

**EPOCHS OF ANCIENT
HISTORY; THE
ATHENIAN EMPIRE**

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Epochs of Ancient History; The Athenian Empire by Sir George W. Cox

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SIR GEORGE W. COX

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ATHENIAN EMPIRE**

EPOCHS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

EDITED BY

REV. SIR G. W. COX, BART. M.A. AND C. SANKEY, M.A.

THE ATHENIAN EMPIRE

SIR G. W. COX

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EPOCHS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

THE
ATHENIAN EMPIRE

BY THE
REV. SIR GEORGE W. COX, BART. M.A.

Joint-Editor of the Series

WITH FIVE MAPS

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PREFACE.

THE whole duration of the Athenian empire extends over little more than two generations.

Its rapid growth and not less rapid decay stand out in marked contrast with the slower march of events in modern times; but the lessons of political wisdom to be gathered from its developement and its fall are as important as any which may be learnt from the history of modern nations. The narrative of its fortunes brings before us a series of efforts, scarcely conscious perhaps at the first, to weld into a compact political society a number of cities whose highest ideal was found in absolute isolation. It exhibits in these cities the growth of a popular opinion decidedly favourable to the imperial city, and still more decidedly opposed to the narrow and exclusive policy of the oligarchic party. This party in all these towns gravitated to Sparta as naturally as the demos or main body of the people was attracted to Athens. The Peloponnesian war was, in fact, a struggle between these two parties; and in Athens Sparta was power-

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fully seconded by the members of the haughty Eupatrid houses, for whom the attainment of their own ends became the paramount object of life, an object to be secured by secret murder and violent revolution. The lesson of indifference to law thus taught bore its bitter fruit in a deterioration of character which rendered possible the betrayal of the whole Athenian fleet to the enemy by Athenian generals, and the establishment of the iron despotism of Sparta in all the cities of the Athenian confederacy.

Of almost the whole of this momentous struggle we have in the pages of Thucydides a narrative of wonderful clearness and accuracy; and only in its closing scenes are we left to the guidance of the meagre chronicle of Xenophon or the dull compilations of such writers as Diodoros.

I have already traversed, in the second volume of my 'History of Greece,' the ground occupied by this little work; and although the limitation of my task to the history of the Athenian empire must impart a different aspect to the narrative, I have not hesitated to reproduce substantially the same pictures of the most striking scenes and the most prominent actors in the great drama. These pictures are the result of years of thought and toil, and I trust that they may impart something of the vividness of real life to one of the most important phases in the history of mankind.

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