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HERODOTUS

The Histories

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PENGUIN BOOKS

about who shall hold which place in the line; we are ready to take our orders from you Spartans, and to hold whatever part of the line, against whatever enemy contingent, you consider most useful. Whatever that position may be, we shall endeavour to fight like men. Give us our orders; we shall obey.'

28 At this answer there was a shout from every man in the Lacedaemonian army that the Athenians were the better men and better deserved the position of honour than the Arcadians. So the Athenians got it – at the Tegeans' expense.

In addition to the Greek troops who had first arrived in the neighbourhood of Plataea, other reinforcements had subsequently joined; and after the incident mentioned above the various contingents moved into line. The order was as follows: on the right wing were 10,000 Lacedaemonians, of whom the 5000 from Sparta were attended by 35,000 light-armed helots – seven to a man.[16] Next to themselves the Spartans stationed the Tegeans – 1500 hoplites – as a tribute of respect to their worth. Next came the 5000 Corinthians – who had obtained leave from Pausanias to have the 300 men from Potidaea in Pallene at their side. Then there were 600 from Orchomenus in Arcadia, 3000 from Sicyon, and 800 from Epidaurus; after these, 1000 from Troezen, 200 from Lepreum, 400 from Mycenae and Tiryns, 1000 from Phlius, and 300 from Hermion; next, 600 from Eretria and Styra, 400 from Chalcis, 500 from Ambracia, 800 from Leucas and Anactorium, and 200 Paleans from Cephallenia; then 500 from Aegina, 3000 from Megara, and 600 from Plataea. Last or first came the Athenians, 8000
29 strong, on the left wing of the army, with Aristides, the son of Lysimachus, in command. All these troops, except the seven helots who attended each of the Spartans, were hoplites, and their total strength amounted to 38,700 men. In addition to the heavy infantry there were light-armed auxiliaries: the 35,000 helots in attendance, as already mentioned, upon the Spartans, all of them fighting men, and 34,500 others, belonging to the other towns both in Lacedaemon and elsewhere – at the rate,
30 that is, of one auxiliary to every man-at-arms. The total number of auxiliaries was thus 69,500, making the aggregate strength of the Greek army at Plataea 110,000 – all but 1800, a deficiency

which was made up by the Thespians, whose surviving men (1800 precisely) had joined the Greek force. They were not, however, fully armed.

So much for the strength and organization of the Greek army 31
when it took up its position on the Asopus. Mardonius' men, when they had finished mourning for Masistius, also moved up to the river upon learning that the Greeks were at Plataea, and were posted in the following order. Facing the Lacedaemonians Mardonius stationed his Persians, who, as they greatly outnumbered the Lacedaemonians, were drawn up in greater depth than usual and extended far enough to cover the Tegeans as well. Mardonius saw to it that the best of them faced the Lacedaemonians, the weaker ones being on their flank to cover the Tegeans. This precaution was taken at the suggestion, and by the advice, of the Thebans. On the right of the Persians were the Medes, covering the Greek contingents from Corinth, Potidaea, Orchomenus, and Sicyon; then the Bactrians, covering the Greeks from Epidaurus, Troezen, Lepreum, Tiryns, Mycenae, and Phlius; then the Indians, covering the men from Hermion, Eretria, Styra, and Chalcis; then the Sacae, covering the Ambraciots, Anactorians, Leucadians, Paleans, and Aeginetans; and, finally, on the right of the Sacae, and facing the Athenians, Plataeans, and Megarians, were posted the contingents from Boeotia, Locris, Malis, and Thessaly, together with the Phocians, 1000 strong. Not all the Phocians had gone over to Persia; a certain number of them, from their base amongst the hills of Parnassus, did good service to the Greek cause by raiding and harrying Mardonius' army and the Greeks who were serving with it. Mardonius also posted on his right wing, facing the troops from Athens, the Macedonians and certain contingents from Thessaly.

I have named here the most efficient and important of the 32
various national contingents which Mardonius put into the line on this occasion; his army also contained a sprinkling of troops of other nationalities – Phrygians, Mysians, Thracians, Paeonians, and so on, as well as Ethiopians and Egyptians. These last belonged to the caste called Hermotybians and Calasirians – the only fighting men in Egypt. Their weapon is the sword. They

had previously served with the fleet, but Mardonius brought them ashore before leaving Phalerum; there were no Egyptian troops in the land force which Xerxes brought to Athens.[17]

The foreign troops in Mardonius' army numbered, as I have already shown, 300,000; the number of Greeks who were serving under him nobody knows, for they were never counted. My own guess is that there were about 50,000 of them. All the above-mentioned troops which were put into the line were infantrymen; the cavalry formed a separate unit.

33 When Mardonius' dispositions were complete, with the national contingents all in their respective places in the line, both armies, on the following day, proceeded to offer sacrifice. The man who officiated for the Greeks was Tisamenus, the son of Antiochus, who was serving with the army in the capacity of diviner. He came originally from Elis and belonged to the Clytiad family of the Iamidae, but the Lacedaemonians had adopted him as one of themselves, under the following circumstances. Having no children, he had gone to Delphi to consult the oracle on the subject, and the Priestess, in her reply, told him that he was destined to win the 'five greatest contests'. Failing to understand the meaning of this prophecy, he went into training for athletics under the impression that that was the kind of 'contest' he was to win, and actually came within a single event of winning the Olympic pentathlon against Hieronymus of Andros. The Lacedaemonians, however, realized that the word 'contests' in the oracle referred not to athletics but to war, and attempted to induce him, by the offer of a wage, to become joint leader with their Heraclid kings in the conduct of their wars. Tisamenus saw that the Spartans were extremely anxious to get his support, and consequently raised his price, indicating that he would do as they asked only if they made him a Spartan citizen with full civic rights. Otherwise he would have nothing to do with the proposal. The first effect upon the Spartans of Tisamenus' demand was indignation, and they stopped asking for his services; but later on, under the terrible threat of the Persian invasion, they again sought him out and agreed to his terms. Tisamenus, however, seeing that they had come round, declared that he was no longer satisfied with the original conditions, but must have his brother Hagias, too, made a citizen of Sparta with the same rights as himself. In making this demand 34
Tisamenus was following the example of Melampus – if one can compare a demand for citizenship with a demand for a throne. For Melampus, it will be remembered, when he was fetched by the Argives from Pylos and offered a fee to restore their women, who had all gone mad, to sanity, claimed half the kingdom as payment for the service.[18] The Argives thought the demand a monstrous one, and left him; but later, when more of their women caught the disease, they brought themselves to consent, and went back to Melampus to promise what he asked. Thereupon Melampus, seeing they had come round to his terms, reached out for a bit more, and refused to perform the service they wanted unless they gave, in addition, one-third of the kingdom to his brother Bias. The Argives, who were in dire straits, had to consent to this too. It was just the same with 35
the Spartans – they needed Tisamenus badly, and consequently gave him everything he asked for. The result was that this man from Elis, having become a citizen of Sparta, helped the Spartans, in his capacity as diviner, to win five 'contests' of the greatest importance. (Tisamenus and his brother were the only two foreigners ever to be made Spartan citizens.) They were the following: first, the battle of Plataea, which I am about to describe; second, the fight at Tegea against the Tegeans and Argives; third, at Dipaees against the combined forces of Arcadia, excluding Mantinea; fourth, against the Messenians at Ithome; and, last, against the Athenians and Argives at Tanagra.[19]

This Tisamenus, then, brought by the Spartans, was acting as 36
diviner for the Greek forces at Plataea. The omens turned out to be favourable to the Greeks, provided that they fought a defensive action, but unfavourable should they cross the Asopus and attack. For Mardonius the omens were similar – good for 37
defence, bad if he yielded to his eagerness to attack. Mardonius too made use of the Greek ritual to get his omens; his diviner was Hegesistratus of Elis, the best-known member of the clan of the Telliadae. He had once been arrested by the Spartans on a charge of doing them a number of injuries of a very serious

nature. Flung into prison and condemned to death, Hegesistratus, realizing, in his desperate situation, not only that his life was at stake but also that he would be tortured before his execution, dared a deed which one cannot find words adequate to tell. He was lying with one foot in the stocks – which were made of wood reinforced with iron – and somehow managed to get hold of a knife, which was smuggled into the prison. No sooner was the knife in his hand than he contrived the means to escape – and how he did it was the bravest action of all those we know: he cut a bit off his foot, having nicely judged how much to leave in order to pull it free. Then, as the prison was guarded, he worked a hole through the wall and escaped to Tegea, travelling at night and lying up during the day in the woods. The Lacedaemonians went out in force to try to find him, but he got clear and reached Tegea on the third night. They were astonished at the man's daring when they saw half his foot lying by the stocks and were unable to find him.

In this way Hegesistratus escaped his captors and made his way successfully to Tegea, which was not at that time on good terms with Sparta. When his wound healed he got himself a wooden foot made, and openly avowed his enmity to the Spartans. This, however, was destined ultimately to bring him into trouble; for at a later period – after Plataea – while he was performing his duties as diviner in Zacynthus, the Spartans
38 caught him and put him to death.[20] On the occasion of which I am speaking, he was with Mardonius on the Asopus; he was by no means poorly paid, and he performed his duties with great zest – partly out of hatred for the Spartans, partly for the sake of the money.

All this time the Greek forces were increasing by a continual influx of men; and in view of this, added to the fact that both for the Persians and for their Greek allies (who were served by their own diviner Hippomachus of Leucas) the omens were unfavourable for attack, a Theban named Timagenides, the son of Herpys, advised Mardonius to watch the passes of Cithaeron, as he would be able to cut off a great many of the men who every day were streaming through them to join the Greek army.
39 The proposal was made when the two armies had already been

eight days in position, facing one another. Mardonius saw that it was a good one, and that evening sent his cavalry to the pass over Cithaeron which leads to Plataea – the pass, that is, which the Boeotians call Three Heads, though the Athenians call it Oak Heads. The movement was not without success; a train of five hundred mules bringing food from the Peloponnese for the army was caught, together with the men in charge, just as it was coming down from the hills. The Persian cavalrymen showed no mercy; they killed beasts and men indiscriminately, and drove the remnant, when they were sick of slaughter, back to Mardonius within their own lines.

Two more days went by, and no further action took place. 40
Neither side was willing to begin the general engagement. The Persians provoked the Greek forces to attack by advancing right up to the river, but neither of them ventured actually to cross. Nevertheless Mardonius' cavalry harassed the Greeks continually: this was due to the Thebans – Persia's firm friends; their hearts were in the war, and again and again they led the cavalry to within striking distance, when the Persians and Medes took over, and proceeded to show what stuff they were made of.

During those ten days nothing happened beyond what I have 41
mentioned. The armies faced one another and no move was made, and all the time the Greek forces were rapidly increasing. At last, on the eleventh day, Mardonius, irked by the protracted inactivity, entered into conference with Artabazus, the son of Pharnaces – a Persian of the very highest reputation with Xerxes. In the discussion which followed Artabazus urged that the best thing to do would be to abandon their present position at once, and to withdraw the entire army within the fortifications of Thebes, where they had stored abundant supplies, including fodder for the animals. They had with them a great deal of gold, both coined and uncoined, besides plenty of silver and drinking vessels; and they could easily achieve their purpose, without making any active move, simply by sending lavish presents out of this treasure to the Greeks – especially to those of them who were most influential in the various towns. This would very soon bring them to give up their liberty. It would be a mistake,

on the other hand, to risk another battle. This opinion coincided with that of the Thebans – for they reckoned that Artabazus was a man of more than average foresight.

Mardonius expressed himself in much more uncompromising terms, and did not agree at all. In his view, the right policy, as the Persian army was far stronger than the Greek, was to force an engagement at once, and not allow the enemy forces to increase any further; as for Hegesistratus and his sacrifices, it would be best to ignore them – certainly not to try to force their meaning – and to engage in battle in the good old Persian
42 way. The proposal was carried without opposition – for it was Mardonius, not Artabazus, who held from Xerxes the command of the army.[21] He then sent for his divisional commanders and the Greek officers who were serving under him, and asked if they knew of any prophecy which foretold the destruction of Persian troops in Greece. Nobody said a word: some of them were unaware of the prophecies, while others, who knew them well enough, felt it was safer not to mention them. Mardonius accordingly said: 'Either you know of no such prophecy, or are afraid to speak of it. Well, I *do* know of one, and I will tell it to you. It says that the Persians will come to Greece, sack the temple at Delphi, and then perish to a man. Very well then: knowing that, we will keep away from the temple and make no attempt to plunder it – and thus avoid destruction.[22] All of you, therefore, who wish your country well, may rejoice at this, and be very sure that we shall defeat the Greeks.' Thereupon he issued his orders to prepare for battle on the following day.

43 I happen to know that the oracle, which Mardonius applied to the Persians, actually referred to the Illyrians and the army of the Encheles; there are, however, some verses of Bacis which did, in fact, refer to this battle:

> By Thermodon and Asopus, where the grass grows soft,
> Shall be gathering of Greeks and the sound of strange tongues;
> And there beyond lot and portion many Medes shall fall,
> Armed with the bow, when the day of doom comes.

These verses, and other similar ones of Musaeus, I know referred to the Persians. The Thermodon flows between Tanagra and Glisas.

After Mardonius had asked his question about the oracles 44
and spoken the words of encouragement which I mentioned, darkness fell and the watches were set. Some hours passed; and as soon as silence had descended on the two armies and the men all seemed to be asleep, Alexander, the son of Amyntas, the king and commander of the Macedonians, rode up to the Athenian guard-posts and asked permission to have a word with the officers in command. Most of the pickets stayed at their posts, but a few of them hurried off and informed their officers that a man on horseback had arrived from the Persian army: he would say nothing, except that he wanted to speak to the officers in charge, whose names he mentioned. The Athenians at once 45
accompanied the guards back to their post, and Alexander delivered his message. 'Men of Athens,' he said, 'I trust to your honour for what I am about to tell you: keep it a secret from everybody except Pausanias or you will ruin me. I should not be here at all if I had not at heart the common welfare of Greece – I am myself a Greek by descent, and have no wish to see Greece exchange her freedom for slavery. Listen, then: Mardonius and his army cannot get satisfactory omens from their sacrifices – but for this, you would have been fighting long before now. Mardonius has decided, however, to ignore the omens and to attack at dawn – in anxiety to prevent still further reinforcements from reaching you, as I guess. Be ready for him, therefore. If, on the contrary, he should postpone his attack, my advice to you is to hold on where you are: for he has only a few days' supplies left.

'In the event of your bringing this war to a successful conclusion, you must remember me, and do something for my freedom: for the sake of Greece I have taken a great risk, in my desire to acquaint you with what Mardonius intends, and thus to save you from a surprise attack. I am Alexander of Macedon.'

This said, Alexander rode back to the camp and resumed the position assigned to him, while the Athenian commanders 46
hurried to Pausanias, on the right wing of the Greek army, and

told him what they had just heard. Pausanias was much alarmed. 'As we are to be in action at dawn,' he said, 'you Athenians had better take position opposite the Persians, while we deal with the Boeotians and the other Greeks now opposite you. Marathon gave you experience of Persian tactics – unlike us, who know nothing about them whatever. No Spartan here has ever been in action against Persian troops – but we are all familiar enough with the soldiers of Boeotia and Thessaly. So get moving at once, and come and take over the right wing. We will take your place on the left.'[23]

'It occurred to us,' the Athenians replied, 'long ago – ever since we saw that your section would have to face the Persian thrust – to make the very suggestion which you have now been the first to put forward; but we were afraid of offending you. Now, however, that you have mentioned it yourselves, we willingly accept, and will do what you ask.'

47 The matter being settled to the satisfaction of both parties, at the first signs of dawn the Athenian and Spartan contingents changed places. But the Boeotians detected the movement and reported to Mardonius, who immediately shifted his Persian troops to the other wing, so as still to face the Spartans. Pausanias, seeing that his own movement had not escaped observation, then marched his men back again to the right wing – and, as
48 before, Mardonius followed suit, so that Persians and Spartans were once again facing one another in their original positions. Mardonius then sent a herald to the Spartan lines. 'Men of Lacedaemon,' the message ran, 'everybody about here seems to think you are very brave. Everyone admires you for never retreating in battle and for never quitting your post: you stick to it, so they say, until death – either your enemy's or your own. But it turns out that all this is untrue: for here you are, running away and deserting your post before the battle has even begun or a single blow been struck, and giving the place of danger to the Athenians, while you yourselves face men who are merely our slaves. This is by no means what brave men would do; indeed, we have been greatly deceived about you. Your reputation led us to expect that you would send us a challenge, in your eagerness to match yourselves with none but Persian

troops. We should have accepted the challenge, had you sent it; but you did not. We find you, instead, slinking away from us. Well, as you have sent no challenge, we will send one ourselves: why should we not fight with equal numbers on both sides, with you (who are supposed to be the most valiant) as the champions of Greece, and ourselves as the champions of Asia? Then, if it seems a good thing that the rest should fight too, they can do so after we have finished; otherwise let us settle it between us, and let the victor be considered to have won the battle for the whole army.'

The herald waited for a time after delivering this challenge; 49
then, as nobody gave him an answer, he returned to Mardonius and told him what had happened. Mardonius was overjoyed and, in all the excitement of his empty victory, ordered his cavalry to attack. The Persian cavalry, being armed with the bow, were not easy to come to grips with; so when they moved forward, they harried all the Greek line with their arrows and javelins; they also choked up and spoilt the spring of Gargaphia, from which all the Greek troops got their water. Actually, only the Lacedaemonians were near the spring, the rest of the army being some distance away, in their various positions, but all close to the river Asopus; nevertheless they, too, had been forced to resort to the spring for water, because the enemy cavalry, with their missile weapons, prevented them getting it from the river. In these circumstances, their men being continually 50
harassed by the Persian cavalry and cut off from their water, the commanders of the various Greek contingents went in a body to Pausanias on the right wing, to discuss these and other difficulties with him. Lack of water, though bad enough, was by no means the only cause of distress; food, too, had run short, and the servants who had been sent to bring supplies from the Peloponnese had been stopped by parties of Persian cavalry and had failed to rejoin. In the course of the discussion it was agreed 51
that, if the Persians let the day pass without bringing on a general engagement, they should shift their position to the Island – a tract of ground in front of Plataea, rather more than a mile from the Asopus and Gargaphia, where they then were. This place is a sort of 'island on land': there is a river which splits

into two channels near its source on Cithaeron, and in the plain below the channels are about three furlongs apart, before they unite again further on. The name of the river is Oeroe, and it is known locally as 'daughter of Asopus'. Two reasons led them to choose the Island for their new position: first, they would have an abundant supply of water; and, secondly, the enemy cavalry would be unable to hurt them. The plan was to make the move during the night, at the second watch, to prevent the enemy from observing them as they marched out, and thus to escape trouble from his cavalry on the way. It was further agreed that upon reaching the tract of land 'islanded' by the two channels of the Oeroe as it flows down from Cithaeron, they should detach, during the same night, one half of the army and send it as far as the hills of Cithaeron, to relieve the food convoys which were cut off there.

52 Having made these decisions, they continued throughout the day, without a moment's respite, to suffer harassment from the enemy cavalry; but towards evening the attacks ceased, and after dark, at the time agreed upon for departure, the greater part of the Greek forces moved off. However, they had no intention of making for the Island, according to plan: on the contrary, once they were on the move, they fled to Plataea, only too thankful to escape the Persian cavalry. Here they came to a halt in front of the temple of Hera, which stands outside the town, at a distance of about two and a half miles from Gargaphia.

53 When Pausanias saw the troops moving from their original position, he gave orders to the Lacedaemonians to strike camp and follow them, in the belief that those who had already started were making for the agreed position. Pausanias' officers were ready to obey the order, with one exception – Amompharetus, the son of Poliades and commander of the Pitanate regiment.[24] This officer refused to run away from the 'strangers' and thus deliberately to dishonour his country, and (as he had not been present at the conference) expressed his astonishment at the sight of this unexpected move. Pausanias and Euryanax were highly indignant at this refusal to obey orders; none the less they felt it would be even worse, just because of Amompharetus'

obstinacy, to leave the Pitanate regiment to its fate; for both he and his men would almost certainly be killed, if the rest of the army carried out their agreement and abandoned them. Accordingly the order to move was countermanded, and Pausanias and Euryanax made every endeavour to convince Amom- 54
pharetus that he was mistaken. The Athenians, meanwhile, being well aware of the Spartan habit of saying one thing and meaning something else, did not move from the position they occupied, until the withdrawal began; then they sent a man on horseback to find out if the Spartans themselves had any intention of going, or not, and to ask Pausanias for instructions. The 55
messenger found the Lacedaemonians still in their old position, and their officers at loggerheads; for Euryanax and Pausanias had failed in their efforts to persuade Amompharetus not to endanger the lives of his men by staying behind while the others withdrew, and they had begun to quarrel just at the moment when the Athenian messenger arrived. Still arguing violently, Amompharetus picked up a rock in both hands, and, laying it at Pausanias' feet, cried: 'Here's my voting-pebble – and I cast my vote against running away from the strangers!'[25] Pausanias said he was a fool and had taken leave of his senses; then, when the Athenian messenger put his question, he told him to report the state of affairs in the Spartan lines, adding a request that the Athenians should move over in their direction and, in the movement, conform to the Spartan lead. So the messenger 56
returned, and the Spartans continued to wrangle until dawn next morning.

With the coming of daylight Pausanias, thinking – quite rightly, as the event proved – that Amompharetus would not stay behind if all the other Lacedaemonian troops withdrew, at last gave the order for retreat, and marched off all his men, except the Pitanates, along the line of the hills, the Tegean contingent accompanying them. The Athenians followed in good order, but by a different route; for while the Spartans kept to the higher ground and the foothills of Cithaeron for fear of attack by the Persian cavalry, the Athenians took the lower road across level country.

Amompharetus did not at first believe that Pausanias would 57

actually go so far as to leave him behind, and for that reason urged the necessity of holding their position; but when Pausanias' men had already got some distance on their way, he could no longer have any doubt about it: he was left behind in good earnest. Accordingly, he gave his regiment orders to march, and followed, at a leisurely pace, the rest of the Spartan troops, who halted about half a mile off to wait for him, near the river Moloïs and a place called Argiopium, where there is a temple dedicated to Demeter of Eleusis. Their reason for waiting was to give them a chance of going back to the assistance of Amompharetus and his men in the event of his deciding, after all, not to abandon his position. No sooner had Amompharetus rejoined the main body than the cavalry attacks began again: the Persian horse, meaning to continue their old harassing tactics, had found the enemy gone from the position they had occupied during the last few days, and had ridden in pursuit. Now, having overtaken the retreating columns, they renewed their attacks with vigour.

58 When Mardonius learned that the Greeks had slipped away under cover of darkness, and saw with his own eyes that not a man remained in the position they had previously held, he sent for Thorax of Larissa and his two brothers, Eurypylus and Thrasidaeus. 'Well, sons of Aleuas,' he exclaimed, 'what will you say, now that you see that place deserted? You, who are neighbours of the Lacedaemonians, used to tell me that they were grand fighters, and never ran away! Only yesterday you saw them try to get out of their place in the line, and now it is plain to all of us that last night they simply took to their heels and fled. Once they found it necessary to fight against troops which are, in actual fact, first-rate, they showed clearly enough that there's nothing in them, and that their reputation was gained merely amongst Greeks – who have nothing in them either. Now *you* I can excuse for praising these men: you know nothing about the Persians – and you did know one or two things the Spartans have done; but I was much more surprised at Artabazus, that *he* should be frightened of the Lacedaemonians, and allow his fear to suggest to him the shameful policy of a general retreat within the fortifications of Thebes, where we should stand a siege. I shall take care that the king is informed

of that proposal of his – but that can wait; our immediate task is not to let the Greeks escape us by what they have done: they must be pursued till they are caught and punished for all the injuries they have inflicted upon us.'

So saying, Mardonius gave the order to advance. His men 59
crossed the Asopus and followed at the double in the track of the Greek forces who, it was supposed, were in full flight. Actually, it was the Spartans and Tegeans only that Mardonius was after, for the Athenians, who had marched by a different route across the level ground, were hidden from sight by the intervening hills.

When the officers of the other divisions of Mardonius' army saw the Persian contingent start in pursuit, they immediately ordered the standards to be raised, and all the troops under their command joined in the chase as fast as their legs would carry them. Without any attempt to maintain formation they swept forward, yelling and shouting, never doubting that they would make short work of the fugitives. Pausanias, when the enemy 60
cavalry fell upon him, sent a rider to the Athenians with an appeal for help. 'Men of Athens,' the message ran, 'the great struggle is now upon us – the struggle which will determine the liberty or enslavement of Greece; but our friends fled last night from the field of battle and have betrayed us both. Now, therefore, our duty is plain: we must defend ourselves and protect each other as best we can. Had it been you who were first attacked by the Persian horse, we should have been bound to come to your assistance, together with the Tegeans who are, like us, loyal to the cause of Greece; but as we, not you, are bearing the whole weight of the attack, it is your duty to support those who are hardest pressed. If you are in any difficulty which prevents you from coming to our aid, then send us your archers, and we shall be grateful. We acknowledge that throughout this war your zeal has been equalled by none; you will not, then, refuse this request.'

On receipt of this message the Athenians started to the relief 61
of the Spartans, to whom they were anxious to give all the help they could; but they were no sooner on the move than they were attacked by the Greek troops under Persian command, who

held the position facing them. The attack was a heavy one, and made it impossible for them to carry out their purpose, so that the Lacedaemonians and Tegeans, whom nothing could induce to leave their side, were left to fight alone – the former 50,000 strong, including the light-armed auxiliaries, the latter 3000.

Once more, as they were about to engage with Mardonius and his men, they performed the ritual of sacrifice. The omens were not favourable; and meanwhile many of their men were killed, and many more wounded, for the Persians had made a barricade of their wicker shields and from the protection of it were shooting arrows in such numbers that the Spartan troops were in serious distress; this, added to the unfavourable results of the sacrifice, at last caused Pausanias to turn his eyes to the temple of Hera and to call upon the goddess for her aid, praying her not to allow the Greeks to be robbed of their hope of victory.
62 Then, while the words were still upon his lips, the Tegeans sprang forward to lead the attack, and a moment later the sacrificial victims promised success. At this, the Spartans, too, at last moved forward against the enemy, who stopped shooting their arrows and prepared to meet them face to face.[26]

First there was a struggle at the barricade of shields; then, the barricade down, there was a bitter and protracted fight, hand to hand, close by the temple of Demeter, for the Persians would lay hold of the Spartan spears and break them; in courage and strength they were as good as their adversaries, but they were deficient in armour, untrained, and greatly inferior in skill. Sometimes singly, sometimes in groups of ten men – perhaps fewer, perhaps more – they fell upon the Spartan line and were
63 cut down. They pressed hardest at the point where Mardonius fought in person – riding his white charger, and surrounded by his thousand Persian troops, the flower of the army. While Mardonius was alive, they continued to resist and to defend themselves, and struck down many of the Lacedaemonians; but after his death, and the destruction of his personal guard – the finest of the Persian troops – the remainder yielded to the Lacedaemonians and took to flight. The chief cause of their discomfiture was their lack of armour, fighting without it against hoplites.

Thus the prophecy of the oracle was fulfilled,[27] and Mardon- 64
ius rendered satisfaction to the Spartans for the killing of Leonidas; and thus, too, Pausanias, son of Cleombrotus and grandson of Anaxandrides, won the most splendid victory of all those we know. (I have given Pausanias' ancestors before Anaxandrides where I gave the genealogy of Leonidas.) Mardonius was killed by Aeimnestus, a distinguished Spartan, who some time after the Persian wars met his own death, together with the three hundred men under his command, at Stenyclerus fighting against the entire forces of the Messenians.[28]

Once their resistance was broken by the Lacedaemonians, the 65
Persian troops fled in disorder and took refuge in the wooden fort which they had erected in Theban territory. It is a wonder to me how it should have happened that, though the battle was fought close to the holy precinct of Demeter, not a single Persian soldier was found dead upon the sacred soil, or ever appears to have set foot upon it, while round about the temple, on unconsecrated ground, the greatest number were killed. My own view is – if one may have views at all about divine matters – that the Goddess herself would not let them in, because they had burnt her sanctuary at Eleusis.[29]

Artabazus, the son of Pharnaces, had disapproved from the 66
first of Xerxes' action in leaving Mardonius behind in Greece, and had done his best, though without success, to dissuade Mardonius from an engagement; consequently having from the first disliked Mardonius' strategy, this is what he did. He had under his command a considerable force of some 40,000 men; well aware, as he was, of what the issue was likely to be, he gave orders to this force, as soon as the fighting began, to advance in good order and to follow his lead at whatever pace he might set them. At first he made as if to lead his men into battle; but he had not advanced very far before he saw the Persians already in flight, whereupon he no longer kept to his order of march, but suddenly wheeled about and beat a retreat – not to the barricade, or to Thebes, but direct to Phocis, in his desire to reach the Hellespont with the least possible delay.

Most of the Greek troops on the king's side made little or no 67
attempt to distinguish themselves. This, however, was not true

of the Boeotians, who had a long struggle with the Athenians; for the Thebans who had gone over to the enemy, far from deliberately shirking duty, fought so hard that three hundred of their best and bravest men were killed. When they, too, were overpowered, they fled to Thebes, but not with the defeated Persians or the mixed crowd of confederate troops, who made their escape without striking a blow or doing any service whatever. It is perfectly obvious that everything depended upon the Persians: the rest of Mardonius' army took to their heels simply because they saw the Persians in retreat, and before they had even come to grips with the enemy. The only section of Mardonius' army which was not hopelessly routed was the cavalry – especially the Boeotian cavalry: this force did good service to the fugitives, keeping all the time in close contact with the enemy and acting as a screen between their friends and the pursuing Greeks.

68

69 During the panic rout of the enemy, while the victors were still pursuing the fugitives with great slaughter, news of the battle and of Pausanias' success reached the Greeks who were stationed near the temple of Hera and had taken no part in the fighting. The moment they heard the turn events had taken, they rushed forward in a mob, the Corinthians and their division by the upper routes across the foothills of Cithaeron, straight for the temple of Demeter, the Megarians, Phliasians and others by the level route through the plain. These last had nearly got into touch with the enemy when they were seen by the Theban cavalry under Asopodorus son of Timander, who, taking advantage of their complete lack of order and discipline, promptly attacked, killing six hundred of them and driving the remainder in headlong flight into the hills – an inglorious end.[30] Mardonius'

70 men – Persians and all – who took refuge behind their wooden palisade, managed to get up into the bastions before the Lacedaemonians were on them, and at once did what they could to strengthen their defences. When the Lacedaemonians arrived, a struggle of some vigour began, but, as they have never mastered the art of attacking defensive works, the Persians kept them out and had much the better of it, until the Athenians reached the scene of action. Then, with the arrival of the Athenians, the fight

for the palisade was long and violent, until at last, by courage and perseverance, they forced their way up and made a breach, through which the rest of the army poured. First in were the Tegeans; and it was they who plundered Mardonius' tent, taking from it, amongst much else, the manger used by his horses – a remarkable piece of work, all in bronze. They placed this manger as an offering in the temple of Athene Alea, whereas everything else they took was brought into the common stock of plunder taken by the Greeks generally. Once the palisade was down, the Persians no longer kept together as an organized force; soldierly virtues were all forgotten; chaos prevailed and, huddled in thousands within that confined space, all of them were half dead with fright. To the Greeks they were such an easy prey that of the 300,000 men (excluding the 40,000 who fled with Artabazus) not 3000 survived. The Spartan losses in the battle amounted to 91 killed; the Tegeans lost 16, the Athenians 52.

Of the enemy's infantry, the Persian contingent fought best; 71
of the cavalry, the Sacae; and of individuals Mardonius himself is said to have been as good as any. On the Greek side, the troops from Tegea and Athens were conspicuous in the fighting, but both were surpassed by the Lacedaemonians: the only evidence I can offer to support this statement (for all three were victorious in their own section of the line) is the fact that the Lacedaemonians had the hardest task. They were matched against the best troops of the enemy – and beat them. Much the greatest courage was shown, in my opinion, by Aristodemus – the man who had suffered the disgrace of being the sole survivor of the Three Hundred at Thermopylae. After him, the greatest personal distinction was won by the three Spartans, Posidonius, Philocyon, and Amompharetus. However, when, after the battle, the question of who had most distinguished himself was discussed, the Spartans present decided that Aristodemus had, indeed, performed great deeds, but that he had done so merely to retrieve his lost honour, rushing forward with the fury of a madman in his desire to be killed before his comrades' eyes; Posidonius, on the contrary, without any wish to be killed, had fought bravely, and was on that account the better man. It may,

of course, have been envy which made them say this; in any case, the men I mentioned all received public honours except Aristodemus – Aristodemus got nothing, because he deliberately
72 courted death for the reason already explained.[31] These, then, were the men who beyond others made names for themselves at Plataea; Callicrates, on the other hand, was killed before the real action began – Callicrates, the handsomest man in the Greek army, Lacedaemonians and everyone else included. He was sitting in his place, while Pausanias was offering sacrifice, and was hit in the side by an arrow. As the two armies engaged, he was carried out of the line, and died hard. 'It is no sorrow to me', he said to Arimnestus the Plataean, 'to die for my country; what grieves me is, that I have not used my arm or done anything worthy of myself, such as I longed to do.'

73 The Athenian who is said most to have distinguished himself was Sophanes, the son of Eutychides, from the deme of Decelea – once upon a time the scene of an action which, the Athenians say, has been useful to them ever since. Long ago, when the sons of Tyndareus invaded Attica with a large army to recover Helen, and, unable to find her hiding-place, were laying the village in ruin, the men of Decelea (or some say Decelus himself), in resentment at Theseus' high-handed conduct, and alarm for the safety of the whole Athenian territory, revealed the whole thing to the invaders and guided them to Aphidnae, which Titacus, a native of the place, betrayed into their hands. In return for this service, Sparta has ever since given the Deceleans the freedom of their city and special seats at public functions – so that during the war, many years after these events between Athens and Sparta, the Spartans in their raids on Attica always left Decelea
74 unharmed.[32] This, then, was the village to which Sophanes belonged. Of his prowess at Plataea two accounts are given: according to one, he carried an iron anchor made fast to the belt of his corslet with a bronze chain; with this he would anchor himself whenever he got near the enemy, to prevent their attacks from shifting him; then, when the enemy retreated, he would up-anchor and chase them. According to the other account, which differs from the former one, he did not have an actual iron anchor attached to his corslet, but merely bore the device

of an anchor on his shield, which he kept continually spinning round and round. Another famous exploit of Sophanes was 75
during the Athenian siege of Aegina, when he killed Eurybates the Argive, a winner of the pentathlon, in single combat.[33] His ultimate fate was to meet his death in a battle with the Edoni for the gold mines at Datum, where he did good service as joint commander of the Athenians with Leagrus, the son of Glaucon.

After the rout at Plataea, a woman, who had made her escape 76
from the Persians, came into the Greek lines. She was a concubine of the Persian Pharandates, the son of Teaspis; and when she realized that the Persian army was done for and that the Greeks were winning the day, she dressed herself and her maids in the finest things she possessed, loaded herself with gold ornaments, and, getting down from her covered waggon, made her way to the Spartans while the work of slaughter was still in progress. She soon recognized Pausanias; for not only was she already acquainted, from what she had often heard, with his name and country, but she could also see for herself that he was directing all the operations. 'O King of Sparta,' she cried, clasping his knees in supplication, 'save me, I beg you, from the slavery which awaits the prisoner of war! For one service I am already in your debt – the killing of these men, who reverence neither gods nor divinities. I am a native of Cos, and the daughter of Hegetorides and granddaughter of Antagoras. That Persian took me by force and kept me against my will.'

'You need not be afraid,' Pausanias replied; 'as a suppliant you are safe – and still more so, if you are indeed the daughter of Hegetorides of Cos, for he is bound to me by closer ties of friendship than anyone else in those parts.' With these words he put her in the charge of the Spartan magistrates who happened to be on the spot, and afterwards sent her, at her own wish, to Aegina.

Immediately after this woman's visit, the troops from Man- 77
tinea arrived upon the scene – too late. Such was their indignation and distress when they found that all was over, that they declared they deserved to be punished. Somebody told them about the Persian force which had made its escape with Artabazus, and they were all for going in pursuit of it to Thessaly;

but the Spartans refused to allow them, so they returned home and passed sentence of exile upon their army leaders. Next the troops from Elis arrived – and they, too, had to go home again in disappointment, which they marked in the same way as the Mantineans, by banishing their officers.

78 Serving with the Aeginetans at Plataea there was a man named Lampon. His father was Pytheas, and he was a person of the highest distinction in his native town. This man went to see Pausanias, and urged upon him an unholy proposal. 'Son of Cleombrotus,' he said, 'the service you have already rendered is noble beyond all expectation. God has granted you the privilege of saving Greece and of winning for yourself the greatest glory of all Greeks of whom we know. Now, to crown all, there is one thing more that you should do, both to increase your own reputation and to make foreigners think twice in future before they offer insult and injury to the Greeks. When Leonidas was killed at Thermopylae, Xerxes and Mardonius had his head cut off and stuck on a pike: have your revenge, then; render like for like, and you will win the praise not only of every man in Sparta, but of every man in Greece. Impale Mardonius' body, and Leonidas, your father's brother, will be avenged.'

Lampon really thought that this would be an acceptable
79 suggestion; Pausanias, however, replied: 'I thank you, my Aeginetan friend, for your goodwill and concern for me; but, in regard to your judgement, you have failed to hit the mark. First, you exalt me and my country to the skies by your praise of my success; and then you would bring it all to nothing by advising me to insult a dead body, and by saying that my good name would be increased if I were to do an improper thing fitter for barbarians than Greeks – and even then we think it repulsive. No, indeed; in this matter I hope I shall never please the Aeginetans, or anyone else who approves such beastliness. It is enough for me to please the Spartans, by reverence and decency in both word and deed. As for Leonidas, whom you wish me to avenge, he is, I maintain, abundantly avenged already – surely the countless lives here taken are a sufficient price not for Leonidas only, but for all the others, too, who fell at Thermopylae. Never come to me with such a proposal again, and be grateful that you

are allowed to go unpunished.' When he heard that, Lampon 80
retired.[34]

Pausanias now issued an order that everything of value which had fallen into their hands as a result of the battle should be collected by the helots, and that nobody else should touch it. The helots accordingly went through the whole camp. Treasure was there in plenty – tents full of gold and silver furniture; couches overlaid with the same precious metals; bowls, goblets, and cups, all of gold; and waggons loaded with sacks full of gold and silver basins. From the bodies of the dead they stripped anklets and chains and golden-hilted scimitars, not to mention richly embroidered clothes which, amongst so much of greater value, seemed of no account. Everything which the helots could not conceal – and that was a great deal – they declared to their superiors; but there was a great deal, too, which they stole and sold afterwards to the Aeginetans, who, by buying the gold at the price of brass (which the helots supposed it to be), laid the foundation of their future wealth.

When all the stuff had been collected, a tenth was set apart 81
for the god at Delphi, and from this was made the gold tripod which stands next the altar on the three-headed bronze snake;[35] portions were also assigned to the gods at Olympia and the Isthmus, and from these were made, in the first case, a bronze Zeus, fifteen feet high,[36] and, in the second, a bronze Poseidon, nine and a half feet high. The rest of the booty – the Persians' women, pack-animals, gold, silver, and so on – was divided amongst the troops, every man receiving his due. There is no record of any special awards for distinguished service in the battle, but I imagine that they must have been made. Pausanias himself was granted ten of everything – women, horses, talents, camels, and everything else.

It is said that Xerxes on his retreat from Greece left his tent 82
with Mardonius. When Pausanias saw it, with its embroidered hangings and gorgeous decorations in silver and gold, he summoned Mardonius' bakers and cooks and told them to prepare a meal of the same sort as they were accustomed to prepare for their former master. The order was obeyed; and when Pausanias saw gold and silver couches all beautifully draped, and gold and

silver tables, and everything prepared for the feast with great magnificence, he could hardly believe his eyes for the good things set before him, and, just for a joke, ordered his own servants to get ready an ordinary Spartan dinner. The difference between the two meals was indeed remarkable, and, when both were ready, Pausanias laughed and sent for the Greek commanding officers. When they arrived, he invited them to take a look at the two tables, saying, 'Men of Greece, I asked you here in order to show you the folly of the Persians, who, living in this style, came to Greece to rob us of our poverty.'

83 Long after these events many people in Plataea found coffers full of gold, silver, and other valuables. Another interesting thing also came to light: when the flesh had fallen away from the bodies of the Persian dead, and the Plataeans were collecting the skeletons, a skull was found with no join in it – the bone being seamless and continuous; a jaw, too, was picked up, which had all the teeth, front and back, joined together in a continuous line of bone; also the skeleton of a man of seven and a half feet high.[37]

84 The body of Mardonius disappeared the day after the battle; but I cannot say with certainty who it was that took it away. I have heard of many people of all sorts who are said to have buried him, and I know that many received substantial rewards from his son Artontes for doing so; none the less, I am unable to satisfy myself which of them it really was that removed the body and buried it. One story has it that it was a man from Ephesus named Dionysophanes. In any case it appears that he *was* buried somehow.

85 After the distribution of the booty the Greeks proceeded to bury their own dead, those from each contingent in a separate grave. The Lacedaemonians made three graves – one for the priests, amongst whom were Posidonius, Amompharetus, Philocyon, and Callicrates; another for the rest of the Spartans; and a third for the helots.[38] The Tegeans buried all their dead in a common grave; so did the Athenians, and the Megarians and Phliasians buried together those who had been killed by the cavalry.

Unlike these tombs, which were real ones containing the