The Greek Historians

The Essence of

HERODOTUS
THUCYDIDES
XENOPHON
POLYBIUS

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The World of Odysseus
Studies in Land and Credit in Ancient Athens, 500-200 B.C.
The Ancient Greeks
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History in its root sense means inquiry. For a considerable time before it took on the specific, narrower meaning the word now has, and even long thereafter—we still say "natural history"—the stress was on the inquiry as such, regardless of subject matter, on the search for explanation and understanding. Man is a rational being: if he asks rational questions, he can, by the unaided efforts of his intellect, discover rational answers. But first he must discover that about himself. The Greeks did, in the seventh century B.C. (insofar as so abstract a notion can be dated at all), and thereby they established the greatest of their claims to immortality. Significantly, the inquiry was first directed to the most universal matters, the nature of being and the cosmos. Only later was it extended to man himself, his social relations and his past.

It was no accident that this profound intellectual revolution took place in the region the Greeks called Ionia (the west coast of Turkey). There they were in closest touch with the older cultures of the ancient Near East. Greek-speaking peoples first migrated into the lower Balkans by 2000 or 1900 B.C. and eventually spread eastward across the Aegean Sea (and later west to Sicily and southern Italy). Like all invaders, they adopted and adapted a variety of ideas and institutions from their new neighbours. How much they borrowed we are only beginning to appreciate, as one after another the lost languages of the area are recovered, most
recently Mycenaean Greek itself. In the course of centuries
religious ideas, gods, myths and rituals, scientific and tech-
nological information found their way from Babylonians,
Hittites, Hurrites, and other peoples of the Near East and were
embodied in Greek ways of life and thought on a scale un-
dreamed of by historians fifty or a hundred years ago.

Paradoxically, the more we learn about this process of
diffusion and adaptation, the more astonishing is the original-
ity of the Greeks. One need only read their earliest poetry
or look at their archaic statues and vases to catch some of
the genius. Then one turns to the Ionian intellectual rev-
olution for another side of it, the spirit of rational inquiry.
Without Babylonian mathematics and astronomy and metal-
lurgy there could have been no Thales or Anaximander. But
it was the Ionian Greeks, not their Babylonian forerunners,
who first asked the critical questions about the earth and the
stars and metals and matter. And so, too, with man himself
and his past. The older civilizations had their records and
their chronicles, but the essential element of inquiry, of
history, was lacking. The writers of these accounts, the late
R. G. Collingwood pointed out, were “not writing history,”
they were “writing religion”; they were not inquiring, they
were recording “known facts for the information of persons
to whom they are not known, but who, as worshippers of the
god in question, ought to know the deeds whereby he has
made himself manifest.”¹ It was the Ionians, again, who
first thought to ask questions in a systematic way about the
supposedly known facts, in particular about their meaning
in rational, human terms.

The magnitude and boldness of this innovation must not
be underestimated. Today we too easily assume, without
giving it much thought, that a concern with history is a
natural human activity. All men have memories and “live
in the past” to a greater or less extent. Is it not natural that
they should be interested in their ancestors and the past of
their community, people, nation? Yes, but such an interest
is not necessarily the same thing as history. It can be satisfied


entirely by myth, and, in fact, that is how most of mankind
has customarily dealt with the past (and, in a very real sense,
still does). Myth serves admirably to provide the necessary
continuity of life, not only with the past but with nature and
the gods as well. It is rich and vivid, it is concrete and yet
full of symbolic meanings and associations, it explains insti-
tutions and rites and feelings, it is instructive—above all,
it is real and true and immediately comprehensible. It served
the early Greeks perfectly.

When myth was finally challenged, by the Ionian enlight-
enment, the attack was directed not to the events and the
stories, such as the details of the Trojan War, but to the
mythic view of life and the cosmos, to its theogony and
divine interventions. “Homer and Hesiod have attributed to
the gods everything that is disgraceful and blameworthy
among men: theft, adultery, and deceit.” So runs the famous
protest by Xenophanes of Colophon, who was born about
570 B.C. Such criticism helped bring about a new cosmology
and a new ethics; it did not, of itself, lead to the study of
history. The skeptics stripped the traditional accounts of
irrational elements and contradictions, but they neither
doubted the remaining hard core nor tried to extend it by
research of their own. They historicized myth, they did not
write history. A remarkable example will be found in the
first fifteen chapters of Thucydides. Here is a rapid review
of the evolution of Greek society in which not a single trace
of the mythic conception survives: the gods have disap-
peared completely, and with them fate and fortune and every
other extra-human agency. In their place Thucydides put
common-sense human causes and impulses, and the result
looks so much like history that many people today, even
historians who should know better, praise it as a great piece
of historical writing. In fact what Thucydides did was to take
the common Greek traditions, divest them of what he con-
sidered to be their false trappings, and reformulate them in
a brilliantly coherent picture by thinking hard about them,
using as his sole tools what he knew about the world of his
own day, its institutions and its psychology.
It takes more than skepticism about old traditions to produce historical investigation. A positive stimulus is needed, and again Ionia provided the starting point. That part of the Greek world was not only in closest contact with other peoples, eventually it was also subjected to them, first to the Lydians and then to the Persians. The Greeks thought it was important to know something about their overlords, and so they investigated the subject and wrote books putting together the geography, antiquities, customs, and bits of history of the nations with whom they were concerned. Significantly, this had never been done before: the prevailing view, as any reader of the Old Testament must realize, was totally ethnocentric. Nations other than one's own had no intrinsic interest. Significantly, too, the Greek innovation was for a long time a restricted one: they were not attracted to ethnography as such, or history as such, but to the manners and institutions of the two nations with whom their lives were now closely bound. The Greeks had no myths to account for the past of the Lydians and Persians. That is why their first steps toward historical writing—for these works were not histories in any proper sense—were about foreign nations, not about themselves.

None of this writing survives apart from scattered quotations. Its general character, however, is clear enough from the first half of Herodotus' book. Herodotus, born early in the fifth century B.C. in the city of Halicarnassus in Asia Minor, planned a periodos on an unprecedented scale. Stimulated no doubt by the Persian Wars, which demonstrated that thinking Greeks must widen their horizons, Herodotus decided to extend the inquiry to more peoples and places. He proposed to investigate as much as he could personally, to confront and cross-question a variety of expert witnesses, and to report faithfully and accurately what he learned, distinguishing for his audience between first- and second-hand information, between probable and improbable (or impossible) accounts, between what he believed to be true and what he disbelieved but repeated because it had significance nonetheless. Every reader can judge for himself how success-

fully Herodotus carried out his program. But, had he done no more, it is unlikely that we should now have this opportunity: in the end, his writings would have disappeared like those of Hecataeus and the others, and Herodotus would be just another name today, the author of a few surviving fragments of books called Lydiaca, Aegyptiaca, Scythica, and so on.

We know virtually nothing about the life of Herodotus, and therefore we can only infer when and why he made a radical shift in his program. It seems most likely that this happened in Athens, toward the middle of the century. There Herodotus began a new inquiry, one utterly unlike any which had been attempted before. He determined to reconstruct, by personal investigation, the generation of the Persian Wars. In the process, he assembled much material about still earlier generations of Greek history, and he tied his account to the mythical tradition, which he rationalized and historicized as well as he could. The final product is an amalgam, for Herodotus did not abandon his earlier work. The Aegyptiaca and Scythica appear as long digressions; the Lydians and Persians have their story woven in with Greek affairs, but they are also given space for customs and manners; and the Greeks themselves appear in semi-mythical form at times (with unmistakable influences from epic and tragedy). Yet the work as a whole is surely a history.

No twentieth-century reader can really visualize Herodotus at work, under conditions which make both his effort and the final result a miracle of human enterprise. Written records did not exist, for all practical purposes, and few men who had any direct knowledge of the Persian Wars (let alone the still earlier years) could have been alive when he began this part of his study. Everything—the politics and the battles and the ravaging of cities and the intrigues—had to be rescued from oral tradition, as it was preserved and transmitted among the great families of Athens or the priests of Delphi or the kings of Sparta. These traditions were fragmentary, unreliable, self-serving, and often contradictory. That he nevertheless undertook so difficult and unprece-
dent a task implies some overpowering impulse, and I have little doubt that it was a political one, in the broadest sense of that term. Democratic Athens, under Pericles, was asserting itself with more and more pressure in the Greek world, offering leadership and military security, but at the same time demanding, and if necessary compelling, tribute and a measure of dependence. Difficult problems were raised—political problems which were, as always, at heart moral questions. Discussion was lively and often heated; out of it the sophists, and later Socrates, created the new discipline of ethics and, as a subdivision, political theory. Herodotus was no philosopher, he was not even a systematic thinker; but he was no less sensitive than the sophists and the tragedians to the great moral issues, and he made a unique contribution to the discussion. He found a moral justification for Athenian dominance in the role she had played in the Persian Wars, and he sought to capture that story and fix it before its memory was lost.

Herodotus had a most subtle mind, and the story he told was complex, full of shadings and paradoxes and qualifications. In traditional religion, for example, he stood somewhere between outright skepticism and the murky piety of Aeschylus. His political vision was Athenian and democratic, but it lacked any trace of chauvinism. He was committed, but not for one moment did that release him from the high obligation of understanding. His great discovery was that one could uncover moral problems and moral truths in history, in the concrete data of experience, in a discourse which was neither freely imaginative like that of the poets nor abstract like that of the philosophers. That is what history meant to Herodotus; nothing could be more wrongly-headed than the persistent and seemingly indestructible legend of Herodotus the charmingly naïve storyteller.

It did not follow as a self-evident and automatic consequence that the new discovery was at once welcomed or that histories and historians arose on all sides to advance the new discipline. The Athenians appreciated Herodotus, obviously, and yet a full generation was to elapse before anyone thought it a good idea to write a complete history of Athens, and even then the step was taken by a foreigner, Hellanicus of Lesbos, and he was an annalist, a chronicler, not a historian, and he continued to repeat the traditional myths alongside more recent, verifiable history. Other Greeks naturally presented the phil-Athenianism of Herodotus and his version of their role in the Persian Wars, but they did not rush to reply by writing their own histories. They objected and they challenged a detail here and there, and they eventually pinned the label “Father of Lies” to him, a late echo of which can still be read in Plutarch’s essay On the Malice of Herodotus. The new discipline, in short, remained highly problematic. In all honesty men could doubt whether it was possible to know the past, and whether the effort to find out was worth the trouble.

One man who read Herodotus carefully and fully appreciated his achievement (and the inherent difficulties) was Thucydides. He was probably in his late twenties when the second decisive struggle in Greek history broke out in 431 B.C., the war between Athens and Sparta, and he decided immediately that he would be its historian. Apart from the acute prognostic sense which Thucydides revealed thereby, his decision was a critical one for the future of Greek historical writing in general. There could be no more complete turning of one’s back on the past than this, the idea of writing a history of an event which lay in the future. The war lasted twenty-seven years and Thucydides survived it, possibly by five years. All through it he worked away at his book with a remarkable singleness of purpose, collecting evidence, sifting, checking and double-checking, writing and revising, and all the time thinking hard about the problems: about the war itself, its causes and issues, about Pericles, about the Athenian Empire, about politics and man’s behaviour as a political animal.

The book was not finished: that is obvious at a glance, and the way it breaks off more than six years before the end of the war leaves us with something of a puzzle. Possibly Thucydides found himself in a bitter impasse, unable to
resolve to his own satisfaction either the general problems of politics, which concerned him more and more as the war continued, or the more technical questions of how to present to the public what he thought and what he had learned. The book is filled with tension, not merely the external tensions inevitable in so long and difficult a war, but also the inner conflicts of the author, as he tried to fight through the mass of facts and the complex moral issues which became obsessive with him, to a basic understanding of politics and ethics. He certainly did not abandon his life work in the year in which the manuscript suddenly stops. There are things in the earliest portions which could not have been said until after the end of the war in 404 B.C. There are unmistakable evidences of rethinking and rewriting. Very probably the Funeral Oration and Pericles’ last speech were among the latest sections Thucydides wrote, and they (together with the so-called Melian Dialogue at the end of the fifth book) sum up the whole generation as Thucydides saw it at the end of his life.

From the standpoint of the history of historical writing, Thucydides’ political ideas are perhaps not so interesting as his technique. To begin with, he set out consciously to overcome certain weaknesses in Herodotus: hence the insistence on careful checking of eyewitness testimony, on precise chronology, on the total elimination of “romance” from his work, on a rational analysis which has no patience with oracles and supernatural interventions and divine punishments. His account of the great plague in Athens, for example, is a model of reporting; Thucydides even equipped himself with the most advanced medical knowledge, and his technical language and accuracy on this subject are unparalleled among lay writers in the whole of antiquity. All this is so impressive and has such an aura of earnestness and sincerity that, even though we have no independent evidence for virtually anything Thucydides tells us, we believe him without hesitation. The same cannot be said of any other historian in the ancient world.

It is no underestimation of these remarkable qualities in Thucydides to say that none of this—whatever its worth sub specie aeternitatis—locates him in the development of Greek historiography. Our admiration, however warranted, tends to divert attention from the crucial fact that his subject was contemporary, that he was writing about things which were happening under his eyes, or in sight of others whom he could cross-examine, not about events of the literally dead past. Therefore in his very explicit statement of his working methods and principles there is not one word about research into documents or traditions; there are only the rules to be followed in eliciting accurate information from eyewitnesses.

When Thucydides did make a brief excursion into earlier times, as in the first fifteen chapters or in the sketch of developments from the point at which Herodotus’ history breaks off to the beginning of the account of the Peloponnesian War, his motives were either to justify his own work or to provide certain necessary background materials, nothing more. They were not history, either in Thucydides’ sense or in ours; they were introductory to his proper subject. Only contemporary history could be really known and grasped; if one worked hard enough and with sufficient intelligence and honesty, one could know and write the history of one’s own age: that, we may say, was Thucydides’ answer to the doubters, to the men who challenged Herodotus and the validity of his enterprise.

But what about the past? If one is interested in it, then what? In a famous and unique digression, Thucydides set out at some length to prove that, contrary to the common and official view, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who had assassinated Hipparchus near the end of the previous century, were not the liberators of Athens from tyranny, because it was Hippias who was the elder son of Pisistratus, and therefore he (and not his brother Hipparchus) was the reigning tyrant at that time. There has been much speculation about Thucydides’ reasons for this digression, which adds nothing to his story, and the most likely explanation is that he inserted it, at a late date, in reply to something—perhaps the publication of Hellanicus’ chronicle of Athens—which annoyed him. His proof, which is perfectly sound, rested on two dedicatory
inscriptions. This is an astonishing performance precisely because of its irrelevance, for it is one of the very few instances in which he quoted a document of any kind. Nothing else in the work shows so decisively what a great historian of the past Thucydides could have been. Here, he seems to be saying in contemptuous anger, is the way to go about writing the history of the past, if you think it is worth the bother.

Thucydides himself emphatically did not think it was. He shared the firm conviction, general among Greek thinkers, that mere knowledge of facts for their own sake was pointless (and sometimes harmful). Curiosity, a desire to know, had to lead to understanding, virtue, action. Of course, it is impossible to guess just what the young Thucydides had in mind when he decided, in 431 B.C., to become the war’s historian. Perhaps he had no clear idea himself. But the time came—and I believe very quickly—when he set himself the goal of uncovering, through the story of his own generation, the essentials of man’s behaviour, his political behaviour. That would be the “possession for all time” he would give to the world. And that, I suggest, is why Thucydides abandoned the past for the present. Human nature and human behaviour were for him essentially fixed qualities, the same in one century as in another. The good and the bad, the rational and the passionate and irrational, the moral and the immoral, the attractions and excesses of power—these were always present and operative, in various combinations. Therefore they could best be brought to light, where they could be studied and known, in the contemporary world rather than in the bygone generations which one could never really know. For Thucydides the choice was made even simpler and more obvious by the Peloponnesian War, which, he took pains to demonstrate in his introduction, was the greatest power struggle in Greek history.

By moving from history, in its narrower sense of a narrative of the war, to the basic political questions, Thucydides set himself an unattainable goal. It was difficult enough for him to reach the depth of understanding he desired. There remained the equally difficult problem of finding ways to communicate to his readers what he had learned. Merely to write the history of the Peloponnesian War, no matter how accurately and completely, would not do: that would add up to nothing more than a succession of concrete events, and how could the general ideas emerge from this mass of facts, each a particular and unique datum? To be sure, there is no explicit statement by Thucydides to say that he thought in those terms; nevertheless, the book he wrote seems to me to suffer no other explanation.

To begin with, there is the question of his selection of materials. All historical writing, like any form of rational discourse, must choose the relevant and discard the rest, must group and organize data, establish connections and patterns. But very often Thucydides’ exclusions transcend the limits of the permissible by any definition of history that the modern world would recognize. For example, he wrote a long analysis of the civil disturbance (στάσις) in Corcyra and thereafter he ignored this major factor of fifth-century Greek history almost completely, to the extent of not mentioning a number of other occurrences at all, not even those which had a demonstrably important bearing on the war. The balance is equally lopsided with the men in the war: instead of the expected proportions, according to Thucydides’ judgement of the significance of the various generals and politicians, the method tends to be all or nothing. Of the popular leaders in Athens after the death of Pericles, only Cleon is given a role; the others receive no attention and are sometimes not even named. This cannot be dismissed as carelessness. Thucydides was too intelligent and serious a writer; we must assume that a principle of selection was at work, and I find it in his search for general ideas. Having demonstrated the nature and meaning of στάσις, or the character and function of the demagogue, he saw no necessity to report other instances of the same general phenomenon. One good example was sufficient for his purposes; the rest would be useless repetition.

It is to be noticed, further, how the ideal demagogue is
portrayed, in the shape of Cleon. Although Cleon was the
decisive personality in Athens for at least five years, among
the most crucial in the war, he is allowed but three full-dress
appearances, much like the character in a play. Thucydides
required no more in order to fix the image of Cleon com-
pletely, and he left everything else out. We are not told any-
thing about Cleon's rise to power, or about his financial
measures, or about his program in any proper sense. And
characteristically, one of the three appearances is in the
Mitylene debate, in which Cleon was outvoted in the as-
sembly. Speeches, often in antithetical pairs, were Thuc-
ydides' favorite device, and his most problematical one.
Despite his explicit statement about his method with respect
to speeches, they have perplexed and upset commentators
from antiquity to our own day. It is simply undeniable that
all the speeches are in the same style, Thucydides' own, and
that some of the remarks could not have been made by the
speakers in question. Worse still, in the Mitylene debate,
whether Cleon and Diodotus are accurately reported in sub-
stance or not, the whole tone is false. From what Thucydides
himself said in introducing the two speeches, his choice of
these two out of the many which were actually delivered
that day in the assembly distorted the actual issues, and dis-
torted them badly. Thucydides was surely not unaware of
the effect he was creating—that would be too stupid—and
therefore we have still another instance of how his interest
in general ideas prevailed over mere reporting, and, in that
sense, over historical accuracy. When it comes, finally, to the
Melian Dialogue (which I have not included among the
selections), history goes by the boards altogether. For what-
ever reason, Thucydides chose that point in his story to write
a little sophistical piece, thinly disguised as a secret dis-
ussion between two groups of unnamed negotiators, in
which he played with abstract ideas of justice and empire,
right and might, freedom and slavery.

In the end we are confronted with two different, and al-
most unrelated, kinds of writing brought together under one
cover as Thucydides' "history" of the Peloponnesian War.

On the one hand there is the painstaking, precise, almost
impersonal reporting, filled with minor details arranged in
strict chronology. And on the other hand there are the many
tests, varied in form and tone, to get beneath and behind
the facts, to uncover and bring into clear focus the realities
of politics, the psychology of political behaviour, the rights
and wrongs of power. These are, by and large, much the
more interesting and enduring sections of the work, and the
most personal (though rarely in the naive dress of outright
torializing). They are the most dramatic, in form more
than in content; they are the freest, in their portrayal of a
few men and events and their exclusion of many others, in
their accent, and even, I may say, in their preaching. They
represent the Thucydides who restricted Cleon to three ap-
pearances; the other is the historian who solemnly put down
the names and patronymics of endless obscure commanders
and ship captains.

None of this is said in criticism of Thucydides. Few
historians have goaded and whipped themselves so mercilessly
for the better part of a lifetime to achieve complete
accuracy and at the same time to discover and communicate
those truths which would give value to, which would justify,
their effort. I do not believe Thucydides ever came to the
point of being satisfied that he had found the answers, either
to the great questions of political life or to the more philos-
ophical one of moving from the concrete and particular
event to the general truth. Increasingly, however, he seemed
to feel himself impelled away from narrow historical pres-
entation. The paradox is that to give meaning to history he
tended to abandon history. If the historian, by definition,
concentrates on the concrete event, then Thucydides, for all
his advance over his predecessor in techniques of investiga-
tion and checking, was a poorer historian, or at least less a
historian, than Herodotus. It is plain that he could have been
a greater one—I do not speak of charm and elegance of style
—but he chose otherwise. And his reasons, which I have
indicated, were beyond reproach.

No Greek again undertook a task so difficult and unre-
warding. The surviving histories after Thucydides number less than a dozen, but we know the names of nearly a thousand writers of history, of one sort or another, and all the evidence leaves no doubt that not one of them approached Thucydides in intellectual rigour or insight. At least five men in the middle or second half of the fourth century wrote continuations of Thucydides' history. One work survives, Xenophon's *Hellenica*, and it is very unreliable, tendentious, dishonest, dreary to read, and rarely illuminating on broader issues. Such talents as Xenophon had lay elsewhere, and that is why in this volume he is represented not by the *Hellenica* but by the *Anabasis*, the long story of the expedition of some ten thousand Greek mercenaries into the interior of the Persian Empire in support of an unsuccessful palace revolt, and of their difficult and exciting retreat. Xenophon was an officer on this march, and his account is superb. That kind of contemporary history he could master, but not the broader canvas.

Probably some, and perhaps all four, of the continuators of Thucydides were better historians than Xenophon. That is to say, they were more accurate, more penetrating in their analysis of events, and more skillful in combining and relating movements in various parts of the Greek world. But no more. We have no reason to believe that they appreciated the real problems of historiography which Thucydides saw, or that they really understood what troubled Thucydides and drove him to re-examine his ideas and his methods over and over again. Nor did the so-called Attidographers, the six men more or less contemporary with them who wrote—compiled, rather—lengthy chronicles of Athens, year by year, in which the mythological age received the same attention, on the same level and in the same tone, as the historical era proper. Thucydides saw in the study of contemporary history a road to understanding. Those who came after generally lowered their sights to far lesser goals: local patriotism, object lessons for politicians, elementary moralizing, and, above all, entertainment, high or low. The quality of their work, even at its best, was no better than their purposes deserved.

From Xenophon in the middle of the fourth century B.C. to Polybius two hundred years later, nothing survives. Our knowledge of these two centuries has suffered much as a result, but it is hardly conceivable that the art (or science) of history has lost anything of value. It is perhaps curious that the career of Alexander the Great failed to stimulate anything better than it did, memoirs written by several men closely associated with him and a large and constantly growing body of legend. But then, neither did Napoleon; his campaigns produced great novels, not great histories. After the fifth century Greek politics lacked the epic element which nourished Herodotus and Thucydides, and it was Rome which in the end provided the stimulus for the only Greek historian who was in any sense a worthy successor. Polybius also obeyed an impulse which was political, in his case stated much more explicitly. How did Rome succeed in conquering and dominating the world in so short a time? To answer that he produced a huge work, nothing less than a history of the "world," that is to say, of both Greek and Roman affairs, from the middle of the third century on.

Polybius was a good historian in many ways. If he was not of the calibre of Thucydides, I attribute that as much to his time as to his personal capacities. His expressed intentions and methods of work were sound, but his performance is often slovenly and inaccurate, his political analysis is very shallow, he is flagrantly partisan, and he repeatedly descends to the rhetorical tricks and sensationalism which he does not hesitate to censure severely in his predecessors. Nevertheless, he belongs to the great tradition of Greek historians because he, too, insisted that history must be instructive and that politics is its proper and serious subject, with the stress on the contemporary (it is noteworthy that his excuse for

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2 These works are reasonably well known, at reliable second hand, from the *Anabasis* of Arrian, who wrote about the middle of the second century of our era.
going back several generations is essentially aesthetic: every story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end); and because, within his limitations, he felt the danger of submerging the central problems and issues in the mass of concrete events. He editorialized all the time, so that no reader could possibly miss his points, and he digressed at length in one pivotal book, the sixth, in which he described the Roman constitution, explained and exemplified the theory of the cycle of governmental forms, and, with understandable caution, suggested that Rome would not escape this inevitable movement. Once again history failed a Greek historian. In order to demonstrate the cycles, which, if they are anything, are a historical phenomenon, Polybius made not the slightest attempt to write history. Instead, he gave a purely speculative account, of a kind long familiar to Greek philosophers from whom he borrowed it, into which he worked a number of comparative illustrations, inadequate, inconsistent, and all floating in the air, without historical context or concreteness.

Historians continued to write in Greek for centuries after Polybius. A few of them are not without interest—Diodorus, who used scissors and paste to compose a universal history; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who, at the end of the first century B.C., wrote a voluminous Roman Antiquities; Arrian; and Dio Cassius—but they belong essentially to Roman history, and, for all their effort and their knowledge of the past, they did not advance the art of history one bit. Nothing new will be learned from them about this subject. Only Plutarch was genuinely creative and original, and his kind of biographical writing brushes history very lightly. His interests were ethical and psychological. His selection of events, his organization of the material he chose, and his assessments—in short, his portraits—often came out of history (but often, too, from myth). They are live, real, profound, moral; but they remain abstractions from the past, not the history of a period or a career, not even biographies, in the historian's sense. There is a simple test: one need only try to re-create either fourth-century Athenian politics or Demosthenes' role in it from Plutarch's life of Demosthenes.³

The second half of the fifth century B.C. has been called the Greek age of enlightenment. The parallel is tempting, not least in the view of history: there are the same dissatisfaction with the prevailing mythical accounts of the past, the same insistence on a strictly rational explanation of events, the same feeling that a proper study of history could be illuminating. But the eighteenth-century enlightenment was followed, at once, by the emergence of modern historiography, with its technical refinements, its demand for absolute accuracy, its unflagging search for more and more evidence, its vast scale of investigation and interests. History became a discipline and its study a profession. Not so in ancient Greece. In biology, mathematics, and astronomy, in grammar and rhetoric, great work of systematic investigation and classification still lay ahead of the Greeks when the fifth century came to an end. Herodotus and Thucydides, however, led nowhere. What came after them was less systematic, less accurate, less serious, less professional. The fathers of history produced a stunted, sickly stock, weaker in each successive generation apart from a rare sport like Polybius.

It is not easy to explain the different outcomes of the two enlightenments; it is altogether impossible until we rid ourselves of the assumption that the study of history is a natural, inherent, inevitable kind of human activity. That few Greeks, if any, took this for granted is immediately apparent from the regularity with which most historians opened their works by justifying themselves, their efforts, and the particular subjects they chose. Utility or pleasure: that was how they customarily posed the alternative. Those who aimed at the latter were defeated before they began. Poetry was too deeply entrenched in Greek life, and, when the highest forms were epic and tragedy, both "historical," there was no chance for history unless it could demonstrate its value in other

³ It is only fair to add that some of his Roman biographies, such as the lives of the Gracchi, are much more "historical" than the Greek. But that is a mere difference in degree.
than aesthetic terms. How could Xenophon or Ephorus or Phylarchus compete with Homer, from whom every literate Greek learned his ABCs? Many tried, by rhetoric and sensationalism, by writing “tragic history” as Polybius contemptuously called it, and they failed on all scores: they still gave less pleasure than the poets and in the process their history became pseudo-history.

As for utility, somehow the essential intellectual and social conditions were lacking, at least in sufficient strength. One obstacle was the Greek passion for general principles. History, Aristotle said in a famous passage dismissing the subject, tells us only “what Alcibiades did and what he suffered.” And any Greek who was serious enough to inquire about such matters wanted to know not what happened, but why, and by what fixed principles, in human affairs as in the phenomena of nature. Not even Thucydides could find the solution in his historical work, and surely none of his successors, all lesser men. Poetry and philosophy gave the answers, and they valued the immutable and universal qualities far more than the individual and transient. There was no idea of progress—here the parallel with the modern enlightenment and its aftermath breaks down completely—and therefore there was no reason to look to the past for a process of continuing growth. What one found instead was either a cyclical movement, an endless coming-to-be and passing-away; or a decline from a golden age. Either way the objective was to discover the great absolute truths and then to seek their realization in life, through education and legislation. History, as the nineteenth century with its geneticism and its fact-mindedness understood the study, was obviously not the answer to the needs which the Greeks felt for themselves.

The presence or absence of the idea of progress (on a significant scale) is not just an intellectual phenomenon. It is not merely a matter of someone’s having thought the idea up, and then of its being widely accepted (or not) simply because it appealed to aesthetic sensibilities or emotions or

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*Poetics*, Chapter 9.

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logic. In the nineteenth century such an idea seemed self-evident: material progress was visible everywhere. In ancient Greece, after the emergence of the classical civilization of the fifth century, it was not visible at all. Everyone knew, of course, that there had been an earlier stage in Greek society and that non-Greeks, barbarians, lived quite differently, some of them (such as the Thracians or Scythians) being what we would call more “primitive.” This rudimentary conception fell short of the modern idea of progress in at least two respects, each fundamental and critical. In the first place, whatever advances were conceded were chiefly moral and institutional rather than material. Second, the Greeks of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. were unanimous (insofar as any people can ever be) in thinking that the city-state was the only correct political structure, in rejecting territorial expansion and growth in the size of the political organism as a road to social and moral improvement, and in ignoring completely the possibility of further technological and material progress (or the notion that this could have anything to do with the good life or a better life).

The differences which were observed were explained partly by differences in the quality of the men—as between Greeks and barbarians above all; and partly by differences in institutions. The former obviously invites no significant historical investigation. The latter might, but to them it rarely did, thanks to their *idée fixe* that current political institutions could be explained sufficiently by the genius of an original “lawgiver” and the subsequent moral behaviour of the community. That is why so much writing about Sparta gravitated around the largely legendary Lycurgus; or of Athens around Solon, who was a real person to be sure, but who by the middle of the fifth century B.C. had been mythicized beyond recognition. This kind of writing may, at its best as in Plutarch, have the air of history, but in fact it is not much more historical than the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* or Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*. And at its worst, it became a wild farrago about divine ancestors, their feuds, philanderings, and settlements. The great national rivalries of the nineteenth century
Halicarnassus in Asia Minor, where Herodotus was born and reared, was a Greek settlement ruled by a Carian dynasty under the higher suzerainty of the Persian king. Its population was much intermingled, and the name of one of Herodotus' kinsmen, the poet Panyassis, indicates that his family, too, though Greek in its culture and aristocratic in status, had a Carian strain. Herodotus' partiality for the Carian queen Artemisia is familiar to every reader of the History; she is presented as the most sensible and most effective of Xerxes' advisers in Greece.

Herodotus was born in the 480s B.C., too late to have any significant personal memories of the Persian Wars. When he was a young man his family was forced to leave Halicarnassus for political reasons and they settled on the island of Samos, which became his second home. By the time he was forty he had completed much of the research for the book he originally planned, a geographic and ethnographic survey of a large part of the "barbarian" world. Not only had he travelled fairly widely in Asia Minor and the Aegean islands, but he had visited Egypt, the coasts of Syria and Phoenicia, Thrace, the edge of the Scythian territory north of the Black Sea, and eastern regions as far as Babylon (but not Persia proper). He travelled for information, not to explore, and therefore he concentrated on main centers such as Memphis and Babylon, and he seems to have moved quickly. His stay in Egypt, for example, can be fixed at a
maximum of four months by his personal observations of the Nile flood.

By the mid-440s Herodotus had moved to the Greek mainland, where he gave public readings from his work. In Athens, at least (and no doubt in other cities), he was acclaimed officially, though whether by some purely honorific gesture or by a more material reward is unknown. There, too, where he became acquainted with the Periclean circle and made a friend of Sophocles, he was inspired to transform his book into a history of the Persian Wars. And again he began to travel in search of material, inspecting battle sites and routes, visiting Sparta, Thebes, Delphi, and other key Greek centers, and going as far north as Macedonia. How long he was occupied in this way is not known, nor is the date when (or the reason why) he migrated to Thurium on the Gulf of Tarentum in southern Italy, a Panhellenic settlement founded in 443 under the sponsorship of Pericles.

Presumably he spent the final years of his life in the west, writing his book and occasionally making short trips in Italy and Sicily and once to Cyrene in North Africa. The exact date of his death is also unknown, but it is demonstrable that, just as his life began in the final years of the Persian Wars, it closed early in the Peloponnesian War, which broke out in 431. There is no reference in the History to anything that occurred after 430 and there are things which he could hardly have said (or failed to say) after 424. The probability is that his death occurred nearer 430 than 424. His book was published in the 420s, soon after his death, most likely. All the details regarding the publication are unknown, and that is the final uncertainty in this short list of probabilities and possibilities which constitutes everything we know about the life of Herodotus.

—M. I. F.

From BOOK I

Lydia

These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the barbarians from losing their due meed of glory; and withal to put on record what were their grounds of feud.

1. According to the Persians best informed in history, the Phoenicians began the quarrel. This people, who had formerly dwelt on the shores of the Erythraean Sea,1 having migrated to the Mediterranean and settled in the parts which they now inhabit, began at once, they say, to adventure on long voyages, freighting their vessels with the wares of Egypt and Assyria. They landed at many places on the coast, and among the rest at Argos, which was then pre-eminent above all the states included now under the common name of Hellas. Here they exposed their merchandise, and traded with the natives for five or six days; at the end of which time, when almost everything was sold, there came down to the beach a number of women, and among them the daughter of the king, who was, they say, agreeing in this with the Greeks, Io, the child of Inachus. The women were standing by the stern of the ship intent upon their purchases, when the Phoenicians, with a general shout, rushed upon them. The greater part made their escape, but some were seized and carried off. Io herself was among the captives. The Phoenicians put the women on board their vessel, and set sail for Egypt.

2. Thus did Io pass into Egypt, according to the Persian

1 The Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.
story, which differs widely from the Greek: and thus commenced, according to their authors, the series of outrages. At a later period, certain Greeks, with whose name they [the Persian sources] are unacquainted, but who may have been Cretans, made a landing at Tyre, on the Phoenician coast, and bore off the king’s daughter, Europa. In this they only retaliated; but afterwards the Greeks, they say, were guilty of a second violence. They manned a ship of war, and sailed to Aea, a city of Colchis, on the river Phasis; from whence, after despatching the rest of the business on which they had come,² they carried off Medea, the daughter of the king of the land. The monarch sent a herald into Greece to demand reparation of the wrong, and the restitution of his child; but the Greeks made answer that, having received no reparation of the wrong done them in the seizure of Io the Argive, they should give none in this instance.

3. In the next generation afterwards, according to the same authorities, Alexander³ the son of Priam [king of Troy], bearing these events in mind, resolved to procure himself a wife out of Greece by violence, fully persuaded that, as the Greeks had not given satisfaction for their outrages, so neither would he be forced to make any for his. Accordingly he made prize of Helen; upon which the Greeks decided that, before resorting to other measures, they would send envoys to reclaim the princess and require reparation of the wrong. Their demands were met by a reference to the violence which had been offered to Medea, and they were asked with what face they could now require satisfaction, when they had formerly rejected all demands for either reparation or restitution addressed to them.

4. Hitherto the injuries on either side had been mere kidnappings; but in what followed the Persians consider that the Greeks were greatly to blame, since before any attack had been made on Europe, they led an army into Asia. Now as for the carrying off of women, it is the deed, they say, of a rogue; but to make a stir about such as are carried off, argues a man a fool. Men of sense care nothing for such women, since it is plain that without their own consent they would never be forced away. The Asiatics, when the Greeks ran off with their women, never troubled themselves about the matter; but the Greeks, for the sake of a single Lacedaemonian girl, collected a vast armament, invaded Asia, and destroyed the kingdom of Priam. Henceforth they ever looked upon the Greeks as their open enemies. For Asia, with all the various tribes of barbarians that inhabit it, is regarded by the Persians as their own; but Europe and the Greek race they look on as distinct and separate.

5. Such is the account which the Persians give of these matters. They trace to the attack upon Troy their ancient enmity towards the Greeks. The Phoenicians, however, as regards Io, vary from the Persian statements. They deny that they used any violence to remove her into Egypt; she herself, they say, having formed an intimacy with the captain, while his vessel lay at Argos, and perceiving herself to be with child, of her own free will accompanied the Phoenicians on their leaving the shore, to escape the shame of detection and the reproaches of her parents. This is what the Persians and the Phoenicians say. Whether this account be true, or whether the matter happened otherwise, I shall not discuss further. I shall proceed at once to point out the person who first within my own knowledge inflicted injury on the Greeks, after which I shall go forward with my history, describing equally the greater and the lesser cities of men. For the cities which were formerly great have most of them become insignificant; and such as are at present powerful were weak in the olden time. I shall therefore discourse equally of both, convinced that human happiness never continues long in one stay.

6. Croesus, son of Alyattes, by birth a Lydian, was lord [c. 560-546 B.C.] of all the nations to the west of the river Halys. This stream, which separates Syria [i.e., Cappadocia] from Paphlagonia, runs with a course from south to north, and finally falls into the Black Sea. So far as our knowledge goes, he was the first of the barbarians who had dealings

² The winning of the Golden Fleece.
³ More commonly known by his other name, Paris.
godess, which was distant from the ancient city, then besieged by Croesus, a space of seven furlongs. They were, as I said, the first Greeks whom he attacked. Afterwards, on some pretext or other, he made war in turn upon every Ionian and Aeolian state, bringing forward, where he could, a substantial ground of complaint; where such failed him, advancing some poor excuse.

27. In this way he made himself master of all the Greek cities in Asia, and forced them to become his tributaries; after which he began to think of building ships, and attacking the islanders. Everything had been got ready for this purpose, when Bias of Priene (or, as some say, Pittacus the Mytilenean) put a stop to the project. The king had made inquiry of this person, who was lately arrived at Sardis, if there were any news from Greece; to which he answered, “Yes, sire, the islanders have purchased ten thousand horses, designing an expedition against you and your capital.” Croesus, thinking he spoke seriously, broke out, “Ah, might the gods put such a thought into their minds as to attack the sons of the Lydians with cavalry!” “It seems, O King,” rejoined the other, “that you earnestly desire to catch the islanders on horseback upon the mainland—you know well what would come of it. But what do you think the islanders desire better, now that they hear you are about to build ships and sail against them, than to catch the Lydians at sea, and there revenge on them the wrongs of their brothers upon the mainland, whom you hold in slavery?” Croesus was charmed with the turn of the speech; and thinking there was reason in what was said, gave up his shipbuilding and concluded a league of amity with the Ionians of the isles.

28. Croesus afterwards brought under his sway almost all the peoples to the west of the Halys. The Lycians and Cilicians alone continued free; all the others he reduced and held in subjection. They were the following: the Lydians, Phrygians, Mysians, Mariandynians, Chalybians, Paphlagonians, Thynian and Bithynian Thracians, Carians, Ionians, Dorians, Aeolians, and Pamphylians.

29. When all these conquests had been added to the Lydian empire, and the prosperity of Sardis was now at its height, there came thither, one after another, all the sages of Greece living at the time, and among them Solon, the Athenian. He was on his travels, having left Athens to be absent ten years, under the pretence of wishing to study, but really to avoid being forced to repeal any of the laws which he had introduced. Without his sanction the Athenians could not repeal them, as they had bound themselves by great oaths to be governed for ten years by the laws which Solon should lay down for them.

30. On this account, as well as to study, Solon set out upon his travels, in the course of which he went to Egypt to the court of Amasis, and also to Croesus at Sardis. Croesus received him as his guest, and lodged him in the royal palace. On the third or fourth day after, he bade his servants conduct Solon over his treasuries, and show him all their greatness and magnificence. When he had seen them all, and, so far as time allowed, inspected them, Croesus addressed this question to him. “Stranger of Athens, we have heard much of your wisdom and of your travels through many lands, from love of knowledge and a wish to see the world. I am curious therefore to inquire of you, whom, of all the men that you have seen, you deem the most happy?” This he asked because he thought himself the happiest of mortals: but Solon answered him without flattery, according to his true sentiments, “Tellus of Athens, sire.” Full of astonishment at what he heard, Croesus demanded sharply, “And wherefore do you deem Tellus happiest?” To which the other replied, “First, because his country was flourishing in his days, and he himself had sons both beautiful and good, and he lived to see children born to each of them, and these children all grew up; and further because, after a life spent in what our people look upon as comfort, his end was surpassingly glorious. In a battle between the Athenians and their neighbours near Eleusis, he came to the assistance of his countrymen, routed the foe, and died upon the field most

8 In fact, neither Amasis nor Croesus was king during the ten years following Solon’s legislative activity.
gallantly. The Athenians gave him a public funeral on the spot where he fell, and paid him the highest honours."

31. Thus did Solon admonish Croesus by the example of Tellus, enumerating the manifold particulars of his happiness. When he had ended, Croesus inquired a second time, who after Tellus seemed to him the happiest, expecting that at any rate, he would be given the second place. "Cleobis and Biton," Solon answered; "they were of Argive race; their fortune was enough for their wants, and they were besides endowed with so much bodily strength that they had both gained prizes at the games. Also this tale is told of them: There was a great festival in honour of the goddess Hera at Argos, to which their mother must needs be taken in a car. Now the oxen did not come home from the field in time, so the youths, fearful of being too late, put the yoke on their own necks, and themselves drew the car in which their mother rode. Five and forty furlongs did they draw her, and stopped before the temple. This deed of theirs was witnessed by the whole assembly of worshippers, and then their life closed in the best possible way. Herein, too, the god showed forth most evidently, how much better a thing for man death is than life. For the Argive men, who stood around the car, extolled the vast strength of the youths; and the Argive women extolled the mother who was blessed with such a pair of sons; and the mother herself, overjoyed at the deed and at the praises it had won, standing straight before the image, besought the goddess to bestow on Cleobis and Biton, the sons who had so mightily honoured her, the highest blessing to which mortals can attain. Her prayer ended, they offered sacrifice and partook of the banquet, after which the two youths fell asleep in the temple. They never woke more, but so passed from the earth. The Argives, looking on them as among the best of men, caused statues of them to be made, which they dedicated at Delphi."

32. When Solon had thus assigned these youths the second place, Croesus broke in angrily, "What, stranger of Athens, is our happiness, then, so utterly set at nought by you, that you do not even put us on a level with private men?"

"O Croesus," replied the other, "you asked a question concerning the condition of man, of one who knows that the god is full of jealousy, and fond of troubling our lot. A long life gives one to witness much, and experience much oneself, that one would not choose. Seventy years I regard as the limit of the life of man. In these seventy years are contained, without reckoning intercalary months, twenty-five thousand and two hundred days. Add an intercalary month to every other year, that the seasons may come round at the right time, and there will be, in the seventy years, thirty-five such months, making an addition of one thousand and fifty days. The whole number of the days contained in the seventy years will thus be twenty-six thousand two hundred and fifty, whereof not one but will produce events unlike the rest. Hence man is wholly accident. For yourself, O Croesus, I see that you are wonderfully rich, and are king over many men; but with respect to that whereon you questioned me, I have no answer to give, until I hear that you have closed your life happily. For assuredly he who possesses great store of riches is no nearer happiness than he who has what suffices for his daily needs, unless it so hap that luck attend upon him, and so he continue in the enjoyment of all his good things to the end of life. For many of the wealthiest men have been unfavoured of fortune, and many whose means were moderate have had excellent luck. Men of the former class excel those of the latter but in two respects; these last excel the former in many. The wealthy man is better able to content his desires, and to bear up against a sudden buffet of calamity. The other has less ability to withstand these evils (from which, however, his good luck keeps him clear), but he enjoys all these following blessings: he is whole of limb, a stranger to disease, free from misfortune, happy in his children, and comely to look upon. If, in addition to all this, he end his life well, he is of a truth the man of whom you are in search, the man who may rightly be termed..."
happy. Call him, however, until he die, not happy but fortunate. Scarcely, indeed, can any man unite all these advantages: as there is no country which contains within it all that it needs, but each, while it possesses some things, lacks others, and the best country is that which contains the most; so no single human being is complete in every respect—something is always lacking. He who unites the greatest number of advantages, and, retaining them to the day of his death, then dies peaceably, that man alone, sire, is, in my judgment, entitled to bear the name of ‘happy.’ But in every matter it behoves us to mark well the end: for oftentimes the god gives men a gleam of happiness, and then plunges them into ruin.”

33. Such was the speech which Solon addressed to Croesus, a speech which brought him neither largess nor honour. The king saw him depart with much indifference, since he thought that a man must be an arrant fool who made no account of present good, but bade men always wait and mark the end.

34. After Solon had gone away a dreadful vengeance, sent of the god, came upon Croesus, to punish him, it is likely, for deeming himself the happiest of men. First he had a dream in the night, which foreshowed him truly the evils that were about to befall him in the person of his son. For Croesus had two sons, one blasted by a natural defect, being deaf and dumb; the other, distinguished far above all his co-mates in every pursuit. The name of the last was Atys. It was this son concerning whom he dreamt a dream, that he would die by the blow of an iron weapon. When he awoke, he considered earnestly with himself, and greatly alarmed at the dream, instantly made his son take a wife, and whereas in former years the youth had been wont to command the Lydian forces in the field, he now would not suffer him to accompany them. All the spears and javelins, and weapons used in the wars, he removed out of the male apartments, and laid them in heaps in the storerooms, fearing lest perhaps one of the weapons that hung against the wall might fall and strike his son.

35. Now it chanced that while he was making arrangements for the wedding, there came to Sardis a man under a misfortune, who had upon him the stain of blood. He was by race a Phrygian, and belonged to the family of the king. Presenting himself at the palace of Croesus, he prayed to be admitted to purification according to the customs of the country. Now the Lydian method of purifying is very nearly the same as the Greek. Croesus granted the request, and went through all the customary rites, after which he asked the suppliant of his birth and country, addressing him as follows:

“Who are you, stranger, and from what part of Phrygia did you flee to take refuge at my hearth? And whom, moreover, what man or what woman, did you slay?” “O King,” replied the Phrygian, “I am the son of Gordias, son of Midas. I am named Adrastus. The man I unintentionally slew was my own brother. For this my father drove me from the land, and I lost all.” “You are the offspring,” Croesus rejoined, “of a house friendly to mine, and you have come to friends. You shall want for nothing so long as you remain with me. Bear your misfortune as easily as you can, so will it go best with you.” Thenceforth Adrastus lived with the king.

36. It chanced that at this very same time there was in the Mysian Olympus a huge monster of a boar, which went forth often from this mountain country, and wasted the cornfields of the Mysians. Many a time had the Mysians collected to hunt the beast, but instead of doing him any hurt they came off always with some loss to themselves. At length they sent ambassadors to Croesus, who delivered their message to him in these words: “O King, a mighty monster of a boar has appeared in our parts, and destroys the labor of our hands. We do our best to take him, but in vain. Now therefore we beseech you to let your son accompany us back, with some chosen youths and hounds, that we may rid our country of the animal.” Such was the tenor of their prayer.

But Croesus bethought him of his dream, and answered, “Say no more of my son going with you; that may not be in any wise. He is but just joined in wedlock, and is busy
59. The name Doriscus is given to a beach and a vast plain upon the coast of Thrace, through the middle of which flows the strong stream of the Hebrus. Here was the royal fort which is likewise called Doriscus, where Darius had maintained a Persian garrison ever since the time when he attacked the Scythians. This place seemed to Xerxes a convenient spot for reviewing and numbering his soldiers, which he did. The sea captains, who had brought the fleet to Doriscus, were ordered to take the vessels to the beach adjoining, where Sale stands, a city of the Samothracians, and Zone, another city. The beach extends to Serrheim, the well-known promontory; the whole district in former times was inhabited by the Ciconians. Here then the captains were to bring their ships, and to haul them ashore for refitting, while Xerxes at Doriscus was employed in numbering the soldiers.

60. What the exact number of the troops of each nation was I cannot say with certainty—for it is not mentioned by anyone—but the whole land army together was found to amount to one million seven hundred thousand men. The manner in which the numbering took place was the following. A body of ten thousand men was brought to a certain place, and the men were made to stand as close together as possible; after which a circle was drawn around them, and the men were let go; then where the circle had been, a fence was built about the height of a man’s navel, and the enclosure was filled continually with fresh troops, till the whole army had in this way been numbered. When the numbering was over, the troops were drawn up according to their several nations. . . .

100. Now when the numbering and marshalling of the host was ended, Xerxes conceived a wish to go himself throughout the forces, and with his own eyes behold everything. Accordingly he traversed the ranks seated in his chariot, and, going from nation to nation, made manifold inquiries, while his scribes wrote down the answers; till at last he had passed from end to end of the whole land army, both the horsemen and the foot. This done, he exchanged his chariot for a Sidonian galley, and, seated beneath a golden awning, sailed along the prows of all his vessels, while he made inquiries again, as he had done when he reviewed the land force, and caused the answers to be recorded by his scribes. The captains took their ships to the distance of about four hundred feet from the shore, and there lay to, with their vessels in a single row, the prows facing the land, and with the fighting men upon the decks accoutred as if for war, while the king sailed along in the open space between the ships and the shore, and so reviewed the fleet.

101. Now after Xerxes had sailed down the whole line and was gone ashore, he sent for Demaratus the son of Ariston, who had accompanied him in his march upon Greece, and spoke to him thus:

“Demaratus, it is my pleasure at this time to ask you certain things which I wish to know. You are a Greek, and, as I hear from the other Greeks with whom I converse, no less than from your own lips, you are a native of a city which is not the weakest or the meanest in their land. Tell me, therefore, what you think. Will the Greeks lift a hand against us? My own judgement is that even if all the Greeks and all the others of the west were gathered together in one place they would not be able to abide my onset, not being really of one mind. But I should like to know what you think.”

Thus Xerxes questioned; and the other replied in his turn, “O King, is it your will that I give you a true answer, or do you wish a pleasant one?”

Then the king bade him speak the plain truth, and promised that he would not on that account hold him in less favour than heretofore.

102. So Demaratus, when he heard the promise, spoke as follows:

“O King, since you bid me at all risks speak the truth, and not say what will one day prove me to have lied to you, thus I answer. Want has at all times been a fellow dweller with us in our land, while valor is an ally whom we have gained by dint of wisdom and strict laws. Her aid enables us to drive out want and escape thraldom. Brave are all the Greeks who
dwell in any Dorian land; but what I am about to say does not concern all, but only the Lacedaemonians. First, then, come what may, they will never accept your terms, which would reduce Greece to slavery; and further, they are sure to join battle with you, though all the rest of the Greeks should submit to your will. As for their numbers, do not ask how many they are, that their resistance should be a possible thing; for if a thousand of them should take the field, they will meet you in battle, and so will any number, be it less or more.”

103. When Xerxes heard this answer of Demaratus, he laughed and answered:

“What wild words, Demaratus! A thousand men join battle with such an army as this! Come then, will you—who were once, you say, their king—engage to fight this very day against ten men? And yet, if all your fellow citizens be indeed such as you say they are, you ought, as their king, by your own country’s usages, be ready to fight twice the number. If then each one of them be a match for ten of my soldiers, I may well call upon you to be a match for twenty. Thus would you assure the truth of what you have now said. If, however, you Greeks, who vaunt yourselves so much, are of a truth men like those whom I have seen about my court, like yourself, Demaratus, and the others with whom I converse—if, I say, you are really men of this sort and size, how is the speech you have uttered more than a mere empty boast? For, to go to the very verge of likelihood—how could a thousand men, or ten thousand, or even fifty thousand, particularly if they are all alike free, and not under one lord—how could such a force, I say, stand against an army like mine? Let them be five thousand, and we shall have more than a thousand men to each one of theirs. If, indeed, like our troops, they had a single master, their fear of him might make them courageous beyond their natural bent; or they might be urged by lashes against an enemy which far outnumbered them. But left to their own free choice, assuredly they will act differently. For my part, I believe that if the Greeks had to contend with the Persians only, and the num-

bers were equal on both sides, the Greeks would find it hard to stand their ground. We too have among us such men as those of whom you spoke—not many indeed, but still we possess a few. For instance, some of my bodyguard would be willing to engage singly with three Greeks. But you did not know this; and therefore it was that you talked so foolishly.”

104. Demaratus answered him: “I knew, O King, at the outset, that if I told you the truth my speech would displease you. But as you required me to answer with all possible truthfulness, I informed you what the Spartans will do. And in this I spoke not from any love that I bear them—for none knows better than you what my love towards them is likely to be at the present time, when they have robbed me of my rank and my ancestral honours, and made me a homeless exile, whom your father received, bestowing on me both shelter and sustenance. What likelihood is there that a man of understanding should be unthankful for kindness shown him, and not cherish it in his heart? For myself, I do not pretend to cope with ten men, nor with two—nay, had I the choice, I would rather not fight even with one. But if need appeared, or if there were any great cause urging me on, I would contend with right good will against one of those persons who boast themselves a match for any three Greeks. So likewise the Lacedaemonians, when they fight singly, are as good men as any in the world, and when they fight in a body are the bravest of all. For though they be freemen, they are not in all respects free: law is the master whom they own, and this master they fear more than your subjects fear you. Whatever he commands they do; and his commandment is always the same: it forbids them to flee in battle, whatever the number of their foes, and requires them to stand firm, and either to conquer or die. If in these words, O King, I seem to you to speak foolishly, I am content from this time forward evermore to hold my peace. I had not now spoken unless compelled by you. Certainly, I pray that all may turn out according to your wishes.”

105. Such was the answer of Demaratus; and Xerxes was
not angry with him at all, but only laughed, and sent him away with words of kindness.

After this interview, and after he had made Mascames the son of Megadostes governor of Doriscus, setting aside the governor appointed by Darius, Xerxes started with his army, and marched upon Greece through Thrace...

118. Now the Greeks who had to feed the army [on the march] and to entertain Xerxes were brought thereby to the very extremity of distress, insomuch that some of them were forced even to forsake house and home. When the Thasians received and feasted the host, on account of their possessions upon the mainland, Antipater, the son of Orges, one of the citizens of best repute, and the man to whom the business was assigned, proved that the cost of the meal was four hundred talents of silver.

119. And estimates almost to the same amount were made by the superintendents in other cities. For the entertainment, which had been ordered long beforehand and was reckoned to be of much consequence, was, in the manner of it, such as I will now describe. No sooner did the heralds who brought the orders give their message than in every city the inhabitants made a division of their stores of corn, and proceeded to grind flour of wheat and of barley for many months together. Besides this, they purchased the best cattle that they could find, and fattened them; and fed poultry and water fowl in ponds and buildings, to be in readiness for the army; while they likewise prepared gold and silver vases and drinking cups, and whatsoever else is needed for the service of the table. These last preparations were made for the king only, and those who sat at meat with him; for the rest of the army nothing was made ready beyond the food. On the arrival of the Persians, a tent ready pitched for the purpose received Xerxes, who took his rest therein, while the soldiers remained under the open heaven. When the dinner hour came, great was the toil of those who entertained the army; while the guests ate their fill, and then, after passing the night at the place, tore down the royal tent next morning,

and, seizing its contents, carried them all off, leaving nothing behind.

120. On one of these occasions Megacreon of Abdera wittily recommended his countrymen to go to the temples in a body, men and women alike, and there take their station as suppliants, and beseech the gods that they would in future always spare them one-half of the woes which might threaten their peace—thanking them at the same time very warmly for their past goodness in that they had caused Xerxes to be content with one meal in the day. For had the order been to provide breakfast for the king as well as dinner, the Abderites must either have fled before Xerxes came, or, if they awaited his coming, have been brought to absolute ruin. As it was, the nations, though suffering heavy pressure, complied nevertheless with the directions that had been given.

121. At Acanthus Xerxes separated from his fleet, bidding the captains sail on ahead and await his coming at Therma, on the Thermaic Gulf, the place from which the bay takes its name. Through this town lay, he understood, his shortest road. Previously, his order of march had been the following: from Doriscus to Acanthus his land force had proceeded in three bodies, one of which took the way along the sea-shore in company with the fleet, and was commanded by Mardonius and Masistes, while another pursued an inland track under Tritantaehmes and Gergis; the third, with which was Xerxes himself, marching midway between the other two, and having for its leaders Smerdomenes and Megabyzus.

122. The fleet, therefore, after leaving the king, sailed through the channel which had been cut for it by Mount Athos, and came into the bay whereon lie the cities of Assa, Pilorus, Singus, and Sarta; from all which it received contingents...

124. Xerxes meanwhile with his land force left Acanthus, and started for Therma, taking his way across the land. This road led him through Paeonia and Crestonia to the
fortune to see that the king knows well how to honour merit. In like manner you yourselves, were you to make your submission to him, would receive at his hands, seeing that he deems you men of merit, some government in Greece."

"Hydarnes," they answered, "you are a one-sided counsellor. You have experience of half the matter; but the other half is beyond your knowledge. You understand a slave's life; but, never having tasted liberty, you cannot tell whether it be sweet or no. Ah, had you known what freedom is, you would have hidden us fight for it, not with the spear only, but with the battle-axe."

So they answered Hydarnes.

136. And afterwards, when they were come to Susa into the king's presence, and the guards ordered them to fall down and do obeisance, and went so far as to use force to compel them, they refused, and said they would never do any such thing, even were their heads thrust down to the ground; for it was not their custom to worship men, and they had not come to Persia for that purpose. So they fought off the ceremony; and having done so, addressed the king in words much like the following:

"O King of the Medes, the Lacedaemonians have sent us hither, in the place of those heralds of yours who were slain in Sparta, to make atonement to you on their account."

Then Xerxes answered with true greatness of soul that he would not act like the Lacedaemonians, who, by killing the heralds, had broken the laws which all men hold in common. As he had blamed such conduct in them, he would never be guilty of it himself. And besides, he did not wish to free the Lacedaemonians from the stain of their former outrage by putting the two men to death in return.

137. This conduct on the part of the Spartans caused the anger of Talthybius to cease for a while, notwithstanding that Sperthias and Bulis returned home alive. But many years afterwards it awoke once more, as the Lacedaemonians themselves declare, during the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians.

In my judgement this was a case wherein the hand of

Heaven was most plainly manifest. That the wrath of Talthybius should have fallen upon ambassadors, and not slacked till it had full vent, so much justice required; but that it should have come upon the sons of the very men who were sent up to the Persian king on its account—upon Nicolaïs, the son of Bulis, and Aneristus, the son of Sperthias (the same who raided Halieis, the refuge of the Tirynthians, when cruising in a well-manned merchant ship)—this does seem to me to be plainly a supernatural circumstance. These two men, having been sent to Asia as ambassadors by the Lacedaemonians, were betrayed by Sitalces, the son of Teres, king of Thrace, and Nymphodorus, the son of Pythes, a native of Abdera, and being made prisoners at Bisanthe, upon the Hellespont, were conveyed to Attica, and there put to death by the Athenians, at the same time as Aristeas, the son of Adeimantus, the Corinthian. All this happened, however, very many years after the expedition of Xerxes, and I return to my subject.

138. The expedition of the Persian king, though it was in name directed against Athens, threatened really the whole of Greece. And of this the Greeks were aware some time before; but they did not all view the matter in the same light. Some of them had given the Persian earth and water, and were bold on this account, deeming themselves thereby secured against suffering hurt from the barbarian army; while others, who had refused compliance, were thrown into extreme alarm. For whereas they considered all the ships in Greece too few to engage the enemy, it was plain that the greater number of the people did not wish to take part in the war, but favoured going over to the Medes.

139. And here I feel constrained to deliver an opinion which most men, I know, will dislike, but which, as it seems to me to be true, I am determined not to withhold. Had the Athenians, from fear of the approaching danger, quitted their country, or had they without quitting it submitted to the power of Xerxes, there would certainly have been no attempt to resist the Persians by sea; in which case the course of events by land would have been the following. Though
the Peloponnesians might have carried ever so many breastworks across the Isthmus, yet their allies would have fallen off from the Lacedaemonians, not by voluntary desertion, but because town after town must have been taken by the fleet of the barbarians; and so the Lacedaemonians would at last have stood alone, and, standing alone, would have displayed prodigies of valor, and died nobly. Either they would have done thus, or else, before it came to that extremity, seeing one Greek state after another embrace the cause of the Medes, they would have come to terms with Xerxes; and thus, either way Greece would have been brought under Persia. For I cannot understand of what possible use the walls across the Isthmus could have been, if the king had had the mastery of the sea. If then a man should now say that the Athenians were the saviours of Greece, he would not exceed the truth. For they truly held the scales; and whichever side they espoused must have carried the day. They too it was who, when they had determined to maintain the freedom of Greece, roused up that portion of the Greek world which had not gone over to the Medes; and so, next to the gods, they repulsed the invader. Even the terrible oracles which reached them from Delphi, and struck fear into their hearts, failed to persuade them to fly from Greece. They had the courage to remain faithful to their land, and await the coming of the foe.

140. When the Athenians, anxious to consult the oracle, sent their messengers to Delphi, hardly had the envoys completed the customary rites about the sacred precinct, and taken their seats inside the sanctuary of the god, when the Pythia, Aristomachus by name, thus prophesied:

"Wretches, why sit ye here? Fly, fly to the ends of creation,
Quitting your homes, and the crags which your city crowns with her circlet.
Neither the head nor the body is firm in its place, nor at bottom

Firm the feet, nor the hands; nor resteth the middle un-inch'd.
All—all ruined and lost. Since fire, and impetuous Ares, Speeding along in a Syrian chariot, hastens to destroy her. Not alone shalt thou suffer; full many the towers he will level,
Many the shrines of the gods he will give to a fiery destruction.
Even now they stand with dark sweat horribly dripping. Trembling and quaking for fear; and lo! from the high roofs trickleth
Black blood, sign prophetic of hard distresses impending. Get ye away from the temple; and brood on the ills that await ye!"

141. When the Athenian messengers heard this reply, they were filled with the deepest affliction: whereupon Timon, the son of Androclus, one of the men of most mark among the Delphians, seeing how utterly cast down they were at the gloomy prophecy, advised them to take an olive branch, and entering the sanctuary again, consult the oracle as suppliants. The Athenians followed this advice, and going in once more, said, “O Lord, we pray thee reverence these boughs of supplication which we bear in our hands, and deliver to us something more comforting concerning our country. Else we will not leave thy sanctuary, but will stay here till we die.” Upon this the priestess gave them a second answer, which was the following:

"Pallas has not been able to soften the lord of Olympus, Though she has often prayed him, and urged him with excellent counsel.
Yet once more I address thee in words than adamant firmer.
When the foe shall have taken whatever the limit of Cecrops
Holds within it, and all which divine Cithaeron shelters,
cept only the Onochonus; but in Achaea, the largest of the streams, the Apidanus, barely held out.

197. On his arrival at Alus in Achaea, his guides, wishing to inform him of everything, told him the tale known to the dwellers in those parts concerning the temple of the Laphystian Zeus—how that Athamas the son of Aeolus took counsel with Ino and plotted the death of Phrixus; and how that afterwards the Achaean, warned by an oracle, laid a forfeit upon his posterity, forbidding the eldest of the race ever to enter into the court-house (which they call the leiton), and keeping watch themselves to see the law obeyed. If one comes within the doors, he can never go out again except to be sacrificed. Further, they told him how that many persons, expecting to be sacrificed, are seized with such fear that they flee away and take refuge in some other country; and that these, if they come back long afterwards, and are found to be the persons who entered the court-house, are led forth covered with chaplets, in a grand procession, and are sacrificed. This forfeit is paid by the descendants of Cytsisorus the son of Phrixus, because, when the Achaean, in obedience to an oracle, made Athamas the son of Aeolus their sin-offering, and were about to slay him, Cytsisorus came from Aca in Colchis and rescued Athamas; by which deed he brought the anger of the god upon his own posterity. Xerxes, therefore, having heard this story, when he reached the grove of the god, avoided it, and commanded his army to do the like. He also paid the same respect to the house of the descendants of Athamas as to the sanctuary.

198. Such were the doings of Xerxes in Thessaly and in Achaea. . . .

201. King Xerxes pitched his camp in the region of Malis called Trachis, while on their side the Greeks occupied the defile. This pass the Greeks in general call Thermopylae; but the natives, and those who dwell in the neighbourhood, call it Pylae. Here then the two armies took their stand; the one master of all the region lying north of Trachis, the other of the country extending southward of that place to the verge of the continent.

202. The Greeks who at this spot awaited the coming of Xerxes were the following: from Sparta, three hundred men-at-arms; from Arcadia, a thousand Tegeans and Mantineans, five hundred of each people; a hundred and twenty Orchomenians, from the Arcadian Orchomenus; and a thousand from other cities: from Corinth, four hundred men; from Phlius, two hundred; and from Mycenae, eighty. Such was the number from the Peloponnesus. There were also present, from Boeotia, seven hundred Thespians and four hundred Thebans.

203. Besides these troops, the Locrians of Opus and the Phocians had obeyed the call of their countrymen, and sent, the former all the force they had, the latter a thousand men. For envoys had gone from the Greeks at Thermopylae among the Locrians and Phocians, to call on them for assistance, and to say that they were themselves but the vanguard of the host, sent to precede the main body, which might every day be expected to follow them. The sea was in good keeping, watched by the Athenians, the Aeginetans, and the rest of the fleet. There was no cause why they should fear; for after all the invader was not a god but a man; and there never had been, and never would be, a man who was not liable to misfortunes from the very day of his birth, and those misfortunes greater in proportion to his own greatness. The assailant therefore, being only a mortal, must needs fall from his glory. Thus urged, the Locrians and the Phocians had come with their troops to Trachis.

204. The various nations had each captains of their own under whom they served; but the one to whom all especially looked up, and who had the command of the entire force, was the Lacedaemonian, Leonidas. Now Leonidas was the son of Anaxandrides, who was the son of Leon, who was the son of Eurycrates, who was the son of Anaxander, who was the son of Eurycrates, who was the son of Polydorus, who was the son of Alcamenes, who was the son of Telecles, who was the son of Archelaüs, who was the son of Hegesilaiüs, who was the son of Doryssus, who was the son of Leobotes, who was the son of Echestratus, who was the son
of Agis, who was the son of Eurythèmes, who was the son of Aristodemus, who was the son of Aristomachus, who was the son of Cleodæus, who was the son of Hyllus, who was the son of Hercules.

Leonidas had come to be king of Sparta quite unexpectedly.

205. Having two elder brothers, Cleomenes and Dorieus, he had no thought of ever mounting the throne. However, when Cleomenes died without male offspring, as Dorieus was likewise deceased, having perished in Sicily, the crown fell to Leonidas, who was older than Cleombrotus, the youngest of the sons of Anaxandridas, and, moreover, was married to the daughter of Cleomenes. He had now come to Thermopylae, accompanied by men chosen from the three hundred and from fathers with sons living. On his way he had taken the troops from Thebes, whose number I have already mentioned, and who were under the command of Leontiades the son of Erymachus. The reason why he made a point of taking troops from Thebes, and Thebes only, was that the Thebans were strongly suspected of being well inclined to the Medes. Leonidas therefore called on them to come with him to the war, wishing to see whether they would comply with his demand, or openly refuse, and disclaim the Greek alliance. They, however, though their wishes leant the other way, nevertheless sent the men.

206. The force with Leonidas was sent forward by the Spartans in advance of their main body, that the sight of them might encourage the allies to fight, and hinder them from going over to the Medes, as it was likely they might have done had they seen that Sparta was backward. They intended presently, when they had celebrated the Carneian festival, which was what now kept them at home, to leave a garrison in Sparta, and hasten in full force to join the army. The rest of the allies also intended to act similarly; for it happened that the Olympic games fell exactly at this same period. None of them looked to see the contest at Thermopy-

\[\text{The text of this sentence is uncertain.}\]
army. When he appeared, Xerxes told him all that he had heard, and questioned him concerning the news, since he was anxious to understand the meaning of such behaviour on the part of the Spartans. Then Demaratus said:

"I spoke to you concerning these men long since, when we had just begun our march upon Greece; you, however, only laughed at my words, when I told you of all this, which I saw would come to pass. Earnestly do I struggle at all times to speak truth to you, O King, and now listen to it once more. These men have come to dispute the pass with us; and it is for this that they are now making ready. It is their custom, when they are about to hazard their lives, to adorn their heads with care. Be assured, however, that if you can subdue the men who are here and the Lacedaemonians who remain in Sparta, there is no other nation in all the world which will venture to lift a hand against you. You have now to deal with the first kingdom in Greece, and with the bravest men."

Then Xerxes, to whom what Demaratus said seemed altogether to surpass belief, asked further how it was possible for so small an army to contend with his.

"O King," Demaratus answered, "let me be treated as a liar if matters fall not out as I say."

210. But Xerxes was not persuaded any the more. Four whole days he suffered to go by, expecting that the Greeks would run away. When, however, he found on the fifth that they were not gone, thinking that their firm stand was mere impudence and recklessness, he grew wroth, and sent against them the Medes and Cissians, with orders to take them alive and bring them into his presence. Then the Medes rushed forward and charged the Greeks, but fell in vast numbers: others however took the places of the slain, and would not be beaten off, though they suffered terrible losses. In this way it became clear to all, and especially to the king, that though he had plenty of combatants, he had but very few warriors. The struggle, however, continued during the whole day.

211. Then the Medes, having met so rough a reception, withdrew from the fight; and their place was taken by the band of Persians under Hydarnes, whom the king called his "Immortals"; they, it was thought, would soon finish the business. But when they joined battle with the Greeks, it was with no better success than the Median detachment—things went much as before—the two armies fighting in a narrow space, and the barbarians using shorter spears than the Greeks, and having no advantage from their numbers. The Lacedaemonians fought in a way worthy of note, and showed themselves far more skilful in fight than their adversaries, often turning their backs and making as though they were all flying away, on which the barbarians would rush after them with much noise and shouting, when the Spartans at their approach would wheel round and face their pursuers, in this way destroying vast numbers of the enemy. Some Spartans likewise fell in these encounters, but only a very few. At last the Persians, finding that all their efforts to gain the pass availed nothing, and that, whether they attacked by divisions or in any other way, it was to no purpose, withdrew to their own quarters.

212. During these assaults, it is said that Xerxes, who was watching the battle, thrice leaped from his throne. Thus they fought. Next day the barbarians had no better success. The Greeks were so few that the barbarians hoped to find them disabled, by reason of their wounds, from offering any further resistance; and so they once more attacked them. But the Greeks were drawn up in detachments according to their cities, and bore the brunt of the battle in turns—all except the Phocians, who had been stationed on the mountain to guard the pathway. So, when the Persians found no difference between that day and the preceding, they again retired to their quarters.

213. Now, as the king was in a great strait, and knew not how he should deal with the emergency, Ephialtes, the son of Eurypemus, a man of Malis, came to him and was admitted to a conference. Stirred by the hope of receiving a rich reward at the king's hands, he had come to tell him of the pathway which led across the mountain to Thermopylae; by
Even less is known (or can be inferred) about the life of Thucydides than the very little which can be said about Herodotus. From the way he writes, at one point in his book, that he was old enough at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War to have maturity of judgement—a statement with unmistakably defensive overtones—it is reasonable to place his birth about 460 B.C., or a trifle later. His father had a Thracian name, Olorus, and that fact almost certainly links him with the important aristocratic family of Miltiades, the hero of Marathon, and his son Cimon, who preceded Pericles and then contended with him for leadership in Athens. Miltiades had married the daughter of a Thracian chieftain called Olorus, and that is surely why the name was carried on in Athens.

Thucydides himself stresses his Thracian connections. He owned a gold-mining concession there, he says, and in consequence he had influence over the native population in the area. Presumably, though this he himself does not say, that is why he was elected general in 424, when the most important battle was the struggle for the Greek city of Amphipolis in the Thracian sphere north of the Aegean. With his family background, Thucydides undoubtedly received not only the best available education, but also early experience in military and political affairs. There is not a shred of evidence, however, that his career was such as to warrant election to the highest office in the state (the board of ten gen-
erals) at an early age, except for the special circumstances of his involvement with Thrace at that precise stage of the war. His failure at Amphipolis led to his exile from Athens, whether justly or unjustly. As far as we know, he spent the twenty years of his exile primarily on his history of the war. He himself says that it placed him in the advantageous position of being able to keep in touch with all parties in the conflict. Presumably his base was in Thrace, but he must have travelled widely during some of the time. He was permitted to return to Athens when the war ended, and he died not long after (five years later at the outside). Several later writers report that his tomb (or cenotaph) could be seen in the burial ground of the Cimonid family, a perfectly credible story.

Thucydides left the history of the war far from complete. The book was published posthumously, though by whom is unknown. It must have appeared very soon after his death, for an acquaintance with it is evident in various fourth-century writers, and at least five men wrote continuations in the middle or second half of the century, of which Xenophon's *Hellenica* alone survives. Nevertheless, Thucydides seems not to have been much appreciated in this period. His real popularity in antiquity came only in Roman times.

—M. I. F.

From BOOK I

The Beginnings

1. Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war, and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it. This belief was not without its grounds. The preparations of both the combatants were in every department in the last state of perfection; and he could see the rest of the Hellenic race taking sides in the quarrel, those who delayed doing so at once having it in contemplation. Indeed this was the greatest movement yet known in history, not only of the Hellenes, but of a large part of the barbarian world—I had almost said of mankind. For though the events of remote antiquity, and even those that more immediately precede the war, could not from lapse of time be clearly ascertained, yet the evidences, which an inquiry carried as far back as was practicable leads me to trust, all point to the conclusion that there was nothing on a great scale, either in war or in other matters.

2. For instance, it is evident that the country now called Hellas had in ancient times no settled population; on the contrary, migrations were of frequent occurrence, the several tribes readily abandoning their homes under the pressure of superior numbers. Without commerce, without freedom of communication either by land or sea, cultivating no more of their territory than the exigencies of life required, destitute of capital, never planting their land (for they could not tell when an invader might not come and take it all away, and when he did come they had no walls to stop him), thinking that the necessities of daily sustenance could be supplied at one place as well as another, they cared little for shifting their habitation, and consequently neither built large cities nor attained to any other form of greatness. The richest soils were always most subject to this change of masters, such as the district now called Thessaly, Boeotia, most of the Peloponnesus, Arcadia excepted, and the most fertile parts of the rest of Hellas. The goodness of the land favoured the aggrandizement of particular individuals, and thus created faction which proved a fertile source of ruin. It also invited invasion. Accordingly Attica, from the poverty of its soil enjoying from a very remote period freedom from faction, never changed its inhabitants. And here is no inconsiderable exemplification of my assertion that the migrations were the cause of there being no correspondent growth in other
parts. The most powerful victims of war or faction from the rest of Hellas took refuge with the Athenians as a safe retreat; and at an early period, becoming naturalized, swelled the already large population of the city to such a height that Attica became at last too small to hold them, and they had to send out colonies to Ionia.

3. There is also another circumstance that contributes not a little to my conviction of the weakness of ancient times. Before the Trojan War there is no indication of any common action in Hellas, nor indeed of the universal prevalence of the name; on the contrary, before the time of Hellen, son of Deucalion, no such appellation existed, but the country went by the names of the different tribes, in particular of the Pelasgian. It was not till Hellen and his sons grew strong in Phthiotis, and were invited as allies into the other cities, that one by one they gradually acquired from the connection the name of Hellenes; though a long time elapsed before that name could fasten itself upon all. The best proof of this is furnished by Homer. Born long after the Trojan War, he nowhere calls all of them by that name, nor indeed any of them except the followers of Achilles from Phthiotis, who were the original Hellenes: in his poems they are called Danaans, Argives, and Achaeans. He does not even use the term barbarian, probably because the Hellenes had not yet been marked off from the rest of the world by one distinctive appellation. It appears therefore that the several Hellenic communities, comprising not only those who first acquired the name, city by city, as they came to understand each other, but also those who assumed it afterwards as the name of the whole people, were before the Trojan War prevented by their want of strength and the absence of mutual intercourse from displaying any collective action. Indeed, they could not unite for this expedition till they had gained increased familiarity with the sea.

4. The first person known to us by tradition as having established a navy is Minos. He made himself master of what is now called the Hellenic sea, and ruled over the Cyclades, into most of which he sent the first colonies, expelling the Carians and appointing his own sons governors; and thus did his best to put down piracy in those waters, a necessary step to secure the revenues for his own use.

5. For in early times the Hellenes and the barbarians of the coast and islands, as communication by sea became more common, were tempted to turn pirates, under the conduct of their most powerful men, the motives being to serve their own cupidities and to support the needy. They would fall upon a town unprotected by walls and consisting of a mere collection of villages, and would plunder it; indeed, this came to be the main source of their livelihood, no disgrace being yet attached to such an achievement, but even some glory. An illustration of this is furnished by the honour with which some of the inhabitants of the continent still regard a successful marauder, and by the question we find the old poets everywhere representing the people as asking of voyagers, “Are they pirates?” as if those who are asked the question would have no idea of disclaiming the imputation, or their interrogators of reproaching them for it. The same rapine prevailed also by land. And even at the present day many parts of Hellas still follow the old fashion, the Ozolian Locrians for instance, the Aetolians, the Acarnanians, and that region of the continent; and the custom of carrying arms is still kept up among these continentals, from the old piratical habits.

6. The whole of Hellas used once to carry arms, their habitations being unprotected and their communication with each other unsafe; indeed, to wear arms was as much a part of everyday life with them as with the barbarians. And the fact that the people in these parts of Hellas are still living in the old way points to a time when the same mode of life was once equally common to all.

The Athenians were the first to lay aside their weapons, and to adopt an easier and more luxurious mode of life; indeed, it is only lately that their rich old men left off the luxury of wearing undergarments of linen, and fastening a knot
of their hair with a tie of golden grasshoppers, a fashion which spread to their Ionian kindred, and long prevailed among the old men there. On the contrary a modest style of dressing, more in conformity with modern ideas, was first adopted by the Lacedaemonians, the rich doing their best to assimilate their way of life to that of the common people. They also set the example of contending naked, publicly stripping and anointing themselves with oil in their gymnastic exercises. Formerly, even in the Olympic contests, the athletes who contended wore athletic supports about their genitals; and it is but a few years since that the practice ceased. To this day among some of the barbarians, especially in Asia, when prizes for boxing and wrestling are offered, such supports are worn by the combatants. And there are many other points in which a likeness might be shown between the life of the Hellenic world of old and the barbarian of today.

7. With respect to their towns, later on, at an era of increased facilities of navigation and a greater supply of wealth, we find the shores becoming the site of walled towns, and the isthmuses being occupied for the purposes of commerce, and defence against a neighbour. But the old towns, on account of the great prevalence of piracy, were built away from the sea, whether on the islands or the continent, and still remain in their old sites. For the pirates used to plunder one another, and indeed all coast populations, whether seafaring or not.

8. The islanders, too, were great pirates. These islanders were Carians and Phoenicians, by whom most of the islands were colonized, as was proved by the following fact. During the purification of Delos by Athens in this war [426-425 B.C.] all the graves in the island were taken up, and it was found that above half their inmates were Carians: they were identified by the fashion of the arms buried with them, and by the method of interment, which was the same as the Carians still follow. But as soon as Minos had formed his navy, communication by sea became easier, as he colonized most of the islands, and thus expelled the malefactors. The coast populations now began to apply themselves more closely to the acquisition of wealth, and their life became more settled; some even began to build themselves walls on the strength of their newly acquired riches. For the love of gain would reconcile the weaker to the dominion of the stronger, and the possession of resources enabled the more powerful to reduce the smaller towns to subjection. And it was at a somewhat later stage of this development that they went on the expedition against Troy.

9. What enabled Agamemnon to raise the armament was more, in my opinion, his superiority in strength than the oaths of Tyndareus, which bound Helen's suitors to follow him. Indeed, the account given by those Peloponnesians who have been the recipients of the most credible tradition is this. First of all Pelops, arriving among a needy population from Asia with vast wealth, acquired such power that, stranger though he was, the country was called after him; and this power was materially increased in the hands of his descendants. Eurytheus had been killed in Attica by the Heraclids. Atreus was his mother's brother; and to the hands of his relation, who had left his father on account of the death of Chrysiippus, Eurytheus, when he set out on his expedition, had committed Mycenae and the government. As time went on and Eurytheus did not return, Atreus complied with the wishes of the Mycenaeans, who were influenced by fear of the Heraclids—besides, his power seemed considerable, and he had not neglected to court the favour of the populace—and assumed the scepter of Mycenae and the rest of the dominions of Eurytheus. And so the power of the descendants of Pelops came to be greater than that of the descendants of Perseus.

To all this Agamemnon succeeded. He had also a navy far stronger than his contemporaries, so that, in my opinion, fear was quite as strong an element as love in the formation of the confederate expedition. The strength of his navy is shown by the fact that his own was the largest contingent, and that of the Arcadians was furnished by him; this at least is what Homer says, if his testimony is deemed sufficient.
Besides, in his account of the transmission of the scepter, he calls him

Of many an isle, and of all Argos king.

Now Agamemnon's was a continental power, and he could not have been master of any except the adjacent islands (and these would not be many) but through the possession of a fleet. And from this expedition we may infer the character of earlier enterprises.

10. Now Mycenae may have been a small place, and many of the towns of that age may appear comparatively insignificant, but no exact observer would therefore feel justified in rejecting the estimate given by the poets and by tradition of the magnitude of the armament. For I suppose if Lacedaemon were to become desolate, and the temples and the foundations of the public buildings were left, that as time went on there would be a strong disposition with posterity to refuse to accept her fame as a true exponent of her power. And yet they occupy two-fifths of Peloponneseus and lead the whole, not to speak of their numerous allies without. Still, as the city is neither built in a compact form nor adorned with magnificent temples and public edifices, but composed of villages after the old fashion of Hellas, there would be an impression of inadequacy. Whereas, if Athens were to suffer the same misfortune, I suppose that any inference from the appearance presented to the eye would make her power to have been twice as great as it is.

We have therefore no right to be sceptical, nor to content ourselves with an inspection of a town to the exclusion of a consideration of its power; but we may safely conclude that the armament in question surpassed all before it, as it fell short of modern efforts; if we can here accept the testimony of Homer's poems, in which, without allowing for the exaggeration which a poet would feel himself licensed to employ, we can see that it was far from equaling ours. He has represented it as consisting of twelve hundred vessels, the Bocotian complement of each ship being a hundred and twenty men, that of the ships of Philoctetes fifty. By this, I conceive, he meant to convey the maximum and the minimum complement: at any rate he does not specify the amount of any others in his catalogue of the ships. That they were all rowers as well as warriors we see from his account of the ships of Philoctetes, in which all the men at the oar are bowmen. Now it is improbable that many supernumeraries sailed if we except the kings and high officers; especially as they had to cross the open sea with munitions of war, in ships, moreover, that had no decks, but were equipped in the old piratical fashion. So that if we strike the average of the largest and smallest ships, the number of those who sailed will appear inconsiderable, representing, as they did, the whole force of Hellas.

11. And this was due not so much to scarcity of men as of money. Difficulty of subsistence made the invaders reduce the numbers of the army to a point at which it might live on the country during the prosecution of the war. Even after the victory they obtained on their arrival—and a victory there must have been, or the fortifications of the naval camp could never have been built—there is no indication of their whole force having been employed; on the contrary, they seem to have turned to cultivation of the Chersonesus and to piracy from want of supplies. This was what really enabled the Trojans to keep the field for ten years against them; the dispersion of the enemy making them always a match for the detachment left behind. If they had brought plenty of supplies with them, and had persevered in the war without scattering for piracy and agriculture, they would have easily defeated the Trojans in the field; since they could hold their own against them with the division on service. In short, if they had stuck to the siege, the capture of Troy would have cost them less time and less trouble. But as want of money proved the weakness of earlier expeditions, so from the same cause even the one in question, more famous than its predecessors, may be pronounced on the evidence of what it effected to have been inferior to its renown and to the current opinion about it formed under the tuition of the poets.
12. Even after the Trojan War, Hellas was still engaged in removing and settling, and thus could not attain to the quiet which must precede growth. The late return of the Hellenes from Ilium caused many revolutions, and factions ensued almost everywhere; and it was the citizens thus driven into exile who founded the cities. Sixty years after the capture of Ilium the modern Boeotians were driven out of Arne by the Thessalians, and settled in the present Boeotia, the former Cadmeis; though there was a division of them there before, some of whom joined the expedition to Ilium. Twenty years later the Dorians and the Heraclids became masters of the Peloponnesus; so that much had to be done and many years had to elapse before Hellas could attain to a durable tranquillity undisturbed by removals, and could begin to send out colonies, as Athens did to Ionia and most of the islands, and the Peloponnesians to most of Italy and Sicily and some places in the rest of Hellas. All these places were founded subsequently to the war with Troy.

13. But as the power of Hellas grew, and the acquisition of wealth became more an object, the revenues of the states increasing, tyrannies were by their means established almost everywhere—the old form of government being hereditary monarchy with definite prerogatives—and Hellas began to fit out fleets and apply herself more closely to the sea. It is said that the Corinthians were the first to approach the modern style of naval architecture, and that Corinth was the first place in Hellas where triremes were built; and we have Ameinocles, a Corinthian shipwright, making four ships for the Samians. Dating from the end of this war, it is nearly three hundred years ago that Ameinocles went to Samos. Again, the earliest sea-fight in history was between the Corinthians and Coryciaeans; this was about two hundred and sixty years ago, dating from the same time. Planted on an isthmus, Corinth had from time out of mind been an emporium; as formerly almost all communication between the Hellenes within and without the Peloponnesus was carried on overland, and the Corinthian territory was the highway through which it travelled. She had consequently great

money resources, as is shown by the epithet “wealthy” bestowed by the old poets on the place, and this enabled her, when traffic by sea became more common, to procure her navy and put down piracy; and as she could offer a mart for both branches of the trade, she acquired for herself all the power which a large revenue affords.

Subsequently the Ionians attained to great naval strength in the reign of Cyrus, the first king of the Persians, and of his son Cambyses, and while they were at war with the former commanded for a while the Ionian sea. Polycrates also, the tyrant of Samos, had a powerful navy in the reign of Cambyses with which he reduced many of the islands, and among them Rhenea, which he consecrated to the Delian Apollo. About this time also the Phocaeans, while they were founding Marseilles, defeated the Carthaginians in a sea fight.

14. These were the most powerful navies. And even these, although so many generations had elapsed since the Trojan War, seem to have been principally composed of the old penteconters and long-boats, and to have counted few triremes among their ranks. Indeed it was only shortly before the Persian war and the death of Darius the successor of Cambyses, that the Sicilian tyrants and the Coryciaeans acquired any large number of triremes. For after these there were no navies of any account in Hellas till the expedition of Xerxes; Aegina, Athens, and others may have possessed a few vessels, but they were principally penteconters. It was quite at the end of this period that the war with Aegina and the prospect of the barbarian invasion enabled Themistocles to persuade the Athenians to build the fleet with which they fought at Salamis; and even these vessels had not complete decks.

15. The navies, then, of the Hellenes during the period we have traversed were what I have described. All their insignificance did not prevent their being an element of the greatest power to those who cultivated them, alike in revenue and in dominion. They were the means by which the islands were reached and reduced, those of the smallest area falling the easiest prey. Wars by land there were none, none at
least by which power was acquired; we have the usual border contests, but of distant expeditions with conquest for object we hear nothing among the Hellenes. There was no union of subject cities round a great state, no spontaneous combination of equals for confederate expeditions; what fighting there was consisted merely of local warfare between rival neighbours. The nearest approach to a coalition took place in the old war between Chalcis and Eretria; this was a quarrel in which the rest of the Hellenic name did to some extent take sides.

16. Various, too, were the obstacles which the national growth encountered in various localities. The power of the Ionians was advancing with rapid strides when it came into collision with Persia, under King Cyrus, who, after having dethroned Croesus and overrun everything between the Halys and the sea, stopped not till he had enslaved the cities of the coast; the islands being only left to be subdued by Darius and the Phoenician navy.

17. Again, wherever there were tyrants in the Hellenic cities, their habit of providing simply for themselves, of looking solely to their personal comfort and family aggrandizement, made safety the great aim of their policy, and prevented anything great proceeding from them; though they would each have their affairs with their immediate neighbours. (In Sicily, however, they attained to very great power.) Thus for a long time everywhere in Hellas do we find causes which make the states alike incapable of combination for great and common ends, or of any vigorous action of their own.

18. But at last a time came when the tyrants of Athens and the far older tyrannies of the rest of Hellas were, with the exception of those in Sicily, once and for all put down by Lacedaemon; for this city, though after the settlement of the Dorians, its present inhabitants, it suffered from faction for an unparalleled length of time, still at a very early period obtained good laws, and enjoyed a freedom from tyrants which was unbroken; it has possessed the same form of government for more than four hundred years, reckoning to the end of the late war, and has thus been in a position to arrange the affairs of the other states.

Not many years after the deposition of the tyrants, the battle of Marathon was fought between the Medes and the Athenians. Ten years afterwards the barbarian returned with the armada for the subjugation of Hellas. In the face of this great danger the command of the confederate Hellenes was assumed by the Lacedaemonians in virtue of their superior power; and the Athenians, having made up their minds to abandon the city, broke up their homes, threw themselves into their ships, and became a naval people. This coalition, after repulsing the barbarian, soon afterwards split into two sections, which included the Hellenes who had revolted from the king, as well as those who had aided him in the war. At the head of the one stood Athens, at the head of the other Lacedaemon, one the first naval, the other the first military power in Hellas. For a short time the alliance held together, till the Lacedaemonians and Athenians quarrelled, and made war upon each other with their allies, a duel into which all the Hellenes sooner or later were drawn, though some might at first remain neutral. So that the whole period from the Median War to this, with some peaceful intervals, was spent by each power in war, either with its rival or with its own revolted allies, and consequently afforded them constant practice in military matters, and that experience which is learnt in the school of danger.

19. The policy of Lacedaemon was not to exact tribute from her allies, but merely to secure their subservience to her interests by establishing oligarchies among them; Athens, on the contrary, had by degrees deprived hers of their ships, and imposed instead contributions in money on all except Chios and Lesbos. Both found their resources for this war separately to exceed the sum of their strength when the alliance flourished intact.

20. Having now given the result of my inquiries into early times, I grant that there will be a difficulty in believing every particular detail. The way that most men deal with traditions, even traditions of their own country, is to receive
them all alike as they are delivered, without applying any critical test whatever. The general Athenian public fancy that Hipparcatus was tyrant when he fell by the hands of Harmodius and Aristogeiton; not knowing that Hippias, the eldest of the sons of Pisistratus, was really supreme, and that Hipparcatus and Thessalus were his brothers; and that Harmodius and Aristogeiton suspecting, on the very day, nay at the very moment fixed on for the deed, that information had been conveyed to Hippias by his accomplices, concluded that he had been warned, and did not attack him, yet, not liking to be apprehended and risk their lives for nothing, fell upon Hipparcatus near the Leocoreum, and slew him as he was arranging the Panathenian procession.

There are many other unfounded ideas current among the rest of the Hellenes, even on matters of contemporary history which have not been obscured by time. For instance, there is the notion that the Lacedaemonian kings have two votes each, the fact being that they have only one; and that there is a company of Pitana, there being simply no such thing. So little pains do the vulgar take in the investigation of truth, accepting readily the first story that comes to hand.

21. On the whole, however, the conclusions I have drawn from the proofs quoted may, I believe, safely be relied on. Assuredly they will not be disturbed either by the lays of a poet displaying the exaggeration of his craft, or by the compositions of the chroniclers that are attractive at truth's expense, the subjects they treat of being out of the reach of evidence, and time having robbed most of them of historical value by enthroning them in the region of legend. Turning from these, we can rest satisfied with having proceeded upon the clearest data, and having arrived at conclusions as exact as can be expected in matters of such antiquity. To come to this war; despite the known disposition of the actors in a struggle to overrate its importance, and when it is over to return to their admiration of earlier events, yet an examination of the facts will show that it was much greater than the wars which preceded it.

22. With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eyewitnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time.

23. The Median War, the greatest achievement of past times, yet found a speedy decision in two actions by sea and two by land. The present war was prolonged to an immense length, and long as it was it was short without parallel for the misfortunes that it brought upon Hellas. Never had so many cities been taken and laid desolate, here by the barbarians, here by the parties contending (the old inhabitants being sometimes removed to make room for others); never was there so much banishing and blood-shedding, now on the field of battle, now in the strife of faction. Old stories of occurrences handed down by tradition, but scantily confirmed by experience, suddenly ceased to be incredible; there were earthquakes of unparalleled extent and violence; eclipses of the sun occurred with a frequency unrecorded