that their pretended allies aimed at nothing leſs than the conqueſt of the whole iſland, concluded a peace with Syracuſe ; and the diſappointed Athenians vented their rage up­on thoſe who had adviſed and conducted the expedition.

In 416 B. C. a diſpute happening between the inha­bitants of Egeſta and Selinus concerning ſome lands which the latter bad ſeized, the Egeſtines applied for aſſiſtance to Agrigentum, Syracuſe, and even to Carthage. But as none of these ſtates choſe to intereſt themſelves in their quarrel, they applied at laſt to the Athenians, who joyfully accented of the opportunity of again interfering in the affairs of Sicily. Though the Egestines were but an inconſiderable people, they had engaged to pay all the troops that ſhould be em­ploy coin the war; but this appearing doubtful to the Athe­nians, they ſent ambaſſadors to inquire into the ſtate of the island in general, and particularly that of Egeſta. The Egeſtines impoſed on theſe ambaſſadors by producing a great number of gold and ſilver veſſels which they had borrowed for the purpose ; ſo that the populace of Athens, dreaming of nothing but conqueſts to be made without any expence, became obſtinately bent on the war. Nicias, a man of great influence at Athens, attempted to ſhow, that as Athens was then engaged in a dangerous war with Sparta, it was impossible to spare a force ſufficient to reduce the iſland ; but the contrary opinion being eſpouſed by Alcibiades, at that time the moſt eloquent ſpeaker in Athens, Nicias was over­ruled, and obliged to engage in the expedition. The force he required was only 5000 land forces and 100 galleys, with which, however inadequate to the purpose it may ſeem, the Athenians were ſo sure of ſucceſs, that the officers, be­fore they ſet sail, had a conference with the ſenate concern­ing the diſpoſal of the Sicilians. In this conference it was agreed, that the Selinuntines and Syracuſians their ſuppoſed allies ſhould be carried off and sold for flaves, and the reſt obliged to pay an annual tribute and live according to the Athenian laws.

With theſe ſanguine expectations the Athenian forces embarked to the number of 7000; for such was their eagerneſs for the expedition, that 2000 more enliſted themſelves than Nicias had required. They firſt sailed to the iſland of Egina, and from thence to Corcyra, where they had appoint­ed the place of rendezvous for their allies and the tranſports. On their arrival they ſet sail again, and landed on the coaſt of Italy, with a view to engage some of the Italian cities in their quarrel ; but finding this impossible, they ſent ſome ships to cruiſe off the coaſt of Sicily, in order to find out a proper place for landing, and at the ſame time to know what treasure the Egeſtines could contribute towards carrying on the war, which had been undertaken for their take. Theſe, on their return, acquainted the generals, that the Egeſtines had impoſed on them, and were a poor indigent people, who had only 30 talents in the treaſury. On this information a council of war was called, in which Nicias gave it as his opinion that they ſhould ſail to Selinus, which had been the firſt occasion of this expedition ; and then, if the Egeſtines performed their promiſe, and ſupplied the army with a month’s pay, to oblige the Selinuntines and Egeſtines to come to an agreement, and then return to Athens without engaging in ſuch an expenſive war. Alcibiades, however, again oppoſed Nicias ; thinking it highly diſhonourable to return home without doing any thing, after having been at the expence of fitting out an armament. He therefore urged, that they ſhould solicit the cities of Sicily to enter into a confederacy againſt the Syracuſians and Selinuntines ; and, in caſe they found them diſpoſed to come into their measures, to attack either Syracuſe or Selinus. Another of the Athenian genera’s was for laying ſiege immediately to Syracuſe ; but the opinion of Alcibiades prevailing, they ſet ſail ſor Sicily. Having accordingly landed in that iſland, they reduced ſeveral places ; but Alcibiades in the mean time being recalled, Nicias and Lamachus were left to con­duct the war as they best could. At firſt they were ſucceſsful, poſſeſſing themſelves of a ſtrong poſt, and put the Sy­racuſians to flight ; ſoon after which they received conſider­able ſupplies both of men, money, and provisions, from Athens, as well as from their Sicilian allies, The Syracuſians alſo received aſſiſtance from the Lacedaemonians under the command of an experienced officer named *Gylippus.* Before theſe arrived, the Athenians had poſſeſſed themſelves of an important poſt named *Epipola,* which being a very ſteep hill, stood without the city and commanded it. Im­mediately after this the city was inveſted in form. The inhabitants made frequent and vigorous sallies ; but were always repulſed with loſs. In one of theſe ſallies Lamachus was ſlain ; and thus Nicias became sole commander. He then cauſed the canals to be cut by which water was con­veyed into the city ; upon which the Syracuſians began to think of capitulating. From this, however, they were soon after prevented by the arrival of Gylippus with the Spartan auxiliaries. On this they prepared for making vigorous ſallies, in order to facilitate the entrance of Gylippus. While they were making theſe preparations, Gylippus himſelf ap­peared at the held of 3000 foot and 200 horſe. Making directly for Epipolæ, where Nicias had fortified himſelf in a caſtle named *Labdalon,* he drew up his ſmall army under the walls ; and ſent an herald to Nicias, letting him know that he would allow him only five days to leave Sicily. To this meſſage Nicias returned no anſwer ; but Gylippus ſoon after attacked the fort, carried it by ſtorm, and put to the ſword all the Athenians that were in it. This opened for him a way into the city, where he was received with loud acclamations.

The fortune of the war was again changed. The Athe­nians gained an advantage by land, but were next day defeated with considerate loss. The Syracuſians received freſh ſupplies from Corinth, and the Athenians from their own country. Many engagements both by ſea and land took place, in which the ſucceſs was ultimately in favour of the Syracuſians At laſt the Athenian affairs were totally ruined by the loſs of a ſea-fight, in which 60 of their ships were taken or deſtroyed, and the reſt left quite unſerviceable. In this deſperate ſituation it was determined to abandon their ſhips, and retire that very night to the city of their confederates. The Syracuſian commander, suſpecting that this would be the caſe, ordered all his forces to be in readiness to prevent them from effecting their purpoſe. But as the people were then in the height of their rejoicing for the late victory, they refuted to take up arms again until they had reſted for ſome days. On this Hermocrates the general ſent to the Athenian camp ſome horsemen, who were to paſs for friends, and to adviſe Nicias not to quit his camp, which was well fortified, ſince the Syracuſians lay in ambush for him, and has ſeized on all the paſſes leading to the cities of their allies. To this false advice Nicias gave too eaſy credit, and did not march out till the third day, when his antagoniſt Hermocrates had prevailed upon his forces to march out. The Athenians and their allies alſo marched out to the number of no leſs than 40,000 ; but finding themſelves ſhut up on all sides, and being obliged to fight, their way through every outlet, they ſoon sunk into the deepeſt despair. Nicias did his utmoſt to encourage them ; and at laſt ſucceeded ſo far that they marched out in two bodies, both drawn up in proper order. The vanguard led by Ni­cias continued to keep together, and advanced in good or­der ; but half the rear, commanded by Demoſthenes, lost their way in the night, and were obliged to surrender. Ni-