



HISTORICAL WORKS.



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BALLADS
FROM
HERODOTUS.

LONDON :
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114

BALLADS

FROM

H E R O D O T U S.

BY J. ^{ohn} E. ^{rnest} BODE, M.A.

LATE STUDENT OF CHRISTCHURCH.

SECOND EDITION,

WITH FOUR ADDITIONAL PIECES.

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LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.
1854.



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P R E F A C E

TO

T H E S E C O N D E D I T I O N .



THE degree of favour with which the First Edition of these Ballads has been received, has induced the Author to add three¹ pieces of a similar description ; one a Ballad, the other two belonging to the class of descriptive or characteristic poems, in which an attempt has been made to give an idea of the tone and character of the genius of Herodotus, as well as in some degree of his style. In connection with this distinction, (which, had it been worth while to change the title, would perhaps have rendered “Ballads and Poems from Herodotus” a more correct description of the volume,) the Author wishes to allude to the great difference which exists between the several stories selected for illustration. In some there is nothing but a skeleton in the original ; while in others the skeleton is clothed with the most becoming drapery, and set off with the most attractive colour-

¹ The fourth, as observed in the introduction to it, is a kind of accident to the volume.

ing. In the latter the peculiar beauties of Herodotus are lavishly displayed, but in the former there is little remarkable except an elegant conciseness. Herodotus, again frequently dramatises one part of the same story, and only narrates the other. In such a case to expand those portions, which in a similar case the historian himself would probably have expanded, seems no sacrilege. These remarks are addressed to those *classical* readers who really having in their minds the *ipsissima verba* of Herodotus, or at least retaining their first impression of his stories in all its freshness, are inclined to look with but little favour on any attempt to reproduce, in an altered form, what they admire as being itself perfect.

P R E F A C E

TO

T H E F I R S T E D I T I O N



So unpretending a volume as the present collection of Ballads perhaps scarcely needs, or claims, the pomp of a Preface. Nevertheless, the Author wishes to be allowed to state that the idea of reproducing these stories in an English metrical dress does not owe its origin either to Mr. Macaulay's "Lays of Ancient Rome," or to a little volume entitled "Stories from Herodotus," consisting chiefly of prose, but with a sprinkling of verse, published by Mr. Moberly. In fact, the idea occurred to the Author as early as the year 1841. Like most Oxford men with any pretensions to scholarship, he was naturally familiar with Herodotus; and, as naturally, peculiarly fond of the beautiful episodes with which the narrative of that historian is interspersed. He had, moreover, had occasion to keep the text more prominently in his mind than it might have been, from having from time to time read it with his private pupils at Christchurch; and so, happening to

devour, at that particular time, a great number of our old English and Scottish Ballads, the trait of mingled simplicity and beauty which those Ballads and the stories of Herodotus have in common, presented itself forcibly to his mind; and he was not satisfied without attempting to give a poetical *form* to those portions of the historian's episodes which appeared most impressed with the character of poetry. About half of the Ballads were written at that time; and one of them, "Cleobis and Biton," which, though one of the shortest, may be regarded as a specimen of the plan, appeared in Blackwood's Magazine in April, 1842¹ — some six months before the publication of Mr. Macaulay's "Lays," and about a year before the appearance of Mr. Moberly's "Stories." In the course of writing these Ballads, the Author became acquainted with Mr. Lockhart's "Spanish Ballads," the perusal of which added impulse to his scheme, as well as suggested the more frequent use of the double rhyme in the long ballad metre.

In stating these facts, the Author has no wish to invite comparison between his book and either of those which he has mentioned. With Mr. Macaulay's spirited and popular "Lays" he especially declines to place his Ballads in competition. He is well aware that, to say nothing of inferiority of execution, the stories here presented to the English reader do not possess either that national interest which is derived

¹ "Polycrates" and "Syloson" appeared in "Blackwood" in the year 1843.

from being connected with the struggles of a great people for freedom, or for empire, or that excitement which attends upon tales of battle, or of feud,—especially when the warriors, or the victims, have been familiar to our minds from childhood. The sentimental interest of the Spanish stories is also wanting. There is, moreover, a gentleness and repose, even in the pathos of these stories, which to some may seem tame. Still the pathos is often so exquisite, and the simplicity so engaging, that the Author would fain to hope that, in spite of all that may be lost in a paraphrase, or in a poem founded on an inimitable prose narrative, these Ballads may possess some interest for the general reader; as well as, perhaps, recall to those acquainted with the original, something of its peculiar charm.

With a view of treading on less beaten ground, and being able to present to the reader *some* novel scenes and associations, the less-known stories were for the most part selected. Atys and Adrastus, Pactyas and Aristodicus, Syloson, Agarista—nay, even Gorgo, and Perdiccas I., are names which, even to the classical reader, are not hackneyed, even if they are familiar.

The general plan of the Ballads has been to dramatise the story, where it appeared desirable—to bring out the moral in some cases more vividly—and occasionally to enlarge on some incident which appeared capable of being thus rendered more inter-

esting. The reader of Herodotus will, at the same time, observe that, where it appeared possible, the phrases of the original have been almost literally translated.

The Metrical Introduction seems to require a word of further apology. It is the relic of a more ambitious plan, which aimed at no less than introducing the Ballads, each in its proper place, in a framework purporting to be "The History of Herodotus as read by himself at the Olympian games." On referring, however, to Bishop Thirlwall's "History of Greece,"¹ it appeared doubtful whether that interesting event ever took place—and the somewhat ponderous design was instantly abandoned. But the disappointment of the Author (not perhaps unmingled with a sense of relief), added to a natural wish to provide some substitute for so respectable a "Proxenus" as Herodotus himself, found vent in the present Introductory Lines, which are not to be regarded as expressing the Author's individual opinion as to the value of modern historical criticism; but as a kind of Herodotean dirge over the progress of a too-sifting incredulity.

¹ The passage is as follows (i. 391.):—"The story that Herodotus read his history at Olympia has been disputed, on grounds which certainly render it doubtful."

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ERRATA.

- Page vi. (Preface), line 6., after "portions" add a comma.
" vil. (ditto), line 19., for "Christchurch" read "Christ Church."
" 27., line 13., dele comma after "sing."
" 28., line 1., dele comma after "ship."
" 28., line 5., dele comma after "voice."
" 28., line 17., dele comma after "black."
" 52., line 18., dele comma after "guiding."
" 53., line 4., dele comma after "friend."
" 54., line 13., dele comma after "descending."
" 55., line 6., dele comma after "parting."
" 56., line 25., dele comma after "glowing."
" 58., line 8., add "?" after "scan."
" 65., line 4., for "council" read "counsel."
" 86., last line, for "then" read "than."
" 94., line 15., dele comma after "gateway."
" 141., line 10., for "here" read "hear."
" 147., line 7., add comma after "Cleomenes."
" 152., line 20., for " , " read " . "
" 154., line 13., after "breath" add inverted commas.
" 157., line 6., after "Thucydides" add a comma.
" 189., line 19., dele comma after "Perdiccas."
" 198., line 6., for "three hundred" read "Three Hundred."
" 199., line 17., for "council" read "counsel."
" 217., line 6., note, for "by" read "in."
" 231., line 20., for "Corytus" read "Cocytus."

BALLADS FROM HERODOTUS.

INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

THE LEGEND OF HERODOTUS READING HIS HISTORY AT THE
OLYMPIAN GAMES.



ALAS! the critic's skill has swept away
Too many a vision of the earlier day;
And left, the candles of our youth put out,
A darkened blank of reasonable doubt!
Heroes and kings from storied lands afar —
Unrivalled deeds of wisdom and of war —
Now stand enveloped in a misty cloud;
Expressions forged of ages scarce allowed.
The simple records, which had flourished long,
Theme of the patriot's ¹ boast, the poet's song,
Philosophized, but oft entirely free
From truth's irregular philosophy,
And nature's charm, who will not shape her deeds
To normal forms and well-adjusted creeds,
But shocks the dogmatist's reluctant sight,
With random facts, that are not there by right.
Vanished each legend, which perchance might be
A probable impossibility,

¹ The allusion to the early Roman legends in Cicero, as well as in Virgil, will at once suggest themselves to the mind of the classical reader.

Yet seemed of real men and deeds to speak,
 Could stir the reader's heart, and flush his cheek,
 Lo! in their stead conjecture rears anew
 Cold lifeless forms of things that may be true,
 But oft mere transcripts of some later time,
 Strange flowers transplanted to an unknown clime,
 Types of the past, cast in the present's mould,
 Ingenious medley of the new and old.

Lo! the keen critic in his ruthless den
 Destroying heroes with uplifted pen,
 Blotting whole periods from th' historic page,
 Then wooing art to weave a measured age—
 He waves his hand, and palaces of gold,
 Where admiration shrined the forms of old,
 Sink in the dust: and in their place are seen
 Trim modern halls, conveniently mean.
 A sea of doubt cleaves the continuous shore;
 Dauntless he spans the wide hiatus o'er,
 And on the bridge erects a thousand structures more.

Enough of this! nor do I now complain
 Where with much loss is mixed no little gain;
 I only grieve the blow has fallen on thee,
 Romantic poet-sage of history!
 Not on thy witness—which researches new
 For ever prove more wonderfully true—
 But on thy life, and that most glorious hour
 When, in the pride of mind's acknowledged power,
 We seemed to see thee winning welcome meet,
 The Muses clustering o'er their votary's seat,

An eager concourse standing breathless round,
Or in the Altis¹ or on neighbouring ground,
Regardless of the tumult from afar,
The wrestler's strife, the swift and rattling car,
(As 'mid the olive grove the coursers glide,
Renowned Alpheus, by thy sacred tide,
To hear thee read, for the first time unfurled,
Thy tale, the gathered records of the world.

Lo! mighty empires rise and pass away ;
Assyria crumbles piecemeal in decay ;
And upon Media's ripening glories come
The rugged Persians from their mountain home ;
Hark! the wild tale of rude Cimmerian horde ;
Lo! the soft grace of Lydia's generous lord ;
See fated Cyrus march at nightfall down
Through his own stream on Belus' festive town ;
That town whose walls, like some wide-spreading course,
Bore the proud chariot and the four-yoked horse.

Lo! Egypt's Pyramids with slumb'rous frown
On sandy banks of storied Nile look down.
Trackless as this their spring, as those their date,
Stretch the dim records of that ancient state,
Beyond the Eastern peaks of dawning time,
Where baffled history strives in vain to climb.
Fair land! who oft hast charmed the invader's eye ;
Doomed to a changeful night of slavery.

¹ The *Altis* was the name of the ground at Olympia, consecrated to the games.

Not unavenged to-day; for shorn his pride,
 The wretch who dared thy sacred beast¹ deride,
 And in Egbatana², so fate had said,
 The son of Cyrus rests his phrenzied head;
 Median or Syrian town, what matter to the dead?
 "But where is Smerdis, whom we now revere?
 Sleeps he in bloody grave, or reigns he here?"
 The puzzled slaves the earless Magian³ own;
 But lo! the Seven have risen, and one ascends the throne.

Held by a single thread o'er Ister floats,
 The foiled invader's hope, his bridge of boats,
 The while o'er Scythian streams, o'er steppes that grow,
 Vainly he hunts his ever-flying foe.
 Let but Ionia's⁴ princes speak the word,
 And the wide East shall serve another lord.
 But selfish slavery that hugs her chain
 Gives the mild despot to his realm again.

Lo! soft Ionia kindling seems to feel,
 Too soon to fade, the glow of patriot zeal;

¹ Cambyses first mocked the priests of Apis, and then slew the sacred bull.

² The reader of Shakspeare will remember the death of Henry IV. in the Jerusalem chamber. "In *this* Jerusalem shall Harry die."

³ Smerdis the Magian, who for seven months personated successfully Smerdis the son of Cyrus, had had his ears cut off for some offence; which aided in his detection. The "one," is Darius, who is also spoken off in the next paragraph.

⁴ The tyrants of Ionia, who owed their posts to the Persian monarch, determined by a majority to preserve the bridge of boats, and so secure the return of Darius, and the continuance of their own power.

And Athens' ships are sailing o'er the sea
 To aid the slaves who care not to be free,
 Those ships that brought the East to Hellas' shore,
 Source of her woe, but of her greatness more.

And from that hour in loftier tones he read
 Of Persia's coming, and of Hellas' dread ;
 And how, that dread dispersed, a wondrous glory
 Lit¹ plain, and pass, and gulf renowned in story ;
 While from the veil, that shrouds her perfect form
 Till those who woo with heartfelt love are warm,
 Flashed forth, too seldom seen by mortal eye,
 The virgin smile of genuine liberty !

And some are² fighting side by side with those
 Whom but of late they deemed their deadliest foes,
 And some³ have left their land (for honour calls),
 Embarking houseless in their "wooden walls,"
 While slighted⁴ Persia's fire devours again
 Each pleasant home, each consecrated fane —
 Yet better thus than there as slaves remain !

E'en selfish Sparta, for a moment, caught
 The pure contagion of the patriot thought,
 And won between the mountains and the sea,
 Leonidas, a deathless name for thee !

¹ Marathon, Thermopylæ, Salamis.

² The Athenians and Æginetans.

³ The Athenians. The oracle had warned them to seek for safety in "wooden walls," rightly judged by the majority to be their ships.

⁴ "Slighted." The Persians had made most advantageous offers to Athens if she would desert the common cause.

Twice¹ on the land, twice routed on the main,
 The Persian flies, and Hellas breathes again ;
 So runs the mild narrator's glowing strain.
 He weighs the glories of each rival state,
 Records each high emprise, each grave debate,
 The spring of resolute will, the crushing wheels of fate.

And now and then, 'mid feud and battle's din,
 A people's phrenzy or a tyrant's sin,
 A welcome guest intrudes, some pleasant tale,
 Like sweet notes wafted on the evening gale
 To one who musing in a lonely room
 Peoples the past with images of gloom.

The Argive brethren² draw their mother's car ;
 Fades the proud court, and sinks the crash of war.
 The Phrygian bows beneath his sorrow's load ;
 And tears are in the eyes that lately glowed.
 The Lydian monarch climbs his fiery grave ;
 And Athens weeps whom Solon's name could save.
 The Archer-god defends the suppliant's cause ;
 And pious hearts beat high in mute applause.

Anon some old Egyptian fane he shows,
 Sleeping unchanged in mystical repose ;
 Or darkling maze, an unimagined pile,

¹ At Marathon and Plataea, and at Salamis and Mycale.

² The stories specified are those which form the groundwork of the Ballads, the only difference being, that the "Maze," the "Enchanted Isle," and the "Magic Waters" are not represented there ; while, on the other hand, "Cities Great and Small" "Arion," and "The Rising of the Nile," are omitted here.

Or sourceless river, or enchanted isle ;
And magic waters play, and green oases smile.

Pale Psammenitus mourns his tearless lot ;
And Afric's wondrous shows are all forgot.
The Samian prince, who listened all too long
To the soft music of Anacreon's song,
By dreams and loving fears detained in vain,
Leaves the bright isle he ne'er shall see again,—
By dark Oroetes' lure and vengeful treachery slain.
Restored from exile by the Persian's power,
Why weeps his brother in his victory's hour ?
Boasts new-made royalty no blither cheer ?
Ah ! lonely state ; ah ! conquest bought too dear.

In early virtue wise, see Gorgo now,
A maiden flush upon her daring brow,
Warn her weak sire, that child of eight years old,
To fly, ere yet too late, the stranger's gold.

Fair Agarista wins all Greece to woo ;
From every land the rivals pass in view ;
And, prized o'er all when came the eventful hour,
Victorious Athens culls the royal flower.

See rising deathless from its withered root
Athena's olive dart its wondrous shoot ;
Blest plant ! nor fire nor steel can check thy spring,
Nor Persia's youthful lord, nor Sparta's aged king.¹

¹ Xerxes and Archidamus. The allusion is to the famous chorus in Sophocles. *Æd.* Col. 701.

Lo! Alexander, eager for the start,
Amid the runners stands with throbbing heart,
The while th' impartial hallowed judges trace
From far Perdiccas his Hellenic race,
What time, defrauded of his promised pay,
He bore Lebæa's proffered sun away,
Mysterious emblem of his destined sway.

The pensive Persian at the festive board
Foretells, yet cannot shun, the fated sword.

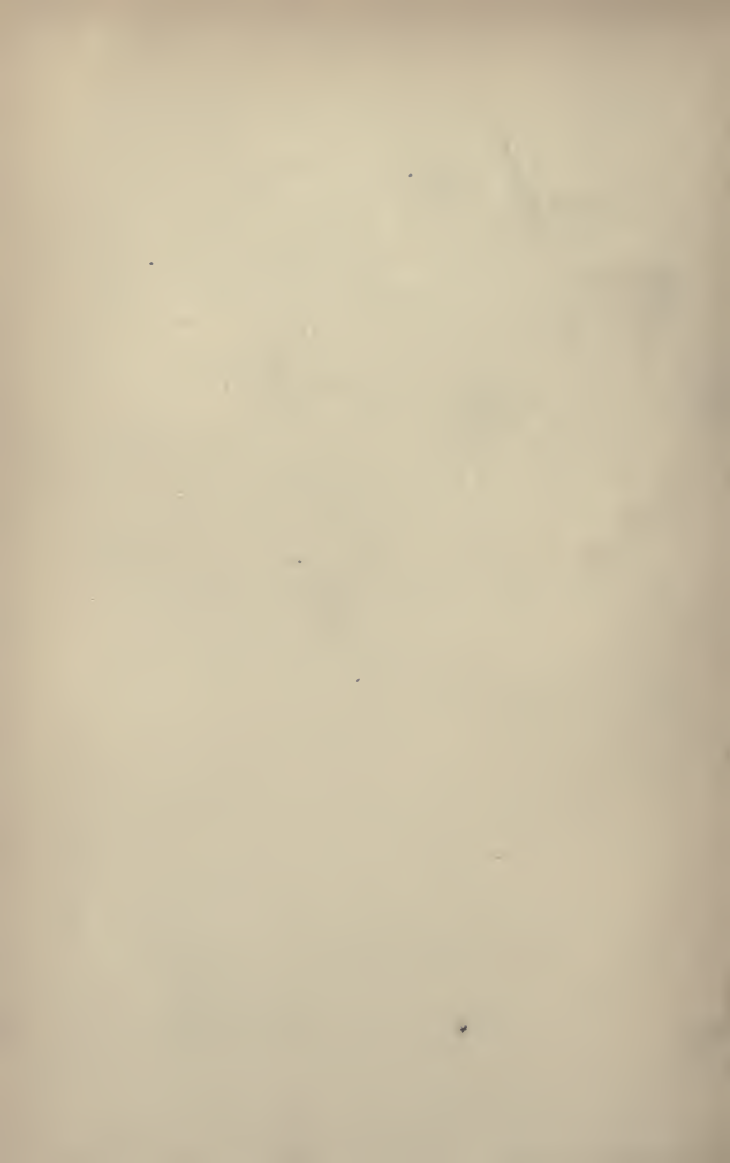
With tales like these he studs his shadowy sky;
Bright stars around the moon of history —
Or islets round some larger island spread,
Which oft the traveller turns aside to tread,
Where gleams some pillared cave or sleep th' ancestral
 dead —
Green resting places, lest we toil too fast
Along the dusty desert of the past —
Or tasseled fringe round purple robe of state,
Which, while it lengthens, seems to break its weight.

And now and then, 'mid strange description true,
While art or nature's marvels court our view,
Pausing he deals his quaintly-wise applause
To seemly customs or to blameless laws,
Or from some simple fact some sage conclusion draws.
A dædal mass the vast embroidery grows,
And with a thousand varied colours glows;
Yet, ne'er displaced, one thread pervades the whole,
The artless musing of a loving soul!

Entranced they heard ; and, in his generous youth,
The sage enthusiast¹ of historic truth,
The warrior annalist, who lived to climb
By sterner paths to kindred heights sublime,
Saw Hellas breathless while the stranger spoke,
Heard the loud shouts which when he ended woke,
And doubtful half, half-conscious of his worth,
Into a flood of emulous tears broke forth.

While thus I laboured in my task of love,
Happy, if gentle souls, like thine, approve,
(Old friend, whose tales, though much beschooled they be,
Unhackneyed wear their early charm for me,)
And for a moment, in that pleasant dream,
Drank in thy voice beside Alpheus stream,
Sudden there fell upon the structure fair
The critic's bolt, "Perchance he was not there!"

¹ Thucydides. This anecdote must of course fall with that of the history being read at Olympia.



CITIES GREAT AND SMALL.

CITIES GREAT AND SMALL.

(HEROD. I. 5.)

THE following lines, which are a paraphrase of the passage in Herodotus, give a fair specimen of the melancholy which often tinges the reflections of the amiable historical moralist, derived, to use the beautiful expression of Wordsworth,—

“ From hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity;
Nor harsh, nor grating, yet of ample power
To chasten and subdue.”

The historian, dwelling with pensive tenderness on the past, feels it necessary to make an apology to the ruder spirits, among the public whom he addressed, for a fidelity which must have appeared to them unnecessary, and nothing but an interruption to the narration of matters of present interest.

CITIES GREAT AND SMALL.

HERODOTUS LOQUITUR.



I.

THE cities, which of old were great,
 Are dwindling fast away ;
 And few could tell their rise and date
 Of those who live to-day.
 So flows the ruthless tide of fate,
 Which bringeth on decay.

II.

And those, which great we wont to call,
 Now in their glorious prime,
 Were poor, I trow, and mean and small
 In that ancestral time.
 So turns the wheel that some must fall,
 And others mount sublime.

III.

Then murmur not, nor deem it strange,
 Reader, whoe'er thou be,

A mirror of this ceaseless change
In this my book to see.
Through great and small alike they range
Whoever sail with me.

IV.

For mortal happiness, I wot,
Hath no abiding place ;
It visiteth in turn each spot,
Each nation, town, and race.
And therefore every varying lot
Hath in my tale a space.

A R I O N.

ARION.

(HEROD. I. 24.)

—◆—

“ARION among the Dolphins” is a well-known character in Greek mythology, and a favourite one, as may be inferred from the manner in which Plutarch introduces it in his “Banquet of the Seven Sages,” from which source the author of these Ballads has borrowed the circumstance of the moonlight festival to Neptune above the headland of Tænarum. The obvious allusion (in stanza viii.) to the death-song of the swan, was a coincidence, but the mention of it by Plutarch perhaps gives a traditional character to the remark of Arion. We say “perhaps,” because it seems evident that, in pressing *many* dolphins into the service, not merely as attendants but assistants, Plutarch has departed from the true tradition, and very much to the damage of the poetical character of the story. The actual dolphins whom he introduces, instead of the ideal creature of Herodotus, are represented as floundering about, and *hustling* Arion on to the beach, in a manner as undignified and unromantic as it must have been uncomfortable. How different is the picture which Herodotus summons up by using the singular number, which it is plain he did intentionally, from his mention of the votive offering of Arion at Tænarum, which represented a man on a dol-

phin's back (*ἐπὶ δελφῖνος ἐπέων ἄνθρωπος*). Perhaps the difference between the two was this: that Plutarch wished to reduce the *poetical* as near as might be to the *actual*, while Herodotus, on the other hand, was pleased to regard the poetical, if not as actual, still as by no means incredible. He speaks, indeed, of the circumstances as a tradition; but does not add, as he does occasionally, that it is one to which he for his part cannot give credit.

A R I O N.



I.

ALL in his minstrel garb he stood,
 Upon the benches high,
 And poured upon th' astonished flood,
 His heaven-taught melody.
 Forth from the sea the Dolphins dart
 To listen to the lay :
 But he could not touch the sailor's heart—
 More dull and cold than they.

II.

“ Now Venus guide you, seamen bold,
 Across the stormy sea !
 Keep, if ye list, my yellow gold,
 But grant my life to me.
 And Venus guide you, seamen brave,
 Whene'er ye cross the main !
 But waft the minstrel o'er the wave
 To Corinth's shores again.”

III.

“ What boots it, man, our time to waste,
 And eke thy breath so fine ?
 The sweets of life 'twas thine to taste ;
 But now methinks 'tis mine.

Thou shalt not live our name to blot,
 And say, 'My gold they stole;'
 Then haste, resign thee to thy lot,
 And Hermes waft thy soul!

IV.

"Or thou with sword must here on board,
 Thy minstrel soul set free;
 So on the shore, our voyage o'er,
 Thy corpse shall buried be.
 Or if thy hand, by fear unmann'd,
 Shall tremble at the hilt,
 Into the deep thou needs must leap—
 Now, choose thee which thou wilt!"

V.

'Twas thus the savage seaman spake,
 And turn'd his face away :
 And the minstrel's knees began to quake,
 And his face grew pale as clay.
 It was a fearful thing to go
 From life and wealth and fame :
 And suddenly that fearful blow
 Upon the minstrel came.

VI.

He could not brook to leave the earth,
 Yet bright with virgin flowers ;
 Her pensive joys, her bursts of mirth,
 Her pleasant genial hours.
 And, though in bright Elysian skies
 The sun be never dim,

The light, he taught the world to prize,
Now seemed all dull to him.

VII.

A little space, 'twixt life and death,
In anguish sore he stood :
He drew the weapon from its sheath,
He gazed upon the flood.
But lo! a sudden light has fired
His eyes and cheek so wan ;
And he speaks again, like one inspired,
Some god-befriended man.

VIII.

“ Your heart is hard,” the minstrel said,
“ Yet grant me, ere I die,
To tune my string once more to sing,
Farewell to earth and sky.
My pleasant notes will soothe your ear ;
I will not hold you long :
But, like the bird to Phœbus dear,
I fain would die in song.”

IX.

So on the benches high he stood,
All in his garb so brave,
And poured upon th' astonished flood
A far-resounding stave.
Flash'd from the deep the Dolphin bright
To listen to the strain ;
And rose and fell in calm delight
The billows of the main.

X.

Mute in the middle of the ship/
 The savage sailors throng ;
 And, though the captain curl'd his lip,
 He listened to the song.
 The sweetest notes of harp and voice/
 Fell on the ear that day ;
 Each living thing might well rejoice
 To hear that lovely lay.

XI.

Why rears he thus his gleaming crest,
 Yon camel of the deep ?
 Why floats he thus beyond the rest
 That bask in charmèd sleep ?
 Methinks he were a fitting steed
 For Neptune's self to ride,
 When, from Olympus' councils freed,
 He revels in the tide.

XII.

From out the gathering storm-clouds black/
 A golden sunbeam sped :
 It flash'd upon the Dolphin's back,
 It lit the minstrel's head.
 The harmless beast, the holy bard,
 Have won that sunbeam bright ;
 But on the sailors false and hard
 Lay shadows dark as night.

XIII.

The minstrel played a cadence loud ;
 One upward glance he gave—

Then, like the lightning from the cloud,
 He plunged into the wave.
 All in the view of that false crew
 The blameless bard sprang o'er.
 They strained their eyes to see him rise,
 But he rose for them no more.

XIV.

“Make sail, make sail, my comrades all!”
 The captain gave command;
 “I fear,” said he, “a deadly squall
 Or e'er we reach the land.”
 “I feel,” said he, “a crushing weight
 My inmost heart within:
 To doom such bard to such a fate
 It was a deed of sin!”

XV.

They toil'd amain the land to gain,
 Those sailors full of dread;
 And the bark that skimmed the waves before
 Seemed heavy now as lead.
 They seemed amid the shrouds to see
 The minstrel's visage pale;
 They seemed to hear his accents clear
 In the piping of the gale.

XVI.

Safe on the Dolphin's back he sat,
 As on a vessel's deck;
 His harp in hand he needs no band
 Around the creature's neck.

The darkening clouds above him roll,
 Around him roars the wave ;
 And yet he feels no fear — his soul
 Is innocent and brave !

XVII.

Full well he knew, by Phœbus prayed,
 The god who rules the sea
 Had sent the Dolphin to his aid, —
 Therefore no fear has he !
 E'en to the blessed gods is dear,
 The minstrel's holy skill :
 His harp is sweet, his heart is clear —
 Therefore he fears no ill !

XVIII.

A stately sail the Dolphin made ;
 And now and then, in glee,
 Around their favoured comrade played
 His brethren of the sea.
 A stately sail the Dolphin made,
 For well he knew he bore
 The sweetest bard that harp e'er played
 To proud Laconia's shore.

XIX.

The sun beneath the waves has set ;
 The sailors cease to row ;
 But through the night the Dolphin bright
 He ceaseth not to go.
 The fair full moon upriseth soon
 To light them on their way,

And soon the heights of Tænarus
Stand out beneath her ray.

XX.

Along the height a festal train
Was praising all night long
The god who rules the stormy main¹
With dances and with song.
And gazing from the lofty steep
That hems the narrow strand,
They saw the Dolphin through the deep
Come sailing to the land.

XXI.

They hurried downward to the shore
Along the winding track :
And now the bard, his voyage o'er,
Has left the creature's back.
Around the rescued bard they pressed ;
They stayed not to inquire—
They knew him by his minstrel vest,
And by his eye of fire.

XXII.

The minstrel kiss'd the wish'd-for land,
And duteous thanks he gave
Unto the glorious Gods, whose hand
Had snatch'd him from the wave.
"Thou, too," he said, "who stallest far
In ocean's azure cell,

¹ Tænarum was one of the few sites of the worship of Neptune among the Dorians.

Where Nereids yoke the amber car,
Return, and fare thee well!"

XXIII.

Then turned his head that ocean horse,
And straightway sought the main :
But none might track his wondrous course
To ocean's depths again.
For He, who bade the creature come
The holy bard to free,
Hath rapt him viewless to his home,
Far in the mid-most sea.

XXIV.

Around the bard the maidens cling—
But no, "I must not stay,
I needs must sing to Corinth's king
My first triumphant lay."
With dripping vest he onward pressed,
And, ere the moon went down,
From Tænarus was journeying fast
Tow'rds Corinth's wealthy town.

XXV.

The monarch's halls the minstrel sought :
"Behold a man," quoth he,
"Whom on his back a Dolphin brought
Unharm'd across the sea!"
"Nay," cried the King, "we greet thee well,
Beloved of gods and men :
What tale is this thou com'st to tell?
Thy prelude sing again!"

XXVI.

“Against my life thy slaves conspire ;
I plunged into the wave :
A dolphin came, at my desire,
Thy minstrel’s life to save.
He brought me to the winding shore
That fronts the Lybian main ;
So stand I here thy life to cheer
With melody again.”

XXVII.

“Now Phœbus shield thee!” cried the king,
“To whom the bards belong ;
I ne’er have heard so strange a thing
In all thy worlds of song.
In fancy rapt thou speak’st, perchance ;
And on a dolphin’s back
Hast sailed, in high poetic trance,
A thousand leagues and back !”

XXVIII.

“Nay,” quoth the bard, “my words are true ;
And, when thy sailors come,
Then let me burst upon their view—
I trow they will be dumb :
I trow their hearts will yet be wrung
To see me stand again,
As when, my latest prelude sung,
I plunged into the main.”

XXIX.

“No more I doubt,” the king replied ;
“Yet, by our foam-born queen !

It was, I wot, the strangest ride
 That sea or land has seen."
 They came ere long, that faithless crew —
 They entered one by one ;
 The minstrel watch'd them, hid from view
 Beside the monarch's throne.

XXX.

They came, with jovial air and free,
 And spread their wares so gay ;
 "And bring ye news of aught," said he,
 "From fair Tarentum's bay ?
 And saw ye good Arion there,
 The bard I love so well ?
 How fares my friend in other air ?
 Make haste your tale to tell !"

XXXI.

"We saw the mighty minstrel there,
 And he was well to do ;
 So may the king's true liegemen fare
 As all our words are true !
 We left him in Tarentum's town ;
 A wealthy man is he :
 The tidings of his high renown
 He bade us bring to thee.

XXXII.

"We came"— but here the seaman stopped ;
 Wild was the start he gave ;—
 "And com'st thou from Olympus dropped,
 Or from thy watery grave ?"

Well might the guilty seaman quake,
For at the king's right hand
He saw the man of whom he spake,
The Lesbian minstrel, stand.

XXXIII.

All in his minstrel garb he stood ;
A light was in his eye,
As when he poured on ocean's flood
His heaven-taught melody ;
As when the listening monsters lay
Along the vessel's side,
And, ere the last notes died away,
He plunged into the tide.



CLEOBIS AND BITON.

CLEOBIS AND BITON.

(HEROD. I. 31.)



THE story of Cleobis and Biton was related¹, according to Herodotus, by Solon, the Athenian lawgiver and philosopher, to Cræsus, king of Lydia, in the course of the memorable conversation in which he astonished the prosperous monarch by refusing him the title of "Happy" or "Blessed," on account of the uncertainty that enveloped his future lot. Cleobis and Biton, as well as Tellus the Athenian, are for this reason preferred by the philosopher before the mightiest prince "on this side the Halys." The story does not appear to require any explanation. The notion of the mother of the youths being the priestess of the temple, which is perhaps implied by the words *ἔδεε πάντως*, in Herodotus, is taken from Cicero (*Tusc. Disp.* i. 47). It is singular that Addison, in the "Spectator" (No. 483), thinks it necessary, for the lady's dignity, to change the missing *oxen* into "persons,"—thus doing away with the whole point of the story.

¹ It appears doubtful whether this visit of Solon to the court of Cræsus ever took place.

CLEOBIS AND BITON.



I.

TO-DAY it is the holy feast in Juno's temple fair,
 To-day the priestess to the fane must in her car repair.
 All in the car she rides in state, amid the festive band ;
 And mail-clad youths before her march—the noblest of the land.

II.

But wherefore is the priestess' brow so sorrowful to-day?
 And wherefore in her chamber high doth she so long delay?
 And where are they, the oxen white, that must her chariot draw
 Unto the temple's holy gates, according to the law?

III.

She said, " It is the holy feast in Juno's temple fair,
 But I, the priestess of the fane, to-day shall not be there ;
 For the lazy herdsmen have not brought the oxen for my car,
 And my aged feet are all too weak to carry me so far."

IV.

" Now smile again, dear Mother, smile! we will soon that loss repair,
 Thy sons will take the oxen's place, and quickly draw thee there.
 Come, Brother, come! put forth thy speed, our task will soon be o'er ;
 Hurrah! was ever lady drawn so gallantly before?"

V.

For four long miles they drew the car, those brethren bold and strong,
 And soon before the temple stood amid the wondering throng ;
 And all the host from Argos' town came flocking round them there,
 To see the mother and the sons,—a goodly sight and rare !

VI.

And Argos' sons those brethren praised, for their strength and courage bold—
 “Were never seen such stately forms of so strong and fair a mould !”
 And Argos' daughters one and all around the mother press'd—
 “Oh, happy thou with two such sons as these bold brethren blest !”

VII.

Oh ! brightly shone that mother's eye, and her glance was high and proud,
 For the noble deed her sons had done, and the praises of the crowd ;
 And she stood before the imaged form in Juno's temple fair,
 And her mother's heart was beating high, as she breathed her eager prayer : —

VIII.

“Oh ! Goddess, whom in Argos' town we reverence and obey,
 To Cleobis and Biton grant the boon I ask to-day ;
 For the honour they have done to me to them I pray be given,
 The choicest gift, whate'er it be, that man may ask of heaven.”

IX.

The holy rites are over now, and the feasting is begun ;
 And there the happy mother sits between each gallant son ;
 Till sleep stole o'er their weary eyes, and on the hallowed ground,
 Together sank those sons so true in deepest slumber bound.

X.

Why wake they not? the feast is o'er, the shades of night are come,
And from the temple-gates the crowd is slowly wending home.
Why wake they not? what spell has caused a rest so long and deep?
Away! they ne'er shall wake again; they sleep the last long sleep.

XI.

With favouring ear the Goddess heard the mother's fond request,
And she gave of all her heavenly gifts the kindest and the best:
All placidly, without a pang, without a single sigh,
They yielded up their blameless lives,—and call ye this to *die*?

XII.

Oh! no, 'tis but a rest prolonged, a waking on the shore,
Where the stormy blasts of mortal life shall rave and howl no more;
Where in th' Elysian fields the good repose in endless rest;—
Oh! 'tis of all the gifts of heaven the choicest and the best!

ATYS AND ADRASTUS.

ATYS AND ADRASTUS.

(HEROD. I. 34—46.)



IN this Ballad the “envy” or “indignation” of the Gods, which, according to the peculiar notion of the Greeks, only bided its time to assail the too great prosperity of man, and of those especially who prided themselves on their good fortune, first begins to fall upon Cræsus. The first part of the Ballad is little more than a paraphrase of the story as told by Herodotus. In the second the author is responsible for the attempt to describe the departure for the boar-hunt, and the preliminary circumstances of it; and also for the moonlight “effect,” and the soliloquy of Adrastus.

ATYS AND ADRASTUS.



PART I.

“PLEAD no more, ye Mysian strangers,
 Take your band, my warriors' pride ;
 But let Atys, free from dangers,
 Stay and cheer his new-made bride.”

“Say not so, my noble father,
 Put not thou this slight on me ;
 Let me to the hunting rather,
 With my country's chivalry.
 Once it was my joy and glory
 Manfully my arms to wield
 In the plain of battle gory,
 Or on gallant hunting field.
 Now deprived of both I linger,
 Idly wandering up and down ;
 Mark for scorn's insulting finger,
 Once the gaze of Sardis' town.
 What of me, with shame thus laden,
 Will the Lydian people say ?
 What will she, th' admirèd maiden,
 Made my bride but yesterday ?

While fair Mysia, wasted, bleeding,
 Calls me in her hour of need,
 Shall I sit at home unheeding,
 Nor essay one generous deed?
 Dost thou then a recreant deem me?
 Father, am I fall'n so low?
 Let my deeds from shame redeem me,
 Let me to the hunting go!"

Spake the youth — while filial duty
 Strove with passion in his breast —
 Atys, famed for manly beauty,
 And in prowess deemed the best.

"Not for want of noble bearing,"
 Thus the monarch sage begun,
 "Not for aught of blame impairing
 Thy bright deeds, my gallant son!
 But in dreams a form stood o'er me,
 And thy fate it did reveal,
 Saying thou shouldst die before me,
 Smitten down by lance of steel.
 Therefore have I kept thee near me,
 Far from danger and affray,
 To preserve thy life to cheer me
 Till my own shall pass away.
 Child, thou know'st, I have no other,
 Were I thus deprived of thee;
 For thy sad and speechless brother,
 He, alas! is nought to me.
 Therefore free from chance or malice,
 In thy nuptial bower abide,

Quaffing love's still brimming chalice,
With thy newly married bride."

"If my lot by steel to perish,"

All unmoved the youth 'gan say ;

"Yet, oh ! wherefore shouldst thou cherish,

Good my sire, these fears to-day ?

From the monster's tusks unsightly,

Danger there perchance may be ;

But of this thy visions nightly

Have not aught reveal'd to thee.

If no more where trumpets sounding

Summon forth the warrior train,

Where the battle steeds are bounding,

It be mine renown to gain,—

While in Lydia's warlike story

Others shall achieve their fame,

Let the hunter's humbler glory

Gild at least thy Atys' name !"

"Many a form of death assembling,

Fancy pales thy father's cheek ;

E'en to-day my heart is trembling,

Though no human foe ye seek.

All too wisely hast thou pleaded,

Nor can I thy words gainsay ;

Go, my child, yet not unheeded

Cast thy father's prayers away ;

But when youth's warm pulse is beating,

And on danger bids you run,

When the monster ye are meeting,

Think, oh, think, on me, my son !"

Slowly thus the king consenting
 Yielded to his son's request.
 Soon, alas, in vain repenting,
 He shall smite his hopeless breast.

And he bade them call the stranger,
 Who to Lydia's court had come,
 By a father's ruthless anger
 Banished from his Phrygian home.
 Through his native forests riding
 At the prey he hurl'd his dart ;
 But the fates the arrow guiding,
 Plung'd it in his brother's heart.
 Lydia's lord with generous pity
 Cleansed his stain and soothed his woe,
 And in Sardis' royal city
 Bade his hours in pleasure flow.
 Yet a gloom, all joys o'erpowering,
 Shrouds him still with darksome wing,
 And his brow is sad and lowering
 As he stands before the king.
 But he gave him courteous greeting,
 And in gentle accents said,
 " Youth, my friend, is quickly fleeting,
 Tears cannot restore the dead.
 Wherefore, then, in fruitless weeping,
 Shouldst thou waste thy golden prime ?
 He who in the grave is sleeping
 Brands not thee with taint of crime.
 Cleansed by me, by me befriended
 Since the sad disastrous day,
 When thy brother's hours were ended,—
 Wouldst thou now that boon repay ?

Go where Lydia's youth are arming
 For the boar-hunt fierce and wild,
 Go, and from each danger's harming,
 Guard thy friend, thy patron's child!
 Go, the toil, the glory sharing,
 Join the hunter-warrior train:
 Noble birth, and strength, and daring,
 Should not e'er be given in vain."

Slow replied the mournful stranger,
 "If it thus, O king, must be;
 I will guard thy son from danger,
 And restore him safe to thee.
 Though the clash of spears and lances
 Jars upon my altered ear,
 And my dull eye coldly glances
 Upon all it once held dear;
 Though no more my depth of sadness
 Cheering sights or sounds illumine,
 And for me each thought of gladness
 Sleeps within my brother's tomb,—
 When I came, a blood-stained stranger,
 Thou didst pity's claim allow,
 And my grateful hand from danger
 Well shall guard young Atys now."

PART II.

From the city's frowning barriers,
 On a morn without a cloud,
 Pass the gallant hunter-warriors
 Slowly through th' admiring crowd.

Gay his mien, his bright eye sparkling,
Princely Atys leads the van,
And beside him, sad and darkling,
Rides Adrastus, mournful man.
With a deep unsated sorrow
Still his heart seems iron-bound ;
He no thoughts of joy can borrow
From the joyous scenes around.
Down the mountain steps defiling
Of the palace-fortress high,
Onward where Pactolus smiling
Greets them with his golden eye ;
Ere his waters swift descending,
Mix with Hermus' ampler tide,
To the right their course is bending
Round by Tmolus' northern side.
Soon the Mysian oaks are waving
O'er each hunter's fearless brow,
And the danger they are braving
Soon shall burst upon them now.
High each youthful heart is bounding,
As, through copse or forest glade,
Many a pipe's shrill music sounding,
Sweeps the lordly cavalcade.
Mysia's peasants, flocking round them,
Guide them on their venturous way ;
Shouts of grateful joy surround them,
" Soon the boar shall fall a prey !"
Hark ! a sound 'mid yonder bushes —
Gallants, halt ! the charge prepare
For the monster when he rushes
Fierce from his invaded liar.

O'er the stranger's dark brow glancing
 Gleam'd a transient smile of joy,
 As, beside him gaily prancing,
 Rein'd his steed that princely boy.
 See! the tangled copse-wood parting,
 For the grisly beast makes way;
 From his covert wildly starting,
 Proudly now he stands at bay.
 Hark! his deadly tusks he crashes,
 Stamping on the echoing ground;
 Lo! his red eye grimly flashes,
 As he fiercely glares around.
 Round the beast, the danger scorning,
 Swiftly forms the spearmen's ring:
 Where is now the stranger's warning?
 Where the hope of Lydia's king?
 Many an eager eye is beaming
 In that young and lordly band,
 Many a quivering lance is gleaming,
 Grasped in valour's trusty hand.
 Who, before his comrades pressing,
 Shall the meed of honour gain?
 Who shall earn a nation's blessing,
 Slain the scourge of Mysia's plain?
 See Adrastus bold advancing
 Spurs his steed beyond the rest —
 Flew the spear,—but faithless glancing
 Pierced young Atys' fated breast.

 From the plain of death they bore him,—
 Sight to greet a father's eye!

Lydia's warriors marched before him,
 And Adrastus followed nigh.
 Fast before them rumour speeding
 On her dark, ill-omened wing,
 Told the tale of Atys bleeding
 To the sad and childless king.
 Onward on his bier they bore him,
 Last of Gyges' line of fame!
 Sadly marched his friends before him,—
 And behind the slayer came.
 To the king himself he yielded,—
 "Haste! for me the doom prepare;
 By the hand that should have shielded,
 Slaughtered lies thy dear-loved heir.
 Cleansed by thee, by thee befriended,
Thus have I that boon repaid!
 Oh, that I, my sorrows ended,
 Were with Atys lowly laid!"

Desolate and broken-hearted,
 Reft of him he held so dear,
 While the salt tears freshly started
 As he gazed upon the bier,
 Still with generous pity glowing,
 Half his grief the king repress,
 And the soft kind words are flowing
 To console his frantic guest:—
 "Envious gods, my glory viewing,
 Keen with hate my race pursue;
 And thy fated hand is doing
 What the gods have willed thee do.

Grieve not thou,—thy lance unwilling
Has my son's best life-blood spilt,
Ruthless fate's decrees fulfilling;—
Thine the deed but not the guilt."

To the tomb the monarch bore him,
Whom in vain he strove to save;
Many a mournful dirge sung o'er him,
Low he lies within the grave.
O'er the saddened city stealing,
Eve brings on the hour of rest;
Can it lull each anguished feeling
In Adrastus' hopeless breast?
When the shades of night descended,
And the mournful crowd was gone,
And the funeral rites were ended,—
By the grave he stood alone.
And he looked, where, vainly weeping,
Lay the monarch of the land,
Grief's unceasing vigils keeping;
And he gazed upon his hand.
"Hand accurst! shall Hermus' water
Wash thee twice with blood defiled?
Thou hast wrought a brother's slaughter,
Thou hast slain my patron's child!
With a doom of ceaseless sorrow
Who like me by fate opprest?
Wherefore live to meet a morrow
That can bring me nought of rest?
Wherefore live? shall aught of gladness
Pierce again my night of grief?"

Live accurst! the thought is madness!
Come, oh, death, my sole relief!"

From a cloud the fair moon gleaming
Doth the mournful scene illumine,
And her soft pale light is streaming
On Adrastus' brow of gloom.
In his hand a sword is shining —
Who his darksome thoughts shall scan,
Or the anguish, past defining,
Of the miserable man?
For awhile he gazed around him,
On the heaven and on the earth;
Cursed the ties to life that bound him,
And the day that gave him birth.—
When again the dark clouds blended,
And obscured that transient ray,
All was o'er,—his sorrows ended,
Low in death Adrastus lay.
When the day, to night succeeding,
Tinged the hills with roseate hue,
There the Lydians found him bleeding
On the grave of him he slew.

CRÆSUS ON THE PYRE.

CRÆSUS ON THE PYRE.



IN this ballad the storm of divine indignation has burst upon the head of the too prosperous monarch; but it is appeased in some degree by his complete fall, and the humility with which he bears it. The story does not appear to require any explanation. Its probability must be left to the tender mercies of the critical historian.—See *Bishop Thirlwall's History of Greece*, vol. ii. p. 167.

CRÆSUS ON THE PYRE.



I.

It was the Lydian monarch kind lay stretched upon the pyre,
 And Persia's lord has given the word to light the deadly fire.
 Twice seven fair youths of Sardis' town all chained around him lie—
 Such was the conqueror's grim command—doomed with their king
 to die.

II.

Where shall the mighty monarch be when yonder sun goes down?
 A heap of unremembered dust, before his native town!
 With tearful eyes on those fair walls a lingering glance he cast—
 The stately towers he loved so well — that look must be his last!

III.

With chainèd hands the Lydian bands stand mute and sad around;
 And now their eyes are on their lord, now fixed upon the ground.
 But what relief can looks of grief or tears of anguish bring?
 What mortal power can save from death the heaven-forsaken
 king?

IV.

Is it to prove the faith of heaven — to see if Jove will save —
 That the Persian dooms his brother king to yonder fiery grave?
 Is it a vow that binds him now and checks his softer mood—
 The first-fruits of his victory due to the god of wars and blood?

V.

There is a silence, sad and deep, like the silence of the tomb —
 With awestruck eye each stander-by awaits the monarch's doom ;
 When hark ! his voice from forth the pyre in hurried accents came,
 And thrice, in tones of hopeless woe, he call'd on Solon's name.

VI.

For the days of old came o'er him ; he bethought him of the hour,
 When to Sardis came th' Athenian sage, and saw his pride of
 power ;
 Yet, all surveyed, he calmly said, " I may not call thee blest
 Till life is o'er and change no more in the realms of endless rest."

VII.

Then Cyrus called th' interpreters, and bade them quickly show,
 " Now who is this yon king calls on in his hour of doom and woe ?
 Is it a god to whom he prays to shield him from his fate ?
 Methinks his prayer he well may spare,—'tis utter'd all too late."

VIII.

Awhile the Lydian scorned reply, and ne'er a word he spake ;
 But at length with warning voice and grave the mournful silence
 brake,
 " Oh ! 'tis a man for whom a king might give his crown of gold —
 No treasures rare can e'er compare with a friend so wise and bold."

IX.

" Now speak again, thou man of woe ! and to the king relate
 What counsel gave that sage to thee, whose wisdom was so great ?"
 Thus sorely pressed, he told the rest, and how to Sardis' tower
 In days of yore th' Athenian came and gazed on all his power.

X.

Yet, all surveyed, he calmly said, "I may not call thee blest
Till life is o'er and change no more in the realms of endless rest."
"Oh! had I to that lesson sage applied a listening ear,
Had I known to prize that council wise, I had not now been here." xcl

XI.

The victor heard the warning word, and it seemed both sad and
true,
And he gazed awhile on the fatal pile with a fixed and thoughtful
view;
He thought upon the wondrous change that captive prince had
known,—
And, musing on another's fate, he bethought him of his own.

XII.

"To-morrow's hour the sky may lower, the storm descend on me,
And I, like yonder victim pale, may doomed and helpless be;
For who can tell the ways of fate, and what a day may bring?"—
And he bade them quench the kindling pyre, and save his
brother king.

XIII.

With water from the golden stream they strive to quench the fire,
But the forkèd flames above their heads rise higher still and higher:
In vain the haughty Persian owns the wondrous ways of fate,
And feels that he is but a man—his mercy is too late.

XIV.

They strive in vain—the flames ascend—still nearer and more near
They close around the fated king—oh, sight most sad and drear!
The pious king who loved the gods, and to each temple high
Sent presents rare beyond compare— is it thus that he must die?

XV.

He looked around — no help was found — the flames around him
glare ;

With streaming eye to Phœbus high he breathed a broken prayer :

“ If e'er my gifts in former days were pleasant unto thee,

Oh, Delphian king ! some succour bring, in mercy look on me ! ”

XVI.

The piteous words were scarcely said, when the wind rose loud
and high,

And cloud on cloud began to shroud the brightness of the sky.

That mournful cry to Phœbus high has not been breathed
in vain :

Hark ! hark ! I hear upon the bier the plashing of the rain.

XVII.

The holy power has sent the shower his worshipper to save ;

For on Delphi's shrine the eye divine beheld the gifts he gave.

The fire is quenched, the pious king from harm and danger free ;

For they who love the gods above shall ne'er forsaken be !

PACTYAS AND ARISTODICUS.

PACTYAS AND ARISTODICUS.

(HEROD. I. 153—161.)



THE time of the events recorded in this ballad is immediately after the first conquest of Lydia by Cyrus. Tabalus was a Persian, left governor of Sardis; Pactyas a Lydian, rashly entrusted by Cyrus with the guardianship of his treasure. The temple of Apollo at Branchidæ was to the coast of Asia-Minor what his temple at Delphi was to Greece proper. He was, we are informed by Müller (Dorians, i. 254., English translation), worshipped here under the title of *Εκάεργος*, the Far-darter. Müller also quotes from Quinctilian a passage describing the sound called *Βράγχος*, from which he supposes the founder of the temple to have derived his name. This passage is attempted to be rendered in the ballad, in the line,—

Ere hoarse and tremulous came forth the long-drawn words of fate.

To the same source is due the account of the sacred way from the temple to the harbour Panormus, and particularly the mention of the Egyptian lion. The curse of the Lydians on the Chians for giving up Pactyas to the Persians, in consideration of being put into possession of the tract of land called “the Atarnian Field” (as we have in Scripture, “the *Field* of Machpelah”), is an interpolation of the author. Herodotus, however, states as a

fact, that for some time the land thus obtained was unfruitful. He also mentions the misfortune which befel the band of youths whom the Chians sent to consult the oracle at Delphi, as having foreshadowed their future destruction on the occasion of the Ionian revolt (v. 26. &c.). The author therefore hopes that, in placing it as a prophecy in the mouth of the Lydians, he is not departing from the *spirit* of the original.

The term "Xenian" Jove, *i. e.* Jove who presides over hospitality, has been borrowed from the Greek.

PACTYAS AND ARISTODICUS.



I.

ON Sardis' royal city, on Hermus' golden stream,
 Reviving freedom's sun has shed a momentary gleam ;
 It flashed awhile, that parting smile, o'er town, and mount, and
 river ;
 A mocking light 'mid slavery's night—and then it sank for ever !

II.

The patriot band have made a stand before their native town—
 “Once more,” they said, “on Cræsus' head shall shine his father's
 crown ;”
 And Tabalus with fury sees their troops surround his hold,
 Whom Pactyas 'gainst Persia's king has hired with Persian gold.

III.

On wings of fame the tidings came on the conqueror's home-
 ward track ;
 But a nobler prey before him lay, and he scorned to turn him
 back ;
 For Babylon's unconquered towers invite their destined lord ;
 And the old renown of Egypt's crown—if 'scaped the Scythian
 sword.

IV.

But he bade Mazares take a band, and seek that ill-starred coast :
 "Our leaguered garrison set free—disperse the Lydian host!
 Who stands at bay thou needst must slay ; but Pactyas bring alive ;
 We'll take the sting," grim smiled the king, "from yonder rebel
 hive.¹

V.

"Their leader ta'en, their bravest slain, the vulgar herd disarm ;
 The loom to ply, to trade and lie, shall be my peaceful charm.
 Better for us to tame them thus than to enslave or kill ;
 Such women-men will ne'er again uprising to work us ill."

VI.

Right soon upon the leaguered town his troops Mazares led—
 But without a blow the rebel foe before that rumour fled.
 All suddenly the patriot bands have melted from the plain,
 Like snow from Tmolus' fragrant steeps when spring returns again.

VII.

"And is the traitor Pactyas fled? methinks we soon shall know
 What town so bold as dare to hold the Persian monarch's foe!
 Ho! ride ye straight to Cumæ's gate, and say, 'Mazares calls—
 Yon slave to me must yielded be, or straight we storm your walls.'"

VIII.

Old Cumæ's startled sons have heard Mazares' message proud,
 And doubt is at the council-board and panic in the crowd—
 For words are rife—"The cause of strife 'twere better to remove ;"
 And "Dare ye break, for Cyrus' sake, the laws of Xenian Jove?"

¹ Cyrus is made by Herodotus (i. 141.) to use similar metaphorical language to the Ionians.

IX.

“ Who draw the sword 'gainst Persia's lord, in all unequal fight,
 Their wives and they shall fall a prey, although their cause be
 right.”

“ But who the hospitable laws of Xenian Jove invades
 His deed shall rue, if bards speak true, for ever 'mid the shades.”

X.

Then spoke good Aristodicus, “ When good men's counsels fail,
 The gods, I ween, from heaven will lean, to hear their whispered
 tale ;

At Branchidæ the Archer-god will grant us counsel true ;
 And whatsoever Phœbus says be this our care to do !

XI.

“ For oh ! whate'er our country's fate in future days may be,
 Whether like Sardis fair enslaved, or gallant Xanthus free,
 A life of shame with tarnished name it boots not, friends, to live ;
 For a heart at rest is still the best that God to man can give !”

XII.

Thus spoke that upright councillor, and none his word gainsaid,
 Perplexed mid-awe for Jove's high law, and fear of Persia's blade ;
 And a solemn embassy is gone to the great Far-Darter's shrine,
 Resolved to know, come weal, come woe, what wills the voice divine.

XIII.

Ah ! wherefore sent they to the god his mystic word to hear,
 When the thrilling voice of their inner choice was sounding in
 their ear ?

Ah ! wherefore to the holy shrine in doubtful guise repair ?
 Why look not to their own true heart for the heavenly writing
 there ?

XIV.

Alas! the fear of Persia's spear has stilled that voice within,
 And the letters bright elude the sight of those who toy with sin.
 And vainly at Apollo's shrine they ask for heaven's high will
 Who dare to slight the holy light that conscience kindles still.

XV.

Near soft Miletus' peaceful town they seek Panormus' bay,
 And towards the glorious temple pace along the sacred way;
 On either side the pavement wide stand sculptured figures brave,
 And Egypt's lion thoughtful glares, which conquering Necho gave.

XVI.

They have reached the temple's hallowed gate at Branchidæ divine,
 And humbly wait the words of fate before the prescient shrine.
 And from the tripod came a voice they ne'er had thought to hear,
 "Yield Pactyas straight to meet his fate! why tempt the Persian
 spear?"

XVII.

They have hied them back to Cumæ's town, and told the god's reply,
 And the good and wise with wondering eyes look upward to the sky.
 "Where now," said they, "the ancient sway of Jove, the stranger's
 friend?
 If deeds like these the gods can please, where will foul treachery
 end?"

XVIII.

But all the bad relieved and glad have heard the god's decree,
 "Full well we knew the answer true of peaceful Branchidæ.
 'Tis better far the cause of war from our country to remove,
 Than to risk our head from idle dread of the wrath of Xenian Jove."

XIX.

But outspoke Aristodicus with voice serene and stern :
 'The laws of Jove are fixed above, unchanging and eterne.
 Ye hear," quoth he, "the impious glee that greets the answer
 strange —
 Perchance to please such souls as these they have dared the Word
 to change."

XX.

Oh! deep within the heart of man there stands a secret cell,
 Where, placed by Jove, 'twixt wrath and love, prophetic answers
 dwell ;
 And then I ween from that cave unseen came forth a warning strain,
 That bade the doubting people send to Phœbus' shrine again.

XXI.

They have sent their wisest and their best to Phœbus' temple now,
 And Aristodicus is there with firm yet clouded brow ;
 Once more they wait the words of fate before the awful shrine,
 And the priestess on the tripod sits to hear the voice divine.

XXII.

With laurel clad before the shrine the Pythia sitteth late,
 Ere hoarse and tremulous came forth the long-drawn words of fate :
 Why seek again, misguided men, to hear Apollo's word ?
 Field Pactyas straight to meet his fate! why tempt the Persian
 sword ? "

XXIII.

Along the temple's ¹ hallowed roof, the time-worn walls among,
 The sparrow loves to build her nest and rear her callow young ;

¹ The author's obligation to the language of the 84th Psalm will be obvious.
 The incident itself is in the original.

No birds of prey come there to slay, no truant boys molest,
But all around the holy ground is peaceful and at rest.

XXIV.

But thither Cumæ's ruthless son hath bent his steps to-day,
Those harmless sojourners to scare from their peaceful home away ;
And plaintive cries are heard to rise, as all the precincts round
From sheltering nests the birds he wrests and flings them on the
ground.

XXV.

But hark ! from out the inmost shrine an awful voice is heard ;
It seemed to seek that daring man, the great Far-Darter's word.
" Oh ! wretch accurst, that darest first my suppliants to molest,
Who beneath the wing of the Archer-king have sought their place
of rest."

XXVI.

" The Archer-king beneath his wing his suppliants shieldeth well,
The feathered race in the holy place uninjured claim to dwell ;
But man must slight the suppliant's right, who hopeless and distress
From tyrant's hands and slavery's bands comes 'neath his shade to
rest !"

XXVII.

'Twas thus that daring man replied, nor feared the Archer's might ;
For well he knew his words were true, and in truth the gods delight ;
And from the shrine the voice divine hath issued forth again ;
But now its tone is milder grown, though grave the warning strain.

XXVIII.

" Oh ! man, to lure you to your doom that answer strange was given,
Who dared to doubt the suppliant's right, and doubting tempted
heaven ;

And had ye yielded Pactyas up at Persia's king's demand,
I had left no trace of Cumæ's place, uprooted from the land!

XXIX.

“Yea, one and all, both great and small, had felt th' avenging ire
Of Branchidæ's far-darting lord, and Xenian Jove his sire;
For holy is the suppliant's head, and wheresoe'er he goes
Wide-ruling Jove from heaven above his ægis o'er him throws.”

XXX.

He has sought his native city's walls, and told that true decree;
And Pactyas to the Persian King shall ne'er surrendered be;
But on the town the foe came down, when spurned the king's
demand,
And the suppliant is from danger sent to Chios' sea-girt land.

XXXI.

Oh! Persia's scimitars are sharp, and true the Persian bow;
But they cannot reach from beach to beach to smite an island¹ foe;
And well upon the battle-field the Persian horsemen ride,
But they cannot leap the yawning deep, or breast the Ægean's tide.

XXXII.

“Then blessings crown old Cumæ's town, who Pactyas shielded
well!
But deadliest blight on Chios light, who dared his blood to sell;
No kindly soil repay their toil, nor trees their produce yield,
Nor dews of God enrich the sod in the curst Atarnian field!

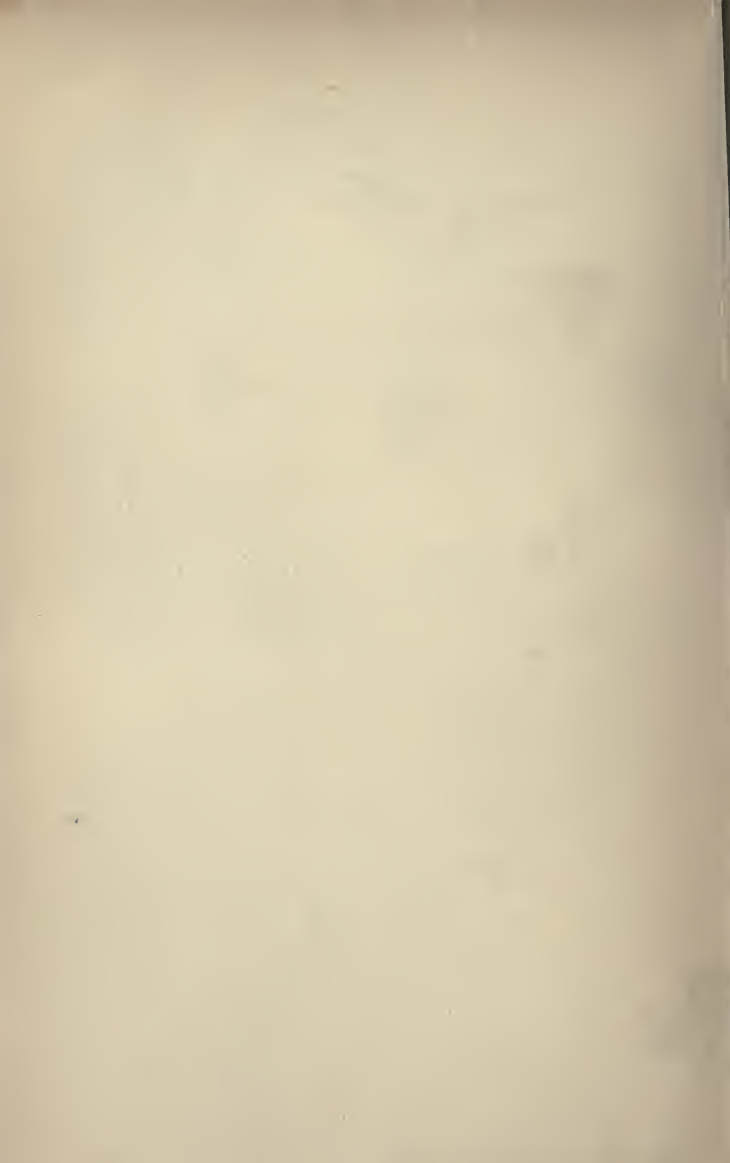
¹ At the time of the conquest of Lydia by Cyrus, Herodotus writes thus of the islanders:—“Now to those of them who were islanders, there was no cause of dread; for the Phœnicians were not yet subject to the Persians, and the Persians themselves were not sea-faring men.”

XXXIII.

“ And when in after days they send to the Archer’s Delphian shrine,
Some crushing blow shall lay them low from the slighted power
divine.

God grant that they,” the Lydians pray, “ may drink of slavery’s cup,
Who to tyrant’s hands and slavish bands the suppliant yielded up ! ”

THE RISING OF THE NILE.



THE RISING OF THE NILE.

(HEROD. II. 20—26.)

WITH the peculiar *naïveté* and candour of Herodotus is sometimes mixed a perverse, or, to speak more fairly, an unhappy ingenuity, which makes his positive assertions on matters of geography and physics somewhat fantastical. The present ballad is intended to give an idea of this. In reading the passage in the original one is reminded of the children's game in which one of the party has to 'seek' for something hidden in the room during his absence, his approach to the hiding-place being marked by music played faster or slower, or some equivalent indication. One is amused to see him come very near, and then start off again, more wrong than ever. Unluckily, or luckily, there was no one to say 'hot' or 'cold' for Herodotus, and his approaches to the truth, and subsequent diversions into the most hopeless blunders, are consequently rather startling. When he mentions an influx of *anything* in Abyssinia as one of the alleged causes of the rising of the river, and adds that the winds from those regions are very rainy *ὑετώτατοι*, we are sur-

prised that he does not make the one fact correct the other, instead of making the winds such incorrigible absentees, and evolving the somewhat peculiar instrumentality of the sun, his 'Deus ex machinâ' for this occasion. The corollary in the last stanza of the ballad is not actually made by Herodotus, but it seems a fair inference from his meandering statement, and exhibits the characteristic which led to the composition of these lines.

THE RISING OF THE NILE.



I.

It riseth not because the winds,
 The winds Etesian, blow ;
 Nor yet because on Ethiop hills
 Melts the deep-drifted snow ;
 Nor yet because Oceanus
 Around the world doth flow.

II.

'Gainst many a Syrian, Lybian, stream
 The winds Etesian beat ;
 And yet they never rise like Nile
 All in the summer's heat :
 Then wherefore unto sober men
 Such idle tale repeat ?

III.

There's many a year th' Etesian winds
 Have not been known to blow ;
 Yet not the less did Nilus rise,
 As all the world doth know :
 And therefore 'tis not they that make
 Old Nilus overflow.

IV.

Who speak of old Oceanus
 And his earth-girding stream
 Have soar'd on high, all proof above,
 For who can fight a dream?
 And such methinks their wild surmise,
 Meet for a poet's theme.

V.

I know not if Oceanus
 A stream of earth may be ; —
 I've wandered far, through many a land,
 Yet ne'er his course did see.
 'Tis like that Homer feign'd his name
 To grace his poesy.

VI.

But they who high on Ethiop hills
 Melt the deep-drifted snow,
 A specious mien they wear and grave,
 As who the truth must know :
 Yet 'tis the simplest tale of all,
 As I ere long will show.

VII.

Warm are the breezes, passing warm,
 From Ethiop hills that come.
 In Ethiop vales the sunny crane
 In winter seeks a home.
 In Ethiop skies the livelong year
 Both kite and swallow roam.

VIII.

In Ethiop land the livelong year
Nor ice nor rain is seen ;
Yet rain doth ever wait on snow
Ere five days intervene :
And therefore in the Ethiop land
No snow can fall I ween.

IX.

In Ethiop land the men are black
Beneath the sun's hot ray.
To talk of snow in such a land
'Tis senseless every way ;
The thing is naught by nature's law, —
What boots it more to say ?

X.

Now he who others' counsel blames
'Tis meet perchance that he
Some tidings of his own should bring
By man believed to be :
And therefore why the Nile doth rise
Shall now be told by me.

XI.

The sun from out his wonted course
By wintry storms is driven ;
Unto the Ethiop land he hies,
And shineth bright in heaven.
My tale is told — to men of sense
There needs no reason given.

XII.

But some perchance more words may need
 Unwonted truth to know :
 And therefore let them lend their ears
 The while I quickly show
 What works the sun in Ethiop's land
 When thither forced to go.

XIII.

He shineth in the clear blue sky
 With fierce unquenchèd beam ;
 He draweth water from the Nile
 In clouds of misty steam ;
 He draweth water from the Nile,
 And from no other stream.

XIV.

The water that the sun doth draw
 He to the winds doth lend ;
 And therefore they from Ethiop land,
 With rainiest influence wend :
 Yet more about himself he keeps
 Than he abroad doth send.

XV.

Turbid and full in winter tide
 Each other stream doth flow ;
 But into Nile's oppressèd flood
 No drop of rain doth go :
 And therefore he in winter tide
 Is then¹ himself more low.

¹ αὐτὸς ἑωυτοῦ, i. e., "than he usually is." This singular objective

XVI.

Unto his wonted haunts the sun,
 When storms abate, returns :
 And now he shines on all alike
 And all alike he burns,
 And all the river-nymphs on earth
 Mourn o'er their emptied urns.

XVII.

But Nile, who in the winter tide
 Alone was sore oppressed,
 Is further now from Phœbus' beams,
 And suffers like the rest :
 And therefore high above his banks
 He rears his swelling crest.

XVIII.

The reason why the Nile doth rise
 Each mortal now may know ;
 And well it is to Ethiop hills
 The sun is forced to go,
 Or Nile methinks on Egypt's fields
 Would always overflow.

expression is even more curious when it is superlative ; as, when it is said that a man was *richest of himself* ; i. e., than he had ever been before.

THE TEMPLE OF BUBASTIS.

THE TEMPLE OF BUBASTIS.

(HEROD. II. 137, 138.)



WITH the exception of the praise of the temples at Samos and Ephesus (which occurs in Herodotus, but not in this particular passage), and of a few ornamental phrases which could not well be avoided, this ballad is nothing but a paraphrase of the chapter in Herodotus. The extreme simplicity of the lines was intentional. The idea of them was to give an impression of the untranslatable beauty, calmness, and picturesque distinctness (yet with a kind of soft delicious *atmosphere*) which charms in the original. Bubastis was the Egyptian Artemis, or Diana.



THE TEMPLE OF BUBASTIS.



I.

THERE be other temples larger,
 More rich in gifts and gold ;
 But ne'er I saw a temple
 So lovely to behold.
 Stately is Juno's temple,
 That on Samos' shore looks down ;
 And fair our own Diana's,
 Pride of th' Ephesian town !
 But for joy to the beholder
 No temple can compare
 With the fane of great Bubastis,
 Whose glories I declare.

II.

The beauteous temple standeth,
 E'en as it ever stood ;
 'Mid lines of gleaming water,
 'Mid groves of waving wood.
 They have razed the town's foundations,
 They have razed each house and wall ;
 But the temple of the Goddess
 They have not touched at all ;

And if you walk around it,
 As once to me befel,
 Your eye looks down upon it,
 And you trace its beauties well.

III.

With lofty trees o'ershaded,
 From the sacred stream of Nile
 Two broad canals roll onward
 To form the holy isle.
 On every side the precincts,
 Each side a stade I ween,
 The tranquil waters slumber
 The darksome trees between ;
 Save where the entrance-gateway
 Its sculptured front extends ;
 For on either side the gateway
 Each stream of water ends.

IV.

And all about the gateway,
 Carved by some sculptor old,
 Tall forms stand forth to greet you,
 Right worthy to be told.
 And, as you pass the gateway
 Into the holy ground,
 Within the gleaming waters
 A sculptured wall runs round.
 And in the midst, embowering
 The holiest ground of all,
 A grove of trees ariseth,
 With shadowy branches tall ;

And mid those trees umbrageous
The spacious shrine is seen,
And in the shrine a statue,
The statue of the Queen.

v.

And from the entrance-gateway
Goes forth a pavèd road,
From the market-place right eastward,
Full long, and smooth, and broad ;
And on either side the pavement
Gigantic trees arise,
Far-shadowing, high ascending
Until they reach the skies.
Right onward through the market
It goes without a wind,
Until you reach the temple
Where Hermes sits enshrined.

vi.

Such is Bubastis' temple ;
And never yet, say I,
Was seen on earth a temple
With its loveliness to vie !



A GLANCE AT THE PYRAMIDS
WITH HERODOTUS.

A GLANCE AT THE PYRAMIDS WITH HERODOTUS.

(II. 134, 137, passim.)



THE following lines were intended to give a general idea of Herodotus' account of the Pyramids, and also of his style of narrative and argument in many of his episodes. A kind of dreamy inconsequence often blends with an appearance and evident intention of exactness and investigation ; we feel as if a great deal had passed before our eyes, but had only left a vague impression of grandeur and antiquity. The inscription on the fifth, or brick pyramid, in which it deprecates contemptuous comparisons, is slightly altered. In Herodotus it is addressed to the passer by ; and no allusion is made, as in the ballad, to the "guilt" connected with the origin of the stone pyramids. But as some doubt may be felt as to the correctness of the interpretation given to Herodotus by the priests, it is hoped that the liberty taken with the text may be excused.

A GLANCE AT THE PYRAMIDS WITH HERODOTUS.



I.

THEY rose in wicked Cheops' reign,
 And his worse son Chephreen ;
 So say the priests who tend the fane
 Of the great Egyptian Queen ;
 And the royal maid her lovers prayed,
 Who built a third between.

II.

Memorials of those evil days
 The mighty monsters stand,
 And all on them with wonder gaze
 Who seek th' Egyptian land ;
 And near the three a fourth they see,
 Though smaller and less grand.

III.

And some of Mycerinus tell,
 Some of Rhodopis speak ;
 But scarce could she its builder be,
 That fair alluring Greek,
 Although she sold her smiles for gold
 With bright unblushing cheek.

IV.

“DESPISE ME NOT,” the fifth exclaims,
“MY STONE-BUILT BRETHREN TALL,
FOR I WAS BUILT, WITHOUT YOUR GUILT,
MORE WONDROUSLY THAN ALL ;
FOR IN THE LAKE THEY DIPT TO MAKE
THE BRICKS THAT FRAME MY WALL.”

V.

Unchanged they stand : they awe the land,
Beneath the clear dark sky ;
But at what time their points sublime
They heavenward reared, and why —
The gods, that see all things that be,
Can better tell than I.

THE
NASAMONIAN TALE ABOUT THE NILE.

THE NASAMONIAN TALE ABOUT THE NILE.

(II. 32, 33.)



THIS is one of the quaintest stories in Herodotus, and is told with the most amusing simplicity. In endeavouring to give effect to it the author has been guilty of a slight exaggeration in the third and fourth lines of the seventh stanza, which seemed necessary, in order to do justice to the original in a paraphrase. The river seen, or said to be seen, by the Nasamonians is thought to have been the Niger.

THE NASAMONIAN TALE ABOUT THE NILE.



I.

" I NE'ER have seen the sacred head
 From whence its waters spring ; —"
 'Twas thus that Etearchus said,
 The great Ammonian king :
 " I ne'er have seen its fountain,
 Nor know I if 'tis true,
 Oh ! children of Cyrene,
 The tale I tell to you.

II.

" There is a land beside the foam,
 Beside the eddying sand ;
 The Nasamonian shepherds roam
 In that untravelled land :
 And there among the nobles
 Five haughty youths arose,
 Who fain would know the desert
 More than the wisest knows.

III.

" With many an earthen water-jar,
 With store of flesh and bread,

Lo! they have left behind them far
 The 'land inhabited;' ¹
 And through the mighty desert
 Are wandering to and fro,
 That they may know its treasures
 More than the wisest know.

IV.

"At length amid that dreary scene
 A grassy plain they won,
 Where pleasant trees were waving green,
 And goodly fruit thereon;
 And, as the fruit they gathered
 That on the branches grew,
 Upon them came the people,
 A strange, mysterious crew.

V.

"They seized each Nasamonian youth,
 That people dark and strange;" —
 "Oh king," said they, "we tell thee sooth,
 But four feet high they range!
 They are the darkest people
 Beneath th' all-seeing sun;
 A dark and dwarfish people,
 And conjurors every one!

VI.

"They bare them to their city straight,
 Those pigmies swift and bold;
 And close beside that city's gate
 A mighty river rolled.

¹ "Until they came to 'a land inhabited.'" (Exod. xvi. 35.)

They saw that river rolling,
 And it was deep and wide ;
 And what our mind conjectures
 Oh king, we will not hide ;

VII.

“ Basking upon its banks they saw
 The Egyptian crocodile ;
 Therefore, oh king ! by nature’s law,
 It needs must be the Nile.
 And towards the bright sun rising ¹
 It stretched for many a mile
 From where the sunsets darken ; —
 We doubt not ’tis the Nile.”

VIII.

“ Oh ! children of old Battus’ town,
 Ye hear the tale they told ;
 A stream from Jove at once come down
 No eye did e’er behold.
 I ne’er have seen its waters, —
 Yet without doubt or guile
 I give my royal judgment,
 That river is the Nile.”

¹ Πρὸς ἥλιον ἀνατέλλοντα.—HEROD.

“ On this side Jordan *towards the sun rising.*” (DEUT. iv. 41.)

THE SAMIAN OASIS.

THE SAMIAN OASIS.

(HEROD. III. 26)



THE following stanzas are supposed to be addressed by the Samians of the Oasis to the Greek stragglers from the army of Cambyses, which was destroyed by the simoon. Herodotus mentions no such invitation. He only states that the army, on its way to the country of the Ammonians, arrived at a city Oasis inhabited by Samians, said to belong to the Æschrionian tribe; and that this tract of land is called in the Greek tongue an "Island of the Blessed." The "twelve fair cities" are the cities of the Panionium, of which Samos was one. The "Encampment" was the name given to the place where Psammetichus settled the Carian and Ionian auxiliaries, who enabled him to get the better of his eleven partners in the Dodecarchy, then established in Egypt. The reader who is acquainted with modern descriptions of these Oases will not think their beauties overdrawn.

THE SAMIAN OASIS.



I.

WITHIN th' Icarian Ocean
 A pleasant island lies,
 All in a tempered climate
 Beneath soft smiling skies :
 A pleasant isle and famous,
 And Samos is its name ;
 Off Caria's coast it sparkles,—
 And thence our fathers came.

II.

They left the proud Encampment
 Where the Ionians dwell,
 Who 'gainst his faithless rivals
 Served Egypt's monarch well ;
 And, as they southward wandered
 To seek a place of rest,
 The gods to them discovered
 This "island of the blest."

III.

They say our fathers' island
 Is by a tyrant held ;

It was not thus they left it
 In days of happier eld.
 They say the twelve fair cities
 To Persia's monarch bow,
 That time has left no traces
 Of free Ionia now.

IV.

We hear the tale with pity ;
 Yet are not much distress ;
 Such distant sorrows vex not
 Our island of the blest.
 We hear the tale, and doubt not
 Our severed lot is best ;
 And we love our lonely island,
 The island of the blest.

V.

A desert stretches round us
 As barren as the sea ;
 But tall trees wave about us,
 And in their shade dwell we.
 Arcadia boasts not meadows
 More fresh and green than ours ;
 And clear our virgin fountains,
 And bright our desert flowers.

VI.

A desert stretches round us,—
 To us no foemen come :
 We envy not the Ocean
 That girds your Grecian home.

We too have gods above us,
And oft we catch their smile :
We are not at all deserted
In this our sand-set isle.

VII.

We are not at all deserted,
For safe we are and free ;
And human hearts we cherish,
Though far from men we be.
Then mourn not for your comrades
Who sleep beneath the sand ;
But dwell with us contented,
In this lone but lovely land.

VIII.

And mourn not for your cities,
Though dear they be to fame ;
Our fathers here found comfort,
And ye shall find the same !
Here from all life's commotions
Some God has given you rest :
Then smile with us, and call it
The " island of the blest !"

PSAMMENITUS;

OR,

THE GRIEF TOO DEEP FOR TEARS.

PSAMMENITUS ;
OR,
THE GRIEF TOO DEEP FOR TEARS.

(HEROD. III. 14.)



THE story in this ballad seems to require no elucidation. But the author has a pleasure in acknowledging his obligation to Mr. Wordsworth for the expression "too deep for tears." The exact expression in Herodotus is "too great for one to weep at." Thucydides (b. vii.) has a similar expression: "having suffered things greater than after the measure of tears."

PSAMMENITUS ;

OR,

THE GRIEF TOO DEEP FOR TEARS.



HE sat unscaptred and uncrowned
 Before his city's gate ;
 His fellow-captives ranged around
 That monarch desolate !
 'Twas but of late in yonder towers
 He held unchallenged sway,
 A prince amid his kingdom's powers—
 Alas! how changed to-day!
 The guards of Persiá's victor-lord
 Hem in that mournful ring,
 To watch each glance and note each word
 Of Egypt's captive king.
 Darkling he sat, while onward came,
 In servile garb arrayed,
 (Oh! sight of sorrow and of shame!)
 Old Egypt's royal maid.
 To fill her urn at yonder spring
 (Such was her lord's command)
 She goes, the daughter of a king,
 With all unwonted hand.
 The father sees his child pass by,
 The maid he loved so dear.

Bent upon earth his steadfast eye,
 He doth not shed a tear.

Another mournful band comes on,
 With step and brow of gloom ;
 Among them walks his only son,—
 He goes to meet his doom.

His hands are bound, his head is bare,
 Death's chill is on his brow.
 Yes! 'tis thy child, thy kingdom's heir—
 Weeps not the captive now?
 Loud rose each father's piteous cry,
 His son's dark fate to see;
 But Egypt's monarch's eyes are dry,
 No tear to shed has he.

But lo ! an aged wanderer passed
 That scene of sorrow by ;
 And upward for a moment cast
 His melancholy eye.
 His garb with age and travel torn,
 His tall form earthward bent,
 With listless step and look forlorn
 He begged from tent to tent.
 Why doth the monarch sudden start,
 Why beat his careworn brow ?
 The pent-up fountains of his heart
 Why are they bursting now ?
 Through want and sorrow's grim disguise
 His ancient friend he knew :
 And from his eyes the sad surprise
 Th' imprisoned tear-drops drew.

Straight to Cambyses' throne of state
 The tale of wonder came ;
 " He wept not for his son's sad fate,
 Nor for his daughter's shame ;
 It seemed his heart was all grown cold,
 Such sights unmoved to see,
 But for yon beggar poor and old
 His tears flow fast and free."
 marvelled the Persian at the tale,
 And straight he bade them go
 And ask of yonder captive pale
 The secret of his woe.
 The captive monarch bowed his head,
 And mournful made reply :
 " And ask'st thou, Cyrus' son," he said,
 " My sorrow's mystery ? —
 The sad philosophy of grief,
 Taught in misfortune's school,
 Hails the eyes' dew a sweet relief
 The burning heart to cool.
 For common sorrows tears may flow,
 Like these that stain my cheek.
 But, prince, there is a depth of woe
 That tears can never speak.
 To see my comrade's cheerless state,
 The friend of happier years,
 I weep — but oh ! my children's fate
 Lies all too deep for tears.
 Far in the heart's most secret shrine
 Those springs of sorrow sleep :
 Who bends 'neath woes as dark as mine
 Must *grieve*,—he cannot *weep*."

THE FATE OF POLYCRATES.

THE FATE OF POLYCRATES.

(HEROD. III. 124—126.)



THERE is more amplification and management of the materials afforded by Herodotus in this ballad, than in most of its companions. The dream of the daughter of Polycrates, and her remonstrance to her father just as he was starting, and his reply, — are recorded by the historian. But the author of the Ballads is responsible for the lengthened dialogue in which the ambitious designs and character of Polycrates are attempted to be described. One of the reasons given by Herodotus for the enmity of Orætes, viceroy of Sardis, towards Polycrates, is that to which the ballad alludes in the second stanza, viz. the neglect with which the king of Samos treated an ambassador or herald of the viceroy; not caring to look round to speak to him, being absorbed in listening to the strains of Anacreon. The reader of Schiller will notice, that the present author has not intruded on the ground pre-occupied by the great German poet; for which, however, he can take no credit to himself, as he had not, at the time of writing this ballad, become acquainted with “The Ring of Polycrates,” even through the medium of a translation.

Lord Bacon, in his Essay “of Prophecies,” thus notices

the dream of the daughter of Polycrates and its fulfilment: — “The daughter of Polycrates dreamed that Jupiter bathed her father, and Apollo anointed him; and it came to pass that he was crucified in an open place, where the sun made his body run with sweat, and the rain washed it.”

THE FATE OF POLYCRATES.



I.

“OH! go not forth, my father dear, oh! go not forth to-day ;
 And trust not thou that satrap dark, for he fawns but to betray ;
 His courteous smiles are treacherous wiles his foul designs to hide :
 Deep in his vengeful heart he bears the smart of wounded pride :

II.

“He hates thee, father! since the day when his herald vainly came,
 The while the Teian poured his lay of soft melodious flame —
 Deep in his heart he bears the smart-of answer all denied :
 Then go not forth, my father dear—in thy own fair towers abide!”

III.

“Now say not so, dear daughter mine, I pray thee say not so!
 Where glory calls, a monarch’s feet must never fear to go ;
 And safe to-day shall be my way through proud Magnesia’s halls,
 As if I stood ’mid my bowmen good beneath my Samian walls.

IV.

“The satrap is my friend, sweet child ; my trusty friend is he :
 The ruddy gold his coffers hold he shares it all with me :
 No more amid these clustering isles alone shall be my sway,
 But Hellas wide from side to side my empire shall obey.

V.

“And of all the maids of Hellas, though they be rich and fair,
 With the daughter of Polycrates, oh! who shall then compare?
 Then dry thy tears, no idle fears should damp our joy to-day;
 And let me see thee smile once more before I sail away.”

VI.

“Oh, father! false would be the smile that I should wear this morn,
 For of all my country's daughters I shall soon be most forlorn;
 I know, I know, ah! thought of woe, I ne'er shall see again
 My father's ship come sailing home across th' Icarian main.

VII.

“Each gifted seer with words of fear forbids thee to depart,
 And their warnings find an echo in every faithful heart;
 A maiden weak, e'en I must speak—ye gods assist me now!
 The characters of doom and death are graven on thy brow.

VIII.

“Last night, my sire, a vision dire thy daughter's eyes did see;
 Suspended in mid air there hung a form resembling thee:
 Nay frown not thus, my father dear—my tale will soon be done,—
 Methought that form was bathed by Jove, and anointed by the
 Sun.”

IX.

“My child, my child! thy fancies wild I may not stay to hear;
 A friend goes forth to meet a friend—then wherefore shouldst
 thou fear?
 Though moon-struck seers with idle fears beguile a maiden weak,
 They cannot stay thy father's hand, or blanch thy father's cheek.

X.

“Let cowards keep within their holds, and on peril fear to run!
Such shame,” quoth he, “is not for me, fair Fortune’s favourite
son!”

Yet still the maiden did repeat her melancholy strain,
“I ne’er shall see my father’s fleet come sailing home again.”

XI.

The monarch called his seamen good; they mustered on the shore;
Waved in the gale the snow-white sail, and dashed the sparkling
oar;

But by the flood that maiden stood, loud rose her piteous cry,—
“Oh! go not forth, my dear, dear sire—oh! go not forth to die!”

XII.

A frown was on the monarch’s brow as he spoke and turned away,
“Full soon shall Samos’ lord return to Samos’ lovely bay;
But thou shalt aye a maiden lone within my courts abide;
No chief of fame shall ever claim my daughter for his bride.

XIII.

“A long, long maidenhood to thee thy prophet tongue hath given.”
“Oh! would my sire,” that maid replied, “such were the will of
heaven!

Though I a loveless maiden lone must ever more remain,
Still let me hear that voice so dear in my native isle again!”

XIV.

’Twas all in vain that warning strain, the king has crossed the tide;
But never more off Samos’ shore his bark was seen to ride.
The satrap false his life has ta’en, that monarch bold and free,
And his limbs are blackening in the blast, nailed to the gallows-
tree.

XV.

At night the rain came down apace, and washed each gory stain ;
But the sun's bright ray the next noon-day glared fiercely on the
slain ;

And the oozing gore began once more from his wounded sides to
run —

Good sooth, that form was bathed by Jove, and anointed by the
Sun.

THE PURPLE CLOAK;

OR,

THE RETURN OF SYLOSON TO SAMOS.

THE PURPLE CLOAK;
OR,
THE RETURN OF SYLOSON TO SAMOS.

(HEROD. III. 139—149.)



THERE is but little extraneous matter in this ballad, with the exception of the moralizing with which Part II. begins and the melancholy soliloquy of the restored Syloson.



THE PURPLE CLOAK :

OR,

THE RETURN OF SYLOSON TO SAMOS.



PART I.

I.

THE king sat on his lofty throne¹ in Susa's palace fair ;
 And many a stately Persian lord and satrap proud was there ;
 Among his councillors he sat, and justice dealt to all ;
 No suppliant e'er went unredrest from Susa's palace hall.

II.

There came a slave and louted² low before Darius' throne :
 " A wayworn wanderer waits without, he is poor and all alone ;
 And he craves a boon of thee, oh king! for he saith that he has done
 Good service in the former days to Hystaspes' royal son."

III.

" Now lead him hither," quoth the king, " no suitor e'er shall wait,
 While I am lord in Susa's halls, unheeded at the gate ;
 And speak thy name, thou wanderer poor, I pray thee let me know
 To whom the king of Persia's land this ancient debt doth owe."

¹ The reader of our old English ballads will be reminded of the opening of " Sir Patrick Spence": " The King sat in Dumfermline town."

² This word, though unusual in modern English, has the authority of Spenser, Ben Jonson, and Drayton.

IV.

The stranger bowed before the king, and thus began to speak ;
Full well I ween his garb was worn, and with sorrow pale his
cheek ;

But his air was free and noble, and proudly flashed his eye,
As he stood unknown in that high hall, —and thus he made
reply :

V.

“ From Samos came I, mighty king, and Syloson my name ;
My brother was Polycrates, a chief well known to fame ;
That brother drove me from my home, —a wanderer forth I went ;
And since that hour my weary soul has never known content.

VI.

“ Methinks I need not tell to thee my brother’s mournful fate :
He lies within his bloody grave —a churl usurps his state ;
Mæandrius lords it o’er the land, my brother’s base-born slave :—
Restore me to that throne, oh king ! this, this the boon I crave.

VII.

“ Nay start not, let me tell my tale, —I pray thee look on me,
And, prince, thou soon shalt know the cause that I ask this boon
of thee :
Round Persia’s king a bristling ring of spearmen standeth now ;
But, when Cambyses wore the crown, a spearman poor wast *thou*.

VIII.

“ Rememberest not, oh ! king, the hour, when in fair Memphis
town,
Upon the day ye won the fray, thou wast pacing up and down ?
The costly cloak that then I wore, its colours charmed thy eye, —
In truth it was a gorgeous robe of purple Tyrian dye.

IX.

“ Let base-born peasants buy and sell, I *gave* that robe to thee ;
 And for that gift on thee bestow'd grant thou this boon to me !
 I ask not silver, ask not gold, — I ask of thee to stand
 A prince once more on Samos' shore, my own ancestral land.”

X.

“ Oh ! best and noblest,” cried the king, “ thou ne'er shalt rue the
 day
 When to Cambyses' spearman poor thou gav'st thy cloak away ;
 The faithless eye each well-known form and feature may forget ;
 But the deeds of generous kindness done the heart remembers yet.”

XI.

“ To-day thou art a wanderer sad, — but thou shalt sit ere long
 Within thy fair ancestral halls, and here the minstrel's song ; *as*
 To-day thou art a homeless man, — to-morrow thou shalt stand,
 A conqueror and a sceptred king, upon thy native land.”

XII.

“ A cloud is on thy brow to-day, thy lot is poor and low ;
 To all who gaze on thee thou seem'st a man of want and woe ;
 But thou shalt drain the bowl ere long within thy own bright
 isle,
 A wreath of roses round thy head, and on thy brow a smile.”

XIII.

And he called the proud Otanes, — one of the Seven was he,
 Who laid the Magian traitor low, and set their country free ;
 And he bade him man a gallant fleet, and sail without delay
 To the pleasant isle of Samos in the fair Icarian bay.

XIV.

“To place yon chief on Samos’ throne, Otanes, be thy care !
 But bloodless let thy victory be — his Samian people spare :
 For thus the generous chieftain said, when he made his high
 demand,
 ‘I had rather still an exile roam than waste my native land.’”

PART II.

I.

Oh! “monarchs’¹ arms are wondrous long,” their power is
 wondrous great!
 But not to them is given to stem the rushing tide of fate ;
 A king can man a stately fleet, an island fair can give ;
 But can he blunt the sword’s sharp edge, or bid the dead to live ?

II.

They leave the strand that gallant band — their ships are in the
 bay —
 It was a glorious sight, I ween, to view their bright array.
 And there amid the Persian chiefs — himself he holds the helm—
 Sits lovely Samos’ future lord — he comes to claim his realm.

III.

Mæandrius saw the Persian fleet come sailing proudly down ;
 And his troops he knew were all too few to guard a leaguered town ;
 So he laid his crown and sceptre down his recreant life to save —
 Who thus resigns a kingdom fair deserves to be a slave !

¹ Greek proverb,—quoted by Alexander son of Amyntas, at Athens.—
Herod. viii. 140.)

IV.

He calls his band, he seeks the strand: they grant him passage
free—

“And shall they then,” his brother cried, “have a bloodless
victory?”

No! give me but yon spears of thine, and I soon to them will show
There yet are men in Samos left to face the Persian foe.”

V.

The traitor heard his brother's word, and he gave the youth his
way—

“An empty land, proud Syloson, shall lie beneath thy sway.”

That youth has armed those spearmen stout, three hundred men
in all,

And on the Persian chiefs he fell before the city's wall.

VI.

The Persian lords before the wall were sitting all in state,
They deemed the land was all at peace, they recked not of their fate.
When on them came the fiery youth, with desperate charge he came;
And soon lay weltering in his gore full many a chief of fame.

VII.

The outrage rude Otanes viewed, and fury fired his breast,
And to the winds the chieftain cast his monarch's high behest.
He gave the word, that angry lord, “War, war unto the death!”
And many a scimitar flashed forth impatient from its sheath.

VIII.

Through Samos wide from side to side the carnage is begun,
And ne'er a mother there is seen but mourns a slaughtered son.
From side to side through Samos wide Otanes hunts his prey—
Few, few are left in that bright isle their monarch to obey.

IX.

The new-made monarch sits in state in his fair ancestral bowers ;
 And he bids his minstrel strike the lyre, and he crowns his head
 with flowers ;
 But still a cloud is on his brow,—where is the promised smile ?
 And yet he sits, a sceptred king, in his own dear native isle.

X.

“ Oh ! Samos dear, my native land ! I tread thy shores again,
 But where are they thy gallant sons ? I gaze upon the slain.
 A dreary kingdom mine I woen,” the mournful monarch said —
 “ Where are my subjects good and true ? I reign but o’er the dead.

XI.

“ Ah ! woe is me : I would that I had ne’er to Susa gone
 To ask that fatal boon of thee, Hystaspes’ generous son !
 Oh ! deadly fight, oh ! woeful sight to greet a monarch’s eyes ;
 All desolate my native land, reft of her children, lies.”

XII.

Thus mourned the chief,—and no relief his regal state could bring ;
 O’er such a drear unpeopled waste oh ! who would be a king ?
 And still, when desolate a land, and her sons all swept away,
 “ The waste ¹ domain of Syloson,” ’tis called unto this day.

¹ Greek proverb,—“*ἔκητι Συλοσῶντος εὐρυχωρήη*,” not quoted by Herodotus, but probably referring to this event.

ARISTAGORAS AT SPARTA.

ARISTAGORAS AT SPARTA.

AN ANECDOTE OF THE CHILDHOOD OF GORGO, WIFE OF LEONIDAS.

(HEROD. v. 49—51.)



THE author has so far departed from his original in this ballad, as to blend into one the three interviews of Aristagoras with Cleomenes. He has also ventured to represent Aristagoras as bringing with him a “bag of gold” to enforce his request; which more material method of proceeding will, it is hoped, find some justification in the story of Leotychides, king of Sparta and colleague of Cleomenes, being detected in receiving bribes, by being found in his tent *χειρίδι πλέγ ἀργυρίου*, “with the sleeve of his tunic full of money.” The character assigned to Gorgo in after years seems to be borne out by the estimation in which she was held in Sparta. (See Herod. vii. 239.)

ARISTAGORAS AT SPARTA.

AN ANECDOTE OF THE CHILDHOOD OF GORGO, WIFE OF LEONIDAS.

"Now by the Twins of heavenly Jove,"
 Quoth Sparta's wondering king,
 "So far from home our troops to move
 Would be a monstrous thing.
 Oh! stranger from Ionia's land,
 An idle task is thine,
 To lure the Spartans from their land
 So far across the brine.
 'Tis long to cross the Ægæan wide
 To reach yon troubled shore;
 And, when we gain its eastern side,
 Our task will not be o'er.
 O'er pass, o'er stream, o'er hill and plain,
 Must lie our weary road—
 There is much peril ere we gain
 The Persian king's abode.
 Then haste thee on thy homeward course!
 'Twere well thou hadst not come
 To strive to tempt a Spartan force
 A three months' march from home."

" Oh ! king, the way is not too long,
 And royal stations fair
 For those whose force is passing strong
 Unfailing cheer prepare.
 All treasures that on earth are found
 In yonder land are seen ;
 There flocks, and herds, and slaves abound,
 And robes of dazzling sheen.
 See ! graved upon this brazen plate
 Which in my hand I bring,
 The goodly lands which partial fate
 Has given to Persia's king.
 And first, beneath these Sardian towers,
 So wondrous to behold,
 By Tmolus fed with yellow showers
 Pactolus runs with gold.
 And Phrygia's flocks are grazing near,
 And Phrygia's corn-lands smile,
 You will not see such harvests here
 In 'Pelops' Dorian isle.' ¹
 And next, within their mountain screen
 Cilicia's valleys lie ;
 There snow-white steeds in pastures green
 Delight a monarch's eye.
 Armenia's shepherds never sleep ;
 And well I ween that he
 Who owns Armenia's fleecy sheep
 No needy man shall be.
 And lo ! within the Cissian land,
 Beside Choaspes' stream,

¹ Ἐν τῇ μεγάλῃ Πέλοπος Δώριδι νᾶσφ. — *Soph. Œd. Col.*

Fair Susa's royal turrets stand,
Where countless treasures gleam.
And they who guard these lands so fair
For Persia's distant lord,
Soft turbans on their heads they bear,
Nor know to wield the sword.
Then come! without or risk or toil,
And win these regions bright,
Nor for this poor unkindly soil
With rugged neighbours fight."

"Oh! man, thou wear'st a suppliant's dress,
I may not spurn thee hence;
But this I say, I like thee less
At every new pretence.
The way thou show'st is wondrous long,
As by thy plate I see,
And, though my troops are passing strong,
They shall not move for thee.
We reckon not much of stranger's praise,
We reckon not of his blame;
Within his home the Spartan stays,
Not all unknown to fame."

'Twas then, with many a stealthy look,
Lest any should behold,
From out his vest the stranger took
A bag of Persian gold.
He shows the gold, the gold he rings;
And at that sound and sight,
Oh! scion proud of Jove-born kings,
Thy eye is glistening bright.

Said I no mortal could behold
The wily tempter's deed?
Sweet child! — it needs not to be old
To help in time of need:
And maxims sage with added years
Are by experience given;
But wisdom most in youth appears
To wear the garb of heaven.
Within the chamber Gorgo sate,
The monarch's daughter she; —
But silent now her childish prate,
And checked her innocent glee.
Upon the stranger and her sire
The little maid looked long,
While Spartan virtue 'gan to tire
Beneath temptation strong.
Perchance it was a prescient dread,
That bade the stranger pray
That from the room the little maid
Might straight be sent away,
Perchance some guardian power that day
Upon the monarch smiled,
Who answered straight, "Say forth thy say,
And stay not for the child."
And now, forgotten in her nook,
With wonder-flushing cheek,
She marks her father's kindling look,
And hears the stranger speak.
"Full fifty talents shalt thou have
All darics fresh and bright;
Grant but, oh king! the boon I crave,
And aid Ionia's right!"

Upon the gold the monarch hung
With ever-brightening eye;
When up the little maiden sprung,
And stood her father by.
I know not if she caught the drift
Of all the stranger spoke;
But, when she saw the glittering gift,
Her soul within her woke.
And hardly can each thought be guessed
An eight-years heart within;
But, when his bribe the stranger pressed,
She knew that it was sin.
"Oh! father," cried that maiden bold,
"Make haste to rise and flee,
Or by the stranger and his gold
Corrupted thou wilt be."
The child-adviser said no more,
But glided swift away;
But at that word the fight was o'er,
And virtue won the day:
And Aristagoras has gone,
To tell his tale again
(With better speed than then to one)
To thirty thousand men.¹

And many a stirring year has flown;
And Gorgo, where is she?
The little maid, a matron grown,
Perchance all changed may be.

¹ The Athenian Assembly, to whom Aristagoras applied successfully after leaving Sparta.

Oh ! no, the years have only brought
New wisdom to her soul ;
And hers is still the patriot thought,
The strength of wise controul.
And she, who won that early fight,
Has lived His bride to be
Who daring died for Hellas' right
At fell Thermopylæ.

Oh ! matched full well, the wise and true,
The upright and the brave !
Had fate no better thing for you
Than yonder patriot grave ?

“ Oh ! waste not thou thy pitying breath,¹¹
Methinks that voice had said —
“ Who wins eternal fame in death —
I do not count him dead.”

THE WOOING OF AGARISTA.

THE WOOING OF AGARISTA.

(HEROD. VI. 126—132.)



THE only additions to the original in this ballad are, first, the idea thrown out that Megacles was the favoured suitor of Agarista as well as of Clisthenes himself: and, secondly, the eulogy of Pericles whom Herodotus merely mentions by name as descended on the mother's side from the hero of the story. The passage of Thucydides, which suggested the terms of the eulogy, will at once occur to the classical reader, who will also remember that the character of the "tyrant-hating" Alcmaeonidæ is to be found in the episode, part of which the ballad paraphrases. It has been thought advisable to give the full list of the suitors by way of adding an appearance of reality to the story. The rather touching allusions to the former prosperity of Sybaris and Eretria, which were both destroyed when Herodotus wrote, are in the original.

THE WOOING OF AGARISTA.



FROM her bower the royal maiden,
 Child of Sicyon's monarch proud,
 Mid her young and fair attendants,
 Gazes on the lordly crowd.
 Many a stately chief is wending
 To her father's palace high ;
 Many a youth, whose graceful bearing
 Well might win a maiden's eye.
 For thy lovely hand contending,
 Agarista, lo ! they come —
 Who shall win the beauteous maiden ?
 Who shall bear her to his home ?
 From his soft luxurious city,
 Sybaris, so glorious *then*,
 Comes the courtly Smyndirides,
 Famed for splendour among men.
 Damasus from Siris hastens,
 (Amyris, the wise, his sire)
 Epidamnian Amphimnestus
 To the maiden dares aspire.
 Brother of the huge Titormus,
 (Famed for monstrous strength and size,
 Who forsook the haunts of mortals) —
 Males from Ætolia hies.

Son of Argos' haughty monarch,
 (Phidon, who with reckless hand
Durst th' Olympian customs trample,)
 Leocedes joins the band.
Laphanes from Pæum marches ;
 He whose sire, as legends sing,
In his old ancestral mansion
 Lodged the Twins of heaven's high king.
Onomastus — name of honour, —
 Comes from Elis' sacred towers ;
And the gentle Amiantus
 Leaves his green Arcadian bowers.
Cranon sent her princely chieftain
 Of the Scopads' line of fame ;
From the bleak Molossian mountains,
 Hunter keen, bold Alcon came.
Fair Eretria's golden corn-lands
 (Then she basked in fortune's smile)
Sent the lordly young Lysanias
 From Eubœa's bounteous isle.
With a gay and graceful bearing
 Hippoclides marched along ;
Confident in youth and beauty,
 Fairest of that princely throng.
With a graver, statelier carriage
 Megacles next came in sight ;
Yet his mien was full as noble,
 And his eye was full as bright.
Longer was the glance and deeper
 That the youthful maiden cast,
Gazing from her lofty chamber,—
 As the two Athenians past.

For thy gentle hand contending,
 Lady, lo! these chieftains come, —
 Who shall win the beauteous maiden?
 Who shall bear her to his home?

Courteously the stately monarch
 Bade them welcome one and all;
 Courteously he bade them welcome
 To his palace' spacious hall.
 Courteously each chief he greeted,
 And he asked each sounding name;
 And their high-descended lineage,
 And the cities whence they came.

“ In my court a year abiding,
 Now let each his powers essay!
 He whose prowess shines the brightest
 Shall my daughter bear away.”

Now the prince, each suitor proving,
 Tries the head, the hand, the heart;
 Who in nature's gifts excelling;
 Who in varied stores of art.
 Still, of all that proud assemblage,
 — Whatsoe'er was done or said,—
 Seemed the two Athenian chieftains
 Worthiest of the royal maid.
 Whether in bright armour shining,
 Strove the youths in mimic fray,
 Or in gilded halls reclining,
 Wiled the social hours away;

Or, in lofty groves umbrageous,
 With the king conversed alone,
 Culling flowers of wit and fancy—
 Still the palm was all their own.
 Courteous manners, noble bearing,
 Piercing wit, and taste refined;—
 Theirs the frame of manly beauty,
 Theirs the treasure of the mind.
 To the gallant Hippocides
 Most the monarch doth incline,
 Meetest he for Sicyon's daughter,
 Linked with Corinth's royal line.

Rolling months the year have ended,—
 This the day that must decide
 Who has won the father's favour,
 And the virgin for his bride.
 Now the wine-cup full is flowing,
 And the chiefs feast long and high;
 Many a youthful heart is glowing,
 Beams with hope each eager eye.
 Nor alone the gallant suitors
 Anxiously the issue wait;
 Sicyon's thousands, thither thronging,
 Fill the princely halls of state.
 Now the sumptuous feast is ended;
 Social converse crowns the day;
 And before the king the rivals
 Wit and fancy's powers display.
 Far above each rival chieftain,
 On that all-eventful day,

Shone the brilliant Hippocrides,—
 He must bear the palm away.
 Till at length for music calling,
 Many a measure wild he tries ;
 Many a strange and shameless gesture
 Meets the monarch's wondering eyes.
 Darker grew the frown and darker
 On the brow of Sicyon's king,
 While the reckless youth, exclaiming,
 Bade the slaves a table bring.
 On his head his body poisoning,
 Light on high his legs he threw ;
 From the sight uncouth the monarch
 Haughtily his eyes withdrew.
 Long each exploit strange beholding,
 Scarce had he his wrath repressed,
 But at length his grief and anger
 Burst from his o'erladen breast.

“ Though in many a doubtful contest
 Well thy prowess has been tried,
 Chief, by yon unseemly antics
 Thou hast danced away thy bride.”

“ Little careth Hippocrides ”—

This was all the youth replied ;
 Reckless thus his claim resigning
 To the lovely royal bride.

Spake the youth ; the monarch turning
 To the suitors 'gan to say ;

“ Great the honour each has done me :
 Great the thanks to each I pay.

Would that I on each brave suitor
 Could a daughter's hand bestow !
 None from Sicyon's halls rejected,
 None should unrewarded go !
 Well his worth has each commended ;
 But,—since thus it may not be,—
 Princely son of old Alcmaeon,
 I betroth my child to thee.
 Each a present rich and costly
 From my stores shall homeward bear ;
 But on Megacles of Athens
 I bestow my daughter fair,"

Some have said, the royal maiden,
 Oft as Megacles passed by,
 Followed far the favoured chieftain
 With a kind glance of her eye.
 And, when oft her listening handmaids
 Told his praises in her ear,
 Glowed her cheek with softest blushes,—
 Sign to lover's hopes most dear.
 Something do I heed their story,
 But my song alone must sing
 How the son of old Alcmaeon
 Won the child of Sicyon's king.
 Thus, though reckless Hippoclidides
 Lost the lovely prize that day,
 Still from all the rival cities
 Athens bore the palm away.
 Many a patriot chief and statesman
 From that lofty union came,—

Names renowned in Grecian story,
Gems in Athens' crown of fame.
Little of the tyrant's lineage
In that generous race was found ;
'Twas a tyrant-hating kindred,
Most of all on Attic ground.
Still a new free-hearted leader
Rose when one had passed away —
Noblest-born of all the noble,
Still the people's friends were they.
Ere twice fifty years were numbered,
From that honoured line He sprung,
On whose lips the listening thousands
Wrapt in mute attention hung ; —
He, whose voice the city swaying,
Like th' Olympian thunders loud,
Quelled the nobles' factious striving,
Stemmed the fury of the crowd.
He who, high above corruption,
With a patriot's front of pride,
O'er the free held firm dominion,
And for Athens lived and died.

THE OLIVE OF MINERVA.

THE OLIVE OF MINERVA.¹



IN this ballad the author has to plead responsible for everything but the fact, or alleged fact, of an olive, which had been burnt with the temple in which it stood (having been first planted there by Minerva in commemoration of her contest with Neptune), being found the next morning to have put forth a considerable shoot. But the temple was that of the earthborn or indigenious hero Erectheus, not that of Minerva. The author may plead Homer's authority for connecting Minerva so closely with Erectheus:—

ὄν ποτ' Ἀθήνη
Θρέψε Διὸς θυγατῆρ, τέχε δὲ ζείδωρος ἀρούρα,
Καδδ' ἐν Ἀθηναῖς εἶσεν ἐφ' ἐνὶ πτόνι νήφ.

Hom. *Il.* ii. 547.

¹ Founded on an incident related in Herod. viii. 55.

THE OLIVE OF MINERVA.



“How blooms it now, yon olive bough,
 Within this ruined fane?
 What power unseen with foliage green
 Has clothed its trunk again?
 We burnt the fane with Persian fire,
 We burnt their sacred tree,—
 What doth it there, yon shoot so fair?
 What may this wonder be?
 The blackened ground, all bare around,
 Of our conquest tells the tale;—
 In a single night it has sprung to light,
 That branch of the olive pale!”
 The monarch spake, but none replied;
 For none could tell aright
 How that blooming shoot from its withered root
 Uprose in a single night.
 When hark! a voice from the inmost shrine,
 In accents loud and clear,
 The voice of the guardian power divine,—
 Burst forth on his awestruck ear:
 “And deem’dst thou then that the hand of men
 Could mar my sacred tree?
 That mortal blow could the stem lay low
 That was planted of old by me?”

By Pallas nurs't it rose at first,
 To grace this favoured land ;
And aye shall be seen its branches green
 Unscathed by tyrant's hand.
My pillaged fane, my fair domain
 Burnt by a ruthless foe,
My sons shall avenge with their own good swords,
 And lay thy glory low.
With a single sail thou shalt woo the gale,
 From Hellas forced to fly,
And Athens' bards shall tell the tale
 In strains that shall never die.
Aye, once and again on the battle plain,
 Thy myriads shall scattered be ;
And kings shall learn a lesson stern
 In the land of the brave and free.
And though deeper gloom may brood ere long
 O'er Athena's hallowed ground,
And the warrior's shout, and the poet's song,
 No longer here resound ; —
Yet deathless lays my children's praise
 Shall spread from shore to shore,
And Athens' name by the voice of fame
 Be hallowed evermore.
And pilgrim bands from distant lands
 Shall seek my ruined fane,
Till to fancy's eyes my towers shall arise
 In their beauty and pride again.
And, while they mourn my city's fall,
 Nurse of the wise and free, —
Proud king, the meanest of them all
 Shall scorn to think on thee."

A LEGEND OF MACEDON;

OR,

THE TALE OF PERDICCAS.

A LEGEND OF MACEDON;

OR,

THE TALE OF PERDICCAS.

(HEROD. VIII. 137—139.)



GREATER liberty has been taken with the original in this ballad than in any of the others. The prominence at once given to Perdiccas,—the trait of piety and devotion to Juno, the patron Goddess of the Argives,—the character of Orestes, as well as his name (Mountaineer),—the death of the two elder brothers, and the marriage of Perdiccas, are all grafted on the somewhat scanty narrative of Herodotus. But besides this and other amplifications, the author has ventured to have recourse to other sources of information, as well as to invent on his own responsibility one very important character,—the daughter of King Thurimas. She is a mere creature of the imagination, a child of the roses of Bermius, the mention of which suggested her origin. The authorities for supposing that there was a settlement of the Temenidæ in Macedonia, before the arrival of Perdiccas and his brethren, are to be found in Müller (*Dorians*, ii. p. 480, &c.),¹ who considers the three kings mentioned by chronologers, Caranus, Cœnus, and Thurimas or Turimmas, to have belonged to this dynasty. Edessa is regarded as the seat of empire of the older branch. Both Edessa and

¹ The reference is to the English translation.

Berœa being situated in the region bounded by the rivers Lydias and Haliaemon, there seemed no improbability in supposing a junction taking place in the days of Perdiccas between the two branches; and the conquest of Lebœa seemed a natural step in the further progress of the conquerors. Lebœa, which Herodotus does not place, is supposed to be in Lynceus, in which district rises Mount Barnus, a distinct mountain from Bermius.

It is hoped that the interview between Perdiccas and his lady-love in the gardens of Midas will not be considered unclassical by those who have noticed how much more of resemblance to modern notions is to be found in the very early days of Grecian History than in the commonly received classical period. The more free intercourse between the sexes, and the greater prevalence of something like what we call "sentiment," are among the marked features in the Homeric poems as compared with the tragedians. Among the latter writers we should look in vain for such passages as *Il. iv. 143.*, or *xxii. 126.*

The author must apologise for having ventured, in this ballad, to go beyond Herodotus in the regions of the marvellous. The mysterious action of Perdiccas in drawing up the rays of the sun into his bosom, is simply narrated by Herodotus, who leaves it to the reader to suppose, with the king in the story, that it had some emblematic intention. The writer of the ballad has taken the liberty of developing the supposed emblem into a charm, and of enlarging upon its working. But, though in doing so he has far exceeded the letter of his original, he hopes that he will not be considered to have departed from its spirit.

The three first stanzas are put into the mouth of Alex-

ander, son of Amyntas, king of Macedon. Amyntas is supposed to be still alive, but not present at the banquet; Alexander to have just returned from Olympia, where, after proving his Hellenic descent, he was allowed to run in the stadium, and ran a dead heat,— *συνεξέπιπτε τῷ πρώτῳ*. Gygæa was the name of the sister of Alexander.

A LEGEND OF MACEDON;

OR,

THE TALE OF PERDICCAS.



I.

In famed Olympia's contest we have not won the prize,
 Though with the first we ran full well, to our southern friends'
 surprise;
 And ere another year has passed, upon some luckier day,
 Amyntas' son, so swift to run, shall bear the palm away.

II.

'Mid true-born sons of Hellas who claims the foremost place?
 The man who wears the olive-wreath of the famed Olympic race.
 And we of Macedon, I ween, though northward far we range,
 Are sprung from old Hellenic sires, and blood can never change.

III.

"Then fill me up a brimming cup! and, nobles, drink," quoth he,
 "To the judges true before whose view we proved our pedigree;
 And let our minstrel tell the tale, that our fathers handed down,
 How first the race of Temenus won Macedonia's crown."

THE TALE OF PERDICCAS.

PART I.

I.

Behind Lebæa's city the sun was setting fast,
When up the hill three brethren toiled, and through the gateway
passed.

The first was stout Aeropus, the next Gauanes tall,
The third was young Perdiccas, the noblest of them all.

II.

In humble guise those youths were clad, and weary seemed each
one,

As through the city's gate they passed, beneath the setting sun ;
And, ere their feet had paced the street and gained the palace door,
Full many a light of early night had gemmed the starry floor.

III.

Before the rustic palace-gate the king Orestes stood,
His steed was nigh with travel spent, and his lance all stained
with blood,—

The blood of those marauders wild who haunt that rugged plain
Where Barnus from the stormy sky descends to earth again.

IV.

Right onward to the palace-gate those three stout brethren came,
And he asked them of their native land, and he asked them of
their name ;

Then silent stood Aeropus, and eke Gauanes tall ;
But spoke the young Perdiccas, the boldest of them all : —

V.

“From Argos, in the Apian land, oh! king, thy servants come,
To seek, amid these northern climes, a calmer, happier home.
The echoes of our native land with fierce dissensions ring;
They have left us but our strong right hands, and these to thee
we bring.”

VI.

Oh! some can trace a noble soul through many a quaint disguise;
And virtue's mark is never dark, except to blinded eyes,
And well I ween, 'neath vesture mean, it could not all be hid,
The princely grace of that ancient race, the Argive Temenid!

VII.

Was it the night, whose scanty light beguiled the monarch's ken?
Or did the shadow of his fate come stealing o'er him then?
For, whom the gods¹ would fain destroy, upon his darkened soul
A fateful phrenzy oft comes down, and prescient thunders roll!

VIII.

He seemed to muse a little space, and then he smiled and said,
“Ye shall sleep beneath a monarch's roof, and share a monarch's
bread.

The first shall tend my gallant steeds, the next my oxen keep,
And the third, yon stripling fair and bold, shall feed my fleecy
sheep.”

¹ The sentiment is to be found in a fragment attributed, though perhaps without sufficient authority, to Euripides, which is better known in its Latin version, “Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.”

*ὄταν δὲ δαίμων ἀνδρὶ πορσύνη κακὸν
τὸν νοῦν ἐβλαψε πρῶτον.*

It is singular that the apocryphal “dementare,” in a transitive sense, should so long have passed muster.

IX.

That night beneath Orestes' roof their weary limbs they laid ;
 And, ere he slept, to Jove's high queen the young Perdiccas
 prayed ;
 And slumber's boon stole o'er him soon, and with the early morn
 Full cheerily he went a-field, as one to labour born.

X.

Yet oft, methinks, a blush of shame came flushing o'er his cheek
 As he fed the monarch's sheep alone along those mountains bleak.
 He bethought him of his native land, and his highborn sires'
 renown,
 And a chilling pang of hopeless worth upon his soul came down.

XI.

“ 'Tis sad to keep these silly sheep on these dreary mountains lone,
 For one whose hand can wield a brand, whose sires have graced a
 throne.
 Nor marvel I that Peleus' son¹, amid those maidens bright,
 Should gladly hail that merchant's tale who call'd him to the fight.

XII.

“ Oh ! Queen of Jove, whom Argives love, wherever thou mayst
 be ; —
 In yonder heaven I strive to trace the path that leads to thee. —
 Far hence above my Argive home, hear thou my suppliant cry,
 That a shepherd² of the people they may greet me ere I die ! ”

¹ The allusion is to the well-known post-Homeric story, that at the time of the siege of Troy Achilles was concealed in the court of Lycomedes in a woman's dress, to avoid joining in the expedition ; but was discovered by Ulysses, who visited the court for that purpose in the disguise of a pedlar.

² Ποίμενα λαών, the well-known Homeric epithet of a king or chieftain.

XIII.

Thus prayed the youth, nor deemed in sooth the fated hour was
 near
 When again his hand should wield a brand and launch the qui-
 vering spear.
 And mournfully he wended home, and reached the monarch's
 stalls,
 And there he left his fleecy care, and sought the city's walls.

PART II.

I.

There were few such princely monarchs as Amyntas, best of
 men —
 There were few such stately maidens as fair Gygæa, then.
 A rugged life, 'mid war and strife, the plundering monarch led,
 And the queen, with her own dainty hands, herself she made the
 bread!

II.

And every noon that lady fair, on household cares intent,
 Baked for the serfs their daily loaf, ere to their toil they went;
 And every morn a wondrous sight appalled her gazing eyes,
 For the loaf of young Perdiccas was twice the wonted size.

III.

“There's magic here,” the lady cried, “it was not well, oh! king,
 Thus rashly to thy peaceful home these wizard serfs to bring;
 And send them hence again, forthwith, or, by the gods above,
 I ne'er will bake a loaf again, for anger or for love.”

IV.

An angry man Orestes grew, as angry men have been,
 And he swore an oath against the serfs, and he frowned upon the
 queen ;
 For well he knew such stalwart youths he ne'er again should find,
 And well he knew that lady's tongue was wondrous hard to bind.

V.

And, sooth to say, the tale was strange, and a voice within him said
 That the fortunes of the serf might grow, perchance, as grew the
 bread ;
 And, small as good Orestes' fame 'mid pious men might be,
 Yet something of the hand divine in this he seemed to see.

VI.

He called the serfs before him, and with angry voice he said,
 " This night beneath another roof, young men, ye lay your head !
 And woe be to your mother's son who, when the sun goes down,
 Shall linger still to work me ill in fair Lebæa's town ! "

VII.

The young men heard the angry word, indignant and amazed ;
 They gazed upon each other, and on the king they gazed :
 Aghast stood stout Aeropus, and eke Gauanes tall,
 But spoke the young Perdiccas, the boldest of them all : —

VIII.

" Oh ! king, we bow to thy command, though something strange
 it be ;
 Yet listen to the humble claim that justice makes on thee ;
 Grant us forthwith our wages due for labour duly done ;
 And, though loth to leave thy service, we will take it, and be
 gone. "

IX.

The monarch heard th' unwelcome word that spoke of wages due,
 And sudden phrenzy seized his soul, though just the claim he knew ;
 And he pointed to the sun's bright rays that through the rafters
 shone, —

“ Yon light,” quoth he, “ your wages be ; ho ! take it and be gone ! ”

X.

Then spoke the young Perdiccas ; and, as he spoke, he bowed —
 His voice was clear, and something stern, though its tones were
 never loud.

And from his side his dirk he drew, and traced a circle round,
 Where the golden rays of Phœbus were streaming on the ground.—

XI.

And as he spoke, a sudden gleam came o'er his face the while,
 And o'er his features seemed to play a strange mysterious smile.
 And, but that king Orestes had turned in wrath aside,
 Methinks he must have seen the smile that lit that brow of pride.—

XII.

But the angry monarch turned aside, ere yet the youth could say,
 “ The wages of thy gift, oh ! king, we take and go our way.”
 And thrice into his breast he drew those rays of streaming light,
 And higher seemed his form to rise, and his eye to shine more
 bright !

XIII.

The serfs have left the palace, and through the gateway passed ;
 And “ 'twere well,” said stout Aeropus, “ that we should travel
 fast ;
 For, if Perdiccas' theft is known to Orestes or the queen,
 They will send a friendly message to ask us what we mean.”

XIV.

And "well Iween," Gauanes said, and his cheek with anger burned,
"That they who saw have told the king, although his back was
turned ;

And much I fear we soon shall hear his horsemen on our track
To ask yon magic loaf-maker to give his sunshine back."

XV.

And at the word a shout was heard, though distant far away,—
A shout of warriors in pursuit, and eager for the prey ;
For from the hill Orestes' men the fugitives had seen,
Who came to ask Perdiccas what his mystic theft might mean.

XVI.

For some had told the savage king what that wondrous youth had
done ;

How in his breast, beneath his vest, he bore away the sun :
And a deadly chill came o'er him first, and then with rage he
glowed,

And sent his swiftest horsemen straight to slay them on their road.

XVII.

"Now haste we onward to the ford ; and, brethren, frown not so ;
The Queen of Jove with looks of love beholds us as we go.
Who walks beneath the Queen's high care," the young Perdiccas
cried,

"No blow need fear of hostile spear, no faithless monarch's pride!"

XVIII.

They hastened on o'er brake and stone, and to the ford they came—
I know not what in days of yore might be that river's name —
But well I know, the Saviour stream we call it to this day ;
And Macedonia's monarchs there their grateful offerings pay.

XIX.

The gentle stream was murmuring low on its rocky channel wide,
 Like one who whispered words of love to the tall trees by its side.
 And as across the ford they passed, those Jove-born brethren three,
 The waters of the Saviour stream were scarce above their knee.

XX.

Upon a little hill beyond they rested from their race;
 And soon upon the wind they heard the shouts of men in chase.
 And the brethren twain began again on that stripling bold to frown,
 As nearer to the Saviour stream the horse came tramping down.

XXI.

“Now pause awhile,” with conscious smile the young Perdiccas
 said;
 “Yon waters low ere long shall grow as grew the monarch’s bread;
 For, sure as in my breast I bear the sun’s prophetic beam,
 The horsemen of yon churlish king shall never cross the stream!”

XXII.

And as he spoke a sound awoke, which they had not heard before,—
 The sound of rushing waters, a hoarse and threatening roar;
 And at that moment in the sun they saw the lances quiver,
 And the horsemen of the cruel king have reached the Saviour
 river!

XXIII.

Why stand the warriors all aghast by the well-known river’s side?
 What spell has checked the chargers’ speed, and tamed the rider’s
 pride?
 Why haste they not to cross the ford and reach the grassy hill
 Where from their toil the way-worn serfs are calmly resting still?

XXIV.

Right suddenly their steeds they checked as to the stream they
came ;
And they gazed upon the hills around, but the hills were still the
same ;
But the humble stream they wont to ford was gone, and in its
stead
A swollen torrent roared apace, and tossed its foaming head.

XXV.

The baffled horsemen lingered long, and strove to cross the stream,
Till the sun behind the mountains set, and rose the moon's pale
beam ;
And the mocking waters danced and roared, as if they fain would
say,
"What though ye be a monarch's men, ye shall never pass this
way !"

XXVI.

All slowly they have wended home and told the king the tale ;
And first his cheek grew red with rage and then with terror pale ;
And he bade them slay those horsemen straight, though he knew
the deed was vain ;
For the sunshine of his life was gone, and ne'er would come again !

PART III.

I.

Where Haliacmon eastward rolls, the exiled youths have come ;
And through blood and toil in that rugged soil they strive to win
a home.
And slain is stout Aeropus, Gauanes slain is he ;
But safe is young Perdiccas, the noblest of the three.

II.

Yes, safe is young Perdiccas, he "bears a charmed life"—
 'Mid many an ambush dark unscathed,—unscathed 'mid battle
 strife:

Nor marvel I that o'er his weal should watch the eye divine,
 Who nursed the seed of man's best breed, the great Alcides' line.

III.

He has won him sheep and oxen, he has won him pastures wide ;
 He has wooed a monarch's daughter, she has sworn to be his bride ;
 But not till fair Lebæa's town has fall'n beneath his sway
 Will young Perdiccas ask her sire to name their marriage day.

IV.

Full well I ween Perdiccas' bride was not of low degree,
 But one of his own kindly race the true Temenidæ:
 For there, twice forty years before, Caranus fixed his seat ;
 And Thurimas his grandson lives his kinsman bold to greet,

V.

In fair Bercea's new-built halls he feasts his kinsman bold—
 And they talked of great Alcides' deeds, and the glorious days
 of old.

"When first our valleys heard thy fame," then spoke the aged king,
 "I augured sooth such peerless youth from Jove's own blood must
 spring.

VI.

"To spread my line the powers divine have given no son to me ;
 Be thine my daughter bright to wed, my kingdom's heir to be ;
 Perdiccas, and Caranus' line shall then united bloom,
 And thence shall spring a conquering king¹, when we are in the
 tomb !

¹ The allusion is to Alexander the Great. The classical reader will remember Dido's vision of Hannibal, in Virgil, *Æn.* iv. 625.

VII.

“Where Lydias laves my northern bounds Edessa’s towers arise,
My warrior father Cœnus there, and there Caranus lies;
Berœa southward guards my realm; but then our reign shall be
On either side the Ægæan wide, to Adria’s western sea!”

VIII.

Then gaily to the aged king replied Perdiccas bold,
“I have won me flocks and pastures fair — I have won me brass
and gold;
But ere the new-born moon shall wane, if heaven my footsteps
guide,
I’ll bring Lebœa’s monarch’s crown as a present for my bride.”

IX.

Oh! sweetly at old Bermius’ foot in Midas’ garden grows,
Full sixty leaves in every flower, the bright and fragrant rose;
And there Perdiccas walked at eve in the balmy summer tide,
With the monarch’s lovely daughter, who was pledged to be his
bride,

X.

And many a loving word was said in that calm delightful hour,
And from a rose-bush ere she went the lady plucked a flower.
“I cull thee for an exile now; but, when next I wander here,
Thou shalt grace a new-made monarch’s wreath, or strew a
warrior’s bier.”

XI.

Perdiccas smiled and kissed the flower, “Sweet lady, say not so;
For well I ween our Argive Queen will shield me where I go.
Lo! in my breast I place thy rose until my wreath is won;
And methinks it will not wither there, for the sweet flower loves
the sun!”

XII.

The maid has left the garden bright, and sought her father's tower,
 But there Perdiccas mused alone for many a silent hour.
 At length among the flowers he sank, half-dreaming, half-awake,
 Till the circling stars began to set, and the rosy dawn to break.

XIII.

He has called his gallant comrades, he has tried his trusty blade ;
 But, ere they went, to Jove's high Queen the youthful warrior
 prayed,—
 " Oh ! Queen of Jove, whom Argives love, my own, my fathers'
 stay ;
 Avenge me on Lebæa's king ; guide thou my destined way ! "

XIV.

Whene'er Perdiccas went to lead his comrades to the war,
 Upon his breast there stood confessed a bright unearthly star.
 It came, I trow, that magic glow, on that mysterious day,
 When from Lebæa's palace floor he bore the sun away.

XV.

Concealed or seen, full well I ween that light was shining still,
 A pledge of destined empire wide o'er many a sunlit hill ;
 And as towards fair Lebæa's town that morn the warrior sped,
 The kindred ray of the god of day played fondly round his head.

XVI.

They have reached the little grassy mound where the exiled
 brethren lay ;
 And Perdiccas' heart within him burned as he thought upon
 that day.
 They have plunged into the Saviour stream all glad with mar-
 tial glee ;
 And the waters of the Saviour stream were scarce above their knee.

XVII.

They have hemmed Lebæa's startled walls with their spearmen's
iron ring,

They have forced the fated palace-doors and slain the churlish king.
And all the land Orestes held beneath the sun's bright ray
Has felt the might of that magic light, and owned Perdiccas' sway.

* * * * *

XVIII.

And Thurimas, that monarch old, in far Edessa sleeps —
And o'er his grave Perdiccas brave, and sweet Gygæa weeps ;
And Juno high with favouring eye beheld that kindred pair,
As bright as Phœbus in the sky, as rose in garden fair !

XIX.

And still that line the eye divine delighteth to behold,
And kings have sprung, whom bards had sung, had they lived in
days of old.

Ah ! well I know my voice is low, —but had I Homer's string,
The glories of that generous race I yet would love to sing !

THE FEAST OF ATTAGINUS.



THE FEAST OF ATTAGINUS.

(HEROD. IX. 15, 16.)



THE reader who, jealous for the fame of Herodotus, may have complained of the introduction of extraneous matter into the last Ballad, will, it is hoped, be pacified by the fidelity which the present observes. With the exception of a little amplification there is nothing in the ballad which is not to be found in Herodotus, save the reflections on the treachery of Attaginus, and the illustrations in the fourteenth stanza. The banquet took place at Thebes; the river is the Asopus.



THE FEAST OF ATTAGINUS.



I.

“ GRECIAN guest, my couch who sharest, strange the chance that
links us here,
Fellows in the gay carousal, not the meeting of the spear ;
At the selfsame board reclining, at this all-unlooked-for feast,
Where with Grecia’s lords are mingled chiefs and satraps of the
East.

II.

“ But, since fate our lot has blended, let me leave my words im-
pressed
On thy heart in friendly memory of thy transient fellow-guest ;
That, forewarned of fated evil, thou mayst counsel take, and know
How to meet thy share of danger, or to shun the common blow.

III.

“ Thine, perchance, to ’scape the battle, and thy added years to tell,
’Mid the joys of stormy freedom, which the Grecians love so well ;
Ours by yonder stream to perish, or in dungeons pent to lie,
Record of the king’s invasion, and the Grecian’s victory ! ”

IV.

Spake the mournful Persian feaster, while the rest the goblets plied,
To the Orchomenian noble, strangely seated by his side,

At the feast of Attaginus, which to Persia's lords he gave,—
—In his halls the foe receiving, like a willing Theban slave!

V.

Hark! the traitor's halls are ringing with the mingled sounds of
mirth;
While beneath, for Persia's noblest yawns the free indignant earth;
And he sits on high and welcomes gaily each invader lord;
Whom of late the true three hundred greeted with the sheathless
sword.

VI.

Courteous host! his friends he welcomes, little recks he that they
come
Fresh from fired Athenian temple, ravished maid, and plundered
home;
Little recks that many a Theban, loathing now his treacherous part,
Longs his peaceful knife to bury in his fellow-reveller's heart.

VII.

Hark! the shouts are stilled a moment, and the Theban minstrels
sing;
Softly floats Bœotia's war-note to the armies of the king!
But, when ceased the strain, and round them mirth once more rose
loud and high,
Thus again the mournful Persian sadly spoke with glistening eye:

VIII.

“Seest thou, friend, yon Persian revellers, well I ween a princely
band—
Gallant generals, stately satraps, flower of our imperial land?
And rememberest thou the army which we left beside the stream,
Where the standards of the nations, and their myriad lances gleam?”

IX.

“Who can stand against the army which the Persian king of kings,
As if earth her tribes were moving, from his world-wide empire
brings?

Who can stand against the army which such wondrous deeds has
wrought?

Bridged the sea and bored the mountain — springs not thus th’ un-
bidden thought?

X.

“Yet of all the stately nobles, gathered here in festal pride,
Of the many-peopled army, camped by yonder river’s side —
Warriors in their iron vigour — feasters in their silken mirth —
Ere a few short days are over, few shall tread the joyous earth!”

XI.

Thus the Persian, sadly musing o’er the ill that should betide,
Told the tale of doom and slaughter to the stranger by his side.
And, amid the joyous banquet, while the rest with pleasure glow,
Lo! his tears are quickly falling at the vision of the woe!

XII.

Spake the Orchomenian noble: “If it thus indeed must be,
Wer’t not well that great Mardonius heard the destined doom
from thee?

To the general of the army, and the nobles high in state,
Let the prophecy be spoken, and the dark designs of fate!”

XIII.

“Friend, I thank thee for thy council; but I know that none
would hear;

Vainly seek the words of wisdom access to a fate-bound ear.
And the woe that God hath destined on the race of man to bring,
Mortal hand can ne’er avert it — host or general, slave or king!

XIV.

“What avail the heaven-sent thunders, in the distance rolling deep,
If the souls they fain would waken slumber still in heedless sleep?
What avails to mark the storm-clouds gathering in the darkening
sky,
If the feet are bound and move not, though the shelter seemeth
nigh?”

XV.

“Many a Persian in the army knows the doom I tell to thee,
That ere long our warrior myriads slaughtered and enslaved
shall be.
But we follow, soulless victims, to the dungeon or the tomb,
Yoked to draw the crushing chariot of inevitable doom!”

XVI.

“Many a weary weird of sorrow is by God to mortals given;
But of all the woes of mortals this is worst beneath the heaven—
When the many-musing spirit ever offers counsel true,
But the will, by fate o’ermastered, hath no power to rise and do.”

THERMOPYLÆ.

THERMOPYLÆ.¹

IN adding this Ballad, which was an afterthought, to the present collection, the author feels that, like the heroes of his story, on the third day of the battle, he is, as it were, leaving the "narrow," which he prescribed to himself in his Preface, and advancing into a wider and more dangerous field. His object was to give greater variety, and, if possible, greater animation, to his little volume. How far he has succeeded in this respect the reader must decide. But he hopes that he may avoid the charge of presumption in thus venturing "*magna modis tenuare parvis*," by calling attention to the fidelity with which he has followed the narrative, and frequently even the language of his original.² His object has rather been to exhibit the jewel of Herodotus, than to encumber³ it with any elaborate setting of

¹ Herod. vii. 198—229.

² The author did not feel justified, in the case of an historical, not legendary, battle, and one so famous, in condensing the action into a day, or altering the time of the death of Leonidas, both which might have been improvements to the Ballad.

³ Indeed to *disencumber* the story of the digressions, necessary, perhaps, in a history, but tantalising in a poem, has been one chief object. The 'setting' mainly consists of dramatizing the narrative; as, especially, in the opening speeches, and in those in Part III.

his own. A few remarks, however, seemed inevitable in writing on such a subject, and a few details have been invented, the principal of which are the following: — It is not stated by Herodotus that the Trachinians remonstrated with Leonidas on his vain attempt to resist the army of Xerxes; but it seemed probable that they should do so, as we *are* informed that they acquainted the Greeks with the secret of the Anopæa (the track betrayed by Ephialtes); and the figurative description of the numbers of the Persian (introduced in the Ballad) is said to have been given to Dianeces “by one of the Trachinians.” The Cissian charge of cavalry under Tithæus (who is named as one of the three generals of the cavalry ¹) is also an invention of the author. It is hoped that this will not seem improbable when it is remembered,—

1. That the Medes and Cissians, to whom Xerxes ² gave his first ridiculous orders (“in a rage,” like Naaman, another oriental), “to go and bring Leonidas and his band alive into his presence,” usually served on horseback ³, and, moreover, were among the few nations who are recorded ⁴ as having actually supplied cavalry on this occasion.
2. That the scout, who was sent to reconnoitre the Greek post, which was to the east of the narrow at the junction of the Phœnix and Asopus, evidently ⁵ rode very near it.
3. That Xerxes was without military experience, had an extravagant idea of his own power, an utter contempt for his enemy, and an utter disregard of human life.
4. The troops, whatever they were, are

¹ vii. 88. Tithæus was son of Datis, one of the generals at Marathon, and may be supposed to have been eager to efface the disgrace of his father's defeat.

² vii. 210.

³ vii. 84.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ vii. 208.

said to have fallen upon the Greeks impetuously (*φερόμενοι*).

The action of Xerxes in starting from his seat (which Herodotus introduces with an "it is said,") has been transferred from the first to the second day. The idea of Xerxes *watching* the sunrise, and his libation being offered to the Sun-god, is borrowed from Mr. Mitford. The author is responsible for the speech of Diæneces on the third day of the battle, but he has the authority of Herodotus ¹ for the fact of Diæneces having "left behind him many other such-like sayings," besides that which he himself records, and which is introduced early in this Ballad.

¹ vii. 226.

THERMOPYLÆ.



Go, take the style of glory,
 And write their names on high ;
 For some have fought to conquer ;
 But these have fought to die !

PART I.

“Carnean¹ moons will shine ere long,
 We must not march straightway,
 But we must keep, with dance and song,
 Apollo’s holy day.
 Nine days the solemn feast we keep,
 And, when those days be past,
 The Persian king, who deems we sleep,
 Shall hear our Dorian blast.
 Our king shall keep the foe at bay
 ’Twixt Cæta and the tide ;
 By the sea-wall² we bade them stay —
 Three hundred spearmen tried !

¹ The Spartan festival in honour of Apollo kept in the month of the same name. See Eur. Alc. 449.

² An old wall across the narrow at Thermopylæ, built by the Phocians, and lately repaired by the Greek confederacy.

Our king shall show the Spartan's mind,
 And, when that mind they see,
 Our faint allies, who snuff the wind,
 Shall straight stout-hearted be."

"Olympia's feast will soon be here,
 And each true Grecian son
 Must wend, the new-made odes to hear,
 And see the coursers run.
 I doubt the Island ¹ steeds will sweep
 The foremost palm away ;
 Along the stream those coursers leap
 Like a wild goat at play.
 God help the Spartan king, say we —
 But sure it were a crime
 If we should northward summoned be
 At this most holy time."
 So spake each Spartan, calm and cold,
 So spake each faint ally —
 And doomed that little vanguard bold
 In Pylæ's pass to die.

"The king has come, two millions strong,
 Into our rugged plain ;
 The broad expanse his myriads throng —
 Oh ! hie ye home again !
 With twice two thousand men in all,
 How can ye hope to stand ?
 Oh ! king, ye only fight to fall,
 Nor guard your native land.

¹ Sicily, greatly distinguished, especially about this period, at the Olympic games.

Like a dark storm-cloud from the north
 His countless hosts are driven,
 And when they shoot their arrows forth
 The sun is hid in heaven!"

"Ye men of Trachis, good and true,
 We thank you from our heart;
 But Sparta's hest we came to do,
 And we will ne'er depart.
 Let yonder threatening storm-cloud burst,
 And sweep our band away!
 Unto this post we came at first,
 And in this post we stay.
 What matter where the brave shall lie,
 What soil receives his dust?
 The Spartan's glory is to die,
 Keeping his sacred trust!"

"Nay," quoth Diæneces, "oh! king,
 Methinks thy words are weak;
 'Tis good, the news these strangers bring,—
 And if the truth they speak,
 And if by Persia's arrows' flight
 So dark a cloud be made,
 'Twere well to 'scape the sunbeams bright,
 And fight them in the shade!"

A scout rode forth from Persia's host—
 What saw the horseman there?
 He saw each Spartan at his post,
 Combing his long dark hair.

He looked again along the strand —
 What might he tell the king?
 Before the wall another band
 Was wrestling in a ring.
 He marvelled much, and drew more near,
 Then rode in peace away:
 There was no hand that raised a spear,
 No voice that said him nay.

Loud¹ laughed king Xerxes at the word,
 A scornful laugh laughed he,
 And turned where Sparta's exiled lord²
 Was standing silently.

“Now, by heaven's vault, Ariston's son,
 Read me this jest, I pray;
 Four days we wait to see them run;
 Why do these Spartans stay?
 And wherefore do they comb their hair,
 And wherefore sport and play,
 Like men who for a feast prepare,
 Or keep their natal day?”³

“Oh! king,” replied Ariston's son,
 “My words thou wilt not heed;

¹ “The first line that Sir Patrick read
 A loud laugh laughed he.”

Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence.

² Demaratus, who, after being deposed, had taken refuge at the court of Xerxes.

³ “And most of all days they (the Persians) use to honour that on which each was born.” (*Herod. i. 133.*)

These men are purposed, every one,
 To do a glorious deed !
 Whene'er the Spartans, one and all,
 For deadliest risk prepare,
 Like men who hold high festival,
 They comb their long dark hair.
 I told thee once their purpose high,
 I tell thee now again :
 These men are come — they cannot fly —
 To slay and to be slain !”

“Nay,” quoth the king, with pleasant scorn,
 “The truth I tell to thee ;
 Yon post, before to-morrow's morn,
 Will all deserted be !”

PART II.

The morn shone out on Persia's host,
 The white tents glimmered fair ;
 It shone on Grecia's sea-beat post,
 And still the Greeks were there.

“Now, by my sires,” the monarch cried,
 “These slaves chastised must be ;
 Let Media charge, and Cissia's pride,
 And bring yon Greeks to me !”

“Mine,” cried Tithæus, “mine alone,
 The destined praise, to bring,
 To kneel before their master's throne,
 Yon Spartans and their king !”

Mount, Cissians, mount! your monarch calls ;
Is not your boast to lave
Your steeds 'neath Susa's royal walls,
In cool Choaspes' wave ? ”

With that the Cissian horsemen dashed
The narrow pass to gain —
Oft on the rock their horse-hoofs flashed
E'en as they crossed the plain.
All calmly by the water's edge
The Grecian vanguard stood,
And on this side the rocky ledge,
On that the ocean-flood.
Right gaily to the narrow pass
The turbaned horsemen ride ;
They stirred each blade of scanty grass
Upon the hill's dark side.
The king has marked his horsemen ride,
He marked them ride amain
Between the mountains and the tide ; —
Why come they not again ?
There is a little road of stone
Kissing the ocean's lip ;
A single wain might pass alone
Along that stony strip.
You might have deemed that mount and tide
Had there conspired to be
A barrier 'gainst th' invader's pride,
A frontier of the free.
All in that grim unyielding way
Bristled the spearmen's wood ;

And turbaned¹ Cissia's horsemen gay
 Are weltering in their blood!
 Spurred on by Fear's despotic goad
 (Half sister she to Fame),
 Clattering along that stony road,
 By twos and threes they came.
 Staggering beneath that dreary ledge
 They strove their steeds to check,
 Where the fell spearmen's iron hedge
 Knotted the narrow neck.
 Scarce from her post beside the sea
 Sped Sparta's deadly thrust,
 Ere Cissia's graceful chivalry
 - Was tumbled in the dust.
 All shattered, by the salt-sea foam,
 Beneath the mountains high,
 Far from their soft imperial home
 The glittering horsemen lie!

But now upon that pass of fear
 The Median squadrons sweep,
 Where leans the dark rock forth to hear
 The challenge of the deep.
 "For chargers' hoofs yon plain is rough,
 Slippery² the stony strand,

¹ "The Cissians wore the same armour as the Persians, save that instead of felt hats they wore turbans." (*Herod.* vii. 6, 7.)

² Pausanias (b. x.) says, speaking of the battle fought here between the Greeks and the Gauls under Brennus, that the cavalry on both sides was useless, owing, not only to the pass being narrow, but to the ground being smooth and generally slippery from natural rock. But the irrational and insolent character of Xerxes, the supposed zeal of Tithæus, and the Centaur-like habits of Orientals, will, it is hoped, justify the vain attempt of the Cissians as described above.

But Media's cornel spears are tough
 Grasped in a strong right hand !”
 Right gallantly that gorgeous band
 Enters the rocky cleft ;
 The dark rock frowns on the right hand,
 The cold sea on the left ;
 But there 'twixt sea and rocky wall
 The Spartan spears they met ;
 And Media's bravest reel and fall,
 Caught in that bloody net.

“ What ! do the craven Medians quail ?
 Let Persia charge straightway !”
 Cried the proud king with anger pale, —
 “ Hydarnes, to the fray !”

Sprang forth Hydarnes at the word,
 Sprang forth th' Immortals' band¹,
 Before the eyes of Persia's lord
 The flower of Persia's land.
 “ Charge, brave Immortals, charge amain !
 Not yours at war to play ;
 Force yonder pass ! avenge the slain !
 And sweep the Greeks away !”
 With that the Immortals shot like flame
 Into the narrow road ;
 But, when on Sparta's spears they came,
 Their heart's best life-blood flowed.

¹ The Immortals were a band of 10,000 Persians, who acted as the king's body-guard, and had special privileges. Their numbers, when thinned by death or illness, were constantly supplied ; whence their name. See Herod. vii. 83.

“ What ! can the proud Immortals die ?
 Ill have they played their part ! —
 There’s naught immortal ’neath the sky
 Except a brave man’s heart ! ”

PART III.

Sudden and soft o’er sea and land
 The summer night comes down ;
 And hope is on the lonely strand,
 Terror in Trachis town.
 The summer night is in its grave —
 And day breaks forth to bring
 New joy to Sparta’s patriots brave,
 New fury to the king.

“ Now, gallant Persians, charge once more !
 They ne’er will stand your shock ;
 Your spears, that should have drunk their gore,
 Were wasted on the rock. ”

Once more the king’s best troops advance
 ’Twixt Trachis and the main ;
 And redder grows the Grecian lance,
 And thicker lie the slain.
 As surely as the ebbing tide
 Flows back upon the shore,
 So surely, when one Persian died,
 Trooped forth a thousand more ;
 As surely as the rock’s dark side ¹
 Flings back the ocean flood,

¹ In looking through Bishop Thirlwall’s account of the battle, with a view to correct any inaccuracies in the Ballad, the author

The Grecian lance unmoved is dyed
 In Persia's noblest blood.

Thrice sprang king Xerxes from his seat—
 All-panic struck was he ;
 He feared his myriads would be beat
 By Sparta's hundreds three.
 "Oh! Sparta's king, thy words were truth,"
 Groaned forth the monarch then,
 "Full many are my troops in sooth,
 But very few my *men*."

That morn the Greeks with spear and lance
 Flung back the Persian charge,
 And now into the plain advance
 To fight them more at large ;
 That noon the Greeks with lance and blade
 Have forced the Persian back,
 But, ere the morrow's charge was made,
 The foe had won the track,—
 The little track that led on high,
 To few but plunderers known,
 Between the mountains and the sky —
 They found it not alone.
 Now trebly cursed to endless time
 Be Ephialtes' name !
 Spread, spread, ye winds, from clime to clime
 The record of his shame —
 The wretch who dared the brave betray,
 The brave who knew no fear ;

discovered the same metaphor, "Their repeated onsets broke upon the Greeks idly as waves upon a rock."

Who showed the Persian foe the way
To slay them at their rear !

'Twas eve, and here and there a lamp
Was glimmering on the strand,
When from the foe's exulting camp
Marched the Immortals' band.
The livelong night their course they sped,
And with the morning light,
High o'er the doomed Three Hundreds' head,
Stood on the ¹oak-clad height.²

That night the seer Megistias cried,
"Let Fate's high will be done !
But if till morning here ye bide,
Ye perish every one."

"Seer," quoth the king, "I doubt thee not,
Yet still I say the same ;
A Spartan ne'er can leave the spot
To which at first he came.
And other voice of warning call
From Delphi came to me —

¹ Herodotus is express about the oaks, — these summits are now woodless.

² Here the author would have gladly introduced the interesting local incident of the march of the Immortals being betrayed to the Phocian guard by the rustling of the leaves heard through the clear night air. He did not overlook it (as was supposed by a genial article on these Ballads which appeared in the leading journal), but deliberately, though unwillingly, omitted it as too great an interruption to the main narrative, which required a recurrence to the events occurring during the night in the Grecian camp.

‘ A king of Her’cles’ race must fall,
 Or Sparta ruined be.’
 And now upon this fated place,
 I read that word to thee —
 ‘ The king shall die of Herc’les’ race,
 But Sparta shall be free.’
 But thou, Megistias, homeward hie !
 A peaceful trade is thine ;
 And ’tis not good the seers should die
 Who speak the words divine.”

“ Nay,” quoth the seer, “ by this right hand,
 I too, oh ! king, will stay ;
 The leaders of the Spartan land
 I never will betray ;
 And men shall say, ‘ ’Twas nobly done,
 With Sparta’s king he lies ; ’
 Yet will I send my only son
 To glad his mother’s eyes.”

“ Sire,” cried the youth, — and weeping, pass’d,—
 “ I ne’er would quit thy face,
 But that I know I am the last
 Of old Melampus’ race.”

All through that night’s unvalued shade ¹
 Came stragglers forth to say,

¹ “ Now to the Greeks who were at Thermopylæ, first of all the seer Megistias, after inspecting the victims, told the death that awaited them in the morning ; and next came in deserters, fully informing them of the circuitous route of the Persians (these gave

“ The Malian has the pass betrayed,
 The foe is on his way.”
 And when the earliest streaks of light
 ’Gan in the East appear,
 The scouts ran breathless from the height,
 Crying, “ the foe is near.”

“ Now haste ye home, each bold ally !
 ’Tis now no deed of shame.
 The Spartans are enough to die
 To gild our Grecian name.
 And haste ye home, each bold ally !
 You yet may steal away :
 And let the Spartans only die
 On this disastrous day.”

’Tis morning — and they all are gone —
 And on that fatal strand
 The faithful Thespians stand alone
 With Sparta’s patriot band.
 Said I that Thespiæ stood alone ?
 The Theban-warriors stay :
 “ Ho ! lead us straight to Xerxes’ throne,
 The first-fruits of the fray.
 We came not of our own free will,
 We fought not when we came,
 We be the king’s true subjects still
 Despite our Grecian name.”

them notice while it was yet night) ; and, thirdly, the scouts running down from the heights when day was now beginning to dawn.” (*Herod.* vii. 219.)

PART IV.

Before his host at break of day
 The mighty monarch stood,
 Ere yet the sun's ascending ray
 Had gilt the Malian flood.
 To see the worshipped orb come forth
 In suppliant guise he stands ;
 A golden cup of priceless worth
 Is gleaming in his hands.
 He watched the darting sun-beams bright
 Light up the Ocean round,
 Then to the god who gave the light
 He poured it on the ground.
 " Three hours ere noon our spearmen stout
 Will line the southern shore ;
 Three hours ere noon your troops lead out,
 And charge the Greeks once more." ¹
 Again that myriad-peopled host
 Has poured upon the plain ;
 And Sparta at her changeless post
 Has met them once again.

 " Now range awhile, my little band !
 And, if your hearts be strong,
 There yet is grave-room on the strand
 For yonder glittering throng !"
 They sallied forth into the plain
 That they the more might slay :

¹ Herod. vii. 223. " And Xerxes, after making a libation at sun-rising, waited awhile, and began his attack as near as may be at full-market time."

“ We ne'er shall see such crop again,
 Let's reap it while we may !
 Too soon from yonder treacherous track
 Will troop the Persians down ;
 Yet may we choke their pathway back
 To Trachis' sheltering town ! ”

“ And,” quoth Diæneces, “ I trow
 Small cause have we to quake ;
 Unbroken yet our band shall go
 To Pluto's Stygian lake.
 And, if the slain barbarians wend
 To the same shores as we,
 In Charon's boat, my gallant friend,
 Their ghosts will crowded be !
 And, if they say the Spartans fell
 In fair encounter slain,
 By the Twin Gods ! in plains of hell
 We'll fight them o'er again ! ”
 “ Ah ! gallant soul, unmoved in ill,
 Ah ! bravest of the brave ¹,
 Jove grant we may be comrades still,
 By yonder Stygian wave ! ”

All through the morn the Spartan swords
 Yet more and more prevailed ;
 All through the morn those countless hordes
 Incessantly assailed.
 Some onward rushed with furious dash,
 Their prowess prompt to show,

¹ The ἀριστέα, or palm of valour, is assigned by Herodotus to Diæneces (vii. 226.).

And some beneath the general's lash
Were forced upon the foe.
Some, seaward swept in vain retreat,
A watery grave have found,
And some beneath their comrades' feet
Were trampled on the ground.
The hungry Ocean eyed the strife,
And crawled¹ to clasp his prey ;
There was no count of human life
On all that fearful day.
Then fell the Spartan monarch good,
All red with gore he died ;
And princes twain of Xerxes' blood
His reeking corpse bestride.
He fell, but in a king's true place,
Leading his patriot band ;
And princes twain of Xerxes' race
Have fall'n on either hand.
He fell, but o'er the hero slain
More thick the carnage grew ;
But Persia's spear-showers poured like rain,
The Spartan thrusts were few.
Four times to win his body back
They grappled with the foe :
" Our monarch's corpse ye ne'er shall hack
While we can strike a blow ! "

They won their monarch's corpse at last ;
But who shall keep it won ?

¹ The sea even then is described by Herodotus as " sea and shallows."

Four times the foe is backward cast,
But still his bands come on.
They won their monarch's corpse at length,
But, when that deed was done,
('Twas the last burst of hopeless strength);
Their conquering race was run;
For now from out the southern glen
The fierce Immortals came,
(There be ten thousand chosen men
Bear the Immortals' name);
Yet, had they face to face that day
The fierce Immortals met,
As when they kept the narrow way,
They would have foiled them yet.
But now, upon those patriot few,
Before, behind, around,
The mingled myriads ceaseless grew
From every inch of ground.
They thrid that narrow pass of fear,
All choked with Persian dead,
Ere yet his troops to hem their rear
Hydarnes had outspread,
And backed — yet not like those who flee —
Beyond Anthela's plain,
Beyond their wall beside the sea,
So nobly held in vain.

“ Now close once more, make one last stand,
And, if your swords should fail,
Have at them with the strong right hand,
Have at them tooth and nail! ”

They rallied on a hillock high,
 And there they fought full well :
 “ And if it be our lot to die,
 Our lives we’ll dearly sell.”

With broken brands, with fists, with teeth,
 They played their desperate part,
 And every weapon found a sheath
 Deep in some Persian heart.
 There is a fierce unflinching glare
 In every Spartan’s eye ;
 And, like a lion in his lair,
 They rend men ere they die.
 ’Twas all in vain, th’ unequal strife ;
 They sank beneath their foes :
 There was no scene in all their life
 So glorious as its close !
 ’Neath spears, and stones, and swords, and slain,
 All mounded o’er they lie ;
 So thickly fell that ghastly rain¹,
 They scarce could see them die.
 Thrust through and through with countless darts,
 - They press that deadly sod :
 They were, I ween, the stoutest hearts,
 That ere went back to God.

Seek yonder pass by the cold sea,
 Where Pylæ’s walls are steep ;
 For there lie Sparta’s Hundreds Three,
 Sleeping a glorious sleep.

¹ “ And there rained a ghastly dew.”

Search every land beneath the sky,
Tell every nation's name ;
For there ¹ the true Three Hundred lie,
Reaping an endless fame.

There is a lion all of stone
Carved on a hillock high ;
The bravest king e'er sat on throne
Beneath that stone doth lie.
There is a lion-hearted race
O'er many a distant wave ;
And in their soul the lines we trace
Of Sparta's monarch brave.
And some have well that lesson read,
And learnt their sword to draw,
Hopeless, except their blood to shed,
For glory and for law !

Take, take, the style of glory,
And grave their names on high !
For some have fought to conquer,
But these have fought to die !

¹ "The burial-place of the illustrious is in every land," &c.
(*Thuc.* ii. 43.)

THE
DEATH-SONG OF THE SWAN;
OR,
THE HOPE OF THE WISEST OF THE HEATHEN.

THE DEATH-SONG OF THE SWAN ;

OR,

THE HOPE OF THE WISEST OF THE HEATHEN.

PERHAPS the following lines have no right to appear in this collection, as they are neither a "Ballad" nor "from Herodotus." But as they were suggested to the author, as has been said in the Preface, by a passage in the Ballad of "Arion," he thought himself justified in inserting them. There is something very beautiful in the passage of the Phædo of Plato which gave rise to them, where Socrates accuses the vulgar herd of going so far in their fear of death as even to "bely the swans, and say that their last song arises from grief and is a dirge of death," whereas he says that "it is a song of joy because they are going to the God whose servants they are," and "because being prophetic and knowing the good things which shall be theirs in Hades, they rejoice and sing more then than at any former time." With these feelings Arion is made by Plutarch to say that he "adorned himself, and took as his funeral garb, while yet alive, his minstrel dress, and uttered his song as he left life, and so far was not less noble-hearted than the swans."



THE DEATH-SONG OF THE SWAN ;

OR,

THE HOPE OF THE WISEST OF THE HEATHEN.



" ON glassy stream, by greenwood bower,
 His voice was rarely heard :
 Why sings he thus in dying hour
 Yon fair majestic bird ?
 There's many a pleasant sight on earth
 Although they last not long :
 Nor marvel I that thoughts of mirth
 Should issue forth in song.
 Nay, Sorrow's self, while hope remains,
 Beneath the twilight dim
 May chant her own half-soothing strains,
 A dirge-entangled hymn.
 But when from all that's bright and fair
 Unwillingly we go,
 From genial haunts of upper air
 To darksome shades below, —
 Where ghastly spectres glimmering pale
 The gray marsh wander o'er,
 And ceaseless drones the voice of wail
 On bleak C^olytus' shore, —
 To blank despair, in face of death,
 No tuneful strains belong,

And strangely sounds a dying breath
 E'en in a mournful song.
 And therefore, till some wiser word
 The secret shall avow,
 I marvel much the silent bird
 Should break his silence now."

"There's many a pleasant sight on earth :
 But, ah ! they last not long :
 And meagre is the mingled mirth
 That swells a mortal song.
 And Sorrow, who with pensive note
 Woos back the fleeting bliss,
 Could never tune her parchèd throat
 To sounds so clear as this.
 How liquid, yet how sweet the strain !
 It charms the listening air ;
 There's not an under-note of pain,
 No muffled discord there.
 For joy, for joy, the creature sings !
 Of Phœbus' train is he ;
 The oarage of his stately wings
 Expects a nobler sea.
 By Phœbus taught of things to come,
 The prophet songster knows
 The glories of the happier home
 To which through death he goes.
 Ecstatic thoughts of joy and love
 His snowy bosom thrill ;
 Sweet echoes of glad songs above
 His tuneful accents fill.

He leaves the glassy streams of earth,
 He leaves her greenwood bowers
 For clearer springs of heavenly birth,
 For bright eternal flowers.
 He goes to join his Master dear,
 The God he served below,
 The Lord of Light, the Minstrel-Seer,
 Him of the silver bow.
 He goes where love attunes each word,
 Joy brightens every brow,—
 I marvel not the silent bird
 Should break his silence now.

“ We too, my friend, whose spirits rise
 To loftier flights than they,
 Who to be prudent, sober, wise,
 Or guess or learn the way ;
 To whom, though pent in fleshly cage,
 The pitying Gods have given
 Faint echoes of a nobler age,
 Dim memories of heaven ; —
 If from our bodies’ clinging stain
 We cleanse our soul alway,
 And while on earth we yet remain
 Soar nearer heaven each day,
 A surer hope than bird or beast
 Methinks may claim to know,
 That, from our prison-house released,
 We too shall homeward go,
 Unto a brighter earth and sky,
 More liquid streams and seas ;

And (thought more cheering and more high!)
To better hearts than these!
Good men, whose souls were purged below
We trust that home shall share;
But Gods, all-perfect Gods, we *know*
Shall be our patrons there.
There wisdom, virtue, all things good,
Whose shadows here we see,
Like trees in some translucent flood
Reflected distantly,
In bright reality confessed
Before our face shall glow —
Oh! perfect vision of the blest,—
Who would not sing to go?"

THE END.





WORKS ON THE
ARTS, MANUFACTURES, & ARCHITECTURE.

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