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ATHENS: ITS RISE AND FALL.

BOOK III.

FROM THE BATTLE OF MARATHON TO THE BATTLES OF PLATAEA AND MYCALE, B. C. 490 —B. C. 479.

CHAPTER I.

The Character and Popularity of Miltiades.—Naval Expedition.—Siege of Paros.—Conduct of Miltiades. —He is Accused and Sentenced.—His Death.

I. History is rarely more than the biography of great men. Through a succession of individuals we trace the character and destiny of nations. THE PEOPLE glide away from us, a sublime but intangible abstraction, and the voice of the mighty Agora reaches us only through the medium of its representatives to posterity. The more democratic the state, the more prevalent this delegation of its history to the few; since it is the prerogative of democracies to give the widest competition and the keenest excitement to individual genius: and the true spirit of democracy is dormant or defunct, when we find no one elevated to an intellectual throne above the rest. In regarding the characters of men thus concentrating upon themselves our survey of a nation, it is our duty sedulously to discriminate between their qualities and their deeds: for it seldom happens that their renown in life was unattended with reverses equally signal—that the popularity of to-day was not followed by the persecution of to-morrow: and in these vicissitudes, our justice is no less appealed to than our pity, and we are called upon to decide, as judges, a grave and solemn cause between the silence of a departed people, and the eloquence of imperishable names.

We have already observed in the character of Miltiades that astute and calculating temperament common to most men whose lot it has been to struggle for precarious power in the midst of formidable foes. We have seen that his profound and scheming intellect was not accompanied by any very rigid or high-wrought principle; and placed, as the chief of the Chersonese had been from his youth upward, in situations of great peril and embarrassment, aiming always at supreme power, and, in his harassed and stormy domain, removed far from the public opinion of the free states of Greece, it was natural that his political code should have become tempered by a sinister ambition, and that the citizen of Athens should be actuated by motives scarcely more disinterested than those which animated the tyrant of the Chersonese. The ruler of one district may be the hero, but can scarcely be the patriot, of another. The long influence of years and custom—the unconscious deference to the opinion of those whom our youth has been taught to venerate, can alone suffice to tame down an enterprising and grasping mind to objects of public advantage, in preference to designs for individual aggrandizement: influence of such a nature had never operated upon the views and faculties of the hero of Marathon. Habituated to the enjoyment of absolute command, he seemed incapable of the duties of civil subordination; and the custom of a life urged him onto the desire of power [1]. These features of his character fairly considered, we shall see little to astonish us in the later reverses of Miltiades, and find additional causes for the popular suspicions he incurred.

II. But after the victory of Marathon, the power of Miltiades was at its height. He had always possessed the affection of the Athenians, which his manners as well as his talents contributed to obtain for him. Affable and courteous—none were so mean as to be excluded from his presence; and the triumph he had just achieved so largely swelled his popularity, that the most unhesitating confidence was placed in all his suggestions.

In addition to the victory of Marathon, Miltiades, during his tyranny in the Chersonese, had gratified the resentment and increased the dominion of the Athenians. A rude tribe, according to all authority, of the vast and varied Pelasgic family, but essentially foreign to, and never amalgamated with, the indigenous Pelasgians of the Athenian soil, had in very remote times obtained a settlement in Attica. They had assisted the Athenians in the wall of their citadel, which confirmed, by its characteristic masonry, the general tradition of their Pelasgic race. Settled afterward near Hymettus, they refused to blend with the general population—quarrels between neighbours so near naturally ensued—the settlers were expelled, and fixed themselves in the Islands of Lemnos and Imbros—a piratical and savage horde. They kept alive their ancient grudge with the Athenians, and, in one of their excursions, landed in Attica, and carried off some of the women while celebrating a festival of Diana. These captives they subjected to their embraces, and ultimately massacred, together with the offspring of the intercourse. "The Lemnian Horrors" became a proverbial phrase—the wrath of the gods manifested itself in the curse of general sterility, and the criminal Pelasgi were commanded by the oracle to repair the heinous injury they had inflicted on the Athenians. The latter were satisfied with no atonement less than that of the surrender of the islands occupied by the offenders. Tradition thus reported the answer of the Pelasgi to so stern a demand— "Whenever one of your vessels, in a single day and with a northern wind, makes its passage to us, we will comply."

Time passed on, the injury was unatoned, the remembrance remained— when Miltiades (then in the Chersonese) passed from Elnos in a single day and with a north wind to the Pelasgian Islands, avenged the cause of his countrymen, and annexed Lemnos and Imbros to the Athenian sway. The remembrance of this exploit had from the first endeared Miltiades to the Athenians, and, since the field of Marathon, he united in himself the two strongest claims to popular confidence—he was the deliverer from recent perils, and the avenger of hereditary wrongs.

The chief of the Chersonese was not slow to avail himself of the advantage of his position. He promised the Athenians a yet more lucrative, if less glorious enterprise than that against the Persians, and demanded a fleet of seventy ships, with a supply of men and money, for an expedition from which he assured them he was certain to return laden with spoil and treasure. He did not specify the places against which the expedition was to be directed; but so great was the belief in his honesty and fortune, that the Athenians were contented to grant his demand. The requisite preparations made, Miltiades set sail. Assuming the general right to punish those islands which had sided with the Persian, he proceeded to Paros, which had contributed a trireme to the armament of Datis. But beneath the pretext of national revenge, Miltiades is said to have sought the occasion to prosecute a selfish resentment. During his tyranny in the Chersonese, a Parian, named Lysagoras, had sought to injure him with the Persian government, and the chief now wreaked upon the island the retaliation due to an individual.

Such is the account of Herodotus—an account not indeed inconsistent with the vindictive passions still common to the inhabitants of the western clime, but certainly scarce in keeping with the calculating and politic character of Miltiades: for men go backward in the career of ambition when revenging a past offence upon a foe that is no longer formidable.

Miltiades landed on the island, laid vigorous siege to the principal city, and demanded from the inhabitants the penalty of a hundred talents. The besieged refused the terms, and worked day and night at the task of strengthening the city for defence. Nevertheless, Miltiades succeeded in cutting off all supplies, and the city was on the point of yielding; when suddenly the chief set fire to the fortifications he had erected, drew off his fleet, and returned to Athens, not only without the treasure he had promised, but with an ignominious diminution of the glory he had already acquired. The most probable reason for a conduct [2] so extraordinary was, that by some accident a grove on the continent was set on fire—the flame, visible equally to the besiegers and the besieged, was interpreted alike by both: each party imagined it a signal from the Persian fleet—the one was dissuaded from yielding, and the other intimidated from continuing the siege. An additional reason for the retreat was a severe wound in the leg which Miltiades had received, either in the course of the attack, or by an accident he met with when attempting with sacrilegious superstition to consult the infernal deities on ground dedicated to Ceres.

III. We may readily conceive the amazement and indignation with which, after so many promises on the one side, and such unbounded confidence on the other, the Athenians witnessed the return of this fruitless expedition. No doubt the wily and equivocal parts of the character of Miltiades, long cast in shade by his brilliant qualities, came now more obviously in view. He was impeached capitally by Xanthippus, an Athenian noble, the head of that great aristocratic faction of the Alcmaeonids, which, inimical alike to the tyrant and the demagogue, brooked neither a master of the state nor a hero with the people. Miltiades was charged with having accepted a bribe from the Persians [3], which had induced him to quit the siege of Paros at the moment when success was assured.

The unfortunate chief was prevented by his wound from pleading his own cause—he was borne into the court stretched upon his couch, while his brother, Tisagoras, conducted his defence. Through the medium of his advocate, Miltiades seems neither vigorously to have refuted the accusation of treason to the state, nor satisfactorily to have explained his motives for raising the siege. His glory was his defence; and the chief answer to Xanthippus was "Marathon and Lemnos." The crime alleged against him was of a capital nature; but, despite the rank of the accuser, and the excitement of his audience, the people refused to pronounce sentence of death upon so illustrious a man. They found him guilty, it is true—but they commuted the capital infliction to a fine of fifty talents. Before the fine was paid, Miltiades expired of the mortification of his wound. The fine was afterward paid by his son, Cimon. Thus ended a life full of adventure and vicissitude.

The trial of Miltiades has often been quoted in proof of the ingratitude and fickleness of the Athenian people. No charge was ever more inconsiderately made. He was accused of a capital crime, not by the people, but by a powerful noble. The noble demanded his death— appears to have proved the charge—to have had the law which imposed death wholly on his side—and "the favour of the people it was," says Herodotus, expressly, "which saved his life." [4] When we consider all the circumstances of the case—the wound to the popular vanity— the disappointment of excited expectation—the unaccountable conduct of Miltiades himself—and then see his punishment, after a conviction which entailed death, only in the ordinary assessment of a pecuniary fine [5], we cannot but allow that the Athenian people (even while vindicating the majesty of law, which in all civilized communities must judge offences without respect to persons) were not in this instance forgetful of the services nor harsh to the offences of their great men.

CHAPTER II.

The Athenian Tragedy.—Its Origin.—Thespis.—Phrynichus.—Aeschylus.
—Analysis of the Tragedies of Aeschylus.

I. From the melancholy fate of Miltiades, we are now invited to a subject no less connected with this important period in the history of Athens. The interval of repose which followed the battle of Marathon allows us to pause, and notice the intellectual state to which the Athenians had progressed since the tyranny of Pisistratus and his sons.

We have remarked the more familiar acquaintance with the poems of Homer which resulted from the labours and example of Pisistratus. This event (for event it was), combined with other causes,—the foundation of a public library, the erection of public buildings, and the institution of public gardens—to create with apparent suddenness, among a susceptible and lively population, a general cultivation of taste. The citizens were brought together in their hours of relaxation [6], by the urbane and social manner of life, under porticoes and in gardens, which it was the policy of a graceful and benignant tyrant to inculcate; and the native genius, hitherto dormant, of the quick Ionian race, once awakened to literary and intellectual objects, created an audience even before it found expression in a poet. The elegant effeminacy of Hipparchus contributed to foster the taste of the people—for the example of the great is nowhere more potent over the multitude than in the cultivation of the arts. Patronage may not produce poets, but it multiplies critics. Anacreon and Simonides, introduced among the Athenians by Hipparchus, and enjoying his friendship, no doubt added largely to the influence which poetry began to assume. The peculiar sweetness of those poets imbued with harmonious contagion the genius of the first of the Athenian dramatists, whose works, alas! are lost to us, though evidence of their character is preserved. About the same time the Athenians must necessarily have been made more intimately acquainted with the various wealth of the lyric poets of Ionia and the isles. Thus it happened that their models in poetry were of two kinds, the epic and the lyric; and, in the natural connexion of art, it was but the next step to accomplish a species of poetry which should attempt to unite the two. Happily, at this time, Athens possessed a man of true genius, whose attention early circumstances had directed to a rude and primitive order of histrionic recitation:—Phrynichus, the poet, was a disciple of Thespis, the mime: to him belongs this honour, that out of the elements of the broadest farce he conceived the first grand combinations of the tragic drama.

II. From time immemorial—as far back, perhaps, as the grove possessed an altar, and the waters supplied a reed for the pastoral pipe—Poetry and Music had been dedicated to the worship of the gods of Greece. At the appointed season of festival to each several deity, his praises were sung, his traditionary achievements were recited. One of the divinities last introduced into Greece—the mystic and enigmatical Dionysos, or Bacchus, received the popular and enthusiastic adoration naturally due to the God of the Vineyard, and the "Unbinder of galling cares." His festival, celebrated at the most joyous of agricultural seasons [7], was associated also with the most exhilarating associations. Dithyrambs, or wild and exulting songs, at first extemporaneous, celebrated the triumphs of the god. By degrees, the rude hymn swelled into prepared and artful measures, performed by a chorus that danced circling round the altar; and the dithyramb assumed a lofty and solemn strain, adapted to the sanctity of sacrifice and the emblematic majesty of the god. At the same time, another band (connected with the Phallic procession, which, however outwardly obscene, betokened only, at its origin, the symbol of fertility, and betrays the philosophy of some alien and eastern creed [8]) implored in more lively and homely strains the blessing of the prodigal and jovial deity. These ceremonial songs received a wanton and wild addition, as, in order, perhaps, more closely to represent and personify the motley march of the Liber Pater, the chorus-singers borrowed from the vine-browsing goat which they sacrificed the hides and horns, which furnished forth the merry mimicry of the satyr and the faun. Under license of this disguise, the songs became more obscene and grotesque, and the mummers vied with each other in obtaining the applause of the rural audience by wild buffoonery and unrestricted jest. Whether as the prize of the winner or as the object of sacrifice, the goat (tragos in the Greek) was a sufficiently important personage to bestow upon the exhibition the homely name of TRAGEDY, or GOATSONG, destined afterward to be exalted by association with the proudest efforts of human genius. And while the DITHYRAMB, yet amid the Dorian tribes, retained the fire and dignity of its hereditary character—while in Sicyon it rose in stately and mournful measures to the memory of Adrastus, the Argive hero—while in Corinth, under the polished rule of Periander, Arion imparted to the antique hymn a new character and a more scientific music [9],—gradually, in Attica, it gave way before the familiar and fantastic humours of the satyrs, sometimes abridged to afford greater scope to their exhibitions—sometimes contracting the contagion of their burlesque. Still, however, the reader will observe, that the tragedy, or goatsong, consisted of two parts—first, the exhibition of the mummers, and, secondly, the dithyrambic chorus, moving in a circle round the altar of Bacchus. It appears on the whole most

probable, though it is a question of fierce dispute and great uncertainty, that not only this festive ceremonial, but also its ancient name of tragedy, or goatsong, had long been familiar in Attica [10], when, about B. C. 535, during the third tyranny of Pisistratus, a skilful and ingenious native of Icaria, an Attic village in which the Eleutheria, or Bacchic rites, were celebrated with peculiar care, surpassed all competitors in the exhibition of these rustic entertainments. He relieved the monotonous pleasantries of the satyric chorus by introducing, usually in his own person, a histrionic tale-teller, who, from an elevated platform, and with the lively gesticulations common still to the popular narrators of romance on the Mole of Naples, or in the bazars of the East, entertain the audience with some mythological legend. It was so clear that during this recital the chorus remained unnecessarily idle and superfluous, that the next improvement was as natural in itself, as it was important in its consequences. This was to make the chorus assist the narrator by occasional question or remark.

The choruses themselves were improved in their professional art by Thespis. He invented dances, which for centuries, retained their popularity on the stage, and is said to have given histrionic disguise to his reciter—at first, by the application of pigments to the face; and afterward, by the construction of a rude linen mask.

III. These improvements, chiefly mechanical, form the boundary to the achievements of Thespis. He did much to create a stage—little to create tragedy, in the proper acceptation of the word. His performances were still of a ludicrous and homely character, and much more akin to the comic than the tragic. Of that which makes the essence of the solemn drama of Athens—its stately plot, its gigantic images, its prodigal and sumptuous poetry, Thespis was not in any way the inventor. But PHRYNICHUS, the disciple of Thespis, was a poet; he saw, though perhaps dimly and imperfectly, the new career opened to the art, and he may be said to have breathed the immortal spirit into the mere mechanical forms, when he introduced poetry into the bursts of the chorus and the monologue of the actor. Whatever else Phrynichus effected is uncertain. The developed plot—the introduction of regular dialogue through the medium of a second actor —the pomp and circumstance—the symmetry and climax of the drama—do not appear to have appertained to his earlier efforts; and the great artistical improvements which raised the simple incident to an elaborate structure of depicted narrative and awful catastrophe, are ascribed, not to Phrynichus, but Aeschylus. If the later works of Phrynichus betrayed these excellences, it is because Aeschylus had then become his rival, and he caught the heavenly light from the new star which was destined to eclipse him. But every thing essential was done for the Athenian tragedy when Phrynichus took it from the satyr and placed it under the protection of the muse—when, forsaking the humours of the rustic farce, he selected a solemn subject from the serious legends of the most vivid of all mythologies—when he breathed into the familiar measures of the chorus the grandeur and sweetness of the lyric ode—when, in a word, taking nothing from Thespis but the stage and the performers, he borrowed his tale from Homer and his melody from Anacreon. We must not, then, suppose, misled by the vulgar accounts of the Athenian drama, that the contest for the goat, and the buffooneries of Thespis, were its real origin; born of the epic and the lyric song, Homer gave it character, and the lyrists language. Thespis and his predecessors only suggested the form to which the new-born poetry should be applied.

IV. Thus, under Phrynichus, the Thespian drama rose into poetry, worthy to exercise its influence upon poetical emulation, when a young man of noble family and sublime genius, rendered perhaps more thoughtful and profound by the cultivation of a mystical philosophy [11], which had lately emerged from the primitive schools of Ionian wisdom, brought to the rising art the united dignity of rank, philosophy, and genius. Aeschylus, son of Euphorion, born at Eleusis B. C. 525, early saturated a spirit naturally fiery and exalted with the vivid poetry of Homer. While yet a boy, and probably about the time when Phrynichus first elevated the Thespian drama, he is said to have been inspired by a dream with the ambition to excel in the dramatic art. But in Homer he found no visionary revelation to assure him of those ends, august and undeveloped, which the actor and the chorus might be made the instruments to effect. For when the idea of scenic representation was once familiar, the epics of Homer suggested the true nature of the drama. The great characteristic of that poet is individuality. Gods or men alike have their separate, unmistakeable attributes and distinctions—they converse in dialogue—they act towards an appointed end. Bring Homer on the stage, and introduce two actors instead of a narrator, and a drama is at once effected. If Phrynichus from the first borrowed his story from Homer, Aeschylus, with more creative genius and more meditative intellect, saw that there was even a richer mine in the vitality of the Homeric spirit—the unity of the Homeric designs. Nor was Homer, perhaps, his sole though his guiding inspiration. The noble birth of Aeschylus no doubt gave him those advantages of general acquaintance with the poetry of the rest of Greece, which an education formed under the lettered dynasty of the Pisistratidae would naturally confer on the well-born. We have seen that the dithyramb, debased in Attica to the Thespian chorus, was in the Dorian states already devoted to sublime themes, and enriched by elaborate art; and Simonides, whose elegies, peculiar for their sweetness, might have inspired the "ambrosial" Phrynichus, perhaps gave to the stern soul of Aeschylus, as to his own pupil Pindar, the model of a loftier music, in his dithyrambic odes.

V. At the age of twenty-five, the son of Euphorion produced his first tragedy. This appears to have been exhibited in the year after the appearance of Aristagoras at Athens,—in that very year so eventful and important, when the Athenians lighted the flames of the Persian war amid the blazing capital of Sardis. He had two competitors in Pratinas and Choerilus. The last, indeed, preceded Phrynichus, but merely in the burlesques of the rude Thespian stage; the example of Phrynichus had now directed his attention to the new species of drama, but without any remarkable talent for its cultivation. Pratinas, the contemporary of Aeschylus, did not long attempt to vie with his mighty rival in his own line [12]. Recurring to the old satyr-chorus, he reduced its unmeasured buffooneries into a regular and systematic form; he preserved the mythological tale, and converted it into an artistical burlesque. This invention, delighting the multitude, as it adapted an ancient entertainment to the new and more critical taste, became so popular that it was usually associated with the graver tragedy; when the last becoming a solemn and gorgeous spectacle, the poet exhibited a trilogy (or three tragedies) to his mighty audience, while the satyric invention of Pratinas closed the whole, and answered the purpose of our modern farce [13]. Of this class of the Grecian drama but one specimen remains, in the Cyclops of Euripides. It is probable that the birth, no less than the genius of Aeschylus, enabled him with greater facility to make the imposing and costly additions to the exhibition, which the nature of the poetry demanded—since, while these improvements were rapidly proceeding, the poetical fame of Aeschylus was still uncrowned. Nor was it till the fifteenth year after his first exhibition that the sublimest of the Greek poets obtained the ivy chaplet, which had succeeded to the goat and the ox, as the prize of the tragic contests. In the course of a few years, a regular stage, appropriate scenery and costume, mechanical inventions and complicated stage machinery, gave fitting illusion to the representation of gods and men. To the monologue of Phrynichus, Aeschylus added a second actor [14]; he curtailed the choruses, connected them with the main story, and, more important than all else, reduced to simple but systematic rules the progress and development of a poem, which no longer had for its utmost object to please the ear or divert the fancy, but swept on its mighty and irresistible march, to besiege passion after passion, and spread its empire over the whole soul.

An itinerant platform was succeeded by a regular theatre of wood—the theatre of wood by a splendid edifice, which is said to have held no less an audience than thirty thousand persons [15]. Theatrical contests became a matter of national and universal interest. These contests occurred thrice a year, at three several festivals of Bacchus [16]. But it was at the great Dionysia, held at the end of March and commencement of April, that the principal tragic contests took place. At that period, as the Athenian drama increased in celebrity, and Athens herself in renown, the city was filled with visiters, not only from all parts of Greece, but almost from every land in which the Greek civilization was known. The state took the theatre under its protection, as a solemn and sacred institution. So anxious were the people to consecrate wholly to the Athenian name the glory of the spectacle, that at the great Dionysia no foreigner, nor even any metoecus (or alien settler), was permitted to dance in the choruses. The chief archon presided, over the performances; to him was awarded the selection of the candidates for the prize. Those chosen were allowed three actors [17] by lot and a chorus, the expense of which was undertaken by the state, and imposed upon one of the principal persons of each tribe, called choragus. Thus, on one occasion, Themistocles was the choragus to a tragedy by Phrynichus. The immense theatre, crowded by thousands, tier above tier, bench upon bench, was open to the heavens, and commanded, from the sloping hill on which it was situated, both land and sea. The actor apostrophized no mimic pasteboard, but the wide expanse of Nature herself—the living sun, the mountain air, the wide and visible Aegaean. All was proportioned to the gigantic scale of the theatre, and the mighty range of the audience. The form was artificially enlarged and heightened; masks of exquisite art and beauty brought before the audience the ideal images of their sculptured gods and heroes, while (most probably) mechanical inventions carried the tones of the voice throughout the various tiers of the theatre. The exhibitions took place in the open day, and the limited length of the plays permitted the performance of probably no less than ten or twelve before the setting of the sun. The sanctity of their origin, and the mythological nature of their stories, added something of religious solemnity to these spectacles, which were opened by ceremonial sacrifice. Dramatic exhibitions, at least for a considerable period, were not, as with us, made hackneyed by constant repetition. They were as rare in their recurrence as they were imposing in their effect; nor was a drama, whether tragic or comic, that had gained the prize, permitted a second time to be exhibited. A special exemption was made in favour of Aeschylus, afterward extended to Sophocles and Euripides. The general rule was necessarily stimulant of renewed and unceasing exertion, and was, perhaps, the principal cause of the almost miraculous fertility of the Athenian dramatists.

VI. On the lower benches of the semicircle sat the archons and magistrates, the senators and priests; while apart, but in seats equally honoured, the gaze of the audience was attracted, from time to time, to the illustrious strangers whom the fame of their poets and their city had brought to the Dionysia of the Athenians. The youths and women [18] had their separate divisions; the rest of the audience were ranged according to their tribes, while the upper galleries were filled by the miscellaneous and impatient populace.

In the orchestra (a space left by the semicircular benches, with wings stretching to the right and left before the scene), a small square platform served as the altar, to which moved the choral dances, still retaining the attributes of their ancient sanctity. The coryphaeus, or leader of the chorus, took part in the dialogue as the representative of the rest, and, occasionally, even several of the number were excited into exclamations by the passion of the piece. But the principal duty of the chorus was to diversify the dialogue by hymns and dirges, to the music of flutes, while, in dances far more artful than those now existent, they represented by their movements the emotions that they sung [19],—thus bringing, as it were, into harmony of action the poetry of language. Architectural embellishments of stone, representing a palace, with three entrances, the centre one appropriated to royalty, the others to subordinate rank, usually served for the scene. But at times, when the plot demanded a different locality, scenes painted with the utmost art and cost were easily substituted; nor were wanting the modern contrivances of artificial lightning and thunder—the clouds for the gods—a variety of inventions for the sudden apparition of demon agents, whether from above or below—and all the adventitious and effective aid which mechanism lends to genius.

VII. Thus summoning before us the external character of the Athenian drama, the vast audience, the unroofed and enormous theatre, the actors themselves enlarged by art above the ordinary proportions of men, the solemn and sacred subjects from which its form and spirit were derived, we turn to Aeschylus, and behold at once the fitting creator of its grand and ideal personifications. I have said that Homer was his original; but a more intellectual age than that of the Grecian epic had arrived, and with Aeschylus, philosophy passed into poetry. The dark doctrine of fatality imparted its stern and awful interest to the narration of events—men were delineated, not as mere self-acting and self-willed mortals, but as the agents of a destiny inevitable and unseen—the gods themselves are no longer the gods of Homer, entering into the sphere of human action for petty motives and for individual purposes —drawing their grandeur, not from the part they perform, but from the descriptions of the poet;—they appear now as the oracles or the agents of fate—they are visiters from another world, terrible and ominous from the warnings which they convey. Homer is the creator of the material poetry, Aeschylus of the intellectual. The corporeal and animal sufferings of the Titan in the epic hell become exalted by tragedy into the portrait of moral fortitude defying physical anguish. The Prometheus of Aeschylus is the spirit of a god disdainfully subjected to the misfortunes of a man. In reading this wonderful performance, which in pure and sustained sublimity is perhaps unrivalled in the literature of the world, we lose sight entirely of the cheerful Hellenic worship; and yet it is in vain that the learned attempt to trace its vague and mysterious metaphysics to any old symbolical religion of the East. More probably, whatever theological system it shadows forth, was rather the gigantic conception of the poet himself, than the imperfect revival of any forgotten creed, or the poetical disguise of any existent philosophy. However this be, it would certainly seem, that, in this majestic picture of the dauntless enemy of Jupiter, punished only for his benefits to man, and attracting all our sympathies by his courage and his benevolence, is conveyed something of disbelief or defiance of the creed of the populace—a suspicion from which Aeschylus was not free in the judgment of his contemporaries, and which is by no means inconsonant with the doctrines of Pythagoras.

VIII. The conduct of the fable is as follows: two vast demons, Strength and Force, accompanied by Vulcan, appear in a remote plain of earth—an unpeopled desert. There, on a steril and lofty rock, hard by the sea, Prometheus is chained by Vulcan—"a reward for his disposition to be tender to mankind." The date of this doom is cast far back in the earliest dawn of time, and Jupiter has but just commenced his reign. While Vulcan binds him, Prometheus utters no sound—it is Vulcan, the agent of his punishment, that alone complains. Nor is it till the dread task is done, and the ministers of Jupiter have retired, that "the god, unawed by the wrath of gods," bursts forth with his grand apostrophe—

"Oh Air divine! Oh ye swift-winged Winds—
Ye sources of the Rivers, and ye Waves,
That dimple o'er old Ocean like his smiles—
Mother of all—oh Earth! and thou the orb,
All-seeing, of the Sun, behold and witness
What I, a god, from the stern gods endure.

* * * * * *

When shall my doom be o'er?—Be o'er!—to me
The Future hides no riddle—nor can wo
Come unprepared! It fits me then to brave
That which must be: for what can turn aside
The dark course of the grim Necessity?"

While thus soliloquizing, the air becomes fragrant with odours, and faintly stirs with the rustling of approaching wings. The Daughters of Ocean, aroused from their grots below, are come to console the

Titan. They utter many complaints against the dynasty of Jove. Prometheus comforts himself by the prediction that the Olympian shall hereafter require his services, and that, until himself released from his bondage, he will never reveal to his tyrant the danger that menaces his realm; for the vanquished is here described as of a mightier race than the victor, and to him are bared the mysteries of the future, which to Jupiter are denied. The triumph of Jupiter is the conquest of brute force over knowledge.

Prometheus then narrates how, by means of his counsels, Jupiter had gained his sceptre, and the ancient Saturn and his partisans been whelmed beneath the abyss of Tartarus—how he alone had interfered with Jupiter to prevent the extermination of the human race (whom alone the celestial king disregarded and condemned)—how he had imparted to them fire, the seed of all the arts, and exchanged in their breasts the terrible knowledge of the future for the beguiling flatteries of hope and hence his punishment.

At this time Ocean himself appears: he endeavours unavailingly to persuade the Titan to submission to Jupiter. The great spirit of Prometheus, and his consideration for others, are beautifully individualized in his answers to his consoler, whom he warns not to incur the wrath of the tyrant by sympathy with the afflicted. Alone again with the Oceanides, the latter burst forth in fresh strains of pity.

"The wide earth echoes wailingly,
Stately and antique were thy fallen race,
The wide earth waileth thee!
Lo! from the holy Asian dwelling-place,
Fall for a godhead's wrongs, the mortals' murmuring tears,
They mourn within the Colchian land,
The virgin and the warrior daughters,
And far remote, the Scythian band,
Around the broad Maeotian waters,
And they who hold in Caucasus their tower,
Arabia's martial flower
Hoarse-clamouring 'midst sharp rows of barbed spears.

One have I seen with equal tortures riven—
An equal god; in adamantine chains
Ever and evermore
The Titan Atlas, crush'd, sustains
The mighty mass of mighty Heaven,
And the whirling cataracts roar,
With a chime to the Titan's groans,
And the depth that receives them moans;
And from vaults that the earth are under,
Black Hades is heard in thunder;
While from the founts of white-waved rivers flow
Melodious sorrows, wailing with his wo."

Prometheus, in his answer, still farther details the benefits he had conferred on men—he arrogates to himself their elevation to intellect and reason [20]. He proceeds darkly to dwell on the power of Necessity, guided by "the triform fates and the unforgetful Furies," whom he asserts to be sovereign over Jupiter himself. He declares that Jupiter cannot escape his doom: "His doom," ask the daughters of Ocean, "is it not evermore to reign?"—"That thou mayst not learn," replies the prophet; "and in the preservation of this secret depends my future freedom."

The rejoinder of the chorus is singularly beautiful, and it is with a pathos not common to Aeschylus that they contrast their present mournful strain with that which they poured

"What time the silence, erst was broken,
Around the baths, and o'er the bed
To which, won well by many a soft love-token,
And hymn'd by all the music of delight,
Our Ocean-sister, bright
Hesione, was led!"

At the end of this choral song appears Io, performing her mystic pilgrimage [21]. The utter wo and despair of Io are finely contrasted with the stern spirit of Prometheus. Her introduction gives rise to those ancestral and traditionary allusions to which the Greeks were so attached. In prophesying her fate, Prometheus enters into much beautiful descriptive poetry, and commemorates the lineage of the Argive kings. After Io's departure, Prometheus renews his defiance to Jupiter, and his stern prophecies,

that the son of Saturn shall be "hurled from his realm, a forgotten king." In the midst of these weird denunciations, Mercury arrives, charged by Jupiter to learn the nature of that danger which Prometheus predicts to him. The Titan bitterly and haughtily defies the threats and warnings of the herald, and exults, that whatever be his tortures, he is at least immortal,— to be afflicted, but not to die. Mercury at length departs—the menace of Jupiter is fulfilled—the punishment is consummated—and, amid storm and earthquake, both rock and prisoner are struck by the lightnings of the god into the deep abyss.

"The earth is made to reel, and rumbling by,
Bellowing it rolls, the thunder's gathering wrath!
And the fierce fires glare livid; and along
The rocks the eddies of the sands whirl high,
Borne by the hurricane, and all the blasts
Of all the winds leap forth, each hurtling each
Met in the wildness of a ghastly war,
The dark floods blended with the swooping heaven.
It comes—it comes! on me it speeds—the storm,
The rushing onslaught of the thunder-god;
Oh, majesty of earth, my solemn mother!
And thou that through the universal void,
Circlest sweet light, all blessing; EARTH AND ETHER,
YE I invoke, to know the wrongs I suffer."

IX. Such is the conclusion of this unequalled drama, epitomized somewhat at undue length, in order to show the reader how much the philosophy that had awakened in the age of Solon now actuated the creations of poetry. Not that Aeschylus, like Euripides, deals in didactic sentences and oracular aphorisms. He rightly held such pedantries of the closet foreign to the tragic genius [22]. His philosophy is in the spirit, and not in the diction of his works—in vast conceptions, not laconic maxims. He does not preach, but he inspires. The "Prometheus" is perhaps the greatest moral poem in the world—sternly and loftily intellectual—and, amid its darker and less palpable allegories, presenting to us the superiority of an immortal being to all mortal sufferings. Regarded merely as poetry, the conception of the Titan of Aeschylus has no parallel except in the Fiend of Milton. But perhaps the representation of a benevolent spirit, afflicted, but not accursed—conquered, but not subdued by a power, than which it is elder, and wiser, and loftier, is yet more sublime than that of an evil demon writhing under the penance deservedly incurred from an irresistible God. The one is intensely moral—at once the more moral and the more tragic, because the sufferings are not deserved, and therefore the defiance commands our sympathy as well as our awe; but the other is but the picture of a righteous doom, borne by a despairing though stubborn will; it affords no excitement to our courage, and forbids at once our admiration and our pity.

X. I do not propose to conduct the reader at length through the other tragedies of Aeschylus; seven are left to us, to afford the most striking examples which modern or ancient literature can produce of what perhaps is the true theory of the SUBLIME, viz., the elevating the imagination by means of the passions, for a moral end.

Nothing can be more grand and impressive than the opening of the "Agamemnon," with the solitary watchman on the tower, who, for ten long years, has watched nightly for the beacon-fires that are to announce the fall of Ilion, and who now beholds them blaze at last. The description which Clytemnestra gives of the progress of these beacon-fires from Troy to Argos is, for its picturesque animation, one of the most celebrated in Aeschylus. The following lines will convey to the general reader a very inadequate reflection, though not an unfaithful paraphrase, of this splendid passage [23]. Clytemnestra has announced to the chorus the capture of Troy. The chorus, half incredulous, demand what messenger conveyed the intelligence. Clytemnestra replies:—

"A gleam—a gleam—from Ida's height,
By the fire—god sent, it came;
From watch to watch it leap'd that light,
As a rider rode the flame!
It shot through the startled sky;
And the torch of that blazing glory
Old Lemnos caught on high,
On its holy promontory,
And sent it on, the jocund sign,
To Athos, mount of Jove divine.
Wildly the while it rose from the isle,
So that the might of the journeying light

Skimm'd over the back of the gleaming brine!
Farther and faster speeds it on,
Till the watch that keep Macistus steep—
See it burst like a blazing sun!
Doth Macistus sleep
On his tower—clad steep?
No! rapid and red doth the wild-fire sweep
It flashes afar, on the wayward stream
Of the wild Euripus, the rushing beam!
It rouses the light on Messapion's height,
And they feed its breath with the withered heath.
But it may not stay!
And away—away
It bounds in its freshening might.
Silent and soon,
Like a broadened moon,
It passes in sheen, Asopus green, [24]
And bursts on Cithaeron gray.
The warder wakes to the signal rays,
And it swoops from the hill with a broader blaze,
On—on the fiery glory rode—
Thy lonely lake, Gorgopis, glowed—
To Megara's Mount it came;
They feed it again,
And it streams amain
A giant beard of flame!
The headland cliffs that darkly down
O'er the Saronic waters frown,
Are pass'd with the swift one's lurid stride,
And the huge rock glares on the glaring tide,
With mightier march and fiercer power
It gain'd Arachne's neighbouring tower—
Thence on our Argive roof its rest it won,
Of Ida's fire the long-descended son
Bright harbinger of glory and of joy!
So first and last with equal honour crown'd,
In solemn feasts the race-torch circles round.
And these my heralds! this my SIGN OF PEACE!
Lo! while we breathe, the victor lords of Greece,
Stalk, in stern tumult, through the halls of Troy!" [25]

In one of the earlier choruses, in which is introduced an episodical allusion to the abduction of Helen, occurs one of those soft passages so rare in Aeschylus, nor less exquisite than rare. The chorus suppose the minstrels of Menelaus thus to lament the loss of Helen:—

"And wo the halls, and wo the chiefs,
And wo the bridal bed!
And we her steps—for once she loved
The lord whose love she fled!
Lo! where, dishonour yet unknown,
He sits—nor deems his Helen flown,
Tearless and voiceless on the spot;
All desert, but he feels it not!
Ah! soon alive, to miss and mourn
The form beyond the ocean borne
Shall start the lonely king!
And thought shall fill the lost one's room,
And darkly through the palace gloom
Shall stalk a ghostly thing. [26]
Her statues meet, as round they rise,
The leaden stare of lifeless eyes.
Where is their ancient beauty gone?—
Why loathe his looks the breathing stone?
Alas! the foulness of disgrace
Hath swept the Venus from her face!

And visions in the mournful night
Shall dupe the heart to false delight,
  A false and melancholy;
For naught with sadder joy is fraught,
Than things at night by dreaming brought,
  The wish'd for and the holy.
Swift from the solitary side,
The vision and the blessing glide,
Scarce welcomed ere they sweep,
  Pale, bloodless, dreams, aloft
  On wings unseen and soft,
Lost wanderers gliding through the paths of sleep."

But the master-terror of this tragedy is in the introduction of Cassandra, who accompanies Agamemnon, and who, in the very hour of his return, amid the pomp and joy that welcome the "king of men," is seized with the prophetic inspiration, and shrieks out those ominous warnings, fated ever to be heard in vain. It is she who recalls to the chorus, to the shuddering audience, that it is the house of the long-fated Atridae, to which their descendant has returned—"that human shamble-house—that bloody floor—that dwelling, abhorred by Heaven, privy to so many horrors against the most sacred ties;" the doom yet hangs over the inexpiable threshold; the curse passes from generation to generation; Agamemnon is the victim of his sires.

Recalling the inhuman banquet served by Atreus to Thyestes of his own murdered children, she starts from the mangled spectres on the threshold:

"See ye those infants crouching by the floor,
Like phantom dreams, pale nurslings, that have perish'd
By kindred hands."

Gradually her ravings become clear and clearer, until at last she scents the "blood-dripping slaughter within;" a vapour rises to her nostrils as from a charnel house—her own fate, which she foresees at hand, begins to overpower her—her mood softens, and she enters the palace, about to become her tomb, with thoughts in which frantic terror has yielded to solemn and pathetic resignation:

"Alas for mortals!—what their power and pride?
A little shadow sweeps it from the earth!
And if they suffer—why, the fatal hour
Comes o'er the record like a moistened sponge,
And blots it out; *methinks this latter lot*
Affects me deepest—Well! 'tis pitiful!" [27]

Scarcely has the prophetess withdrawn than we hear behind the scene the groans of the murdered king, the palace behind is opened, and Clytemnestra is standing, stern and lofty, by the dead body of her lord. The critics have dwelt too much on the character of Clytemnestra—it is that of Cassandra which is the masterpiece of the tragedy.

XI. The story, which is spread throughout three plays (forming a complete trilogy), continues in the opening of the Choephori, with Orestes mourning over his father's tomb. If Clytemnestra has furnished would-be critics with a comparison with Lady Macbeth, for no other reason than that one murdered her husband, and the other persuaded her husband to murder somebody else, so Orestes may with more justice be called the Hamlet of the Greeks; but though the character itself of Orestes is not so complex and profound as that of Hamlet, nor the play so full of philosophical beauties as the modern tragedy, yet it has passages equally pathetic, and more sternly and terribly sublime. The vague horror which in the commencement of the play prepares us for the catastrophe by the dream of Clytemnestra—how a serpent lay in swaddling-clothes like an infant, and she placed it in her breast, and it drew blood; the brief and solemn answer of Orestes—

"Man's visions never come to him in vain;"

the manner in which the avenging parricide interrupts the dream, so that (as in Macbeth) the prediction inspires the deed that it foretells; the dauntless resolution of Clytemnestra, when she hears, in the dark sayings of her servant, that "the dead are slaying the living" (i. e., that through the sword of Orestes Agamemnon is avenged on Aegisthus), calls for a weapon, royal to the last, wishing only to

"Know which shall be the victor or the vanquished—
Since that the crisis of the present horror;"

the sudden change from fierce to tender as Orestes bursts in, and, thinking only of her guilty lover, she shrieks forth,

"Ah! thou art then no more, beloved Aegisthus;"

the advance of the threatening son, the soft apostrophe of the mother as she bares her bosom—

"Hold! and revere this breast on which so oft
Thy young cheek nestled—cradle of thy sleep,
And fountain of thy being;"

the recoil of Orestes—the remonstrance of Pylades—the renewed passion of the avenger—the sudden recollection of her dream, which the murderess scarcely utters than it seems to confirm Orestes to its fulfilment, and he pursues and slays her by the side of the adulterer; all these passages are full of so noble a poetry, that I do not think the parallel situations in Hamlet equal their sustained and solemn grandeur. But the sublimest effort of the imagination is in the conclusion. While Orestes is yet justifying the deed that avenged a father, strange and confused thoughts gradually creep over him. No eyes see them but his own—there they are, "the Gorgons, in vestments of sable, their eyes dropping loathly blood!" Slowly they multiply, they approach, still invisible but to their prey—"the angry hell-hounds of his mother." He flies, the fresh blood yet dripping from his hands. This catastrophe—the sudden apparition of the Furies ideally imaged forth to the parricide alone—seems to me greater in conception than the supernatural agency in Hamlet. The visible ghost is less awful than the unseen Furies.

The plot is continued through the third piece of the trilogy (the Eumenides), and out of Aeschylus himself, no existing tragedy presents so striking an opening—one so terrible and so picturesque. It is the temple of Apollo at Delphi. The priestess, after a short invocation, enters the sacred edifice, but suddenly returns. "A man," she says, "is at the marble seat, a suppliant to the god—his bloody hands hold a drawn sword and a long branch of olive. But around the man sleep a wondrous and ghastly troop, not of women, but of things woman-like, yet fiendish; harpies they seem, but are not; black-robed and wingless, and their breath is loud and baleful, and their eyes drop venom—and their garb is neither meet for the shrines of God nor the habitations of men. Never have I seen (saith the Pythian) a nation which nurtured such a race." Cheered by Apollo, Orestes flies while the dread sisters yet sleep; and now within the temple we behold the Furies scattered around, and a pale and lofty shape, the ghost of Clytemnestra, gliding on the stage, awakens the agents of her vengeance. They break forth as they rouse themselves, "Seize—seize— seize." They lament—they bemoan the departure of their victim, they expostulate with Apollo, who expels them from his temple. The scene changes; Orestes is at Athens,—he pleads his cause before the temple of Minerva. The contest is now shared by gods; Apollo and the Furies are the pleaders—Pallas is the umpire, the Areopagites are the judges. Pallas casts in her vote in favour of Orestes—the lots are equal—he is absolved; the Furies, at first enraged, are soothed by Minerva, and, invited to dwell in Athens, pour blessings on the land. A sacred but joyous procession crowns the whole. Thus the consummation of the trilogy is cheerful, though each of the two former pieces is tragic; and the poet artfully conduces the poem to the honour of his native Athens and the venerable Areopagus. Regarding the three as one harmonious and united performance, altogether not so long as one play of Shakspeare's, they are certainly not surpassed in greatness of thought, in loftiness of conception, and in sustained vigour of execution, by any poem in the compass of literature; nor, observing their simple but compact symmetry as a whole, shall we do right to subscribe to those who deny to Aeschylus the skill of the artist, while they grant him the faculty of the poet.

The ingenious Schlegel attributes to these tragedies symbolical interpretations, but to my judgment with signal ill-success. These four tragedies—the Prometheus, the Agamemnon, the Choephori, and the Eumenides—are in grandeur immeasurably superior to the remaining three.

XII. Of these last, the Seven against Thebes is the best. The subject was one peculiarly interesting to Greece; the War of the Seven was the earliest record of a league among the Grecian princes, and of an enterprise carried on with a regular and systematic design. The catastrophe of two brothers falling by each other's hand is terrible and tragic, and among the most national of the Grecian legends. The fierce and martial spirit of the warrior poet runs throughout the play; his descriptions are animated as with the zeal and passion of battle; the chorus of Theban virgins paint in the most glowing colours the rush of the adverse hosts—the prancing of the chargers—the sound of their hoofs, "rumbling as a torrent lashing the side of cliffs;" we hear the creak of the heavy cars—the shrill whiz of the javelins, "maddening the very air"—the showers of stones crashing over the battlements—the battering at the mighty gates—the uproar of the city—the yells of rapine—the shrieks of infants "strangled by the bubbling blood." Homer himself never accumulated more striking images of horror. The description of Tydeus is peculiarly Homeric—

"Three shadowy crests, the honours of his helm,
Wave wild, and shrilly from his buckler broad

The brazen bell rings terror. On the shield
He bears his haughty ensign—typed by stars
Gleaming athwart the sky, and in the midst
Glitters the royal Moon—the Eye of Night.
Fierce in the glory of his arms, his voice
Roars by the river banks; and drunk with war
He pants, as some wild charger, when the trump
Clangs ringing, as he rushes on the foe."

The proud, dauntless, and warlike spirit of Eteocles which is designed and drawn with inconceivable power, is beautifully characterized in his reply to the above description:

"Man hath no armour, war hath no array,
At which this heart can tremble; no device
Nor blazonry of battle can inflict
The wounds they menace; crests and clashing bells
Without the spear are toothless, and the night,
Wrought on yon buckler with the stars of heaven,
Prophet, perchance, his doom; and if dark Death
Close round his eyes, are but the ominous signs
Of the black night that waits him."

The description of each warrior stationed at each gate is all in the genius of Homer, closing as it does with that of Polynices, the brother of the besieged hero, whom, when he hears his name, Eteocles himself resolves to confront. At first, indeed, the latter breaks out into exclamations which denote the awe and struggle of the abhorrent nature; forebodings of his own doom flit before him, he feels the curses of his sire are ripening to their fruit, and that the last storm is yet to break upon the house of Oedipus. Suddenly he checks the impulse, sensible of the presence of the chorus. He passes on to reason with himself, through a process of thought which Shakspeare could not have surpassed. He conjures up the image of that brother, hateful and unjust from infancy to boyhood, from boyhood up to youth— he assures himself that justice would be forsworn if this foe should triumph—and rushes on to his dread resolve.

"'Tis I will face this warrior; who can boast
A right to equal mine? Chief against chief—
Foe against foe!—and brother against brother.
What, ho! my greaves, my spear, my armour proof
Against this storm of stones! My stand is chosen."

Eteocles and his brother both perish in the unnatural strife, and the tragedy ends with the decree of the senators to bury Eteocles with due honours, and the bold resolution of Antigone (the sister of the dead) to defy the ordinance which forbids a burial to Polynices—

"For mighty is the memory of the womb
From which alike we sprung—a wretched mother!"

The same spirit which glows through the "Seven against Thebes" is also visible in the "Persians," which, rather picturesque than dramatic, is tragedy brought back to the dithyrambic ode. It portrays the defeat of Xerxes, and contains one of the most valuable of historical descriptions, in the lines devoted to the battle of Salamis. The speech of Atossa (the mother of Xerxes), in which she enumerates the offerings to the shade of Darius, is exquisitely beautiful.

"The charms that sooth the dead:
White milk, and lucid honey, pure-distill'd
By the wild bee—that craftsman of the flowers;
The limpid droppings of the virgin fount,
And this bright liquid from its mountain mother
Born fresh—the joy of the time—hallowed vine;
The pale-green olive's odorous fruit, whose leaves
Live everlastingly—and these wreathed flowers,
The smiling infants o' the prodigal earth."

Nor is there less poetry in the invocation of the chorus to the shade of Darius, which slowly rises as they conclude. But the purpose for which the monarch returns to earth is scarcely sufficient to justify his appearance, and does not seem to be in accordance with the power over our awe and terror which the poet usually commands. Darius hears the tale of his son's defeat—warns the Persians against interfering with the Athenians—tells the mother to comfort and console her son— bids the chorus (who

disregard his advice) give themselves to mirth, even though in affliction, "for to the dead riches are no advantage"— and so returns to his repose, which seems very unnecessarily disturbed.

"The Suppliants," which Schlegel plausibly conjectures to have been the intermediate piece of a trilogy, is chiefly remarkable as a proof of the versatility of the poet. All horror has vanished from the scene; the language is soft when compared with the usual diction of Aeschylus; the action is peaceful, and the plot extremely simple, being merely the protection which the daughters of Danaus obtain at the court of Pelasgus from the pursuit of the sons of Aegyptus. The heroines of the play, the Danaides, make the chorus, and this serves to render the whole, yet more than the Persians, a lyric rather than a tragedy. The moral of the play is homely and primitive, and seems confined to the inculcation of hospitality to strangers, and the inviolable sanctity of the shrine. I do not know any passages in "The Suppliants" that equal in poetry the more striking verses of "The Persians," or "The Seven against Thebes."

XIII. Attempts have been made to convey to modern readers a more familiar notion of Aeschylus by comparisons with modern poets. One critic likens him to Dante, another to Milton—but he resembles neither. No modern language can convey a notion of the wonderful strength of his diction—no modern poet, of the stern sublimity of his conceptions. The French tragedians may give some weak reflection of Euripides or even of Sophocles, but none have ventured upon the sacred territory of the father of the tragic drama. He defies all imitation. His genius is so near the verge of bombast, that to approach his sublime is to rush into the ridiculous. [28]

Aeschylus never once, in the plays that have come down to us, delineates love, except by an expression or two as regards the passion of Clytemnestra for Aegisthus [29]. It was emblematic of a new state of society when Euripides created the Phaedra and the Medea. His plots are worked out by the simplest and the fewest positions. But he had evidently his own theory of art, and studied with care such stage effects as appeared to him most striking and impressive. Thus, in the burlesque contest between Aeschylus and Euripides, in the comedy of "The Frogs," the former is censured, not for too rude a neglect, but for too elaborate a cultivation, of theatrical craft—such as introducing his principal characters, his Niobe and Achilles [30], with their faces hid, and preserving long and obstinate silence, in order by that suspense to sharpen the expectation of the audience. Aeschylus, in fact, contrary to the general criticism, was as earnest and thoughtful an artist as Sophocles himself. There was this difference, it is true; one invented the art and the other perfected.

But the first requires as intense a study as the last; and they who talk of the savage and untutored genius of Aeschylus, are no wiser than the critics who applied the phrase of "native wood-notes wild" to the consummate philosophy of "Hamlet," the anatomical correctness of "Othello," the delicate symmetry of "The Tempest." With respect to the language of Aeschylus, ancient critics unite with the modern in condemning the straining of his metaphors, and the exaggeration of his images; yet they appear to me a necessary part of his genius, and of the effect it produces. But nothing can be more unsatisfactory and inconclusive than the theory of Schlegel, that such metaphors and images, such rugged boldness and irregular fire, are the characteristics of a literature in its infancy. On the contrary, as we have already seen, Phrynichus, the predecessor of Aeschylus, was as much characterized by sweetness and harmony, as Aeschylus by grandeur and headlong animation. In our own time, we have seen the cold classic school succeeded by one full of the faults which the German, eloquent but superficial, would ascribe to the infancy of literature. The diction of Aeschylus was the distinction of himself, and not of his age; if it require an apology, let us not seek it in false pretences; if he had written after Euripides, his diction would have been equally startling, and his metaphors equally lofty. His genius was one of those which, in any age, can form an era, and not that which an era necessarily forms. He might have enriched his music from the strains of the Dorian lyres, but he required only one poet to have lived before him. The rest of the Greek dramatists required Aeschylus—Aeschylus required only Homer.

The POET is, indeed, the creator, not of images solely, but of men— not of one race of ideas and characters, but of a vast and interminable posterity scattered over the earth. The origin of what wonderful works, in what distant regions, in what various time, may be traced, step by step, from influence to influence, till we arrive at Homer! Such is the vitality of genius. The true spiritual transmigrator—it passes through all shapes—losing identity, but not life—and kindred to the GREAT INTELLIGENCE, which is the soul of matter—departing from one form only to animate another.

CHAPTER III.

Aristides.—His Character and Position.—The Rise of Themistocles.— Aristides is Ostracised.—The Ostracism examined.—The Influence of Themistocles increases.—The Silver-mines of Laurion.—Their Product applied by Themistocles to the Increase of the Navy.—New Direction given to the National Character.

I. While the progress of the drama and the genius of Aeschylus contributed to the rising renown of Athens, there appeared on the surface of her external affairs two rival and principal actors, of talents and designs so opposite, that it soon became evident that the triumph of one could be only in the defeat of the other. Before the battle of Marathon, Aristides had attained a very considerable influence in Athens. His birth was noble—his connexions wealthy—his own fortune moderate. He had been an early follower and admirer of Clisthenes, the establisher of popular institutions in Athens after the expulsion of the Pisistratidae, but he shared the predilection of many popular chieftains, and while opposing the encroachments of a tyranny, supported the power of an aristocracy. The system of Lycurgus was agreeable to his stern and inflexible temper. His integrity was republican—his loftiness of spirit was patrician. He had all the purity, the disinterestedness, and the fervour of a patriot—he had none of the suppleness or the passion of a demagogue; on the contrary, he seems to have felt much of that high-spirited disdain of managing a people which is common to great minds conscious that they are serving a people. His manners were austere, and he rather advised than persuaded men to his purposes. He pursued no tortuous policy, but marched direct to his object, fronting, and not undermining, the obstacles in his path. His reputation for truth and uprightness was proverbial, and when some lines in Aeschylus were recited on the stage, implying that "to be, and not to seem, his wisdom was," the eyes of the spectators were fixed at once upon Aristides. His sternness was only for principles—he had no harshness for men. Priding himself on impartiality between friends and foes, he pleaded for the very person whom the laws obliged him to prosecute; and when once, in his capacity of arbiter between two private persons, one of the parties said that his opponent had committed many injuries against Aristides, he rebuked him nobly: "Tell me not," he said, "of injuries against myself, but against thee. It is thy cause I am adjudging, and not my own." It may be presumed, that with these singular and exalted virtues, he did not seek to prevent the wounds they inflicted upon the self-love of others, and that the qualities of a superior mind were displayed with the bearing of a haughty spirit. He became the champion of the aristocratic party, and before the battle of Marathon he held the office of public treasurer. In this capacity Plutarch asserts that he was subjected to an accusation by Themistocles, and even intimates that Themistocles himself had been his predecessor in that honourable office [31]. But the youth of Themistocles contradicts this statement; and though his restless and ambitious temper had led him already into active life, and he might have combined with others more influential against Aristides, it can scarcely be supposed that, possessing no advantages of birth, he rose into much power or distinction, till he won sudden and popular applause by his gallantry at Marathon.

II. Themistocles was of illegitimate birth, according to the Athenian prejudice, since his mother was a foreigner. His father, though connected with the priestly and high-born house of the Lycomedae, was not himself a Eupatrid. The young Themistocles had many of the qualities which the equivocal condition of illegitimacy often educes from active and stirring minds—insolence, ostentation, the desire to shine, and the invincible ambition to rise. He appears, by a popular tale, to have early associated with his superiors, and to have evinced betimes the art and address which afterward distinguished him. At a meeting of all the illegitimate youths assembled at the wrestling-ring at Cynosarges, dedicated to Hercules, he persuaded some of the young nobles to accompany him, so as to confound as it were the distinction between the legitimate and the baseborn. His early disposition was bold, restless, and impetuous. He paid little attention to the subtleties of schoolmen, or the refinements of the arts; but even in boyhood devoted himself to the study of politics and the arts of government. He would avoid the sports and occupations of his schoolfellows, and compose declamations, of which the subject was the impeachment or defence of some of his young friends. His dispositions prophesied of his future career, and his master was wont to say, "that he was born to be a blessing or a curse to the commonwealth." His strange and precocious boyhood was followed by a wild and licentious youth. He lived in extremes, and alternated between the loosest pleasures [32] and the most daring ambition. Entering prematurely into public life, either his restless disposition or his political principles embroiled him with men of the highest rank. Fearless and sanguine, he cared not whom he attacked, or what he adventured; and, whatever his conduct before the battle of Marathon, the popular opinions he embraced could not but bring him, after that event, in constant opposition to Aristides, the champion of the Areopagus.

That splendid victory which gave an opening to his career sharpened his ambition. The loud fame of Miltiades, yet unconscious of reverse, inspired him with a lofty envy. He seems from that period to have forsaken his more youthful excesses. He abstained from his wonted pursuits and pleasures—he indulged much in solitary and abstracted thought—he watched whole nights. His friends wondered at the change, and inquired the cause. "The trophies of Miltiades," said he, "will not suffer me to sleep." From these meditations, which are common to most men in the interval between an irregular youth and

an aspiring manhood, he soon seems to have awakened with fixed objects and expanded views. Once emerged from the obscurity of his birth, his success was rapid, for he possessed all the qualities which the people demanded in a leader—not only the talents and the courage, but the affability and the address. He was an agreeable and boon companion— he committed to memory the names of the humblest citizens—his versatility enabled him to be all things to all men. Without the lofty spirit and beautiful mind of Pericles, without the prodigal but effeminate graces of Alcibiades—without, indeed, any of their Athenian poetry in his intellectual composition, he yet possessed much of their powers of persuasion, their ready talent for business, and their genius of intrigue. But his mind, if coarser than that of either of his successors, was yet perhaps more masculine and determined; nothing diverted him from his purpose—nothing arrested his ambition. His ends were great, and he associated the rise of his country with his more selfish objects, but he was unscrupulous as to his means. Avid of glory, he was not keenly susceptible to honour. He seems rather not to have comprehended, than comprehending, to have disdained the limits which principle sets to action. Remarkably far-sighted, he possessed, more than any of his contemporaries, the prophetic science of affairs: patient, vigilant, and profound, he was always energetic, because always prepared.

Such was the rival of Aristides, and such the rising leader of the popular party at Athens.

III. History is silent as to the part taken by Aristides in the impeachment of Miltiades, but there is no reason to believe that he opposed the measure of the Alcmaeonid party with which he acted, and which seems to have obtained the ascendency after the death of Miltiades. In the year following the battle of Marathon, we find Aristides in the eminent dignity of archon. In this office he became generally known by the title of the Just. His influence, his official rank, the power of the party that supported him, soon rendered him the principal authority of Athens. The courts of the judges were deserted, every litigant repaired to his arbitration—his administration of power obtained him almost the monopoly of it. Still, however, he was vigorously opposed by Themistocles and the popular faction led by that aspiring rival.

By degrees; various reasons, the chief of which was his own high position, concurred to diminish the authority of Aristides; even among his own partisans he lost ground, partly by the jealousy of the magistrates, whose authority he had superseded—and partly, doubtless, from a maxim more dangerous to a leader than any he can adopt, viz., impartiality between friends and foes in the appointment to offices. Aristides regarded, not the political opinions, but the abstract character or talents, of the candidates. With Themistocles, on the contrary, it was a favourite saying, "The gods forbid that I should be in power, and my friends no partakers of my success." The tendency of the first policy is to discontent friends, while it rarely, if ever, conciliates foes; neither is it so elevated as it may appear to the superficial; for if we contend for the superiority of one set of principles over another, we weaken the public virtue when we give equal rewards to the principles we condemn as to the principles we approve. We make it appear as if the contest had been but a war of names, and we disregard the harmony which ought imperishably to exist between the opinions which the state should approve and the honours which the state can confer. He who is impartial as to persons must submit to seem lukewarm as to principles. Thus the more towering and eminent the seeming power of Aristides, the more really hollow and insecure were its foundations. To his own party it was unproductive— to the multitude it appeared unconstitutional. The extraordinary honours he had acquired—his monopoly of the magistrature—his anti-popular opinions, could not but be regarded with fear by a people so jealous of their liberties. He seemed to their apprehensions to be approaching gradually to the sovereignty of the state—not, indeed, by guards and military force, but the more dangerous encroachments of civil authority. The moment for the attack arrived. Themistocles could count at last upon the chances of a critical experiment, and Aristides was subjected to the ordeal of the ostracism.

IV. The method of the ostracism was this:—each citizen wrote upon a shell, or a piece of broken earthenware, the name of the person he desired to banish. The magistrates counted the shells, and if they amounted to six thousand (a very considerable proportion of the free population, and less than which rendered the ostracism invalid), they were sorted, and the man whose name was found on the greater number of shells was exiled for ten years, with full permission to enjoy his estates. The sentence was one that honoured while it afflicted, nor did it involve any other accusation than that of being too powerful or too ambitious for the citizen of a free state. It is a well-known story, that, during the process of voting, an ignorant burgher came to Aristides, whose person he did not know, and requested him to write down the name of Aristides.

"Has he ever injured you?" asked the great man.

"No," answered the clown, "nor do I know him even by sight; but it vexes me to hear him everywhere called the 'Just.'"

Aristides replied not—he wrote his own name on the shell, and returned it to the enlightened voter. Such is a tale to which more importance than is its due has been attached. Yet perhaps we can give a

new reading to the honest burgher's reply, and believe that it was not so expressive of envy at the virtue, as of fear at the reputation. Aristides received the sentence of exile (B. C. 483) with his accustomed dignity. His last words on leaving his native city were characteristic of his generous and lofty nature. "May the Athenian people," he said, "never know the day which shall force them to remember Aristides!"—A wish, fortunately alike for the exile and the people, not realized. That day, so patriotically deprecated, soon came, glorious equally to Athens and Aristides, and the reparation of wrong and the triumph of liberty found a common date.

The singular institution of the ostracism is often cited in proof of the ingratitude of a republic, and the fickleness of a people; but it owed its origin not to republican disorders, but to despotic encroachment—not to a people, but to a tyrant. If we look throughout all the Grecian states, we find that a tyranny was usually established by some able and artful citizen, who, attaching himself either to the aristocratic, or more frequently to the popular party, was suddenly elevated into supreme power, with the rise of the faction he had espoused. Establishing his fame by popular virtues, he was enabled often to support his throne by a moral authority—more dangerous than the odious defence of military hirelings: hence necessarily arose among the free states a jealousy of individuals, whose eminence became such as to justify an undue ambition; and hence, for a long period, while liberty was yet tender and insecure, the (almost) necessity of the ostracism.

Aristotle, who laments and condemns the practice, yet allows that in certain states it was absolutely requisite; he thinks the evil it is intended to prevent "might have been provided for in the earlier epochs of a commonwealth, by guarding against the rise of one man to a dangerous degree of power; but where the habits and laws of a nation are so formed as to render it impossible to prevent the rise, you must then guard against its consequences:" and in another part of his Politics he observes, "that even in republics, where men are regarded, not according to their wealth, but worth—where the citizens love liberty and have arms and valour to defend it; yet, should the pre-eminent virtues of one man, or of one family, totally eclipse the merit of the community at large, you have but two choices—the ostracism or the throne."

If we lament the precaution, we ought then to acknowledge the cause. The ostracism was the creature of the excesses of the tyrannical, and not of the popular principle. The bland and specious hypocrisy of Pisistratus continued to work injury long after his death—and the ostracism of Aristides was the necessary consequence of the seizure of the citadel. Such evil hath arbitrary power, that it produces injustice in the contrary principles as a counterpart to the injustice of its own; thus the oppression of our Catholic countrymen for centuries resulted from the cruelties and persecutions of a papal ascendency. We remembered the danger, and we resorted to the rigid precaution. To guard against a second tyranny of opinion, we condemned, nor perhaps without adequate cause, not one individual, but a whole sect, to a moral ostracism. Ancient times are not then so opposite to the present—and the safety of the state may excuse, in a republic as in a monarchy, a thousand acts of abstract injustice. But the banishment of Aristides has peculiar excuses in the critical circumstances of the time. The remembrance of Pisistratus was still fresh—his son had but just perished in an attempt on his country—the family still lived, and still menaced: the republic was yet in its infancy—a hostile aristocracy within its walls—a powerful enemy still formidable without. It is a remarkable fact, that as the republic strengthened, and as the popular power increased, the custom of ostracism was superseded. The democratic party was never so strong as at the time in which it was finally abolished. It is the insecurity of power, whether in a people or a king, that generates suspicion. Habituated to liberty, a people become less rigid and more enlightened as to its precautions.

V. It had been a saying of Aristides, "that if the Athenians desired their affairs to prosper, they ought to fling Themistocles and himself into the barathrum." But fortune was satisfied at this time with a single victim, and reserved the other for a later sacrifice. Relieved from the presence of a rival who had constantly crossed and obstructed his career, Themistocles found ample scope for his genius. He was not one of those who are unequal to the situation it costs them so much to obtain. On his entrance into public life he is said by Theophrastus to have possessed only three talents; but the account is inconsistent with the extravagance of his earlier career, and still more with the expenses to which a man who attempts to lead a party is, in all popular states, unavoidably subjected. More probably, therefore, it is said of him by others, that he inherited a competent patrimony, and he did not scruple to seize upon every occasion to increase it, whether through the open emolument or the indirect perquisites of public office. But, desiring wealth as a means, not an end, he grasped with one hand to lavish with the other. His generosity dazzled and his manners seduced the people, yet he exercised the power he acquired with a considerate and patriotic foresight. From the first retreat of the Persian armament he saw that the danger was suspended, and not removed. But the Athenians, who shared a common Grecian fault, and ever thought too much of immediate, too little of distant peril, imagined that Marathon had terminated the great contest between Asia and Europe. They forgot the fleets of Persia, but they still dreaded the galleys of Aegina. The oligarchy of that rival state was the political

enemy of the Athenian demos; the ally of the Persian was feared by the conqueror, and every interest, military and commercial, contributed to feed the passionate and jealous hate that existed against a neighbour, too near to forget, too warlike to despise. The thoughtful and profound policy of Themistocles resolved to work this popular sentiment to ulterior objects; and urging upon a willing audience the necessity of making suitable preparations against Aegina, then the mistress of the seas, he proposed to construct a navy, fitted equally to resist the Persian and to open a new dominion to the Athenians.

To effect this purpose he called into aid one of the most valuable sources of her power which nature had bestowed upon Athens.

VI. Around the country by the ancient Thoricus, on the road from the modern Kerratia to the Cape of Sunium, heaps of scoriae indicate to the traveller that he is in the neighbourhood of the once celebrated silver-mines of Laurion; he passes through pines and woodlands—he notices the indented tracks of wheels which two thousand years have not effaced from the soil—he discovers the ancient shafts of the mines, and pauses before the foundations of a large circular tower and the extensive remains of the castles which fortified the neighbouring town [33]. A little farther, and still passing among mine-banks and hillocks of scoriae, he beholds upon Cape Colonna the fourteen existent columns of the temple of Minerva Sunias. In this country, to which the old name is still attached [34], is to be found a principal cause of the renown and the reverses of Athens—of the victory of Salamis—of the expedition to Sicily.

It appears that the silver-mines of Laurion had been worked from a very remote period—beyond even any traditional date. But as it is well and unanswerably remarked, "the scarcity of silver in the time of Solon proves that no systematic or artificial process of mining could at that time have been established." [35] It was, probably, during the energetic and politic rule of the dynasty of Pisistratus that efficient means were adopted to derive adequate advantage from so fertile a source of national wealth. And when, subsequently, Athens, profiting from the lessons of her tyrants, allowed the genius of her free people to administer the state, fresh necessity was created for wealth against the hostility of Sparta—fresh impetus given to general industry and public enterprise. Accordingly, we find that shortly after the battle of Marathon, the yearly profits of the mines were immense. We learn from the researches of one of those eminent Germans [36] who have applied so laborious a learning with so subtle an acuteness to the elucidation of ancient history, that these mines were always considered the property of the state; shares in them were sold to individuals as tenants in fee farms, and these proprietors paid, besides, an annual sum into the public treasury, amounting to the twenty-fourth part of the produce. The state, therefore, received a regular revenue from the mines, derived from the purchase—moneys and the reserved rents. This revenue had been hitherto divided among all the free citizens, and the sum allotted to each was by no means inconsiderable, when Themistocles, at an early period of his career (before even the ostracism of Aristides), had the courage to propose that a fund thus lucrative to every individual should be appropriated to the national purpose of enlarging the navy. The feud still carried on with the Aeginetans was his pretext and excuse. But we cannot refuse our admiration to the fervent and generous order of public spirit existent at that time, when we find that it was a popular leader who proposed to, and carried through, a popular assembly the motion, that went to empoverish the men who supported his party and adjudged his proposition. Privileged and sectarian bodies never willingly consent to a surrender of pecuniary benefits for a mere public end. But among the vices of a popular assembly, it possesses the redeeming virtue to be generous. Upon a grand and unconscious principle of selfishness, a democracy rarely grudges a sacrifice endured for the service of the state.

The money thus obtained was devoted to the augmentation of the maritime force to two hundred triremes—an achievement that probably exhausted the mine revenue for some years; and the custom once broken, the produce of Laurion does not seem again to have been wasted upon individuals. To maintain and increase the new navy, a decree was passed, either at that time [37], or somewhat later, which ordained twenty triremes to be built yearly.

VII. The construction of these vessels, the very sacrifice of the citizens, the general interest that must have attached to an undertaking that was at once novel in itself, and yet congenial not more to the passions of a people, who daily saw from their own heights the hostile rock of Aegina, "the eyesore of the Piraeus," than to the habits of men placed in a steril land that on three sides tempted to the sea—all combined to assist Themistocles in his master policy—a policy which had for its design gradually to convert the Athenians from an agricultural into a maritime people. What was imputed to him as a reproach became his proudest distinction, viz., that "he first took his countrymen from the spear and shield, and sent them to the bench and oar."

CHAPTER IV.

The Preparations of Darius.—Revolt of Egypt.—Dispute for the Succession to the Persian Throne.—Death of Darius.—Brief Review of the leading Events and Characteristics of his Reign.

I. While, under the presiding genius of Themistocles, Athens was silently laying the foundation of her naval greatness, and gradually increasing in influence and renown, the Persian monarch was not forgetful of the burning of Sardis and the defeat of Marathon. The armies of a despotic power are often slow to collect, and unwieldy to unite, and Darius wasted three years in despatching emissaries to various cities, and providing transports, horses, and forage for a new invasion.

The vastness of his preparations, though congenial to oriental warfare, was probably proportioned to objects more great than those which appear in the Greek historians. There is no reason, indeed, to suppose that he cherished the gigantic project afterward entertained by his son—a project no less than that of adding Europe as a province to the empire of the East. But symptoms of that revolt in Egypt which shortly occurred, may have rendered it advisable to collect an imposing force upon other pretences; and without being carried away by any frantic revenge against the remote and petty territory of Athens, Darius could not but be sensible that the security of his Ionian, Macedonian, and Thracian conquests, with the homage already rendered to his sceptre by the isles of Greece, made it necessary to redeem the disgrace of the Persian arms, and that the more insignificant the foe, the more fatal, if unpunished, the example of resistance. The Ionian coasts—the entrance into Europe—were worth no inconsiderable effort, and the more distant the provinces to be awed, the more stupendous, according to all rules of Asiatic despotism, should appear the resources of the sovereign. He required an immense armament, not so much for the sake of crushing the Athenian foe, as of exhibiting in all its might the angry majesty of the Persian empire.

II. But while Asia was yet astir with the martial preparations of the great king, Egypt revolted from his sway, and, at the same time, the peace of Darius was imbittered, and his mind engaged, by a contest among his sons for the succession to the crown (B. C. 486). Artabazanes, the eldest of his family, born to him by his first wife, previous to his own elevation to the throne, founded his claim upon the acknowledged rights of primogeniture; but Xerxes, the eldest of a second family by Atossa, daughter of the great Cyrus, advanced, on the other hand, a direct descent from the blood of the founder of the Persian empire. Atossa, who appears to have inherited something of her father's genius, and who, at all events, exercised unbounded influence over Darius, gave to the claim of her son a stronger support than that which he could derive from argument or custom. The intrigue probably extended from the palace throughout the pure Persian race, who could not but have looked with veneration upon a descendant of Cyrus, nor could there have seemed a more popular method of strengthening whatever was defective in the title of Darius to the crown, than the transmission of his sceptre to a son, in whose person were united the rights of the new dynasty and the sanctity of the old. These reasonings prevailed with Darius, whose duty it was to nominate his own successor, and Xerxes was declared his heir. While the contest was yet undecided, there arrived at the Persian court Demaratus, the deposed and self-exiled king of Sparta. He attached himself to the cause and person of Xerxes, and is even said to have furnished the young prince with new arguments, founded on the usages of Sparta—an assertion not to be wholly disregarded, since Demaratus appeared before the court in the character of a monarch, if in the destitution of an exile, and his suggestions fell upon the ear of an arbiter willing to seize every excuse to justify the resolution to which he had already arrived.

This dispute terminated, Darius in person prepared to march against the Egyptian rebels, when his death (B. C. 485) consigned to the inexperienced hands of his heir the command of his armies and the execution of his designs.

The long reign of Darius, extending over thirty-six years, was memorable for vast improvements in the administrations of the empire, nor will it, in this place, be an irrelevant digression to glance briefly and rapidly back over some of the events and the innovations by which it was distinguished.

III. The conquest of Cyrus had transplanted, as the ruling people, to the Median empire, a race of brave and hardy, but simple and uncivilized warriors. Cambyses, of whose character no unequivocal evidence remains, since the ferocious and frantic crimes ascribed to him [38] are conveyed to us through the channel of the Egyptian priests, whom he persecuted, most probably, rather as a political nobility than a religious caste, could but slightly have improved the condition of the people, or the administration of the empire, since his reign lasted but seven years and five months, during which he was occupied with the invasion of Africa and the subjugation of Egypt. At the conclusion of his reign he was menaced by a singular conspiracy. The Median magi conspired in his absence from the seat of empire to elevate a Mede to the throne. Cambyses, under the impulse of jealous and superstitious

fears, had lately put to death Smerdis, his brother. The secret was kept from the multitude, and known only to a few—among others, to the magian whom Cambyses had intrusted with the charge of his palace at Susa, an office as important as confidential. This man conceived a scheme of amazing but not unparalleled boldness. His brother, a namesake of the murdered prince, resembled the latter also in age and person. This brother, the chief of the household, with the general connivance of his sacerdotal caste, who were naturally anxious to restore the Median dynasty, suddenly declared to be the true Smerdis, and the impostor, admitted to possession of the palace, asserted his claim to the sovereign power. The consent of the magi— the indifference of the people—the absence, not only of the king, but of the flower of the Persian race—and, above all, the tranquil possession of the imperial palace, conspired to favour the deceit. [39] Placed on the Persian throne, but concealing his person from the eyes of the multitude in the impenetrable pomp of an Oriental seraglio, the pseudo Smerdis had the audacity to despatch, among the heralds that proclaimed his accession, a messenger to the Egyptian army, demanding their allegiance. The envoy found Cambyses at Ecbatana in Syria. Neither cowardice nor sloth was the fault of that monarch; he sprang upon his horse, determined to march at once to Susa, when the sheath fell from his sword, and he received a mortal wound from the naked blade. Cambyses left no offspring, and the impostor, believed by the people to be the true son of Cyrus, issued, from the protecting and august obscurity of his palace, popular proclamations and beneficent edicts. Whatever his present fraud, whatever his previous career, this daring Mede was enabled to make his reign beloved and respected. After his death he was regretted by all but the Persians, who would not have received the virtues of a god as an excuse for the usurpation of a Mede. Known to the vast empire only by his munificence of spirit—by his repeal of tribute and service, the impostor permitted none to his presence who could have detected the secret. He never quitted his palace—the nobles were not invited to his banquets—the women in his seraglio were separated each from each—and it was only in profound darkness that the partners of his pleasures were admitted to his bed. The imposture is said by Herodotus to have been first discovered in the following manner:—the magian, according to the royal custom, had appropriated to himself the wives of Cambyses; one of these was the daughter of Otanes, a Persian noble whom the secluded habits of the pretended king filled with suspicion. For some offence, the magian had been formerly deprived of his ears by the order of Cyrus. Otanes communicated this fact, with his suspicions, to his daughter, and the next time she was a partaker of the royal couch, she took the occasion of his sleep to convince herself that the sovereign of the East was a branded and criminal impostor. The suspicions of Otanes verified, he entered, with six other nobles, into a conspiracy, which mainly owed its success to the resolution and energy of one among them, named Darius, who appears to have held a station of but moderate importance among the royal guard, though son of Hystaspes, governor of the province of Persis, and of the purest and loftiest blood of Persia. The conspirators penetrated the palace unsuspected—put the eunuchs who encountered them to death —and reached the chamber in which the usurper himself was seated with his brother. The impostors, though but imperfectly armed, defended themselves with valour; two of the conspirators were wounded, but the swords of the rest sufficed to consummate the work, and Darius himself gave the death-blow to one of the brothers.

This revolution was accompanied and stained by an indiscriminate massacre of the magi. Nor did the Persians, who bore to that Median tribe the usual hatred which conquerors feel to the wisest and noblest part of the conquered race, content themselves with a short-lived and single revenge. The memory of the imposture and the massacre was long perpetuated by a solemn festival, called "the slaughter of the Magi," or Magophonia, during which no magian was permitted to be seen abroad.

The result of this conspiracy threw into the hands of the seven nobles the succession to the Persian throne: the election fell upon Darius, the soul of the enterprise, and who was of that ancient and princely house of the Achaemenids, in which the Persians recognised the family of their ancestral kings. But the other conspirators had not struggled solely to exchange one despot for another. With a new monarchy arose a new oligarchy. Otanes was even exempted from allegiance to the monarch, and his posterity were distinguished by such exclusive honours and immunities, that Herodotus calls them the only Persian family which retained its liberty. The other conspirators probably made a kind of privileged council, since they claimed the right of access at all hours, unannounced, to the presence of the king—a privilege of the utmost value in Eastern forms of government—and their power was rendered permanent and solid by certain restrictions on marriage [40], which went to maintain a constant alliance between the royal family and their own. While the six conspirators rose to an oligarchy, the tribe of the Pasargadae— the noblest of those sections into which the pure Persian family was divided—became an aristocracy to officer the army and adorn the court. But though the great body of the conquered Medes were kept in subject inferiority, yet the more sternly enforced from the Persian resentment at the late Median usurpation, Darius prudently conciliated the most powerful of that great class of his subjects by offices of dignity and command, and of all the tributary nations, the Medes ranked next to the Persians.

IV. With Darius, the Persian monarchy progressed to that great crisis in the civilization of those

states founded by conquering Nomades, when, after rich possessions are seized, cities built, and settlements established, the unwieldy and enormous empire is divided into provinces, and satrap government reflects in every district the mingled despotism and subservience, pomp and insecurity, of the imperial court. Darius undoubtedly took the most efficient means in his power to cement his sway and organize his resources. For the better collection of tribute, twenty provinces were created, governed by twenty satraps. Hitherto no specific and regular tax had been levied, but the Persian kings had been contented with reluctant presents, or arbitrary extortions. Darius now imposed a limited and annual impost, amounting, according to the computation of Herodotus, to fourteen thousand five hundred and sixty talents, collected partially from Africa, principally from Asia [41]. The Persians, as the conquering and privileged race, were excluded from the general imposition, but paid their moderate contribution under the softer title of gratuity. The Colchians fixed their own burdens—the Ethiopians that bordered Egypt, with the inhabitants of the sacred town of Nyssa, rendered also tributary gratuities—while Arabia offered the homage of her frankincense, and India [42] of her gold. The empire of Darius was the more secure, in that it was contrary to its constitutional spirit to innovate on the interior organization of the distant provinces—they enjoyed their own national laws and institutions—they even retained their monarchs—they resigned nothing but their independence and their tribute. The duty of the satraps was as yet but civil and financial: they were responsible for the imposts, they executed the royal decrees. Their institution was outwardly designed but for the better collection of the revenue; but when from the ranks of the nobles Darius rose to the throne, he felt the advantage of creating subject principalities, calculated at once to remove and to content the more powerful and ambitious of his former equals. Save Darius himself, no monarch in the known world possessed the dominion or enjoyed the splendour accorded to these imperial viceroys. Babylon and Assyria fell to one—Media was not sufficient for another—nation was added to nation, and race to race, to form a province worthy the nomination of a representative of the great king. His pomp and state were such as befitted the viceroy over monarchs. A measure of silver, exceeding the Attic medimnus, was presented every day to the satrap of Babylon [43]. Eight hundred stallions and sixteen thousand mares were apportioned to his stables, and the tax of four Assyrian towns was to provide for the maintenance of his Indian dogs.

But under Darius, at least, these mighty officers were curbed and kept in awe by the periodical visits of the king himself, or his commissioners; while a broad road, from the western coast to the Persian capital—inns, that received the messengers, and couriers, that transmitted the commands of the king, brought the more distant provinces within the reach of ready intelligence and vigilant control. These latter improvements were well calculated to quicken the stagnant languor habitual to the overgrowth of eastern empire. Nor was the reign of Darius undistinguished by the cultivation of the more elegant arts—since to that period may be referred, if not the foundation, at least the embellishment and increase of Persepolis. The remains of the palace of Chil-Menar, ascribed by modern superstition to the architecture of genii, its graceful columns, its mighty masonry, its terrace-flights, its marble basins, its sculptured designs stamped with the unmistakeable emblems of the magian faith, sufficiently evince that the shepherd-soldiery of Cyrus had already learned to appreciate and employ the most elaborate arts of the subjugated Medes.

During this epoch, too, was founded a more regular military system, by the institution of conscriptions—while the subjection of the skilful sailors of Phoenicia, and of the great maritime cities of Asiatic Greece, brought to the Persian warfare the new arm of a numerous and experienced navy.

V. The reign of Darius is also remarkable for the influence which Grecian strangers began to assume in the Persian court—and the fatal and promiscuous admission of Grecian mercenaries into the Persian service. The manners of the Persians were naturally hospitable, and Darius possessed not only an affable temper, but an inquisitive mind. A Greek physician of Crotona, who succeeded in relieving the king from the effects of a painful accident which had baffled the Egyptian practitioners, esteemed the most skilful the court possessed, naturally rose into an important personage. His reputation was increased by a more difficult cure upon the person of Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus, who, from the arms of her brother Cambyses, and those of the magian impostor, passed to the royal marriage-bed. And the physician, though desirous only of returning through some pretext to his own country, perhaps first inflamed the Persian king with the ill-starred wish of annexing Greece to his dominions. He despatched a commission with the physician himself, to report on the affairs of Greece. Many Hellenic adventurers were at that time scattered over the empire, some who had served with Cambyses, others who had sided with the Egyptians. Their valour recommended them to a valiant people, and their singular genius for intrigue took root in every soil. Syloson, a Greek of Samos, brother to Polycrates, the tyrant of that state, who, after a career of unexampled felicity and renown, fell a victim to the hostile treachery of Oretes, the satrap of Sardis, induced Darius to send over Otanes at the head of a Persian force to restore him to the principality of his murdered brother; and when, subsequently, in his Scythian expedition, Darius was an eyewitness of the brilliant civilization of Ionia, not only did Greece become to him more an object of ambition, but the Greeks of his respect. He sought, by a munificent

and wise clemency, to attach them to his throne, and to colonize his territories with subjects valuable alike for their constitutional courage and national intelligence. Nor can we wonder at the esteem which a Hippias or a Demaratus found in the Persian councils, when, in addition to the general reputation of Greeks, they were invested with the dignity of princely rank—for, above all nations [44], the Persians most venerated the name and the attributes of a king; nor could their Oriental notions have accurately distinguished between a legitimate monarch and a Greek tyrant.

VI. In this reign, too, as the empire was concentrated, and a splendid court arose from the warrior camp of Cyrus and Cambyses, the noble elements of the pure Persian character grew confounded with the Median and Assyrian. As the Persians retreated from the manners of a nomad, they lost the distinction of a conquering people. Warriors became courtiers—the palace shrunk into the seraglio—eunuchs and favourites, queens [45], and above all queen-mothers, rose into pernicious and invisible influence. And while the Greeks, in their small states, and under their free governments, progressed to a civilization, in which luxury only sharpened new energies and created new arts, the gorgeous enervation of a despotism destructive to competition, and an empire too vast for patriotism, rapidly debased and ruined the old hardy race of Cyrus [46], perhaps equal originally to the Greeks in mental, and in many important points far superior to them in moral qualities. With a religion less animated and picturesque, but more simple and exalted, rejecting the belief that the gods partook of a mortal nature, worshipping their GREAT ONE not in statues or in temples, but upon the sublime altar of lofty mountain-tops—or through those elementary agents which are the unidolatrous representatives of his beneficence and power [47]; accustomed, in their primitive and uncorrupted state, to mild laws and limited authority; inured from childhood to physical discipline and moral honesty, "to draw the bow and to speak the truth," this gallant and splendid tribe were fated to make one of the most signal proofs in history, that neither the talents of a despot nor the original virtues of a people can long resist the inevitable effect of vicious political constitutions. It was not at Marathon, nor at Salamis, nor at Plataea, that the Persian glory fell. It fell when the Persians imitated the manners of the slaves they conquered. "Most imitative of all men," says Herodotus, "they are ever ready to adopt the manners of the foreigners. They take from the Medes their robe, from the Egyptians their breastplate." Happy, if to the robe and the breastplate they had confined their appropriations from the nations they despised! Happy, if they had not imparted to their august religion the gross adulterations of the Median magi; if they had not exchanged their mild laws and restricted government, for the most callous contempt of the value of life [48] and the dignity of freedom. The whole of the pure Persian race, but especially the nobler tribe of the Pasargadae, became raised by conquest over so vast a population, to the natural aristocracy of the land. But the valuable principle of aristocratic pride, which is the safest curb to monarchic encroachment, crumbled away in the atmosphere of a despotism, which received its capricious checks or awful chastisement only in the dark recesses of a harem. Retaining to the last their disdain of all without the Persian pale; deeming themselves still "the most excellent of mankind;" [49] this people, the nobility of the East, with the arrogance of the Spartan, contracting the vices of the Helot, rapidly decayed from all their national and ancient virtues beneath that seraglio-rule of janizaries and harlots, in which, from first to last, have merged the melancholy destinies of Oriental despotism.

VII. Although Darius seems rather to have possessed the ardour for conquest than the genius for war, his reign was memorable for many military triumphs, some cementing, others extending, the foundations of the empire. A formidable insurrection of Babylon, which resisted a siege of twenty-one months, was effectually extinguished, and the new satrap government, aided by the yearly visits of the king, appears to have kept from all subsequent reanimation the vast remains of that ancient empire of the Chaldaean kings. Subsequently an expedition along the banks of the Indus, first navigated for discovery by one of the Greeks whom Darius took into his employ, subjected the highlands north of the Indus, and gave that distant river as a new boundary to the Persian realm. More important, had the fortunes of his son been equal to his designs, was the alarming settlement which the monarch of Asia effected on the European continent, by establishing his sovereignty in Thrace and Macedonia—by exacting homage from the isles and many of the cities of Greece—by breaking up, with the crowning fall of Miletus, the independence and rising power of those Ionian colonies, which ought to have established on the Asiatic coasts the permanent barrier to the irruptions of eastern conquest. Against these successes the loss of six thousand four hundred men at the battle of Marathon, a less number than Darius deliberately sacrificed in a stratagem at the siege of Babylon, would have seemed but a petty counterbalance in the despatches of his generals, set off, as it was, by the spoils and the captives of Euboea. Nor were the settlements in Thrace and Macedon, with the awe that his vast armament excited throughout that portion of his dominions, an insufficient recompense for the disasters of the expedition, conducted by Darius in person, against the wandering, fierce, and barbarous Mongolian race, that, known to us by the name of Scythians, worshipped their war-god under the symbol of a cimeter, with libations of human blood—hideous inhabitants of the inhospitable and barren tracts that interpose between the Danube and the Don.

VIII. Thus the heritage that passed from Darius to Xerxes was the fruit of a long and, upon the whole,

a wise and glorious reign. The new sovereign of the East did not, like his father, find a disjointed and uncemented empire of countries rather conquered than subdued, destitute alike of regular revenues and local governments; a wandering camp, shifted to and fro in a wilderness of unconnected nations—Xerxes ascended the throne amid a splendid court, with Babylon, Ecbatana, Persepolis, and Susa for his palaces. Submissive satraps united the most distant provinces with the seat of empire. The wealth of Asia was borne in regular currents to his treasury. Save the revolt of the enfeebled Egyptians, and the despised victory of a handful of men upon a petty foreland of the remote Aegaean, no cloud rested upon the dawn of his reign. As yet unfelt and unforeseen were the dangers that might ultimately result from the very wisdom of Darius in the institution of satraps, who, if not sufficiently supported by military force, would be unable to control the motley nations over which they presided, and, if so supported, might themselves become, in any hour, the most formidable rebels. To whatever prestige he inherited from the fame of his father, the young king added, also, a more venerable and sacred dignity in the eyes of the Persian aristocracy, and, perhaps, throughout the whole empire, derived, on his mother's side, from the blood of Cyrus. Never, to all external appearance, and, to ordinary foresight, under fairer auspices, did a prince of the East pass from the luxury of a seraglio to the majesty of a throne.

CHAPTER V.

Xerxes Conducts an Expedition into Egypt.—He finally resolves on the Invasion of Greece.—Vast Preparations for the Conquest of Europe.—Xerxes Arrives at Sardis.—Despatches Envoys to the Greek States, demanding Tribute.—The Bridge of the Hellespont.—Review of the Persian Armament at Abydos.—Xerxes Encamps at Therme.

I. On succeeding to the throne of the East (B. C. 485), Xerxes found the mighty army collected by his father prepared to execute his designs of conquest or revenge. In the greatness of that army, in the youth of that prince, various parties beheld the instrument of interest or ambition. Mardonius, warlike and enterprising, desired the subjugation of Greece, and the command of the Persian forces. And to the nobles of the Pasargadae an expedition into Europe could not but present a dazzling prospect of spoil and power—of satrapies as yet unexhausted of treasure—of garrisons and troops remote from the eye of the monarch, and the domination of the capital.

The persons who had most influence over Xerxes were his uncle Artabanus, his cousin Mardonius, and a eunuch named Natacas [50]. The intrigues of the party favourable to the invasion of Europe were backed by the representations of the Grecian exiles. The family and partisans of the Pisistratidae had fixed themselves in Susa, and the Greek subtlety and spirit of enterprise maintained and confirmed, for that unprincipled and able faction, the credit they had already established at the Persian court. Onomacritus, an Athenian priest, formerly banished by Hipparchus for forging oracular predictions, was now reconciled to the Pisistratidae, and resident at Susa. Presented to the king as a soothsayer and prophet, he inflamed the ambition of Xerxes by garbled oracles of conquest and fortune, which, this time, it was not the interest of the Pisistratidae to expose.

About the same period the Aleuadae, those princes of Thessaly whose policy seems ever to have been that of deadly hostility to the Grecian republics, despatched ambassadors to Xerxes, inviting him to Greece, and promising assistance to his arms, and allegiance to his sceptre.

II. From these intrigues Xerxes aroused himself in the second year of his reign, and, as the necessary commencement of more extended designs, conducted in person an expedition against the rebellious Egyptians. That people had neither military skill nor constitutional hardihood, but they were inspired with the most devoted affection for their faith and their institutions. This affection was to them what the love of liberty is in others—it might be easy to conquer them, it was almost impossible to subdue. By a kind of fatality their history, for centuries, was interwoven with that of Greece: their perils and their enemies the same. The ancient connexion which apocryphal tradition recorded between races so opposite, seemed a typical prophecy of that which actually existed in the historical times. And if formerly Greece had derived something of civilization from Egypt, she now paid back the gift by the swords of her adventurers; and the bravest and most loyal part of the Egyptian army was composed of Grecian mercenaries. At the same time Egypt shared the fate of all nations that intrust too great a power to auxiliaries. Greeks defended her, but Greeks conspired against her. The adventurers from whom she derived a fatal strength were of a vain, wily, and irritable temperament. A Greek removed from the influence of Greece usually lost all that was honest, all that was noble in the national

character; and with the most refining intellect, he united a policy like that of the Italian in the middle ages, fierce, faithless, and depraved. Thus, while the Greek auxiliaries under Amasis, or rather Psammenitus, resisted to the last the arms of Cambyses, it was by a Greek (Phanes) that Egypt had been betrayed. Perhaps, could we thoroughly learn all the secret springs of the revolt of Egypt, and the expedition of Xerxes, we might find a coincidence not of dates alone between Grecian and Egyptian affairs. Whether in Memphis or in Susa, it is wonderful to see the amazing influence and ascendency which the Hellenic intellect obtained. It was in reality the desperate refuse of Europe that swayed the councils, moved the armies, and decided the fate of the mighty dynasties of the East.

III. The arms of Xerxes were triumphant in Egypt (B. C. 484), and he more rigorously enforced upon that ill-fated land the iron despotism commenced by Cambyses. Intrusting the Egyptian government to his brother Achaemenes, the Persian king returned to Susa, and flushed with his victory, and more and more influenced by the ambitious counsels of Mardonius, he now fairly opened, in the full divan of his counsellors, the vast project he had conceived. The vanity of the Greeks led them too credulously to suppose that the invasion of Greece was the principal object of the great king; on the contrary, it was the least. He regarded Greece but as the threshold of a new quarter of the globe. Ignorant of the nature of the lands he designed to subject, and credulous of all the fables which impart proverbial magnificence to the unknown, Xerxes saw in Europe "regions not inferior to Asia in extent, and far surpassing it in fertility." After the conquest of Greece on either continent, the young monarch unfolded to his counsellors his intention of overrunning the whole of Europe, "until heaven itself should be the only limit to the Persian realm, and the sun should shine on no country contiguous to his own." [51]

IV. These schemes, supported by Mardonius, were opposed only by Artabanus; and the arguments of the latter, dictated by prudence and experience, made considerable impression upon the king. From that time, however, new engines of superstitious craft and imposture were brought to bear upon the weak mind, on whose decision now rested the fatal war between Asia and Europe. Visions and warnings, threats and exhortations, haunted his pillow and disturbed his sleep, all tending to one object, the invasion of Greece. As we learn from Ctesias that the eunuch Natacas was one of the parasites most influential with Xerxes, it is probable that so important a personage in the intrigues of a palace was, with the evident connivance of the magi, the instrument of Mardonius. And, indeed, from this period the politics of Persia became more and more concentrated in the dark plots of the seraglio. Thus superstition, flattery, ambition, all operating upon him, the irresolution of Xerxes vanished. Artabanus himself affected to be convinced of the expediency of the war; and the only object now remaining to the king and his counsellors was to adapt the preparations to the magnitude of the enterprise. Four additional years were not deemed an idle delay in collecting an army and fleet destined to complete the conquest of the world.

"And never," says Herodotus, "was there a military expedition comparable to this. Hard would it be to specify one nation of Asia which did not accompany the Persian king, or any waters, save the great rivers, which were not exhausted by his armament." Preparations for an expedition of three years were made, to guard against the calamities formerly sustained by the Persian fleet. Had the success of the expedition been commensurate with the grandeur of its commencement, perhaps it would have ranked among the sublimest conceptions of military genius. All its schemes were of a vast and gigantic nature. Across the isthmus, which joins the promontory of Athos to the Thracian continent, a canal was formed —a work of so enormous a labour, that it seems almost to have justified the skepticism of later writers [52], but for the concurrent testimony of Thucydides and Lysias, Plato, Herodotus, and Strabo.

Bridges were also thrown over the river Strymon; the care of provisions was intrusted to the Egyptians and Phoenicians, and stores were deposited in every station that seemed the best adapted for supplies.

V. While these preparations were carried on, the great king, at the head of his land-forces, marched to Sardis. Passing the river Halys, and the frontiers of Lydia, he halted at Celaenae. Here he was magnificently entertained by Pythius, a Lydian, esteemed, next to the king himself, the richest of mankind. This wealthy subject proffered to the young prince, in prosecution of the war, the whole of his treasure, amounting to two thousand talents of silver, and four millions, wanting only seven thousand, of golden staters of Darius [53]. "My farms and my slaves," he added, "will be sufficient to maintain me."

"My friend," said the royal guest, who possessed all the irregular generosity of princes, "you are the first person, since I left Persia (B. C. 480), who has treated my army with hospitality and voluntarily offered me assistance in the war. Accept my friendship; I receive you as my host; retain your possessions, and permit me to supply the seven thousand staters which are wanting to complete the four millions you already possess." A man who gives from the property of the public is seldom outdone in munificence.

At length Xerxes arrived at Sardis, and thence he despatched heralds into Greece (close of B. C. 481), demanding the tribute of earth and water. Athens and Sparta were the only cities not visited by his envoys.

VI. While Xerxes rested at the Lydian city, an enterprise, scarcely less magnificent in conception than that of the canal at Athos, was completed at the sacred passage of the Hellespont. Here was constructed from the coast of Asia to that of Europe a bridge of boats, for the convoy of the army. Scarce was this completed when a sudden tempest scattered the vessels, and rendered the labour vain. The unruly passion of the high-spirited despot was popularly said to have evinced itself at this intelligence, by commanding the Hellespont to receive three hundred lashes and a pair of fetters—a story recorded as a certainty by Herodotus, and more properly contemned as a fable by modern skepticism.

A new bridge was now constructed under new artificers, whose industry was sharpened by the fate of their unfortunate predecessors, whom Xerxes condemned to death. These architects completed at last two bridges of vessels, of various kinds and sizes, secured by anchors of great length, and thus protected from the influence of the winds that set in from the Euxine on the one hand, and the south and southeast winds on the other. The elaborate description of this work given by Herodotus proves it to have been no clumsy or unartist-like performance. The ships do not appear so much to have formed the bridge, as to have served for piers to support its weight. Rafters of wood, rough timber, and layers of earth were placed across extended cables, and the whole was completed by a fence on either side, that the horses and beasts of burden might not be frightened by the sight of the open sea.

VII. And now the work was finished (B. C. 480), the winter was past, and at the dawn of returning spring, Xerxes led his armament from Sardis to Abydos. As the multitude commenced their march, it is said that the sun was suddenly overcast, and an abrupt and utter darkness crept over the face of heaven. The magi were solemnly consulted at the omen; and they foretold, that by the retirement of the sun, the tutelary divinity of the Greeks, was denoted the withdrawal of the protection of Heaven from that fated nation. The answer pleased the king.

On they swept—the conveyance of the baggage, and a vast promiscuous crowd of all nations, preceding; behind, at a considerable interval, came the flower of the Persian army—a thousand horse—a thousand spearmen—the ten sacred steeds, called Nisaean—the car of the great Persian god, drawn by eight snow-white horses, and in which no mortal ever dared to seat himself. Around the person of Xerxes were spearmen and cavalry, whose arms glittered with gold—the ten thousand infantry called "The Immortals," of whom nine thousand bore pomegranates of silver at the extremity of their lances, and one thousand pomegranates of gold. Ten thousand horsemen followed these: and far in the rear, the gorgeous procession closed with the mighty multitude of the general army.

The troops marched along the banks of the Caicus—over the plains of Thebes;—and passing Mount Ida to the left, above whose hoary crest broke a storm of thunder and lightning, they arrived at the golden Scamander, whose waters failed the invading thousands. Here it is poetically told of Xerxes, that he ascended the citadel of Priam, and anxiously and carefully surveyed the place, while the magi of the barbarian monarch directed libations to the manes of the Homeric heroes.

VIII. Arrived at Abydos, the king reviewed his army. High upon an eminence, and on a seat of white marble, he surveyed the plains covered with countless thousands, and the Hellespont crowded with sails and masts. At first, as he gazed, the lord of Persia felt all the pride and exultation which the command over so many destinies was calculated to inspire. But a sad and sudden thought came over him in the midst of his triumphs, and he burst into tears. "I reflect," said he to Artabanus, "on the transitory limit of human life. I compassionate this vast multitude—a hundred years hence, which of them will still be a living man?" Artabanus replied like a philosopher, "that the shortness of life was not its greatest evil; that misfortune and disease imbittered the possession, and that death was often the happiest refuge of the living." [54]

At early daybreak, while the army yet waited the rising of the sun, they burnt perfumes on the bridge, and strewed it with branches of the triumphal myrtle. As the sun lifted himself above the east, Xerxes poured a libation into the sea, and addressing the rising orb, implored prosperity to the Persian arms, until they should have vanquished the whole of Europe, even to the remotest ends. Then casting the cup, with a Persian cimeter, into the sea, the signal was given for the army to commence the march. Seven days and seven nights were consumed in the passage of that prodigious armament.

IX. Thus entering Europe, Xerxes proceeded to Doriscus (a wide plain of Thrace, commanded by a Persian garrison), where he drew up, and regularly numbered his troops; the fleets ranged in order along the neighbouring coast. The whole amount of the land-force, according to Herodotus, was 1,700,000. Later writers have been skeptical as to this vast number, but without sufficient grounds for their disbelief. There were to be found the soldiery of many nations:—the Persians in tunics and scale

breastplates, the tiara helmet of the Medes, the arrows, and the large bow which was their natural boast and weapon; there were the Medes similarly equipped; and the Assyrians, with barbarous helmets, linen cuirasses, and huge clubs tipped with iron; the Bactrians with bows of reeds, and the Scythian Sacae, with their hatchets and painted crests. There, too, were the light-clothed Indians, the Parthians, Chorasmians, Sogdians, Gandarians, and the Dadicae. There were the Caspians, clad in tough hides, with bows and cimeters; the gorgeous tunics of the Sarangae, and the loose flowing vests (or zirae) of the Arabians. There were seen the negroes of Aethiopian Nubia with palm bows four cubits long, arrows pointed with flint, and vestures won from the leopard and the lion; a barbarous horde, who, after the wont of savages, died their bodies with gypsum and vermilion when they went to war; while the straight-haired Asiatic Aethiopians wore the same armour as the Indians whom they bordered. save that their helmets were formed of the skin of the horse's head [55], on which the mane was left in the place of plumage. The Libyans were among the horde, and the buskined Paphlagonians, with helms of network; and the Cappadocian Syrians; and the Phrygians; and the Armenians; the Lydians, equipped similarly to the Greeks; the Strymonian Thracians, clad in tunics, below which were flowing robes like the Arabian zirae or tartan, but of various colours, and buskins of the skins of fawns —armed with the javelin and the dagger; the Thracians, too, of Asia, with helmets of brass wrought with the ears and horns of an ox; the people from the islands of the Red Sea, armed and people like Medes; the Mares, and the Colchians, and the Moschi, and other tribes, tedious to enumerate, swelled and diversified the force of Xerxes.

Such were the infantry of the Persian army, forgetting not the ten thousand chosen Persians, called the Immortal Band [56], whose armour shone with profuse gold, and who were distinguished even in war by luxury—carriages for their women, troops of attendants, and camels and beasts of burden.

Besides these were the Persian cavalry; the nomad Sagartii, who carried with them nooses, in which they sought to entangle their foe; the Medes and the Indian horse, which last had also chariots of war drawn by steeds or wild asses; the Bactrians and Caspians, equipped alike; the Africans, who fought from chariots; the Paricanians; and the Arabians with their swift dromedaries, completed the forces of the cavalry, which amounted to eighty thousand, exclusive even of chariots and the camels.

Nor was the naval unworthy of the land armada. The number of the triremes was one thousand two hundred and seven. Of these the Phoenicians and the Syrians of Palestine furnished three hundred, the serving-men with breastplates of linen, javelins, bucklers without bosses, and helmets fashioned nearly similarly to those of the Greeks; two hundred vessels were supplied by the Egyptians, armed with huge battle-axes, and casques of network; one hundred and fifty vessels came from Cyprus, and one hundred from Cilicia; those who manned the first differing in arms from the Greeks only in the adoption of the tunic, and the Median mitres worn by the chiefs—those who manned the last, with two spears, and tunics of wool. The Pamphylians, clad as the Greeks, contributed thirty vessels, and fifty also were manned by Lycians with mantles of goat-skin and unfeathered arrows of reed. In thirty vessels came the Dorians of Asia; in seventy the Carians, and in a hundred, the subjugated Ionians. The Grecian Isles between the Cyaneae, and the promontories of Triopium and Sunium [57], furnished seventeen vessels, and the Aeolians sixty. The inhabitants of the Hellespont (those of Abydos alone excepted, who remained to defend the bridges) combined with the people of Pontus to supply a hundred more. In each vessel were detachments of Medes, Persians, and Saci; the best mariners were the Phoenicians, especially those of Sidon. The commanders-in-chief of the sea-forces were Ariabignes (son of Darius), Prexaspes, Megabazus (son of Megabates), and Achaemenes (brother of Xerxes, and satrap of Egypt).

Of the infantry, the generals were Mardonius, Tritantaechmes, son of Artabanus, and Smerdones (cousin to Xerxes), Maistes (his brother), Gergis, and Megabazus, son of that celebrated Zopyrus, through whom Darius possessed himself of Babylon. [58]

Harmamithres and Tithaeus, who were Medes, commanded the cavalry; a third leader, Pharnouches, died in consequence of a fall from his horse. But the name of a heroine, more masculine than her colleagues, must not be omitted: Artemisia, widow to one of the Carian kings, furnished five ships (the best in the fleet next to those of Sidon), which she commanded in person, celebrated alike for a dauntless courage and a singular wisdom.

X. Such were the forces which the great king reviewed, passing through the land-forces in his chariot, and through the fleet in a Sidonian vessel, beneath a golden canopy. After his survey, the king summoned Demaratus to his presence.

"Think you," said he, "that the Greeks will presume to resist me?"

"Sire," answered the Spartan, "your proposition of servitude will be rejected by the Greeks; and even if the rest of them sided with you, Lacedaemon still would give you battle; question not in what numbers; had Sparta but a thousand men she would oppose you."

Marching onward, and forcibly enlisting, by the way, various tribes through which he passed, exhausting many streams, and empoverishing the population condemned to entertain his army, Xerxes arrived at Acanthus: there he dismissed the commanders of his fleet, ordering them to wait his orders at Therme, a small town which gave its name to the Thermean Gulf (to which they proceeded, pressing ships and seamen by the way), and afterward, gaining Therme himself, encamped his army on the coast, spreading far and wide its multitudinous array from Therme and Mygdonia to the rivers Lydias and Haliacmon.

CHAPTER VI.

The Conduct of the Greeks.—The Oracle relating to Salamis.—Art of Themistocles.—The Isthmian Congress.—Embassies to Argos, Crete, Corcyra, and Syracuse.—Their ill Success.—The Thessalians send Envoys to the Isthmus.—The Greeks advance to Tempe, but retreat.—The Fleet despatched to Artemisium, and the Pass of Thermopylae occupied. —Numbers of the Grecian Fleet.—Battle of Thermopylae.

I. The first preparations of the Persians did not produce the effect which might have been anticipated in the Grecian states. Far from uniting against the common foe, they still cherished a frivolous and unreasonable jealousy of each other. Several readily sent the symbols of their allegiance to the Persian, including the whole of Boeotia, except only the Thespians and Plataeans. The more timorous states imagined themselves safe from the vengeance of the barbarian; the more resolute were overwhelmed with dismay. The renown of the Median arms was universally acknowledged for in spite of Marathon, Greece had not yet learned to despise the foreigner; and the enormous force of the impending armament was accurately known from the spies and deserters of the Grecian states, who abounded in the barbarian camp. Even united, the whole navy of Greece seemed insufficient to contend against such a foe; and, divided among themselves, several of the states were disposed rather to succumb than to resist [59]. "And here," says the father of history, "I feel compelled to assert an opinion, however invidious it may be to many. If the Athenians, terrified by the danger, had forsaken their country, or submitted to the Persian, Xerxes would have met with no resistance by sea. The Lacedaemonians, deserted by their allies, would have died with honour or yielded from necessity, and all Greece have been reduced to the Persian yoke. The Athenians were thus the deliverers of Greece. They animated the ardour of those states yet faithful to themselves; and, next to the gods, they were the true repellers of the invader. Even the Delphic oracles, dark and ominous as they were, did not shake their purpose, nor induce them to abandon Greece." When even the deities themselves seemed doubtful, Athens was unshaken. The messengers despatched by the Athenians to the Delphic oracle received indeed an answer well calculated to appal them.

"Unhappy men," cried the priestess, "leave your houses and the ramparts of the city, and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth. Fire and keen Mars, compelling the Syrian chariot, shall destroy, towers shall be overthrown, and temples destroyed by fire. Lo! now, even now, they stand dropping sweat, and their house-tops black with blood, and shaking with prophetic awe. Depart and prepare for ill!"

II. Cast into the deepest affliction by this response, the Athenians yet, with the garb and symbols of suppliants, renewed their application. "Answer us," they said, "oh supreme God, answer us more propitiously, or we will not depart from your sanctuary, but remain here even until death."

The second answer seemed less severe than the first: "Minerva is unable to appease the Olympian Jupiter. Again, therefore, I speak, and my words are as adamant. All else within the bounds of Cecropia and the bosom of the divine Cithaeron shall fall and fail you. The wooden wall alone Jupiter grants to Pallas, a refuge to your children and yourselves. Wait not for horse and foot—tarry not the march of the mighty army—retreat, even though they close upon you. Oh Salamis the divine, thou shalt lose the sons of women, whether Ceres scatter or hoard her harvest!"

III. Writing down this reply, the messengers returned to Athens. Many and contradictory were the attempts made to interpret the response; some believed that by a wooden wall was meant the citadel, formerly surrounded by a palisade of wood. Others affirmed that the enigmatical expression signified the fleet. But then the concluding words perplexed them. For the apostrophe to Salamis appeared to denote destruction and defeat. At this juncture Themistocles approved himself worthy of the position he

had attained. It is probable that he had purchased the oracle to which he found a ready and bold solution. He upheld the resort to the ships, but denied that in the apostrophe to Salamis any evil to Athens was denounced. "Had," said he, "the prediction of loss and slaughter referred to the Athenians, would Salamis have been called 'divine?' would it not have been rather called the 'wretched' if the Greeks were doomed to perish near that isle? The oracle threatens not the Athenians, but the enemy. Let us prepare then to engage the barbarian by sea. Our ships are our wooden walls."

This interpretation, as it was the more encouraging, so it was the more approved. The vessels already built from the revenues of the mines of Laurion were now destined to the safety of Greece.

IV. It was, however, before the arrival of the Persian envoys [60], and when the Greeks first woke to the certainty, that the vast preparations of Xerxes menaced Greece as the earliest victim, that a congress, perhaps at the onset confined to the Peloponnesian states, met at Corinth. At the head of this confederate council necessarily ranked Sparta, which was the master state of the Peloponnesus. But in policy and debate, if not in arms, she appears always to have met with a powerful rival in Corinth, the diplomacy of whose wealthy and liberal commonwealth often counteracted the propositions of the Spartan delegates. To this congress subsequently came the envoys of all the states that refused tribute and homage to the Persian king. The institution of this Hellenic council, which was one cause of the salvation of Greece, is a proof of the political impotence of the old Amphictyonic league. The Synedrion of Corinth (or rather of that Corinthian village that had grown up round the temple of Neptune, and is styled the ISTHMUS by the Greek writers) was the true historical Amphictyony of Hellas.

In the Isthmian congress the genius of Themistocles found an ampler sphere than it had hitherto done among the noisy cabals of Athens. Of all the Greek delegates, that sagacious statesman was most successful in accomplishing the primary object of the confederacy, viz., in removing the jealousies and the dissensions that hitherto existed among the states which composed it. In this, perhaps the most difficult, as the most essential, task, Themistocles was aided by a Tegean, named Chileus, who, though he rarely appears upon the external stage of action, seems to have been eminently skilled in the intricate and entangled politics of the time. Themistocles, into whose hands the Athenian republic, at this period, confided the trust not more of its interests than its resentments, set the example of concord; and Athens, for a while, consented to reconciliation and amity with the hated Aegina. All the proceedings of this illustrious congress were characterized by vigilant prudence and decisive energy. As soon as Xerxes arrived in Sardis, emissaries were despatched to watch the movements of the Persian army, and at the same period, or rather some time before [61], ambassadors were sent to Corcyra, Crete, Argos, and to Syracuse, then under the dominion of Gelo. This man, from the station of a high-born and powerful citizen of Gela, in Sicily, had raised himself, partly by military talents, principally by a profound and dissimulating policy, to the tyranny of Gela and of Syracuse. His abilities were remarkable, his power great; nor on the Grecian continent was there one state that could command the force and the resources that were at the disposal of the Syracusan prince.

The spies despatched to Sardis were discovered, seized, and would have been put to death, but for the interference of Xerxes, who dismissed them, after directing them to be led round his army, in the hope that their return from the terror of such a spectacle would, more than their death, intimidate and appal their countrymen.

The mission to Argos, which, as a Peloponnesian city, was one of the earliest applied to, was unsuccessful. That state still suffered the exhaustion which followed the horrible massacre perpetrated by Cleomenes, the Spartan king, who had burnt six thousand Argives in the precincts of the sanctuary to which they had fled. New changes of government had followed this fatal loss, and the servile population had been enabled to seize the privileges of the free. Thus, hatred to Sparta, a weakened soldiery, an unsettled internal government, all conspired to render Argos lukewarm to the general cause. Yet that state did not openly refuse the aid which it secretly resolved to withhold. It consented to join the common league upon two conditions; an equal share with the Spartans in the command, and a truce of thirty years with those crafty and merciless neighbours. The Spartans proposed to compromise the former condition, by allowing to the Argive king not indeed half the command, but a voice equal to that of each of their own kings. To the latter condition they offered no objection. Glad of an excuse to retaliate on the Spartans their own haughty insolence, the Argives at once rejected the proposition, and ordered the Spartan ambassador to quit their territories before sunset. But Argos, though the chief city of Argolis, had not her customary influence over the other towns of that district, in which the attachment to Greece was stronger than the jealous apprehensions of Sparta.

The embassy to Sicily was not more successful than that to Argos. Gelo agreed indeed to furnish the allies with a considerable force, but only on the condition of obtaining for Sicily the supreme command, either of the land-force claimed by Sparta, or of the naval force to which Athens already ventured to pretend; an offer to which it was impossible that the Greeks should accede, unless they were disposed to surrender to the craft of an auxiliary the liberties they asserted against the violence of a foe. The

Spartan and the Athenian ambassadors alike, and with equal indignation, rejected the proposals of Gelo, who, in fact, had obtained the tyranny of his native city by first securing the command of the Gelan cavalry. The prince of Syracuse was little affected by the vehement scorn of the ambassadors. "I see you are in more want of troops than commanders," said he, wittily. "Return, then; tell the Greeks this year will be without its spring." For, as the spring to the year did Gelo consider his assistance to Greece. From Sicily the ambassadors repaired to Corcyra. Here they were amused with flattering promises, but the governors of that intriguing and factious state fitted out a fleet of sixty vessels, stationed near Pylos, off the coast of Sparta, to wait the issue of events assuring Xerxes, on the one hand, of their indisposition to oppose him, and pretending afterward to the Greeks, on the other, that the adverse winds alone prevented their taking share in the engagement at Salamis. The Cretans were not more disposed to the cause than the Corcyraeans; they found an excuse in an oracle of Delphi, and indeed that venerable shrine appears to have been equally dissuasive of resistance to all the states that consulted it; although the daring of the Athenians had construed the ambiguous menace into a favourable omen. The threats of superstition become but incitements to courage when interpreted by the brave.

V. And now the hostile army had crossed the Hellespont, and the Thessalians, perceiving that they were the next objects of attack, despatched ambassadors to the congress at the Isthmus.

Those Thessalian chiefs called the Aleuadae had, it is true, invited Xerxes to the invasion of Greece. But precisely because acceptable to the chiefs, the arrival of the great king was dreaded by the people. By the aid of the Persians, the Aleuadae trusted to extend their power over their own country—an ambition with which it is not to be supposed that the people they assisted to subject would sympathize. Accordingly, while Xerxes was to the chiefs an ally, to the people he remained a foe.

These Thessalian envoys proclaimed their willingness to assist the confederates in the defence of their fatherland, but represented the imminence of the danger to Thessaly, and demanded an immediate supply of forces. "Without this," they said, "we cannot exert ourselves for you, and our inability to assist you will be our excuse, if we provide for our own safety."

Aroused by these exhortations, the confederates commenced their military movements. A body of infantry passed the Euripus, entered Thessaly, and encamped amid the delights of the vale of Tempe. Here their numbers, in all ten thousand heavy-armed troops, were joined by the Thessalian horse. The Spartans were led by Euaenetus. Themistocles commanded the Athenians. The army did not long, however, remain in the encampment. Alexander, the king of Macedon, sent confidentially advising their retreat, and explaining accurately the force of the enemy. This advice concurred with the discovery that there was another passage into Thessaly through the higher regions of Macedonia, which exposed them to be taken in the rear. And, in truth, it was through this passage that the Persian army ultimately marched. The Greeks, therefore, broke up the camp and returned to the Isthmus. The Thessalians, thus abandoned, instantly treated with the invader, and became among the stanchest allies of Xerxes.

It was now finally agreed in the Isthmian congress, that the most advisable plan would be to defend the pass of Thermopylae, as being both nearer and narrower than that of Thessaly. The fleet they resolved to send to Artemisium, on the coast of Histiaeotis, a place sufficiently neighbouring Thermopylae to allow of easy communication. Never, perhaps, have the Greeks shown more military skill than in the choice of these stations. But one pass in those mountainous districts permitted the descent of the Persian army from Thessaly, bounded to the west by steep and inaccessible cliffs, extending as far as Mount Oeta; to the east by shoals and the neighbouring sea. This defile received its name Thermopylae, or Hot Gates, from the hot-springs which rose near the base of the mountain. In remote times the pastoral Phocians had fortified the place against the incursions of the Thessalians, and the decayed remains of the wall and gates of their ancient garrison were still existent in the middle of the pass; while, by marsh and morass, to render the place yet more impassable, they had suffered the hot-springs to empty themselves along the plain, on the Thessalian side, and the quagmire was still sodden and unsteady. The country on either side the Thermopylae was so contracted, that before, near the river Phoenix, and behind, near the village of Alpeni, was at that time space only for a single chariot. In such a pass the numbers and the cavalry of the Mede were rendered unavailable; while at the distance of about fifteen miles from Thermopylae the ships of the Grecian navy rode in the narrow sea, off the projecting shores of Euboea, equally fortunate in a station which weakened the force of numbers and allowed the facility of retreat.

The sea-station was possessed by the allied ships. Corinth sent forty; Megara twenty; Aegina eighteen; Sicyon twelve; Sparta ten; the Epidaurians contributed eight; the Eretrians seven; the Troezenians five; the Ityraeans and the people of Ceos each two, and the Opuntian Locrians seven vessels of fifty oars. The total of these ships (without reckoning those of fifty oars, supplied by the Locrians, and two barks of the same description, which added to the quota sent by the people of Ceos) amount to one hundred and twenty-four. The Athenian force alone numbered more vessels than all the

other confederates, and contributed one hundred and twenty-seven triremes, partly manned by Plataeans, besides twenty vessels lent to the Chalcidians, who equipped and manned them. The Athenian fleet was commanded by Themistocles. The land-force at Thermopylae consisted chiefly of Peloponnesians; its numbers were as follows:—three hundred heavy-armed Spartans; five hundred Tegeans; five hundred Mantinaeans; one hundred and twenty Orchomenians; one thousand from the other states of Arcady; two hundred from Phlius; eighty from Mycenae. Boeotia contributed seven hundred Thespians, and four hundred Thebans; the last had been specially selected by Leonidas, the Spartan chief, because of the general suspicion that the Thebans were attached to the Medes, and he desired, therefore, to approve them as friends, or know them as foes. Although the sentiments of the Thebans were hostile, says Herodotus, they sent the assistance required. In addition to these, were one thousand Phocians, and a band of the Opuntian Locrians, unnumbered by Herodotus, but variously estimated, by Diodorus at one thousand, and, more probably, by Pausanias at no less than seven thousand.

The chief command was intrusted, according to the claims of Sparta, to Leonidas, the younger brother of the frantic Cleomenes [62], by a different mother, and his successor to the Spartan throne.

There are men whose whole life is in a single action. Of these, Leonidas is the most eminent. We know little of him, until the last few days of his career. He seems, as it were, born but to show how much glory belongs to a brave death. Of his character or genius, his general virtues and vices, his sorrows and his joys, biography can scarcely gather even the materials for conjecture. He passed from an obscure existence into an everlasting name. And history dedicates her proudest pages to one of whom she has nothing but the epitaph to relate.

As if to contrast the little band under the command of Leonidas, Herodotus again enumerates the Persian force, swelled as it now was by many contributions, forced and voluntary, since its departure from Doriscus. He estimates the total by sea and land, thus augmented, at two millions six hundred and forty-one thousand six hundred and ten fighting men, and computes the number of the menial attendants, the motley multitude that followed the armament, at an equal number; so that the son of Darius conducted, hitherto without disaster, to Sepias and Thermopylae, a body of five millions two hundred and eighty-three thousand two hundred and twenty human beings [63]. And out of this wondrous concourse, none in majesty and grace of person, says Herodotus, surpassed the royal leader. But such advantages as belong to superior stature, the kings of Persia obtained by artificial means; and we learn from Xenophon that they wore a peculiar kind of shoe so constructed as to increase their height.

VI. The fleet of Xerxes, moving from Therme, obtained some partial success at sea: ten of their vessels despatched to Sciathos, captured a guard-ship of Troezene, and sacrificed upon the prow a Greek named Leon; the beauty of his person obtained him that disagreeable preference. A vessel of Aegina fell also into their hands, the crew of which they treated as slaves, save only one hero, Pytheas, endeared even to the enemy by his valour; a third vessel, belonging to the Athenians, was taken at the mouth of the Peneus; the seamen, however, had previously debarked, and consequently escaped. Beacons apprized the Greek station at Artemisium of these disasters, and the fleet retreated for a while to Chalcis, with a view of guarding the Euripus. But a violent storm off the coast of Magnesia suddenly destroying no less than four hundred of the barbarian vessels, with a considerable number of men and great treasure, the Grecian navy returned to Artemisium.

Here they soon made a capture of fifteen of the Persian vessels,
which, taking them for friends, sailed right into the midst of them.
With this exception, the rest of the barbarian fleet arrived safely at
Aphetae.

VII. Meanwhile the mighty land-force of the great king, passing through Thessaly and Achaia, arrived at last at the wide Trachinian plains, which, stretching along the shores of Thessaly, forty miles in circumference, and adjacent to the straits of Thermopylae, allowed space for the encampment of his army.

The Greeks at Thermopylae beheld the approach of Xerxes with dismay; they had anticipated considerable re-enforcements from the confederate states, especially Sparta, which last had determined to commit all her strength to the campaign, leaving merely a small detachment for the defence of the capital. But the Carneian festival in honour of the great Dorian Apollo, at Sparta, detained the Lacedaemonians, and the Olympic games diverted the rest of the allies, not yet expecting an immediate battle.

The vicinity of Xerxes, the absence of the re-enforcements they expected, produced an alarmed and anxious council; Leonidas dissuaded the confederates from retreat, and despatched messengers to the various states, urging the necessity of supplies, and stating the hopelessness of opposing the Mede

effectually with the present forces.

Xerxes, in the meanwhile, who had heard that an insignificant band were assembled under a Spartan descendant of Hercules, to resist his progress, despatched a spy to reconnoitre their number and their movements. The emissary was able only to inspect those without the intrenchment, who, at that time, happened to be the Spartans; he found that singular race engaged in gymnastic exercises, and dressing their long hair for the festival of battle. Although they perceived the spy, they suffered him to gaze at his leisure, and he returned in safety to the king.

Much astonished at the account he received, Xerxes sent for Demaratus, and detailing to him what the messenger had seen, inquired what it might portend, and whether this handful of men amusing themselves in the defile could seriously mean to resist his arms.

"Sire," answered the Spartan, "it is their intention to dispute the pass, and what your messenger has seen proves that they are preparing accordingly. It is the custom of the Spartans to adorn their hair on the eve of any enterprise of danger. You are advancing to attack the flower of the Grecian valour." Xerxes, still incredulous that opposition could be seriously intended, had the courtesy to wait four days to give the enemy leisure to retreat; in the interim he despatched a messenger to Leonidas, demanding his arms. "Come and take them!" replied the Spartan.

VIII. On the fifth day the patience of Xerxes was exhausted, and he sent a detachment of Medes and Cissians [64] into the pass, with orders to bring its rash and obstinate defenders alive into his presence. The Medes and Cissians were repulsed with considerable loss. "The Immortal Band" were now ordered to advance, under the command of Hydarnes. But even the skill and courage of that warlike troop were equally unsuccessful; their numbers were crippled by the narrowness of the pass, and their short weapons coped to great disadvantage with the long spears of the Greeks. The engagement was renewed a second day with the like fortune; the loss of the Persians was great, although the scanty numbers of the Spartans were also somewhat diminished.

In the midst of the perplexity which pervaded the king's councils after this defeat, there arrived at the Persian camp one Ephialtes, a Malian. Influenced by the hope of a great reward, this traitor demanded and obtained an audience, in which he offered to conduct the Medes through a secret path across the mountains, into the pass. The offer was joyfully accepted, and Hydarnes, with the forces under his command, was despatched under the guidance of the Malian. At the dusk of evening the detachment left the camp, and marching all night, from the river Asopus, between the mountains of Oeta on the right hand, and the Trachinian ridges on the left, they found themselves at the early dawn at the summit of the hill, on which a thousand Phocians had been stationed to defend the pass, for it was not unknown to the Spartans. In the silence of dawn they wound through the thick groves of oak that clad the ascent, and concealed the glitter of their arms; but the exceeding stillness of the air occasioned the noise they made in trampling on the leaves [65] to reach the ears of the Phocians. That band sprang up from the earth on which they had slept, to the consternation and surprise of the invaders, and precipitately betook themselves to arms. The Persians, though unprepared for an enemy at this spot, drew up in battle array, and the heavy onslaught of their arrows drove the Phocians to seek a better shelter up the mountains, not imagining that the passage into the defile, but their own destruction, was the object of the enterprise. The Persians prudently forbore pursuit, but availing themselves of the path now open to their progress, rapidly descended the opposite side of the mountain.

IX. Meanwhile, dark and superstitious terrors were at work in the Grecian camp. The preceding eve the soothsayer (Megistias) had inspected the entrails, and foretold that death awaited the defenders of Thermopylae in the morning; and on that fatal night a Cumaean deserted from the Persian camp had joined Leonidas, and informed him of the treachery of Ephialtes. At early day their fears were confirmed by the sentinels posted on the mountains, who fled into the defile at the approach of the barbarians.

A hasty council was assembled; some were for remaining, some for flight. The council ended with the resolution of a general retreat, probably with the assent, possibly by the instances, of Leonidas, who was contented to possess the monopoly of glory and of death. The laws of the Spartans forbade them to fly from any enemy, however numerous, and Leonidas did not venture to disobey them. Perhaps his resolution was strengthened by an oracle of that Delphi so peculiarly venerated by the Dorian race, and which foretold either the fall of Sparta, or the sacrifice of a Spartan king of the blood of Hercules. To men whose whole happiness was renown, life had no temptation equal to such a death!

X. Leonidas and his countrymen determined to keep the field. The Thespians alone voluntarily remained to partake his fate; but he detained also the suspected Thebans, rather as a hostage than an auxiliary. The rest of the confederates precipitately departed across the mountains to their native cities. Leonidas would have dismissed the prophetic soothsayer, but Megistias insisted on his right to

remain; he contented himself with sending away his only son, who had accompanied the expedition. Even the stern spirit of Leonidas is said to have yielded to the voice of nature; and he ordered two of his relations to return to Sparta to report the state of affairs. "You prescribe to us the duties of messengers, not of soldiers," was the reply, as the warriors buckled on their shields, and took their posts with the rest.

If history could penetrate from events into the hearts of the agents, it would be interesting even to conjecture the feelings of this devoted band, awaiting the approach of a certain death, in that solitary defile. Their enthusiasm, and that rigid and Spartan spirit which had made all ties subservient to obedience to the law—all excitement tame to that of battle—all pleasure dull to the anticipation of glory—probably rendered the hours preceding death the most enviable of their lives. They might have exulted in the same elevating fanaticism which distinguished afterward the followers of Mahomet; and seen that opening paradise in immortality below, which the Moslemin beheld in anticipation above.

XI. Early on that awful morning, Xerxes offered a solemn libation to his gods, and at the middle of the noon, when Hydarnes might be supposed to be close upon the rear of the enemy, the barbarian troops commenced their march. Leonidas and his band advanced beyond their intrenchment, into the broader part of the defile. Before the fury of their despair, the Persians fell in great numbers; many of them were hurled into the sea, others trodden down and crushed by the press of their own numbers.

When the spears of the Greeks were shivered in pieces they had recourse to their swords, and the battle was fought hand to hand: thus fighting, fell Leonidas, surrounded in death by many of his band, of various distinction and renown. Two half-brothers of Xerxes, mingling in the foremost of the fray, contended for the body of the Spartan king, and perished by the Grecian sword.

For a short time the Spartans repelled the Persian crowd, who, where valour failed to urge them on, were scourged to the charge by the lash of their leaders, and drew the body of Leonidas from the press; and now, winding down the pass, Hydarnes and his detachment descended to the battle. The scene then became changed, the Spartans retired, still undaunted, or rather made yet more desperate as death drew near, into the narrowest of the pass, and, ranged upon an eminence of the strait, they died—fighting, even after their weapons were broken, with their hands and teeth—rather crushed beneath the number than slain by the swords of the foe—"non victi sed vincendo fatigati." [67]

XII. Two Spartans of the three hundred, Eurytus and Aristodemus, had, in consequence of a severe disorder in the eyes, been permitted to sojourn at Alpeni; but Eurytus, hearing of the contest, was led by his helot into the field, and died with his countrymen. Aristodemus alone remained, branded with disgrace on his return to Sparta; but subsequently redeeming his name at the battle of Plataea. [68]

The Thebans, beholding the victory of the Persians, yielded their arms; and, excepting a few, slain as they approached, not as foes, but as suppliants, were pardoned by Xerxes.

The king himself came to view the dead, and especially the corpse of Leonidas. He ordered the head of that hero to be cut off, and his body suspended on a cross [69], an instance of sudden passion, rather than customary barbarity. For of all nations the Persians most honoured valour, even in their foes.

XIII. The moral sense of mankind, which places the example of self-sacrifice among the noblest lessons by which our nature can be corrected, has justly immortalized the memory of Leonidas. It is impossible to question the virtue of the man, but we may fairly dispute the wisdom of the system he adorned. We may doubt whether, in fact, his death served his country so much as his life would have done. It was the distinction of Thermopylae, that its heroes died in obedience to the laws; it was the distinction of Marathon, that its heroes lived to defeat the invader and preserve their country. And in proof of this distinction, we find afterward, at Plataea, that of all the allied Greeks the Spartans the most feared the conquerors of Thermopylae; the Athenians the least feared the fugitives of Marathon.

XIV. Subsequently, on the hill to which the Spartans and Thespians had finally retired, a lion of stone was erected by the Amphictyons, in honour of Leonidas; and many years afterward the bones of that hero were removed to Sparta, and yearly games, at which Spartans only were allowed to contend, were celebrated round his tomb. Separate monuments to the Greeks generally, and to the three hundred who had refused to retreat, were built also, by the Amphictyons, at Thermopylae. Long extant, posterity admired the inscriptions which they bore; that of the Spartans became proverbial for its sublime conciseness.

"Go, stranger," it said, "and tell the Spartans that we obeyed the law—and lie here!"

The private friendship of Simonides the poet erected also a monument to Megistias, the soothsayer, in which it was said truly to his honour,

"That the fate he foresaw he remained to brave;"

Such is the history of the battle of Thermopylae (B. C. 480). [70]

CHAPTER VII.

The Advice of Demaratus to Xerxes.—Themistocles.—Actions off Artemisium.—The Greeks retreat.—The Persians invade Delphi, and are repulsed with great Loss.—The Athenians, unaided by their Allies, abandon Athens, and embark for Salamis.—The irresolute and selfish Policy of the Peloponnesians.—Dexterity and Firmness of Themistocles.—Battle of Salamis.—Andros and Carystus besieged by the Greeks.—Anecdotes of Themistocles.—Honours awarded to him in Sparta.—Xerxes returns to Asia.—Olynthus and Potidaea besieged by Artabazus.—The Athenians return Home.—The Ostracism of Aristides is repealed.

I. After the victory of Thermopylae, Demaratus advised the Persian monarch to despatch a detachment of three hundred vessels to the Laconian coast, and seize the Island of Cythera, of which a Spartan once (foreseeing how easily hereafter that post might be made to command and overawe the Laconian capital) had said, "It were better for Sparta if it were sunk into the sea." The profound experience of Demaratus in the selfish and exclusive policy of his countrymen made him argue that, if this were done, the fears of Sparta for herself would prevent her joining the forces of the rest of Greece, and leave the latter a more easy prey to the invader.

The advice, fortunately for the Greeks, was overruled by Achaemenes.

Meanwhile the Grecian navy, assembled off Artemisium, was agitated by divers councils. Beholding the vast number of barbarian ships now collected at Aphetae, and the whole shores around swarming with hostile troops, the Greeks debated the necessity of retreat.

The fleet was under the command of Eurybiades, the Spartan. For although Athens furnished a force equal to all the rest of the allies together, and might justly, therefore, have pretended to the command, yet the jealousy of the confederates, long accustomed to yield to the claims of Sparta, and unwilling to acknowledge a new superiority in another state, had induced the Athenians readily to forego their claim. And this especially at the instance of Themistocles. "To him," says Plutarch, "Greece not only owes her preservation, but the Athenians in particular the glory of surpassing their enemies in valour and their allies in moderation." But if fortune gave Eurybiades the nominal command, genius forced Themistocles into the actual pre-eminence. That extraordinary man was, above all, adapted to his time; and, suited to its necessities, he commanded its fates. His very fault in the callousness of the moral sentiment, and his unscrupulous regard to expediency, peculiarly aided him in his management of men. He could appeal to the noblest passions—he could wind himself into the most base. Where he could not exalt he corrupted, where he could not persuade he intimidated, where he could not intimidate he bribed. [71]

When the intention to retreat became generally circulated, the inhabitants of the northern coast of Euboea (off which the Athenian navy rode) entreated Eurybiades at least to give them time to remove their slaves and children from the vengeance of the barbarian. Unsuccessful with him, they next sought Themistocles. For the consideration of thirty talents, the Athenian promised to remain at Artemisium, and risk the event of battle. Possessed of this sum, he won over the sturdy Spartan by the gift of five talents, and to Adimantus the Corinthian, the most obstinate in retreat, he privately sent three [72]. The remainder he kept for his own uses;— distinguished from his compeers in this—that he obtained a much larger share of the gift than they; that they were bribed to be brave, and that he was rewarded for bribing them. The pure-minded statesman of the closet cannot but feel some disdain and some regret to find, blended together, the noblest actions and the paltriest motives. But whether in ancient times or in modern, the web of human affairs is woven from a mingled yarn, and the individuals who save nations are not always those most acceptable to the moralist. The share of Themistocles in this business is not, however, so much to his discredit as to that of the Spartan Eurybiades. We cannot but observe that no system contrary to human nature is strong against actual temptation. The Spartan law interdicted the desire of riches, and the Spartans themselves yielded far more easily to the lust of avarice than the luxurious Athenians. Thus a native of Zelea, a city in Asia Minor, had sought to corrupt the Peloponnesian cities by Persian gold: it was not the Spartans, it was the Athenians, who declared this man infamous, and placed his life out of the pale of the Grecian law. With a noble pride Demosthenes speaks of this decree. "The gold," he, says, "was brought into Peloponnesus, not to Athens. But our ancestors extended their care beyond their own city to the whole of Greece." [73] An

Aristides is formed by the respect paid to integrity, which society tries in vain—a Demaratus, an Eurybiades, and, as we shall see, a Pausanias, by the laws which, affecting to exclude the influence of the passions, render their temptations novel, and their effects irresistible.

II. The Greeks continued at Euboea; and the Persians, eager to engage so inconsiderable an enemy, despatched two hundred chosen vessels, with orders to make a circuitous route beyond Sciathos, and thus, unperceived, to attack the Grecian rear, while on a concerted signal the rest would advance upon the front.

A deserter of Scios escaped, however, from Aphetae, and informed the Greeks of the Persian plan. Upon this it was resolved at midnight to advance against that part of the fleet which had been sent around Euboea. But as twilight approached, they appeared to have changed or delayed this design, and proceeded at once towards the main body of the fleet, less perhaps with the intention of giving regular battle, than of attempting such detached skirmishes as would make experiment of their hardihood and skill. The Persians, amazed at the infatuation of their opponents, drew out their fleet in order, and succeeded in surrounding the Greek ships.

The night, however, separated the hostile forces, but not until the Greeks had captured thirty of the barbarian vessels; the first ship was taken by an Athenian. The victory, however, despite this advantage, was undecided, when the Greeks returned to Artemisium, the Persians to Aphetae.

III. But during the night one of those sudden and vehement storms not unfrequent to the summers of Greece broke over the seas. The Persians at Aphetae heard, with a panic dismay, the continued thunder that burst above the summit of Mount Pelion; and the bodies of the dead and the wrecks of ships, floating round the prows, entangled their oars amid a tempestuous and heavy sea. But the destruction which the Persians at Aphetae anticipated to themselves, actually came upon that part of the barbarian fleet which had made the circuit round Euboea. Remote from land, exposed to all the fury of the tempest, ignorant of their course, and amid the darkness of night, they were dashed to pieces against those fearful rocks termed "The Hollows," and not a single galley escaped the general destruction.

Thus the fleet of the barbarians was rendered more equal to that of the Greeks. Re-enforced by fifty-three ships from Athens the next day, the Greeks proceeded at evening against that part of the hostile navy possessed by the Cilicians. These they utterly defeated, and returned joyfully to Artemisium.

Hitherto these skirmishes, made on the summer evenings, in order probably to take advantage of the darkening night to break off before any irremediable loss was sustained, seem rather to have been for the sake of practice in the war—chivalric sorties as it were—than actual and deliberate engagements. But the third day, the Persians, impatient of conquest, advanced to Artemisium. These sea encounters were made precisely on the same days as the conflicts at Thermopylae; the object on each was the same—the gaining in one of the sea defile, in the other of the land entrance into Greece. The Euripus was the Thermopylae of the ocean.

IV. The Greeks remained in their station, and there met the shock; the battle was severe and equal; the Persians fought with great valour and firmness, and although the loss upon their side was far the greatest, many of the Greek vessels also perished. They separated as by mutual consent, neither force the victor. Of the Persian fleet the Egyptians were the most distinguished—of the Grecian the Athenians; and of the last none equalled in valour Clinias; his ship was manned at his own expense. He was the father of that Alcibiades, afterward so famous.

While the Greeks rested at Artemisium, counting the number of their slain, and amid the wrecks of their vessels, they learned the fate of Leonidas. [74] This determined their previous consultations on the policy of retreat, and they abandoned the Euripus in steady and marshalled order, the Corinthians first, the Athenians closing the rear. Thus the Persians were left masters of the sea and land entrance into Greece.

But even in retreat, the active spirit of Themistocles was intent upon expedients. It was more than suspected that a considerable portion of the Ionians now in the service of Xerxes were secretly friendly to the Greeks. In the swiftest of the Athenian vessels Themistocles therefore repaired to a watering-place on the coast, and engraved upon the rocks these words, which were read by the Ionians the next day.

"Men of Ionia, in fighting against your ancestors, and assisting to enslave Greece, you act unworthily. Come over to us; or if that may not be, at least retire from the contest, and prevail on the Carians to do the same. If yet neither secession nor revolt be practicable, at least when we come to action exert not yourselves against us. Remember that we are descended from one common race, and that it was on your behalf that we first incurred the enmity of the Persian."

A subtler intention than that which was the more obvious, was couched beneath this exhortation. For if it failed to seduce the Ionians, it might yet induce Xerxes to mistrust their alliance.

When the Persians learned that the Greeks had abandoned their station, their whole fleet took possession of the pass, possessed themselves of the neighbouring town of Histiaea, and overrunning a part of the Isle of Euboea, received the submission of the inhabitants.

Xerxes now had recourse to a somewhat clumsy, though a very commonly practised artifice. Twenty thousand of his men had fallen at Thermopylae: of these he buried nineteen thousand, and leaving the remainder uninterred, he invited all who desired it, by public proclamation, to examine the scene of contest. As a considerable number of helots had joined their Spartan lords and perished with them, the bodies of the slain amounted to four thousand [75], while those of the Persians were only one thousand. This was a practical despotic bulletin.

V. Of all the neighbouring district, the Phocians had alone remained faithful to the Grecian cause: their territory was now overrun by the Persians, at the instance of their hereditary enemies, the Thessalians, destroying city and temple, and committing all the horrors of violence and rapine by the way. Arrived at Panopeae, the bulk of the barbarian army marched through Boeotia towards Athens, the great object of revenge, while a separate detachment was sent to Delphi, with a view of plundering the prodigious riches accumulated in that celebrated temple, and of which, not perhaps uncharacteristically, Xerxes was said to be better informed than of the treasures he had left behind in his own palace.

But the wise and crafty priesthood of Delphi had been too long accustomed successfully to deceive mankind to lose hope or self-possession at the approach even of so formidable a foe. When the dismayed citizens of Delphi ran to the oracle, demanding advice and wishing to know what should be done with the sacred treasures, the priestess gravely replied that "the god could take care of his own possessions, and that the only business of the citizens was to provide for themselves;" a priestly answer, importing that the god considered his possessions, and not the flock, were the treasure. The one was sure to be defended by a divinity, the other might shift for themselves.

The citizens were not slow in adopting the advice; they immediately removed their wives and children into Achaia—while the males and adults fled—some to Amphissa, some amid the craggy recesses of Parnassus, or into that vast and spacious cavern at the base of Mount Corycus, dedicated to the Muses, and imparting to those lovely deities the poetical epithet of Corycides. Sixty men, with the chief priest, were alone left to protect the sacred city.

VI. But superstition can dispense with numbers in its agency. Just as the barbarians were in sight of the temple, the sacred arms, hitherto preserved inviolable in the sanctuary, were seen by the soothsayer to advance to the front of the temple. And this prodigy but heralded others more active. As the enemy now advanced in the stillness of the deserted city, and impressed doubtless by their own awe (for not to a Persian army could there have seemed no veneration due to the Temple of the Sun!) just by the shrine of Minerva Pronaea, built out in front of the great temple, a loud peal of thunder burst suddenly over their heads, and two enormous fragments of rock (separated from the heights of that Parnassus amid whose recesses mortals as well as gods lay hid) rolled down the mountain-side with a mighty crash, and destroyed many of the Persian multitude. At the same time, from the temple of the warlike goddess broke forth a loud and martial shout, as if to arms. Confused—appalled—panic-stricken by these supernatural prodigies—the barbarians turned to fly; while the Delphians, already prepared and armed, rushed from cave and mountain, and, charging in the midst of the invaders, scattered them with great slaughter. Those who escaped fled to the army in Boeotia. Thus the treasures of Delphi were miraculously preserved, not only from the plunder of the Persian, but also from the clutch of the Delphian citizens themselves, who had been especially anxious, in the first instance, to be permitted to deposite the treasures in a place of safety. Nobody knew better than the priests that treasures always diminish when transferred from one hand to another.

VII. The Grecian fleet anchored at Salamis by the request of the Athenians, who were the more anxious immediately to deliberate on the state of affairs, as the Persian army was now approaching their borders, and they learned that the selfish warriors of the Peloponnesus, according to their customary policy, instead of assisting the Athenians and Greece generally, by marching towards Boeotia, were engaged only in fortifying the isthmus or providing for their own safety.

Unable to engage the confederates to assist them in protecting Attica, the Athenians entreated, at least, the rest of the maritime allies to remain at Salamis, while they themselves hastened back to Athens.

Returned home, their situation was one which their generous valour had but little merited. Although they had sent to Artemisium the principal defence of the common cause, now, when the storm rolled

towards themselves, none appeared on their behalf. They were at once incensed and discouraged by the universal desertion. [76] How was it possible that, alone and unaided, they could withstand the Persian multitude? Could they reasonably expect the fortunes of Marathon to be perpetually renewed? To remain at Athens was destruction—to leave it seemed to them a species of impiety. Nor could they anticipate victory with a sanguine hope, in abandoning the monuments of their ancestors and the temples of their gods. [77]

Themistocles alone was enabled to determine the conduct of his countrymen in this dilemma. Inexhaustible were the resources of a genius which ranged from the most lofty daring to the most intricate craft. Perceiving that the only chance of safety was in the desertion of the city, and that the strongest obstacle to this alternative was in the superstitious attachment to HOME ever so keenly felt by the ancients, he had recourse, in the failure of reason, to a counter-superstition. In the temple of the citadel was a serpent, dedicated to Minerva, and considered the tutelary defender of the place. The food appropriated to the serpent was suddenly found unconsumed—the serpent itself vanished; and, at the suggestion of Themistocles, the priests proclaimed that the goddess had deserted the city and offered herself to conduct them to the seas. Then, amid the general excitement, Themistocles reiterated his version of the Delphic oracle. Then were the ships reinterpreted to be the wooden walls, and Salamis once more proclaimed "the Divine." The fervour of the people was awakened—the persuasions of Themistocles prevailed—even the women loudly declared their willingness to abandon Athens for the sake of the Athenians; and it was formally decreed that the city should be left to the guardianship of Minerva, and the citizens should save themselves, their women, children, and slaves, as their own discretion might suggest. Most of them took refuge in Troezene, where they were generously supported at the public expense—some at Aegina—others repaired to Salamis.

A moving and pathetic spectacle was that of the embarcation of the Athenians for the Isle of Salamis. Separated from their children, their wives (who were sent to remoter places of safety)—abandoning their homes and altars—the citadel of Minerva—the monuments of Marathon—they set out for a scene of contest (B. C. 480), perilous and precarious, and no longer on the site of their beloved and father-land. Their grief was heightened by the necessity of leaving many behind, whose extreme age rendered them yet more venerable, while it incapacitated their removal. Even the dumb animals excited all the fond domestic associations, running to the strand, and expressing by their cries their regret for the hands that fed them: one of them, a dog, that belonged to Xanthippus, father of Pericles, is said to have followed the ships, and swam to Salamis, to die, spent with toil, upon the sands.

VIII. The fleet now assembled at Salamis; the Spartans contributed only sixteen vessels, the people of Aegina thirty—swift galleys and well equipped; the Athenians one hundred and eighty; the whole navy, according to Herodotus, consisted of three hundred and seventy-eight [78] ships, besides an inconsiderable number of vessels of fifty oars.

Eurybiades still retained the chief command. A council of war was held. The greater number of the more influential allies were composed of Peloponnesians, and, with the countenance of the Spartan chief, it was proposed to retire from Salamis and fix the station in the isthmus near the land-forces of Peloponnesus. This was highly consonant to the interested policy of the Peloponnesian states, and especially to that of Sparta; Attica was considered already lost, and the fate of that territory they were therefore indisposed to consider. While the debate was yet pending, a messenger arrived from Athens with the intelligence that the barbarian, having reduced to ashes the allied cities of Thespiae and Plataea in Boeotia, had entered Attica; and shortly afterward they learned that (despite a desperate resistance from the handful of Athenians who, some from poverty, some from a superstitious prejudice in favour of the wooden wall of the citadel, had long held out, though literally girt by fire from the burning of their barricades) the citadel had been taken, plundered, and burnt, and the remnant of its defenders put to the sword.

IX. Consternation seized the council; many of the leaders broke away hastily, went on board, hoisted their sails, and prepared to fly. Those who remained in the council determined that an engagement at sea could only be risked near the isthmus. With this resolve the leaders at night returned to their ships.

It is singular how often, in the most memorable events, the fate and the glory of nations is decided by the soul of a single man. When Themistocles had retired to his vessel, he was sought by Mnesiphilus, who is said to have exercised an early and deep influence over the mind of Themistocles, and to have been one of those practical yet thoughtful statesmen called into existence by the sober philosophy of Solon [79], whose lessons on the science of government made a groundwork for the rhetorical corruptions of the later sophists. On learning the determination of the council, Mnesiphilus forcibly represented its consequences. "If the allies," said he, "once abandon Salamis, you have lost for ever the occasion of fighting for your country. The fleet will certainly separate, the various confederates return home, and Greece will perish. Hasten, therefore, ere yet it be too late, and endeavour to persuade Eurybiades to change his resolution and remain."

This advice, entirely agreeable to the views of Themistocles, excited that chief to new exertions. He repaired at once to Eurybiades; and, by dint of that extraordinary mastery over the minds of others which he possessed, he finally won over the Spartan, and, late as the hour was, persuaded him to reassemble the different leaders.

X. In that nocturnal council debate grew loud and warm. When Eurybiades had explained his change of opinion and his motives for calling the chiefs together; Themistocles addressed the leaders at some length and with great excitement. It was so evidently the interest of the Corinthians to make the scene of defence in the vicinity of Corinth, that we cannot be surprised to find the Corinthian leader, Adimantus, eager to interrupt the Athenian. "Themistocles," said he, "they who at the public games rise before their time are beaten."

"True," replied Themistocles, with admirable gentleness and temper; "but they who are left behind are never crowned."

Pursuing the advantage which a skilful use of interruption always gives to an orator, the Athenian turned to Eurybiades. Artfully suppressing his secret motive in the fear of the dispersion of the allies, which he rightly judged would offend without convincing, he had recourse to more popular arguments. "Fight at the isthmus," he said, "and you fight in the open sea, where, on account of our heavier vessels and inferior number, you contend with every disadvantage. Grant even success, you will yet lose, by your retreat, Salamis, Megara, and Aegina. You would preserve the Peloponnesus, but remember, that by attracting thither the war, you attract not only the naval, but also the land forces of the enemy. Fight here, and we have the inestimable advantage of a narrow sea—we shall preserve Salamis, the refuge of our wives and children—we shall as effectually protect the Peloponnesus as by repairing to the isthmus and drawing the barbarian thither. If we obtain the victory, the enemy will neither advance to the isthmus nor penetrate beyond Attica. Their retreat is sure."

The orator was again interrupted by Adimantus with equal rudeness. And Themistocles, who well knew how to alternate force with moderation, and menace with persuasion, retorted with an equal asperity, but with a singular dignity and happiness of expression.

"It becomes you," said Adimantus, scornfully, alluding to the capture of Athens, "it becomes you to be silent, and not to advise us to desert our country; you, who no longer have a country to defend! Eurybiades can only be influenced by Themistocles when Themistocles has once more a city to represent."

"Wretch!" replied Themistocles, sternly, "we have indeed left our walls and houses—preferring freedom to those inanimate possessions— but know that the Athenians still possess a country and a city, greater and more formidable than yours, well provided with stores and men, which none of the Greeks will be able to resist: our ships are our country and our city."

"If," he added, once more addressing the Spartan chief, "if you continue here you will demand our eternal gratitude: fly, and you are the destroyers of Greece. In this war the last and sole resource of the Athenians is their fleet: reject my remonstrances, and I warn you that at once we will take our families on board, and sail to that Siris, on the Italian shores, which of old is said to have belonged to us, and in which, if the oracle be trusted, we ought to found a city. Deprived of us, you will remember my words."

XI. The menace of Themistocles—the fear of so powerful a race, unhoused, exasperated, and in search of a new settlement—and the yet more immediate dread of the desertion of the flower of the navy— finally prevailed. Eurybiades announced his concurrence with the views of Themistocles, and the confederates, wearied with altercation, consented to risk the issue of events at Salamis.

XII. Possessed of Athens, the Persian king held also his council of war. His fleet, sailing up the Euripus, anchored in the Attic bay of Phalerum; his army encamped along the plains around, or within the walls of Athens. The losses his armament had sustained were already repaired by new re-enforcements of Malians, Dorians, Locrians, Bactrians, Carystians, Andrians, Tenedians, and the people of the various isles. "The farther," says Herodotus, "the Persians penetrated into Greece, the greater the numbers by which they were followed." It may be supposed, however, that the motley contributions of an idle and predatory multitude, or of Greeks compelled, not by affection, but fear, ill supplied to Xerxes the devoted thousands, many of them his own gallant Persians, who fell at Thermopylae or perished in the Euboean seas.

XIII. Mardonius and the leaders generally were for immediate battle. The heroine Artemisia alone gave a more prudent counsel. She represented to them, that if they delayed a naval engagement or sailed to the Peloponnesus [80], the Greeks, failing of provisions and overruled by their fears, would be certain to disperse, to retire to their several homes, and, thus detached, fall an easy prey to his arms.

Although Xerxes, contrary to expectation, received the adverse opinion of the Carian princess with compliments and praise, he yet adopted the counsel of the majority; and, attributing the ill success at Artemisium to his absence, resolved in person to witness the triumph of his arms at Salamis.

The navy proceeded, in order, to that island: the land-forces on the same night advanced to the Peloponnesus: there, under Cleombrotus, brother to Leonidas, all the strength of the Peloponnesian confederates was already assembled. They had fortified the pass of Sciron, another Thermopylae in its local character, and protected the isthmus by a wall, at the erection of which the whole army worked night and day; no materials sufficing for the object of defence were disdained—wood, stones, bricks, and sand—all were pressed into service. Here encamped, they hoped nothing from Salamis—they believed the last hope of Greece rested solely with themselves. [81]

XIV. Again new agitation, fear, and dissension broke out in the Grecian navy. All those who were interested in the safety of the Peloponnesus complained anew of the resolution of Eurybiades—urged the absurdity of remaining at Salamis to contend for a territory already conquered—and the leaders of Aegina, Megara, and Athens were left in a minority in the council.

Thus overpowered by the Peloponnesian allies, Themistocles is said to have bethought himself of a stratagem, not inconsonant with his scheming and wily character. Retiring privately from the debate, yet unconcluded, and summoning the most confidential messenger in his service [82], he despatched him secretly to the enemy's fleet with this message—"The Athenian leader, really attached to the king, and willing to see the Greeks subjugated to his power, sends me privately to you. Consternation has seized the Grecian navy; they are preparing to fly; lose not the opportunity of a splendid victory. Divided among themselves, the Greeks are unable to resist you; and you will see, as you advance upon them, those who favour and those who would oppose you in hostility with each other."

The Persian admiral was sufficiently experienced in the treachery and defection of many of the Greeks to confide in the message thus delivered to him; but he scarcely required such intelligence to confirm a resolution already formed. At midnight the barbarians passed over a large detachment to the small isle of Psyttaleia, between Salamis and the continent, and occupying the whole narrow sea as far as the Attic port of Munychia, under cover of the darkness disposed their ships, so as to surround the Greeks and cut off the possibility of retreat.

XV. Unconscious of the motions of the enemy, disputes still prevailed among the chiefs at Salamis, when Themistocles was summoned at night from the council, to which he had returned after despatching his messenger to the barbarian. The person who thus summoned him was Aristides. It was the third year of his exile—which sentence was evidently yet unrepealed—or not in that manner, at night and as a thief, would the eminent and high-born Aristides have joined his countrymen. He came from Aegina in an open boat, under cover of the night passed through the midst of the Persian ships, and arrived at Salamis to inform the Greeks that they were already surrounded.

"At any time," said Aristides, "it would become us to forget our private dissensions, and at this time especially; contending only who should most serve his country. In vain now would the Peloponnesians advise retreat; we are encompassed, and retreat is impossible."

Themistocles welcomed the new-comer with joy, and persuaded him to enter the council and acquaint the leaders with what he knew. His intelligence, received with doubt, was presently confirmed by a trireme of Tenians, which deserted to them; and they now seriously contemplated the inevitable resort of battle.

XVI. At dawn all was prepared. Assembled on the strand, Themistocles harangued the troops; and when he had concluded, orders were given to embark.

It was in the autumn of 480 B. C., two thousand three hundred and sixteen years ago, that the battle of Salamis was fought.

High on a throne of precious metals, placed on one of the eminences of Mount Aegaleos, sat, to survey the contest, the royal Xerxes. The rising sun beheld the shores of the Eleusinian gulf lined with his troops to intercept the fugitives, and with a miscellaneous and motley crowd of such as were rather spectators than sharers of the conflict. [83]

But not as the Persian leaders had expected was the aspect of the foe; nor did the Greeks betray the confusion or the terror ascribed to them by the emissary of Themistocles. As the daylight made them manifest to the Persian, they set up the loud and martial chorus of the paean— "the rocks of Salamis echoed back the shout"—and, to use the expression of a soldier of that day [84], "the trumpet inflamed them with its clangour."

As soon as the Greeks began to move, the barbarian vessels advanced swiftly. But Themistocles

detained the ardour of the Greeks until the time when a sharp wind usually arose in that sea, occasioning a heavy swell in the channel, which was peculiarly prejudicial to the unwieldy ships of the Persians; but not so to the light, low, and compact vessels of the Greeks. The manner of attack with the ancient navies was to bring the prow of the vessel, which was fortified by long projecting beaks of brass, to bear upon the sides of its antagonist, and this, the swell of the sea causing the Persian galleys to veer about unwieldily, the agile ships of the Greeks were well enabled to effect.

By the time the expected wind arose, the engagement was begun. The Persian admiral [85] directed his manoeuvres chiefly against Themistocles, for on him, as the most experienced and renowned of the Grecian leaders, the eyes of the enemy were turned. From his ship, which was unusually lofty, as from a castle [86], he sent forth darts and arrows, until one of the Athenian triremes, commanded by Aminias, shot from the rest, and bore down upon him with the prow. The ships met, and, fastened together by their brazen beaks, which served as grappling-irons, Ariabignes gallantly boarded the Grecian vessel, and was instantly slain by the hostile pikes and hurled into the sea [87]. The first who took a ship was an Athenian named Lycomedes. The Grecians keeping to the straits, the Persians were unable to bring their whole armament to bear at once, and could only enter the narrow pass by detachments; the heaviness of the sea and the cumbrous size of their tall vessels frequently occasioned more embarrassment to themselves than the foe—driven and hustling the one against the other. The Athenians maintaining the right wing were opposed by the Phoenicians; the Spartans on the left by the Ionians. The first were gallantly supported by the Aeginetans, who, long skilled in maritime warfare, eclipsed even their new rivals the Athenians. The Phoenician line was broken. The Greeks pursued their victory, still preserving the steadiest discipline and the most perfect order. The sea became strewn and covered with the wrecks of vessels and the bodies of the dead; while, to the left, the Ionians gave way before that part of the allied force commanded by the Spartans, some fighting with great valour, some favouring the Greek confederates. Meanwhile, as the Persians gave way, and the sea became more clear, Aristides, who had hitherto remained on shore, landed a body of Athenians on the Isle of Psyttaleia, and put the Persian guard there stationed to the sword.

Xerxes from the mountain, his countless thousands from the shore, beheld, afar and impotent, the confusion, the slaughter, the defeat of the forces on the sea. Anxious now only for retreat, the barbarians retreated to Phalerum; and there, intercepted by the Aeginetans, were pressed by them in the rear; by the Athenians, led by Themistocles, in front. At this time the heroine Artemisia, pursued by that Aminias whose vessel had first grappled with the Persians, and who of all the Athenian captains was that day the most eminently distinguished, found herself in the extremest danger. Against that remarkable woman the efforts of the Athenians had been especially directed: deeming it a disgrace to them to have an enemy in a woman, they had solemnly set a reward of great amount upon her capture. Thus pursued, Artemisia had recourse to a sudden and extraordinary artifice. Falling in with a vessel of the Persians, commanded by a Calyndian prince, with whom she had once been embroiled, she bore down against the ship and sunk it—a truly feminine stratagem—deceiving at once a public enemy and gratifying a private hatred. The Athenian, seeing the vessel he had pursued thus attack a barbarian, conceived he had mistaken a friendly vessel, probably a deserter from the Persians, for a foe, and immediately sought new objects of assault. Xerxes beheld and admired the prowess of Artemisia, deeming, in the confusion, that it was a hostile vessel she had sunken. [88]

XVII. The battle lasted till the dusk of evening, when at length the remnant of the barbarian fleet gained the port of Phalerum; and the Greeks beheld along the Straits of Salamis no other vestige of the enemy than the wrecks and corpses which were the evidence of his defeat.

XVIII. When morning came, the Greeks awaited a renewal of the engagement; for the Persian fleet were still numerous, the Persian army yet covered the neighbouring shores, and, by a feint to conceal his real purpose, Xerxes had ordered the Phoenician transports to be joined together, as if to connect Salamis to the continent. But a mandate was already issued for the instant departure of the navy for the Hellespont, and a few days afterward the army itself retired into Boeotia.

The victory of Salamis was celebrated by solemn rejoicings, in which, principally remarkable for the beauty of his person, and his accomplishments on the lyre and in the dance, was a youth named Sophocles, destined afterward to share the glory of Aeschylus, who, no less a warrior than a poet, distinguished himself in the battle, and has bequeathed to us the most detailed and animated account we possess of its events.

The Grecian conquerors beheld the retreat of the enemy with indignation; they were unwilling that any of that armament which had burnt their hearths and altars should escape their revenge; they pursued the Persian ships as far as Andros, where, not reaching them, they cast anchor and held a consultation. Themistocles is said to have proposed, but not sincerely, to sail at once to the Hellespont and destroy the bridge of boats. This counsel was overruled, and it was decided not to reduce so terrible an enemy to despair:—"Rather," said one of the chiefs (whether Aristides or Eurybiades is

differently related), "build another bridge, that Xerxes may escape the sooner out of Europe."

Themistocles affected to be converted to a policy which he desired only an excuse to effect; and, in pursuance of the hint already furnished him, is said to have sent secretly to Xerxes, informing him that it was the intention of the allies to sail to the Hellespont and destroy the bridge, so that, if the king consulted his safety, he would return immediately into Asia, while Themistocles would find pretexts to delay the pursuit of the confederates.

This artifice appears natural to the scheming character of Themistocles; and, from concurrent testimony [89], it seems to me undoubted that Themistocles maintained a secret correspondence with Xerxes, and even persuaded that monarch that he was disposed to favour him. But it is impossible to believe, with Herodotus, that he had at that time any real desire to conciliate the Persian, foreseeing that he might hereafter need a refuge at the Eastern court. Then in the zenith of his popularity, so acute a foresight is not in man. He was one of those to whom the spirit of intrigue is delight in itself, and in the present instance it was exerted for the common cause of the Athenians, which, with all his faults, he never neglected for, but rather incorporated with, his own.

XIX. Diverted from the notion of pursuing the Persians, the Grecian allies, flushed with conquest, were yet eager for enterprise. The isles which had leagued with the Mede were strongly obnoxious to the confederates, and it was proposed to exact from them a fine; in defrayal of the expenses of the war. Siege was laid to Andros, and those islanders were the first who resisted the demand. Then was it that they made that memorable answer, which may serve as a warning in all times to the strong when pressing on the desperate.

"I bring with me," said Themistocles, "two powerful divinities—
Persuasion and Force."

"And we," answered the Andrians, "have two gods equally powerful on our side—Poverty and Despair."

The Andrian deities eventually triumphed, and the siege was raised without effect. But from the Parians and Carystians, and some other islanders, Themistocles obtained enormous sums of money unknown to his colleagues, which, however unjustly extorted, it does not satisfactorily appear that he applied largely to his own personal profit, but, as is more probable, to the rebuilding of Athens. Perhaps he thought, nor without reason, that as the Athenians had been the principal sufferers in the war, and contributed the most largely to its resources, so whatever fines were levied on the seceders were due, not to the confederates generally, but the Athenians alone. The previous conduct of the allies, with so much difficulty preserved from deserting Athens, merited no particular generosity, and excused perhaps the retaliation of a selfish policy. The payment of the fine did not, however, preserve Carystus from attack. After wasting its lands, the Greeks returned to Salamis and divided the Persian spoils. The first fruits were dedicated to the gods, and the choicest of the booty sent to Delphi. And here we may notice one anecdote of Themistocles, which proves, that whatever, at times and in great crises, was the grasping unscrupulousness of his mind, he had at least no petty and vulgar avarice. Seeing a number of bracelets and chains of gold upon the bodies of the dead, he passed them by, and turning to one of his friends, "Take these for yourself," said he, "for you are not Themistocles." [90]

Meanness or avarice was indeed no part of the character of Themistocles, although he has been accused of those vices, because guilty, at times, of extortion. He was profuse, ostentatious, and magnificent above his contemporaries and beyond his means. His very vices were on a large and splendid scale; and if he had something of the pirate in his nature, he had nothing of the miser. When he had to choose between two suiters for his daughter, he preferred the worthy to the wealthy candidate—willing that she should rather marry a man without money than money without a man. [91]

XX. The booty divided, the allies repaired to the isthmus, according to that beautiful ancient custom of apportioning rewards to such as had been most distinguished. It was in the temple of Neptune that the leaders met. The right of voting was confined to the several chiefs, who were to declare whom they thought the first in merit and whom the second. Each leader wrote his own name a candidate for the first rank; but a great majority of suffrages awarded the second to Themistocles. While, therefore, each leader had only a single suffrage in favour of the first rank, the second rank was unequivocally due to the Athenian.

XXI. But even conquest had not sufficed to remove the jealousies of the confederate leaders—they evaded the decision of a question which could not but be propitious to the Athenians, and returned home without having determined the point which had assembled them at the isthmus. But Themistocles was not of a temper to brook patiently this fraud upon his honours. Far from sharing the petty and miserable envies of their chiefs, the Greeks generally were loud in praise of his wisdom and services; and, taking advantage of their enthusiasm, Themistocles repaired to Sparta, trusting to the generosity

of the principal rival to compensate the injustice of many. His expectations were not ill-founded—the customs of Sparta allowed no slight to a Spartan, and they adjudged therefore the prize of valour to their own Eurybiades, while they awarded that of wisdom or science to Themistocles. Each was equally honoured with a crown of olive. Forgetful of all their prejudices, their envy, and their inhospitable treatment of strangers, that nation of warriors were dazzled by the hero whose courage assimilated to their own. They presented him with the stateliest chariot to be found in Sparta, and solemnly conducted him homeward as far as Tegea, by an escort of three hundred chosen Spartans called "The Knights"—the sole example of the Spartans conducting any man from their city. It is said that on his return to Athens, Themistocles was reproached by Timodemus of Aphidna, a Belbinite by origin [92], and an implacable public enemy, with his visit to Sparta: "The honours awarded you," said Timodemus, "are bestowed from respect, not to you, but to Athens."

"My friend," retorted the witty chief, "the matter stands thus. Had I been a Belbinite, I had not been thus distinguished at Sparta, nor would you, although you had been born an Athenian!"

While the Greeks were thus occupied, the Persian army had retreated with Mardonius into Thessaly. Here that general selected and marshalled the forces with which he intended to renew the war, retaining in his service the celebrated Immortals. The total, including the cavalry, Herodotus estimates at three hundred thousand men.

Thus occupied, and ere Xerxes departed from Thessaly, the Spartans, impelled by an oracle, sent a messenger to Xerxes to demand atonement for the death of Leonidas.

"Ay," replied the king, laughing, "this man (pointing to Mardonius) shall make you fitting retribution."

Leaving Mardonius in Thessaly, where he proposed to winter, Xerxes now hastened home. Sixty thousand Persians under Artabazus accompanied the king only as far as the passage into Asia; and it was with an inconsiderable force, which, pressed by famine, devastated the very herbage on their way, and which a pestilence and the dysentery diminished as it passed, that the great king crossed the Hellespont, on which the bridge of boats had already been broken by wind and storm. A more abundant supply of provisions than they had yet experienced tempted the army to excesses, to which many fell victims. The rest arrived at Sardis with Xerxes, whence he afterward returned to his more distant capital.

XXII. The people of Potidaea, on the Isthmus of Pallene, and Olynthus, inhabited by the Bottiaeans, a dubious and mongrel race, that boasted their origin from those Athenians who, in the traditional ages, had been sent as tributary captives to the Cretan Minos, no sooner learned the dispersion of the fleet at Salamis, and the retreat of the king, than they openly revolted from the barbarian. Artabazus, returning from the Hellespont, laid siege to Olynthus, massacred the inhabitants, and colonized the town with Chalcidians. He then sat down before Potidaea; but a terrible inundation of the sea, with the sallies of the besieged, destroyed the greater number of the unfortunate invaders. The remnant were conducted by Artabazus into Thessaly, to join the army of Mardonius. The Persian fleet, retreating from Salamis, after passing over the king and his forces from the Chersonese to Abydos, wintered at Cuma; and at the commencement of the spring assembled at Samos.

Meanwhile the Athenians returned to their dismantled city, and directed their attention to its repair and reconstruction. It was then, too, that in all probability the people hastened, by a formal and solemn reversal of the sentence of ostracism, to reward the services of Aristides, and to restore to the commonwealth the most spotless of its citizens. [93]

CHAPTER VIII.

Embassy of Alexander of Macedon to Athens.—The Result of his Proposals.—Athenians retreat to Salamis.—Mardonius occupies Athens. —The Athenians send Envoys to Sparta.—Pausanias succeeds Cleombrotus as Regent of Sparta.—Battle of Plataea.—Thebes besieged by the Athenians.—Battle of Mycale.—Siege of Sestos.—Conclusion of the Persian War.

I. The dawning spring and the formidable appearance of Mardonius, who, with his Persian forces, diminished indeed, but still mighty, lowered on their confines, aroused the Greeks to a sense of their

danger. Their army was not as yet assembled, but their fleet, consisting of one hundred and ten vessels, under the command of Leotychides, king of Sparta, and Xanthippus of Athens, lay off Aegina. Thus anchored, there came to the naval commanders certain Chians, who, having been discovered in a plot against the life of Strattis, a tyrant imposed upon Chios by the Persians, fled to Aegina. They declared that all Ionia was ripe for revolt, and their representations induced the Greeks to advance as far as the sacred Delos.

Beyond they dared not venture, ignorant alike of the localities of the country and the forces of the enemy. Samos seemed to them no less remote than the Pillars of Hercules, and mutual fear thus kept the space between the Persian and the Greek fleet free from the advance of either. But Mardonius began slowly to stir from his winter lethargy. Influenced, thought the Greeks, perhaps too fondly, by a Theban oracle, the Persian general despatched to Athens no less distinguished an ambassador than Alexander, the king of Macedon. That prince, connected with the Persians by alliance (for his sister had married the Persian Bubares, son of Megabazus), was considered an envoy calculated to conciliate the Athenians while he served their enemy. And it was now the object of Mardonius to reconcile the foe whom he had failed to conquer. Aware of the Athenian valour, Mardonius trusted that if he could detach that state from the confederacy, and prevail on the Athenians to unite their arms to his own, the rest of Greece would become an easy conquest. By land he already deemed himself secure of fortune, by sea what Grecian navy, if deprived of the flower of its forces, could resist him?

II. The King of Macedon arrived at Athens; but conscious of the jealous and anxious fear which the news of an embassy from Persia would excite among the confederates, the Athenians delayed to grant him the demanded audience until they had time to send for and obtain deputies from Sparta to be present at the assembly.

Alexander of Macedon then addressed the Athenians.

"Men of Athens!" said he, "Mardonius informs you, through me, of this mandate from the king: 'Whatever injuries,' saith he, 'the Athenians have done me, I forgive. Restore them their country—let them even annex to it any other territories they covet—permit them the free enjoyment of their laws. If they will ally with me, rebuild the temples I have burnt.'"

Alexander then proceeded to dilate on the consequences of this favourable mission, to represent the power of the Persian, and urge the necessity of an alliance. "Let my offers prevail with you," he concluded, "for to you alone, of all the Greeks, the king extends his forgiveness, desiring your alliance."

When Alexander had concluded, the Spartan envoys thus spoke through their chief, addressing, not the Macedonian, but the Athenians:—"We have been deputed by the Spartans to entreat you to adopt no measures prejudicial to Greece, and to receive no conditions from the barbarians. This, most iniquitous in itself, would be, above all, unworthy and ungraceful in you; with you rests the origin of the war now appertaining to all Greece. Insufferable, indeed, if the Athenians, once the authors of liberty to many, were now the authors of the servitude of Greece. We commiserate your melancholy condition — your privation for two years of the fruits of your soil, your homes destroyed, and your fortunes ruined. We, the Spartans, and the other allies, will receive your women and all who may be helpless in the war while the war shall last. Let not the Macedonian, smoothing down the messages of Mardonius, move you. This becomes him; tyrant himself, he would assist in a tyrant's work. But you will not heed him if you are wise, knowing that faith and truth are not in the barbarians."

III. The answer of the Athenians to both Spartan and Persian, the substance of which is, no doubt, faithfully preserved to us by Herodotus, may rank among the most imperishable records of that high-souled and generous people.

"We are not ignorant," ran the answer, dictated, and, probably, uttered by Aristides [94], "that the power of the Mede is many times greater than our own. We required not that ostentatious admonition. Yet, for the preservation of liberty, we will resist that power as we can. Cease to persuade us to contract alliance with the barbarian. Bear back to Mardonius this answer from the Athenians—So long as yonder sun," and the orator pointed to the orb [95], "holds the courses which now it holds—so long will we abjure all amity with Xerxes—so long, confiding in the aid of our gods and heroes, whose shrines and altars he hath burnt, will we struggle against him in battle and for revenge. And thou, beware how again thou bearest such proffers to the Athenians; nor, on the plea of benefit to us, urge us to dishonour; for we would not—ungrateful to thee, our guest and our friend—have any evil befall to thee from the anger of the Athenians."

"For you, Spartans! it may be consonant with human nature that you should fear our alliance with the barbarians—yet shamefully you fear it, knowing with what spirit we are animated and act. Gold hath no amount—earth hath no territory, how beautiful soever—that can tempt the Athenians to accept conditions from the Mede for the servitude of Greece. Were we so inclined, many and mighty are our

prohibitions; first and chiefly, our temples burnt and overthrown, urging us not to alliance, but to revenge. Next, the whole race of Greece has one consanguinity and one tongue, and common are its manners, its altars, and its gods base indeed, if Athenians were of these the betrayers. Lastly, learn now, if ye knew it not before, that, while one Athenian shall survive, Athens allies herself not with Xerxes."

"We thank you for your providence of us—your offers to protect our families—afflicted and impoverished as we are. We will bear, however, our misfortunes as we may—becoming no burden upon you. Be it your care to send your forces to the field. Let there be no delay. The barbarian will be on us when he learns that we have rejected his proposals. Before he proceed to Attica let us meet him in Boeotia."

IV. On receiving this answer from the Athenians the Spartan ambassadors returned home; and, shortly afterward, Mardonius, by rapid marches, conducted his army towards Attica; fresh supplies of troops recruiting his forces wheresoever he passed. The Thessalian princes, far from repenting their alliance with Mardonius, animated his ardour.

Arrived in Boeotia, the Thebans endeavoured to persuade the Persian general to encamp in that territory, and to hazard no battle, but rather to seek by bribes to the most powerful men in each city, to detach the confederates from the existent alliance. Pride, ambition, and the desire of avenging Xerxes once more upon Athens, deterred Mardonius from yielding to this counsel. He marched on to Attica—he found the territory utterly deserted. He was informed that the inhabitants were either at Salamis or with the fleet. He proceeded to Athens (B. C. 479), equally deserted, and, ten months after the first capture by Xerxes, that city a second time was occupied by the Mede.

From Athens Mardonius despatched a Greek messenger to Salamis, repeating the propositions of Alexander. On hearing these offers in council, the Athenians were animated by a species of fury. A counsellor named Lycidas having expressed himself in favour of the terms, he was immediately stoned to death. The Athenian women, roused by a similar passion with the men, inflicted the same fate upon his wife and children—one of those excesses of virtue which become crimes, but for which exigency makes no despicable excuse. [96] The ambassador returned uninjured.

V. The flight of the Athenians to Salamis had not been a willing resort. That gallant people had remained in Attica so long as they could entertain any expectation of assistance from the Peloponnesus; nor was it until compelled by despair at the inertness of their allies, and the appearance of the Persians in Boeotia, that they had removed to Salamis.

The singular and isolated policy of Sparta, which had curbed and crippled, to an exclusive regard for Spartans, all the more generous and daring principles of action, was never, perhaps, so odiously displayed as in the present indifference to an ally that had so nobly preferred the Grecian liberties to its own security. The whole of the Peloponnesus viewed with apathy the occupation of Attica, and the Spartans were employed in completing the fortifications of the isthmus.

The Athenians despatched messengers to Sparta, as did also Megara and Plataea. These ambassadors assumed a high and reproachful tone of remonstrance.

They represented the conduct of the Athenians in rejecting the overtures of the barbarians—they upbraided the Spartans with perfidy for breaking the agreement to meet the enemy in Boeotia—they declared the resentment of the Athenians at the violation of this compact, demanded immediate supplies, and indicated the plains near Thria, a village in Attica, as a fitting field of battle.

The ephors heard the remonstrance, but from day to day delayed an answer. The Spartans, according to Herodotus, were engaged in celebrating the solemnities in honour of Hyacinthus and Apollo; and this ceremonial might have sufficed as a plausible cause for procrastination, according to all the usages and formalities of Spartan manners. But perhaps there might be another and a graver reason for the delayed determination of the ephors.

When the isthmian fortifications were completed, the superstition of the regent Cleombrotus, who had superintended their construction, was alarmed by an eclipse, and he led back to Sparta the detachment he had commanded in that quarter. He returned but to die; and his son Pausanias succeeded to the regency during the continued minority of Pleistarchus, the infant heir of Leonidas [97]. If the funeral solemnities on the death of a regent were similar to those bestowed upon a deceased king, we can account at once for the delay of the ephors, since the ten days which passed without reply to the ambassadors exactly correspond in number with the ten days dedicated to public mourning. [98] But whatever the cause of the Spartan delay —and the rigid closeness of that oligarchic government kept, in yet more important matters, its motives and its policy no less a secret to contemporaneous nations than to modern inquirers—the delay itself highly incensed the Athenian

envoys: they even threatened to treat with Mardonius, and abandon Sparta to her fate, and at length fixed the day of their departure. The ephors roused themselves. Among the deputies from the various states, there was then in Sparta that Chileus of Tegea, who had been scarcely less serviceable than Themistocles in managing the affairs of Greece in the isthmian congress. This able and eminent Arcadian forcibly represented to the ephors the danger of forfeiting the Athenian alliance, and the insufficient resistance against the Persian that the fortifications of the isthmus would afford. The ephors heard, and immediately acted with the secrecy and the vigilance that belongs to oligarchies. That very night they privately despatched a body of five thousand Spartans and thirty-five thousand helots (seven to each Spartan), under the command of Pausanias.

The next morning the ephors calmly replied to the angry threats of the Athenians, by protesting that their troops were already on the march, and by this time in Oresteum, a town in Arcadia, about eighteen miles distant from Sparta. The astonished deputies [99] hastened to overtake the Spartan force, and the ephors, as if fully to atone for their past procrastination, gave them the escort and additional re-enforcement of five thousand heavy-armed Laconians or Perioeci.

VI. Mardonius soon learned from the Argives (who, not content with refusing to join the Greek legion, had held secret communications with the Persians) of the departure of the Spartan troops. Hitherto he had refrained from any outrage on the Athenian lands and city, in the hope that Athens might yet make peace with him. He now set fire to Athens, razed the principal part of what yet remained of the walls and temples [100], and deeming the soil of Attica ill adapted to his cavalry, and, from the narrowness of its outlets, disadvantageous in case of retreat, after a brief incursion into Megara he retired towards Thebes, and pitched his tents on the banks of the Asopus, extending from Erythrae to Plataea. Here his force was swelled by such of the Greeks as were friendly to his cause.

VII. Meanwhile the Spartans were joined at the isthmus by the rest of the Peloponnesian allies. Solemn sacrifices were ordained, and the auguries drawn from the victims being favourable, the Greek army proceeded onward; and, joined at Eleusis by the Athenians, marched to the foot of Cithaeron, and encamped opposite the Persians, with the river of the Asopus between the armies. Aristides commanded the Athenians, at the head of eight thousand foot; and while the armies were thus situated, a dangerous conspiracy was detected and defeated by that able general.

The disasters of the war—the devastation of lands, the burning of houses—had reduced the fortunes of many of the Athenian nobles. With their property diminished their influence. Poverty, and discontent, and jealousy of new families rising into repute [101], induced these men of fallen fortunes to conspire for the abolition of the popular government at Athens, and, failing that attempt, to betray the cause to the enemy.

This project spread secretly through the camp, and corrupted numbers; the danger became imminent. On the one hand, the conspiracy was not to be neglected; and, on the other, in such a crisis it might be dangerous too narrowly to sift a design in which men of mark and station were concerned. Aristides acted with a singular prudence. He arrested eight of the leaders. Of these he prosecuted only two (who escaped during the proceedings), and, dismissing the rest, appealed to the impending battle as the great tribunal which would acquit them of the charge and prove their loyalty to the state. [102]

VIII. Scarce was this conspiracy quelled than the cavalry of the Persians commenced their operations. At the head of that skilful and gallant horse, for which the oriental nations are yet renowned, rode their chief, Masistius, clad in complete armour of gold, of brass, and of iron, and noted for the strength of his person and the splendour of his trappings. Placed on the rugged declivities of Cithaeron, the Greeks were tolerably safe from the Persian cavalry, save only the Megarians, who, to the number of three thousand, were posted along the plain, and were on all sides charged by that agile and vapid cavalry. Thus pressed, the Megarians sent to Pausanias for assistance. The Spartan beheld the air darkened with shafts and arrows, and knew that his heavy-armed warriors were ill adapted to act against horse. He in vain endeavoured to arouse those about him by appeals to their honour —all declined the succour of the Megarians—when Aristides, causing the Athenian to eclipse the Spartan chivalry, undertook the defence. With three hundred infantry, mixed with archers, Olympiodorus, one of the ablest of the Athenian officers, advanced eagerly on the barbarian.

Masistius himself, at the head of his troops, spurred his Nisaean charger against the new enemy. A sharp and obstinate conflict ensued; when the horse of the Persian general, being wounded, threw its rider, who could not regain his feet from the weight of his armour. There, as he lay on the ground, with a swarm of foes around him, the close scales of his mail protected him from their weapons, until at length a lance pierced the brain through an opening in his visor. After an obstinate conflict for his corpse, the Persians were beaten back to the camp, where the death of one, second only to Mardonius in authority and repute, spread universal lamentation and dismay.

The body of Masistius, which, by its vast size and beautiful proportions, excited the admiration of the

victors, remained the prize of the Greeks; and, placed on a bier, it was borne triumphantly through the ranks.

IX. After this victory, Pausanias conducted his forces along the base of Cithaeron into the neighbourhood of Plataea, which he deemed a more convenient site for the disposition of his army and the supply of water. There, near the fountain of Gargaphia [103], one of the sources of the Asopus (which splits into many rivulets, bearing a common name), and renowned in song for the death of the fabulous Actaeon, nor far from the shrine of an old Plataean hero (Androcrates), the Greeks were marshalled in regular divisions, the different nations, some on a gentle acclivity, others along the plain.

In the allotment of the several stations a dispute arose between the Athenians and the Tegeans. The latter claimed, from ancient and traditionary prescription, the left wing (the right being unanimously awarded to the Spartans), and assumed, in the course of their argument, an insolent superiority over the Athenians.

"We came here to fight," answered the Athenians (or Aristides in their name [104]), "and not to dispute. But since the Tegeans proclaim their ancient as well as their modern deeds, fit is it for us to maintain our precedence over the Arcadians."

Touching slightly on the ancient times referred to by the Tegeans, and quoting their former deeds, the Athenians insisted chiefly upon Marathon; "Yet," said their orators, or orator, in conclusion, "while we maintain our right to the disputed post, it becomes us not, at this crisis, to altercate on the localities of the battle. Place us, oh Spartans! wherever seems best to you. No matter what our station; we will uphold our honour and your cause. Command, then—we obey."

Hearing this generous answer, the Spartan leaders were unanimous in favour of the Athenians; and they accordingly occupied the left wing.

X. Thus were marshalled that confederate army, presenting the strongest force yet opposed to the Persians, and comprising the whole might and manhood of the free Grecian states; to the right, ten thousand Lacedaemonians, one half, as we have seen, composed of the Perioeci, the other moiety of the pure Spartan race—to each warrior of the latter half were allotted seven armed helots, to each of the heavy-armed Perioeci one serving-man. Their whole force was, therefore, no less than fifty thousand men. Next to the Spartans (a kind of compromise of their claim) were the one thousand five hundred Tegeans; beyond these five thousand Corinthians; and to them contiguous three hundred Potidaeans of Pallene, whom the inundation of their seas had saved from the Persian arms. Next in order, Orchomenus ranged its six hundred Arcadians; Sicyon sent three thousand, Epidaurus eight hundred, and Troezene one thousand warriors. Neighbouring the last were two hundred Lepreatae, and by them four hundred Myceneans and Tirynthians [105]. Stationed by the Tirynthians came, in successive order, a thousand Phliasians, three hundred Hermionians, six hundred Eretrians and Styreans, four hundred Chalcidians, five hundred Ambracians, eight hundred Leucadians and Anactorians, two hundred Paleans of Cephallenia, and five hundred only of the islanders of Aegina. Three thousand Megarians and six hundred Plataeans were ranged contiguous to the Athenians, whose force of eight thousand men, under the command of Aristides, closed the left wing.

Thus the total of the heavy-armed soldiery was thirty-eight thousand seven hundred. To these were added the light-armed force of thirty-five thousand helots and thirty-four thousand five hundred attendants on the Laconians and other Greeks; the whole amounting to one hundred and eight thousand two hundred men, besides one thousand eight hundred Thespians, who, perhaps, on account of the destruction of their city by the Persian army, were without the heavy arms of their confederates.

Such was the force—not insufficient in number, but stronger in heart, union, the memory of past victories, and the fear of future chains— that pitched the tent along the banks of the rivulets which confound with the Asopus their waters and their names.

XI. In the interim Mardonius had marched from his former post, and lay encamped on that part of the Asopus nearest to Plataea. His brave Persians fronted the Lacedaemonians and Tegeans; and, in successive order, ranged the Medes and Bactrians, the Indians and the Sacae, the Boeotians, Locrians, Malians, Thessalians, Macedonians, and the reluctant aid of a thousand Phocians. But many of the latter tribe about the fastnesses of Parnassus, openly siding with the Greeks, harassed the barbarian outskirts: Herodotus calculates the hostile force at three hundred and fifty thousand, fifty thousand of which were composed of Macedonians and Greeks. And, although the historian has omitted to deduct from this total the loss sustained by Artabazus at Potidaea, it is yet most probable that the barbarian nearly trebled the Grecian army—odds less fearful than the Greeks had already met and vanquished.

XII. The armies thus ranged, sacrifices were offered up on both sides. It happened, by a singular coincidence, that to either army was an Elean augur. The appearance of the entrails forbade both

Persian and Greek to cross the Asopus, and ordained each to act on the defensive.

That the Persian chief should have obeyed the dictates of a Grecian soothsayer is sufficiently probable; partly because a superstitious people rarely despise the superstitions of another faith, principally because a considerable part of the invading army, and that perhaps the bravest and the most skilful, was composed of native Greeks, whose prejudices it was politic to flatter—perilous to affront.

Eight days were consumed in inactivity, the armies confronting each other without motion; when Mardonius, in order to cut off the new forces which every day resorted to the Grecian camp, despatched a body of cavalry to seize the pass of Cithaeron. Falling in with a convoy of five hundred beasts of burden, carrying provisions from the Peloponnesus, the barbarians, with an inhumanity sufficient, perhaps, to prove that the detachment was not composed of Persians, properly so speaking, a mild though gallant people—slaughtered both man and beast. The provisions were brought to the Persian camp.

XIII. During the two following days Mardonius advanced nearer to the Asopus, and his cavalry (assisted by the Thebans, who were the right arm of the barbarian army), in repeated skirmishes, greatly harassed the Greeks with much daring and little injury.

At length Mardonius, either wearied of this inactivity or unable to repress the spirit of a superior army, not accustomed to receive the attack, resolved to reject all further compliance with the oracles of this Elean soothsayer, and, on the following morning, to give battle to the Greeks. Acting against one superstition, he sagaciously, however, sought to enlist on his behalf another; and, from the decision of a mortal, he appealed to the ambiguous oracles of the Delphic god, which had ever one interpretation for the enterprise and another for the success.

XIV. "The watches of the night were set," says Herodotus, in his animated and graphic strain—"the night itself was far advanced—a universal and utter stillness prevailed throughout the army, buried in repose—when Alexander, the Macedonian prince, rode secretly from the Persian camp, and, coming to the outposts of the Athenians, whose line was immediately opposed to his own, demanded an audience of their commanders. This obtained, the Macedonian thus addressed them: 'I am come to inform you of a secret you must impart to Pausanias alone. From remote antiquity I am of Grecian lineage. I am solicitous of the safety of Greece. Long since, but for the auguries, would Mardonius have given battle. Regarding these no longer, he will attack you early on the morning. Be prepared. If he change his purpose, remain as you are—he has provisions only for a few days more. Should the event of war prove favourable, you will but deem it fitting to make some effort for the independence of one who exposes himself to so great a peril for the purpose of apprizing you of the intentions of the foe. I am Alexander of Macedon.'"

"Thus saying, the horseman returned to the Persian camp."

"The Athenian leaders hastened to Pausanias, and informed him of what they had heard."

The Spartan does not appear, according to the strong expressions [106] of Herodotus, to have received the intelligence with the customary dauntlessness of his race. He feared the Persians, he was unacquainted with their mode of warfare, and he proposed to the Athenians to change posts with the Lacedaemonians; "For you," said he, "have before contended with the Mede, and your experience of their warfare you learned at Marathon. We, on the other hand, have fought against the Boeotians and Thessalians [opposed to the left wing]. Let us then change our stations."

At first the Athenian officers were displeased at the offer, not from terror, but from pride; and it seemed to them as if they were shifted, like helots, from post to post at the Spartan's pleasure. But Aristides, whose power of persuasion consisted chiefly in appeals, not to the baser, but the loftier passions, and who, in swaying, exalted his countrymen—represented to them that the right wing, which the Spartan proposed to surrender, was, in effect, the station of command.

"And are you," he said, "not pleased with the honour you obtain, nor sensible of the advantage of contending, not against the sons of Greece, but the barbarian invader?" [107]

These words animated those whom the Athenian addressed; they instantly agreed to exchange posts with the Spartans, and "to fight for the trophies of Marathon and Salamis." [108]

XV. As, in the dead of night, the Athenians marched to their new station, they exhorted each other to valour and to the recollection of former victories. But Mardonius, learning from deserters the change of position, moved his Persians opposite the Spartans; and Pausanias again returning to the right, Mardonius pursued a similar manoeuvre. Thus the day was consumed without an action. The troops having resumed their former posts, Mardonius sent a herald to the Spartans, chiding them for their

cowardice, and proposing that an allotted number meet equal Spartans in battle, and whoever conquered should be deemed victors over the whole adverse army.

This challenge drew no reply from the Spartans. And Mardonius, construing the silence into a proof of fear, already anticipated the victory. His cavalry, advancing upon the Greeks, distressed them from afar and in safety with their shafts and arrows. They succeeded in gaining the Gargaphian fountain, which supplied water to the Grecian army, and choked up the stream. Thus cut off from water, and, at the same time, yet more inconvenienced by the want of provisions, the convoy of which was intercepted by the Persian cavalry, the Grecian chiefs determined to shift the ground, and occupy a space which, being surrounded by rivulets, was termed the Island of Oeroe [109], and afforded an ample supply of water. This island was about a mile from their present encampment: thence they proposed to detach half their army to relieve a convoy of provisions encompassed in the mountains.

About four hours after sunset the army commenced its march; but when Pausanias gave the word to his Spartans, one officer, named Amompharetus, obstinately refused to stir. He alleged the customs and oaths of Sparta, and declared he would not fly from the barbarian foe, nor connive at the dishonour of Sparta.

XVI. Pausanias, though incensed at the obstinacy of the officer, was unwilling to leave him and his troop to perish; and while the dispute was still unsettled, the Athenians, suspicious of their ally, "for they knew well it was the custom of Spartans to say one thing and to think another," [110] despatched a horseman to Pausanias to learn the cause of the delay. The messenger found the soldiers in their ranks; the leaders in violent altercation. Pausanias was arguing with Amompharetus, when the last, just as the Athenian approached, took up a huge stone with both hands, and throwing it at the feet of Pausanias, vehemently exclaimed, "With this calculus I give my suffrage against flying from the stranger." Pausanias, in great perplexity, bade the Athenian report the cause of the delay, and implore his countrymen to halt a little, that they might act in concert. At length, towards morning, Pausanias resolved, despite Amompharetus, to commence his march. All his forces proceeded along the steep defiles at the base of Cithaeron, from fear of the Persian cavalry; the more dauntless Athenians along the plain. Amompharetus, after impotent attempts to detain his men, was reluctantly compelled to follow.

XVII. Mardonius, beholding the vacant ground before him no longer bristling with the Grecian ranks, loudly vented his disdain of the cowardice of the fugitives, and instantly led his impatient army over the Asopus in pursuit. As yet, the Athenians, who had already passed the plain, were concealed by the hills; and the Tegeans and Lacedaemonians were the sole object of attack.

As the troops of Mardonius advanced, the rest of the Persian armament, deeming the task was now not to fight but to pursue, raised their standards and poured forward tumultuously, without discipline or order.

Pausanias, pressed by the Persian line, and if not of a timorous, at least of an irresolute temper, lost no time in sending to the Athenians for succour. But when the latter were on their march with the required aid, they were suddenly intercepted by the auxiliary Greeks in the Persian service, and cut off from the rescue of the Spartans.

The Spartans beheld themselves thus left unsupported with considerable alarm. Yet their force, including the Tegeans and helots, was fifty-three thousand men. Committing himself to the gods, Pausanias ordained a solemn sacrifice, his whole army awaiting the result, while the shafts of the Persian bowmen poured on them near and fast. But the entrails presented discouraging omens, and the sacrifice was again renewed. Meanwhile the Spartans evinced their characteristic fortitude and discipline—not one man stirring from his ranks until the auguries should assume a more favouring aspect; all harassed, and some wounded, by the Persian arrows, they yet, seeking protection only beneath their broad bucklers, waited with a stern patience the time of their leader and of Heaven. Then fell Callicrates, the stateliest and strongest soldier in the whole army, lamenting, not death, but that his sword was as yet undrawn against the invader.

XVIII. And still sacrifice after sacrifice seemed to forbid the battle, when Pausanias, lifting his eyes, that streamed with tears, to the temple of Juno that stood hard by, supplicated the tutelary goddess of Cithaeron, that if the fates forbade the Greeks to conquer, they might at least fall like warriors [111]. And while uttering this prayer, the tokens waited for became suddenly visible in the victims, and the augurs announced the promise of coming victory.

Therewith the order of battle rang instantly through the army, and, to use the poetical comparison of Plutarch, the Spartan phalanx suddenly stood forth in its strength, like some fierce animal—erecting its bristles and preparing its vengeance for the foe. The ground, broken in many steep and precipitous ridges, and intersected by the Asopus, whose sluggish stream [112] winds over a broad and rushy bed,

was unfavourable to the movements of cavalry, and the Persian foot advanced therefore on the Greeks.

Drawn up in their massive phalanx, the Lacedaemonians presented an almost impenetrable body—sweeping slowly on, compact and serried— while the hot and undisciplined valour of the Persians, more fortunate in the skirmish than the battle, broke itself into a thousand waves upon that moving rock. Pouring on in small numbers at a time, they fell fast round the progress of the Greeks—their armour slight against the strong pikes of Sparta—their courage without skill—their numbers without discipline; still they fought gallantly, even when on the ground seizing the pikes with their naked hands, and with the wonderful agility which still characterizes the oriental swordsman, springing to their feet and regaining their arms when seemingly overcome—wresting away their enemies' shields, and grappling with them desperately hand to hand.

XIX. Foremost of a band of a thousand chosen Persians, conspicuous by his white charger, and still more by his daring valour, rode Mardonius, directing the attack—fiercer wherever his armour blazed. Inspired by his presence, the Persians fought worthily of their warlike fame, and, even in falling, thinned the Spartan ranks. At length the rash but gallant leader of the Asiatic armies received a mortal wound—his scull was crushed in by a stone from the hand of a Spartan [113]. His chosen band, the boast of the army, fell fighting round him, but his death was the general signal of defeat and flight. Encumbered by their long robes, and pressed by the relentless conquerors, the Persians fled in disorder towards their camp, which was secured by wooden intrenchments, by gates, and towers, and walls. Here, fortifying themselves as they best might, they contended successfully, and with advantage, against the Lacedaemonians, who were ill skilled in assault and siege.

Meanwhile the Athenians obtained the victory on the plains over the Greeks of Mardonius—finding their most resolute enemy in the Thebans (three hundred of whose principal warriors fell in the field)—and now joined the Spartans at the Persian camp. The Athenians are said to have been better skilled in the art of siege than the Spartans; yet at that time their experience could scarcely have been greater. The Athenians were at all times, however, of a more impetuous temper; and the men who had "run to the charge" at Marathon were not to be baffled by the desperate remnant of their ancient foe. They scaled the walls —they effected a breach through which the Tegeans were the first to rush—the Greeks poured fast and fierce into the camp. Appalled, dismayed, stupefied by the suddenness and greatness of their loss, the Persians no longer sustained their fame—they dispersed themselves in all directions, falling, as they fled, with a prodigious slaughter, so that out of that mighty armament scarce three thousand effected an escape. We must except, however, the wary and distrustful Artabazus, who, on the first tokens of defeat, had fled with the forty thousand Parthians and Chorasmians he commanded towards Phocis, in the intention to gain the Hellespont. The Mantineans arrived after the capture of the camp, too late for their share of glory; they endeavoured to atone the loss by the pursuit of Artabazus, which was, however, ineffectual. The Eleans arrived after the Mantineans. The leaders of both these people were afterward banished.

XX. An Aeginetan proposed to Pausanias to inflict on the corpse of Mardonius the same insult which Xerxes had put upon the body of Leonidas.

The Spartan indignantly refused. "After elevating my country to fame," said he, "would you have me depress it to infamy by vengeance on the body of the dead? Leonidas and Thermopylae are sufficiently avenged by this mighty overthrow of the living."

The body of that brave and ill-fated general, the main author of the war, was removed the next day—by whose piety and to what sepulchre is unknown. The tomb of his doubtful fame is alone eternally visible along the plains of Plataea, and above the gray front of the imperishable Cithaeron!

XXI. The victory won (September, B. C. 479), the conquerors were dazzled by the gorgeous plunder which remained—tents and couches decorated with precious metals—cups, and vessels, and sacks of gold— and the dead themselves a booty, from the costly ornaments of their chains and bracelets, and cimeters vainly splendid—horses, and camels, and Persian women, and all the trappings and appliances by which despotism made a luxury of war.

Pausanias forbade the booty to be touched [114], and directed the helots to collect the treasure in one spot. But those dexterous slaves secreted many articles of value, by the purchase of which several of the Aeginetans, whose avarice was sharpened by a life of commerce, enriched themselves—obtaining gold at the price of brass.

Piety dedicated to the gods a tenth part of the booty—from which was presented to the shrine of Delphi a golden tripod, resting on a three-headed snake of brass; to the Corinthian Neptune a brazen state of the deity, seven cubits high; and to the Jupiter of Olympia a statue of ten cubits. Pausanias obtained also a tenth of the produce in each article of plunder—horses and camels, women and gold—a

prize which ruined in rewarding him. The rest was divided among the soldiers, according to their merit.

So much, however, was left unappropriated in the carelessness of satiety, that, in after times, the battlefield still afforded to the search of the Plataeans chests of silver and gold, and other treasures.

XXIL Taking possession of the tent of Mardonius, which had formerly been that of Xerxes, Pausanias directed the oriental slaves who had escaped the massacre to prepare a banquet after the fashion of the Persians, and as if served to Mardonius. Besides this gorgeous feast, the Spartan ordered his wonted repast to be prepared; and then, turning to the different chiefs, exclaimed—"See the folly of the Persian, who forsook such splendour to plunder such poverty."

The story has in it something of the sublime. But the austere Spartan was soon corrupted by the very luxuries he affected to disdain. It is often that we despise to-day what we find it difficult to resist to-morrow.

XXIII. The task of reward to the living completed, the Greeks proceeded to that of honour to the dead. In three trenches the Lacedaemonians were interred; one contained those who belonged to a class in Sparta called the Knights [115], of whom two hundred had conducted Themistocles to Tegea (among these was the stubborn Amompharetus); the second, the other Spartans; the third, the helots. The Athenians, Tegeans, Megarians, Phliasians, each had their single and separate places of sepulture, and, over all, barrows of earth were raised. Subsequently, tribes and states, that had shared indeed the final battle or the previous skirmishes, but without the glory of a loss of life, erected cenotaphs to imaginary dead in that illustrious burial-field. Among those spurious monuments was one dedicated to the Aeginetans. Aristodemus, the Spartan who had returned safe from Thermopylae, fell at Plataea, the most daring of the Greeks on that day, voluntarily redeeming a dishonoured life by a glorious death. But to his manes alone of the Spartan dead no honours were decreed.

XXIV. Plutarch relates that a dangerous dispute ensued between the Spartans and Athenians as to their relative claim to the Aristeia, or first military honours; the question was decided by awarding them to the Plataeans—a state of which none were jealous; from a similar motive, ordinary men are usually found possessed of the honours due to the greatest.

More important than the Aristeia, had the spirit been properly maintained, were certain privileges then conferred on Plataea. Thither, in a subsequent assembly of the allies, it was proposed by Aristides that deputies from the states of Greece should be annually sent to sacrifice to Jupiter the Deliverer, and confer upon the general politics of Greece. There, every fifth year, should be celebrated games in honour of Liberty; while the Plataeans themselves, exempted from military service, should be deemed, so long as they fulfilled the task thus imposed upon them, a sacred and inviolable people. Thus Plataea nominally became a second Elis—its battle-field another Altis. Aristides, at the same time, sought to enforce the large and thoughtful policy commenced by Themistocles. He endeavoured to draw the jealous states of Greece into a common and perpetual league, maintained against all invaders by a standing force of one thousand cavalry, one hundred ships, and ten thousand heavy-armed infantry.

XXV. An earnest and deliberate council was now held, in which it was resolved to direct the victorious army against Thebes, and demand the persons of those who had sided with the Mede. Fierce as had been the hostility of that state to the Hellenic liberties, its sin was that of the oligarchy rather than the people. The most eminent of these traitors to Greece were Timagenidas and Attaginus, and the allies resolved to destroy the city unless those chiefs were given up to justice.

On the eleventh day from the battle they sat down before Thebes, and on the refusal of the inhabitants to surrender the chiefs so justly obnoxious, laid waste the Theban lands.

Whatever we may think of the conduct of Timagenidas in espousing the cause of the invaders of Greece, we must give him the praise of a disinterested gallantry, which will remind the reader of the siege of Calais by Edward III., and the generosity of Eustace de St. Pierre. He voluntarily proposed to surrender himself to the besiegers.

The offer was accepted: Timagenidas and several others were delivered to Pausanias, removed to Corinth, and there executed—a stern but salutary example. Attaginus saved himself by flight. His children, given up to Pausanias, were immediately dismissed. "Infants," said the Spartan, "could not possibly have conspired against us with the Mede."

While Thebes preserved herself from destruction, Artabazus succeeded in effecting his return to Asia, his troop greatly reduced by the attacks of the Thracians, and the excesses of famine and fatigue.

XXVI. On the same day as that on which the battle of Plataea crushed the land-forces of Persia, a no less important victory was gained over their fleet at Mycale in Ionia.

It will be remembered that Leotychides, the Spartan king, and the Athenian Xanthippus, had conducted the Grecian navy to Delos. There anchored, they received a deputation from Samos, among whom was Hegesistratus, the son of Aristagoras. These ambassadors declared that all the Ionians waited only the moment to revolt from the Persian yoke, and that the signal would be found in the first active measures of the Grecian confederates. Leotychides, induced by these representations, received the Samians into the general league, and set sail to Samos. There, drawn up in line of battle, near the temple of Juno, they prepared to hazard an engagement.

But the Persians, on their approach, retreated to the continent, in order to strengthen themselves with their land-forces, which, to the amount of sixty thousand, under the command of the Persian Tigranes, Xerxes had stationed at Mycale for the protection of Ionia.

Arrived at Mycale, they drew their ships to land, fortifying them with strong intrenchments and barricades, and then sanguinely awaited the result.

The Greeks, after a short consultation, resolved upon pursuit. Approaching the enemy's station, they beheld the sea deserted, the ships secured by intrenchments, and long ranks of infantry ranged along the shore. Leotychides, by a herald, exhorted the Ionians in the Persian service to remember their common liberties, and that on the day of battle their watchword would be "Hebe."

The Persians, distrusting these messages, though uttered in a tongue they understood not, and suspecting the Samians, took their arms from the latter; and, desirous of removing the Milesians to a distance, intrusted them with the guard of the paths to the heights of Mycale. Using these precautions against the desertion of their allies, the Persians prepared for battle.

The Greeks were anxious and fearful not so much for themselves as for their countrymen in Boeotia, opposed to the mighty force of Mardonius. But a report spreading through the camp that a complete victory had been obtained in that territory (an artifice, most probably, of Leotychides), animated their courage and heightened their hopes.

The Athenians, who, with the troops of Corinth, Sicyon, and Troezene, formed half the army, advanced by the coast and along the plain—the Lacedaemonians by the more steep and wooded courses; and while the latter were yet on their march, the Athenians were already engaged at the intrenchments (Battle of Mycale, September, B. C. 479).

Inspired not more by enmity than emulation, the Athenians urged each other to desperate feats—that they, and not the Spartans, might have the honours of the day. They poured fiercely on—after an obstinate and equal conflict, drove back the foe to the barricades that girt their ships, stormed the intrenchments, carried the wall, and, rushing in with their allies, put the barbarians to disorderly and rapid flight. The proper Persians, though but few in number, alone stood their ground—and even when Tigranes himself was slain, resolutely fought on until the Lacedaemonians entered the intrenchment, and all who had survived the Athenian, perished by the Spartan, sword.

The disarmed Samians, as soon as the fortunes of the battle became apparent, gave all the assistance they could render to the Greeks; the other Ionians seized the same opportunity to revolt and turn their arms against their allies. In the mountain defiles the Milesians intercepted their own fugitive allies, consigning them to the Grecian sword, and active beyond the rest in their slaughter. So relentless and so faithless are men, compelled to servitude, when the occasion summons them to be free.

XXVII. This battle, in which the Athenians were pre-eminently distinguished, was followed up by the conflagration of the Persian ships and the collection of the plunder. The Greeks then retired to Samos. Here deliberating, it was proposed by the Peloponnesian leaders that Ionia should henceforth, as too dangerous and remote to guard, be abandoned to the barbarian, and that, in recompense, the Ionians should be put into possession of the maritime coasts of those Grecian states which had sided with the Mede. The Athenians resisted so extreme a proposition, and denied the power of the Peloponnesians to dispose of Athenian colonies. The point was surrendered by the Peloponnesians; the Ionians of the continent were left to make their own terms with the barbarian, but the inhabitants of the isles which had assisted against the Mede were received into the general confederacy, bound by a solemn pledge never to desert it. The fleet then sailed to the Hellespont, with the design to destroy the bridge, which they believed still existent. Finding it, however, already broken, Leotychides and the Peloponnesians returned to Greece. The Athenians resolved to attempt the recovery of the colony of Miltiades in the Chersonese. The Persians collected their whole remaining force at the strongest hold in that peninsula —the Athenians laid siege to it (begun in the autumn, B. C. 479, concluded in the spring, B. C. 478), and, after enduring a famine so obstinate that the cordage, or rather straps, of their bedding were consumed for food, the Persians evacuated the town, which the inhabitants then cheerfully surrendered.

Thus concluding their victories, the Athenians returned to Greece, carrying with them a vast treasure, and, not the least precious relics, the fragments and cables of the Hellespontic bridge, to be suspended in their temples.

XXVIII. Lingering at Sardis, Xerxes beheld the scanty and exhausted remnants of his mighty force, the fugitives of the fatal days of Mycale and Plataea. The army over which he had wept in the zenith of his power, had fulfilled the prediction of his tears: and the armed might of Media and Egypt, of Lydia and Assyria, was now no more!

So concluded the great Persian invasion—that war the most memorable in the history of mankind, whether from the vastness or from the failure of its designs. We now emerge from the poetry that belongs to early Greece, through the mists of which the forms of men assume proportions as gigantic as indistinct. The enchanting Herodotus abandons us, and we do not yet permanently acquire, in the stead of his romantic and wild fidelity, the elaborate and sombre statesmanship of the calm Thucydides. Henceforth we see more of the beautiful and the wise, less of the wonderful and vast. What the heroic age is to tradition, the Persian invasion is to history.

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