

country.' 'Victorious,' said he. 'Willingly then,' said she, 'do I hear of the death of my sons.'

"Another, when burying her son, was commiserated by an old woman, who cried out, 'Oh your fate!' 'Yes, by the gods,' said she, 'a glorious fate, for did not I bear him that he might die for Sparta?'

"And their courage was not merely of a daring and physical character. It was a moral courage. A Spartan had been wounded in battle and compelled to crawl on all-fours; he seemed to feel ashamed of the awkwardness of his position. 'How much better it is,' said his mother, 'to rejoice on account of bravery, than be ashamed on account of ignorant laughter!'

"It might be supposed that the peculiar training to which the women were subjected might make them licentious and forward, but the testimony is strong that no such results followed from free intercourse with the young men. Adultery was almost entirely unknown.

"Plutarch tells the story that a stranger asked Geradas, one of the very old Spartans, what punishment their law appointed for adulterers. He answered, 'O stranger, there is no adulterer in our country.' The stranger said, 'What if there should be one?' 'He pays a fine,' said Geradas, 'of a bull so large, that stooping over Taygetus it will drink out of the Eurotas.' When the stranger expressed his surprise and said, 'But how could there ever be so large a bull?' Geradas replied with a smile, 'And how could there ever be an adulterer in Sparta?' This language is perhaps too strong, and there were certain practices allowable which would not be allowed in our communities. The one object of marriage was to produce strong children, and any deviation from the ordinary arrangement by which one woman was married to one man was not only deemed legitimate but praiseworthy, if it secured strong children. In this way a weak man might lend his wife to a stronger, and some women had two husbands. There is only one case on record of a Spartan having two wives, and the case was singular. A greater latitude must have been allowed to women. But all these cases must have been quite exceptional. The wives were true to their husbands, the husbands fond and proud of their wives. A poor maiden was asked what dowry she could give to her lover. 'Ancestral purity,' she said. A person was sent to try to persuade a Lacedæmonian woman to aid in some evil practice. 'When I was a girl,' she said, 'I was taught to obey my father, and I obeyed him; and when I became a wife I obeyed my husband; if, therefore, you have anything just to urge, make it known to him first.'

"Such were these Spartan women for many generations. No word of reproach can be brought against them. It is true that the free intercourse of the young men with the young women, and the slightness of the female garments, shocked the ordinary Athenian, and expressions to this effect occur in some writers, especially Euripides. But the general purity of the Spartan women is guaranteed by all the principal writers who have discussed the constitution of Sparta as it was during its supremacy—by Plato, Xenophon, and Plutarch. No doubt the system labored under a radical defect. It was exclusive; it drove away all strangers; it discouraged the higher culture, at least in the case of the men; and it suspected all the higher arts as tending to luxury. And when the crisis came, and the old manners gave way, vice and weakness rushed in, and men and women became equally bad. It is in the latter period that the words of blame are heard. Plato justly criticises one marked defect in the Spartan treatment of women. The lawgiver had looked on woman only

as a mother. He had lost sight of every other function. But women cannot spend their whole lives as mothers. When their infants grew into boyhood they were handed over to the instruction of Spartan men. And then what function had the women to discharge? Lycurgus, or the Spartan lawgivers, took no thought of this. The men were under strict regulation to the end of their days. They dined together on the fare prescribed by the state. They were continually out on military service. They had other employments assigned to them. But no regulations were made for the women. They might live as they liked; there was nothing to restrain their luxury, and they were not taught the military art like the men. This neglect of the half of the city, Aristotle affirms, was followed by dire consequences. In his day, the Spartan women were incorrigible and luxurious. He also affirms that the Spartan system threw a great deal of land into the hands of the women, so that they possessed two-fifths of it; and finally he accuses the Spartan women of ruling their husbands. Warlike men, he thinks, are apt to be passionately fond of the society of women. 'And what difference,' he says, 'does it make whether the women rule or the rulers are ruled by the women? for the result is the same.' There seems to have been some truth in this last accusation. Many of the wives were better educated than their husbands, and the fact was noticed by others. 'You of Lacedæmon,' said a stranger lady to Gorgo, wife of Leonidas, 'are the only women in the world that rule the men.' 'We,' she replied, 'are the only women that bring forth men.' There is a great deal of point in what Gorgo said. If women bring forth and rear *men*, they are certain to receive from them respect and tenderness; for there is no surer test of a man's real manhood, than his love for all that is noblest, highest, and truest in woman, and his desire to aid her in attaining to the full perfection of her nature.

"The student of the history of woman is continually reminded of the fact that, when men lose their dignity and eminence, woman disappears from the scene, but when they rise into worth, she again comes on the stage in all her power and tenderness. We have an instance before us. Sparta became degenerate. Her name almost vanishes from the pages of the historian. But she was not to die without a final struggle. In the middle of the third century before Christ, two kings of Sparta in succession dreamed of putting down the luxury, and restoring the old Spartan discipline and the old Lycurgan laws. And in the midst of their vigorous and heroic efforts to effect this great change, women again play their part with energy and devotion. The earliest of the two kings was the young and gentle Agis, and almost the first person whom he consulted on his projected reforms was his mother, Agesistrata, a woman of great wealth and influence. She was at first utterly taken aback, for the project included the surrender of all her wealth. But at length she admired her son's noble ambition, and set her mind, with the aid of some other like-minded women, on procuring the support of the women of Sparta. The importance of such support could not be over-estimated. 'They well knew,' says Plutarch, 'that the Lacedæmonian men were always obedient to their wives, and that they allowed them to meddle in public matters more than they allowed themselves to meddle in private affairs.' Besides, the women had a great deal of property. Would they surrender their wealth? Would they give up their luxurious habits? Would they return to the old Spartan simplicity? No; the movement seemed to have come too late. Some were willing to sacrifice everything, but others would yield nothing, and a strong party was formed against Agis. At first this party was put down with a high hand. Leonidas, the leader, was driven into exile. The daughter of this man, Chelonis, is one of the

great characters that emerged during these troublous times. She had been married to Cleombrotus, who took the side of Agis. Chelonis was in straits what to do, but she chose to follow the path where gentleness and tenderness were required. She left her husband, and tended her father in distress, relieving his wants, soothing his troubles, and supplicating the victorious party in his behalf. At length the wheel of fortune turned round. Leonidas became master of the situation. Agis and Cleombrotus were in his hands. Chelonis at once fled from her father, and took her place beside her husband. In the wretched robes which she had worn when pleading for her father, she pleaded for her husband. After much entreaty she prevailed, and the life of her husband was spared, but he was condemned to exile. Chelonis had again to make her choice. Her father urged her to stay with him, reminding her of the kindness he showed her in sparing her husband, and promising every comfort. But Chelonis did not hesitate. As Cleombrotus rose to go, she gave him one of her children, and taking the other in her arms, and kissing the altar of the goddess, she walked out with him to degradation and poverty. Justly does Plutarch add the remark that, if Cleombrotus had not been entirely corrupted by vain glory, he would have deemed exile with such a woman a greater blessing than any kingdom. The fate of pure-minded Agis was worse than that of Cleombrotus. No mercy was shown him, and he was put to death by strangulation. His mother, Agesistrata, waited to hear what was to become of him. The officer, who knew that Agis was dead, delusively told her that no violence would be done him. She wished to see him, and take her old mother with her. Permission was granted. The two women entered the prison. The doors were shut. The grandmother was requested to go into the chamber where Agis was. She went in, and was strangled. Then Agesistrata entered, and saw her son lying on the ground, and her mother hanging by a rope. She calmly helped to take the dead body down, and stretching her alongside of Agis, laid both the bodies out and covered them; and, falling upon her son and kissing him, she said, 'O my son, it is your gentleness and goodness that have ruined you.' 'If that is your opinion,' said the officer, 'you had better go the same way.' She bravely held out her neck, and said, 'May this turn out for the good of Sparta!' And thus was stamped out the first effort for the reformation of Sparta.

"The second is also remarkable for the nobility of the women who aided it. Cleomenes, a man of great vigor and capacity, the son of Leonidas mentioned above, came to the throne. His father had compelled him to marry Agiatis, the widow of Agis; but he soon began to love the noble and gentle lady. They talked much together about Agis and his projects, and Cleomenes at length resolved to carry out the projected reforms. Again the young prince was helped most effectively by his mother, Cratesicleia, who supplied him with resources, and even married again for his sake, for she thereby secured the support of one of the most influential men in Sparta. But again Destiny was too powerful for the reformer. He did, indeed, succeed in introducing his reforms into Sparta, and in again giving her the foremost place in Peloponnesus. But he awoke the jealousy of Aratus, the head of the Achaean League, the Macedonian stranger was called in, and after a fatal battle, Cleomenes had to flee. During the course of his struggles, his noble wife Agiatis died, and was bitterly lamented. His mother, Cratesicleia, was always ready to help him, and stood by him to the last. At one time he required the alliance of Ptolemy, King of Egypt, but Ptolemy would not agree to it, unless the Spartan king sent his mother and child as hostages. Cleomenes did not venture to mention this proposal to his mother, but

the mother's keen eye observed that he was keeping some secret from her. At last she prevailed upon him to disclose it, and on hearing it, she laughed loudly, and said, 'Will you not send immediately this body where it is likely to be most useful to Sparta, before it is dissolved by old age?' After she had gone to Egypt, she heard that Cleomenes was afraid to take certain measures, because Ptolemy held his mother and child as hostages, and she at once wrote to him, 'Do what is proper, and never mind what becomes of an old woman and a little child.'

"The fate of Cleomenes was as tragic as that of Agis. He had sought shelter in Egypt, but found a prison there instead of a home. He and his companions determined to overpower the sentinels, break through the place of confinement, and rouse the inhabitants to assert their liberty. They easily broke through their place of confinement, but they could not rouse the inhabitants, and so they resolved to die. Each one killed himself except Panteus, the youngest and most beautiful among them. He had been ordered by the king to wait till all had killed themselves. And so he did. He went round all the bodies to see that they were dead, and then, kissing Cleomenes and throwing his arms around him, he also killed himself. The Egyptian king ordered the execution of all the women connected with the Spartans. The mother was brought forth and stabbed. Other women also were put to death. But the most touching of all was the end of the wife of Panteus. She was still very young and exquisitely beautiful, and she was still in the raptures of first love. When her husband left Sparta for Egypt, her father had refused to let her go with him, and confined her. But she found means of escape. She mounted a horse, and rode to Tanarus, and there embarked on a vessel sailing for Egypt. Now she moved about the women, encouraging and consoling. She led Cratesicleia by the hand to the place of execution. She decently laid out the bodies of the women who were slain; and then, adjusting her own robe so that she might fall becomingly, she offered herself to the executioner without fear. Thus ended the second effort at Spartan reformation, and henceforth autonomous Sparta and her women disappear from history. We may well conclude the story with the closing words of Plutarch, who, thinking of the dramatic contests which were held in Greece, says, 'Thus Lacedæmon, exhibiting a dramatic contest, in which the women vied with the men, showed in her last days that Virtue cannot be insulted by Fortune.'"