

ARTAXERXES

437-359 B.C.

by Plutarch
translated by John Dryden

ARTAXERXES

THE first Artaxerxes, among all the kings of Persia the most remarkable for a gentle and noble spirit, was surnamed the Long-handed, his right hand being longer than his left, and was the son of Xerxes. The second, whose story I am now writing, who had the surname of the Mindful, was the grandson of the former, by his daughter Parysatis, who brought Darius four sons, the eldest Artaxerxes, the next Cyrus, and two younger than these, Ostanes and Oxathres. Cyrus took his name of the ancient Cyrus, as he, they say, had his from the sun, which, in the Persian language, is called Cyrus. Artaxerxes was at first called Arsicas; Dinon says Oarses; but it is utterly improbable that Ctesias (however otherwise he may have filled his books with a perfect farrago of incredible and senseless fables) should be ignorant of the name of the king with whom he lived as his physician, attending upon himself, his wife, his mother, and his children.

Cyrus, from his earliest youth, showed something of a headstrong and vehement character; Artaxerxes, on the other side, was gentler in everything, and of a nature more yielding and soft in its action. He married a beautiful and virtuous wife, at the desire of his parents, but kept her as expressly against their wishes. For King Darius, having put her brother to death, was purposing likewise to destroy her. But Arsicas, throwing himself at his mother's feet, by many tears, at last, with much ado, persuaded her that they should neither put her to death nor divorce her from him. However, Cyrus, was his mother's favourite, and the son whom she most desired to settle in the throne. And therefore, his father Darius now lying ill, he, being sent for from the sea to the court, set out thence with full hopes that by her means he was to be declared the successor to the kingdom. For Parysatis had the specious plea in his behalf, which Xerxes on the advice of Demaratus had of old made use of, that she had borne him Arsicas when he was a subject, but Cyrus, when a king. Notwithstanding, she prevailed not with Darius, but the eldest son, Arsicas, was proclaimed king, his name being changed into Artaxerxes; and Cyrus remained satrap of Lydia, and commander in the maritime provinces.

It was not long after the decease of Darius that the king, his successor, went to Pasargadae, to have the ceremony of his inauguration consummated by the Persian priests. There is a temple dedicated to a warlike goddess, whom one might liken to Minerva, into which when the royal person to be initiated has passed, he must strip himself of his own robe, and put on that which Cyrus the first

wore before he was king; then, having devoured a frail of figs, he must eat turpentine, and drink a cup of sour milk. To which if they superadd any other rites, it is unknown to any but those that are present at them. Now Artaxerxes being about to address himself to this solemnity, Tisaphernes came to him, bringing a certain priest, who, having trained up Cyrus in his youth in the established discipline of Persia, and having taught him the Magian philosophy, was likely to be as much disappointed as any man that his pupil did not succeed to the throne. And for that reason his veracity was the less questioned when he charged Cyrus as though he had been about to lie in wait for the king in the temple, and to assault and assassinate him as he was putting off his garment. Some affirm that he was apprehended upon this impeachment, others that he had entered the temple and was pointed out there, as he lay lurking by the priest. But as he was on the point of being put to death, his mother clasped him in her arms, and, entwining him with the tresses of her hair, joined his neck close to her own, and by her bitter lamentation and intercession to Artaxerxes for him, succeeded in saving his life; and sent him away again to the sea and to his former province. This, however, could no longer content him; nor did he so well remember his delivery as his arrest, his resentment for which made him more eagerly desirous of the kingdom than before.

Some say that he revolted from his brother, because he had not a revenue allowed him sufficient for his daily meals; but this is on the face of it absurd. For had he had nothing else, yet he had a mother ready to supply him with whatever he could desire out of her own means. But the great number of soldiers who were hired from all quarters and maintained, as Xenophon informs us, for his service, by his friends and connections, is in itself a sufficient proof of his riches. He did not assemble them together in a body, desiring as yet to conceal his enterprise; but he had agents everywhere, enlisting foreign soldiers upon various pretences; and, in the meantime, Parysatis, who was with the king, did her best to put aside all suspicions, and Cyrus himself always wrote in a humble and dutiful manner to him, sometimes soliciting favour, and sometimes making countercharges against Tisaphernes, as if his jealousy and contest had been wholly with him. Moreover, there was a certain natural dilatoriness in the king, which was taken by many for clemency. And, indeed, in the beginning of his reign, he did seem really to emulate the gentleness of the first Artaxerxes, being very accessible in his person, and liberal to a fault in the distribution of honours and favours. Even in his punishments, no contumely or vindictive pleasure could be seen; and those who offered him presents were as much pleased with his manner of accepting, as were those who received gifts from him with his graciousness and amiability in giving them. Nor truly was there anything, however inconsiderable, given him, which he did not deign kindly to accept of; insomuch that when one Omises had presented him with a very large pomegranate, "By city Mithras," said he, "this man, were he intrusted with it, would turn

a small city into a great one."

Once when some were offering him one thing, some another, as he was on a progress, a certain poor labourer, having got nothing at hand to bring him, ran to the river side, and, taking up water in his hands, offered it to him; with which Artaxerxes was so well pleased that he sent him a goblet of gold and a thousand darics. To Euclidas, the Lacedaemonian, who had made a number of bold and arrogant speeches to him, he sent word by one of his officers. "You have leave to say what you please to me, and I, you should remember, may both say and do what I please to you." Teribazus once, when they were hunting, came up and pointed out to the king that his royal robe was torn; the king asked him what he wished him to do; and when Teribazus replied, "May it please you to put on another and give me that," the king did so, saying withal, "I give it you, Teribazus, but I charge you not to wear it." He, little regarding the injunction, being not a bad, but a lightheaded, thoughtless man, immediately the king took it off, put it on, and bedecked himself further with royal golden necklaces and women's ornaments, to the great scandal of everybody, the thing being quite unlawful. But the king laughed and told him, "You have my leave to wear the trinkets as a woman, and the robe of state as a fool." And whereas none usually sat down to eat with the king besides his mother and his wedded wife, the former being placed above, the other below him, Artaxerxes invited also to his table his two younger brothers, Ostanes and Oxathres. But what was the most popular thing of all among the Persians was the sight of his wife Statira's chariot, which always appeared with its curtains down, allowing her country-women to salute and approach her, which made the queen a great favourite with the people.

Yet busy, factious men, that delighted in change, professed it to be their opinion that the times needed Cyrus, a man of great spirit, an excellent warrior, and a lover of his friends, and that the largeness of their empire absolutely required a bold and enterprising prince. Cyrus, then, not only relying upon those of his own province near the sea, but upon many of those in the upper countries near the king, commenced the war against him. He wrote to the Lacedaemonians, bidding them come to his assistance and supply him with men, assuring them that to those who came to him on foot he would give horses, and to the horsemen chariots; that upon those who had farms he would bestow villages, and those who were lords of villages he would make so of cities; and that those who would be his soldiers should receive their pay, not by count, but by weight. And among many other high praises of himself, he said he had the stronger soul; was more a philosopher and a better Magian; and could drink and bear more wine than his brother, who, as he averred, was such a coward and so little like a man, that he could neither sit his horse in hunting nor his throne in time of danger. The Lacedaemonians, his letter being read, sent a staff to Clearchus, commanding him to obey Cyrus in all things. So Cyrus marched towards the king, having under his conduct a numerous host of barbarians, and but little less than

thirteen thousand stipendiary Grecians; alleging first one cause, then another, for his expedition. Yet the true reason lay not long concealed, but Tisaphernes went to the king in person to declare it. Thereupon, the court was all in an uproar and tumult, the queen-mother bearing almost the whole blame of the enterprise, and her retainers being suspected and accused. Above all, Statira angered her by bewailing the war and passionately demanding where were now the pledges and the intercession which saved the life of him that conspired against his brother; "to the end," she said, "that he might plunge us all into war and trouble." For which words Parysatis hating Statira, and being naturally implacable and savage in her anger and revenge, consulted how she might destroy her. But since Dinon tells us that her purpose took effect in the time of the war, and Ctesias says it was after it, I shall keep the story for the place to which the latter assigns it, as it is very unlikely that he, who was actually present, should not know the time when it happened, and there was no motive to induce him designedly to misplace its date in his narrative of it, though it is not infrequent with him in his history to make excursions from truth into mere fiction and romance.

As Cyrus was upon the march, rumours and reports were brought him, as though the king still deliberated, and were not minded to fight and presently to join battle with him; but to wait in the heart of his kingdom until his forces should have come in thither from all parts of his dominions. He had cut a trench through the plain ten fathoms in breadth, and as many in depth the length of it being no less than four hundred furlongs, he be allowed Cyrus to pass across it, and to advance almost to the city of Babylon. Then Teribazus, as the report goes, was the first that had the boldness to tell the king that he ought not to avoid the conflict, nor to abandon Media, Babylon, and even Susa, and hide himself in Persis, when all the while he had an army many times over more numerous than his enemies, and an infinite company of governors and captains that were better soldiers and politicians than Cyrus. So at last he resolved to fight, as soon as it was possible for him. Making, therefore, his first appearance, all on a sudden, at the head of nine hundred thousand well-marshalled men, he so startled and surprised the enemy, who with the confidence of contempt were marching on their way in no order, and with their arms not ready for use, that Cyrus, in the midst of such noise and tumult, was scarcely able to form them for battle. Moreover, the very manner in which he led on his men, silently and slowly, made the Grecians stand amazed at his good discipline; who had expected irregular shouting and leaping, much confusion and separation between one body of men and another, in so vast a multitude of troops. He also placed the choicest of his armed chariots in the front of his own phalanx over against the Grecian troops, that a violent charge with these might cut open their ranks before they closed with them.

But as this battle is described by many historians, and Xenophon in particular as good as shows it us by eyesight, not as a past event, but as a present action, and by his vivid account makes his hearers

feel all the passions and join in all the dangers of it, it would be folly in me to give any larger account of it than barely to mention any things omitted by him which yet deserve to be recorded. The place, then, in which the two armies were drawn out is called Cunaxa, being about five hundred furlongs distant from Babylon. And here Clearchus beseeching Cyrus before the fight to retire behind the combatants, and not expose himself to hazard, they say he replied, "What is this, Clearchus? Would you have me, who aspire to empire, show myself unworthy of it?" But if Cyrus committed a great fault in entering headlong into the midst of danger, and not paying any regard to his own safety, Clearchus was as much to blame, if not more, in refusing to lead the Greeks against the main body of the enemy, where the king stood, and in keeping his right wing close to the river, for fear of being surrounded. For if he wanted, above all other things, to be safe, and considered it his first object to sleep in a whole skin, it had been his best way not to have stirred from home. But, after marching in arms ten thousand furlongs from the sea-coast, simply on his choosing, for the purpose of placing Cyrus on the throne, to look about and select a position which would enable him, not to preserve him under whose pay and conduct he was, but himself to engage with more ease and security, seemed much like one that through fear of present dangers had abandoned the purpose of his actions, and been false to the design of his expedition. For it is evident from the very event of the battle that none of those who were in array around the king's person could have stood the shock of the Grecian charge; and had they been beaten out of the field, and Artaxerxes either fled or fallen, Cyrus would have gained by the victory, not only safety, but a crown. And, therefore, Clearchus by his caution must be considered more to blame for the result in the destruction of the life and fortune of Cyrus, than he by his heat and rashness. For had the king made it his business to discover a place, where having posted the Grecians, he might encounter them with the least hazard, he would never have found out any other but that which was most remote from himself and those near him; of his defeat in which he was insensible, and, though Clearchus had the victory, yet Cyrus could not know of it, and could take no advantage of it before his fall. Cyrus knew well enough what was expedient to be done, and commanded Clearchus with his men to take their place in the centre. Clearchus replied that he would take care to have all arranged as was best, and then spoiled all.

For the Grecians, where they were, defeated the barbarians till they were weary, and chased them successfully a very great way. But Cyrus being mounted upon a noble but a headstrong and hard-mouthed horse, bearing the name, as Ctesias tells us, of Pasacas, Artagerses, the leader of the Cadusians, galloped up to him, crying aloud, "O most unjust and senseless of men, who are the disgrace of the honoured name of Cyrus, are you come here leading the wicked Greeks on a wicked journey, to plunder the good things of the Persians, and this with the intent of slaying your lord and brother, the master of ten thousand

times ten thousand servants that are better men than you? as you shall see this instant; for you shall lose your head here, before you look upon the face of the king." Which when he had said, he cast his javelin at him. But his coat of mail stoutly repelled it, and Cyrus was not wounded; yet the stroke falling heavy upon him, he reeled under it. Then Artagerses turning his horse, Cyrus threw his weapon, and sent the head of it through his neck near the shoulder bone. So that it is almost universally agreed to by all the authors that Artagerses was slain by him.

But as to the death of Cyrus, since Xenophon, as being himself no eyewitness of it, has stated it simply and in few words, it may not be amiss perhaps to run over on the one hand what Dinon, and on the other, what Ctesias has said of it.

Dinon then affirms that, after the death of Artagerses, Cyrus, furiously attacking the guard of Artaxerxes, wounded the king's horse, and so dismounted him, and when Teribazus had quickly lifted him up upon another, and said to him, "O king, remember this day, which is not one to be forgotten," Cyrus, again spurring up his horse, struck down Artaxerxes. But at the third assault the king being enraged, and saying to those near him that death was more eligible, made up to Cyrus, who furiously and blindly rushed in the face of the weapons opposed to him. So the king struck him with a javelin, as likewise did those that were about him. And thus Cyrus falls, as some say, by the hand of the king; as others by the dart of a Carian, to whom Artaxerxes for a reward of his achievement gave the privilege of carrying ever after a golden cock upon his spear before the first ranks of the army in all expeditions. For the Persians call the men of Caria cocks, because of the crests with which they adorn their helmets.

But the account of Ctesias, to put it shortly, omitting many details, is as follows: Cyrus, after the death of Artagerses, rode up against the king, as he did against him, neither exchanging a word with the other. But Ariaeus, Cyrus's friend, was beforehand with him, and darted first at the king, yet wounded him not. Then the king cast his lance at his brother, but missed him, though he both hit and slew Satiphernes, a noble man and a faithful friend to Cyrus. Then Cyrus directed his lance against the king, and pierced his breast with it quite through his armour, two inches deep, so that he fell from his horse with the stroke. At which those that attended him being put to flight and disorder, he, rising with a few, among whom was Ctesias, and making his way to a little hill not far off, rested himself. But Cyrus, who was in the thick enemy, was carried off a great way by the wildness of his horse, the darkness which was now coming on making it hard for them to know him, and for his followers to find him. However, being made elate with victory, and full of confidence and force, he passed through them, crying out, and that more than once, in the Persian language, "Clear the way, villains, clear the way;" which they indeed did, throwing themselves down at his feet. But his tiara dropped off his head, and a young Persian, by name

Mithridates, running by, struck a dart into one of his temples near his eye, not knowing who he was; out of which wound much blood gushed, so that Cyrus, swooning and senseless, fell off his horse. The horse escaped, and ran about the field; but the companion of Mithridates took the trappings which fell off, soaked with blood. And as Cyrus slowly began to come to himself, some eunuchs who were there tried to put him on another horse, and so convey him safe away. And when he was not able to ride, and desired to walk on his feet, they led and supported him, being indeed dizzy in the head and reeling, but convinced of his being victorious, hearing, as he went, the fugitives saluting Cyrus as king, and praying for grace and mercy. In the meantime, some wretched, poverty-stricken Caunians, who in some pitiful employment as camp followers had accompanied the king's army, by chance joined these attendants of Cyrus, supposing them to be of their own party. But when, after a while, they made out that their coats over their breastplates were red, whereas all the king's people wore white ones, they knew that they were enemies. One of them, therefore, not dreaming that it was Cyrus, ventured to strike him behind with a dart. The vein under the knee was cut open, and Cyrus fell, and at the same time struck his wounded temple against a stone, and so died. Thus runs Ctesias's account, tardily, with the slowness of a blunt weapon effecting the victim's death.

When he was now dead, Artasyras, the king's eye, passed by on horseback, and, having observed the eunuchs lamenting, he asked the most trusty of them, "Who is this, Pariscas, whom you sit here deploring?" He replied, "Do not you see, O Artasyras, that it is my master, Cyrus?" Then Artasyras wondering, bade the eunuch be of good cheer, and keep the dead body safe. And going in all haste to Artaxerxes, who had now given up all hope of his affairs, and was in great suffering also with his thirst and his wound, he with much joy assured him that he had seen Cyrus dead. Upon this, at first, he set out to go in person to the place, and commanded Artasyras to conduct him where he lay. But when there was a great noise made about the Greeks, who were said to be in full pursuit, conquering and carrying all before them, he thought it best to send a number of persons to see; and accordingly thirty men went with torches in their hands. Meantime, as he seemed to be almost at the point of dying from thirst, his eunuch Satibarzanes ran about seeking drink for him; for the place had no water in it and he was at a good distance from his camp. After a long search he at last met one of those poor Caunian camp-followers, who had in a wretched skin about four pints of foul and stinking water, which he took and gave to the king; and when he had drunk all off, he asked him if he did not dislike the water; but he declared by all the gods that he never so much relished either wine, or water out of the lightest or purest stream. "And therefore," said he, "if I fail myself to discover and reward him who gave it to you, I beg of heaven to make him rich and prosperous."

Just after this, came back the thirty messengers, with joy and triumph in their looks, bringing him the tidings of his unexpected

fortune. And now he was also encouraged by the number of soldiers that again began to flock in and gather about him; so that he presently descended into the plain with many lights and flambeaux round about him. And when he had come near the dead body, and, according to a certain law of the Persians, the right hand and head had been lopped off from the trunk, he gave orders that the latter should be brought to him, and, grasping the hair of it, which was long and bushy, he showed it to those who were still uncertain and disposed to fly. They were amazed at it, and did him homage; so that there were presently seventy thousand of them got about him, and entered the camp again with him. He had led out to the fight, as Ctesias affirms, four hundred thousand men. But Dinon and Xenophon aver that there were many more than forty myriads actually engaged. As to the number of the slain, as the catalogue of them was given up to Artaxerxes, Ctesias says, they were nine thousand, but that they appeared to him no fewer than twenty thousand. Thus far there is something to be said on both sides. But it is a flagrant untruth on the part of Ctesias to say that he was sent along with Phalinus the Zacynthian and some others to the Grecians. For Xenophon knew well enough that Ctesias was resident at court; for he makes mention of him, and had evidently met with his writings. And, therefore, had he come, and been deputed the interpreter of such momentous words, Xenophon surely would not have struck his name out of the embassy to mention only Phalinus. But Ctesias, as is evident, being excessively vainglorious and no less a favourer of the Lacedaemonians and Clearchus, never fails to assume to himself some province in his narrative, taking opportunity, in these situations, to introduce abundant high praise of Clearchus and Sparta.

When the battle was over, Artaxerxes sent goodly and magnificent gifts to the son of Artagerses, whom Cyrus slew. He conferred likewise high honours upon Ctesias and others, and, having found out the Caunian who gave him the bottle of water, he made him- a poor, obscure man- a rich and an honourable person. As for the punishments he inflicted upon delinquents, there was a kind of harmony betwixt them and the crimes. He gave order that one Arbaces, a Mede, that had fled in the fight to Cyrus and again at his fall had come back, should, as a mark that he was considered a dastardly and effeminate, not a dangerous or treasonable man, have a common harlot set upon his back, and carry her about for a whole day in the market-place. Another, besides that he had deserted to them, having falsely vaunted that he had killed two of the rebels, he decreed that three needles should be struck through his tongue. And both supposing that with his own hand he had cut off Cyrus, and being willing that all men should think and say so, he sent rich presents to Mithridates, who first wounded him, and charged those by whom he conveyed the gifts to him to tell him, that "the king has honoured you with these his favours, because you found and brought him the horse-trappings of Cyrus."

The Carian, also, from whose wound in the ham Cyrus died, suing

for his reward, he commanded those that brought it him to say that "the king presents you with this as a second remuneration of the good news told him; for first Artasyras, and, next to him, you assured him of the decease of Cyrus." Mithridates retired without complaint, though not without resentment. But the unfortunate Carian was fool enough to give way to a natural infirmity. For being ravished with the sight of the princely gifts that were before him, and being tempted thereupon to challenge and aspire to things above him, he deigned not to accept the king's present as a reward for good news, but indignantly crying out and appealing to witnesses, he protested that he, and none but he, had killed Cyrus, and that he was unjustly deprived of the glory. These words, when they came to his ear, much offended the king, so that forthwith he sentenced him to be beheaded. But the queen mother, being in the king's presence, said, "Let not the king so lightly discharge this pernicious Carian; let him receive from me the fitting punishment of what he dares to say." So when the king had consigned him over to Parysatis, she charged the executioners to take up the man, and stretch him upon the rack for ten days, then, tearing out his eyes, to drop molten brass into his ears till he expired.

Mithridates, also, within a short time after, miserably perished by the like folly; for being invited to a feast where were the eunuchs both of the king and of the queen mother, he came arrayed in the dress and the golden ornaments which he had received from the king. After they began to drink, the eunuch that was the greatest in power with Parysatis thus speaks to him: "A magnificent dress, indeed, O Mithridates, is this which the king has given you; the chains and bracelets are glorious, and your scymetar of invaluable worth; how happy has he made you, the object of every eye!" To whom he, being a little overcome with the wine, replied, "What are these things, Sparamizes? Sure I am, I showed myself to the king in that day of trial to be one deserving greater and costlier gifts than these." At which Sparamizes smiling, said, "I do not grudge them to you, Mithridates; but since the Grecians tell us that wine and truth go together, let me hear now, my friend, what glorious or mighty matter was it to find some trappings that had slipped off a horse, and to bring them to the king?" And this he spoke, not as ignorant of the truth, but desiring to unbosom him to the company, irritating the vanity of the man, whom drink had now made eager to talk and incapable of controlling himself. So he forbore nothing, but said out, "Talk you what you please of horse-trappings and such trifles; I tell you plainly, that this hand was the death of Cyrus. For I threw not my darts as Artagerses did, in vain and to no purpose, but only just missing his eye, and hitting him right on the temple, and piercing him through. I brought him to the ground; and of that wound he died." The rest of the company, who saw the end and the hapless fate of Mithridates as if it were already completed, bowed their heads to the ground; and he who entertained them said, "Mithridates, my friend, let us eat and drink now, revering the fortune of our prince, and

let us waive discourse which is too weighty for us."

Presently after, Sparamizes told Parysatis what he said, and she told the king, who was greatly enraged at it, as having the lie given him, and being in danger to forfeit the most glorious and most pleasant circumstance of his victory. For it was his desire that every one, whether Greek or barbarian, should believe that in the mutual assaults and conflicts between him and his brother, he, giving and receiving a blow, was himself indeed wounded, but that the other lost his life. And, therefore, he decreed that Mithridates should be put to death in boats; which execution is after the following manner: Taking two boats framed exactly to fit and answer each other, they lay down in one of them the malefactor that suffers, upon his back; then, covering it with the other, and so setting them together that the head, hands, and feet of him are left outside, and the rest of his body lies shut up within, they offer him food, and if he refuse to eat it, they force him to do it by pricking his eyes; then, after he has eaten, they drench him with a mixture of milk and honey, pouring it not only into his mouth, but all over his face. They then keep his face continually turned towards the sun: and it becomes completely covered up and hidden by the multitude of flies that settle on it. And as within the boats he does what those that eat and drink must needs do, creeping things and vermin spring out of the corruption and rottenness of the excrement, and these entering into the bowels of him, his body is consumed. When the man is manifestly dead, the uppermost boat being taken off, they find his flesh devoured, and swarms of such noisome creatures preying upon and, as it were, growing to his inwards. In this way Mithridates, after suffering for seventeen days, at last expired.

Masabates, the king's eunuch, who had cut off the hand and head of Cyrus, remained still as a mark for Parysatis's vengeance. Whereas, therefore, he was so circumspect, that he gave her no advantage against him, she framed this kind of snare for him. She was a very ingenious woman in other ways, and was an excellent player at dice, and, before the war, had often played with the king. After the war, too, when she had been reconciled to him, she joined readily in all amusements with him, played at dice with him, was his confidant in his love matters, and in every way did her best to leave him as little as possible in the company of Statira, both because she hated her more than any other person, and because she wished to have no one so powerful as herself. And so once when Artaxerxes was at leisure, and inclined to divert himself, she challenged him to play at dice with her for a thousand darics, and purposely let him win them, and paid him down in gold. Yet, pretending to be concerned for her loss, and that she would gladly have her revenge for it, she pressed him to begin a new game for a eunuch; to which he consented. But first they agreed that each of them might except five of their most trusty eunuchs, and that out of the rest of them the loser should yield up any the winner should make choice of. Upon these conditions they played. Thus being bent upon her design, and thoroughly in earnest

with her game, and the dice also running luckily for her, when she had got the game, she demanded Masabates, who was not in the number of the five excepted. And before the king could suspect the matter, having delivered him up to the tormentors, she enjoined them to flay him alive, to set his body upon three stakes, and to stretch his skin upon stakes separately from it.

These things being done, and the king taking them ill, and being incensed against her, she with raillery and laughter told him, "You are a comfortable and happy man indeed, if you are so much disturbed for the sake of an old rascally eunuch, when I, though I have thrown away a thousand darics, hold my peace and acquiesce in my fortune." So the king, vexed with himself for having been thus deluded, hushed up all. But Statira both in other matters openly opposed her, and was angry with her for thus, against all law and humanity, sacrificing to the memory of Cyrus the king's faithful friend and eunuch.

Now after that Tisaphernes had circumvented and by a false oath had betrayed Clearchus and the other commanders, and, taking them, had sent them bound in chains to the king, Ctesias says that he was asked by Clearchus to supply him with a comb; and that when he had it, and had combed his head with it, he was much pleased with this good office, and gave him a ring, which might be a token of the obligation to his relatives and friends in Sparta; and that the engraving upon this signet was a set of Caryatides dancing. He tells us that the soldiers, his fellow-captives, used to purloin a part of the allowance of food sent to Clearchus, giving him but little of it; which thing Ctesias says he rectified, causing a better allowance to be conveyed to him, and that a separate share should be distributed to the soldiers by themselves; adding that he ministered to and supplied him thus by the interest and at the instance of Parysatis. And there being a portion of ham sent daily with his other food to Clearchus, she, he says, advised and instructed him, that he ought to bury a small knife in the meat, and thus send it to his friend, and not leave his fate to be determined by the king's cruelty; which he, however, he says, was afraid to do. However, Artaxerxes consented to the entreaties of his mother, and promised her with an oath that he would spare Clearchus; but afterwards, at the instigation of Statira, he put every one of them to death except Menon. And thenceforward, he says, Parysatis watched her advantage against Statira and made up poison for her; not a very probable story, or a very likely motive to account for her conduct, if indeed he means that out of respect to Clearchus she dared to attempt the life of the lawful queen, that was mother of those who were heirs of the empire. But it is evident enough, that this part of his history is a sort of funeral exhibition in honour of Clearchus. For he would have us believe that, when the generals were executed, the rest of them were torn in pieces by dogs and birds; but as for the remains of Clearchus, that a violent gust of wind, bearing before it a vast heap of earth, raised a mound to cover his body, upon which, after a short time, some dates having fallen there, a beautiful grove of trees

grew up and overshadowed the place, so that the king himself declared his sorrow, concluding that in Clearchus he put to death a man beloved of the gods.

Parysatis, therefore, having from the first entertained a secret hatred and jealousy against Statira, seeing that the power she herself had with Artaxerxes was founded upon feelings of honour and respect for her, but that Statira's influence was firmly and strongly based upon love and confidence, was resolved to contrive her ruin, playing at hazard, as she thought, for the greatest stake in the world. Among her attendant women there was one that was trusty and in the highest esteem with her, whose name was Gigis; who, as Dinon avers, assisted in making up the poison. Ctesias allows her only to have been conscious of it, and that against her will; charging Belitaras with actually giving the drug, whereas Dinon says it was Melantas. The two women had begun again to visit each other and to eat together; but though they had thus far relaxed their former habits of jealousy and variance, still, out of fear and as a matter of caution, they always ate of the same dishes and of the same parts of them. Now there is a small Persian bird, in the inside of which no excrement is found, only a mass of fat, so that they suppose the little creatures lives upon air and dew. It is called rhyntaces. Ctesias affirms, that Parysatis, cutting a bird of this kind into two pieces with a knife one side of which had been smeared with the drug, the other side being clear of it, ate the untouched and wholesome part herself, and gave Statira that which was thus infected; but Dinon will not have it to be Parysatis, but Melantas, that cut up the bird and presented the envenomed part of it to Statira; who, dying with dreadful agonies and convulsions, was herself sensible of what had happened to her, and aroused in the king's mind suspicion of his mother, whose savage and implacable temper he knew. And therefore proceeding instantly to an inquest, he seized upon his mother's domestic servants that attended at her table and put them upon the rack. Parysatis kept Gigis at home with her a long time, and though the king commanded her, she would not produce her. But she, at last herself desiring that she might be dismissed to her own home by night, Artaxerxes had intimation of it, and lying in wait for her, hurried her away, and adjudged her to death. Now poisoners in Persia suffer thus by law. There is a broad stone, on which they place the head of the culprit, and then with another stone beat and press it, until the face and the head itself are all pounded to pieces; which was the punishment Gigis lost her life by. But to his mother, Artaxerxes neither said nor did any other hurt, save that he banished and confined her, not much against her will, to Babylon, protesting that while she lived he would not come near that city. Such was the condition of the king's affairs in his own house.

But when all his attempts to capture the Greeks that had come with Cyrus, though he desired to do so no less than he had desired to overcome Cyrus and maintain his throne, proved unlucky, and they, though they had lost both Cyrus and their own generals, nevertheless

escaped, as it were, out of his very palace, making it plain to all men that the Persian king and his empire were mighty indeed in gold and luxury and women, but otherwise were a mere show and vain display, upon this all Greece took courage and despised the barbarians; and especially the Lacedaemonians thought it strange if they should not now deliver their countrymen that dwelt in Asia from their subjection to the Persians, nor put an end to the contumelious usage of them. And first having an army under the conduct of Thimbron, then under Dercyllidas, but doing nothing memorable, they at last committed the war to the management of their King Agesilaus, who, when he had arrived with his men in Asia, as soon as he had landed them, fell actively to work, and got himself great renown. He defeated Tisaphernes in a pitched battle, and set many cities in revolt. Upon this, Artaxerxes, perceiving what was his wisest way of waging the war, sent Timocrates the Rhodian into Greece, with large sums of gold, commanding him by a free distribution of it to corrupt the leading men in the cities, and to excite a Greek war against Sparta. So Timocrates following his instructions, the most considerable cities conspiring together, and Peloponnesus being in disorder, the ephors remanded Agesilaus from Asia. At which time, they say, as he was upon his return, he told his friends that Artaxerxes had driven him out of Asia with thirty thousand archers; the Persian coin having an archer stamped upon it.

Artaxerxes scoured the seas, too, of the Lacedaemonians, Conon the Athenian and Pharnabazus being his admirals. For Conon, after the battle of Aegospotami, resided in Cyprus; not that he consulted his own mere security, but looking for a vicissitude of affairs with no less hope than men wait for a change of wind at sea. And perceiving that his skill wanted power, and that the king's power wanted a wise man to guide it, he sent him an account of his projects, and charged the bearer to hand it to the king, if possible, by the mediation of Zeno the Cretan or Polycritus the Mendaeian (the former being a dancing-master, the latter a physician), or, in the absence of them both, by Ctesias; who is said to have taken Conon's letter, and foisted into the contents of it a request, that the king would also be pleased to send over Ctesias to him, who was likely to be of use on the sea-coast. Ctesias, however, declares that the king, of his accord, deputed him to his service. Artaxerxes, however, defeating the Lacedaemonians in a sea-fight at Cnidos, under the conduct of Pharnabazus and Conon, after he had stripped them of their sovereignty by sea, at the same time brought, so to say, the whole of Greece over to him, so that upon his own terms he dictated the celebrated peace among them, styled the peace of Antalcidas. This Antalcidas was a Spartan, the son of one Leon, who, acting for the king's interest, induced the Lacedaemonians to covenant to let all the Greek cities in Asia and the islands adjacent to it become subject and tributary to him, peace being upon these conditions established among the Greeks, if indeed the honourable name of peace can fairly be given to what was in fact the disgrace and betrayal of Greece, a

treaty more inglorious than had ever been the result of any war to those defeated in it.

And therefore Artaxerxes, though always abominating other Spartans, and looking upon them, as Dinon says, to be the most impudent men living, gave wonderful honour to Antalcidas when he came to him into Persia; so much so that one day, taking a garland of flowers and dipping it in the most precious ointment, he sent it to him after supper, a favour which all were amazed at. Indeed he was a person fit to be thus delicately treated, and to have such a crown, who had among the Persians thus made fools of Leonidas and Callicratidas. Agesilaus, it seems, on some one having said, "O the deplorable fate of Greece, now that the Spartans turn Medes!" replied, "Nay, rather it is the Medes who become Spartans." But the subtlety of the repartee did not wipe off the infamy of the action. The Lacedaemonians soon after lost their sovereignty in Greece by their defeat at Leuctra; but they had already lost their honour by this treaty. So long then as Sparta continued to be the first state in Greece, Artaxerxes continued to Antalcidas the honour of being called his friend and his guest; but when, routed and humbled at the battle of Leuctra, being under great distress for money, they had despatched Agesilaus into Egypt, and Antalcidas went up to Artaxerxes, beseeching him to supply their necessities, he so despised, slighted, and rejected him, that finding himself, on his return, mocked and insulted by his enemies, and fearing also the ephors, he starved himself to death. Ismenias, also, the Theban, and Pelopidas, who had already gained the victory at Leuctra, arrived at the Persian court; where the latter did nothing unworthy of himself. But Ismenias, being commanded to do obeisance to the king, dropped his ring before him upon the ground, and so, stooping to take it up, made a show of doing him homage. He was so gratified with some secret intelligence which Timagoras the Athenian sent in to him by the hand of his secretary Beluris, that he bestowed upon him ten thousand darics, and because he was ordered, on account of some sickness, to drink cow's milk, there were fourscore milch kine driven after him; also, he sent him a bed, furniture, and servants for it, the Grecians not having skill enough to make it, as also chairmen to carry him, being infirm in body, to the seaside. Not to mention the feast made for him at court, which was so princely and splendid that Ostanes, the king's brother, said to him, "O Timagoras, do not forget the sumptuous table you have sat at here; it was not put before you for nothing;" was indeed rather a reflection upon his treason than to remind him of the king's bounty. And indeed the Athenians condemned Timagoras to death for taking bribes.

But Artaxerxes gratified the Grecians in one thing in lieu of the many wherewith he plagued them, and that was by taking off Tisaphernes, their most hated and malicious enemy, whom he put to death; Parysatis adding her influence to the charges made against him. For the king did not persist long in his wrath with his mother, but was reconciled to her, and sent for her, being assured that she had

wisdom and courage fit for royal power, and there being now no cause discernible but that they might converse together without suspicion or offence. And from thenceforward humouring the king in all things according to his heart's desire, and finding fault with nothing that he did, she obtained great power with him, and was gratified in all her requests. She perceived he was desperately in love with Atossa, one of his own two daughters, and that he concealed and checked his passion chiefly for fear of herself, though, if we may believe some writers, he had privately given way to it with the young girl already. As soon as Parysatis suspected it, she displayed a greater fondness for the young girl than before, and extolled both her virtue and beauty to him, as being truly imperial and majestic. In fine she persuaded him to marry her and declare her to be his lawful wife, overriding all the principles and the laws by which the Greeks hold themselves bound, and regarding himself as divinely appointed for a law to the Persians, and the supreme arbitrator of good and evil. Some historians further affirm, in which number is Heraclides of Cuma, that Artaxerxes married not only this one, but a second daughter also, Amestris, of whom we shall speak by and by. But he so loved Atossa when she became his consort, that when leprosy had run through her whole body, he was not in the least offended at it; but putting up his prayers to Juno for her, to this one alone of all the deities he made obeisance, by laying his hands upon the earth; and his satraps and favourites made such offerings to the goddess by his direction, that all along for sixteen furlongs, betwixt the court and her temple, the road was filled up with gold and silver, purple and horses, devoted to her.

He waged war out of his own kingdom with the Egyptians, under the conduct of Pharnabazus and Iphicrates, but was unsuccessful by reason of their dissensions. In his expedition against the Cadusians, he went himself in person with three hundred thousand footmen and ten thousand horse, and making an incursion into their country, which was so mountainous as scarcely to be passable, and withal very misty, producing no sort of harvest of corn or the like, but with pears, apples, and other tree-fruits feeding a war-like and valiant breed of men, he unawares fell into great distresses and dangers. For there was nothing to be got, fit for his men to eat, of the growth of that place, nor could anything be imported from any other. All they could do was to kill their beasts of burden, and thus an ass's head could scarcely be bought for sixty drachmas. In short, the king's own table failed; and there were but few horses left; the rest they had spent for food. Then Teribazus, a man often in great favour with his prince for his valour and as often out of it for his buffoonery, and particularly at that time in humble estate and neglected, was the deliverer of the king and his army. There being two kings amongst the Cadusians, and each of them encamping separately, Teribazus, after he had made his application to Artaxerxes and imparted his design to him, went to one of the princes, and sent away his son privately to the other. So each of them deceived his man,

assuring him that the other prince had deputed an ambassador to Artaxerxes, suing for friendship and alliance for himself alone; and, therefore, if he were wise, he told him, he must apply himself to his master before he had decreed anything, and he, he said, would lend him his assistance in all things. Both of them gave credit to these words, and because they supposed they were each intrigued against by the other, they both sent their envoys, one along with Teribazus, and the other with his son. All this taking some time to transact, fresh surmises and suspicions of Teribazus were expressed to the king, who began to be out of heart, sorry that he had confided in him, and ready to give ear to his rivals who impeached him. But at last he came, and so did his son, bringing the Cadusian agents along with them, and so there was a cessation of arms and a peace signed with both the princes. And Teribazus, in great honour and distinction, set out homewards in the company of the king; who, indeed, upon this journey made it appear plainly that cowardice and effeminacy are the effects, not of delicate and sumptuous living, as many suppose, but of a base and vicious nature, actuated by false and bad opinions. For notwithstanding his golden ornaments, his robe of state, and the rest of that costly attire, worth no less than twelve thousand talents, with which the royal person was constantly clad, his labours and toils were not a whit inferior to those of the meanest persons in his army. With his quiver by his side and his shield on his arm, he led them on foot, quitting his horse, through craggy and steep ways, insomuch that the sight of his cheerfulness and unwearied strength gave wings to the soldiers, and so lightened the journey, that they made daily marches of above two hundred furlongs.

After they had arrived at one of his own mansions, which had beautiful ornamented parks in the midst of a region naked and without trees, the weather being very cold, he gave full commission to his soldiers to provide themselves with wood by cutting down any, without exception, even the pine and cypress. And when they hesitated and were for sparing them, being large and goodly trees, he, taking up an axe himself, felled the greatest and most beautiful of them. After which his men used their hatchets, and piling up many fires, passed away the night at their ease. Nevertheless, he returned not without the loss of many and valiant subjects, and of almost all his horses. And supposing that his misfortunes and the ill-success of his expedition made him despised in the eyes of his people, he looked jealously on his nobles, many of whom he slew in anger, and yet more out of fear. As, indeed, fear is the bloodiest passion in princes; confidence, on the other hand, being merciful, gentle, and unsuspecting. So we see among wild beasts, the intractable and least tamable are the most timorous and most easily startled; the nobler creatures, whose courage makes them trustful, are ready to respond to the advances of men.

Artaxerxes, now being an old man, perceived that his sons were in controversy about his kingdom, and that they made parties among his favourites and peers. Those that were equitable among them thought

it fit, that as he had received it, so he should bequeath it, by right of age, to Darius. The younger brother, Ochus, who was hot and violent, had indeed a considerable number of the courtiers that espoused his interest, but his chief hope was that by Atossa's means he should win his father. For he flattered her with the thoughts of being his wife and partner in the kingdom after the death of Artaxerxes. And truly it was rumoured that already Ochus maintained a too intimate correspondence with her. This, however, was quite unknown to the king; who, being willing to put down in good time his son Ochus's hopes, lest, by his attempting the same things his uncle Cyrus did, wars and contentions might again afflict his kingdom, proclaimed Darius, then twenty-five years old, his successor, and gave him leave to wear the upright hat, as they called it. It was a rule and usage of Persia, that the heir apparent to the crown should beg a boon, and that he that declared him so should give whatever he asked, provided it were within the sphere of his power. Darius therefore requested Aspasia, in former time the most prized of the concubines of Cyrus, and now belonging to the king. She was by birth a Phocæan, of Ionia, born of free parents, and well educated. Once when Cyrus was at supper, she was led in to him with other women, who, when they were sat down by him, and he began to sport and dally and talk jestingly with them, gave way freely to his advances. But she stood by in silence, refusing to come when Cyrus called her, and when his chamberlains were going to force her towards him, said, "Whosoever lays hands on me shall rue. it;" so that she seemed to the company a sullen and rude-mannered person. However, Cyrus was well pleased, and laughed, saying to the man that brought the women, "Do you not see to a certainty that this woman alone of all that came with you is truly noble and pure in character?" After which time he began to regard her, and loved her, above all of her sex, and called her the Wise. But Cyrus being slain in the fight, she was taken among the spoils of his camp.

Darius, in demanding her, no doubt much offended his father, for the barbarian people keep a very jealous and watchful eye over their carnal pleasures, so that it is death for a man not only to come near and touch any concubine of his prince, but likewise on a journey to ride forward and pass by the carriages in which they are conveyed. And though, to gratify his passion, he had against all law married his daughter Atossa, and had besides her no less than three hundred and sixty concubines selected for their beauty, yet being importuned for that one by Darius, he urged that she was a free-woman, and allowed him to take her, if she had an inclination to go with him, but by no means to force her away against it. Aspasia, therefore, being sent for, and, contrary to the king's expectation, making choice of Darius, he gave him her indeed, being constrained by law, but when he had done so, a little after he took her from him. For he consecrated her priestess to Diana of Ecbatana, whom they name Anaitis, that she might spend the remainder of her days in strict chastity, thinking thus to punish his son, not rigorously, but with

moderation, by a revenge checkered with jest and earnest. But he took it heinously, either that he was passionately fond of Aspasia, or because he looked upon himself as affronted and scorned by his father. Teribazus, perceiving him thus minded, did his best to exasperate him yet further, seeing in his injuries a representation of his own, of which the following is the account: Artaxerxes, having many daughters, promised to give Apama to Pharnabazus to wife, Rhodogune to Orontes, and Amestris to Teribazus; whom alone of the three he disappointed, by marrying Amestris himself. However, to make him amends, he betrothed his youngest daughter Atossa to him. But after he had, being enamoured of her too, as has been said, married her, Teribazus entertained an irreconcilable enmity against him. As indeed he was seldom at any other time steady in his temper, but uneven and inconsiderate; so that whether he were in the number of the choicest favourites of his prince, or whether he were offensive and odious to him, he demeaned himself in neither condition with moderation, but if he was advanced he was intolerably insolent, and in his degradation not submissive and peaceable in his deportment, but fierce and haughty.

And therefore Teribazus was to the young prince flame added upon flame, ever urging him, and saying, that in vain those wear their hats upright who consult not the real success of their affairs, and that he was ill-befriended of reason if he imagined, whilst he had a brother, who, through the women's apartments, was seeking a way to the supremacy, and a father of so rash and fickle a humour, that he should by succession infallibly step up into the throne. For he that out of fondness to an Ionian girl has eluded a law sacred and inviolable among the Persians is not likely to be faithful in the performance of the most important promises. He added, too, that it was not all one for Ochus not to attain to, and for him to be put by his crown; since Ochus as a subject might live happily, and nobody could hinder him; but he, being proclaimed king, must either take up his sceptre or lay down his life. These words presently inflamed Darius: what Sophocles says being indeed generally true:-

"Quick travels the persuasion to what's wrong."

For the path is smooth, and upon an easy descent, that leads us to our own will; and the most part of us desire what is evil through our strangeness to and ignorance of good. And in this case, no doubt, the greatness of the empire and the jealousy Darius had of Ochus furnished Teribazus with material for his persuasions. Nor was Venus wholly unconcerned in the matter, in regard, namely, of his loss of Aspasia.

Darius, therefore, resigned himself up to the dictates of Teribazus; and many now conspiring with them, a eunuch gave information to the king of their plot and the way how it was to be managed, having discovered the certainty of it, that they had resolved to break into his bed-chamber by night, and there to kill him as he lay. After Artaxerxes had been thus advertised, he did not think fit, by disregarding the discovery, to despise so great a danger, nor to

believe it when there was little or no proof of it. Thus then he did: he charged the eunuch constantly to attend and accompany the conspirators wherever they were; in the meanwhile, he broke down the party-wall of the chamber behind his bed, and placed a door in it to open and shut, which he covered up with tapestry; so the hour approaching, and the eunuch having told him the precise time in which the traitors designed to assassinate him, he waited for them in his bed, and rose not up till he had seen the faces of his assailants and recognized every man of them. But as soon as he saw them with their swords drawn and coming up to him, throwing up the hanging, he made his retreat into the inner chamber, and, bolting the door, raised a cry. Thus when the murderers had been seen by him, and had attempted him in vain, they with speed went back through the same doors they came in by, enjoining Teribazus and his friends to fly, as their plot had been certainly detected. They, therefore, made their escape different ways; but Teribazus was seized by the king's guards, and after slaying many, while they were laying hold on him, at length being struck through with a dart at a distance, fell. As for Darius, who was brought to trial with his children, the king appointed the royal judges to sit over him, and because he was not himself present, but accused Darius by proxy, he commanded his scribes to write down the opinion of every one of the judges, and show it to him. And after they had given their sentences, all as one man, and condemned Darius to death, the officers seized on him, and hurried him to a chamber not far off. To which place the executioner, when summoned, came with a razor in his hand, with which men of his employment cut off the heads of offenders. But when he saw that Darius was the person thus to be punished he was appalled and started back, offering to go out, as one that had neither power nor courage enough to behead a king; yet at the threats and commands of the judges who stood at the prison door, he returned and grasping the hair of his head and bringing his face to the ground with one hand, he cut through his neck with the razor he had in the other. Some affirm that sentence was passed in the presence of Artaxerxes; that Darius, after he had been convicted by clear evidence, falling prostrate before him, did humbly beg his pardon; that instead of giving it, he rising up in rage and drawing his scymetar, smote him till he had killed him; and then, going forth into the court, he worshipped the sun, and said, "Depart in peace, ye Persians, and declare to your fellow-subjects how the mighty Oromasdes hath dealt out vengeance to the contrivers of unjust and unlawful things."

Such, then, was the issue of this conspiracy. And now Ochus was high in his hopes, being confident in the influence of Atossa; but yet was afraid of Ariaspes, the only male surviving, besides himself, of the legitimate offspring of his father, and of Arsames, one of his natural sons. For indeed Ariaspes was already claimed as their prince by the wishes of the Persians, not because he was the elder brother, but because he excelled Ochus in gentleness, plain dealing,

and good-nature; and on the other hand Arsames appeared, by his wisdom, fitted for the throne, and that he was dear to his father Ochus well knew. So he laid snares for them both, and being no less treacherous than bloody, he made use of the cruelty of his nature against Arsames, and of his craft and wiliness against Ariaspes. For he suborned the king's eunuchs and favourites to convey to him menacing and harsh expressions from his father, as though he had decreed to put him to a cruel and ignominious death. When they daily communicated these things as secrets, and told him at one time that the king would do so to him ere long, and at another, that the blow was actually close impending, they so alarmed the young man, struck such a terror into him, and cast such a confusion and anxiety upon his thoughts, that, having prepared some poisonous drugs, he drank them, that he might be delivered from his life. The king, on hearing what kind of death he died, heartily lamented him, and was not without a suspicion of the cause of it. But being disabled by his age to search into and prove it, he was, after the loss of this son, more affectionate than before to Arsames, did manifestly place his greatest confidence in him, and made him privy to his counsels. Whereupon Ochus had no longer patience to defer the execution of his purpose, but having procured Arpates, Teribazus's son, for the undertaking, he killed Arsames by his hand. Artaxerxes at that time had but a little hold on life, by reason of his extreme age, and so, when he heard of the fate of Arsames, he could not sustain it at all, but sinking at once under the weight of his grief and distress, expired, after a life of ninety-four years, and a reign of sixty-two. And then he seemed a moderate and gracious governor, more especially as compared to his son Ochus, who outdid all his predecessors in blood-thirstiness and cruelty.

THE END

