



FIFTEEN DECISIVE BATTLES OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

THE BATTLE OF MARATHON.

*Quibus actus uterque
Europæ atque Asiæ fati concurrerit orbis.*

Two THOUSAND three hundred and forty years ago, a council of Athenian officers was summoned on the slope of one of the mountains that look over the plain of Marathon, on the eastern coast of Attica. The immediate subject of their meeting was to consider whether they should give battle to an enemy that lay encamped on the shore beneath them; but on the result of their deliberations depended, not merely the fate of two armies, but the whole future progress of human civilization.

There were eleven members of that council of war. Ten were the generals who were then annually elected at Athens, one for each of the local tribes into which the Athenians were divided. Each general led the men of his own tribe, and each was invested with equal military authority. But one of the archons was also associated with them in the general command of the army. This magistrate was termed the polemarch or War-ruler; he had the privilege of leading the right wing of the army in battle, and his vote in a council of war was equal to that of any of the generals. A noble Athenian named Callimachus was the War-ruler of this year; and as such, stood listening to the earnest discussion of the ten generals. They had, indeed, deep matter for anxiety, though little aware how momentous to mankind were the votes they were about to give, or how the generations to come would read with interest the record of their discussions. They saw before them the invading forces of a mighty empire, which had in the last fifty years shattered and enslaved nearly all the kingdoms and principalities of the then known world. They knew that all the resources of

their own country were comprised in the little army intrusted to their guidance. They saw before them a chosen host of the Great King, sent to wreak his special wrath on that country, and on the other insolent little Greek community, which had dared to aid his rebels and burn the capital of one of his provinces. That victorious host had already fulfilled half its mission of vengeance. Eretria, the confederate of Athens in the bold march against Sardis nine years before, had fallen in the last few days, and the Athenian generals could discern from the heights the island of Egilia, in which the Persians had deposited their Eretrian prisoners, whom they had reserved to be led away captives into Upper Asia, there to hear their doom from the lips of King Darius himself. Moreover, the men of Athens knew that in the camp before them was their own banished tyrant, who was seeking to be reinstated by foreign cimeters in despotic sway over any remnant of his countrymen that might survive the sack of their town, and might be left behind as too worthless for leading away into Median bondage.

The numerical disparity between the force which the Athenian commanders had under them, and that which they were called on to encounter, was hopelessly apparent to some of the council. The historians who wrote nearest to the time of the battle do not pretend to give any detailed statements of the numbers engaged, but there are sufficient data for our making a general estimate. Every free Greek was trained to military duty; and, from the incessant border wars between the different states, few Greeks reached the age of manhood without having seen some service. But the muster-roll of free Athenian citizens of an age fit for military duty never exceeded thirty thousand, and at this epoch probably did not amount to two-thirds of that number. Moreover, the poorer portion of these were unprovided with the equipments, and untrained to the operations of the regular infantry. Some detachments of the best-armed troops would be required to garrison the city itself and man the various fortified posts in the territory; so that it is impossible to reckon the fully equipped force that marched from Athens to Marathon when the news of the Persian landing arrived, at higher than ten thousand men.*

With one exception, the other Greeks held back from aiding them. Sparta had promised assistance, but the Persians had landed on the sixth day of the moon, and a religious scruple delayed the march of Spartan troops till the moon should have reached its

* The historians, who lived long after the time of the battle, such as Justin, Plutarch, and others, give ten thousand as the number of the Athenian army. Not much reliance could be placed on their authority, if unsupported by other evidence; but a calculation made for the number of the Athenian free population remarkably confirms it. For the data of this, see Boeckh's "Public Economy of Athens," vol. I., p. 45. Some *Μετοικοι* probably served as Hoplites at Marathon, but the number of resident aliens at Athens cannot have been large at this period.

full. From one quarter only, and that from a most unexpected one, did Athens receive aid at the moment of her great peril.

Some years before this time the little state of Plataea in Boeotia, being hard pressed by her powerful neighbor, Thebes, had asked the protection of Athens, and had owed to an Athenian army the rescue of her independence. Now when it was noised over Greece that the Mede had come from the uttermost parts of the earth to destroy Athens, the brave Plateans, unsolicited, marched with their whole force to assist the defense, and to share the fortunes of their benefactors. The general levy of the Plateans only amounted to a thousand men; and this little column, marching from their city along the southern ridge of Mount Cithæron, and thence across the Attic territory, joined the Athenian forces above Marathon almost immediately before the battle. The re-enforcement was numerically small, but the gallant spirit of the men who composed it must have made it of ten-fold value to the Athenians; and its presence must have gone far to dispel the cheerless feeling of being deserted and friendless, which the delay of the Spartan succors was calculated to create among the Athenian ranks.*

This generous daring of their weak but true-hearted ally was never forgotten at Athens. The Plateans were made the civil fellow-countrymen of the Athenians, except the right of exercising certain political functions; and from that time forth, in the solemn sacrifices at Athens, the public prayers were offered up for a joint blessing from Heaven upon the Athenians, and the Plateans also.

After the junction of the column from Plataea, the Athenian commanders must have had under them about eleven thousand fully-armed and disciplined infantry, and probably a larger number of irregular light-armed troops; as, besides the poorer citizens who went to the field armed with javelins, cutlasses, and targets, each regular heavy-armed soldier was attended in the camp by one or more slaves, who were armed like the inferior freemen.† Cavalry or archers the Athenians (on this occasion) had none; and the use in the field of military engines was not at that period introduced into ancient warfare.

* Mr. Grote observes (vol. iv., p. 464) that "this volunteer march of the whole Platean force to Marathon is one of the most affecting incidents of all Grecian history." In truth, the whole career of Plataea, and the friendship, strong, even unto death, between her and Athens, form one of the most affecting episodes in the history of antiquity. In the Peloponnesian war the Plateans again were true to the Athenians against all risks, and all calculation of self-interest; and the destruction of Plataea was the consequence. There are few nobler passages in the classics than the speech in which the Platean prisoners of war, after the memorable siege of their city, justify before their Spartan executioners their loyal adherence to Athens. See Thucydides, lib. iii., secs. 53-60.

† At the battle of Plataea, eleven years after Marathon, each of the eight thousand Athenian regular infantry who served them was attended by a light-armed slave.—Herod., lib. viii., c. 28, 29.

Contrasted with their own scanty forces, the Greek commanders saw stretched before them, along the shores of the winding bay, the tents and shipping of the varied nations who marched to do the bidding of the king of the Eastern world. The difficulty of finding transports and of securing provisions would form the only limit to the numbers of a Persian army. Nor is there any reason to suppose the estimate of Justin exaggerated, who rates at a hundred thousand the force which on this occasion had sailed, under the satraps Datis and Artaphernes, from the Cilician shores against the devoted coasts of Eubœa and Attica. And after largely deducting from this total, so as to allow for mere mariners and camp followers, there must still have remained fearful odds against the national levies of the Athenians. Nor could Greek generals then feel that confidence in the superior quality of their troops, which ever since the battle of Marathon has animated Europeans in conflicts with Asiatics; as, for instance, in the after struggles between Greece and Persia, or when the Roman legions encountered the myriads of Mithradates and Tigranes, or as is the case in the Indian campaigns of our own regiments. On the contrary, up to the day of Marathon the Medes and Persians were reputed invincible. They had more than once met Greek troops in Asia Minor, in Cyprus, in Egypt, and had invariably beaten them. Nothing can be stronger than the expressions used by the early Greek writers respecting the terror which the name of the Medes inspired, and the prostration of men's spirits before the apparently resistless career of the Persian arms.* It is, therefore, little to be wondered at, that five of the ten Athenian generals shrank from the prospect of fighting a pitched battle against an enemy so superior in numbers and so formidable in military renown. Their own position on the heights was strong, and offered great advantages to a small defending force against assailing masses. They deemed it mere foolhardiness to descend into the plain to be trampled down by the Asiatic horse, overwhelmed with the archery, or cut to pieces by the invincible veterans of Cambyzes and Cyrus. Moreover, Sparta, the great war-state of Greece, had been applied to, and had promised succor to Athens, though the religious observance which the Dorians paid to certain times and seasons had for the present delayed their march. Was it not wise, at any rate, to wait till the Spartans came up, and to have the help of the best troops in Greece, before they exposed themselves to the shock of the dreaded Medes?

* *Ἀθηναῖοι πρῶτοι ἀνέβχοντο ἐς ἡττὰ τε Μηδικὴν ὁρέωντες, καὶ τοὺς ἀνδράς ταυτὴν ἐβημένους· τῶς δὲ ἦν τοῖσι Ἕλλησι καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῶν Μηδῶν φόβος ἀκούσαι.*—HERODOTUS lib. vi., c. 112.

Αἱ δὲ γυνῶμαι δεδοσμέναι ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων ἦσαν ὥς πολλαὶ καὶ μεγάλα καὶ μάχιμα γέννηκα δεδοσμένην ἦν ἡ Περσῶν ἀρχή.—*Πλάτο, Menæxenus.*

Specious as these reasons might appear, the other five generals were for speedier and bolder operations. And, fortunately for Athens and for the world, one of them was a man, not only of the highest military genius, but also of that energetic character, which impresses its own type and ideas upon spirits feeble in conception.

Miltiades was the head of one of the noblest houses at Athens; he ranked the *Æacidae* among his ancestry, and the blood of Achilles flowed in the veins of the hero of Marathon. One of his immediate ancestors had acquired the dominion of the Thracian Chersonese, and thus the family became at the same time Athenian citizens and Thracian princes. This occurred at the time when Pisistratus was tyrant of Athens. Two of the relatives of Miltiades—an uncle of the same name, and a brother named Stesagoras—had ruled the Chersonese before Miltiades became its prince. He had been brought up at Athens in the house of his father, Cimon,* who was renowned throughout Greece for his victories in the Olympic chariot-races, and who must have been possessed of great wealth. The sons of Pisistratus, who succeeded their father in the tyranny at Athens, caused Cimon to be assassinated; but they treated the young Miltiades with favor and kindness, and when his brother Stesagoras died in the Chersonese, they sent him out there as lord of the principality. This was about twenty-eight years before the battle of Marathon, and it is with his arrival in the Chersonese that our first knowledge of the career and character of Miltiades commences. We find, in the first act recorded of him, the proof of the same resolute and unscrupulous spirit that marked his mature age. His brother's authority in the principality had been shaken by war and revolt; Miltiades determined to rule more securely. On his arrival he kept close within his house, as if he was mourning for his brother. The principal men of the Chersonese, hearing of this, assembled from all the towns and districts, and went together to the house of Miltiades, on a visit of condolence. As soon as he had thus got them in his power, he made them all prisoners. He then asserted and maintained his own absolute authority in the peninsula, taking into his pay a body of five hundred regular troops, and strengthening his interest by marrying the daughter of the king of the neighboring Thracians.

When the Persian power was extended to the Hellespont and its neighborhood, Miltiades, as prince of the Chersonese, submitted to King Darius; and he was one of the numerous tributary rulers who led their contingents of men to serve in the Persian camp, in the expedition against Scythia. Miltiades and the vassal Greeks of Asia Minor were left by the Persian king in charge of the bridge across the Danube, when the invading army crossed that river, and plunged into the wilds of the country that now is Russia, in vain pursuit of the ancestors of the modern Cossacks.

* Herodotus, lib. vi., c. 103.

† *Ib.*

On learning the reverses that Darius met with in the Scythian wilderness, Miltiades proposed to his companions that they should break the bridge down, and leave the Persian king and his army to perish by famine and the Scythian arrows. The rulers of the Asiatic Greek cities, whom Miltiades addressed, shrank from this bold but ruthless stroke against the Persian power, and Darius returned in safety. But it was known what advice Miltiades had given, and the vengeance of Darius was thenceforth specially directed against the man who had counseled such a deadly blow against his empire and his person. The occupation of the Persian arms in other quarters left Miltiades for some years after this in possession of the Chersonese; but it was precarious and interrupted. He, however, availed himself of the opportunity which his position gave him of conciliating the good-will of his fellow-countrymen at Athens, by conquering and placing under the Athenian authority the islands of Lemnos and Imbros, to which Athens had ancient claims, but which she had never previously been able to bring into complete subjection. At length, in 494, B. C., the complete suppression of the Ionian revolt by the Persians left their armies and fleets at liberty to act against the enemies of the Great King to the west of the Hellespont. A strong squadron of Phœnician galleys was sent against the Chersonese. Miltiades knew that resistance was hopeless; and while the Phœnicians were at Tenedos, he loaded five galleys with all the treasure that he could collect, and sailed away for Athens. The Phœnicians fell in with him, and chased him hard along the north of the Ægean. One of his galleys, on board of which was his eldest son, Metiochus, was actually captured. But Miltiades, with the other four, succeeded in reaching the friendly coast of Imbros in safety. Thence he afterward proceeded to Athens, and resumed his station as a free citizen of the Athenian commonwealth.

The Athenians, at this time, had recently expelled Hippias, the son of Pisistratus, the last of their tyrants. They were in the full glow of their newly-recovered liberty and equality; and the constitutional changes of Cleisthenes had inflamed their republican zeal to the utmost. Miltiades had enemies at Athens; and these, availing themselves of the state of popular feeling, brought him to trial for his life for having been tyrant of the Chersonese. The charge did not necessarily import any acts of cruelty or wrong to individuals: it was founded on no specific law; but it was based on the horror with which the Greeks of that age regarded every man who made himself arbitrary master of his fellow-men, and exercised irresponsible dominion over them. The fact of Miltiades having so ruled in the Chersonese was undeniable, but the question which the Athenians assembled in judgment must have tried, was whether Miltiades, although tyrant of the Chersonese, deserved punishment as an Athenian citizen. The eminent service that he had done the state in con-

quering Lemnos and Imbros for it, pleaded strongly in his favor. The people refused to convict him. He stood high in public opinion. And when the coming invasion of the Persians was known, the people wisely elected him one of their generals for the year.

Two other men of high eminence in history, though their renown was achieved at a later period than that of Miltiades, were also among the ten Athenian generals, at Marathon. One was Themistocles, the future founder of the Athenian navy, and the destined victor of Salamis. The other was Aristides, who afterward led the Athenian troops at Plataea, and whose integrity and just popularity acquired for his country, when the Persians had finally been repulsed, the advantageous pre-eminence of being acknowledged by half of the Greeks as their imperial leader and protector. It is not recorded what part either Themistocles or Aristides took in the debate of the counsel of war at Marathon. But, from the character of Themistocles, his boldness, and his intuitive genius for extemporizing the best measures in every emergency* (a quality which the greatest of historians ascribes to him beyond all his contemporaries), we may well believe that the vote of Themistocles was for prompt and decisive action. On the vote of Aristides it may be more difficult to speculate. His predilection for the Spartans may have made him wish to wait till they came up; but though circumspect, he was neither timid as a soldier nor as a politician, and the bold advice of Miltiades may probably have found in Aristides a willing, most assuredly it found in him a candid, hearer.

Miltiades felt no hesitation as to the course which the Athenian army ought to pursue; and earnestly did he press his opinion on his brother-generals. Practically acquainted with the organization of the Persian armies, Miltiades felt convinced of the superiority of the Greek troops, if properly handled; he saw with the military eye of a great general the advantage which the position of the forces gave him for a sudden attack, and as a profound politician he felt the perils of remaining inactive, and of giving treachery time to ruin the Athenian cause.

One officer in the council of war had not yet voted. This was Callimachus, the War-ruler. The votes of the generals were five and five, so that the voice of Callimachus would be decisive.

On that vote, in all human probability, the destiny of all the nations of the world depended. Miltiades turned to him, and in simple soldierly eloquence, the substance of which we may read faithfully reported in Herodotus, who had conversed with the vet-

* See the character of Themistocles in the 138th section of the first book of Thucydides, especially the last sentence. *Καὶ τὸ ἐνυπαρ εἶπεν φρόνως μὲν δυνάμει μελέτης δὲ βραχύτητι κρᾶτις δὲ οὗτος αὐτοσχέδιον τὰ δέοντα ἐγένετο.*

erans of Marathon, the great Athenian thus adjured his countrymen to vote for giving battle.

"It now rests with you, Callimachus, either to enslave Athens, or, by assuring her freedom, to win yourself an immortality of fame, such as not even Harmodius and Aristogeiton have acquired; for never, since the Athenians were a people, were they in such danger as they are in at this moment. If they bow the knee to these Medes, they are to be given up to Hippias, and you know what they then will have to suffer. But if Athens comes victorious out of this contest, she has it in her to become the first city of Greece. Your vote is to decide whether we are to join battle or not. If we do not bring on a battle presently, some factions intrigue will disunite the Athenians, and the city will be betrayed to the Medes. But if we fight, before there is anything rotten in the state of Athens, I believe that, provided the gods will give fair play and no favor, we are able to get the best of it in an engagement."*

The vote of the brave War-ruler was gained; the council determined to give battle; and such was the ascendancy and acknowledged military eminence of Miltiades, that his brother generals one and all gave up their days of command to him, and cheerfully acted under his orders. Fearful, however, of creating any jealousy, and of so failing to obtain the vigorous co-operation of all parts of his small army, Miltiades waited till the day when the chief command would have come round to him in regular rotation before he led the troops against the enemy.

The inaction of the Asiatic commanders during this interval appears strange at first sight; but Hippias was with them, and they and he were aware of their chance of a bloodless conquest through the machinations of his partisans among the Athenians. The nature of the ground also explains in many points the tactics of the opposite generals before the battle, as well as the operations of the troops during the engagement.

The plain of Marathon, which is about twenty-two miles distant from Athens, lies along the bay of the same name on the north-

* Herodotus, lib. vi., sec. 109. The 116th section is to my mind clear proof that Herodotus had personally conversed with Epizelus, one of the veterans of Marathon. The substance of the speech of Miltiades would naturally become known by the report of some of his colleagues. The speeches which ancient historians place in the mouths of kings and generals are generally inventions of their own; but part of this speech of Miltiades bears internal evidence of authenticity. Such is the case with the remarkable expression *ἦν δὲ ἐνυμβάλλωμεν πρὶν τι καὶ καθρόν Ἀθηναίων κτελεστέροις ἐγγενέσθαι, δεῶν τὰ ἴσα νεμόντων, οἳ τε εἶμεν περιγενέσθαι τῇ ἐνυμβολῇ*. This daring and almost irreverent assertion would never have been coined by Herodotus, but it is precisely consonant with what we know of the character of Miltiades; and it is an expression which, if used by him, would be sure to be remembered and repeated by his hearers.

eastern coast of Attica. The plain is nearly in the form of a crescent, and about six miles in length. It is about two miles broad in the center, where the space between the mountains and the sea is greatest, but it narrows toward either extremity, the mountains coming close down to the water at the horns of the bay. There is a valley trending inward from the middle of the plain, and a ravine comes down to it to the southward. Elsewhere it is closely girt round on the land side by rugged limestone mountains, which are thickly studded with pines, olive-trees, and cedars, and overgrown with the myrtle, arbutus, and the other low odoriferous shrubs that everywhere perfume the Attic air. The level of the ground is now varied by the mound raised over those who fell in the battle, but it was an unbroken plain when the Persians encamped on it. There are marshes at each end, which are dry in spring and summer, and then offer no obstruction to the horseman, but are commonly flooded with rain and so rendered impracticable for cavalry in the autumn, the time of year at which the action took place.

The Greeks, lying encamped on the mountains, could watch every movement of the Persians on the plain below, while they were enabled completely to mask their own. Miltiades also had from his position, the power of giving battle whenever he pleased, or of delaying it at this discretion, unless Datis were to attempt the perilous operation of storming the heights.

If we turn to the map of the Old World, to test the comparative territorial resources of the two states whose armies were now about to come into conflict, the immense preponderance of the material power of the Persian king over that of the Athenian republic is more striking than any similar contrast which history can supply. It has been truly remarked, that, in estimating mere areas, Attica, containing on its whole surface only seven hundred square miles, shrinks into insignificance, if compared with many a baronial fief of the Middle Ages, or many a colonial allotment of modern times. Its antagonist, the Persian Empire, comprised the whole of modern Asiatic and much of modern European Turkey, the modern kingdom of Persia, and the countries of modern Georgia, Armenia, Balkh, the Punjab, Afghanistan, Beloochistan, Egypt, and Tripoli.

Nor could a European, in the beginning of the fifth century before our era, look upon this huge accumulation of power beneath the scepter of a single Asiatic ruler with the indifference with which we now observe on the map the extensive dominions of modern Oriental sovereigns; for, as has been already remarked, before Marathon was fought, the prestige of success and of supposed superiority of race was on the side of the Asiatic against the European. Asia was the original seat of human societies, and long before any trace can be found of the inhabitants of the rest of the world having emerged from the rudest barbarism, we can perceive that mighty and brilliant empires flourished in the Asi-

atic continent. They appear before us through the twilight of primeval history, dim and indistinct, but massive and majestic, like mountains in the early dawn.

Instead, however, of the infinite variety and restless change which has characterized the institutions and fortunes of European states ever since the commencement of the civilization of our continent, a monotonous uniformity pervades the histories of nearly all Oriental empires, from the most ancient down to the most recent times. They are characterized by the rapidity of their early conquests, by the immense extent of the dominions comprised in them, by the establishment of a satrap or pashaw system of governing the provinces, by an invariable and speedy degeneracy in the princes of the royal house, the effeminate nurslings of the seraglio succeeding to the warrior sovereigns, reared in the camp, and by the internal anarchy and insurrections which indicate and accelerate the decline and fall of these unwieldy and ill-organized fabrics of power. It is also a striking fact that the governments of all the great Asiatic empires have in all ages been absolute despotisms. And Heeren is right in connecting this with another great fact, which is important from its influence both on the political and the social life of Asiatics. "Among all the considerable nations of Inner Asia, the paternal government of every household was corrupted by polygamy: where that custom exists, a good political constitution is impossible. Fathers, being converted into domestic despots, are ready to pay the same abject obedience to their sovereign which they exact from their family and dependents in their domestic economy." We should bear in mind, also, the inseparable connection between the state religion and all legislation which has always prevailed in the East, and the constant existence of a powerful sacerdotal body, exercising some check, though precarious and irregular, over the throne itself, grasping at all civil administration, claiming the supreme control of education, stereotyping the lines in which literature and science must move, and limiting the extent to which it shall be lawful for the human mind to prosecute its inquiries.

With these general characteristics rightly felt and understood, it becomes a comparatively easy task to investigate and appreciate the origin, progress, and principles of Oriental empires in general, as well as of the Persian monarchy in particular. And we are thus better enabled to appreciate the repulse which Greece gave to the arms of the East, and to judge of the probable consequences to human civilization, if the Persians had succeeded in bringing Europe under their yoke, as they had already subjugated the fairest portions of the rest of the then known world.

The Greeks, from their geographical position, formed the natural van-guard of European liberty against Persian ambition; and they pre-eminently displayed the salient points of distinctive national character which have rendered European civilization so far

superior to Asiatic. The nations that dwelt in ancient times around and near the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, were the first in our continent to receive from the East the rudiments of art and literature, and the germs of social and political organizations. Of these nations the Greeks, through their vicinity to Asia Minor, Phœnicia, and Egypt, were among the very foremost in acquiring the principles and habits of civilized life; and they also at once imparted a new and wholly original stamp on all which they received. Thus, in their religion, they received from foreign settlers the names of all their deities and many of their rites, but they discarded the loathsome monstrosities of the Nile, the Orantes, and the Ganges; they nationalized their creed; and their own poets created their beautiful mythology. No sacerdotal caste ever existed in Greece. So, in their governments, they lived long under hereditary kings, but never endured the permanent establishment of absolute monarchy. Their early kings were constitutional rulers, governing with defined prerogatives.* And long before the Persian invasion, the kingly form of government had given way in almost all the Greek states to republican institutions, presenting infinite varieties of the blending or the alternate predominance of the oligarchical and democratical principles. In literature and science the Greek intellect followed no beaten track, and acknowledged no limitary rules. The Greeks thought their subjects boldly out; and the novelty of a speculation invested it in their minds with interest, and not with criminality. Versatile, restless, enterprising, and self-confident, the Greeks presented the most striking contrast to the habitual quietude and submissiveness of the Orientals; and, of all the Greeks, the Athenians exhibited these national characteristics in the strongest degree. This spirit of activity and daring, joined to a generous sympathy for the fate of their fellow-Greeks in Asia, had led them to join in the last Ionian war; and now mingling with their abhorrence of the usurping family of their own citizens, which for a period had forcibly seized on and exercised despotic power at Athens, nerved them to defy the wrath of King Darius, and to refuse to receive back at his bidding the tyrant whom they had some years before driven out.

The enterprise and genius of an Englishman have lately confirmed by fresh evidence, and invested with fresh interest, the might of the Persian monarch who sent his troops to combat at Marathon. Inscriptions in a character termed the Arrow-headed or Cuneiform, had long been known to exist on the marble monuments at Persepolis, near the site of the ancient Susa, and on the faces of rocks in other places formerly ruled over by the early Persian kings. But for thousands of years they had been mere

* *Ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς γέρονσι πατρικαὶ βασιλείαι.*—THUCYD. lib. 1, sec. 13.

unintelligible enigmas to the curious but baffled beholder; and they were often referred to as instances of the folly of human pride, which could indeed write its own praises in the solid rock, but only for the rock to outlive the language as well as the memory of the vainglorious inscribers. The elder Niebuhr, Grotefend, and Lassen, had made some guesses at the meaning of the Cuneiform letters; but Major Rawlinson, of the East India Company's service, after years of labor, has at last accomplished the glorious achievement of fully revealing the alphabet and the grammar of this long unknown tongue. He has, in particular, fully deciphered and expounded the inscription on the sacred rock of Behistun, on the western frontiers of Media. These records of the Achæmenidæ have at length found their interpreter; and Darius himself speaks to us from the consecrated mountain, and tells us the names of the nations that obeyed him, the revolts that he suppressed, his victories, his piety, and his glory.*

Kings who thus seek the admiration of posterity are little likely to dim the record of their successes by the mention of their occasional defeats; and it throws no suspicion on the narrative of the Greek historians that we find these inscriptions silent respecting the overthrow of Datis and Artaphernes, as well as respecting the reverses which Darius sustained in person during his Scythian campaigns. But these indisputable monuments of Persian fame confirm, and even increase the opinion with which Herodotus inspires us of the vast power which Cyrus founded and Cambyses increased; which Darius augmented by Indian and Arabian conquests, and seemed likely, when he directed his arms against Europe, to make the predominant monarchy of the world.

With the exception of the Chinese empire, in which, throughout all ages down to the last few years, one-third of the human race has dwelt almost unconnected with the other portions, all the great kingdoms, which we know to have existed in ancient Asia, were, in Darius's time, blended into the Persian. The northern Indians, the Assyrians, the Syrians, the Babylonians, the Chaldees, the Phenicians, the nations of Palestine, the Armenians, the Bactrians, the Lydians, the Phrygians, the Parthians, and the Medes, all obeyed the scepter of the Great King: the Medes standing next to the native Persians in honor, and the empire being frequently spoken of as that of the Medes or as that of the Medes and Persians. Egypt and Cyrene were Persian provinces; the Greek colonists in Asia Minor and the islands of the *Ægean* were Darius's subjects; and their gallant but unsuccessful attempts to throw off the Persian yoke had only served to rivet it more strongly, and to increase the general belief that the Greeks could not stand before the Persians in a field of battle. Darius's Scythian war,

* See the tenth volume of the "Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society."

though unsuccessful in its immediate object, had brought about the subjugation of Thrace and the submission of Macedonia. From the Indus to the Peneus, all was his.

We may imagine the wrath with which the lord of so many nations must have heard, nine years before the battle of Marathon, that a strange nation toward the setting sun, called the Athenians, had dared to help his rebels in Ionia against him, and that they had plundered and burned the capital of one of his provinces. Before the burning of Sardis, Darius seems never to have heard of the existence of Athens; but his satraps in Asia Minor had for some time seen Athenian refugees at their provincial courts imploring assistance against their fellow-countrymen. When Hippias was driven away from Athens, and the tyrannic dynasty of the Pisistratidæ finally overthrown in 510 B. C., the banished tyrant and his adherents, after vainly seeking to be restored by Spartan intervention, had betaken themselves to Sardis, the capital city of the satrapy of Artaphernes. There Hippias (in the expressive words of Herodotus*) began every kind of agitation, slandering the Athenians before Artaphernes, and doing all he could to induce the satrap to place Athens in subjection to him, as the tributary vassal of King Darius. When the Athenians heard of his practices, they sent envoys to Sardis to remonstrate with the Persians against taking up the quarrel of the Athenian refugees.

But Artaphernes gave them in reply a menacing command to receive Hippias back again if they looked for safety. The Athenians were resolved not to purchase safety at such a price, and after rejecting the satrap's terms, they considered that they and the Persians were declared enemies. At this very crisis the Ionian Greeks implored the assistance of their European brethren, to enable them to recover their independence from Persia. Athens, and the city of Eretria in Eubœa, alone consented. Twenty Athenian galleys, and five Eretrian, crossed the *Ægean* Sea, and by a bold and sudden march upon Sardis, the Athenians and their allies succeeded in capturing the capital city of the haughty satrap, who had recently menaced them with servitude or destruction. They were pursued, and defeated on their return to the coast, and Athens took no further part in the Ionian war: but the insult that she had put upon the Persian power was speedily made known throughout that empire, and was never to be forgiven or forgotten. In the emphatic simplicity of the narrative of Herodotus, the wrath of the Great King is thus described: "Now when it was told to King Darius that Sardis had been taken and burned by the Athenians and Ionians, he took small heed of the Ionians, well knowing who they were, and that their revolt would soon be put down; but he asked who, and what manner of men, the Athenians

* Herod., lib. v. c. 98.