

be started from its lair by more than a thousand dogs.¹⁰

CHAPTER II.

THE hunt was over. Waggon full of game, amongst which were several enormous wild boars killed by the king's own hand, were driven home behind the sportsmen. At the palace-gates the latter dispersed to their several abodes, in order to exchange the simple Persian leather hunting-costume for the splendid Median court-dress.

In the course of the day's sport Cambyses had (with difficulty restraining his agitation) given his brother the seemingly kind order to start the next day for Egypt

10. The same immense trains of followers of course accompanied the kings on their hunting expeditions, as on their journeys. As the Persian nobility were very fond of hunting, their boys were taught this sport at an early age. According to Strabo, kings themselves boasted of having been mighty hunters in the inscriptions on their tombs. A relief has been found in the ruins of Persepolis, on which the king is strangling a lion with his right arm, but this is supposed to have a historical, not a symbolical meaning. Similar representations occur on Assyrian monuments. Izdubar strangling a lion and fighting with a lion (relief at Khorsabad) is admirably copied in Delitzsch's edition of G. Smith's Chaldean Genesis. Texier, *Description de l'Arménie* pl. 98. Layard discovered some representations of hunting-scenes during his excavations; as, for instance, stags and wild boars among the reeds; and the Greeks often mention the immense troops of followers on horse and foot who attended the kings of Persia when they went hunting. According to Xenophon, *Cyrop.* I. 2. II. 4. every hunter was obliged to be armed with a bow and arrows, two lances, sword and shield. In Firdusi's Book of Kings we read that the lasso was also a favorite weapon. Hawking was well known to the Persians more than 900 years ago. Book of Kabus XVIII. p. 495. The boomerang was used in catching birds as well by the Persians as by the ancient Egyptians and the present savage tribes of New Holland. Brugsch tells us that the present Shah of Persia, Nasr-ed-din, is a bold sportsman and passionately fond of hunting.

in order to fetch Sappho and accompany her to Persia. At the same time he assigned him the revenues of Bactra, Rhagæ and Sinope for the maintenance of his new household, and to his young wife, all the duties levied from her native town Phocæa, as pin-money.

Bartja thanked his generous brother with undisguised warmth, but Cambyses remained cold as ice, uttered a few farewell words, and then, riding off in pursuit of a wild ass, turned his back upon him.

On the way home from the chase the prince invited his bosom-friends* Croesus, Darius, Zopyrus and Gyges to drink a parting-cup with him.

Croesus promised to join them later, as he had promised to visit the blue lily at the rising of the Tistar-star.

He had been to the hanging-gardens that morning early to visit Nitetis, but had been refused entrance by the guards, and the blue lily seemed now to offer him another chance of seeing and speaking to his beloved pupil. He wished for this very much, as he could not thoroughly understand her behavior the day before, and was uneasy at the strict watch set over her.

The young Achæmenidæ sat cheerfully talking together in the twilight in a shady bower in the royal gardens, cool fountains plashing round them. Araspes, a Persian of high rank, who had been one of Cyrus's friends, had joined them, and did full justice to the prince's excellent wine.

"Fortunate Bartja!" cried the old bachelor, "going out to a golden country to fetch the woman you love; while I, miserable old fellow, am blamed by every-

* See vol. I. note 193.

body,* and totter to my grave without wife or children to weep for me and pray the gods to be merciful to my poor soul."

"Why think of such things?" cried Zopyrus, flourishing the wine-cup. "There's no woman so perfect that her husband does not, at least once a day, repent that he ever took a wife. Be merry, old friend, and remember that it's all your own fault. If you thought a wife would make you happy, why did not you do as I have done? I am only twenty-two years old and have five stately wives and a troop of the most beautiful slaves in my house."

Araspes smiled bitterly.

"And what hinders you from marrying now?" said Gyges. "You are a match for many a younger man in appearance, strength, courage and perseverance. You are one of the king's nearest relations too—I tell you, Araspes, you might have twenty young and beautiful wives."

"Look after your own affairs," answered Araspes. "In your place, I certainly should not have waited to marry till I was thirty."

"An oracle has forbidden my marrying."

"Folly? how can a sensible man care for what an oracle says? It is only by dreams, that the gods announce the future to men. I should have thought that your own father was example enough of the shameful way in which those lying priests deceive their best friends."

"That is a matter which you do not understand, Araspes."

"And never wish to, boy, for you only believe in

* See note 6

oracles because you don't understand them, and in your short-sightedness call everything that is beyond your comprehension a miracle. And you place more confidence in anything that seems to you miraculous, than in the plain simple truth that lies before your face. An oracle deceived your father and plunged him into ruin, but the oracle is miraculous, and so you too, in perfect confidence, allow it to rob you of happiness!"

"That is blasphemy, Araspes. Are the gods to be blamed because we misunderstand their words?"

"Certainly: for if they wished to benefit us they would give us, with the words, the necessary penetration for discovering their meaning. What good does a beautiful speech do me, if it is in a foreign language that I do not understand?"

"Leave off this useless discussion," said Darius, "and tell us instead, Araspes, how it is that, though you congratulate every man on becoming a bridegroom, you yourself have so long submitted to be blamed by the priests, slighted at all entertainments and festivals, and abused by the women, only because you choose to live and die a bachelor?"

Araspes looked down thoughtfully, then shook himself, took a long draught from the wine-cup, and said, "I have my reasons, friends, but I cannot tell them now."

"Tell them, tell them," was the answer.

"No, children, I cannot, indeed I cannot. This cup I drain to the health of the charming Sappho, and this second to your good fortune, my favorite, Darius."

"Thanks, Araspes!" exclaimed Bartja, joyfully raising his goblet to his lips.

"You mean well, I know," muttered Darius, looking down gloomily.

"What's this, you son of Hystaspes?" cried the old man, looking more narrowly at the serious face of the youth. "Dark looks like these don't sit well on a betrothed lover, who is to drink to the health of his dearest one. Is not Gobryas' little daughter the noblest of all the young Persian girls after Atossa? and isn't she beautiful?"

"Artystone has every talent and quality that a daughter of the Achæmenidæ ought to possess," was Darius's answer, but his brow did not clear as he said the words.

"Well, if you want more than that, you must be very hard to please."

Darius raised his goblet and looked down into the wine.

"The boy is in love, as sure as my name is Araspes!" exclaimed the elder man.

"What a set of foolish fellows you are," broke in Zopyrus at this exclamation. "One of you has remained a bachelor in defiance of all Persian customs; another has been frightened out of marrying by an oracle; Bartja has determined to be content with only one wife; and Darius looks like a Destur chanting the funeral-service, because his father has told him to make himself happy with the most beautiful and aristocratic girl in Persia!"

"Zopyrus is right," cried Araspes. "Darius is ungrateful to fortune."

Bartja meanwhile kept his eyes fixed on the friend, who was thus blamed by the others. He saw that their jests annoyed him, and feeling his own great hap-

piness doubly in that moment, pressed Darius's hand, saying: "I am so sorry that I cannot be present at your wedding. By the time I come back, I hope you will be reconciled to your father's choice."

"Perhaps," said Darius, "I may be able to show a second and even a third wife by that time."

"Anahita* grant it!" exclaimed Zopyrus. "The Achæmenidæ would soon become extinct, if every one were to follow such examples as Gyges and Araspes have set us. And your one wife, Bartja, is really not worth talking about. It is your duty to marry three wives at once, in order to keep up your father's family—the race of Cyrus."

"I hate our custom of marrying many wives," answered Bartja. "Through doing this, we make ourselves inferior to the women, for we expect them to remain faithful to us all our lives, and we, who are bound to respect truth and faithfulness above every thing else, swear inviolable love to one woman to-day, and to another to-morrow."

"Nonsense!" cried Zopyrus. "I'd rather lose my tongue than tell a lie to a man, but our wives are so awfully deceitful, that one has no choice but to pay them back in their own coin."

"The Greek women are different," said Bartja, "because they are differently treated. Sappho told me of one, I think her name was Penelope, who waited twenty years faithfully and lovingly for her husband, though every one believed he was dead, and she had fifty lovers a day at her house."

"My wives would not wait so long for me," said Zopyrus laughing. "To tell the truth, I don't think I

* See vol. I. note 253.

should be sorry to find an empty house, if I came back after twenty years. For then I could take some new wives into my harem, young and beautiful, instead of the unfaithful ones, who, besides, would have grown old. But alas! every woman does not find some one to run away with her, and our women would rather have an absent husband than none at all."

"If your wives could hear what you are saying!" said Araspes.

"They would declare war with me at once, or, what is still worse, conclude a peace with one another."

"How would that be worse?"

"How? it is easy to see, that you have had no experience."

"Then let us into the secrets of your married life."

"With pleasure. You can easily fancy, that five wives in one house do not live quite so peacefully as five doves in a cage; mine at least carry on an uninterrupted, mortal warfare. But I have accustomed myself to that, and their sprightliness even amuses me. A year ago, however, they came to terms with one another, and this day of peace was the most miserable in my life."

"You are jesting."

"No, indeed, I am quite in earnest. The wretched eunuch who had to keep watch over the five, allowed them to see an old jewel-merchant from Tyre. Each of them chose a separate and expensive set of jewels. When I came home Sudabe came up and begged for money to pay for these ornaments. The things were too dear, and I refused. Every one of the five then came and begged me separately for the money; I refused each of them point blank and went off to court. When I

came back, there were all my wives weeping side by side, embracing one another and calling each other fellow-sufferers. These former enemies rose up against me with the most touching unanimity, and so overwhelmed me with revilings and threats that I left the room. They closed their doors against me. The next morning the lamentations of the evening before were continued. I fled once more and went hunting with the king, and when I came back, tired, hungry and half-frozen—for it was in spring, we were already at Ecbatana, and the snow was lying an ell deep on the Orontes—there was no fire on the hearth and nothing to eat. These noble creatures had entered into an alliance in order to punish me, had put out the fire, forbidden the cooks to do their duty and, which was worse than all—had kept the jewels! No sooner had I ordered the slaves to make a fire and prepare food, than the impudent jewel-dealer appeared and demanded his money. I refused again, passed another solitary night, and in the morning sacrificed ten talents for the sake of peace. Since that time harmony and peace among my beloved wives seems to me as much to be feared as the evil Divs themselves, and I see their little quarrels with the greatest pleasure."

"Poor Zopyrus!" cried Bartja.

"Why poor?" asked this five-fold husband. "I tell you I am much happier than you are. My wives are young and charming, and when they grow old, what is to hinder me from taking others, still handsomer, and who, by the side of the faded beauties, will be doubly charming. Ho! slave—bring some lamps. The sun has gone down, and the wine loses all its flavor when the table is not brightly lighted."

At this moment the voice of Darius, who had left the

arbor and gone out into the garden, was heard calling: "Come and hear how beautifully the nightingale is singing."

"By Mithras, you son of Hystaspes, you must be in love," interrupted Araspes. "The flowery darts of love¹¹ must have entered the heart of him, who leaves his wine to listen to the nightingale."

"You are right there, father," cried Bartja. "Philomel, as the Greeks call our Gulgul, is the lovers' bird among all nations, for love has given her her beautiful song. What beauty were you dreaming of, Darius, when you went out to listen to the nightingale?"

"I was not dreaming of any," answered he. "You know how fond I am of watching the stars, and the Tistar-star rose so splendidly to-night, that I left the wine to watch it. The nightingales were singing so loudly to one another, that if I had not wished to hear them I must have stopped my ears."

"You kept them wide open, however," said Araspes laughing. "Your enraptured exclamation proved that."

"Enough of this," cried Darius, to whom these jokes were getting wearisome. "I really must beg you to leave off making allusions to matters, which I do not care to hear spoken of."

"Imprudent fellow!" whispered the older man; "now you really have betrayed yourself. If you were not in love, you would have laughed instead of getting angry."

11. We have borrowed this idea from the Indians, the arrows of whose love-god Kama were made of sharpened flower-blossoms. The nightingale "gulgul" plays a great part in the Persian love-songs. Her song is spoken of as the perfection of sweet sound, and she herself as the lovers' bird. See J. von Hammer's *Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens*.

Still I won't go on provoking you—tell me what you have just been reading in the stars."

At these words Darius looked up again into the starry sky and fixed his eyes on a bright constellation hanging over the horizon. Zopyrus watched him and called out to his friends, "Something important must be happening up there. Darius, tell us what's going on in the heavens just now."

"Nothing good," answered the other. "Bartja, I have something to say to you alone."

"Why to me alone? Araspes always keeps his own counsel, and from the rest of you I never have any secrets."

"Still—"

"Speak out."

"No, I wish you would come into the garden with me."

Bartja nodded to the others, who were still sitting over their wine, laid his hand on Darius' shoulder and went out with him into the bright moonlight. As soon as they were alone, Darius seized both his friend's hands, and said: "To-day is the third time that things have happened in the heavens, which bode no good for you. Your evil star has approached your favorable constellation so nearly, that a mere novice in astrology could see some serious danger was at hand. Be on your guard, Bartja, and start for Egypt to-day; the stars tell me that the danger is here on the Euphrates, not abroad."

"Do you believe implicitly in the stars?"

"Implicitly. They never lie."

"Then it would be folly to try and avoid what they have foretold."

"Yes, no man can run away from his destiny; but

that very destiny is like a fencing-master—his favorite pupils are those who have the courage and skill to parry his own blows. Start for Egypt to-day, Bartja.”

“I cannot—I haven’t taken leave of my mother and Atossa.”

“Send them a farewell message, and tell Croesus to explain the reason of your starting so quickly.”

“They would call me a coward.”

“It is cowardly to yield to any mortal, but to go out of the way of one’s fate is wisdom.”

“You contradict yourself, Darius. What would the fencing-master say to a runaway-pupil?”

“He would rejoice in the stratagem, by which an isolated individual tried to escape a superior force.”

“But the superior force must conquer at last.—What would be the use of my trying to put off a danger which, you say yourself, cannot be averted? If my tooth aches, I have it drawn at once, instead of tormenting and making myself miserable for weeks by putting off the painful operation as a coward or a woman would, till the last moment. I can await this coming danger bravely, and the sooner it comes the better, for then I shall have it behind me.”

“You do not know how serious it is.”

“Are you afraid for my life?”

“No.”

“Then tell me, what you are afraid of.”

“That Egyptian priest with whom I used to study the stars, once cast your horoscope with me. He knew more about the heavens, than any man I ever saw. I learnt a great deal from him, and I will not hide from you that even then he drew my attention to dangers that threaten you now.”

“And you did not tell me?”

“Why should I have made you uneasy beforehand? Now that your destiny is drawing near, I warn you.”

“Thank you,—I will be careful. In former times I should not have listened to such a warning, but now that I love Sappho, I feel as if my life were not so much my own to do what I like with, as it used to be.”

“I understand this feeling . . .”

“You understand it? Then Araspes was right? You don’t deny?”

“A mere dream without any hope of fulfilment.”

“But what woman could refuse you?”

“Refuse!”

“I don’t understand you. Do you mean to say that you—the boldest sportsman, the strongest wrestler—the wisest of all the young Persians—that you, Darius, are afraid of a woman?”

“Bartja, may I tell you more, than I would tell even to my own father?”

“Yes.”

“I love the daughter of Cyrus, your sister and the king’s,—Atossa.”

“Have I understood you rightly? you love Atossa? Be praised for this, O ye pure Amescha çpenta!* Now I shall never believe in your stars again, for instead of the danger with which they threatened me, here comes an unexpected happiness. Embrace me, my brother, and tell me the whole story, that I may see whether I can help you to turn this hopeless dream, as you call it, into a reality.”

“You will remember that before our journey to Egypt, we went with the entire court from Ecbatana to Susa. I

* See note 17.

was in command of the division of the "Immortals" appointed to escort the carriages containing the king's mother and sister, and his wives. In going through the narrow pass which leads over the Orontes, the horses of your mother's carriage slipped. The yoke to which the horses were harnessed¹² broke from the pole, and the heavy, four-wheeled carriage fell over the precipice without obstruction. On seeing it disappear, we were horrified and spurred our horses to the place as quickly as possible. We expected of course to see only fragments of the carriages and the dead bodies of its inmates, but the gods had taken them into their almighty protection, and there lay the carriage, with broken wheels, in the arms of two gigantic cypresses which had taken firm root in the fissures of the slate rocks, and whose dark tops reached up to the edge of the carriage-road.

"As quick as thought I sprang from my horse and scrambled down one of the cypresses. Your mother and sister stretched their arms to me, crying for help. The danger was frightful, for the sides of the carriage had been so shattered by the fall, that they threatened every moment to give way, in which case those inside it must inevitably have fallen into the black, unfathomable abyss which looked like an abode for the gloomy Divs, and stretched his jaws wide to crush its beautiful victims.

"I stood before the shattered carriage as it hung over the precipice ready to fall to pieces every moment, and then for the first time I met your sister's imploring

¹² There was a yoke at the end of the shaft of a Persian carriage, which was fastened on to the backs of the horses and took the place of our horse-collar and pole-chain. See illustration in Gosse's *Assyria*, p. 224. Layard, p. 151 and 447-451. The Egyptian horses were harnessed in the same manner. See Vol. I. note 30. The horses represented on the Persian and Assyrian monuments are without question a different race from those on the Egyptian.

look. From that moment I loved her, but at the time I was much too intent on saving them, to think of anything else, and had no idea what had taken place within me. I dragged the trembling women out of the carriage, and one minute later it rolled down the abyss crashing into a thousand pieces. I am a strong man, but I confess that all my strength was required to keep myself and the two women from falling over the precipice until ropes were thrown to us from above. Atossa hung round my neck, and Kassandane lay on my breast, supported by my left arm; with the right I fastened the rope round my waist, we were drawn up, and I found myself a few minutes later on the high-road—your mother and sister were saved.

"As soon as one of the Magi had bound up the wounds cut by the rope in my side, the king sent for me, gave me the chain I am now wearing and the revenues of an entire satrapy, and then took me to his mother and sister. They expressed their gratitude very warmly; Kassandane allowed me to kiss her forehead, and gave me all the jewels she had worn at the time of the accident, as a present for my future wife. Atossa took a ring from her finger, put it on mine and kissed my hand in the warmth of her emotion—you know how eager and excitable she is. Since that happy day—the happiest in my life—I have never seen your sister, till yesterday evening, when we sat opposite to each other at the banquet. Our eyes met. I saw nothing but Atossa, and I think she has not forgotten the man who saved her. Kassandane . . ."

"Oh, my mother would be delighted to have you for a son-in-law; I will answer for that. As to the king, your father must apply to him; he is our uncle

and has a right to ask the hand of Cyrus's daughter for his son."

"But have you forgotten your father's dream? You know that Cambyses has always looked on me with suspicion since that time."

"Oh, that has been long forgotten. My father dreamt before his death that you had wings,¹³ and was misled by the soothsayers into the fancy that you, though you were only eighteen then, would try to gain the crown. Cambyses thought of this dream too; but, when you saved my mother and sister, Crœsus explained to him that this must have been its fulfilment, as no one but Darius or a winged eagle could possibly have possessed strength and dexterity enough to hang suspended over such an abyss."

"Yes, and I remember too that these words did not please your brother. He chooses to be the only eagle in Persia; but Crœsus does not spare his vanity—"

"Where can Crœsus be all this time?"

"In the hanging-gardens. My father and Gobryas have very likely detained him."

Just at that moment the voice of Zopyrus was heard exclaiming, "Well, I call that polite! Bartja invites us to a wine-party and leaves us sitting here without a host, while he talks secrets yonder."

"We are coming, we are coming," answered Bartja. Then taking the hand of Darius heartily, he said: "I am very glad that you love Atossa. I shall stay here till the day after to-morrow, let the stars threaten me with all the dangers in the world. To-morrow I will find out what Atossa feels, and when every thing is in

13. Herod. I. 209.

the right track I shall go away, and leave my winged Darius to his own powers."

So saying Bartja went back into the arbor, and his friend began to watch the stars again. The longer he looked the sadder and more serious became his face, and when the Tistar-star set, he murmured, "Poor Bartja!" His friends called him, and he was on the point of returning to them, when he caught sight of a new star, and began to examine its position carefully. His serious looks gave way to a triumphant smile, his tall figure seemed to grow taller still, he pressed his hand on his heart and whispered: "Use your pinions, winged Darius; your star will be on your side," and then returned to his friends.

A few minutes after, Crœsus came up to the arbor. The youths sprang from their seats to welcome the old man, but when he saw Bartja's face by the bright moonlight, he stood as if transfixed by a flash of lightning.

"What has happened, father?" asked Gyges, seizing his hand anxiously.

"Nothing, nothing," he stammered almost inaudibly, and pushing his son on one side, whispered in Bartja's ear: "Unhappy boy, you are still here? don't delay any longer,—fly at once! the whip-bearers are close at my heels, and I assure you that if you don't use the greatest speed, you will have to forfeit your double imprudence with your life."

"But Crœsus, I have . . ."

"You have set at nought the law of the land and of the court, and, in appearance at least, have done great offence to your brother's honor . . ."

"You are speaking . . ."

"Fly, I tell you—fly at once; for if your visit to the hanging-gardens was ever so innocently meant, you are still in the greatest danger. You know Cambyses' violent temper—so well; how could you so wickedly disobey his express command?"

"I don't understand."

"No excuses,—fly! don't you know that, Cambyses has long been jealous of you, and that your visit to the Egyptian to-night . . ."

"I have never once set foot in the hanging-gardens, since Nitetis has been here."

"Don't add a lie to your offence, I . . ."

"But I swear to you . . ."

"Do you wish to turn a thoughtless act into a crime by adding the guilt of perjury? The whip-bearers are coming, fly!"

"I shall remain here, and abide by my oath."

"You are infatuated! It is not an hour ago since I myself, Hystaspes, and others of the Achæmenidæ, saw you in the hanging-gardens . . ."

In his astonishment Bartja had, half involuntarily, allowed himself to be led away, but when he heard this he stood still, called his friends and said "Cræsus says he met me an hour ago in the hanging-gardens, you know that since the sun set I have not been away from you. Give your testimony, that in this case an evil Div must have made sport of our friend and his companions."

"I swear to you, father," cried Gyges, "that Bartja has not left this garden for some hours."

"And we confirm the same," added Araspes, Zopyrus and Darius with one voice.

"You want to deceive me?" said Cræsus getting

very angry, and looking at each of them reproachfully. "Do you fancy that I am blind or mad? Do you think that your witness will outweigh the words of such men as Hystaspes, Gobryas, Artaphernes and the high-priest, Oropastes? In spite of all your false testimony, which no amount of friendship can justify, Bartja will have to die unless he flies at once."

"May Angramainjus destroy me," said Araspes interrupting the old man, "if Bartja was in the hanging-gardens two hours ago!" and Gyges added:

"Don't call me your son any longer, if we have given false testimony."

Darius was beginning to appeal to the eternal stars, but Bartja put an end to this confusion of voices by saying in a decided tone: "A division of the body-guard is coming into the garden. I am to be arrested; I cannot escape because I am innocent, and to fly would lay me open to suspicion. By the soul of my father, the blind eyes of my mother, and the pure light of the sun, Cræsus, I swear that I am not lying."

"Am I to believe you, in spite of my own eyes which have never yet deceived me? But I will, boy, for I love you. I do not and I will not know whether you are innocent or guilty, but this I do know, you must fly, and fly at once. You know Cambyses. My carriage is waiting at the gate. Don't spare the horses, save yourself even if you drive them to death. The soldiers seem to know what they have been sent to do; there can be no question that they delay so long only in order to give their favorite time to escape. Fly, fly, or it is all over with you."

Darius, too, pushed his friend forward, exclaiming:

"Fly, Bartja, and remember the warning that the heavens themselves wrote in the stars for you."

Bartja, however, stood silent, shook his handsome head, waved his friends back, and answered: "I never ran away yet, and I mean to hold my ground to-day. Cowardice is worse than death in my opinion, and I would rather suffer wrong at the hands of others than disgrace myself. There are the soldiers! Well met, Bischen. You've come to arrest me, haven't you? Wait one moment, till I have said good-bye to my friends."

Bischen, the officer he spoke to, was one of Cyrus's old captains; he had given Bartja his first lessons in shooting and throwing the spear, had fought by his side in the war with the Tapuri, and loved him as if he were his own son. He interrupted him, saying: "There is no need to take leave of your friends, for the king, who is raging like a madman, ordered me not only to arrest you, but every one else who might be with you."

And then he added in a low voice: "The king is beside himself with rage and threatens to have your life. You must fly. My men will do what I tell them blind-fold; they will not pursue you; and I am so old that it would be little loss to Persia, if my head were the price of my disobedience."

"Thanks, thanks, my friend," said Bartja, giving him his hand; "but I cannot accept your offer, because I am innocent, and I know that though Cambyses is hasty, he is not unjust. Come friends, I think the king will give us a hearing to-day, late as it is."

CHAPTER III.

Two hours later Bartja and his friends were standing before the king. The gigantic man was seated on his golden throne; he was pale and his eyes looked sunken; two physicians stood waiting behind him with all kinds of instruments and vessels in their hands. Cambyses had, only a few minutes before, recovered consciousness, after lying for more than an hour in one of those awful fits, so destructive both to mind and body, which we call epileptic.

Since Nitetis' arrival he had been free from this illness; but it had seized him to-day with fearful violence, owing to the overpowering mental excitement he had gone through.¹⁴

If he had met Bartja a few hours before, he would have killed him with his own hand; but though the epileptic fit had not subdued his anger it had at least so far quieted it, that he was in a condition to hear what was to be said on both sides.

At the right hand of the throne stood Hystaspes, Darius's grey-haired father, Gobryas, his future father-in-law, the aged Intaphernes, the grandfather of that Phædime whose place in the king's favor had been given to Nitetis, Oropastes the high-priest, Croesus, and behind them Boges, the chief of the eunuchs. At its left Bartja, whose hands were heavily fettered, Araspes, Darius,

¹⁴ The dangerous disease to which Herodotus says Cambyses had been subject from his birth, and which was called "sacred" by some, can scarcely be other than epilepsy. See Herod. III. 33.