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XERXES

Jacob Abbott

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Jacob Abbott

Xerxes / Makers of History



Artabanus and the Ghost

PREFACE

One special object which the author of this series has had in view, in the plan and method which he has followed in the preparation of the successive volumes, has been to adapt them to the purposes of text-books in schools. The study of a *general compend* of history, such as is frequently used as a text-book, is highly useful, if it comes in at the right stage of education, when the mind is sufficiently matured, and has acquired sufficient preliminary knowledge to understand and appreciate so condensed a generalization as a summary of the whole history of a nation contained in an ordinary volume must necessarily be. Without this degree of maturity of mind, and this preparation, the study of such a work will be, as it too frequently is, a mere mechanical committing to memory of names, and dates, and phrases, which awaken no interest, communicate no ideas, and impart no useful knowledge to the mind.

A class of ordinary pupils, who have not yet become much acquainted with history, would, accordingly, be more benefited by having their attention concentrated, at first, on detached and separate topics, such as those which form the subjects, respectively, of these volumes. By studying thus fully the history of individual monarchs, or the narratives of single events, they can go more fully into detail; they conceive of the transactions described as realities; their reflecting and reasoning powers are occupied on what they read; they take notice of the motives of conduct, of the gradual development of character, the good or ill desert of actions, and of the connection of causes and consequences, both in respect to the influence of wisdom and virtue on the one hand, and, on the other, of folly and crime. In a word, their *minds* and *hearts* are occupied instead of merely their memories. They reason, they sympathize, they pity, they approve, and they condemn. They enjoy the real and true pleasure which constitutes the charm of historical study for minds that are mature; and they acquire a taste for truth instead of fiction, which will tend to direct their reading into proper channels in all future years.

The use of these works, therefore, as text-books in classes, has been kept continually in mind in the preparation of them. The running index on the tops of the pages is intended to serve instead of questions. These captions can be used in their present form as *topics*, in respect to which, when announced in the class, the pupils are to repeat substantially what is said on the page; or, on the other hand, questions in form, if that mode is preferred, can be readily framed from them by the teacher. In all the volumes, a very regular system of division is observed, which will greatly facilitate the assignment of lessons.



Map of the Persian Empire

Chapter I. The Mother of Xerxes

B.C. 522–484

Persian magnificence.

The name of Xerxes is associated in the minds of men with the idea of the highest attainable elevation of human magnificence and grandeur. This monarch was the sovereign of the ancient Persian empire when it was at the height of its prosperity and power. It is probable, however, that his greatness and fame lose nothing by the manner in which his story comes down to us through the Greek historians. The Greeks conquered Xerxes, and, in relating his history, they magnify the wealth, the power, and the resources of his empire, by way of exalting the greatness and renown of their own exploits in subduing him.

The mother of Xerxes.
Cambyses.

The mother of Xerxes was Atossa, a daughter of Cyrus the Great, who was the founder of the Persian empire. Cyrus was killed in Scythia, a wild and barbarous region lying north of the Black and Caspian Seas. His son Cambyses succeeded him.

Ambition and selfishness of kings.

A kingdom, or an empire, was regarded, in ancient days, much in the light of an estate, which the sovereign held as a species of property, and which he was to manage mainly with a view to the promotion of his own personal aggrandizement and pleasure. A king or an emperor could have more palaces, more money, and more wives than other men; and if he was of an overbearing or ambitious spirit, he could march into his neighbors' territories, and after gratifying his love of adventure with various romantic exploits, and gaining great renown by his ferocious impetuosity in battle, he could end his expedition, perhaps, by adding his neighbors' palaces, and treasures, and wives to his own.

General influence exerted by great sovereigns upon the community.

Divine Providence, however, the mysterious power that overrules all the passions and impulses of men, and brings extended and general good out of local and particular evil, has made the ambition and the selfishness of princes the great means of preserving order and government among men. These great ancient despots, for example, would not have been able to collect their revenues, or enlist their armies, or procure supplies for their campaigns, unless their dominions were under a regular and complete system of social organization, such as should allow all the industrial pursuits of commerce and of agriculture, throughout the mass of the community, to go regularly on. Thus absolute monarchs, however ambitious, and selfish, and domineering in their characters, have a strong personal interest in the establishment of order and of justice between man and man throughout all the regions which are under their sway. In fact, the greater their ambition, their selfishness, and their pride, the stronger will this interest be; for, just in proportion as order, industry, and internal tranquillity prevail in a country, just in that proportion can revenues be collected from it, and armies raised and maintained.

Labors of great conquerors.
Cæsar.
Darius.

William the Conqueror.
Napoleon.

It is a mistake, therefore, to suppose of the great heroes, and sovereigns, and conquerors that have appeared from time to time among mankind, that the usual and ordinary result of their influence and action has been that of disturbance and disorganization. It is true that a vast amount of disturbance and disorganization has often followed from the march of their armies, their sieges, their invasions, and the other local and temporary acts of violence which they commit; but these are the exceptions, not the rule. It must be that such things are exceptions, since, in any extended and general view of the subject, a much greater amount of social organization, industry, and peace is necessary to raise and maintain an army, than that army can itself destroy. The deeds of destruction which great conquerors perform attract more attention and make a greater impression upon mankind than the quiet, patient, and long-continued labors by which they perfect and extend the general organization of the social state. But these labors, though less noticed by men, have really employed the energies of great sovereigns in a far greater degree than mankind have generally imagined. Thus we should describe the work of Cæsar's life in a single word more truly by saying that he *organized* Europe, than that he conquered it. His bridges, his roads, his systems of jurisprudence, his coinage, his calendar, and other similar means and instruments of social arrangement, and facilities for promoting the pursuits of industry and peace, mark, far more properly, the real work which that great conqueror performed among mankind, than his battles and his victories. Darius was, in the same way, the organizer of Asia. William the Conqueror completed, or, rather, advanced very far toward completing, the social organization of England; and even in respect to Napoleon, the true and proper memorial of his career is the successful working of the institutions, the systems, and the codes which he perfected and introduced into the social state, and not the brazen column, formed from captured cannon, which stands in the Place Vendôme.

Heroes and conquerors.
The main spring of their actions.

These considerations, obviously true, though not always borne in mind, are, however, to be considered as making the characters of the great sovereigns, in a moral point of view, neither the worse nor the better. In all that they did, whether in arranging and systematizing the functions of social life, or in ruthless deeds of conquest and destruction, they were actuated, in a great measure, by selfish ambition. They arranged and organized the social state in order to form a more compact and solid pedestal for the foundation of their power. They maintained peace and order among their people, just as a master would suppress quarrels among his slaves, because peace among laborers is essential to productive results. They fixed and defined legal rights, and established courts to determine and enforce them; they protected property; they counted and classified men; they opened roads; they built bridges; they encouraged commerce; they hung robbers, and exterminated pirates—all, that the collection of their revenues and the enlistment of their armies might go on without hinderance or restriction. Many of them, indeed, may have been animated, in some degree, by a higher and nobler sentiment than this. Some may have felt a sort of pride in the contemplation of a great, and prosperous, and wealthy empire, analogous to that which a proprietor feels in surveying a well-conditioned, successful, and productive estate. Others, like Alfred, may have felt a sincere and honest interest in the welfare of their fellow-men, and the promotion of human happiness may have been, in a greater or less degree, the direct object of their aim. Still, it can not be denied that a selfish and reckless ambition has been, in general, the main spring of action with heroes and conquerors, which, while it aimed only at personal aggrandizement, has been made to operate, through the peculiar mechanism of the social state which the Divine wisdom has contrived, as a means, in the main of preserving and extending peace and order among mankind, and not of destroying them.

Cyrus.

Character and career of Cambyses.

But to return to Atossa. Her father Cyrus, who laid the foundation of the great Persian empire, was, for a hero and conqueror, tolerably considerate and just, and he desired, probably, to promote the welfare and happiness of his millions of subjects; but his son Cambyses, Atossa's brother, having been brought up in expectation of succeeding to vast wealth and power, and having been, as the sons of the wealthy and the powerful often are in all ages of the world, wholly neglected by his father during the early part of his life, and entirely unaccustomed to control, became a wild, reckless, proud, selfish, and ungovernable young man. His father was killed suddenly in battle, as has already been stated, and Cambyses succeeded him. Cambyses's career was short, desperate, and most tragical in its end.¹ In fact, he was one of the most savage, reckless, and abominable monsters that have ever lived.

Wives of Cambyses.

It was the custom in those days for the Persian monarchs to have many wives, and, what is still more remarkable, whenever any monarch died, his successor inherited his predecessor's family as well as his throne. Cyrus had several children by his various wives. Cambyses and Smerdis were the only sons, but there were daughters, among whom Atossa was the most distinguished. The ladies of the court were accustomed to reside in different palaces, or in different suites of apartments in the same palace, so that they lived in a great measure isolated from each other. When Cambyses came to the throne, and thus entered into possession of his father's palaces, he saw and fell in love with one of his father's daughters. He wished to make her one of his wives. He was accustomed to the unrestricted indulgence of every appetite and passion, but he seems to have had some slight misgivings in regard to such a step as this. He consulted the Persian judges. They conferred upon the subject, and then replied that they had searched among the laws of the realm, and though they found no law allowing a man to marry his sister, they found many which authorized a Persian king to do whatever he pleased.

He marries his sister.

Cambyses therefore added the princess to the number of his wives, and not long afterward he married another of his father's daughters in the same way. One of these princesses was Atossa.

Death of Cambyses.

Cambyses invaded Egypt, and in the course of his mad career in that country he killed his brother Smerdis and one of his sisters, and at length was killed himself. Atossa escaped the dangers of this stormy and terrible reign, and returned safely to Susa after Cambyses's death.

Smerdis the magian.

Cunning of Smerdis.

Smerdis, the brother of Cambyses, would have been Cambyses's successor if he had survived him; but he had been privately assassinated by Cambyses's orders, though his death had been kept profoundly secret by those who had perpetrated the deed. There was another Smerdis in Susa, the Persian capital, who was a magian—that is, a sort of priest—in whose hands, as regent, Cambyses had left the government while he was absent on his campaigns. This magian Smerdis accordingly conceived the plan of usurping the throne, as if he were Smerdis the prince, resorting to a great many ingenious and cunning schemes to conceal his deception. Among his other plans, one was to keep himself wholly sequestered from public view, with a few favorites, such, especially, as had not personally known Smerdis the prince. In the same manner he secluded from each other and from himself all who had known Smerdis, in order to prevent their conferring with one another, or communicating to each other any suspicions which they might chance to entertain. Such seclusion, so far as related to the ladies of the royal family, was not unusual after the death of a king, and

¹ His history is given in the first chapter of Darius the Great.

Smerdis did not deviate from the ordinary custom, except to make the isolation and confinement of the princesses and queens more rigorous and strict than common. By means of this policy he was enabled to go on for some months without detection, living all the while in the greatest luxury and splendor, but at the same time in absolute seclusion, and in unceasing anxiety and fear.

His feeling of insecurity.

One chief source of his solicitude was lest he should be detected by means of his *ears*! Some years before, when he was in a comparatively obscure position, he had in some way or other offended his sovereign, and was punished by having his ears cut off. It was necessary, therefore, to keep the marks of this mutilation carefully concealed by means of his hair and his head-dress, and even with these precautions he could never feel perfectly secure.

Smerdis suspected.

His imposture discovered.

At last one of the nobles of the court, a sagacious and observing man, suspected the imposture. He had no access to Smerdis himself, but his daughter, whose name was Phædyma, was one of Smerdis's wives. The nobleman was excluded from all direct intercourse with Smerdis, and even with his daughter; but he contrived to send word to his daughter, inquiring whether her husband was the true Smerdis or not. She replied that she did not know, inasmuch as she had never seen any other Smerdis, if, indeed, there had been another. The nobleman then attempted to communicate with Atossa, but he found it impossible to do so. Atossa had, of course, known her brother well, and was on that very account very closely secluded by the magian. As a last resort, the nobleman sent to his daughter a request that she would watch for an opportunity to feel for her husband's ears while he was asleep. He admitted that this would be a dangerous attempt, but his daughter, he said, ought to be willing to make it, since, if her pretended husband were really an impostor, she ought to take even a stronger interest than others in his detection. Phædyma was at first afraid to undertake so dangerous a commission; but she at length ventured to do so, and, by passing her hand under his turban one night, while he was sleeping on his couch, she found that the ears were gone.²

Death of Smerdis.

Succession of Darius.

The consequence of this discovery was, that a conspiracy was formed to dethrone and destroy the usurper. The plot was successful. Smerdis was killed; his imprisoned queens were set free, and Darius was raised to the throne in his stead.

Atossa now, by that strange principle of succession which has been already alluded to, became the wife of Darius, and she figures frequently and conspicuously in history during his long and splendid reign.

Atossa's sickness.

The Greek physician.

Her name is brought into notice in one case in a remarkable manner, in connection with an expedition which Darius sent on an exploring tour into Greece and Italy. She was herself the means, in fact, of sending the expedition. She was sick; and after suffering secretly and in silence as long as possible—the nature of her complaint being such as to make her unwilling to speak of it to others—she at length determined to consult a Greek physician who had been brought to Persia as a captive, and had acquired great celebrity at Susa by his medical science and skill. The physician said that he would undertake her case on condition that she would promise to grant him a certain request that he

² For a more particular account of the transaction, and for an engraving illustrating this scene, see the history of Darius.

would make. She wished to know what it was beforehand, but the physician would not tell her. He said, however, that it was nothing that it would be in any way derogatory to her honor to grant him.

Atossa's promise.

On these conditions Atossa concluded to agree to the physician's proposals. He made her take a solemn oath that, if he cured her of her malady, she would do whatever he required of her, provided that it was consistent with honor and propriety. He then took her case under his charge, prescribed for her and attended her, and in due time she was cured. The physician then told her that what he wished her to do for him was to find some means to persuade Darius to send him home to his native land.

Atossa's conversation with Darius.

Atossa was faithful in fulfilling her promise. She took a private opportunity, when she was alone with Darius, to propose that he should engage in some plans of foreign conquest. She reminded him of the vastness of the military power which was at his disposal, and of the facility with which, by means of it, he might extend his dominions. She extolled, too, his genius and energy, and endeavored to inspire in his mind some ambitious desires to distinguish himself in the estimation of mankind by bringing his capacities for the performance of great deeds into action.

Darius listened to these suggestions of Atossa with interest and with evident pleasure. He said that he had been forming some such plans himself. He was going to build a bridge across the Hellespont or the Bosphorus, to unite Europe and Asia; and he was also going to make an incursion into the country of the Scythians, the people by whom Cyrus, his great predecessor, had been defeated and slain. It would be a great glory for him, he said, to succeed in a conquest in which Cyrus had so totally failed.

Success of her plans.

But these plans would not answer the purpose which Atossa had in view. She urged her husband, therefore, to postpone his invasion of the Scythians till some future time, and first conquer the Greeks, and annex their territory to his dominions. The Scythians, she said, were savages, and their country not worth the cost of conquering it, while Greece would constitute a noble prize. She urged the invasion of Greece, too, rather than Scythia, as a personal favor to herself, for she had been wanting, she said, some slaves from Greece for a long time—some of the women of Sparta, of Corinth, and of Athens, of whose graces and accomplishments she had heard so much.

There was something gratifying to the military vanity of Darius in being thus requested to make an incursion to another continent, and undertake the conquest of the mightiest nation of the earth, for the purpose of procuring accomplished waiting-maids to offer as a present to his queen. He became restless and excited while listening to Atossa's proposals, and to the arguments with which she enforced them, and it was obvious that he was very strongly inclined to accede to her views. He finally concluded to send a commission into Greece to explore the country, and to bring back a report on their return; and as he decided to make the Greek physician the guide of the expedition, Atossa gained her end.

The expedition to Greece.

Escape of the physician.

A full account of this expedition, and of the various adventures which the party met with on their voyage, is given in our history of Darius. It may be proper to say here, however, that the physician fully succeeded in his plans of making his escape. He pretended, at first, to be unwilling to go, and he made only the most temporary arrangements in respect to the conduct of his affairs while he should be gone, in order to deceive the king in regard to his intentions of not returning. The king, on his part, resorted to some stratagems to ascertain whether the physician was sincere in his professions, but he did not succeed in detecting the artifice, and so the party went away. The physician never returned.

Atossa's four sons.
Artobazanes.

Atossa had four sons. Xerxes was the eldest of them. He was not, however, the eldest of the sons of Darius, as there were other sons, the children of another wife, whom Darius had married before he ascended the throne. The oldest of these children was named Artobazanes. Artobazanes seems to have been a prince of an amiable and virtuous character, and not particularly ambitious and aspiring in his disposition, although, as he was the eldest son of his father, he claimed to be his heir. Atossa did not admit the validity of this claim, but maintained that the oldest of *her* children was entitled to the inheritance.

It became necessary to decide this question before Darius's death; for Darius, in the prosecution of a war in which he was engaged, formed the design of accompanying his army on an expedition into Greece, and, before doing this, he was bound, according to the laws and usages of the Persian realm, to regulate the succession.

Dispute about the succession.
Xerxes and Artobazanes.

There immediately arose an earnest dispute between the friends and partisans of Artobazanes and Xerxes, each side urging very eagerly the claims of its own candidate. The mother and the friends of Artobazanes maintained that he was the oldest son, and, consequently, the heir. Atossa, on the other hand, contended that Xerxes was the grandson of Cyrus, and that he derived from that circumstance the highest possible hereditary rights to the Persian throne.

The arguments.

This was in some respects true, for Cyrus had been the founder of the empire and the legitimate monarch, while Darius had no hereditary claims. He was originally a noble, of high rank, indeed, but not of the royal line; and he had been designated as Cyrus's successor in a time of revolution, because there was, at that time, no prince of the royal family who could take the inheritance. Those, therefore, who were disposed to insist on the claims of a legitimate hereditary succession, might very plausibly claim that Darius's government had been a regency rather than a reign; that Xerxes, being the oldest son of Atossa, Cyrus's daughter, was the true representative of the royal line; and that, although it might not be expedient to disturb the possession of Darius during his lifetime, yet that, at his death, Xerxes was unquestionably entitled to the throne.

Influence of Atossa.

There was obviously a great deal of truth and justice in this reasoning, and yet it was a view of the subject not likely to be very agreeable to Darius, since it seemed to deny the existence of any real and valid title to the sovereignty in him. It assigned the crown, at his death, not to his son as such, but to his predecessor's grandson; for though Xerxes was both the son of Darius and the grandson of Cyrus, it was in the latter capacity that he was regarded as entitled to the crown in the argument referred to above. The doctrine was very gratifying to the pride of Atossa, for it made Xerxes the successor to the crown as her son and heir, and not as the son and heir of her husband. For this very reason it was likely to be not very gratifying to Darius. He hesitated very much in respect to adopting it. Atossa's ascendancy over his mind, and her influence generally in the Persian court, was almost overwhelming, and yet Darius was very unwilling to seem, by giving to the oldest grandson of Cyrus the precedence over his own eldest son, to admit that he himself had no legitimate and proper title to the throne.

The Spartan fugitive.
His views of the succession.

While things were in this state, a Greek, named Demaratus, arrived at Susa. He was a dethroned prince from Sparta, and had fled from the political storms of his own country to seek refuge in Darius's capital. Demaratus found a way to reconcile Darius's pride as a sovereign with his personal preferences as a husband and a father. He told the king that, according to the principles of hereditary succession which were adopted in Greece, Xerxes was his heir as well as Cyrus's, for he was the oldest son who was born *after his accession*. A son, he said, according to the Greek ideas on the subject, was entitled to inherit only such rank as his father held when the son was born; and that, consequently, none of his children who had been born before his accession could have any claims to the Persian throne. Artobazanes, in a word, was to be regarded, he said, only as the son of Darius the noble, while Xerxes was the son of Darius the king.

The decision.

Death of Darius.

In the end Darius adopted this view, and designated Xerxes as his successor in case he should not return from his distant expedition. He did not return. He did not even live to set out upon it. Perhaps the question of the succession had not been absolutely and finally settled, for it arose again and was discussed anew when the death of Darius occurred. The manner in which it was finally disposed of will be described in the next chapter.

Chapter II. Egypt and Greece

B.C. 484

Xerxes assumes the crown.
His message to Artobazanes.

The arrangements which Darius had made to fix and determine the succession, before his death, did not entirely prevent the question from arising again when his death occurred. Xerxes was on the spot at the time, and at once assumed the royal functions. His brother was absent. Xerxes sent a messenger to Artobazanes³ informing him of their father's death, and of his intention of assuming the crown. He said, however, that if he did so, he should give his brother the second rank, making him, in all respects, next to himself in office and honor. He sent, moreover, a great many splendid presents to Artobazanes, to evince the friendly regard which he felt for him, and to propitiate his favor.

Artobazanes sent back word to Xerxes that he thanked him for his presents, and that he accepted them with pleasure. He said that he considered himself, nevertheless, as justly entitled to the crown, though he should, in the event of his accession, treat all his brothers, and especially Xerxes, with the utmost consideration and respect.

Question of the succession again debated.

Soon after these occurrences, Artobazanes came to Media, where Xerxes was, and the question which of them should be the king was agitated anew among the nobles of the court. In the end, a public hearing of the cause was had before Artabanus, a brother of Darius, and, of course, an uncle of the contending princes. The question seems to have been referred to him, either because he held some public office which made it his duty to consider and decide such a question, or else because he had been specially commissioned to act as judge in this particular case. Xerxes was at first quite unwilling to submit his claims to the decision of such a tribunal. The crown was, as he maintained, rightfully his. He thought that the public voice was generally in his favor. Then, besides, he was already in possession of the throne, and by consenting to plead his cause before his uncle, he seemed to be virtually abandoning all this vantage ground, and trusting instead to the mere chance of Artabanus's decision.

Advice of Atossa.

Atossa, however, recommended to him to accede to the plan of referring the question to Artabanus. He would consider the subject, she said, with fairness and impartiality, and decide it right. She had no doubt that he would decide it in Xerxes's favor; "and if he does not," she added, "and you lose your cause, you only become the second man in the kingdom instead of the first, and the difference is not so very great, after all."

Atossa may have had some secret intimation how Artabanus would decide.

Decision of Artabanus.

However this may be, Xerxes at length concluded to submit the question. A solemn court was held, and the case was argued in the presence of all the nobles and great officers of state. A throne

³ Plutarch, who gives an account of these occurrences, varies the orthography of the name. We, however, retain the name as given by Herodotus.

was at hand to which the successful competitor was to be conducted as soon as the decision should be made. Artabanus heard the arguments, and decided in favor of Xerxes. Artobazanes, his brother, acquiesced in the decision with the utmost readiness and good humor. He was the first to bow before the king in token of homage, and conducted him, himself, to the throne.

Xerxes kept his promise faithfully of making his brother the second in his kingdom. He appointed him to a very high command in the army, and Artobazanes, on his part, served the king with great zeal and fidelity, until he was at last killed in battle, in the manner hereafter to be described.

Unfinished wars of Darius.

As soon as Xerxes found himself established on his throne, he was called upon to decide immediately a great question, namely, which of two important wars in which his father had been engaged he should first undertake to prosecute, the war in Egypt or the war in Greece.

Egypt and Greece.

Character of the Egyptians.

Character of the Greeks.

By referring to the map, the reader will see that, as the Persian empire extended westward to Asia Minor and to the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, the great countries which bordered upon it in this direction were, on the north Greece, and on the south, Egypt; the one in Europe, and the other in Africa. The Greeks and the Egyptians were both wealthy and powerful, and the countries which they respectively inhabited were fertile and beautiful beyond expression, and yet in all their essential features and characteristics they were extremely dissimilar. Egypt was a long and narrow inland valley. Greece reposed, as it were, in the bosom of the sea, consisting, as it did, of an endless number of islands, promontories, peninsulas, and winding coasts, laved on every side by the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Egypt was a plain, diversified only by the varieties of vegetation, and by the towns and villages, and the enormous monumental structures which had been erected by man. Greece was a picturesque and ever-changing scene of mountains and valleys; of precipitous cliffs, winding beaches, rocky capes, and lofty headlands. The character and genius of the inhabitants of these two countries took their cast, in each case, from the physical conformations of the soil. The Egyptians were a quiet, gentle, and harmless race of tillers of the ground. They spent their lives in pumping water from the river, in the patient, persevering toil of sowing smooth and mellow fields, or in reaping the waving grain. The Greeks drove flocks and herds up and down the declivities of the mountains, or hunted wild beasts in forests and fastnesses. They constructed galleys for navigating the seas; they worked the mines and manufactured metals. They built bridges, citadels, temples, and towns, and sculptured statuary from marble blocks which they chiseled from the strata of the mountains. It is surprising what a difference is made in the genius and character of man by elevations, here and there, of a few thousand feet in the country where his genius and character are formed.

Architecture.

Monuments of Greece.

Egyptian architecture.

The architectural wonders of Egypt and of Greece were as diverse from each other as the natural features of the soil, and in each case the structures were in keeping and in harmony with the character of the landscape which they respectively adorned. The harmony was, however, that of contrast, and not of correspondence. In Greece, where the landscape itself was grand and sublime, the architect aimed only at beauty. To have aimed at magnitude and grandeur in human structures among the mountains, the cliffs, the cataracts, and the resounding ocean shores of Greece, would have been absurd. The Grecian artists were deterred by their unerring instincts from the attempt. They accordingly built beautiful temples, whose white and symmetrical colonnades adorned the declivities, or crowned the summits of the hills. They sculptured statues, to be placed on pedestals in groves

and gardens; they constructed fountains; they raised bridges and aqueducts on long ranges of arches and piers; and the summits of ragged rocks crystallized, as it were, under their hands into towers, battlements, and walls. In Egypt, on the other hand, where the country itself was a level and unvarying plain, the architecture took forms of prodigious magnitude, of lofty elevation, and of vast extent. There were ranges of enormous columns, colossal statues, towering obelisks, and pyramids rising like mountains from the verdure of the plain. Thus, while nature gave to the country its elements of beauty, man completed the landscape by adding to it the grand and the sublime.

Form of Egypt.

The shape and proportions of Egypt would be represented by a green ribbon an inch wide and a yard long, lying upon the ground in a serpentine form; and to complete the model, we might imagine a silver filament passing along the center of the green to denote the Nile. The real valley of verdure, however, is not of uniform breadth, like the ribbon so representing it, but widens as it approaches the sea, as if there had been originally a gulf or estuary there, which the sediment from the river had filled.

Delta of the Nile.

Fertility of Egypt.

In fact, the rich and fertile plain which the alluvial deposits of the Nile have formed, has been protruded for some distance into the sea, and the stream divides itself into three great branches about a hundred miles from its mouth, two outermost of which, with the sea-coast in front, inclose a vast triangle, which was called the Delta, from the Greek letter *delta*, Δ , which is of a triangular form. In ascending the river beyond the Delta, the fertile plain, at first twenty-five or thirty miles wide, grows gradually narrower, as the ranges of barren hills and tracts of sandy deserts on either hand draw nearer and nearer to the river. Thus the country consists of two long lines of rich and fertile intervals, one on each side of the stream. In the time of Xerxes the whole extent was densely populated, every little elevation of the land being covered with a village or a town. The inhabitants tilled the land, raising upon it vast stores of corn, much of which was floated down the river to its mouth, and taken thence to various countries of Europe and Asia, in merchant ships, over the Mediterranean Sea. Caravans, too, sometimes came across the neighboring deserts to obtain supplies of Egyptian corn. This was done by the sons of Jacob when the crops failed them in the land of Canaan, as related in the sacred Scriptures.

No rain in Egypt.

There were two great natural wonders in Egypt in ancient times as now: first, it never rained there, or, at least, so seldom, that rain was regarded as a marvelous phenomenon, interrupting the ordinary course of nature, like an earthquake in England or America. The falling of drops of water out of clouds in the sky was an occurrence so strange, so unaccountable, that the whole population regarded it with astonishment and awe. With the exception of these rare and wonder-exciting instances, there was no rain, no snow, no hail, no clouds in the sky. The sun was always shining, and the heavens were always serene. These meteorological characteristics of the country, resulting, as they do, from permanent natural causes, continue, of course, unchanged to the present day; and the Arabs who live now along the banks of the river, keep their crops, when harvested, in heaps in the open air, and require no roofs to their huts except a light covering of sheaves to protect the inmates from the sun.

Rising of the Nile.

The other natural wonder of Egypt was the annual rising of the Nile. About midsummer, the peasantry who lived along the banks would find the river gradually beginning to rise. The stream became more turbid, too, as the bosom of the waters swelled. No cause for this mysterious increase appeared, as the sky remained as blue and serene as before, and the sun, then nearly vertical, continued to shine with even more than its wonted splendor. The inhabitants however, felt no surprise, and asked

for no explanation of the phenomenon. It was the common course of nature at that season. They had all witnessed it, year after year, from childhood. They, of course, looked for it when the proper month came round, and, though they would have been amazed if the annual flood had failed, they thought nothing extraordinary of its coming.

Preparations for the inundation.

Gradual rise of the water.

When the swelling of the waters and the gradual filling of the channels and low grounds in the neighborhood of the river warned the people that the flood was at hand, they all engaged busily in the work of completing their preparations. The harvests were all gathered from the fields, and the vast stores of fruit and corn which they yielded were piled in roofless granaries, built on every elevated spot of ground, where they would be safe from the approaching inundation. The rise of the water was very gradual and slow. Streams began to flow in all directions over the land. Ponds and lakes, growing every day more and more extended, spread mysteriously over the surface of the meadows; and all the time while this deluge of water was rising to submerge the land, the air continued dry, the sun was sultry, and the sky was without a cloud.

Appearance of the country during an inundation.

As the flood continued to rise, the proportion of land and water, and the conformation of the irregular and temporary shores which separated them, were changed continually, from day to day. The inhabitants assembled in their villages, which were built on rising grounds, some natural, others artificially formed. The waters rose more and more, until only these crowded islands appeared above its surface—when, at length, the valley presented to the view the spectacle of a vast expanse of water, calm as a summer's sea, brilliant with the reflected rays of a tropical sun, and canopied by a sky, which, displaying its spotless blue by day and its countless stars at night, was always cloudless and serene.

The three theories.

The inundation was at its height in October. After that period the waters gradually subsided, leaving a slimy and very fertilizing deposit all over the lands which they had covered. Though the inhabitants themselves, who had been accustomed to this overflow from infancy, felt no wonder or curiosity about its cause, the philosophers of the day, and travelers from other countries who visited Egypt, made many attempts to seek an explanation of the phenomenon. They had three theories on the subject, which Herodotus mentions and discusses.

Objections to the first.

The first explanation was, that the rising of the river was occasioned by the prevalence of northerly winds on the Mediterranean at that time of the year, which drove back the waters at the mouth of the river, and so caused the accumulation of the water in the upper parts of the valley. Herodotus thought that this was not a satisfactory explanation; for sometimes, as he said, these northerly winds did not blow, and yet the rising of the river took place none the less when the appointed season came. Besides, there were other rivers similarly situated in respect to the influence of prevailing winds at sea in driving in the waters at their mouths, which were, nevertheless, not subject to inundations like the Nile.

Second and third theories.

Reasons against them.

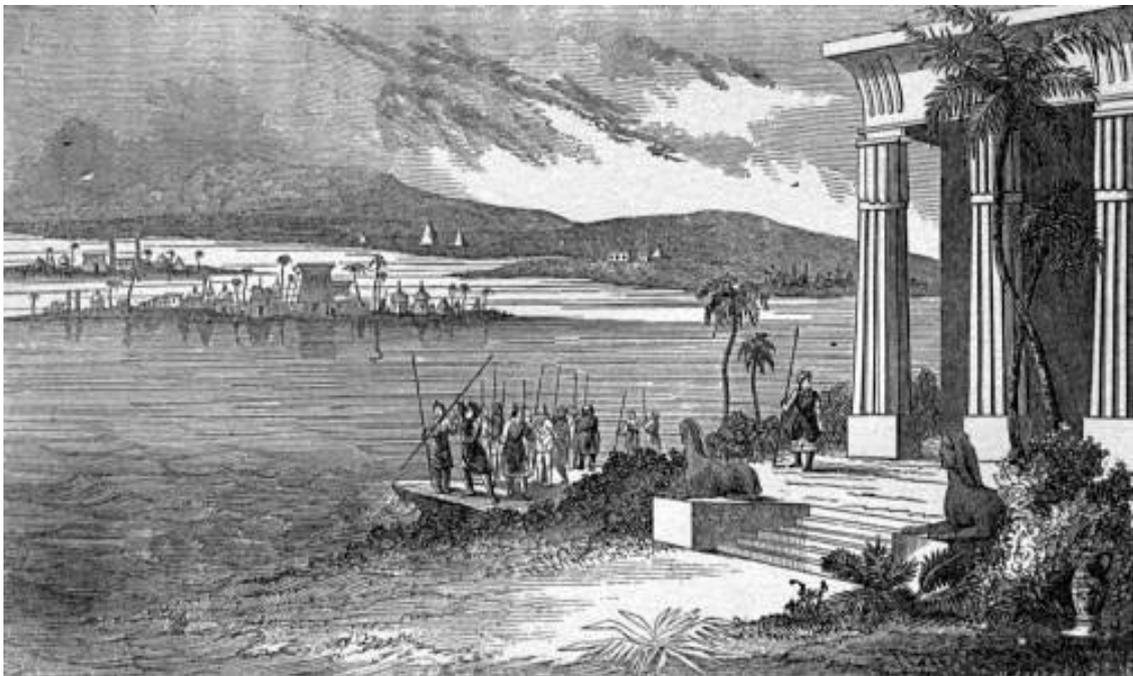
The second theory was, that the Nile took its rise, not, like other rivers, in inland lakes, or among inland mountains, but in some remote and unknown ocean on the other side of the continent, which ocean the advocates of this theory supposed might be subject to some great annual ebb and flow; and from this it might result that at stated periods an unusual tide of waters might be poured

into the channel of the river. This, however, could not be true, for the waters of the inundation were fresh, not salt, which proved that they were not furnished by any ocean.

A third hypothesis was, that the rising of the water was occasioned by the melting of the snows in summer on the mountains from which the sources of the river came. Against this supposition Herodotus found more numerous and more satisfactory reasons even than he had advanced against the others. In the first place the river came from the south—a direction in which the heat increased in intensity with every league, as far as travelers had explored it; and beyond those limits, they supposed that the burning sun made the country uninhabitable. It was preposterous to suppose that there could be snow and ice there. Then, besides, the Nile had been ascended to a great distance, and reports from the natives had been brought down from regions still more remote, and no tidings had ever been brought of ice and snow. It was unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that the inundations could arise from such a cause.

Ideas of the common people in regard to the inundation.

These scientific theories, however, were discussed only among philosophers and learned men. The common people had a much more simple and satisfactory mode of disposing of the subject. They, in their imaginations, invested the beneficent river with a sort of life and personality, and when they saw its waters rising so gently but yet surely, to overflow their whole land, leaving it, as they withdrew again, endued with a new and exuberant fertility, they imagined it a living and acting intelligence, that in the exercise of some mysterious and inscrutable powers, the nature of which was to them unknown, and impelled by a kind and friendly regard for the country and its inhabitants, came annually, of its own accord, to spread over the land the blessings of fertility and abundance. The mysterious stream being viewed in this light, its wonderful powers awakened their veneration and awe, and its boundless beneficence their gratitude.



Pheron defying the Nile.

Story of King Pheron.
His punishment.

Among the ancient Egyptian legends, there is one relating to a certain King Pheron which strikingly illustrates this feeling. It seems that during one of the inundations, while he was standing with his courtiers and watching the flow of the water, the commotion in the stream was much greater than usual on account of a strong wind which was blowing at that time, and which greatly increased the violence of the whirlpools, and the force and swell of the boiling eddies. There was given, in fact, to the appearance of the river an expression of anger, and Pheron, who was of a proud and haughty character, like most of the Egyptian kings, threw his javelin into one of the wildest of the whirlpools, as a token of his defiance of its rage. He was instantly struck blind!

Sequel of the story of King Pheron.

The sequel of the story is curious, though it has no connection with the personality of the Nile. Pheron remained blind for ten years. At the end of that time it was announced to him, by some supernatural communication, that the period of his punishment had expired, and that his sight might be brought back to him by the employment of a certain designated means of restoration, which was the bathing of his eyes by a strictly virtuous woman. Pheron undertook compliance with the requisition, without any idea that the finding of a virtuous woman would be a difficult task. He first tried his own wife, but her bathing produced no effect. He then tried, one after another, various ladies of his court, and afterward others of different rank and station, selecting those who were most distinguished for the excellence of their characters. He was disappointed, however, in them all. The blindness continued unchanged. At last, however, he found the wife of a peasant, whose bathing produced the effect. The monarch's sight was suddenly restored. The king rewarded the peasant woman, whose virtuous character was established by this indisputable test, with the highest honors. The others he collected together, and then shut them up in one of his towns. When they were all thus safely imprisoned, he set the town on fire, and burned them all up together.

Nilometers.

To return to the Nile. Certain columns were erected in different parts of the valley, on which cubits and the subdivisions of cubits were marked and numbered, for the purpose of ascertaining precisely the rise of the water. Such a column was called a Nilometer. There was one near Memphis, which was at the upper point of the Delta, and others further up the river. Such pillars continue to be used to mark the height of the inundations to the present day.

Use of Nilometers.

The object of thus accurately ascertaining the rise of the water was not mere curiosity, for there were certain important business operations which depended upon the results. The fertility and productiveness of the soil each year were determined almost wholly by the extent of the inundation; and as the ability of the people to pay tribute depended upon their crops, the Nilometer furnished the government with a criterion by which they regulated the annual assessments of the taxes. There were certain canals, too, made to convey the water to distant tracts of land, which were opened or kept closed according as the water rose to a higher or lower point. All these things were regulated by the indications of the Nilometer.

Enormous structures of Egypt.

Comparative antiquity of various objects.

Great age of the Pyramids.

Egypt was famed in the days of Xerxes for those enormous structures and ruins of structures whose origin was then, as now, lost in a remote antiquity. Herodotus found the Pyramids standing in his day, and presenting the same spectacle of mysterious and solitary grandeur which they exhibited to Napoleon. He speculated on their origin and their history, just as the philosophers and travelers of our day do. In fact, he knew less and could learn less about them than is known now. It helps to

impress our minds with an idea of the extreme antiquity of these and the other architectural wonders of Egypt, to compare them with things which are considered old in the Western world. The ancient and venerable colleges and halls of Oxford and Cambridge are, many of them, two or three hundred years old. There are remains of the old wall of the city of London which has been standing seven hundred years. This is considered a great antiquity. There are, however, Roman ruins in Britain, and in various parts of Europe, more ancient still. They have been standing eighteen hundred years! People look upon these with a species of wonder and awe that they have withstood the destructive influences of time so long. But as to the Pyramids, if we go back *twenty-five hundred* years, we find travelers visiting and describing them then—monuments as ancient, as venerable, as mysterious and unknown in their eyes, as they appear now in ours. We judge that a mountain is very distant when, after traveling many miles toward it, it seems still as distant as ever. Now, in tracing the history of the pyramids, the obelisks, the gigantic statues, and the vast columnar ruins of the Nile, we may go back twenty-five hundred years, without, apparently, making any progress whatever toward reaching their origin.

Egypt a mark for the conqueror.
Its relation to Persia.

Such was Egypt. Isolated as it was from the rest of the world, and full of fertility and riches, it offered a marked and definite object to the ambition of a conqueror. In fact, on account of the peculiar interest which this long and narrow valley of verdure, with its wonderful structures, the strange and anomalous course of nature which prevails in it, and the extraordinary phases which human life, in consequence, exhibits there, has always excited among mankind, heroes and conquerors have generally considered it a peculiarly glorious field for their exploits. Cyrus, the founder of the Persian monarchy, contemplated the subjugation of it. He did not carry his designs into effect, but left them for Cambyses his son. Darius held the country as a dependency during his reign, though, near the close of his life, it revolted. This revolt took place while he was preparing for his grand expedition against Greece, and he was perplexed with the question which of the two undertakings, the subjugation of the Egyptians or the invasion of Greece, he should first engage in. In the midst of this uncertainty he suddenly died, leaving both the wars themselves and the perplexity of deciding between them as a part of the royal inheritance falling to his son.

Xerxes resolves to subdue Egypt first.
The Jews.
The Egyptians subdued.
Return to Susa.

Xerxes decided to prosecute the Egyptian campaign first, intending to postpone the conquest of Greece till he had brought the valley of the Nile once more under Persian sway. He deemed it dangerous to leave a province of his father's empire in a state of successful rebellion, while leading his armies off to new undertakings. Mardonius, who was the commander-in-chief of the army, and the great general on whom Xerxes mainly relied for the execution of his schemes, was very reluctant to consent to this plan. He was impatient for the conquest of Greece. There was little glory for him to acquire in merely suppressing a revolt, and reconquering what had been already once subdued. He was eager to enter upon a new field. Xerxes, however, overruled his wishes, and the armies commenced their march for Egypt. They passed the land of Judea on their way, where the captives who had returned from Babylon, and their successors, were rebuilding the cities and reoccupying the country. Xerxes confirmed them in the privileges which Cyrus and Darius had granted them, and aided them in their work. He then went on toward the Nile. The rebellion was easily put down. In less than a year from the time of leaving Susa, he had reconquered the whole land of Egypt, punished the leaders of the revolt, established his brother as viceroy of the country, and returned in safety to Susa.

All this took place in the second year of his reign.

Chapter III. Debate on the Proposed Invasion Of Greece

B.C. 481

Counselors of Xerxes.
Age and character of Mardonius.
The avenues to renown.
Blood inherited and blood shed.

The two great counselors on whose judgment Xerxes mainly relied, so far as he looked to any other judgment than his own in the formation of his plans, were Artabanus, the uncle by whose decision the throne had been awarded to him, and Mardonius, the commander-in-chief of his armies. Xerxes himself was quite a young man, of a proud and lofty, yet generous character, and full of self-confidence and hope. Mardonius was much older, but he was a soldier by profession, and was eager to distinguish himself in some great military campaign. It has always been unfortunate for the peace and happiness of mankind, under all monarchical and despotic governments, in every age of the world, that, through some depraved and unaccountable perversion of public sentiment, those who are not born to greatness have had no means of attaining to it except as heroes in war. Many men have, indeed, by their mental powers or their moral excellences, acquired an extended and lasting *posthumous* fame; but in respect to all immediate and exalted distinction and honor, it will be found, on reviewing the history of the human race, that there have generally been but two possible avenues to them: on the one hand, high birth, and on the other, the performance of great deeds of carnage and destruction. There must be, it seems, as the only valid claim to renown, either blood inherited or blood shed. The glory of the latter is second, indeed, to that of the former, but it is *only* second. He who has sacked a city stands very high in the estimation of his fellows. He yields precedence only to him whose grandfather sacked one.

This state of things is now, it is true, rapidly undergoing a change. The age of chivalry, of military murder and robbery, and of the glory of great deeds of carnage and blood, is passing away, and that of peace, of industry, and of achievements for promoting the comfort and happiness of mankind is coming. The men who are now advancing to the notice of the world are those who, through their commerce or their manufactures, feed and clothe their fellow-men by millions, or, by opening new channels or new means for international intercourse, civilize savages, and people deserts; while the glory of killing and destroying is less and less regarded, and more and more readily forgotten.

In the days of Xerxes, however, there was no road to honor but by war, and Mardonius found that his only hope of rising to distinction was by conducting a vast torrent of military devastation over some portion of the globe; and the fairer, the richer, the happier the scene which he was thus to inundate and overwhelm, the greater would be the glory. He was very much disposed, therefore, to urge on the invasion of Greece by every means in his power.

Character of Artabanus.
His advice to Xerxes.
The Ionian rebellion.
First invasion of Greece.

Artabanus, on the other hand, the uncle of Xerxes, was a man advanced in years, and of a calm and cautious disposition. He was better aware than younger men of the vicissitudes and hazards of war, and was much more inclined to restrain than to urge on the youthful ambition of his nephew.

Xerxes had been able to present some show of reason for his campaign in Egypt, by calling the resistance which that country offered to his power a rebellion. There was, however, no such reason in the case of Greece. There had been two wars between Persia and the Athenians already, it is true. In the first, the Athenians had aided their countrymen in Asia Minor in a fruitless attempt to recover their independence. This the Persian government considered as aiding and abetting a rebellion. In the second, the Persians under Datis, one of Darius's generals, had undertaken a grand invasion of Greece, and, after landing in the neighborhood of Athens, were beaten, with immense slaughter, at the great battle of Marathon, near that city. The former of these wars is known in history as the Ionian rebellion; the latter as the first Persian invasion of Greece. They had both occurred during the reign of Darius, and the invasion under Datis had taken place not many years before the accession of Xerxes, so that a great number of the officers who had served in that campaign were still remaining in the court and army of Xerxes at Susa. These wars had, however, both been terminated, and Artabanus was very little inclined to have the contests renewed.

Xerxes convenes a public council.

Xerxes, however, was bent upon making one more attempt to conquer Greece, and when the time arrived for commencing his preparations, he called a grand council of the generals, the nobles, and the potentates of the realm, to lay his plans before them. The historian who narrated these proceedings recorded the debate that ensued in the following manner.

Xerxes himself first addressed the assembly, to announce and explain his designs.

His speech.

"The enterprise, my friends," said he, "in which I propose now to engage, and in which I am about to ask your co-operation, is no new scheme of my own devising. What I design to do is, on the other hand, only the carrying forward of the grand course of measures marked out by my predecessors, and pursued by them with steadiness and energy, so long as the power remained in their hands. That power has now descended to me, and with it has devolved the responsibility of finishing the work which they so successfully began.

"It is the manifest destiny of Persia to rule the world. From the time that Cyrus first commenced the work of conquest by subduing Media, to the present day, the extent of our empire has been continually widening, until now it covers all of Asia and Africa, with the exception of the remote and barbarous tribes, that, like the wild beasts which share their forests with them, are not worth the trouble of subduing. These vast conquests have been made by the courage, the energy, and the military power of Cyrus, Darius, and Cambyses, my renowned predecessors. They, on their part, have subdued Asia and Africa; Europe remains. It devolves on me to finish what they have begun. Had my father lived, he would, himself, have completed the work. He had already made great preparations for the undertaking; but he died, leaving the task to me, and it is plain that I can not hesitate to undertake it without a manifest dereliction of duty.

Xerxes recounts the aggressions of the Athenians.

"You all remember the unprovoked and wanton aggressions which the Athenians committed against us in the time of the Ionian rebellion, taking part against us with rebels and enemies. They crossed the Ægean Sea on that occasion, invaded our territories, and at last captured and burned the city of Sardis, the principal capital of our Western empire. I will never rest until I have had my revenge by burning Athens. Many of you, too, who are here present, remember the fate of the expedition under Datis. Those of you who were attached to that expedition will have no need that I should urge you to seek revenge for your own wrongs. I am sure that you will all second my undertaking with the utmost fidelity and zeal.

Xerxes proposes to build a bridge over the Hellespont.

"My plan for gaining access to the Grecian territories is not, as before, to convey the troops by a fleet of galleys over the Ægean Sea, but to build a bridge across the Hellespont, and march the army to Greece by land. This course, which I am well convinced is practicable, will be more safe than the other, and the bridging of the Hellespont will be of itself a glorious deed. The Greeks will be utterly unable to resist the enormous force which we shall be able to pour upon them. We can not but conquer; and inasmuch as beyond the Greek territories there is, as I am informed, no other power at all able to cope with us, we shall easily extend our empire on every side to the sea, and thus the Persian dominion will cover the whole habitable world.

"I am sure that I can rely on your cordial and faithful co-operation in these plans, and that each one of you will bring me, from his own province or territories, as large a quota of men, and of supplies for the war, as is in his power. They who contribute thus most liberally I shall consider as entitled to the highest honors and rewards."

Such was, in substance, the address of Xerxes to his council. He concluded by saying that it was not his wish to act in the affair in an arbitrary or absolute manner, and he invited all present to express, with perfect freedom, any opinions or views which they entertained in respect to the enterprise.

Excitement of Mardonius.

While Xerxes had been speaking, the soul of Mardonius had been on fire with excitement and enthusiasm, and every word which the king had uttered only fanned the flame. He rose immediately when the king gave permission to the counselors to speak, and earnestly seconded the monarch's proposals in the following words:

His speech.

"For my part, sire, I can not refrain from expressing my high admiration of the lofty spirit and purpose on your part, which leads you to propose to us an enterprise so worthy of your illustrious station and exalted personal renown. Your position and power at the present time are higher than those ever attained by any human sovereign that has ever lived; and it is easy to foresee that there is a career of glory before you which no future monarch can ever surpass. You are about to complete the conquest of the world! That exploit can, of course, never be exceeded. We all admire the proud spirit on your part which will not submit tamely to the aggressions and insults which we have received from the Greeks. We have conquered the people of India, of Egypt, of Ethiopia, and of Assyria, and that, too, without having previously suffered any injury from them, but solely from a noble love of dominion; and shall we tamely stop in our career when we see nations opposed to us from whom we have received so many insults, and endured so many wrongs? Every consideration of honor and manliness forbids it.

Mardonius expresses his contempt of the Greeks.

"We have nothing to fear in respect to the success of the enterprise in which you invite us to engage. I know the Greeks, and I know that they can not stand against our arms. I have encountered them many times and in various ways. I met them in the provinces of Asia Minor, and you all know the result. I met them during the reign of Darius your father, in Macedon and Thrace—or, rather, sought to meet them; for, though I marched through the country, the enemy always avoided me. They could not be found. They have a great name, it is true; but, in fact, all their plans and arrangements are governed by imbecility and folly. They are not ever united among themselves. As they speak one common language, any ordinary prudence and sagacity would lead them to combine together, and make common cause against the nations that surround them. Instead of this, they are divided into a multitude of petty states and kingdoms, and all their resources and power are exhausted in fruitless contentions with each other. I am convinced that, once across the Hellespont, we can march to Athens without finding any enemy to oppose our progress; or, if we should encounter any resisting force, it will be so small and insignificant as to be instantly overwhelmed."

Predictions of Mardonius.

In one point Mardonius was nearly right in his predictions, since it proved subsequently, as will hereafter be seen, that when the Persian army reached the pass of Thermopylæ, which was the great avenue of entrance, on the north, into the territories of the Greeks, they found only three hundred men ready there to oppose their passage!

Pause in the assembly.

When Mardonius had concluded his speech, he sat down, and quite a solemn pause ensued. The nobles and chieftains generally were less ready than he to encounter the hazards and uncertainties of so distant a campaign. Xerxes would acquire, by the success of the enterprise, a great accession to his wealth and to his dominion, and Mardonius, too, might expect to reap very rich rewards; but what were they themselves to gain? They did not dare, however, to seem to oppose the wishes of the king, and, notwithstanding the invitation which he had given them to speak, they remained silent, not knowing, in fact, exactly what to say.

All this time Artabanus, the venerable uncle of Xerxes, sat silent like the rest, hesitating whether his years, his rank, and the relation which he sustained to the young monarch would justify his interposing, and make it prudent and safe for him to attempt to warn his nephew of the consequences which he would hazard by indulging his dangerous ambition. At length he determined to speak.

Speech of Artabanus.

His apologies.

Artabanus opposes the war.

"I hope," said he, addressing the king, "that it will not displease you to have other views presented in addition to those which have already been expressed. It is better that all opinions should be heard; the just and the true will then appear the more just and true by comparison with others. It seems to me that the enterprise which you contemplate is full of danger, and should be well considered before it is undertaken. When Darius, your father, conceived of the plan of his invasion of the country of the Scythians beyond the Danube, I counseled him against the attempt. The benefits to be secured by such an undertaking seemed to me wholly insufficient to compensate for the expense, the difficulties, and the dangers of it. My counsels were, however, overruled. Your father proceeded on the enterprise. He crossed the Bosphorus, traversed Thrace, and then crossed the Danube; but, after a long and weary contest with the hordes of savages which he found in those trackless wilds, he was forced to abandon the undertaking, and return, with the loss of half his army. The plan which you propose seems to me to be liable to the same dangers, and I fear very much that it will lead to the same results.

Repulse of Datis.

Artabanus warns Xerxes of the danger of the expedition.

"The Greeks have the name of being a valiant and formidable foe. It may prove in the end that they are so. They certainly repulsed Datis and all his forces, vast as they were, and compelled them to retire with an enormous loss. Your invasion, I grant, will be more formidable than his. You will throw a bridge across the Hellespont, so as to take your troops round through the northern parts of Europe into Greece, and you will also, at the same time, have a powerful fleet in the Ægean Sea. But it must be remembered that the naval armaments of the Greeks in all those waters are very formidable. They may attack and destroy your fleet. Suppose that they should do so, and that then, proceeding to the northward in triumph, they should enter the Hellespont and destroy your bridge? Your retreat would be cut off, and, in case of a reverse of fortune, your army would be exposed to total ruin.

"Your father, in fact, very narrowly escaped precisely this fate. The Scythians came to destroy his bridge across the Danube while his forces were still beyond the river, and, had it not been for the

very extraordinary fidelity and zeal of Histiaëus, who had been left to guard the post, they would have succeeded in doing it. It is frightful to think that the whole Persian army, with the sovereign of the empire at their head, were placed in a position where their being saved from overwhelming and total destruction depended solely on the fidelity and firmness of a single man! Should you place your forces and your own person in the same danger, can you safely calculate upon the same fortunate escape?

"Even the very vastness of your force may be the means of insuring and accelerating its destruction, since whatever rises to extraordinary elevation and greatness is always exposed to dangers correspondingly extraordinary and great. Thus tall trees and lofty towers seem always specially to invite the thunderbolts of Heaven.

Artabanus vindicates the character of the Greeks.

"Mardonius charges the Greeks with a want of sagacity, efficiency, and valor, and speaks contemptuously of them, as soldiers, in every respect. I do not think that such imputations are just to the people against whom they are directed, or honorable to him who makes them. To disparage the absent, especially an absent enemy, is not magnanimous or wise; and I very much fear that it will be found in the end that the conduct of the Greeks will evince very different military qualities from those which Mardonius has assigned them. They are represented by common fame as sagacious, hardy, efficient, and brave, and it may prove that these representations are true.

"My counsel therefore is, that you dismiss this assembly, and take further time to consider this subject before coming to a final decision. Perhaps, on more mature reflection, you will conclude to abandon the project altogether. If you should not conclude to abandon it, but should decide, on the other hand, that it must be prosecuted, let me entreat you not to go yourself in company with the expedition. Let Mardonius take the charge and the responsibility. If he does so, I predict that he will leave the dead bodies of the soldiers that you intrust to him, to be devoured by dogs on the plains of Athens or Lacedæmon."

Xerxes's displeasure.

His angry reply to Artabanus.

Xerxes was exceedingly displeased at hearing such a speech as this from his uncle, and he made a very angry reply. He accused Artabanus of meanness of spirit, and of a cowardice disgraceful to his rank and station, in thus advocating a tame submission to the arrogant pretensions of the Greeks. Were it not, he said, for the respect which he felt for Artabanus, as his father's brother, he would punish him severely for his presumption in thus basely opposing his sovereign's plans. "As it is," continued he, "I will carry my plans into effect, but you shall not have the honor of accompanying me. You shall remain at Susa with the women and children of the palace, and spend your time in the effeminate and ignoble pleasures suited to a spirit so mean. As for myself, I must and will carry my designs into execution. I could not, in fact, long avoid a contest with the Greeks, even if I were to adopt the cowardly and degrading policy which you recommend; for I am confident that they will very soon invade my dominions, if I do not anticipate them by invading theirs."

So saying, Xerxes dismissed the assembly.

Xerxes's anxiety.

He determines to abandon his project.

His mind, however, was not at ease. Though he had so indignantly rejected the counsel which Artabanus had offered him, yet the impressive words in which it had been uttered, and the arguments with which it had been enforced, weighed upon his spirit, and oppressed and dejected him. The longer he considered the subject, the more serious his doubts and fears became, until at length, as the night approached, he became convinced that Artabanus was right, and that he himself was wrong. His mind found no rest until he came to the determination to abandon the project after all. He resolved to make this change in his resolution known to Artabanus and his nobles in the morning, and to countermand

the orders which he had given for the assembling of the troops. Having by this decision restored something like repose to his agitated mind, he laid himself down upon his couch and went to sleep.

Xerxes sees a vision in the night.

In the night he saw a vision. It seemed to him that a resplendent and beautiful form appeared before him, and after regarding him a moment with an earnest look, addressed him as follows:

"And do you really intend to abandon your deliberate design of leading an array into Greece, after having formally announced it to the realm and issued your orders? Such fickleness is absurd, and will greatly dishonor you. Resume your plan, and go on boldly and perseveringly to the execution of it."

So saying, the vision disappeared.

When Xerxes awoke in the morning, and the remembrance of the events of the preceding day returned, mingling itself with the new impressions which had been made by the dream, he was again agitated and perplexed. As, however, the various influences which pressed upon him settled to their final equilibrium, the fears produced by Artabanus's substantial arguments and warnings on the preceding day proved to be of greater weight than the empty appeal to his pride which had been made by the phantom of the night. He resolved to persist in the abandonment of his scheme. He called his council, accordingly, together again, and told them that, on more mature reflection, he had become convinced that his uncle was right and that he himself had been wrong. The project, therefore, was for the present suspended, and the orders for the assembling of the forces were revoked. The announcement was received by the members of the council with the most tumultuous joy.

The spirit appears a second time to Xerxes.

That night Xerxes had another dream. The same spirit appeared to him again, his countenance, however, bearing now, instead of the friendly look of the preceding night, a new and stern expression of displeasure. Pointing menacingly at the frightened monarch with his finger, he exclaimed, "You have rejected my advice; you have abandoned your plan; and now I declare to you that, unless you immediately resume your enterprise and carry it forward to the end, short as has been the time since you were raised to your present elevation, a still shorter period shall elapse before your downfall and destruction."

The spirit then disappeared as suddenly as it came, leaving Xerxes to awake in an agony of terror.

Xerxes relates his dreams to Artabanus.

As soon as it was day, Xerxes sent for Artabanus, and related to him his dreams. "I was willing," said he, "after hearing what you said, and maturely considering the subject, to give up my plan; but these dreams, I can not but think, are intimations from Heaven that I ought to proceed."

Opinion of the latter.

Artabanus attempted to combat this idea by representing to Xerxes that dreams were not to be regarded as indications of the will of Heaven, but only as a vague and disordered reproduction of the waking thoughts, while the regular action of the reason and the judgment by which they were ordinarily controlled was suspended or disturbed by the influence of slumber. Xerxes maintained, on the other hand, that, though this view of the case might explain his first vision, the solemn repetition of the warning proved that it was supernatural and divine. He proposed that, to put the reality of the apparition still further to the test, Artabanus should take his place on the royal couch the next night, to see if the specter would not appear to him. "You shall clothe yourself," said he, "in my robes, put the crown upon your head, and take your seat upon the throne. After that, you shall retire to my apartment, lie down upon the couch, and go to sleep. If the vision is supernatural, it will undoubtedly appear to you. If it does not so appear, I will admit that it was nothing but a dream."

Artabanus takes Xerxes's place.

Artabanus made some objection, at first, to the details of the arrangement which Xerxes proposed, as he did not see, he said, of what advantage it could be for him to assume the guise and habiliments of the king. If the vision was divine, it could not be deceived by such artifices as those. Xerxes, however, insisted on his proposition, and Artabanus yielded. He assumed for an hour the dress and the station of the king, and then retired to the king's apartment, and laid himself down upon the couch under the royal pavilion. As he had no faith in the reality of the vision, his mind was quiet and composed, and he soon fell asleep.

The spirit appears a third time.

At midnight, Xerxes, who was lying in an adjoining apartment, was suddenly aroused by a loud and piercing cry from the room where Artabanus was sleeping, and in a moment afterward Artabanus himself rushed in, perfectly wild with terror. He had seen the vision. It had appeared before him with a countenance and gestures expressive of great displeasure, and after loading him with reproaches for having attempted to keep Xerxes back from his proposed expedition into Greece, it attempted to bore out his eyes with a red-hot iron with which it was armed. Artabanus had barely succeeded in escaping by leaping from his couch and rushing precipitately out of [the room](#).

Artabanus is convinced.

The invasion decided upon.

Artabanus said that he was now convinced and satisfied. It was plainly the divine will that Xerxes should undertake his projected invasion, and he would himself, thenceforth, aid the enterprise by every means in his power. The council was, accordingly, once more convened. The story of the three apparitions was related to them, and the final decision announced that the armies were to be assembled for the march without any further delay.

Mardonius probably the ghost.

It is proper here to repeat, once for all in this volume, a remark which has elsewhere often been made in the various works of this series, that in studying ancient history at the present day, it is less important now to know, in regard to transactions so remote, what the facts actually were which really occurred, than it is to know the story respecting them, which, for the last two thousand years, has been in circulation among mankind. It is now, for example, of very little consequence whether there ever was or never was such a personage as Hercules, but it is essential that every educated man should know the story which ancient writers tell in relating his doings. In this view of the case, our object, in this volume, is simply to give the history of Xerxes just as it stands, without stopping to separate the false from the true. In relating the occurrences, therefore, which have been described in this chapter, we simply give the alleged facts to our readers precisely as the ancient historians give them to us, leaving each reader to decide for himself how far he will believe the narrative. In respect to this particular story, we will add, that some people think that Mardonius was really the ghost by whose appearance Artabanus and Xerxes were so dreadfully frightened.

Chapter IV. Preparations for the Invasion Of Greece

B.C. 481

Orders to the provinces.
Mode of raising money.

As soon as the invasion of Greece was finally decided upon, the orders were transmitted to all the provinces of the empire, requiring the various authorities and powers to make the necessary preparations. There were men to be levied, arms to be manufactured, ships to be built, and stores of food to be provided. The expenditures, too, of so vast an armament as Xerxes was intending to organize, would require a large supply of money. For all these things Xerxes relied on the revenues and the contributions of the provinces, and orders, very full and very imperative, were transmitted, accordingly, to all the governors and satraps of Asia, and especially to those who ruled over the countries which lay near the western confines of the empire, and consequently near the Greek frontiers.

Modern mode of securing supplies of arms and money.

In modern times it is the practice of powerful nations to accumulate arms and munitions of war on storage in arsenals and naval depôts, so that the necessary supplies for very extended operations, whether of attack or defense, can be procured in a very short period of time. In respect to funds, too, modern nations have a great advantage over those of former days, in case of any sudden emergency arising to call for great and unusual expenditures. In consequence of the vast accumulation of capital in the hands of private individuals, and the confidence which is felt in the mercantile honor and good faith of most established governments at the present day, these governments can procure indefinite supplies of gold and silver at any time, by promising to pay an annual interest in lieu of the principal borrowed. It is true that, in these cases, a stipulation is made, by which the government may, at a certain specified period, pay back the principal, and so extinguish the annuity; but in respect to a vast portion of the amount so borrowed, it is not expected that this repayment will ever be made. The creditors, in fact, do not desire that it should be, as owners of property always prefer a safe annual income from it to the custody of the principal; and thus governments in good credit have sometimes induced their creditors to abate the rate of interest which they were receiving, by threatening otherwise to pay the debt in full.

Xerxes's preparations.
Four years allotted to them.

These inventions, however, by which a government in one generation may enjoy the pleasure and reap the glory of waging war, and throw the burden of the expense on another, were not known in ancient times. Xerxes did not understand the art of funding a national debt, and there would, besides, have probably been very little confidence in Persian stocks, if any had been issued. He had to raise all his funds by actual taxation, and to have his arms, and his ships and chariots of war, manufactured express. The food, too, to sustain the immense army which he was to raise, was all to be produced, and store-houses were to be built for the accumulation and custody of it. All this, as might naturally be expected, would require time; and the vastness of the scale on which these immense preparations were made is evinced by the fact that *four years* were the time allotted for completing them. This

period includes, however, a considerable time before the great debate on the subject described in the last chapter.

Arms.

Provisions.

Building of ships.

The chief scene of activity, during all this time, was the tract of country in the western part of Asia Minor, and along the shores of the Ægean Sea. Taxes and contributions were raised from all parts of the empire, but the actual material of war was furnished mainly from those provinces which were nearest to the future scene of it. Each district provided such things as it naturally and most easily produced. One contributed horses, another arms and ammunition, another ships, and another provisions. The ships which were built were of various forms and modes of construction, according to the purposes which they were respectively intended to serve. Some were strictly ships of war, intended for actual combat; others were transports, their destination being simply the conveyance of troops or of military stores. There were also a large number of vessels, which were built on a peculiar model, prescribed by the engineers, being very long and straight-sided, and smooth and flat upon their decks. These were intended for the bridge across the Hellespont. They were made long, so that, when placed side by side across the stream, a greater breadth might be given to the platform of the bridge. All these things were very deliberately and carefully planned.

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