

Constitution of Sparta

Xenophon

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Constitution of the Lacedaemonians Translated by E. C. Marchant

It occurred to me one day that Sparta, though among the most thinly populated of states, was evidently the most powerful and most celebrated city in Greece; and I fell to wondering how this could have happened. But when I considered the institutions of the Spartans, I wondered no longer.

Lycurgus, who gave them the laws that they obey, and to which they owe their prosperity, I do regard with wonder; and I think that he reached the utmost limit of wisdom. For it was not by imitating other states, but by devising a system utterly different from that of most others, that he made his country pre-eminently prosperous.

First, to begin at the beginning, I will take the begetting of children. In other states the girls who are destined to become mothers and are brought up in the approved fashion, live on the very plainest fare, with a most meagre allowance of delicacies. Wine is either withheld altogether, or, if allowed them, is diluted with water. The rest of the Greeks expect their girls to imitate the sedentary life that is typical of handicraftsmen — to keep quiet and do wool-work. How, then, is it to be expected that women so brought up will bear fine children?

But Lycurgus thought the labour of slave women sufficient to supply clothing. He believed motherhood to be the most important function of freeborn woman. Therefore, in the first place, he insisted on physical training for the female no less than for the male sex: moreover, he instituted races and trials of strength for women competitors as for men, believing that if both parents are strong they produce more vigorous offspring.

He noticed, too, that, during the time immediately succeeding marriage, it was usual elsewhere for the husband to have unlimited intercourse with his wife. The rule that he adopted was the opposite of this: for he laid it down that the husband should be ashamed to be seen entering his wife's room or leaving it. With this restriction on intercourse the desire of the one for the other must necessarily be increased, and their offspring was bound to be more

vigorous than if they were surfeited with one another.

In addition to this, he withdrew from men the right to take a wife whenever they chose, and insisted on their marrying in the prime of their manhood, believing that this too promoted the production of fine children.

It might happen, however, that an old man had a young wife; and he observed that old men keep a very jealous watch over their young wives. To meet these cases he instituted an entirely different system by requiring the elderly husband to introduce into his house some man whose physical and moral qualities he admired, in order to beget children.

On the other hand, in case a man did not want to cohabit with his wife and nevertheless desired children of whom he could be proud, he made it lawful for him to choose a woman who was the mother of a fine family and of high birth, and if he obtained her husband's consent, to make her the mother of his children.

He gave his sanction to many similar arrangements. For the wives want to take charge of two households, and the husbands want to get brothers for their sons, brothers who are members of the family and share in its influence, but claim no part of the money.

Thus his regulations with regard to the begetting of children were in sharp contrast with those of other states. Whether he succeeded in populating Sparta with a race of men remarkable for their size and strength anyone who chooses may judge for himself.

Having dealt with the subject of birth, I wish next to explain the educational system of Lycurgus, and how it differs from other systems. In the other Greek states parents who profess to give their sons the best education place their boys under the care and control of a moral tutor as soon as they can understand what is said to them, and send them to a school to learn letters, music and the exercises of the wrestling-ground. Moreover, they soften the children's feet by giving them sandals, and pamper their bodies with changes of clothing; and it is customary to allow them as much

food as they can eat.

Lycurgus, on the contrary, instead of leaving each father to appoint a slave to act as tutor, gave the duty of controlling the boys to a member of the class from which the highest offices are filled, in fact to the "Warden" as he is called. He gave this person authority to gather the boys together, to take charge of them and to punish them severely in case of misconduct. He also assigned to him a staff of youths provided with whips to chastise them when necessary; and the result is that modesty and obedience are inseparable companions at Sparta.

Instead of softening the boys' feet with sandals he required them to harden their feet by going without shoes. He believed that if this habit were cultivated it would enable them to climb hills more easily and descend steep inclines with less danger, and that a youth who had accustomed himself to go barefoot would leap and jump and run more nimbly than a boy in sandals.

And instead of letting them be pampered in the matter of clothing, he introduced the custom of wearing one garment throughout the year, believing that they would thus be better prepared to face changes of heat and cold.

As to the food, he required the prefect to bring with him such a moderate amount of it that the boys would never suffer from repletion, and would know what it was to go with their hunger unsatisfied; for he believed that those who underwent this training would be better able to continue working on an empty stomach, if necessary, and would be capable of carrying on longer without extra food, if the word of command were given to do so: they would want fewer delicacies and would accommodate themselves more readily to anything put before them, and at the same time would enjoy better health.

He also thought that a diet which made their bodies slim would do more to increase their height than one that consisted of flesh-forming food. On the other hand, lest they should feel too much the pinch of hunger, while not giving them the opportunity of

taking what they wanted without trouble he allowed them to alleviate their hunger by stealing something.

It was not on account of a difficulty in providing for them that he encouraged them to get their food by their own cunning. No one, I suppose, can fail to see that. Obviously a man who intends to take to thieving must spend sleepless nights and play the deceiver and lie in ambush by day, and moreover, if he means to make a capture, he must have spies ready. There can be no doubt then, that all this education was planned by him in order to make the boys more resourceful in getting supplies, and better fighting men. Someone may ask:

But why, if he believed stealing to be a fine thing, did he have the boy who was caught beaten with many stripes? I reply: Because in all cases men punish a learner for not carrying out properly whatever he is taught to do. So the Spartans chastise those who get caught for stealing badly.

He made it a point of honour to steal as many cheeses as possible [from the altar of Artemis Orthia], but appointed others to scourge the thieves, meaning to show thereby that by enduring pain for a short time one may win lasting fame and felicity. It is shown herein that where there is need of swiftness, the slothful, as usual, gets little profit and many troubles.

In order that the boys might never lack a ruler even when the Warden was away, he gave authority to any citizen who chanced to be present to require them to do anything that he thought right, and to punish them for any misconduct. This had the effect of making the boys more respectful; in fact boys and men alike respect their rulers above everything.

And that a ruler might not be lacking to the boys even when no grown man happened to be present, he selected the keenest of the prefects, and gave to each the command of a division. And so at Sparta the boys are never without a ruler.

I think I ought to say something also about intimacy with boys, since this matter also has a bearing on education. In other Greek states, for instance among the Boeotians, man and boy live together, like married people; elsewhere, among the Eleians, for example, consent is won by means of favours. Some, on the other hand, entirely forbid suitors to talk with boys.

The customs instituted by Lycurgus were opposed to all of these. If someone, being himself an honest man, admired a boy's soul and tried to make of him an ideal friend without reproach and to associate with him, he approved, and believed in the excellence of this kind of training. But if it was clear that the attraction lay in the boy's outward beauty, he banned the connexion as an abomination; and thus he caused lovers to abstain from boys no less than parents abstain from sexual intercourse with their children and brothers and sisters with each other.

I am not surprised, however, that people refuse to believe this. For in many states the laws are not opposed to the indulgence of these appetites. I have now dealt with the Spartan system of education, and that of the other Greek states. Which system turns out men more obedient, more respectful, and more strictly temperate, anyone who chooses may once more judge for himself.

When a boy ceases to be a child, and begins to be a lad, others release him from his moral tutor and his schoolmaster: he is then no longer under a ruler and is allowed to go his own way. Here again Lycurgus introduced a wholly different system.

For he observed that at this time of life self-will makes strong root in a boy's mind, a tendency to insolence manifests itself, and a keen appetite for pleasure in different forms takes possession of him. At this stage, therefore, he imposed on him a ceaseless round of work, and contrived a constant round of occupation.

The penalty for shirking the duties was exclusion from all future honours. He thus caused not only the public authorities, but their relations also to take pains that the lads did not incur the contempt of their fellow citizens by flinching from their tasks.

Moreover, wishing modesty to be firmly rooted in them, he required them to keep their hands under their cloaks, to walk in silence, not to look about them, but to fix their eyes on the ground. The effect of this rule has been to prove that even in the matter of decorum the male is stronger than the female sex.

At any rate you would expect a stone image to utter a sound sooner than those lads; you would sooner attract the attention of a bronze figure; you might think them more modest even than a young bride in the bridal chamber. When they have taken their place at a public meal, you must be content if you can get an answer to a question. Such was the care that he bestowed on the growing lads.

For those who had reached the prime of life he showed by far the deepest solicitude. For he believed that if these were of the right stamp they must exercise a powerful influence for good on the state.

He saw that where the spirit of rivalry is strongest among the people, there the choruses are most worth hearing and the athletic contests afford the finest spectacle. He believed, therefore, that if he could match the young men together in a strife of valour, they too would reach a high level of manly excellence. I will proceed to explain, therefore, how he instituted matches between the young men.

The Ephors, then, pick out three of the very best among them. These three are called Commanders of the Guard. Each of them enrolls a hundred others, stating his reasons for preferring one and rejecting another.

The result is that those who fail to win the honour are at war both with those who sent them away and with their successful rivals; and they are on the watch for any lapse from the code of honour.

Here then you find that kind of strife that is dearest to the gods, and in the highest sense political — the strife that sets the standard of a brave man's conduct; and in which either party exerts itself to the end that it may never fall below its best, and that, when the

time comes, every member of it may support the state with all his might.

And they are bound, too, to keep themselves fit, for one effect of the strife is that they spar whenever they meet; but anyone present has a right to part the combatants. If anyone refuses to obey the mediator the Warden takes him to the Ephors; and they fine him heavily, in order to make him realize that he must never yield to a sudden impulse to disobey the laws.

To come to those who have passed the time of youth, and are now eligible to hold the great offices of state. While absolving these from the duty of bestowing further attention on their bodily strength, the other Greeks require them to continue serving in the army. But Lycurgus established the principle that for citizens of that age, hunting was the noblest occupation, except when some public duty prevented, in order that they might be able to stand the fatigues of soldiering as well as the younger men.

I have given a fairly complete account of the institutions of Lycurgus so far as they apply to the successive stages of life. I will now try to describe the system that he established for all alike.

Lycurgus found the Spartans boarding at home like the other Greeks, and came to the conclusion that the custom was responsible for a great deal of misconduct. He therefore established the public messes outside in the open, thinking that this would reduce disregard of orders to a minimum.

The amount of food he allowed was just enough to prevent them from getting either too much or too little to eat. But many extras are supplied from the spoils of the chase; and for these rich men sometimes substitute wheaten bread. Consequently the board is never bare until the company breaks up, and never extravagantly furnished.

Another of his reforms was the abolition of compulsory drinking, which is the undoing alike of body of mind. But he allowed everyone to drink when he was thirsty, believing that drink is then most

harmless and most welcome. Now what opportunity did these public messes give a man to ruin himself or his estate by gluttony or wine-bibbing?

Note that in other states the company usually consists of men of the same age, where modesty is apt to be conspicuous by its absence from the board. But Lycurgus introduced mixed companies at Sparta, so that the experience of the elders might contribute largely to the education of the juniors.

In point of fact, by the custom of the country the conversation at the public meals turns on the great deeds wrought in the state, and so there is little room for insolence or drunken uproar, for unseemly conduct or indecent talk.

And the system of feeding in the open has other good results. They must needs walk home after the meal, and, of course, must take good care not to stumble under the influence of drink (for they know that they will not stay on at the table); and they must do in the dark what they do in the day. Indeed, those who are still in the army are not even allowed a torch to guide them.

Lycurgus had also observed the effects of the same rations on the hard worker and the idler; that the former has a fresh colour, firm flesh and plenty of vigour, while the latter looks puffy, ugly and weak. He saw the importance of this; and reflecting that even a man who works hard of his own will because it is his duty to do so, looks in pretty good condition, he required the senior for the time being in every gymnasium to take care that the tasks set should be not too small for the rations allowed.

And I think that in this matter too he succeeded. So it would not be easy to find healthier or handier men than the Spartans. For their exercises train the legs, arms and neck equally.

In the following respects, again, his institutions differ from the ordinary type. In most states every man has control of his own children, servants and goods. Lycurgus wanted to secure that the citizens should get some advantage from one another without doing

any harm. He therefore gave every father authority over other men's children as well as over his own.

When a man knows that fathers have this power, he is bound to rule the children over whom he exercises authority as he would wish his own to be ruled. If a boy tells his own father when he has been whipped by another father, it is a disgrace if the parent does not give his son another whipping. So completely do they trust one another not to give any improper orders to the children.

He also gave the power of using other men's servants in case of necessity; and made sporting dogs common property to this extent, that any who want them invite their master, and if he is engaged himself he is glad to send the hounds. A similar plan of borrowing is applied to horses also; thus a man who falls ill or wants a carriage or wishes to get to some place quickly, if he sees a horse anywhere, takes and uses it carefully and duly restores it.

There is yet another among the customs instituted by him which is not found in other communities. It was intended to meet the needs of parties belated in the hunting-field with nothing ready to eat. He made a rule that those who had plenty should leave behind the prepared food, and that those who needed food should break the seals, take as much as they wanted, seal up the rest and leave it behind.

The result of this method of going shares with one another is that even those who have but little receive a share of all that the country yields whenever they want anything.

Nor does this exhaust the list of the customs established by Lycurgus at Sparta that are contrary to those of the other Greeks. In other states, I suppose, all men make as much money as they can. One is a farmer, another a ship-owner, another a merchant, and others live by different handicrafts.

But at Sparta Lycurgus forbade freeborn citizens to have anything to do with business affairs. He insisted on their regarding as their own concern only those activities that make for civic freedom.

Indeed, how should wealth be a serious object there, when he insisted on equal contributions to the food supply and on the same standard of living for all, and thus cut off the attraction of money for indulgence' sake? Why, there is not even any need of money to spend on cloaks: for their adornment is due not to the price of their clothes, but to the excellent condition of their bodies.

Nor yet is there any reason for amassing money in order to spend it on one's messmates; for he made it more respectable to help one's fellows by toiling with the body than by spending money, pointing out that toil is an employment of the soul, spending an employment of wealth.

By other enactments he rendered it impossible to make money in unfair ways. In the first place the system of coinage that he established was of such a kind that even a sum of ten minae could not be brought into a house without the master and the servants being aware of it: the money would fill a large space and need a wagon to draw it.

Moreover, there is a right of search for gold and silver, and, in the event of discovery, the possessor is fined. Why, then, should money-making be a preoccupation in a state where the pains of its possession are more than the pleasures of its enjoyment?

To continue: we all know that obedience to the magistrates and the laws is found in the highest degree in Sparta. For my part, however, I think that Lycurgus did not so much as attempt to introduce this habit of discipline until he had secured agreement among the most important men in the state.

I base my inference on the following facts. In other states the most powerful citizens do not even wish it to be thought that they fear the magistrates: they believe such fear to be a badge of slavery. But at Sparta the most important men show the utmost deference to the magistrates: they pride themselves on their humility, on running instead of walking to answer any call, in the belief that, if they lead, the rest will follow along the path of eager obedience. And so it has proved.

It is probable also that these same citizens helped to set up the office of Ephor, having come to the conclusion that obedience is a very great blessing whether in a state or an army or a household. For they thought that the greater the power of these magistrates the more they would impress the minds of the citizens.

Accordingly, the Ephors are competent to fine whom they choose, and have authority to enact immediate payment: they have authority also to deprive the magistrates of office, and even to imprison and prefer a capital charge against them. Possessing such wide power they do not, like other states, leave persons elected to office to rule as they like throughout the year, but in common with despots and the presidents of the games, they no sooner see anyone breaking the law than they punish the offender.

Among many excellent plans contrived by Lycurgus for encouraging willing obedience to the laws among the citizens, I think one of the most excellent was this: before delivering his laws to the people he paid a visit to Delphi, accompanied by the most important citizens, and inquired of the god whether it was desirable and better for Sparta that she should obey the laws that he himself had framed. Only when the god answered that it was better in every way did he deliver them, after enacting that to refuse obedience to laws given by the Pythian god was not only unlawful, but wicked.

The following achievement of Lycurgus, again, deserves admiration. He caused his people to choose an honourable death in preference to a disgraceful life. And, in fact, one would find on consideration that they actually lose a smaller proportion of their men than those who prefer to retire from the danger zone.

To tell the truth, escape from premature death more generally goes with valour than with cowardice: for valour is actually easier and pleasanter and more resourceful and mightier. And obviously glory adheres to the side of valour, for all men want to ally themselves somehow with the brave.

However, it is proper not to pass over the means by which he contrived to bring about this result. Clearly, what he did was to ensure that the brave should have happiness, and the coward misery.

For in other states when a man proves a coward, the only consequence is that he is called a coward. He goes to the same market as the brave man, sits beside him, attends the same gymnasium, if he chooses. But in Lacedaemon everyone would be ashamed to have a coward with him at the mess or to be matched with him in a wrestling bout.

Often when sides are picked for a game of ball he is the odd man left out: in the chorus he is banished to the ignominious place; in the streets he is bound to make way; when he occupies a seat he must needs give it up, even to a junior; he must support his spinster relatives at home and must explain to them why they are old maids: he must make the best of a fireside without a wife, and yet pay forfeit for that: he may not stroll about with a cheerful countenance, nor behave as though he were a man of unsullied fame, or else he must submit to be beaten by his betters.

Small wonder, I think, that where such a load of dishonour is laid on the coward, death seems preferable to a life so dishonoured, so ignominious.

The law by which Lycurgus encouraged the practice of virtue up to old age is another excellent measure in my opinion. By requiring men to face the ordeal of election to the Council of Elders near the end of life, he prevented neglect of high principles even in old age.

Worthy of admiration also is the protection that he afforded to the old age of good men. For the enactment by which he made the Elders judges in trials on the capital charge caused old age to be held in greater honour than the full vigour of manhood.

And surely it is natural that of all contests in the world this should excite the greatest zeal. For noble as are the contests in the Games, they are merely tests of bodily powers. But the contest for the

Council judges souls whether they be good. As much then, as the soul surpasses the body, so much more worthy are the contests of the soul to kindle zeal than those of the body.

Again, the following surely entitles the work of Lycurgus to high admiration. He observed that where the cult of virtue is left to voluntary effort, the virtuous are not strong enough to increase the fame of their fatherland. So he compelled all men at Sparta to practise all the virtues in public life. And therefore, just as private individuals differ from one another in virtue according as they practise or neglect it, so Sparta, as a matter of course, surpasses all other states in virtue, because she alone makes a public duty of gentlemanly conduct.

For was not this too a noble rule of his, that whereas other states punish only for wrong done to one's neighbour, he inflicted penalties no less severe on any who openly neglected to live as good a life as possible?

For he believed, it seems, that enslavement, fraud, robbery, are crimes that injure only the victims of them; but the wicked man and the coward are traitors to the whole body politic. And so he had good reason, I think, for visiting their offences with the heaviest penalties.

And he laid on the people the duty of practising the whole virtue of a citizen as a necessity irresistible. For to all who satisfied the requirements of his code he gave equal rights of citizenship, without regard to bodily infirmity or want of money. But the coward who shrank from the task of observing the rules of his code he caused to be no more reckoned among the peers.

Now that these laws are of high antiquity there can be no doubt: for Lycurgus is said to have lived in the days of the Heracleidae. Nevertheless, in spite of their antiquity, they are wholly strange to others even at this day. Indeed, it is most astonishing that all men praise such institutions, but no state chooses to imitate them.

The blessings that I have enumerated so far were shared by all alike in peace and in war. But if anyone wishes to discover in what respect Lycurgus' organisation of the army on active service was better than other systems, here is the information that he seeks.

The Ephors issue a proclamation stating the age-limit fixed for the levy, first for the cavalry and infantry, and then for the handicraftsmen. Thus the Lacedaemonians are well supplied in the field with all things that are found useful in civil life. All the implements that an army may require in common are ordered to be assembled, some in carts, some on baggage animals; thus anything missing is not at all likely to be overlooked.

In the equipment that he devised for the troops in battle he included a red cloak, because he believed this garment to have least resemblance to women's clothing and to be most suitable for war, and a brass shield, because it is very soon polished and tarnishes very slowly. He also permitted men who were past their first youth to wear long hair, believing that it would make them look taller, more dignified and more terrifying.

The men so equipped were divided into six regiments of cavalry and infantry. The officers of each citizen regiment comprise one colonel, four captains, eight first lieutenants and sixteen second lieutenants. These regiments at the word of command form sections sometimes (two), sometimes three, and sometimes six abreast.

The prevalent opinion that the Laconian infantry formation is very complicated is the very reverse of the truth. In the Laconian formation the front rank men are all officers, and each file has all that it requires to make it efficient.

The formation is so easy to understand that no one who knows man from man can possibly go wrong. For some have the privilege of leading; and the rest are under orders to follow. Orders to wheel from column into line of battle are given verbally by the second lieutenant acting as a herald, and the line is formed either thin or deep, by wheeling. Nothing whatever in these movements is difficult to understand.

To be sure, the secret of carrying on in a battle with any troops at hand when the line gets into confusion is not so easy to grasp, except for soldiers trained under the laws of Lycurgus.

The Lacedaemonians also carry out with perfect ease manoeuvres that instructors in tactics think very difficult. Thus, when they march in column, every section of course follows in the rear of the section in front of it. Suppose that at such a time an enemy in order of battle suddenly makes his appearance in front: the word is passed to the second lieutenant to deploy into line to the left, and so throughout the column until the battle-line stands facing the enemy. Or again, if the enemy appears in the rear while they are in this formation, each file counter-marches, in order that the best men may always be face to face with the enemy.

True, the leader is then on the left, but instead of thinking this a disadvantage, they regard it as a positive advantage at times. For should the enemy attempt a flanking movement he would try to encircle them, not on the exposed but on the protected side. If, however, it seems better for any reason that the leader should be on the right wing, the left wing wheels, and the army counter-marches by ranks until the leader is on the right, and the rear of the column on the left.

If, on the other hand, an enemy force appears on the right when they are marching in column, all that they have to do is to order each company to wheel to the right so as to front the enemy like a man-of-war, and thus again the company at the rear of the column is on the right. If again an enemy approaches on the left, they do not allow that either, but either push him back or wheel their companies to the left to face him, and thus the rear of the column finds itself on the left.

I will now explain the method of encampment approved by Lycurgus. Seeing that the angles of a square are useless, he introduced the circular form of camp, except where there was a secure hill or wall, or a river afforded protection in the rear.

He caused sentries to be posted by day facing inwards along the place where the arms were kept, for the object of these is to keep an eye not on the enemy but on their friends. The enemy is watched by cavalry from positions that command the widest outlook.

To meet the case of a hostile approach at night, he assigned the duty of acting as sentries outside the lines to the Sciritae. In these days the duty is shared by foreigners, if any happen to be present in the camp.

The rule that patrols invariably carry their spears, has the same purpose, undoubtedly, as the exclusion of slaves from the place of arms. Nor is it surprising that sentries who withdraw for necessary purposes only go so far away from one another and from the arms as not to cause inconvenience. Safety is the first object of this rule also.

The camp is frequently shifted with the double object of annoying their enemies and of helping their friends. Moreover the law requires all Lacedaemonians to practise gymnastics regularly throughout the campaign; and the result is that they take more pride in themselves and have a more dignified appearance than other men. Neither walk nor race-course may exceed in length the space covered by the regiment, so that no one may get far away from his own arms.

After the exercises the senior colonel gives the order by herald to sit down — this is their method of inspection — and next to take breakfast and to relieve the outposts quickly. After this there are amusements and recreations until the evening exercises.

These being finished, the herald gives the order to take the evening meal, and, as soon as they have sung to the praise of the gods to whom they have sacrificed with good omens, to rest by the arms. Let not the length to which I run occasion surprise, for it is almost impossible to find any detail in military matters requiring attention that is overlooked by the Lacedaemonians.

I will also give an account of the power and honour that Lycurgus conferred on the King in the field. In the first place, while on military service the King and his staff are maintained by the state. The colonels mess with the King, in order that constant intercourse may give better opportunities for taking counsel together in case of need. Three of the peers also attend the King's mess. These three take entire charge of the commissariat for the King and his staff, so that these may devote all their time to affairs of war.

But I will go back to the beginning, and explain how the King sets out with an army. First he offers up sacrifice at home to Zeus the Leader and to the gods associated with him. If the sacrifice appears propitious, the Fire-bearer takes fire from the altar and leads the way to the borders of the land. There the King offers sacrifice again to Zeus and Athena.

Only when the sacrifice proves acceptable to both these deities does he cross the borders of the land. And the fire from these sacrifices leads the way and is never quenched, and animals for sacrifice of every sort follow. At all times when he offers sacrifice, the King begins the work before dawn of day, wishing to forestall the goodwill of the god.

And at the sacrifice are assembled colonels, captains, lieutenants, commandants of foreign contingents, commanders of the baggage train, and, in addition, any general from the states who chooses to be present.

There are also present two of the Ephors, who interfere in nothing except by the King's request, but keep an eye on the proceedings, and see that all behave with a decorum suitable to the occasion. When the sacrifices are ended, the King summons all and delivers the orders of the day. And so, could you watch the scene, you would think all other men mere improvisors in soldiering and the Lacedaemonians the only artists in warfare.

When the King leads, provided that no enemy appears, no one precedes him except the Sciritae and the mounted vedettes. But if ever they think there will be fighting, he takes the lead of the first

regiment and wheels to the right, until he is between two regiments and two colonels.

The troops that are to support these are marshalled by the senior member of the King's staff. The staff consists of all peers who are members of the royal mess, seers, doctors, fluteplayers, commanding officers and any volunteers who happen to be present. Thus nothing that has to be done causes any difficulty, for everything is duly provided for.

The following arrangements made by Lycurgus with a view to the actual fighting are also, in my opinion, very useful. When a goat is sacrificed, the enemy being near enough to see, custom ordains that all the fluteplayers present are to play and every Lacedaemonian is to wear a wreath. An order is also given to polish arms. It is also the privilege of the young warrior to comb his hair(?) before entering battle, to look cheerful and earn a good report.

Moreover, the men shout words of encouragement to the subaltern, for it is impossible for each subaltern to make his voice travel along the whole of his section to the far end. The colonel is responsible for seeing that all is done properly.

When the time for encamping seems to have arrived, the decision rests with the King, who also indicates the proper place. On the other hand the dispatch of embassies whether to friends or enemies is not the King's affair. All who have any business to transact deal in the first instance with the King.

Suitors for justice are remitted by the King to the Court of Hellanodicae, applications for money to the treasurers; and if anyone brings booty, he is sent to the auctioneers. With this routine the only duties left to the King on active service are to act as priest in matters of religion and as general in his dealings with the men.

Should anyone ask me whether I think that the laws of Lycurgus still remain unchanged at this day, I certainly could not say that with any confidence whatever.

For I know that formerly the Lacedaemonians preferred to live together at home with moderate fortunes rather than expose themselves to the corrupting influences of flattery as governors of dependent states.

And I know too that in former days they were afraid to be found in possession of gold; whereas nowadays there are some who even boast of their possessions.

There were alien acts in former days, and to live abroad was illegal; and I have no doubt that the purpose of these regulations was to keep the citizens from being demoralized by contact with foreigners; and now I have no doubt that the fixed ambition of those who are thought to be first among them is to live to their dying day as governors in a foreign land.

There was a time when they would fain be worthy of leadership; but now they strive far more earnestly to exercise rule than to be worthy of it.

Therefore in times past the Greeks would come to Lacedaemon and beg her to lead them against reputed wrongdoers; but now many are calling on one another to prevent a revival of Lacedaemonian supremacy.

Yet we need not wonder if these reproaches are levelled at them, since it is manifest that they obey neither their god nor the laws of Lycurgus.

I wish also to give an account of the compact made by Lycurgus between King and state. For this is the only government that continues exactly as it was originally established, whereas other constitutions will be found to have undergone and still to be undergoing modifications.

He ordained that the King shall offer all the public sacrifices on behalf of the state, in virtue of his divine descent, and that, whatever may be the destination to which the state sends out an army, he shall be its leader.

He also gave him the right to receive certain parts of the beasts sacrificed, and assigned to him enough choice land in many of the outlanders' cities to ensure him a reasonable competence without excessive riches.

In order that even the kings should mess in public, he assigned to them a public mess tent; he also honoured them with a double portion at the meal, not that they might eat enough for two, but that they might have the wherewithal to honour anyone whom they chose.

He also allowed each King to choose two messmates, who are called Pythii. Further, he granted them to take of every litter of pigs a porker, that a King may never want victims, in case he wishes to seek counsel of the gods.

A lake near the house supplies abundance of water; and how useful that is for many purposes none know so well as those who are without it. Further, all rise from their seats when the King appears; only the Ephors do not rise from their official chairs.

And they exchange oaths monthly, the Ephors on behalf of the state, the King for himself. And this is the King's oath: "I will reign according to the established laws of the state." And this the oath of the state: "While you abide by your oath, we will keep the kingship unshaken."

These then are the honours that are bestowed on the King at home during his lifetime; and they do not greatly exceed those of private persons. For it was not the wish of Lycurgus to put into the King's hearts despotic pride, nor to implant in the mind of the citizens envy of their power.

As for the honours assigned to the King at his death, the intention of the laws of Lycurgus herein is to show that they have preferred the Kings of the Lacedaemonians in honour not as mere men, but as demigods.