

Plutarch, *Life of Lysander*, 3-11 and 16

Translated by Terence Edwards, 2017

[3.1] The Peloponnesian War had lasted for a long time, and after the disaster in Sicily suffered by the Athenians, it was expected immediately that they would lose control of the sea and give up everywhere soon afterwards. Alkibiades, however, returned from exile and, with his ability in this area, brought about a great change; he achieved a situation where the naval contests were evenly balanced with their rivals. Therefore, the Spartans were again afraid and became newly enthusiastic for the war; so, thinking that the war needed an able leader and more formidable resources, they sent Lysander to lead the campaign at sea. Arriving in Ephesus, he found that the city was well-disposed towards him and very eager to act in Spartan interest, but in a poor state and in danger of being made barbarous because of their mixing with Persian customs, since they were surrounded by Lydia and the generals of the Persian king spent much time there. [3] Lysander set up camp and ordered the ships from everywhere to unload their cargoes there. He also prepared a shipyard for building triremes. He restored their harbours with commerce, their markets with trade and he filled their homes and workshops with business, to such an extent that from that time, because of Lysander, the city first began to hope for the status and greatness it now has.

[4.1 (= LACTOR E120)] When he learnt that Cyrus, the Great King's son, had arrived in Sardis, he went up there to talk with him, and accuse Tissaphernes. Tissaphernes had orders to help the Spartans and drive the Athenians from the sea, but he appeared to be unprepared, even giving up because of Alkibiades and destroying the fleet with poor resources. [2] Indeed it was what Cyrus wanted to have Tissaphernes blamed, since he was a worthless character and was privately opposed to Cyrus. So as a result of this, and because of other behaviour, Lysander pleased Cyrus; especially because he was inclined towards being agreeable in conversation, he shifted the youth in favour of the war. [3] Cyrus once gave a feast for Lysander when he wished to leave, and he asked him not to reject the fellow-feelings and friendship between them, but told him to ask whatever he would like and said that there was absolutely nothing he could not have. Lysander replied, "Since therefore, Cyrus, you are so kind, I beg and entreat you to add one obol to the pay of the sailors so that they take four obols instead of three". [4] So Cyrus was pleased with the honour of the man and gave him 10,000 darics. From this amount he paid out an obol to the sailors and, making a name for himself, in a short time he made the ships of his enemies empty. For many sailors changed allegiance to those who paid more, and those who remained became lazy and mutinous, and daily caused trouble for their generals. [5] Nevertheless, although he reduced his enemies' strength by doing this and caused them trouble, Lysander shrank from a battle at sea being afraid of Alkibiades, who was both active and, having a greater number of ships, had not been beaten in all his battles by land and sea up to that time.

[5.1 (= LACTOR E124)] When Alkibiades sailed from Samos to Phocaea, leaving Antiochus, his pilot, in command of the fleet, Antiochus, as though to insult Lysander and display his confidence, sailed into the harbor of Ephesus with two triremes. He rowed past their anchorage with laughter and a lot of noise in a swaggering manner; Lysander was angered by this and at first launching a few of his triremes, he pursued him; then he saw that the other Athenians were coming to his aid, so he launched the full fleet, and finally the engagement resulted in a battle. [2] Lysander was victorious, capturing fifteen triremes, and he set up a trophy. At this, the people in the city of Athens deposed Alkibiades from his command; since he was insulted and abused by the soldiers at Samos, he sailed from the camp to the Chersonese. Therefore, this battle, although not great in reality, was made famous by the fate

suffered by Alkibiades. [3] Lysander summoned to Ephesus men from their cities whom he viewed as especially outstanding for their daring and determination; he planted in them the beginnings of those dekadarchies (which later he would create) and innovations; he urged and spurred them on to establish political clubs and turn their attention to political issues, so that, as soon as the Athenians were destroyed, they might be freed from the power of the demos and become the power in their cities themselves. [4] He gave them some reason to trust him by his actions, for he involved those already his friends and supporters in important affairs, promoting them with honours and commands, himself doing wrong and injustice in support of these men's greed. The result was that all attached themselves to him and were anxious to be agreeable to him, hoping that, while he was in power, they would fail to gain none of their greatest desires. [5] Therefore they did not view Kallicratidas well at first when he arrived to replace Lysander as commander of the fleet, nor later, when he gave proof that he was the best and most just of all, were they pleased with the manner of his leadership which had a certain Doric openness and honesty. But they admired his virtue, just like the beauty of the stature of a hero, yet desired the enthusiasm of Lysander, and sought his attachment to them and their needs, so that when he sailed away they were dispirited and wept.

[6.1] Lysander made these men even more hostile to Kallicratidas and he sent what remained of the money given to him by Cyrus for the fleet back to Sardis, and ordered Kallicratidas to ask for the money himself, if he wanted to see to the welfare of his soldiers. [2] Finally, when sailing away he called him to witness that he handed over a fleet that was in control of the sea. But Kallicratidas, wanting to prove that this ambition was boastful and empty, said, "Well, then, keep Samos on the left and sail round to Miletus and there hand over the triremes to me. For there is no need to fear sailing past the enemy at Samos, if we control the sea." [3] Lysander replied to this that he did not command the ships but Kallicratidas. Then he sailed off to the Peloponnese, leaving Kallicratidas greatly concerned. For he had not brought money when leaving home, and he could not bear to levy money on the cities nor force them when they were suffering hardships themselves. [4] Therefore, the only course left to him was to go to the doors of the generals of the Great King, just as Lysander had done, to beg for money. For this task, he happened to be the most unsuitable of all men, a free man and high-minded, who considered all Greek defeats by Greeks to be more acceptable than to wait at the doors of barbarians and to flatter those, who had a great deal of gold but nothing else that was good. So forced by his difficulties, he went up to Sardis and at once hurried to the house of Cyrus and ordered that Cyrus be told that Kallicratidas the admiral had come wishing to discuss matters with him. When one of the doorkeepers said to him, "But Cyrus does not have time now, for he is drinking," Kallicratidas replied somewhat naively, "That's not a problem; I will stay standing here until he has finished his drink." [6] Then he left, laughed at by the barbarians who thought him some sort of countryman. When he came back a second time to the doors, he was not allowed in, and, taking this badly, he went to Ephesus, uttering many curses on those who were the first to be treated with contempt by the barbarians and who taught them to be proud because of their wealth. [7] He swore to those present that, as soon as he reached Sparta, he would do all he could to reconcile the Greeks in order that the Greeks themselves would cause the barbarians to fear them, and no longer need to gain the barbarians' power to use against each other.

[7.1] But Kallicratidas, although intending things worthy of Lacedaimon, and being equal to the greatest of the Greeks because of his sense of justice, his greatness of spirit and his courage, was defeated not much later at Arginousai and disappeared from view. The allies, since their situation was now worse, sent an embassy to Sparta, and begged for Lysander to command the fleet, on the grounds that they would take charge of matters more enthusiastically if he were their commander. [2] And Cyrus sent the same demand. However,

the Spartans had a law which did not allow a man to hold a command twice, but they wanted to please their allies, so they gave the title of admiral to a certain Aracus and sent out Lysander nominally second-in-command, but in fact with power over everything. Therefore he set out, which is what most of those in power in the cities had wanted for a while. They hoped to become even more powerful through him, [3] once the power of the people had been completely brought to an end. But, for those who liked a straightforward and noble character in their leaders, Lysander, compared to Kallicratidas, seemed too clever and ready to do anything; a man who achieved many things in the war with various sorts of trickery and who praised justice as long as it profited him; if it did not, he used what was expedient as if it were honourable; he thought truth not naturally better than falsehood, considering its value according to the need of each situation. [4] He ordered to be ridiculed those who thought that men descended from Heracles should not wage war with deceit. "For one must sew on a fox-skin where the lion-skin does not reach."

[8.1] This is the account of his acts at Miletus: his friends and allies, to whom he had promised to help remove the democracy and expel their opponents, changed their views and were reconciled with their enemies. In public he pretended to be pleased and help in the reconciliation, but secretly he criticised and reviled them, and urged them to attack the masses. [2] When he realized that the uprising was happening, he quickly came to help and went into the city, where he voiced his anger at those involved in the uprising whom he met first; he moved against them, treating them harshly, as if to punish them. Others, however, he told to be encouraged and to expect no other trouble now that he was there. [3] But this was all pretence in various ways, because he wanted the most powerful of the democrats not to flee, but remain in the city and be killed. And indeed, this happened; for all who believed him were massacred. A story is recalled by Androkleides which alleges great irresponsibility against Lysander in the matter of oaths. For he urged that children be cheated at knucklebones and men with oaths, imitating Polykrates of Samos, an improper way for a general to act towards a tyrant, nor is it Laconian to treat the gods as enemies; in fact it was even more arrogant: for he who cheats an enemy with an oath, concedes that he fears the enemy but also that he thinks little of the gods.

[9.1] Therefore, Cyrus summoned Lysander to Sardis, and he gave some things and promised others, and he boldly stated, to please him, that he would spend all his own money if his father were to give nothing. If all else failed, he said he would cut up the throne on which he sat when conducted business, since it was made of gold and silver. [2] He was going now up to Media to his father, so he allowed him to take the tribute from the cities and entrusted his control of the cities to him. Embracing him and begging him not to fight a battle with the Athenians, before he returned, saying that he would arrive with many ships from Phoenicia and Cilicia, he went up to the king. Lysander, who was not able to fight a battle since he did not have an equal numbers of ships, nor to sit idle with so many ships, set sail and brought some islands under his control, even reaching Aegina and Salamis which he overran. [3] He landed in Attica and greeted Agis, who had come down from Dekeleia himself. He showed to the infantry present the strength of the fleet, as if he sailed wherever he wanted and controlled the sea. But in fact, when he realised the Athenians were pursuing him, he fled quickly to Asia by another way through the islands. [4] He found the Hellespont deserted, so he made an attempt on Lampsacus with an attack from the sea with his ships. At the same time Thorax, joining him with his land army, attacked the walls. He took the city by force and handed it over to his soldiers to plunder. The fleet of the Athenians of 180 ships by chance had just reached the harbour of Elaeus in the Chersonese. When they learnt that Lampsacus was taken, they immediately put in at Sestos. [5] There they took on supplies and sailed over to Aegospotami, opposite their enemies still anchored at Lampsacus. A number of others

commanded the Athenians, including Philokles who had once persuaded the people to vote to cut off the right thumb of any captive from the war, so that they could no longer carry a spear, but might use an oar.

[10.1] They then all rested, expecting to fight the next day. But Lysander had other plans in mind. He ordered his sailors and pilots, as if there would be a battle during the day, to board their triremes at day break and sit in order and in silence, waiting for their orders, and likewise the infantry were to wait in silence in their ranks by the sea. [2] At sunrise, when the Athenians sailed out, all their ships forming a close front, and called them to battle, Lysander kept the ships ready for action and fully-manned during the night, but did not lead them out; instead he sent dispatch-boats to the front line of ships ordering them to remain quiet and in line, not getting into disorder nor sailing out against the enemy. [3] Thus, when the Athenians sailed back in the early afternoon, Lysander did not send his soldiers from the ships, until two or three triremes, which he had sent to check, came back having seen the enemy had disembarked. The same happened on the next day, and the third, and at last on the fourth, so that the Athenians became over-confident and despised the enemy for keeping close together in fear. [4] During this, Alkibiades, who happened to be living in his own fortress in the Chersonese, rode down to the army of the Athenians and begged the generals not to camp in such a bad place, where it was unsafe on the open beach without a proper anchorage. Then he said it was a mistake to get supplies from Sestos at such a distance from the camp, and [5] that they should sail round a short distance to the harbor and city of Sestos; then they would be farther from their enemy who were lying in watch with an army ruled by one general, whose every order they carry out immediately out of fear of him. However, they were not convinced by his arguments. And Tydeus replied arrogantly, that not he, but others, were in command of the army.

[11.1] Therefore, Alkibiades, suspecting that there was some sort of treachery among them, went away. On the fifth day, the Athenians sailed towards the enemy and again sailed away, as they were accustomed to do, very carelessly and with little concern for the enemy. Lysander sent out his scout ships and ordered the captains, when they saw the Athenians had disembarked, to turn round and row back with all speed; he ordered them, when they were in the middle of the straits, to raise a bronze shield at the prow as a signal for the attack. [2] He himself sailed out and, summoning his pilots and captains, he urged them to hold their crews each in line, both sailors and soldiers. But when the signal was given, he ordered them to row eagerly and strongly down against the enemy. When the shield was raised on the ships and the trumpet signaled the attack from the admiral's ship, the ships sailed out and the infantry hurried along the shore to take the headland. [3] The distance between the two shores is fifteen stades at this point, but the sailors in their eagerness and haste made quick work of the distance. Conon, the Athenian general, was the first to see from land that the fleet was bearing down on them, and he shouted suddenly for the Athenians to embark; deeply moved by the disaster, he called on some, begged others and forced even more to man the triremes. [4] But his hasty efforts achieved nothing, since the men were scattered about. For once they had disembarked, expecting nothing to happen, they went to market, or wandered around the countryside or sat in their tents or were making their midday meal, so were far removed from what was about to happen due to the inexperience of their leaders. [5] Among the shouts and sounds of the enemy attack, Conon with eight ships had already set sail secretly and escaped to Cyprus to Evagoras. But the Peloponnesians fell upon the other ships; some they captured completely empty, others they wrecked as the crews were boarding them. The men, coming up to the ships to help, unarmed and scattered, died or were killed as they fled inland, when the enemy disembarked. [6] Lysander took 3,000 prisoners, with their generals, and the whole fleet, apart from the Paralus and the ones who escaped with Conon. He took the ships

in tow, and plundered the camp, then sailed back to Lampsacus with the sounds of flutes and hymns. He had achieved the greatest success with the least effort, and had, in one hour, ended a war which was the longest and most varied and incredible in its failures and successes of all previous wars. [7] The war's struggles and issues had taken ten thousand different changes and it had consumed as many generals as all the previous wars in Greece; but the sound judgement and cleverness of one man had ended it; because of this some men thought that the work was due to divine will.

[16.1] Lysander himself, once he had organized these things, sailed to Thrace. Any money that remained and any gifts and crowns he had received (since many, as happens, gave gifts to the most powerful man, and in effect the lord of all Greece) he sent to Lacedaimon via Gylippus, who had been general in Sicily. Gylippus, so it is said, loosened the seams of the sacks at the bottom, took out a great amount of silver from each and sewed them up again. But he was unaware that there was a tablet in each sack indicating the amount it held. [2] When he arrived in Sparta, he hid what he had stolen under the tiles of his house. Then he gave the sacks to the ephors and showed them the seals. When the sacks were opened and the money counted, the amount of silver differed from the amount on the tablets. As a result the ephors became concerned, but then a servant of Gylippus informed the ephors by means of a riddle about many owls sleeping under the roof. For at that time the impress of most coins, so it seems, was an owl because of the Athenians.