

foreign customs or foreign manners. They no sooner subdued the Medes than they assumed their dress; after conquering Egypt, they used the Egyptian armor; and after becoming acquainted with the Greeks, they imitated them, as Herodotus informs us, in the worst of their vices. But that they were originally a very different people, all ancient authors bear concurring testimony.

At the time when they engaged in the war with Greece, their national character had undergone an entire change. They were a people corrupted by luxury: their armies, immense in their numbers, were a disorderly assemblage of all the tributary nations they had subdued; Medes, Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, mingled with the native Persians; a discordant mass, of which the component parts had no tie of affection which bound them to a common interest.

Athens at this time had asserted her liberty by the expulsion of the Pisistratidæ, and was disposed to put a high value on her newly purchased freedom. The power and strength of the republic were at this time very considerable. Luxury had not yet spread her contagion on the public manners; and the patriotic flame was fervent in all ranks of the people. Even the slaves, who, as we before remarked, formed the chief mass of the population of the state, were an active and serviceable body of men; for being ever treated with humanity by the free citizens, they felt an equal regard for the common interest, and on every occasion of war armed with the spirit of citizens for the defence of their country. The Lacedæmonians had the same love of liberty, the same ardor of patriotism, and were yet more accustomed to warfare than the Athenians. In the contest with Persia, the spirit of the Greeks was raised to its utmost pitch; and it is in fact from this era that the Greeks, as an united people, begin to occupy the chief place in the history of the nations of antiquity.

BOOK THE SECOND

CHAPTER I.

HISTORY OF GREECE, continued.—Origin and cause of the WAR WITH PERSIA
—Commencement of hostilities—Battle of Marathon—Miltiades—Aristides—
Themistocles—Invasion of Greece by Xerxes—Banishment of Aristides—
Thermopylæ—Salamis—Platæa and Mycæ—Disunion of the Greeks—Cimon
—Pericles—Decline of the patriotic spirit.

HAVING in the last chapter given a short retrospective view of the origin of the Persian monarchy, and the outlines of its history down to the period of the war with Greece—together with a brief account of the government, manners, laws, and religion of the ancient Persians;—we now proceed to carry on the detail of the Grecian history, by shortly tracing the progress and issue of that important war, which may be said to have owed its origin to the ambition of Darius the son of Hystaspes, heightened by the passion of revenge. The Ionians, a people of the lesser Asia, originally a Greek colony, had, with the other colonies of Æolia and Caria, been subdued by Cræsus, and annexed to his dominions of Lydia. On the conquest of Lydia by Cyrus, these provinces of course became a part of the great empire of Persia. They were impatient, however, of this state of subjection, and eagerly sought to regain their former freedom. For this purpose, they sought the aid of their ancient countrymen of Greece, applying first to Lacedæmon, then considered as the predominant power; but, being unsuccessful in that quarter, they made the same demand, with better success, on Athens and the islands of the Ægean Sea. Athens and the islands equipped and furnished the Ionians with twenty-five ships of war, which immediately began hostilities on every city on the Asian coast that acknowledged the government of Persia. We remarked in a former chapter,* that after the expulsion of the Pisistratidæ from Athens, Hippias, the last of

* Book i. chap. x. *in fine*.

that family, betook himself to the Lacedæmonians, who, pleased with the opportunity of harassing their rival state, had ineffectually endeavored to form a league with the other nations of Greece for replacing Hippias on the throne of Athens. As this project soon became abortive, Hippias had betaken himself for aid to Artaphernes, the Persian governor of Lydia, then resident at Sardis, its capital city. This satrap eagerly embraced a scheme which coincided with the views of his master Darius, who, enraged at the revolt of the Ionians, and the aid they had found from Athens and the Greek islands, meditated nothing less than the conquest of all Greece. The Ionians, with their Athenian allies, ravaged and burnt the city of Sardis, destroying the magnificent temple of Cybele, the tutelary goddess of the country; but the Persians defeated them with great slaughter, and compelled the Athenians hastily to re-embark their troops at Ephesus, glad to make the best of their way to Greece. This insult, however, sunk deep into the mind of Darius, and from that moment he vowed the destruction of Greece. That his resolution might suffer no delay or abatement, he caused a crier to proclaim every day when he sat down to table, "Great sovereign, remember the Athenians." Previously to the commencement of his expedition, he sent, according to a national custom, two heralds into the country which he intended to invade, who, in their master's name, demanded earth and water, the usual symbols of subjection. The insolence of this requisition provoked the Athenians and Spartans into a violation of the law of civilized nations. They granted the request of the ambassadors by throwing one of them into a ditch, and the other into a well.*

Many others, however, of the cities of Greece, and all the islands, intimidated by the great armament of Darius, to which they had nothing effectual to oppose, sent the tokens of submission. But the Persian fleet of three hundred ships, commanded by Mardonius, being wrecked in doubling the promontory of Mount Athos, (a peninsula which juts out into the Ægean from the southern coast of Macedonia,) this disaster gave spirits to the inhabitants of the islands, who now returned to their allegiance to the mother country, and cheerfully exerted all their powers in a vigorous opposition to the common enemy.

A new fleet of 600 sail was now equipped by Darius, which began hostilities by an attack on the isle of Naxos. Its principal city, with its temples, was burnt to the ground, and the inhabitants were sent in chains to Susa. Many of the other islands underwent the same fate; and an immense army was landed in Eubœa, which, after plundering and laying waste the country, poured

* Herodot. l. vii. c. 133.

down with impetuosity upon Attica. It was conducted by Datis, a Mede, who, under the guidance of the traitor Hippias, led them on towards Marathon, a small village near the coast, and within ten miles of the city of Athens.

The Athenians, in this critical juncture, armed to a man. Even the slaves of the republic were enrolled, and cheerfully gave their services for the common defence of the country. A hasty demand of aid was made upon the confederate states, but the suddenness of the emergency left no time for effectually answering it. The Plataeans sent a thousand men, the whole strength of their small city. The Spartans delayed to march, from an absurd superstition of beginning no enterprise till after the full moon. The Athenians, therefore, may be said to have stood alone to repel this torrent. The amount of their whole army was only 10,000 men; the army of the Persians consisted of 100,000 foot, and 10,000 horse—a vast inequality.

The Athenians, with a very injudicious policy, had given the command of the army to ten chiefs, with equal authority. The mischiefs of this divided power were soon perceived. Happily, among these commanders was one man of superior powers of mind, to whose abilities and conduct all the rest by common consent paid a becoming deference. This was Miltiades. The Athenians for some time deliberated whether it was their best policy to shut themselves up in the city, and there sustain the attack of the Persians, or to take the field. The former measure could only have been thought of in regard of their great inferiority in numbers to the assailing foe. But there is scarcely an inequality of force that may not be compensated by resolution and intrepidity. By the counsel of Miltiades and Aristides, it was resolved to face the enemy in the field. Aristides, when it was his turn to command, yielded his authority to Miltiades; and the other chiefs, without scruple, followed his example.

Miltiades drew up his little army at the foot of a hill, which covered both the flanks, and frustrated all attempts to surround him. They knew the alternative was victory or death, and that all depended on a vigorous effort to be made in one moment; for a lengthened conflict was sure destruction. The Greeks, therefore, laying aside all missile weapons, trusted every thing to the sword. At the word of command, instead of the usual discharge of javelins, they rushed at once upon the enemy with the most desperate impetuosity. The disorder of the Persians, from this furious and unexpected assault, was instantly perceived by Miltiades, and improved to their destruction by a charge made by both the wings of the Athenian army, in which with great judgment he had placed the best of his troops. The army of the Persians was broken in a moment: their immense numbers increased their confusion, and the whole were put to flight. A great carnage ensued. Six thousand three hundred were left dead on the field of Marathon; and among

these the ignoble Hippias, whose criminal ambition would have sacrificed and enslaved his country. The Athenians, in this day of glory, lost only a hundred and ninety men. The Spartans came the day after the battle, to witness the triumph of their rival state.

The event of this remarkable engagement dissipated the terror of the Persian name; and this first successful experiment of their strength was a favorable omen to the Greeks of the final issue of the contest. With presumptuous confidence, the Persians had brought marble from Asia to erect a triumphal monument on the subjugation of their enemies. The Athenians caused a statue of Nemesis, the Goddess of Vengeance, to be formed out of this marble, by the celebrated Phidias; and tablets to be erected, on which were recorded the names of the heroes who had fallen in the fight. Among the Arundelian marbles at Oxford is a *Psephis ma*, or decree, of the people of Athens, published on occasion of the battle of Marathon. The Athenians likewise caused a large painting to be executed by Panæus, the brother of Phidias, in which Miltiades was represented at the head of his fellow chiefs haranguing the army. This was the first emotion of Athenian gratitude to the man who had saved his country. But merit, the more it was eminent and illustrious, became the more formidable, or, to use a juster phrase, the more the object of envy and detraction to this fickle people. Miltiades, charged with the command of reducing some of the revolted islands, executed his commission with honor, with respect to most of them; but he was unsuccessful in an attack against the isle of Paros. He was dangerously wounded; the enterprise miscarried; and he returned to Athens. With the most shocking ingratitude he was capitally tried for treason, on an accusation brought against him by his political antagonist Xanthippus, of his having taken Persian gold to betray his country. Unable, from his wound, to appear in person, his cause was ably pleaded in the Ecclesia by his brother Tisagoras; but all he could obtain was a commutation of the punishment of death into a fine of fifty talents (about 9,400*l.* sterling,) a sum which being utterly unable to pay, he was thrown into prison, where he died of his wounds.

The Persian monarch, meantime, had been only the more exasperated by his bad success; and he now prepared to invade Greece with all the power of Asia. It was the fortune of Athens, notwithstanding her ingratitude, still to nourish virtuous and patriotic citizens. Such was Aristides, who, at this important period, had the greatest influence in conducting the affairs of the republic; a man of singular abilities, whose extreme moderation, and a mind superior to all the allurements of selfish ambition, had deservedly fixed on him the epithet of **THE JUST**.

Themistocles, who, in many respects, was of a very opposite character from Aristides, was the jealous rival of his honors and

reputation. Both of these eminent men sought the glory of their country; the one from a disinterested spirit of virtuous patriotism, the other from the ambitious desire of unrivalled eminence in that state which he labored successfully to aggrandize. Themistocles bent his whole attention, in this critical situation of his country, to ward off the storm which he saw threatened from Persia. Sensible that a powerful fleet was the first object of importance for the defence of a country every where open to invasion from the sea, he procured the profits of the silver mines belonging to the republic to be employed in equipping an armament of a hundred long galleys.*

In this interval happened the death of Darius: he was succeeded by his son Xerxes, whom he had by Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus. The heir of his father's ambition, but not of his abilities, Xerxes adopted with impetuosity the project of the destruction of Greece, and armed an innumerable multitude—as Herodotus says, above five millions of men—for that expedition; a calculation utterly incredible—but which serves at least to mark a number, though uncertain, yet altogether prodigious. The error of this estimate becomes palpable, when we attend to the number of ships by which this force was to be transported. These were twelve hundred ships of war, and three thousand transports.

The impatience of Xerxes could not brook the delay that would have attended the transportation of this immense body of land forces in his fleet across the *Ægean*, which is a very dangerous navigation, or even by the narrower sea of the *Hellespont*. He ordered a bridge of boats to be constructed between *Sestos* and *Abydos*, a distance of seven furlongs (seven eighths of a mile.) This structure was no sooner completed, than it was demolished by a tempest. In revenge of this insult to his power, the directors of the work were beheaded, and the outrageous element itself was punished, by throwing into it a pair of iron fetters, and bestowing three hundred lashes upon the water. After this childish ceremony, a new bridge was built, consisting of a double range of vessels fixed by strong anchors, and joined to each other by immense cables. On this structure the main body of the army passed, in the space of seven days and nights. It was necessary that the fleet should attend the motions of the army; and to avoid a disaster similar to that which had happened to the armament under *Mardonius*, Xerxes ordered the promontory of *Athos* to be cut through, by a canal of sufficient breadth to allow two ships to sail abreast. This fact, though confidently asserted by *Herodotus*, *Thucydides*, and *Diodorus*, the first actually contemporary with the event, has yet so much the air of

* The sagacious Themistocles did not disdain to avail himself of the superstitious spirit of his countrymen in aid of his wise precautions. The Delphic Oracle, consulted on the fate of the country, answered that the Greeks would owe their safety to wooden walls.

romance, that it has been classed among the fables of ancient history

“——— creditur olim
Velificatus Athos, et quicquid Græcia mendax
Audet in historia :—”

and modern travellers who have surveyed the ground, assert that it exhibits no vestiges of such an operation.

The object of Xerxes' expedition was professedly the chastisement of Athens, for the aid she had given to his revolted subjects of the lesser Asia; but the prodigious force which he set in motion had, beyond doubt, the conquest of all Greece for its real purpose. If Athens then took the principal part in this contest, and finally prevailed in it, we cannot hesitate to assent to the opinion expressed by Herodotus, that to this magnanimous republic all Greece was indebted for her freedom and existence as a nation.

But Athens herself was at this very time the prey of domestic faction, and was divided between the partisans of Themistocles and Aristides. The former could no longer bear the honors and reputation of his rival. By industriously disseminating reports to his prejudice, and representing that very moderation which was the shining feature of his character, as a mere device to gain popularity, and the artful veil of the most dangerous, because the most disguised ambition, he so poisoned the mind of the people that they insisted for the judgment of the ostracism; the consequence was, that the virtuous Aristides was banished for ten years from his country.

Such was the situation of Athens while Xerxes had mustered his prodigious host upon the plains of Thessaly. The greater part of the states of Greece either stood aloof in this crisis of the national fate, or meanly sent to the Persian monarch the demanded symbols of submission. Even Lacedæmon, though expressing a determined resolution of defence against the common enemy, sent no more effective force to join the Athenian army than three hundred men, but these, as we shall see, were a band of heroes. The Corinthians, Thespians, Platæans, and Æginetes contributed each a small contingent.

Xerxes now proceeded by rapid marches towards the pass of Thermopylæ,* a very narrow defile upon the bay of Malia, which divides Thessaly from the territories of Phocis and Locris. In a council of war, held by the Greeks, it was thought of great importance to attempt at least to defend this pass; and a body of 6000 men being destined for that purpose, Leonidas, one of the kings of Sparta, of high reputation for his cool and deliberate courage,

* This defile was called *Thermopylæ* from the hot springs in its vicinity. It is bounded on the west by high precipices which join the lofty ridge of Mount Oeta, and on the east is terminated by an impracticable morass extending to the sea. Near the plain of the Thessalian city, Trachis, the passage was fifty feet in breadth, but at Alpe, the narrower part of the defile, there was not room for one chariot to pass another.

was appointed to command them on this desperate service. He was perfectly aware that his fate was inevitable, and there are some facts which evince that he and his followers had resolutely determined to devote themselves for their country. An oracle had declared that either Sparta or her king must perish. Plutarch relates that, before leaving Lacedæmon, this chosen band of patriots, with their king at their head, celebrated their own funeral games in the sight of their wives and mothers. When the wife of Leonidas bade adieu, and asked his last commands; “My desire,” said he, “is, that you should marry some brave man and bring him brave children.” On the morning of the engagement, when Leonidas, exhorting his troops to take some refreshment, said that they should all sup with Pluto, with one accord they set up a shout of joy, as if they had been invited to a banquet. He took his post in the defile with admirable skill, and drew up his little army to the best advantage possible. After some fruitless attempts on the part of the Persians to corrupt the virtue of this noble Spartan, Xerxes imperiously summoned him to lay down his arms. “Let him come,” said Leonidas, “and take them.” Twenty thousand Medes were ordered to force the defile, but were repulsed with dreadful slaughter by the brave Lacedæmonians. A chosen body of the Persians, dignified with the vain epithet of the *immortals*, met with the same fate. For two whole days, successive bands of the Persians were cut to pieces in making the same attempt. At length, by the treachery of some of the Thespians who had sold their services to Xerxes, a secret and unfrequented track was pointed out to the Persians, through which a pass might be gained by the army over the mountainous ridge which overhangs the defile; and through this path a great part of the Persian troops penetrated in the night to the opposite plain. The defence of the straits was now a fruitless endeavor; and Leonidas, foreseeing certain destruction, ordered the greater part of his force to retreat with speed and save themselves, while he, with his three hundred Spartans, and a few Thespians and Thebans, determined to maintain their position to the last extremity. Their magnanimous motive was to give the Persians a just idea of the spirit of that foe whom they vainly hoped to subdue. They were all cut off, to one man, who brought the news to Sparta, where he was treated with ignominy as a cowardly fugitive, till he wiped off that disgrace in the subsequent battle of Plataea.

The assembly of the Amphictyons decreed that a monument should be erected at Thermopylæ, on the spot where those brave men had fallen, and that famous inscription to be engraven on it, written by the poet Simonides in the true spirit of Lacedæmonian simplicity :

Ω ξειν' αγγελον Λακεδαιμονιοις οτι τηδε
Κειμεθα τοις χειν ων οημασι πειθομενοι.

“O stranger, tell it to the Lacedæmonians,
that we lie here in obedience to her precepts.”

Xerxes continued his march. It was at this time the period of the celebration of the Olympic games, and the national danger did not interrupt that solemnity; a fact which will admit of very opposite inferences; yet it was interpreted by Xerxes to the honor of the Greeks, for it struck him with the utmost astonishment. The Persian army proceeded without opposition to ravage the country in their progress towards Attica. The territory of Phocis was destroyed with fire and sword; the greater part of the inhabitants flying for shelter to the rocks and caves of that mountainous country. The town of Delphi, famous for its oracle, was a tempting object of plunder, from the treasures accumulated in its temple. These were saved by the laudable artifice of the priests. After ordering the inhabitants of the town to quit their houses, and fly with their wives and children to the mountains, these men, from their skill in that species of legerdemain which can work miracles upon the rude and ignorant, contrived by artificial thunders and lightnings, accompanied with horrible noises, while vast fragments of rock hurled from the precipices, gave all the appearance of an earthquake, to create such terror in the assailing Persians, that they firmly believed the divinity of the place had interfered to protect his temple, and fled with dismay from the sacred territory.

The invading army pursued its march towards Attica. The Greeks now afforded a melancholy proof of that general weakness which characterizes a country parcelled out into small states, each jealous of each other's power, and selfishly attached to its petty interests, in preference even to those concerns which involved the very existence of the nation. The dread of the Persian power, thus in the very act of overwhelming the country, instead of operating a magnanimous union of its strength to resist the common enemy, produced, at this juncture, a quite contrary effect. The rest of the states of Greece, struck with panic, and many of them even siding with the invaders,* seemed determined to leave Athens to her fate, which now appeared inevitable. Themistocles himself, seeing no other safety for his countrymen, counselled them to abandon the city, and betake themselves to their fleet: a melancholy extreme, but, in their present situation, absolutely necessary. Those who from age were incapable of bearing arms, together with the women and children, were hastily conveyed to the islands of Salamis and Ægina. A few of the citizens resolutely determined to remain, and to defend the citadel to the last extremity. They were all cut off, and the citadel burnt to the ground.

Themistocles, to whatever motive his character may incline us

* This disgraceful fact is asserted in express terms by Herodotus, lib. viii. c. 73.

to attribute his conduct, now acted a truly patriotic part. The Spartans had a very small share of the fleet, which belonged principally to the Athenians. With singular moderation, as avowing his own inferiority of skill, Themistocles yielded the command of the fleet to Eurybyades, a Spartan. He made yet a greater effort of patriotism. Forgetting all petty jealousies, he publicly proposed the recall, from banishment, of the virtuous Aristides, whose abilities and high character, he foresaw, might, at this important juncture, be of essential service to his country.

Two sea engagements were fought with little advantage on either side; and the Greek fleet returned to the Straits of Salamis, between that island and the coast of Attica.

A woman of a singularly heroic character, Artemisia, queen of Halicarnassus, from a pure spirit of enterprise, had joined the fleet of Xerxes with a small squadron which she commanded in person. The prudence of this woman's counsels, had they been followed, might have saved the Persian monarch the disaster and disgrace that awaited him. She recommended Xerxes to confine his operations to the attack of the enemy by land, to employ his fleet only in the supply of the army, and to avoid all engagement with the Grecian galleys, which now contained the chief force of the enemy. But Xerxes and his officers disdained to follow an advice which they judged the result of female timidity; and the compressed position of the Grecian fleet seemed to offer a favorable opportunity for a decisive blow to their armament. The fleet of the Greeks consisted of 380 ships, that of the Persians amounted to 1200 sail. The latter, with disorderly impetuosity, hastened to the attack; the former waited their assault in perfect order, and with calm and deliberate resolution. A wind sprang up which blew contrary to the fleet of the Persians; and as it thus became necessary to ply their oars with the greater part of their men, their active force was diminished, their motions impeded, and a confusion ensued which gave their enemy a manifest advantage. It was then that the Greeks became the assailants: they raised the *paan*, or song of victory, and, aided by the wind, dashed forward upon the Persian squadron; the brazen beaks of the triremes overwhelming and sinking every ship which they touched. The Persians suffered a complete and dreadful defeat. Artemisia, with her galleys, kept the sea, and fought to the last with manly courage; while Xerxes, who had beheld the engagement from an eminence on the shore, no sooner saw its issue, than he precipitately fled, upon the circulation of a false report that the Greeks designed to break down his bridge of boats upon the Hellespont. The Greeks, landing from their ships, attacked the rear of the Persian army, and made a dreadful carnage, so that the coast was thickly strewn with the dead bodies.*

* Herod. l. viii. c. 84. et seq. Plutarch Aristid. Diod. Sic. l. xi. c. 19. It