

of danger, making it look sleek and combed. They bore in mind one of Lycurgus' statements about long hair, that it renders handsome men better looking, and ugly ones more frightening. On campaign also their physical exercises were less demanding and they permitted the young men a lifestyle which was generally less subject to punishment and scrutiny, with the result that for them uniquely among mankind war represented a respite from their military training. Once their phalanx⁶⁹ was marshalled together in sight of the enemy, the king sacrificed the customary she-goat, instructed everyone to put on garlands, and ordered the pipers to play Castor's Air.⁷⁰ At the same time he began the marching paean, so that it was as if at once solemn and terrifying to see them marching in step to the pipes, creating no gap in the phalanx nor suffering any disturbance of spirit, but approaching the confrontation calmly and happily in time to the music. In all likelihood men in this frame of mind feel neither fear nor exceptional anger, but with hope and courage they steadily maintain their purpose, believing heaven to be with them.

The king advanced against the enemy with an escort of those who had won a contest for which the prize was a crown. The story is told of one man at the Olympic Games who, when offered an immense sum of money, refused it and with a great struggle beat his opponent in wrestling. When he was asked: 'What have you gained by your victory, Spartan?', he replied with a smile: 'In battle against the enemy my place will be in front of the king.' After they had beaten the enemy and made them flee, they gave chase only far enough to confirm the victory by their opponents' flight, and then at once pulled back, because in their view it was neither noble nor Hellenic to butcher and slaughter men who had given up and yielded their ground. This practice was not only splendid and magnanimous, it also paid dividends: it was known that Spartans would kill those who stood in their way, but would spare those who surrendered, so that adversaries saw it as more advantageous to flee than to stand their ground.

23. Hippias the sophist states that Lycurgus personally enjoyed making war and took part in many campaigns, while according

to Philostephanus he was even responsible for forming the cavalry into *oulami*. Under his arrangements an *oulamus* was a body of fifty cavalrymen marshalled in a square formation. Demetrius of Phalerum, however, says that he had no involvement in military actions and established his constitution in peacetime. Certainly his scheme for the Olympic truce does seem to bear the stamp of a mild man of peaceful disposition. And yet, as Hermippus mentions, some say that Lycurgus was initially neither interested in Iphitus' group, nor associated with them, but just happened to be at Olympia for other reasons as a spectator. In this version he heard behind him what sounded like a man's voice criticizing him and expressing surprise at his failure to urge citizens to take part in the festival. But when he turned round, the person who had spoken was nowhere to be seen, some considered the voice to be divine, joined Iphitus, and was his partner in putting the festival on a more illustrious and secure footing.

24. Spartiates' training extended into adulthood, for no one was permitted to live as he pleased. Instead, just as in a camp, so in the city, they followed a prescribed lifestyle and devoted themselves to communal concerns. They viewed themselves absolutely as part of their country, rather than as individuals, and so unless assigned a particular job they would always be observing the boys and giving them some useful piece of instruction, or learning themselves from their elders. Abundant leisure was unquestionably among the wonderful benefits which Lycurgus had conferred upon his fellow citizens. While he totally banned their involvement in any manual craft, there was equally no need for them to amass wealth (with all the work and concentration which that entails), since riches were emphatically neither envied nor esteemed. The helots worked the land for them and paid over the amount mentioned earlier.⁷¹ There was a Spartiate who happened to be in Athens when the courts were sitting, and he learned that a man who had incurred some penalty for refusal to work⁷² was going home depressed, escorted by sympathetic friends who shared his mood. The Spartiate requested those who were there with him to point out

Spartan Life

Plutarch, On Sparta: "Lycurgus" c. 90CE.

this man who had been penalized for his freedom. This illustrates how they thought of a preoccupation with working at a craft and with moneymaking as only fit for slaves! As might be expected, legal disputes disappeared along with coinage, since there was no longer greed nor want among them, but instead equal enjoyment of plenty and the sense of ease which comes from simple living. Except when they went on campaign, all their time was taken up by choral dances, festivals, feasts, hunting expeditions, physical exercise and conversation.

25. Those under the age of thirty generally would not do their own shopping, but would have their domestic needs met by relatives and lovers. It was equally frowned upon for older men to be seen constantly taking time over these matters rather than spending most of the day around the gymnasium and the so-called *leschae*. By meeting in these they would make suitable use of their leisure together. No remarks would be passed about anything relating to moneymaking or commercial dealings. Instead the main function of the time spent thus would be to bestow some praise on good conduct or criticism on bad – in a light-hearted, humorous way which made warning and correction easy to accept. In fact Lycurgus himself was not uncompro-misingly austere. But rather, according to Sossibius, it was he who dedicated the little statue of Laughter⁷³ with the idea of suitably introducing humour to their drinking-parties and such diversions, so as to sweeten their rigorous lifestyle.

Altogether he accustomed citizens to have no desire for a private life, nor knowledge of one, but rather to be like bees, always attached to the community, swarming together around their leader, and almost ecstatic with fervent ambition to devote themselves entirely to their country. This attitude can also be detected in some of their remarks. When Pedaritus⁷⁴ was not selected as one of the Three Hundred, he withdrew looking very cheerful, thus expressing his happiness that the city possessed 300 men better than he was. Polystratidas, as one of a group of envoys to the Great King's generals, was asked by them whether they were taking a private initiative, or had been sent by the state. His reply was: 'If we succeed, the latter; if we fail, the

former.' When some Amphipolitans came to Sparta and visited Brasidas⁷⁵ mother, Argileonis, she asked them if his death had been a noble one, worthy of Sparta. As they were heaping praise on him and claiming that there was no one in Sparta to match him, she declared: 'Don't say that, strangers. Noble and brave Brasidas was, but Sparta has many better men than he.'

26. As already mentioned, Lycurgus himself appointed Elders initially from among those who had been associated with his plan. But later he arranged that whenever an Elder died his place should be taken by the man over sixty whose merits were regarded as most outstanding. And this contest seemed to be the greatest in the world and the one most worthy of competing for. In it a man was to be chosen not as the swiftest of swift men nor the strongest of strong ones, but as the best and wisest of the good and wise, who as a lifelong reward for his merits would have in effect sweeping authority in the state, with control over death and loss of citizen rights and the most important matters generally. The selection was made in the following way. The assembly gathered, and picked men were shut up in a nearby building where they could neither see nor be seen, but could only hear the shouts of those in the assembly. For in this instance, as in others, it was by shouting that they decided between the competitors. These were brought in, not all together, but one by one in an order determined by lot, and each walked through the assembly in silence. The men who had been shut up had writing-tablets, and so in each case they noted the volume of shouting without knowing the identity of the competitor, except that he was the first brought in, or the second, or the third, and so on. Whoever was met with the most shouting, and the loudest, was the man declared elected. Then, wearing a crown, he made a round of the sanctuaries of the gods. He was followed by many young men full of admiration and praise for him, and by many women who sang in celebration of his excellence and proclaimed his good fortune in life. Everyone close to him would serve him a meal, with a declaration that the dinner was a sign of the city's respect. After making his round he went off to his mess. Here everything was as usual for him except that he was