them or on the Macedonians, were not a little offended to hear their ambassador talk in such a high strain. The re­sult of the conference was, that Agesilaus struck the name of Thebes out of the treaty, and declared war against them, about the year 371 b. c.

The Thebans were in no small consternation to see them­selves engaged in a war with the powerful Spartans, without any ally to assist them ; and the rest of the Grecian states having made peace with the latter, began to look upon the ruin of the former as unavoidable. They however resolved to make the best defence they could ; and placed their army under the command of Epaminondas, assigning him, at his own request, six individuals to act as counsellors or assistants. The Theban army consisted at most of 6000 men, whereas that of the enemy was at least thrice that number; but Epaminondas chiefly trusted to his horse, in which he had much the advantage both in quality and good management. The rest he endeavoured to supply by the disposition of his men, and the vigour of his attack. He even refused to suffer any to serve under him in the en­gagement, but such as he knew to be fully resolved to con­quer or die. The two armies met at Leuctra, where the Spartans were defeated with great slaughter, as related under that article.

The victorious general, desirous to improve this great victory, sent a herald, crowned with garlands, to communi­cate it in form to the Athenians, in hopes that this would be an effectual means to reunite them to the Theban inte­rest. But the Athenians, who now looked upon them with a jealous eye, and had in view the sovereignty of Greece, w<ndd not even grant their herald an audience. The Thebans took care to strengthen themselves by alliances; and, besides the Arcadians and EleAns, had brought the Phocians, Locrians, Acarnanians, Eubœans, and other states, under their dependence ; so that they were now in a condi­tion to act offensively against the Spartans. Accordingly, under pretence of assisting the Arcadians, they entered Pelo­ponnesus with a gallant army, with Epaminondas and Pelo­pidas at its head. Here they were joined by the Arcadian and other confederate forces ; so that the whole amounted to 40,000, or, according to some accounts, 50,000 men, be­sides great numbers of those who followed the camp, rather for plunder than fighting, and were computed at about 20,000 more. The army was divided into four columns, and moved towards Sellasia, the place of rendezvous, from which they pursued their march with fire and sword towards Sparta. But here they were repulsed by Agesilaus, who was then returned to that metropolis.

To repair, in some measure, this disgrace, and at the same time to leave some lasting monument which should redound as much to his glory as to the mortification of the Spartans, Epaminondas left not their territories till he had restored the posterity of the Messenians to their ancient dominions, from which they had been banished nearly 300 years ; rebuilt their capital, and left a strong garrison for its defence. He was, however, nearly cut off in his return by Iphicrates, whom the Athenians had sent with 12,000 men to intercept him ; but this general loitered so long at Co­rinth, that the Thebans had passed the defiles of Cenchreæ, the chief place where he could have obstructed their re­treat had he taken possession of it in proper time. Epami­nondas continued his march till he came in full view of the city of Corinth. He found the roads choked up with trees, rocks, stones, and every thing that could render them im­passable ; and the Corinthians well fortified, and resolute on a stout dcfence. But he advanced so furiously upon them, notwithstanding all these difficulties, that they aban­doned all their intrenchments and outworks to the Thebans, and fled into the city. Thither these pursued them sword in band, and made a horrid slaughter ; insomuch that Corinth must inevitably have fallen into their hands had their gene­rals thought fit to pursue these advantages ; but whether they were afraid of the Athenians falling upon them, or ap­prehended some dangerous ambush in a country with which they were but indifferently acquainted, or whether the army was too much weakened through so many fatigues, or, lastly, whether the coldness of the season, it being then the depth of winter, would not permit them to proceed farther, they immediately marched towards Bœotia. This gave such an advantage to their enemies, that they met with a very mor­tifying reception on their return to Thebes, where they were both arrested, and seized as state-prisoners, for having presumed to prolong their command four months longer than the time limited by law, which time included almost the whole of their expedition from their first entrance into Peloponnesus. At last, however, the judges being asham­ed to proceed any further, they were both honourably acquitted. This prosecution had been chiefly carried on and encouraged by Meneclides, a discontented Theban, and a bold and able speaker, who by his artful calumnies at the trial, had so far prevailed with the judges as to get Epami­nondas deprived of the government of Bœotia for a whole year, though he could not gain the same advantage against Pelopidas, who was a greater favourite of the people, as being his senior.

By this delay the Spartans, with much difficulty, had re­covered themselves from their great defeat at Leuctra, and settled their affairs in as good a posture as they could ; but though they had repulsed the Thebans in Peloponnesus, yet from the exploits which they had performed there, especially in dismembering the whole kingdom of Mes­senia from them, they had still cause to fear what their forces might accomplish under two such generals, and had accordingly taken due care to strengthen themselves against them, and to provide a great number of auxiliaries from other states, especially from that of Athens, with whom they had renewed their old treaty, and had agreed that each should have the command five days alternately. Soon after this treaty the Arcadians renewed the war, and took Palene in Laconia by storm, put the garrison to the sword, and were presently assisted by the Argives and Eleans, and especially by the Thebans, who sent to them 7000 foot, and 500 horse under the command of Epaminondas. This measure so alarmed the Athenians that they immediately sent Gobrias with some forces to oppose his passage ; and he so behaved himself against the Thebans that they were a second time forced to abandon Peloponnesus. This ill success gave fresh occasion to the enemies of Epaminondas to blame his conduct in the highest terms, notwithstanding the singular bravery with which he and his troops had for­ced the pass. Even his friends could not but suspect him of partiality for the Spartans, in not pursuing his advantage over them, and making a greater slaughter of them when he had it in his power ; while his enemies made it amount to no less than treachery to his country ; so that their brave general was once more deprived of the government of Bœo­tia, and reduced to the condition of a private man. He did not continue long under this disgrace before an occasion offered to make his services again of such necessity to the state, as to give him an opportunity to retrieve his fame, and wipe off the stain which his enemies had thrown upon him.

The Thessalians, who had groaned some time under the tyranny of the usurper Alexander, surnamed the Pheraean, sent an embassy to Thebes to implore their aid and protec­tion ; upon which Pelopidas was immediately sent as ambas­sador to expostulate with him on their behalf. He was then in Macedon, from whence he took the young prince Philip, afterwards the celebrated monarch, in order to pro­tect and educate him ; and upon his return marched di­rectly to Pharsalus in Thessaly, in order to punish the treachery of some mercenaries who had deserted the The­