415. The Syracusans were neither at unity among themselves nor by any means adequately prepared for effectual defence. Through­out the whole struggle it is perfectly clear that they owed their final deliverance to the most extraordinary good fortune. Athens had the prize within her grasp, and she lost it wholly through the persistent dilatoriness and blundering of her general, the despond­ing, vacillating Nicias. It was at his advice that the summer and autumn of 415 were frittered away and the siege not begun till the spring of 414. By that time the Syracusans were both in better spirits and better prepared : their troops were better organized, and they had built a wall from the Great Harbour to Panagia so as to screen them from attack on the side of Epipolæ on the north­west. The effect of this was to bar the enemy’s approach and push back his blockading lines, which had to be carried over an incon­veniently large extent of ground. The Syracusans had been at first thoroughly cowed ; but they were cowed no longer, and they even plucked up courage to sally out and fight the enemy on the high ground of Epipolæ. They were beaten and driven back ; but at the suggestion of Hermocrates they carried a counter-work up the slope of Epipolæ, which, if completed, would cut in two the Athenian lines and frustrate the blockade. At this point Nicias showed considerable military skill. The Syracusans’ work was destroyed by a prompt and well-executed attack ; and a second counter work carried across marshy ground some distance to the south of Epipolæ and near to the Great Harbour was also demolished after a sharp action, in which Lamachus fell. However, the blockade on the land side was now almost complete, and the Athenian fleet had at the same time entered the Great Harbour. The citizens began to think of surrender, and Nicias was so confident that he neglected to push his advantages. He left a gap in his lines at the point where Epipolæ slopes down to the sea, and he omitted to occupy an important position on its north-western ridge, known as Euryalus, a pass which commanded on this side the approach to the city from the interior.

The second act of the drama may be said to open with the irre­trievable blunder of Nicias in letting the Spartan Gylippus first land in Sicily, and then march at the head of a small army, partly levied on the spot, across the island, and enter Syracuse by way of Epipolæ, through the Euryalus pass. Gylippus was felt to be the representative of Sparta, and of the Peloponnesian Greeks generally, and his arrival inspired the Syracusans with the fullest confidence. Just before his arrival a few ships from Corinth had made their way into the harbour with the news that a great fleet was already on its way to the relief of the city. The tables were now completely turned, and we hear of nothing but defeat and disaster for the besiegers till their final overthrow. The military skill of Gylippus enabled the Syracusan militia to meet the Athenian troops on equal terms, to wrest from them their fortified position on Plemmyrium, and to reduce them to such a plight that, as Nicias said in his despatch to Athens towards the close of 414, they were themselves besieged rather than besieging. In the spring of the following year Syracuse once again gave herself up for lost, when seventy-three warships from Athens, under Demo­sthenes, entered the harbour with a large force of heavy infantry and light troops. Demosthenes decided at once to make a grand attack on Epipolæ, with a view to recovering the Athenian block­ading lines and driving the Syracusans back within the city walls. The assault was made by night, by the uncertain light of the moon, and this circumstance turned what was very nearly a successful surprise into a ruinous defeat. The affair seems to have been well planned up to a certain point, and well executed ; but the Athenian van, flushed with a first success, their ranks broken and disordered by a pursuit of the enemy over rough ground, were repulsed with great loss by a body of heavy armed Bœotians, and driven back in disorder. The confusion spread to the troops behind them, and the action ended in a wild flight through the narrow roads and passes of Epipolæ. The army was now thoroughly out of heart, and Demosthenes was for at once breaking up the camp, embarking the troops, and sailing back to Athens. But Nicias could not bring himself to face the Athenian people at home, nor could he be prevailed on to retire promptly to some position on the coast, such as Catana or Thapsus, where the army would be at least able to maintain itself for a time. He dallied till the end of August, many weeks after the defeat, and on the 27th of that month was an eclipse of the moon, on the strength of which he insisted on a delay of almost another month. His fleet too lingered uselessly in the harbour, till, after a frantic effort to break out and a desperate conflict, it was utterly defeated and half destroyed. The broken and demoralized army, its ranks thinned by fever and sickness, at last began its hopeless retreat in the face of the numerous Syra­cusan cavalry, and, after a few days of dreadful suffering, was forced to lay down its arms. The Syracusans sullied the glory of their triumph by huddling their prisoners iuto their stone-quarries,—a living death, dragged out, for some of them at least, to the space of seventy days.

Her great deliverance and victory naturally stirred up

the energies of Syracuse at home and abroad. Syracusan ships under Hermocrates now play a not unimportant part in the warfare between Sparta and Athens on the coast of Asia. Under the influence of Diodes the consti­tution became a still more confirmed democracy, some at least of the magistracies being filled by lot, as at Athens (Diod., xiii. 31, 35; Arist., *Pol.,* v. 3-6). Diodes appears also as the author of a code of laws of great strictness, which was held in such esteem that later lawgivers were deemed only its expounders. There seems no reason to suppose, with Holm, an earlier lawgiver Diodes distinct from the demagogue ; but the story of his death by his own hand to punish a breach of his own law is, we may suspect, a repetition of the story of Charondas (Diod., xiii. 33 ; cf. xii. 19). Under these influences Hermocrates was banished in 409 ; he submitted to the sentence, notwith­standing the wishes of his army. He went back to Sicily, warred with Carthage on his own account, and brought back the bones of the unburied Syracusans from Himera, but was still so dreaded that the people banished Diodes without restoring him. In 407 he was slain in an attempt to enter the city, and with him was wounded one who was presently to outstrip both rivals.

This was Dionysius, son of another Hermocrates, and an adherent of the aristocratic party, but soon afterwards a demagogue, though supported by some men of rank, among them the historian Philistus (Diod., xiii. 91, 92). By accusing the generals engaged at Gela in the war against Carthage, by obtaining the restoration of exiles, by a variety of tricks played at Gela itself, he secured his own election, first as one of the generals, then as sole general (or with a nominal colleague) with special powers. He next, by another trick, procured from a military assembly at Leon­tini a vote of a bodyguard ; he hired mercenaries and in 406-5 came back to Syracuse as tyrant of the city (Diod., xiii. 91-96). Dionysius kept his power till his death thirty- eight years later (367). But it was wellnigh overthrown before he had fully grasped it. His defeat before Gela (see Sicily, p. 18) was of course turned against him. His enemies in the army, chiefly the horsemen, reached Syracuse before him, plundered his house—he had not yet a fortress —and horribly maltreated his wife; but they took no politi­cal or military steps against himself. He came and took his vengeance, slaying and driving out his enemies, who established themselves at Ætna (Diod., xiii. 113). This revolution and the peace with the Carthaginians confirmed Dionysius in the possession of Syracuse, but of no great territory beyond, as Leontini was again a separate city. It left Syracuse the one great Hellenic city of Sicily, which, however enslaved at home, was at least inde­pendent of the barbarian. Dionysius was able, like Gelon, though with less success and less honour, to take up the part of the champion of Hellas.

During the long tyranny of Dionysius the city grew greatly in size, population, and grandeur. Plato says (*Epist.,* vii. ) that he gathered all Sicily into it. In fact the free Greek cities and com­munities, in both Sicily and southern Italy, were sacrificed to Syracuse ; there the greatness and glory of tho Greek world in the West were concentrated. The mass of the population of Gela and Camarina in the disastrous year 405 had, at the prompting of Dionysius, taken refuge at Syracuse. Gela had in the previous year received the fugitive inhabitants of Acragas (Agrigentum), which had been sacked by the Carthaginians. Syracuse thus absorbed three of the chief Greek cities of Sicily. It received large accessions from some of the Greek cities of southern Italy, from Hipponium on its west and Caulonia on its east coast, both of which Dionysius captured in 389 B.c. There had also been an influx of free citizens from Rhegium. At the time of the Athenian siege Syracuse consisted of two quarters—the Island and the “ outer city ” of Thucydides, generally known as Achradina, and bounded by the sea on the north and east, with the adjoining suburb of Apollo Temenites farther inland at the foot of the southern slopes of Epipolæ. With the vast increase in its population, it now grew