pursuance of his policy Leontius eagerly supported Gorgus, seeing that by this means Philip would absolutely waste the summer. For it was easy enough to sail to Messenia; but to sail back again, while the Etesian winds prevailed, was impossible. It was plain therefore that Philip would get shut up in Messenia with his army, and remain inactive for what remained of the summer; while the Aetolians would traverse Thessaly and Epirus and plunder them at their pleasure. Such was the insidious nature of the advice given by Gorgus and Leontius. But Aratus, who was present, advocated an exactly opposite policy, urging the king to sail to Aetolia and devote himself to that part of the campaign: for as the Aetolians had gone on an expedition across the frontier under Dorimachus, it was a most excellent opportunity for invading and plundering Aetolia. The king had begun Philip decides on to entertain distrust of Leontius since his the invasion of exhibition of cowardice in the siege; and had Aetolia. detected his dishonesty in the course of the discussions held about Palus: he therefore decided to act in the present instance in accordance with the opinion of Aratus. Accordingly he wrote to the Achaean Strategus Eperatus, bidding him take the Achaean levies, and go to the aid of the Messenians; while he himself put to sea from Cephallenia, and arrived at night after a two days' voyage at Leucas: and having managed by proper contrivances to get his ships through the channel or Dioryctus,¹ he sailed up the Ambracian Gulf, which, as I have already stated,² stretches from the Sicilian Sea a long distance into the interior of Aetolia. Having made the whole length of this gulf, and anchored a short time before daybreak at Limnaea, he ordered his men to get their breakfast, and leaving the greater part of their baggage behind them, to make themselves ready in light equipment for a march; while he

¹ The narrow channel between Leucas and the mainland, which had been artificially enlarged. Dionys. Halic. i, 50.

² 4, 63.

himself collected the guides, and made careful inquiries of them about the country and neighbouring towns.

6. Before they started, Aristophanes the Acarnanian Strategus arrived with the full levy of his people. Philip is joined by the Acarnanians, and marches to the Achelous. For having in former times suffered many severe injuries at the hands of the Aetolians, they were now inspired with a fierce determination to be revenged upon them and damage them in every possible way: they gladly therefore seized this opportunity of getting the help of the Macedonians; and the men who now appeared in arms were not confined to those forced by law to serve, but were in some cases past the military age. The Epirotes were quite as eager to join, and for the same motives; but owing to the wide extent of their country, and the suddenness of the Macedonian arrival, they had not been able to muster their forces in time. As to the Aetolians, Dorimachus had taken half their army with him, as I have said, while the other half he had left at home; thinking that it would be an adequate reserve to defend the towns and district against unforeseen contingencies. The king, leaving a sufficient guard for his baggage, started from Limnaea in the evening, and after a march of sixty stades pitched his camp: but, having dined and given his men a short rest, he started again; and marching right through the night, arrived just as the day was breaking at the river Achelous, between the towns of Stratus and Conope, being anxious that his entrance into the district of Thermus should be sudden and unexpected.

7. Leontius saw that it was likely that the king would attain his object, and the Aetolians be unable to resist him, for the double reason of the speed and unexpectedness of the Macedonian attack, Leontius tries to hinder the march. and of his having gone to Thermus; for the Aetolians would never suppose him likely to venture to expose himself so rashly, seeing the strongly fortified nature of the country, and would therefore be sure to be caught off their guard and wholly unprepared for the danger. Clinging still to his purpose, therefore, he advised the king to encamp on the Achelous, and rest his army after their night's march; being anxious to give the Aetolians a short respite to make prepara-

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