The Promethean Library



Tales from Herodotus

A Read-Aloud Storybook

Herodotus

Twenty-four tales from the Histories, translated by G. C. Macaulay

Family Readers · No. 1

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Twenty-four tales from the Histories in the translation of G. C. Macaulay

With a guide to reading aloud, a short introduction to each tale, questions for families and notes



The Promethean Library · Family Readers · No. 1
Transatlantic Press

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A Read-Aloud Storybook

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The readings. The readings are reproduced word for word from public domain translations. Each translator, edition and date is listed under Sources of the Texts, with what this edition leaves out.

How this edition was made. The introduction, headnotes, questions, reflections, practices, notes, glossary, chronology and reading list were drafted with the help of artificial intelligence and checked by hand against the readings and against published sources. Every quotation in them matches the readings printed in this book word for word, and every fact was checked against a published source before it was printed. The publisher keeps a record of the source checked for each fact. No quotation, fact or story was invented. The readings themselves are copied unchanged from the translations named under Sources of the Texts.

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Thus then these things are established by usage, and I think that Pindar spoke rightly in his verse, when he said that "of all things law is king."

Herodotus, Histories, translated by G. C. Macaulay

Contents

Before You Begin 8

Introduction 9

Reading Aloud 14

1. Arion and the Dolphin 16

2. Solon Visits Croesus 19

3. Croesus Tests the Oracles 24

4. Croesus on the Pyre 27

5. The Herdsman's Boy Who Played King 33

6. The Children Who Spoke First 39

7. Beasts of the Nile 41

8. The King of the Long-Lived Ethiopians 45

9. Custom Is King 50

10. The Ring of Polycrates 52

11. The Gold-Digging Ants 56

12. The Gold That Fell from Heaven 59

13. A Bird, a Mouse, a Frog and Five Arrows 62

14. Gorgo and the Map of Bronze 68

15. The Run at Marathon 72

16. Hippocleides Dances Away His Marriage 77

17. Xerxes Weeps at Abydos 81

18. Demaratus Tells the Truth 86

19. Two Spartans Go to the King 90

20. The Wooden Wall 93
21. The Spartans Comb Their Hair 97
22. The Last Stand at Thermopylae 101
23. The Message in the Night 107
24. A Victor Says No 112
Notes on the Texts 114
Glossary 120
Chronology 122
Further Reading 124
Sources of the Texts 125
Edition Notes 126

Before You Begin

This book gathers twenty-four stories from the Histories of Herodotus, the Greek writer of the fifth century BC who set out to record the great war between the Greeks and the Persians, and everything he heard along the way. Each tale is one continuous passage, printed exactly as it stands in the Victorian translation of G. C. Macaulay. Nothing inside a tale has been cut, shortened or rewritten.

The selection is made for family reading: for children of about ten and up listening beside adults, for classrooms, and for reading groups of mixed ages. Herodotus tells many stories that do not suit that audience, and those have been left out. Some of the tales chosen still contain battles, threats or death. The section called Reading Aloud names them, so that you can choose with care.

Each tale has a short headnote that says where and when it happens, who is who, and one thing to listen for. After the tale come two or three questions under the heading Talk About It. The tales run in the order Herodotus tells them, from the tale of Arion and the reign of Croesus to the last battle of the Persian War, but each one stands on its own. You may start anywhere.

Paragraphs are numbered: 13.6 means Tale 13, paragraph 6. In the oracles and epitaphs every line of verse has its own number. The questions and the Notes on the Texts use these numbers.

Macaulay spells Greek names close to the Greek: Demaratos, Kyno, Tainaron, Epialtes. This book's own prose uses the familiar forms: Demaratus, Cyno, Taenarum, Ephialtes. His English also keeps the old "thou" and "ye." Read it as it comes; the meaning is almost always clear from the sentence.

Introduction

The Man Who Asked Questions

Herodotus was born at Halicarnassus, the town now called Bodrum, in southwestern Turkey. The year is uncertain. The usual guess is about 484 BC, and he was still alive in 429 BC. Halicarnassus was a Greek town under Persian rule when he was a boy, so he grew up between the two worlds his book describes.

He traveled widely: up the Nile in Egypt, to the Crimea on the Black Sea, and to Babylon. He seems to have spent time in Athens, and he may have settled at Thurii, a new colony in southern Italy founded in 444 BC. Wherever he went he asked questions, of priests and of anyone else who would talk.

Our word history comes from the Greek word historia, which meant research or inquiry. Herodotus opens his book by saying that he set down the results of his inquiry so that the deeds of men should not be forgotten and great works should not lose their fame. That is still a good description of what a historian does. The Roman writer Cicero called Herodotus the Father of History. A less kind name, the Father of Lies, is credited to Plutarch. Both names have stuck.

What the Histories Are

The Histories tell how the Persian Empire grew into a vast empire, and how it came at last to grief against the Greeks. The story begins in the sixth century BC with Croesus, the rich king of Lydia, and ends with the Greek victories of 479 BC and their aftermath. Along the way Herodotus stops again and again to describe the lands the Persians conquered

or tried to conquer: Egypt and its strange animals, the nomads of the northern steppe, the far edges of the earth where gold is guarded by giant ants.

The work is divided into nine books. That division was made long after Herodotus, probably by scholars at the library of Alexandria in the third century BC, and the books are conventionally named after the nine Muses. Each tale's reading line gives its book and chapter numbers, so that you can find it in a complete Herodotus.

The great events fall in a short span. Cyrus the Great founded the Persian Empire and took Croesus' capital, Sardis, traditionally dated 547 or 546 BC. His son Cambyses conquered Egypt in 525 BC. Darius I invaded the land of the Scythians, north of the Black Sea, in 513 BC. The Greek cities of Ionia, on the coast of what is now Turkey, rose against Persia in 499 BC, and Athens sent ships to help them. Darius then sent an army that the Athenians defeated at Marathon in 490 BC. Ten years later his son Xerxes led a far greater invasion. The Greeks lost at Thermopylae and won at sea at Salamis in 480 BC, and on land at Plataea in 479 BC. The last eight tales in this book (Tales 17 to 24) follow that war.

How Herodotus Tells a Tale

Listen to the way Herodotus talks. He almost never pretends to have seen what he did not see. Over and over he tells us whose story he is passing on. Arion's rescue by a dolphin is "the tale told by the Corinthians and Lesbians alike" (1.2). The gold-digging ants come to us "as the Persians say" (11.4). He reports the Scythians' account of their own beginnings, "though I do not believe it for my part" (12.1). Of the phoenix he admits that he "did not myself see except in painting" (7.6), and of its egg of myrrh he says plainly, "but I cannot believe the story."

At other times he weighs two accounts and tells us which he prefers. Did the allies run at Thermopylae, or did Leonidas send them away? "I am inclined rather to be of this latter opinion" (22.2), he says, and then

gives his reason. This habit is one of the best things about him. He lets his reader see the evidence and the guesswork side by side.

That does not make every story true. Modern historians doubt a good deal of what he reports, and the notes in this book say so where a source allows. Historians treat the tale of Cyrus' childhood (Tale 5) as legend. No other ancient source confirms that an Egyptian king tested two babies to find the first language (Tale 6). Modern historians are skeptical of Herodotus' picture of Cambyses as a madman. But a story can be worth hearing even when it is not exact history. These tales show what Greeks and their neighbors believed, feared and admired, and what made them laugh.

Big Themes in Small Stories

A few ideas run through the whole book, and children notice them quickly once they are pointed out.

The first is that fortune turns. Solon tells Croesus that "man is altogether a creature of accident" (2.5) and that no one should be called happy until the end of his life. Croesus sends him away, and two tales later he stands on a pyre calling Solon's name. The Egyptian king Amasis gives the same warning to the lucky Polycrates (Tale 10). Xerxes, looking down on his huge army, weeps because none of those men will be alive in a hundred years (Tale 17).

The second is that people are proud of their own ways. Darius asks Greeks and Indians what it would take to make them change their funeral customs, and both are horrified (Tale 9). Herodotus concludes, with the poet Pindar, that "of all things law is king."

The third is freedom. Again and again a Greek explains to a Persian why free men fight. Two Spartans tell a Persian governor that he knows what it is to be a slave, "but thou hast never yet made trial of freedom" (19.3). The exiled king Demaratus tells Xerxes that the Spartans are free, yet over them "is set Law as a master" (18.4).

The fourth is cleverness. Herodotus loves a riddle, a trick or a sharp answer: the tortoise in the pot (Tale 3), the Scythians' strange gifts (Tale 13), the message in the night at Salamis (Tale 23), and the one-line replies of Spartans, children included. Gorgo, the daughter of a Spartan king, is eight or nine years old when she sees through a visitor's bribe (Tale 14).

The Lands in These Tales

The tales travel far, and a map helps. Lydia lay in western Asia Minor, now western Turkey, with its capital at Sardis; its kings are credited with the first coins. The Medes, an Iranian people, ruled from Ecbatana, now Hamadan in Iran, until Cyrus the Persian took their kingdom. Egypt in these tales is ruled by kings of its Twenty-sixth Dynasty, such as Psammetichus and Amasis, until Cambyses conquers it. The Scythians were horse-riding nomads of the steppe north of the Black Sea, in what is now Ukraine and southern Russia.

Greece itself was not one country but a network of many small states, each with its own city at its heart, often at odds with one another. The two strongest in these tales are Athens and Sparta, whose people Herodotus usually calls Lacedaemonians. Many more Greeks lived across the Aegean, on the islands and along the coast of Asia Minor; the Ionians among them were Persian subjects. Between Asia and Europe ran the Hellespont, the narrow strait now called the Dardanelles, which Xerxes bridged to bring his army across.

Choosing the Tales

Herodotus wrote a very long book, and he did not write it for children. The twenty-four passages here were chosen because each can be read alone, each tells a story with a beginning and an end, and each is suitable for listeners of ten and up when an adult is present. Together they reach into every one of the nine books.

Some of the most famous stories in the Histories were left out because they are too cruel or too frank for family reading. Others were left out because they cannot be understood without the chapters around them. Where a tale's headnote needs background, it supplies it briefly. Where Herodotus goes on to tell what happened next, a note says so, without printing what was left out.

Macaulay's English

George Campbell Macaulay (1852–1915) was an English scholar. His translation of Herodotus was published in two volumes by Macmillan in London in 1890 and reissued in 1904 and 1914. In his preface he says that his aim was above all faithfulness: to Herodotus' meaning, and also to his manner of expression and the structure of his sentences. So the sentences here are often long, joined by "and" and "for" and "but." They carry well when read aloud slowly.

Macaulay uses the old pronouns "thou," "thee" and "ye" when people speak to each other, and he keeps the Greek form of names. He calls the Greeks "Hellenes" and their land "Hellas," which is what the Greeks called themselves. He calls everyone else "Barbarians," the Greek word for people who did not speak Greek. In Herodotus the word mostly means "foreigners," and in these tales it is used of Persians, Egyptians and Scythians alike. You may want to tell young listeners that Herodotus admired a great deal about the "Barbarians," as the tales of the Ethiopian king and the Scythians show.

Reading Aloud

Herodotus tells his tales as if aloud, and they come alive in a voice. A few practical suggestions follow.

Pacing. Macaulay's sentences are long. Read them more slowly than you would read modern prose, and take a breath at each colon and semicolon. When a sentence turns, as at "but" or "and then," let your voice turn too. At the pace of about 155 words a minute that one guide calls common for audiobook narration, the shortest tales here (Tales 6, 9 and 24) take about three minutes and the longest, Tale 4, about twelve and a half. These are estimates; a family reading with stops for questions will take longer.

Voices. Most tales have only two or three speakers. Give each a different voice, or let a second reader take the speeches. A king and his wise adviser make a good pair: Croesus and Solon (Tale 2), Xerxes and Artabanus (Tale 17), Xerxes and Demaratus (Tale 18). Children enjoy reading the short, sharp lines: Gorgo's warning (14.3), Hippocleides' answer (16.4), Dienekes' joke about the arrows (22.16). Oracles are printed as verse. Read them a little more slowly and evenly, as if from a distance.

Old words. "Thou" and "ye" need no explanation for most listeners after the first page. When a hard word comes up, keep going; the Notes on the Texts gloss the ones that matter, and you can look at them afterward.

Pausing for questions. The best place to stop is just before a turn in the story. Ask listeners to guess what comes next before Solon names the happiest man (2.3), before the Persians decide what the Scythians' gifts mean (13.7), or before Themistocles explains the oracle (20.31). Then read on and compare. Save the Talk About It questions for the end.

Violent and sad moments. The selection leaves out Herodotus' cruelest stories, but these tales still contain some hard things. In Tale 1 sailors plot to kill Arion and order him to kill himself or leap into the sea. Tale 2 tells of a father who dies in battle and two young men who die in their sleep. Tale 4 has a king bound on a burning pyre with fourteen Lydian boys, though he is saved. In Tale 5 a newborn baby is ordered to be left to die, a stillborn child takes its place, a boy is beaten in a game, and a man is threatened with torture. Tale 6 briefly mentions a story, which Herodotus rejects, of women whose tongues were cut out. Tale 9 mentions a people who eat their dead parents. Tale 10 mentions a brother put to death and prisoners in chains. In Tale 13 Darius leaves his weakest men behind in the camp to be found by the Scythians. Tale 15 is a battle: men are killed, one man's hand is cut off and another is blinded. Tale 19 tells how heralds were thrown into a pit and a well, and of two men who offer to die. Tale 20 has an oracle full of fire and blood. Tales 21 and 22 are the battle of Thermopylae, and Tale 22 ends with the death of Leonidas and his men, fighting at the last "with hands and with teeth" (22.15). Tale 23 tells of a plan to kill shipwrecked men. In Tale 24 a Greek urges Pausanias to impale the body of the Persian general Mardonius, as the Persians had beheaded and crucified the body of Leonidas, and Pausanias refuses.

Preview a tale before reading it to a younger child. It is fine to say plainly that these were real wars and that people died in them, and then to ask what the tale wants us to admire or to fear. If a listener is upset, stop and talk. The tale will keep.

1. Arion and the Dolphin

Corinth, in Greece, about six hundred years before Christ. Periander, the ruler of Corinth, kept at his court the most famous singer of the age, Arion, who came from Methymna on the island of Lesbos. Arion played the lyre and sang; Herodotus credits him with the first dithyramb, a hymn sung and danced by a chorus. Here Arion sails home from Italy with a fortune, and the sailors decide they want it.

Taenarum, where the dolphin brings him ashore, is the southern tip of the Peloponnese, the great peninsula of southern Greece.

Listen for how Herodotus ends: not with the rescue, but with the evidence he says you can still see.

READING 1. *Arion and the Dolphin. Herodotus, Histories, Book I, chapters 23–24, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

1 As for Periander, the man who gave information about the oracle to Thrasybulos, he was the son of Kypselos, and despot of Corinth. In his life, say the Corinthians, (and with them agree the Lesbians), there happened to him a very great marvel, namely that Arion of Methymna was carried ashore at Tainaron upon a dolphin's back. This man was a harper second to none of those who then lived, and the first, so far as we know, who composed a dithyramb, naming it so and teaching it to a chorus at Corinth.

2 This Arion, they say, who for the most part of his time stayed with Periander, conceived a desire to sail to Italy and Sicily; and after he had there acquired large sums of money, he wished to return again to Corinth. He

set forth therefore from Taras, and as he had faith in Corinthians more than in other men, he hired a ship with a crew of Corinthians. These, the story says, when out in open sea, formed a plot to cast Arion overboard and so possess his wealth; and he having obtained knowledge of this made entreaties to them, offering them his wealth and asking them to grant him his life. With this however he did not prevail upon them, but the men who were conveying him bade him either slay himself there, that he might receive burial on the land, or leap straightway into the sea. So Arion being driven to a strait entreated them that, since they were so minded, they would allow him to take his stand in full minstrel's garb upon the deck of the ship and sing; and he promised to put himself to death after he had sung. They then, well pleased to think that they should hear the best of all minstrels upon earth, drew back from the stern towards the middle of the ship; and he put on the full minstrel's garb and took his lyre, and standing on the deck performed the Orthian measure. Then as the measure ended, he threw himself into the sea just as he was, in his full minstrel's garb; and they went on sailing away to Corinth, but him, they say, a dolphin supported on its back and brought him to shore at Tainaron: and when he had come to land he proceeded to Corinth with his minstrel's garb. Thither having arrived he related all that had been done; and Periander doubting of his story kept Arion in guard and would let him go nowhere, while he kept careful watch for those who had conveyed him. When these came, he called them and inquired of them if they had any report to make of Arion; and when they said that he was safe in Italy and that they had left him at Taras faring well, Arion suddenly appeared before them in the same guise as when he made his leap from the ship; and they being struck with amazement were no longer able to deny when they were questioned. This is the tale told by the Corinthians and Lesbians alike, and there is at Tainaron a votive offering of Arion of no great size, namely a bronze figure of a man upon a dolphin's back.

Talk About It

1. Arion asks for one thing before he jumps: to sing in his full minstrel's garb (1.2). Why might that matter so much to him?
2. Periander does not believe Arion's story at first (1.2). How does he find out the truth? Is it a fair test?
3. Herodotus says this is "the tale told by the Corinthians and Lesbians alike" (1.2). Does he say he believes it? How can you tell?

2. Solon Visits Croesus

Sardis, the capital of Lydia, in what is now western Turkey, about 560 BC or a little later. Croesus, the king, has conquered most of the land west of the river Halys and is famous for his wealth. To his court comes Solon, the lawgiver of Athens, who has written new laws for his city and then gone abroad for ten years so that no one can make him change them. Many historians doubt that the two men ever met, since Solon's laws date from about 594 BC and Croesus came to the throne decades later.

Croesus shows Solon his treasure and asks a question he is sure he knows the answer to. Solon's answer includes two stories: Tellus, an Athenian, and two brothers from Argos, Cleobis and Biton. In Solon's sums a "furlong" is the Greek stade, about 185 meters.

Listen for the difference between being "happy" and being "fortunate." Solon will not call any man happy until he has seen how his life ends.

Reading 2. *Solon Visits Croesus. Herodotus, Histories, Book I, chapters 28–33, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 As time went on, when nearly all those dwelling on this side the river Halys had been subdued, (for except the Kilikians and Lycians Croesus subdued and kept under his rule all the nations, that is to say Lydians, Phrygians, Mysians, Mariandynoi, Chalybians, Paphlagonians, Thracians both Thynian and Bithynian, Carians, Ionians, Dorians, Aeolians, and Pamphylians),

2 when these, I say, had been subdued, and while he was still adding to his Lydian dominions, there came to Sardis, then at the height of its wealth,

all the wise men of the Hellas who chanced to be alive at that time, brought thither severally by various occasions; and of them one was Solon the Athenian, who after he had made laws for the Athenians at their bidding, left his native country for ten years and sailed away saying that he desired to visit various lands, in order that he might not be compelled to repeal any of the laws which he had proposed. For of themselves the Athenians were not competent to do this, having bound themselves by solemn oaths to submit for ten years to the laws which Solon should propose for them.

3 So Solon, having left his native country for this reason and for the sake of seeing various lands, came to Amasis in Egypt, and also to Croesus at Sardis. Having there arrived he was entertained as a guest by Croesus in the king's palace; and afterwards, on the third or fourth day, at the bidding of Croesus his servants led Solon round to see his treasuries; and they showed him all things, how great and magnificent they were: and after he had looked upon them all and examined them as he had occasion, Croesus asked him as follows: "Athenian guest, much report of thee has come to us, both in regard to thy wisdom and thy wanderings, how that in thy search for wisdom thou hast traversed many lands to see them; now therefore a desire has come upon me to ask thee whether thou hast seen any whom thou deemest to be of all men the most happy." This he asked supposing that he himself was the happiest of men; but Solon, using no flattery but the truth only, said: "Yes, O king, Tellos the Athenian." And Croesus, marvelling at that which he said, asked him earnestly: "In what respect dost thou judge Tellos to be the most happy?" And he said: "Tellos, in the first place, living while his native State was prosperous, had sons fair and good and saw from all of them children begotten and living to grow up; and secondly he had what with us is accounted wealth, and after his life a most glorious end: for when a battle was fought by the Athenians at Eleusis against the neighbouring people, he brought up supports and routed the foe and there died by a most fair

death; and the Athenians buried him publicly where he fell, and honoured him greatly."

4 So when Solon had moved Croesus to inquire further by the story of Tellos, recounting how many points of happiness he had, the king asked again whom he had seen proper to be placed next after this man, supposing that he himself would certainly obtain at least the second place; but he replied: "Cleobis and Biton: for these, who were of Argos by race, possessed a sufficiency of wealth and, in addition to this, strength of body such as I shall tell. Both equally had won prizes in the games, and moreover the following tale is told of them:—There was a feast of Hera among the Argives and it was by all means necessary that their mother should be borne in a car to the temple. But since their oxen were not brought up in time from the field, the young men, barred from all else by lack of time, submitted themselves to the yoke and drew the wain, their mother being borne by them upon it; and so they brought it on for five-and-forty furlongs, and came to the temple. Then after they had done this and had been seen by the assembled crowd, there came to their life a most excellent ending; and in this the deity declared that it was better for man to die than to continue to live. For the Argive men were standing round and extolling the strength of the young men, while the Argive women were extolling the mother to whose lot it had fallen to have such sons; and the mother being exceedingly rejoiced both by the deed itself and by the report made of it, took her stand in front of the image of the goddess and prayed that she would give to Cleobis and Biton her sons, who had honoured her greatly, that gift which is best for man to receive: and after this prayer, when they had sacrificed and feasted, the young men lay down to sleep within the temple itself, and never rose again, but were held bound in this last end. And the Argives made statues in the likeness of them and dedicated them as offerings at Delphi, thinking that they had proved themselves most excellent."

5 Thus Solon assigned the second place in respect of happiness to these: and Croesus was moved to anger and said: "Athenian guest, hast thou

then so cast aside our prosperous state as worth nothing, that thou dost prefer to us even men of private station?" And he said: "Croesus, thou art inquiring about human fortunes of one who well knows that the Deity is altogether envious and apt to disturb our lot. For in the course of long time a man may see many things which he would not desire to see, and suffer also many things which he would not desire to suffer. The limit of life for a man I lay down at seventy years: and these seventy years give twenty-five thousand and two hundred days, not reckoning for any intercalated month. Then if every other one of these years shall be made longer by one month, that the seasons may be caused to come round at the due time of the year, the intercalated months will be in number five-and-thirty besides the seventy years; and of these months the days will be one thousand and fifty. Of all these days, being in number twenty-six thousand two hundred and fifty, which go to the seventy years, one day produces nothing at all which resembles what another brings with it. Thus then, O Croesus, man is altogether a creature of accident. As for thee, I perceive that thou art both great in wealth and king of many men, but that of which thou didst ask me I cannot call thee yet, until I learn that thou hast brought thy life to a fair ending: for the very rich man is not at all to be accounted more happy than he who has but his subsistence from day to day, unless also the fortune go with him of ending his life well in possession of all things fair. For many very wealthy men are not happy, while many who have but a moderate living are fortunate; and in truth the very rich man who is not happy has two advantages only as compared with the poor man who is fortunate, whereas this latter has many as compared with the rich man who is not happy. The rich man is able better to fulfil his desire, and also to endure a great calamity if it fall upon him; whereas the other has advantage over him in these things which follow:—he is not indeed able equally with the rich man to endure a calamity or to fulfil his desire, but these his good fortune keeps away from him, while he is sound of limb, free from disease, untouched by suffering, the father of fair children and himself of comely form; and if in

addition to this he shall end his life well, he is worthy to be called that which thou seekest, namely a happy man; but before he comes to his end it is well to hold back and not to call him yet happy but only fortunate. Now to possess all these things together is impossible for one who is mere man, just as no single land suffices to supply all things for itself, but one thing it has and another it lacks, and the land that has the greatest number of things is the best: so also in the case of a man, no single person is complete in himself, for one thing he has and another he lacks; but whosoever of men continues to the end in possession of the greatest number of these things and then has a gracious ending of his life, he is by me accounted worthy, O king, to receive this name. But we must of everything examine the end and how it will turn out at the last, for to many God shows but a glimpse of happiness and then plucks them up by the roots and overturns them."

6 Thus saying he refused to gratify Croesus, who sent him away from his presence holding him in no esteem, and thinking him utterly senseless in that he passed over present good things and bade men look to the end of every matter.

Talk About It

1. Solon names Tellus first, then Cleobis and Biton (2.3, 2.4). What do these happy people have in common? What do they not have?
2. Solon says the very rich man is not "more happy than he who has but his subsistence from day to day" unless his good fortune lasts (2.5). Do you agree?
3. Croesus thinks Solon "utterly senseless" (2.6). Why is he so annoyed? Have you ever been annoyed by advice that turned out to be right?

3. Croesus Tests the Oracles

Sardis, some years after Solon's visit. Croesus has lost his son, and he has watched a new power rise to the east: Cyrus, king of the Persians, has overthrown the Medes. Croesus wonders whether to make war on him. First he wants to know which oracle he can trust.

An oracle was a shrine where a god was believed to answer questions. The most famous was at Delphi, on the slopes of Mount Parnassus in central Greece, where a priestess of Apollo called the Pythia gave the answers, often in verse. Croesus sends messengers to seven oracles at once, with a question no one could guess.

Listen for the riddle in the Pythia's verse. Try to work out what Croesus was doing before Herodotus tells you.

Reading 3. *Croesus Tests the Oracles. Herodotus, Histories, Book I, chapters 46–48, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 For two years then Croesus remained quiet in his mourning, because he was deprived of his son: but after this period of time the overthrowing of the rule of Astyages the son of Cyaxares by Cyrus the son of Cambyses, and the growing greatness of the Persians caused Croesus to cease from his mourning, and led him to a care of cutting short the power of the Persians, if by any means he might, while yet it was in growth and before they should have become great.

2 So having formed this design he began forthwith to make trial of the Oracles, both those of the Hellenes and that in Libya, sending messengers some to one place and some to another, some to go to Delphi, others to

Abai of the Phocians, and others to Dodona; and some were sent to the shrine of Amphiaraos and to that of Trophonios, others to Branchidai in the land of Miletos: these are the Oracles of the Hellenes to which Croesus sent messengers to seek divination; and others he sent to the shrine of Ammon in Libya to inquire there. Now he was sending the messengers abroad to the end that he might try the Oracles and find out what knowledge they had, so that if they should be found to have knowledge of the truth, he might send and ask them secondly whether he should attempt to march against the Persians.

3 And to the Lydians whom he sent to make trial of the Oracles he gave charge as follows—that from the day on which they set out from Sardis they should reckon up the number of the days following and on the hundredth day they should consult the Oracles, asking what Croesus the son of Alyattes king of the Lydians chanced then to be doing: and whatever the Oracles severally should prophesy, this they should cause to be written down and bear it back to him. Now what the other Oracles prophesied is not by any reported, but at Delphi, so soon as the Lydians entered the sanctuary of the temple to consult the god and asked that which they were commanded to ask, the Pythian prophetess spoke thus in hexameter measure:

"But the number of sand I know, and the measure of drops in the ocean;
5 The dumb man I understand, and I hear the speech of the speechless:
And there hath come to my soul the smell of a strong-shelled tortoise
Boiling in cauldron of bronze, and the flesh of a lamb mingled with it;
Under it bronze is laid, it hath bronze as a clothing upon it."

9 When the Pythian prophetess had uttered this oracle, the Lydians caused the prophecy to be written down, and went away at once to Sardis. And when the rest also who had been sent round were there arrived with the answers of the Oracles, then Croesus unfolded the writings one by one and looked upon them: and at first none of them pleased him, but when he heard that from Delphi, forthwith he did worship to the god and accepted the answer, judging that the Oracle at Delphi was the only true

one, because it had found out what he himself had done. For when he had sent to the several Oracles his messengers to consult the gods, keeping well in mind the appointed day he contrived the following device—he thought of something which it would be impossible to discover or to conceive of, and cutting up a tortoise and a lamb he boiled them together himself in a cauldron of bronze, laying a cover of bronze over them.

Talk About It

1. Croesus counts days so that every oracle is asked on the same day (3.3). Why is that a clever way to run a test?
2. Read the oracle's five lines again (3.4–8). Which line gives away the answer? Which lines are there to show off?
3. If you wanted to test whether someone could really see the future, what would you ask?

4. Croesus on the Pyre

Sardis, in the middle of the sixth century BC. Croesus has gone to war with Cyrus of Persia, encouraged by an oracle from Delphi that said he would destroy a great empire. He lost. Cyrus has taken Sardis, traditionally in 547 or 546 BC, though historians now say the date cannot be fixed. Croesus is a prisoner.

What happened to Croesus next was told in more than one way. Herodotus' version follows. A Greek poet, Bacchylides, told instead that Zeus put out the fire and Apollo carried Croesus away to a happy land in the far north.

Listen for the moment Croesus calls out a name three times, and for how much of Solon's lesson both kings seem to have learned by the end.

Reading 4. *Croesus on the Pyre. Herodotus, Histories, Book I, chapters 86–91, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

1 The Persians then had obtained possession of Sardis and had taken Croesus himself prisoner, after he had reigned fourteen years and had been besieged fourteen days, having fulfilled the oracle in that he had brought to an end his own great empire. So the Persians having taken him brought him into the presence of Cyrus: and he piled up a great pyre and caused Croesus to go up upon it bound in fetters, and along with him twice seven sons of Lydians, whether it was that he meant to dedicate this offering as firstfruits of his victory to some god, or whether he desired to fulfil a vow, or else had heard that Croesus was a god-fearing man and so caused him to go up on the pyre because he wished to know if any one of the di-

vine powers would save him, so that he should not be burnt alive. He, they say, did this; but to Croesus as he stood upon the pyre there came, although he was in such evil case, a memory of the saying of Solon, how he had said with divine inspiration that no one of the living might be called happy. And when this thought came into his mind, they say that he sighed deeply and groaned aloud, having been for long silent, and three times he uttered the name of Solon. Hearing this, Cyrus bade the interpreters ask Croesus who was this person on whom he called; and they came near and asked. And Croesus for a time, it is said, kept silence when he was asked this, but afterwards being pressed he said: "One whom more than much wealth I should have desired to have speech with all monarchs." Then, since his words were of doubtful import, they asked again of that which he said; and as they were urgent with him and gave him no peace, he told how once Solon an Athenian had come, and having inspected all his wealth had made light of it, with such and such words; and how all had turned out for him according as Solon had said, not speaking at all especially with a view to Croesus himself, but with a view to the whole human race and especially those who seem to themselves to be happy men. And while Croesus related these things, already the pyre was lighted and the edges of it round about were burning. Then they say that Cyrus, hearing from the interpreters what Croesus had said, changed his purpose and considered that he himself also was but a man, and that he was delivering another man, who had been not inferior to himself in felicity, alive to the fire; and moreover he feared the requital, and reflected that there was nothing of that which men possessed which was secure; therefore, they say, he ordered them to extinguish as quickly as possible the fire that was burning, and to bring down Croesus and those who were with him from the pyre; and they using endeavours were not able now to get the mastery of the flames.

2 Then it is related by the Lydians that Croesus, having learned how Cyrus had changed his mind, and seeing that every one was trying to put out the fire but that they were no longer able to check it, cried aloud entreat-

ing Apollo that if any gift had ever been given by him which had been acceptable to the god, he would come to his aid and rescue him from the evil which was now upon him. So he with tears entreated the god, and suddenly, they say, after clear sky and calm weather clouds gathered and a storm burst, and it rained with a very violent shower, and the pyre was extinguished. Then Cyrus, having perceived that Croesus was a lover of the gods and a good man, caused him to be brought down from the pyre and asked him as follows: "Croesus, tell me who of all men was it who persuaded thee to march upon my land and so to become an enemy to me instead of a friend?" and he said: "O king, I did this to thy felicity and to my own misfortune, and the causer of this was the god of the Hellenes, who incited me to march with my army. For no one is so senseless as to choose of his own will war rather peace, since in peace the sons bury their fathers, but in war the fathers bury their sons. But it was pleasing, I suppose, to the divine powers that these things should come to pass thus."

3 So he spoke, and Cyrus loosed his bonds and caused him to sit near himself and paid to him much regard, and he marvelled both himself and all who were about him at the sight of Croesus. And Croesus wrapt in thought was silent; but after a time, turning round and seeing the Persians plundering the city of the Lydians, he said: "O king, must I say to thee that which I chance to have in my thought, or must I keep silent in this my present fortune?" Then Cyrus bade him say boldly whatsoever he desired; and he asked him saying: "What is the business that this great multitude of men is doing with so much eagerness?" and he said: "They are plundering thy city and carrying away thy wealth." And Croesus answered: "Neither is it my city that they are plundering nor my wealth which they are carrying away; for I have no longer any property in these things: but it is thy wealth that they are carrying and driving away."

4 And Cyrus was concerned by that which Croesus had said, and he caused all the rest to withdraw and asked Croesus what he discerned for his advantage as regards that which was being done; and he said: "Since the

gods gave me to thee as a slave, I think it right if I discern anything more than others to signify it to thee. The Persians, who are by nature unruly, are without wealth: if therefore thou shalt suffer them to carry off in plunder great wealth and to take possession of it, then it is to be looked for that thou wilt experience this result, thou must expect namely that whosoever gets possession of the largest share will make insurrection against thee. Now therefore, if that which I say is pleasing to thee, do this:—set spearmen of thy guard to watch at all the gates, and let these take away the things, and say to the men who were bearing them out of the city that they must first be tithed for Zeus: and thus thou on the one hand wilt not be hated by them for taking away the things by force, and they on the other will willingly let the things go, acknowledging within themselves that thou art doing that which is just."

5 Hearing this, Cyrus was above measure pleased, because he thought that Croesus advised well; and he commended him much and enjoined the spearmen of his guard to perform that which Croesus had advised: and after that he spoke to Croesus thus: "Croesus, since thou art prepared, like a king as thou art, to do good deeds and speak good words, therefore ask me for a gift, whatsoever thou desirest to be given thee forthwith." And he said: "Master, thou wilt most do me a pleasure if thou wilt permit me to send to the god of the Hellenes, whom I honoured most of all gods, these fetters, and to ask him whether it is accounted by him right to deceive those who do well to him." Then Cyrus asked him what accusation he made against the god, that he thus requested; and Croesus repeated to him all that had been in his mind, and the answers of the Oracles, and especially the votive offerings, and how he had been incited by the prophecy to march upon the Persians: and thus speaking he came back again to the request that it might be permitted to him to make this reproach against the god. And Cyrus laughed and said: "Not this only shalt thou obtain from me, Croesus, but also whatsoever thou mayst desire of me at any time." Hearing this Croesus sent certain of the Lydians to Delphi, enjoining them to lay the fetters upon the threshold of the

temple and to ask the god whether he felt no shame that he had incited Croesus by his prophecies to march upon the Persians, persuading him that he should bring to an end the empire of Cyrus, seeing that these were the firstfruits of spoil which he had won from it—at the same time displaying the fetters. This they were to ask, and moreover also whether it was thought right by the gods of the Hellenes to practice ingratitude.

6 When the Lydians came and repeated that which they were enjoined to say, it is related that the Pythian prophetess spoke as follows: "The fated destiny it is impossible even for a god to escape. And Croesus paid the debt due for the sin of his fifth ancestor, who being one of the spearmen of the Heracleidai followed the treacherous device of a woman, and having slain his master took possession of his royal dignity, which belonged not to him of right. And although Loxias eagerly desired that the calamity of Sardis might come upon the sons of Croesus and not upon Croesus himself, it was not possible for him to draw the Destinies aside from their course; but so much as these granted he brought to pass, and gave it as a gift to Croesus: for he put off the taking of Sardis by three years; and let Croesus be assured that he was taken prisoner later by these years than the fated time: moreover secondly, he assisted him when he was about to be burnt. And as to the oracle which was given, Croesus finds fault with good ground: for Loxias told him beforehand that if he should march upon the Persians he should destroy a great empire: and he upon hearing this, if he wished to take counsel well, ought to have sent and asked further whether the god meant his own empire or that of Cyrus: but as he did not comprehend that which was uttered and did not ask again, let him pronounce himself to be the cause of that which followed. To him also when he consulted the Oracle for the last time Loxias said that which he said concerning a mule; but this also he failed to comprehend: for Cyrus was in fact this mule, seeing that he was born of parents who were of two different races, his mother being of nobler descent and his father of less noble: for she was a Median woman, daughter of Astyages and king of the Medes, but he was a Persian, one of a race subject to the

Medes, and being inferior in all respects he was the husband of one who was his royal mistress." Thus the Pythian prophetess replied to the Lydians, and they brought the answer back to Sardis and repeated it to Croesus; and he, when he heard it, acknowledged that the fault was his own and not that of the god. With regard then to the empire of Croesus and the first conquest of Ionia, it happened thus.

Talk About It

1. Why does Cyrus change his mind about the fire? Find the words that tell you what he "considered" (4.1).
2. Croesus says that "in peace the sons bury their fathers, but in war the fathers bury their sons" (4.2). Put that in your own words. Why does it make war sound so wrong?
3. The oracle blames Croesus for not asking which empire would be destroyed (4.6). Is that fair, or is the oracle making excuses?

5. The Herdsman's Boy Who Played King

Media, in what is now northwestern Iran, about 600 BC. Astyages, king of the Medes, has dreamed that his daughter Mandane's child will rule all Asia. When she bears a son, he orders Harpagus, a kinsman he trusts above all other Medes, to kill the baby. Harpagus cannot bring himself to do it, and passes the task to a herdsman of the king.

The herdsman, Mitradates, and his wife, whom Macaulay calls Kyno, live in the mountains north of the capital, Ecbatana. The baby will grow up to be Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian Empire. Herodotus' story of his childhood is a legend, but it is one of the best he tells.

Listen for how a ten-year-old gives himself away by the way he speaks to a king.

Reading 5. *The Herdsman's Boy Who Played King. Herodotus, Histories, Book I, chapters 110–116, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 Thus he spoke, and straightway sent a messenger to that one of the herdsmen of Astyages who he knew fed his herds on the pastures which were most suitable for his purpose, and on the mountains most haunted by wild beasts. The name of this man was Mitradates, and he was married to one who was his fellow-slave; and the name of the woman to whom he was married was Kyno in the tongue of the Hellenes and in the Median tongue Spaco, for what the Hellenes call *kyna* (bitch) the Medes call *spaca*. Now, it was on the skirts of the mountains that this herdsman had his cattle-pastures, from Ecbatana towards the North Wind and to-

wards the Euxine Sea. For here in the direction of the Saspeirians the Median land is very mountainous and lofty and thickly covered with forests; but the rest of the land of Media is all level plain. So when this herdsman came, being summoned with much urgency, Harpagos said these words: "Astyages bids thee take this child and place it on the most desolate part of the mountains, so that it may perish as quickly as possible. And he bade me to say that if thou do not kill it, but in any way shalt preserve it from death, he will slay thee by the most evil kind of destruction: and I have been appointed to see that the child is laid forth."

2 Having heard this and having taken up the child, the herdsman went back by the way he came, and arrived at his dwelling. And his wife also, as it seems, having been every day on the point of bearing a child, by a providential chance brought her child to birth just at that time, when the herdsman was gone to the city. And both were in anxiety, each for the other, the man having fear about the childbearing of his wife, and the woman about the cause why Harpagos had sent to summon her husband, not having been wont to do so aforetime. So as soon as he returned and stood before her, the woman seeing him again beyond her hopes was the first to speak, and asked him for what purpose Harpagos had sent for him so urgently. And he said: "Wife, when I came to the city I saw and heard that which I would I had not seen, and which I should wish had never chanced to those whom we serve. For the house of Harpagos was all full of mourning, and I being astonished thereat went within: and as soon as I entered I saw laid out to view an infant child gasping for breath and screaming, which was adorned with gold ornaments and embroidered clothing: and when Harpagos saw me he bade me forthwith to take up the child and carry it away and lay it on that part of the mountains which is most haunted by wild beasts, saying that it was Astyages who laid this task upon me, and using to me many threats, if I should fail to do this. And I took it up and bore it away, supposing that it was the child of some one of the servants of the house, for never could I have supposed whence it really was; but I marvelled to see it adorned with gold

and raiment, and I marvelled also because mourning was made for it openly in the house of Harpagos. And straightway as we went by the road, I learnt the whole of the matter from the servant who went with me out of the city and placed in my hands the babe, namely that it was in truth the son of Mandane the daughter of Astyages, and of Cambyses the son of Cyrus, and that Astyages bade slay it. And now here it is."

3 And as he said this the herdsman uncovered it and showed it to her. And she, seeing that the child was large and of fair form, wept and clung to the knees of her husband, beseeching him by no means to lay it forth. But he said that he could not do otherwise than so, for watchers would come backwards and forwards sent by Harpagos to see that this was done, and he would perish by a miserable death if he should fail to do this. And as she could not after all persuade her husband, the wife next said as follows: "Since then I am unable to persuade thee not to lay it forth, do thou this which I shall tell thee, if indeed it needs must be seen laid forth. I also have borne a child, but I have borne it dead. Take this and expose it, and let us rear the child of the daughter of Astyages as if it were our own. Thus thou wilt not be found out doing a wrong to those whom we serve, nor shall we have taken ill counsel for ourselves; for the dead child will obtain a royal burial and the surviving one will not lose his life."

4 To the herdsman it seemed that, the case standing thus, his wife spoke well, and forthwith he did so. The child which he was bearing to put to death, this he delivered to his wife, and his own, which was dead, he took and placed in the chest in which he had been bearing the other; and having adorned it with all the adornment of the other child, he bore it to the most desolate part of the mountains and placed it there. And when the third day came after the child had been laid forth, the herdsman went to the city, leaving one of his under-herdsmen to watch there, and when he came to the house of Harpagos he said that he was ready to display the dead body of the child; and Harpagos sent the most trusted of his spearmen, and through them he saw and buried the herdsman's child. This

then had had burial, but him who was afterwards called Cyrus the wife of the herdsman had received, and was bringing him up, giving him no doubt some other name, not Cyrus.

5 And when the boy was ten years old, it happened with regard to him as follows, and this made him known. He was playing in the village in which were stalls for oxen, he was playing there, I say, with other boys of his age in the road. And the boys in their play chose as their king this one who was called the son of the herdsman: and he set some of them to build palaces and others to be spearmen of his guard, and one of them no doubt he appointed to be the eye of the king, and to one he gave the office of bearing the messages, appointing a work for each one severally. Now one of these boys who was playing with the rest, the son of Artembares a man of repute among the Medes, did not do that which Cyrus appointed him to do; therefore Cyrus bade the other boys seize him hand and foot, and when they obeyed his command he dealt with the boy very roughly, scourging him. But he, so soon as he was let go, being made much more angry because he considered that he had been treated with indignity, went down to the city and complained to his father of the treatment which he had met with from Cyrus, calling him not Cyrus, for this was not yet his name, but the son of the herdsman of Astyages. And Artembares in the anger of the moment went at once to Astyages, taking the boy with him, and he declared that he had suffered things that were unfitting and said: "O king, by thy slave, the son of a herdsman, we have been thus outraged," showing him the shoulders of his son.

6 And Astyages having heard and seen this, wishing to punish the boy to avenge the honour of Artembares, sent for both the herdsman and his son. And when both were present, Astyages looked at Cyrus and said: "Didst thou dare, being the son of so mean a father as this, to treat with such unseemly insult the son of this man who is first in my favour?" And he replied thus: "Master, I did so to him with right. For the boys of the village, of whom he also was one, in their play set me up as king over them, for I appeared to them most fitted for this place. Now the other

boys did what I commanded them, but this one disobeyed and paid no regard, until at last he received the punishment due. If therefore for this I am worthy to suffer any evil, here I stand before thee."

7 While the boy thus spoke, there came upon Astyages a sense of recognition of him and the lineaments of his face seemed to him to resemble his own, and his answer appeared to be somewhat over free for his station, while the time of the laying forth seemed to agree with the age of the boy. Being struck with amazement by these things, for a time he was speechless; and having at length with difficulty recovered himself, he said, desiring to dismiss Artembares, in order that he might get the herdsman by himself alone and examine him: "Artembares, I will so order these things that thou and thy son shall have no cause to find fault"; and so he dismissed Artembares, and the servants upon the command of Astyages led Cyrus within. And when the herdsman was left alone with the king, Astyages being alone with him asked whence he had received the boy, and who it was who had delivered the boy to him. And the herdsman said that he was his own son, and that the mother was living with him still as his wife. But Astyages said that he was not well advised in desiring to be brought to extreme necessity, and as he said this he made a sign to the spearmen of his guard to seize him. So he, as he was being led away to the torture, then declared the story as it really was; and beginning from the beginning he went through the whole, telling the truth about it, and finally ended with entreaties, asking that he would grant him pardon.

Talk About It

1. The herdsman's wife solves an impossible problem (5.3). What does she suggest, and why does it work?
2. When the village boys choose a king, what jobs does the boy give out (5.5)? What does that tell you about him?

3. The boy says to Astyages, "here I stand before thee" (5.6). What is brave about his answer? What makes Astyages suspect who he is (5.7)?

6. The Children Who Spoke First

Egypt, in the seventh century BC. Psammetichus, called Psamtik I by modern historians, ruled Egypt from 664 to 610 BC. The Egyptians believed they were the oldest people in the world. Psammetichus wanted to prove it, and he designed what may be the first recorded experiment on how children learn to speak.

Herodotus says he heard the story from the priests at Memphis. No other ancient source confirms it. He also mentions a Greek version of the story, which he dismisses as an idle tale.

Listen for the one word the children say, and for how the king finds out what it means.

Reading 6. *The Children Who Spoke First. Herodotus, Histories, Book II, chapters 2–3 (to the end of the priests' account), translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 Now the Egyptians, before the time when Psammetichos became king over them, were wont to suppose that they had come into being first of all men; but since the time when Psammetichos having become king desired to know what men had come into being first, they suppose that the Phrygians came into being before themselves, but they themselves before all other men. Now Psammetichos, when he was not able by inquiry to find out any means of knowing who had come into being first of all men, contrived a device of the following kind:—Taking two newborn children belonging to persons of the common sort he gave them to a shepherd to bring up at the place where his flocks were, with a manner of bringing up such as I shall say, charging him namely that no man should utter any

word in their presence, and that they should be placed by themselves in a room where none might come, and at the proper time he should bring to them she-goats, and when he had satisfied them with milk he should do for them whatever else was needed. These things Psammetichos did and gave him this charge wishing to hear what word the children would let break forth first, after they had ceased from wailings without sense. And accordingly so it came to pass; for after a space of two years had gone by, during which the shepherd went on acting so, at length, when he opened the door and entered, both the children fell before him in entreaty and uttered the word *bekos*, stretching forth their hands. At first when he heard this the shepherd kept silence; but since this word was often repeated, as he visited them constantly and attended to them, at last he declared the matter to his master, and at his command he brought the children before his face. Then Psammetichos having himself also heard it, began to inquire about what nation of men named anything *bekos*, and inquiring he found that the Phrygians had this name for bread. In this manner and guided by an indication such as this, the Egyptians were brought to allow that the Phrygians were a more ancient people than themselves.

2 That so it came to pass I heard from the priests of that Hephaestus who dwells at Memphis; but the Hellenes relate, besides many other idle tales, that Psammetichos cut out the tongues of certain women, and then caused the children to live with these women.

Talk About It

1. What did Psammetichus think the experiment would prove? Does the result prove it?
2. The children had heard no one speak but had heard goats (6.1). Can you think of another explanation for the word they said?
3. Would it be right to do this experiment today? Why or why not?

7. Beasts of the Nile

Egypt, as Herodotus saw it on his travels in the fifth century BC. He was fascinated by Egyptian animals, many of which no Greek had seen, and he set down what he learned about them. Some of it is accurate, some is mistaken, and some he reports while saying he does not believe it.

This tale is a tour: the crocodile and the small bird Herodotus calls the trochilus, ways of catching crocodiles, the "river-horse," which is our hippopotamus, a few sacred creatures, and the phoenix, a bird said to come to the city of Heliopolis once in five hundred years.

Listen for the places where Herodotus tells you how he knows something, and the places where he does not.

Reading 7. *Beasts of the Nile. Herodotus, Histories, Book II, chapters 68–73, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

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1 Of the crocodile the nature is as follows:—during the four most wintry months this creature eats nothing: she has four feet and is an animal belonging to the land and the water both; for she produces and hatches eggs on the land, and the most part of the day she remains upon dry land, but the whole of the night in the river, for the water in truth is warmer than the unclouded open air and the dew. Of all the mortal creatures of which we have knowledge this grows to the greatest bulk from the smallest beginning; for the eggs which she produces are not much larger than those of geese and the newly-hatched young one is in proportion to the egg, but as he grows he becomes as much as seventeen cubits long and sometimes yet larger. He has eyes like those of a pig and teeth large and

tusky, in proportion to the size of his body; but unlike all other beasts he grows no tongue, neither does he move his lower jaw, but brings the upper jaw towards the lower, being in this too unlike all other beasts. He has moreover strong claws and a scaly hide upon his back which cannot be pierced; and he is blind in the water, but in the air he is of very keen sight. Since he has his living in the water he keeps his mouth all full within of leeches; and whereas all other birds and beasts fly from him, the trochilus is a creature which is at peace with him, seeing that from her he receives benefit; for the crocodile having come out of the water to the land and then having opened his mouth (this he is wont to do generally towards the West Wind), the trochilus upon that enters into his mouth and swallows down the leeches, and he being benefited is pleased and does no harm to the trochilus.

2 Now for some of the Egyptians the crocodiles are sacred animals, and for others not so, but they treat them on the contrary as enemies: those however who dwell about Thebes and about the lake of Moiris hold them to be most sacred, and each of these two peoples keeps one crocodile selected from the whole number, which has been trained to tameness, and they put hanging ornaments of molten stone and of gold into the ears of these and anklets round the front feet, and they give them food appointed and victims of sacrifices and treat them as well as possible while they live, and after they are dead they bury them in sacred tombs, embalming them: but those who dwell about the city of Elephantine even eat them, not holding them to be sacred. They are called not crocodiles but *champsai*, and the Ionians gave them the name of crocodile, comparing their form to that of the crocodiles (lizards) which appear in their country in the stone walls.

3 There are many ways in use of catching them and of various kinds: I shall describe that which to me seems the most worthy of being told. A man puts the back of a pig upon a hook as bait, and lets it go into the middle of the river, while he himself upon the bank of the river has a young live pig, which he beats; and the crocodile hearing its cries makes for the dir-

ection of the sound, and when he finds the pig's back he swallows it down: then they pull, and when he is drawn out to land, first of all the hunter forthwith plasters up his eyes with mud, and having so done he very easily gets the mastery of him, but if he does not do so he has much trouble.

4 The river-horse is sacred in the district of Papremis, but for the other Egyptians he is not sacred; and this is the appearance which he presents: he is four-footed, cloven-hoofed like an ox, flat-nosed, with a mane like a horse and showing teeth like tusks, with a tail and voice like a horse, and in size as large as the largest ox; and his hide is so exceedingly thick that when it has been dried shafts of javelins are made of it.

5 There are moreover otters in the river, which they consider to be sacred; and of fish also they esteem that which is called the *lepidotos* to be sacred, and also the eel; and these they say are sacred to the Nile: and of birds the fox-goose.

6 There is also another sacred bird called the phoenix which I did not myself see except in painting, for in truth he comes to them very rarely, at intervals, as the people of Heliopolis say, of five hundred years; and these say that he comes regularly when his father dies; and if he be like the painting, he is of this size and nature, that is to say, some of his feathers are of gold colour and others red, and in outline and size he is as nearly as possible like an eagle. This bird they say (but I cannot believe the story) contrives as follows:—setting forth from Arabia he conveys his father, they say, to the temple of the Sun (Helios) plastered up in myrrh, and buries him in the temple of the Sun; and he conveys him thus:—he forms first an egg of myrrh as large as he is able to carry, and then he makes trial of carrying it, and when he has made trial sufficiently, then he hollows out the egg and places his father within it and plasters over with other myrrh that part of the egg where he hollowed it out to put his father in, and when his father is laid in it, it proves (they say) to be of the same

weight as it was; and after he has plastered it up, he conveys the whole to Egypt to the temple of the Sun. Thus they say that this bird does.

Talk About It

1. Herodotus says the crocodile grows "to the greatest bulk from the smallest beginning" of any creature (7.1). Which of his crocodile facts would you most like to check?
2. Which animal in this tale do you think Herodotus saw for himself? Which did he only hear about? What clues does he give?
3. Draw or describe the phoenix from Herodotus' words alone (7.6). What part of his story does he refuse to believe?

8. The King of the Long-Lived Ethiopians

Egypt and the lands to its south, about 525 BC. Cambyses, son of Cyrus, has just conquered Egypt. Now he plans three more campaigns, one of them against the "Long-lived" Ethiopians, a people Herodotus places at the far southern edge of the world. Where they really lived, if they lived at all, is uncertain.

Cambyses sends spies disguised as bearers of gifts. They are Fish-eaters (Macaulay's "Ichthyophagoi") from Elephantine, on Egypt's southern border, who know the Ethiopian language. The Ethiopian king sees through them at once.

Listen to the king's opinion of each gift. What does each opinion tell you about him?

Reading 8. *The King of the Long-Lived Ethiopians. Herodotus, Histories, Book III, chapters 17–24, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 After this Cambyses planned three several expeditions, one against the Carthaginians, another against the Ammonians, and a third against the "Long-lived" Ethiopians, who dwell in that part of Libya which is by the Southern Sea: and in forming these designs he resolved to send his naval force against the Carthaginians, and a body chosen from his land-army against the Ammonians; and to the Ethiopians to send spies first, both to see whether the table of the Sun existed really, which is said to exist among these Ethiopians, and in addition to this to spy out all else, but pretending to be bearers of gifts for their king.

2 Now the table of the Sun is said to be as follows:—there is a meadow in the suburb of their city full of flesh-meat boiled of all four-footed creatures; and in this, it is said, those of the citizens who are in authority at the time place the flesh by night, managing the matter carefully, and by day any man who wishes comes there and feasts himself; and the natives (it is reported) say that the earth of herself produces these things continually.

3 Of such nature is the so-called table of the Sun said to be. So when Cambyses had resolved to send the spies, forthwith he sent for those men of the Ichthyophagoi who understood the Ethiopian tongue, to come from the city of Elephantine: and while they were going to fetch these men, he gave command to the fleet to sail against Carthage: but the Phoenicians said that they would not do so, for they were bound not to do so by solemn vows, and they would not be acting piously if they made expedition against their own sons: and as the Phoenicians were not willing, the rest were rendered unequal to the attempt. Thus then the Carthaginians escaped being enslaved by the Persians; for Cambyses did not think it right to apply force to compel the Phoenicians, both because they had delivered themselves over to the Persians of their own accord and because the whole naval force was dependent upon the Phoenicians. Now the men of Cyprus also had delivered themselves over to the Persians, and were joining in the expedition against Egypt.

4 Then as soon as the Ichthyophagoi came to Cambyses from Elephantine, he sent them to the Ethiopians, enjoining them what they should say and giving them gifts to bear with them, that is to say a purple garment, and a collar of twisted gold with bracelets, and an alabaster box of perfumed ointment, and a jar of palm-wine. Now these Ethiopians to whom Cambyses was sending are said to be the tallest and the most beautiful of all men; and besides other customs which they are reported to have different from other men, there is especially this, it is said, with regard to their regal power—whomsoever of the men of their nation they judge to

be the tallest and to have strength in proportion to his stature, this man they appoint to reign over them.

5 So when the Ichthyophagoi had come to this people they presented their gifts to the king who ruled over them, and at the same time they said as follows: "The king of the Persians Cambyses, desiring to become a friend and guest to thee, sent us with command to come to speech with thee, and he gives thee for gifts these things which he himself most delights to use." The Ethiopian however, perceiving that they had come as spies, spoke to them as follows: "Neither did the king of the Persians send you bearing gifts because he thought it a matter of great moment to become my guest-friend, nor do ye speak true things (for ye have come as spies of my kingdom), nor again is he a righteous man; for if he had been righteous he would not have coveted a land other than his own, nor would he be leading away into slavery men at whose hands he has received no wrong. Now however give him this bow and speak to him these words: The king of the Ethiopians gives this counsel to the king of the Persians, that when the Persians draw their bows (of equal size to mine) as easily as I do this, then he should march against the Long-lived Ethiopians, provided that he be superior in numbers; but until that time he should feel gratitude to the gods that they do not put it into the mind of the sons of the Ethiopians to acquire another land in addition to their own."

6 Having thus said and having unbent the bow, he delivered it to those who had come. Then he took the garment of purple and asked what it was and how it had been made: and when the Ichthyophagoi had told him the truth about the purple-fish and the dyeing of the tissue, he said that the men were deceitful and deceitful also were their garments. Then secondly he asked concerning the twisted gold of the collar and the bracelets; and when the Ichthyophagoi were setting forth to him the manner in which it was fashioned, the king broke into a laugh and said, supposing them to be fetters, that they had stronger fetters than those in their country. Thirdly he asked about the perfumed ointment, and when they had told him of the manner of its making and of the anointing with it, he

said the same as he had said before about the garment. Then when he came to the wine, and had learned about the manner of its making, being exceedingly delighted with the taste of the drink he asked besides what food the king ate, and what was the longest time that a Persian man lived. They told him that he ate bread, explaining to him first the manner of growing the wheat, and they said that eighty years was the longest term of life appointed for a Persian man. In answer to this the Ethiopian said that he did not wonder that they lived but a few years, when they fed upon dung; for indeed they would not be able to live even so many years as this, if they did not renew their vigour with the drink, indicating to the Ichthyophagoi the wine; for in regard to this, he said, his people were much behind the Persians.

7 Then when the Ichthyophagoi asked the king in return about the length of days and the manner of life of his people, he answered that the greater number of them reached the age of a hundred and twenty years, and some surpassed even this; and their food was boiled flesh and their drink was milk. And when the spies marvelled at the number of years, he conducted them to a certain spring, in the water of which they washed and became more sleek of skin, as if it were a spring of oil; and from it there came a scent as it were of violets: and the water of this spring, said the spies, was so exceedingly weak that it was not possible for anything to float upon it, either wood or any of those things which are lighter than wood, but they all went to the bottom. If this water which they have be really such as it is said to be, it would doubtless be the cause why the people are long-lived, as making use of it for all the purposes of life. Then when they departed from this spring, he led them to a prison-house for men, and there all were bound in fetters of gold. Now among these Ethiopians bronze is the rarest and most precious of all things. Then when they had seen the prison-house they saw also the so-called table of the Sun:

8 and after this they saw last of all their receptacles of dead bodies, which are said to be made of crystal in the following manner:—when they have

dried the corpse, whether it be after the Egyptian fashion or in some other way, they cover it over completely with plaster and then adorn it with painting, making the figure as far as possible like the living man. After this they put about it a block of crystal hollowed out; for this they dig up in great quantity and it is very easy to work: and the dead body being in the middle of the block is visible through it, but produces no unpleasant smell nor any other effect which is unseemly, and it has all its parts visible like the dead body itself. For a year then they who are most nearly related to the man keep the block in their house, giving to the dead man the first share of everything and offering to him sacrifices: and after this period they carry it out and set it up round about the city.

Talk About It

1. The Ethiopian king says Cambyses is not "a righteous man" (8.5). What is his reason?
2. He laughs at the gold collar and bracelets, "supposing them to be fetters" (8.6). Why is that funny? Why is it also a little sharp?
3. In the king's prison the chains are made of gold, because bronze is the rarest metal (8.7). What makes a thing precious: what it is made of, or how rare it is?

9. Custom Is King

Egypt and Persia, in the late sixth century BC. Herodotus has been describing how Cambyses mocked the temples and holy images of Egypt. That leads him to a thought about customs, and to a story about Darius, who became king of Persia after Cambyses and reigned from 522 to 486 BC.

Darius asks two peoples a hard question. The Callatians are a people of India, and their custom for the dead is the opposite of the Greek one. The tale mentions it plainly; it is not described.

Listen for the last line, which Herodotus borrows from the poet Pindar.

Reading 9. *Custom Is King. Herodotus, Histories, Book III, chapters 37–38, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 Many such acts of madness did he both to Persians and allies, remaining at Memphis and opening ancient tombs and examining the dead bodies. Likewise also he entered into the temple of Hephaestus and very much derided the image of the god: for the image of Hephaestus very nearly resembles the Phoenician Pataicoi, which the Phoenicians carry about on the prows of their triremes; and for him who has not seen these, I will indicate its nature—it is the likeness of a dwarfish man. He entered also into the temple of the Cabeiroi, into which it is not lawful for anyone to enter except the priest only, and the images there he even set on fire, after much mockery of them. Now these also are like the images of Hephaestus, and it is said that they are the children of that god.

2 It is clear to me therefore by every kind of proof that Cambyses was mad exceedingly; for otherwise he would not have attempted to deride reli-

gious rites and customary observances. For if one should propose to all men a choice, bidding them select the best customs from all the customs that there are, each race of men, after examining them all, would select those of his own people; thus all think that their own customs are by far the best: and so it is not likely that any but a madman would make a jest of such things. Now of the fact that all men are thus wont to think about their customs, we may judge by many other proofs and more specially by this which follows:—Darius in the course of his reign summoned those of the Hellenes who were present in his land, and asked them for what price they would consent to eat up their fathers when they died; and they answered that for no price would they do so. After this Darius summoned those Indians who are called Callatians, who eat their parents, and asked them in presence of the Hellenes, who understood what they said by help of an interpreter, for what payment they would consent to consume with fire the bodies of their fathers when they died; and they cried out aloud and bade him keep silence from such words. Thus then these things are established by usage, and I think that Pindar spoke rightly in his verse, when he said that "of all things law is king."

Talk About It

1. Herodotus says that if all people could choose the best customs in the world, each would choose "those of his own people" (9.2). Is he right?
2. Both the Greeks and the Callatians are shocked by Darius' question. Which of your own customs would you defend most strongly? Why?
3. Is there any custom you think is simply wrong, whoever holds it? How would you decide?

10. The Ring of Polycrates

The island of Samos, off the coast of Turkey, in the 520s BC. Polycrates has made himself sole ruler of Samos and gathered a great fleet of warships. Everything he tries succeeds. His friend Amasis, king of Egypt from 570 to 526 BC, is worried for him and writes him a letter.

The Greeks had a word for a friendship of this kind, made between rulers or families of different lands and kept up by gifts and hospitality. Macaulay calls it "guest-friendship."

Listen for what Amasis believes about too much good luck, and for what he does when the ring comes back.

Reading 10. *The Ring of Polycrates. Herodotus, Histories, Book III, chapters 39–43, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 Now while Cambyses was marching upon Egypt, the Lacedaemonians also had made an expedition against Samos and against Polycrates the son of Aiakes, who had risen against the government and obtained rule over Samos. At first he had divided the State into three parts and had given a share to his brothers Pantagnotos and Syloson; but afterwards he put to death one of these, and the younger, namely Syloson, he drove out, and so obtained possession of the whole of Samos. Then, being in possession, he made a guest-friendship with Amasis the king of Egypt, sending him gifts and receiving gifts in return from him. After this straightway within a short period of time the power of Polycrates increased rapidly, and there was much fame of it not only in Ionia, but also over the rest of Hellas: for to whatever part he directed his forces, everything went fortu-

nately for him: and he had got for himself a hundred fifty-oared galleys and a thousand archers, and he plundered from all, making no distinction of any; for it was his wont to say that he would win more gratitude from his friend by giving back to him that which he had taken, than by not taking at all. So he had conquered many of the islands and also many cities of the continent, and besides other things he gained the victory in a sea-fight over the Lesbians, as they were coming to help the Milesians with their forces, and conquered them: these men dug the whole trench round the wall of the city of Samos working in chains.

2 Now Amasis, as may be supposed, did not fail to perceive that Polycrates was very greatly fortunate, and it was to him an object of concern; and as much more good fortune yet continued to come to Polycrates, he wrote upon a paper these words and sent them to Samos: "Amasis to Polycrates thus saith:—It is a pleasant thing indeed to hear that one who is a friend and guest is faring well; yet to me thy great good fortune is not pleasing, since I know that the Divinity is jealous; and I think that I desire, both for myself and for those about whom I have care, that in some of our affairs we should be prosperous and in others should fail, and thus go through life alternately faring well and ill, rather than that we should be prosperous in all things: for never yet did I hear tell of anyone who was prosperous in all things and did not come to an utterly evil end at the last. Now therefore do thou follow my counsel and act as I shall say with respect to thy prosperous fortunes. Take thought and consider, and that which thou findest to be the most valued by thee, and for the loss of which thou wilt most be vexed in thy soul, that take and cast away in such a manner that it shall never again come to the sight of men; and if in future from that time forward good fortune does not befall thee in alternation with calamities, apply remedies in the manner by me suggested."

3 Polycrates, having read this and having perceived by reflection that Amasis suggested to him good counsel, sought to find which one of his treasures he would be most afflicted in his soul to lose; and seeking he found

this which I shall say:—he had a signet which he used to wear, enchased in gold and made of an emerald stone; and it was the work of Theodoros the son of Telecles of Samos. Seeing then that he thought it good to cast this away, he did thus:—he manned a fifty-oared galley with sailors and went on board of it himself; and then he bade them put out into the deep sea. And when he had got to a distance from the island, he took off the signet-ring, and in the sight of all who were with him in the ship he threw it into the sea. Thus having done he sailed home; and when he came to his house he mourned for his loss.

4 But on the fifth or sixth day after these things it happened to him as follows:—a fisherman having caught a large and beautiful fish, thought it right that this should be given as a gift to Polycrates. He bore it therefore to the door of the palace and said that he desired to come into the presence of Polycrates, and when he had obtained this he gave him the fish, saying: "O king, having taken this fish I did not think fit to bear it to the market, although I am one who lives by the labour of his hands; but it seemed to me that it was worthy of thee and of thy monarchy: therefore I bring it and present it to thee." He then, being pleased at the words spoken, answered thus: "Thou didst exceedingly well, and double thanks are due to thee, for thy words and also for thy gift; and we invite thee to come to dinner." The fisherman then, thinking this a great thing, went away to this house; and the servants as they were cutting up the fish found in its belly the signet-ring of Polycrates. Then as soon as they had seen it and taken it up, they bore it rejoicing to Polycrates, and giving him the signet-ring they told him in what manner it had been found: and he perceiving that the matter was of God, wrote upon paper all that he had done and all that had happened to him, and having written he despatched it to Egypt.

5 Then Amasis, when he had read the paper which had come from Polycrates, perceived that it was impossible for man to rescue man from the event which was to come to pass, and that Polycrates was destined not to have a good end, being prosperous in all things, seeing that he found

again even that which he cast away. Therefore he sent an envoy to him in Samos and said that he broke off the guest-friendship; and this he did lest when a fearful and great mishap befell Polycrates, he might himself be grieved in his soul as for a man who was his guest.

Talk About It

1. Amasis says he would rather go through life "alternately faring well and ill" (10.2). Would you? Why might someone think that way?
2. Polycrates chooses to throw away his ring (10.3). Was it really the thing he valued most? What would you have chosen?
3. Amasis ends the friendship so that he will not grieve later (10.5). Is that wise, or unkind?

11. The Gold-Digging Ants

India, at the far eastern edge of the Persian Empire, as the Persians described it to Herodotus. He never went there. He passes on a story of a sandy desert where ants bigger than foxes dig up sand full of gold, and of the riders who race in on camels to steal it.

The story has puzzled readers ever since. A French explorer, Michel Peissel, suggested in a book of 1984 that the "ants" were really marmots of the Himalayas, burrowing animals that throw up earth from their holes, and that a Persian word was misunderstood.

Listen for why the riders choose female camels, and for whose word Herodotus is taking.

Reading 11. *The Gold-Digging Ants. Herodotus, Histories, Book III, chapters 102–105, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 Others however of the Indians are on the borders of the city of Caspatyros and the country of Pactyïke, dwelling towards the North of the other Indians; and they have a manner of living nearly the same as that of the Bactrians: these are the most warlike of the Indians, and these are they who make expeditions for the gold. For in the parts where they live it is desert on account of the sand; and in this desert and sandy tract are produced ants, which are in size smaller than dogs but larger than foxes, for there are some of them kept at the residence of the king of Persia, which are caught here. These ants then make their dwelling under ground and carry up the sand just in the same manner as the ants found in the land of the Hellenes, which they themselves also very much resemble in form;

and the sand which is brought up contains gold. To obtain this sand the Indians make expeditions into the desert, each one having yoked together three camels, placing a female in the middle and a male like a trace-horse to draw by each side. On this female he mounts himself, having arranged carefully that she shall be taken to be yoked from young ones, the more lately born the better. For their female camels are not inferior to horses in speed, and moreover they are much more capable of bearing weights.

2 As to the form of the camel, I do not here describe it, since the Hellenes for whom I write are already acquainted with it, but I shall tell that which is not commonly known about it, which is this:—the camel has in the hind legs four thighs and four knees, and its organs of generation are between the hind legs, turned towards the tail.

3 The Indians, I say, ride out to get the gold in the manner and with the kind of yoking which I have described, making calculations so that they may be engaged in carrying it off at the time when the greatest heat prevails; for the heat causes the ants to disappear underground. Now among these nations the sun is hottest in the morning hours, not at midday as with others, but from sunrise to the time of closing the market: and during this time it produces much greater heat than at midday in Hellas, so that it is said that then they drench themselves with water. Midday however has about equal degree of heat with the Indians as with other men, while after midday their sun becomes like the morning sun with other men, and after this, as it goes further away, it produces still greater coolness, until at last at sunset it makes the air very cool indeed.

4 When the Indians have come to the place with bags, they fill them with the sand and ride away back as quickly as they can, for forthwith the ants, perceiving, as the Persians allege, by the smell, begin to pursue them: and this animal, they say, is superior to every other creature in swiftness, so that unless the Indians got a start in their course, while the ants were gathering together, not one of them would escape. So then the male camels, for they are inferior in speed of running to the females, if they

drag behind are even let loose from the side of the female, one after the other; the females however, remembering the young which they left behind, do not show any slackness in their course. Thus it is that the Indians get most part of the gold, as the Persians say; there is however other gold also in their land obtained by digging, but in smaller quantities.

Talk About It

1. Why do the Indians go for the gold in the hottest part of the day (11.3)?
2. Why do the female camels run so fast on the way home (11.4)? Is that a kind thing or a sad thing?
3. If the ants were really marmots, which parts of the story might still be true?

12. The Gold That Fell from Heaven

The steppe north of the Black Sea, in what is now Ukraine and southern Russia. The Scythians were horse-riding nomads, and Herodotus spent a whole book describing them. Here he tells their own story of how they began: a first man, Targitaus, his three sons, and four golden objects that fell from the sky.

The river Borysthenes, named in the first paragraph, is the Dnieper. Herodotus says the Greeks gave these people the name Scythians; they called themselves Scoloti.

Listen for which of the three brothers can pick up the gold, and for the strange thing that blocks the view to the north.

Reading 12. *The Gold That Fell from Heaven. Herodotus, Histories, Book IV, chapters 5–7, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 Now the Scythians say that their nation is the youngest of all nations, and that this came to pass as follows:—The first man who ever existed in this region, which then was desert, was one named Targitaos: and of this Targitaos they say, though I do not believe it for my part, however they say the parents were Zeus and the daughter of the river Borysthenes. Targitaos, they report, was produced from some such origin as this, and of him were begotten three sons, Lipoxaïs and Arpoxaïs and the youngest Colaxaïs. In the reign of these there came down from heaven certain things wrought of gold, a plough, a yoke, a battle-axe, and a cup, and fell in the Scythian land: and first the eldest saw and came near them, desir-

ing to take them, but the gold blazed with fire when he approached it: then when he had gone away from it, the second approached, and again it did the same thing. These then the gold repelled by blazing with fire; but when the third and youngest came up to it, the flame was quenched, and he carried them to his own house. The elder brothers then, acknowledging the significance of this thing, delivered the whole of the kingly power to the youngest.

2 From Lipoxaïs, they say, are descended those Scythians who are called the race of the Auchatai; from the middle brother Arpoxaïs those who are called Catiaroi and Traspians, and from the youngest of them the "Royal" tribe, who are called Paralatai: and the whole together are called, they say, Scolotoi, after the name of their king; but the Hellenes gave them the name of Scythians.

3 Thus the Scythians say they were produced; and from the time of their origin, that is to say from the first king Targitaos, to the passing over of Darius against them, they say that there is a period of a thousand years and no more. Now this sacred gold is guarded by the kings with the utmost care, and they visit it every year with solemn sacrifices of propitiation: moreover if anyone goes to sleep while watching in the open air over this gold during the festival, the Scythians say that he does not live out the year; and there is given him for this so much land as he shall ride round himself on his horse in one day. Now as the land was large, Colaxaïs, they say, established three kingdoms for his sons; and of these he made one larger than the rest, and in this the gold is kept. But as to the upper parts which lie on the North side of those who dwell above this land, they say one can neither see nor pass through any further by reason of feathers which are poured down; for both the earth and the air are full of feathers, and this is that which shuts off the view.

Talk About It

1. Why might a people tell a story in which the youngest brother becomes king (12.1)?
2. The four golden gifts are a plow, a yoke, a battle-axe and a cup. What does each one stand for in a people's life?
3. What do you think the "feathers" in the north really were (12.3)?

13. A Bird, a Mouse, a Frog and Five Arrows

Scythia, in 513 BC. Darius, king of Persia, has crossed the river Ister, which we call the Danube, on a bridge guarded by his Greek subjects from Ionia, and marched into Scythia with a huge army. The Scythians will not stand and fight a battle. They keep moving ahead of him and wear him out.

Darius sends a message to their king, Idanthyrsus, demanding "gifts of earth and water," the Persian sign of surrender. The Scythians answer at last with a riddle.

Listen for the two different readings of the riddle, and for the hare that settles which reading is right.

READING 13. *A Bird, a Mouse, a Frog and Five Arrows. Herodotus, Histories, Book IV, chapters 126–135, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

1 Now as this went on for a long time and did not cease, Darius sent a horseman to Idanthyrsos king of the Scythians and said as follows: "Thou most wondrous man, why dost thou fly forever, when thou mightest do of these two things one?—if thou thinkest thyself able to make opposition to my power, stand thou still and cease from wandering abroad, and fight; but if thou dost acknowledge thyself too weak, cease then in that case also from thy course, and come to speech with thy master, bringing to him gifts of earth and water."

2 To this the king of the Scythians Idanthyrsos made answer thus: "My case, O Persian, stands thus:—Never yet did I fly because I was afraid, either before this time from any other man, or now from thee; nor have I

done anything different now from that which I was wont to do also in time of peace: and as to the cause why I do not fight with thee at once, this also I will declare to thee. We have neither cities nor land sown with crops, about which we should fear lest they should be captured or laid waste, and so join battle more speedily with you; but if it be necessary by all means to come to this speedily, know that we have sepulchres in which our fathers are buried; therefore come now, find out these and attempt to destroy them, and ye shall know then whether we shall fight with you for the sepulchres or whether we shall not fight. Before that however, unless the motion comes upon us, we shall not join battle with thee. About fighting let so much as has been said suffice; but as to masters, I acknowledge none over me but Zeus my ancestor and Hestia the queen of the Scythians. To thee then in place of gifts of earth and water I shall send such things as it is fitting that thou shouldest receive; and in return for thy saying that thou art my master, for that I say, woe betide thee." This is the proverbial "saying of the Scythians."

3 The herald then had departed to report this to Darius; and the kings of the Scythians, having heard mention of subjection to a master, were filled with wrath. They sent accordingly the division which was appointed to be joined with the Sauromatai, that division of which Scopasis was in command, bidding them come to speech with the Ionians, namely those who were guarding the bridge of the Ister, and meanwhile they who were left behind resolved not to lead the Persians wandering about any more, but to attack them constantly as they were getting provisions. Therefore they observed the soldiers of Darius as they got provisions, and did that which they had determined: and the cavalry of the Scythians always routed that of the enemy, but the Persian horsemen as they fled fell back upon the men on foot, and these would come up to their assistance; and meanwhile the Scythians when they had driven in the cavalry turned back, fearing the men on foot. Also by night the Scythians used to make similar attacks:

4 and the thing which, strange to say, most helped the Persians and hindered the Scythians in their attacks upon the camp of Darius, I will mention, namely the voice of the asses and the appearance of the mules; for Scythia produces neither ass nor mule, as I have declared before, nor is there at all in the Scythian country either ass or mule on account of the cold. The asses accordingly by riotously braying used to throw into confusion the cavalry of the Scythians; and often, as they were in the middle of riding against the Persians, when the horses heard the voice of the asses they turned back in confusion and were possessed with wonder, pricking up their ears, because they had never heard such a voice nor seen the form of the creature before.

5 So far then the Persians had the advantage for a small part of the war. But the Scythians, whenever they saw that the Persians were disquieted, then in order that they might remain a longer time in Scythia and in remaining might suffer by being in want of everything, would leave some of their own cattle behind with the herdsmen, while they themselves rode out of the way to another place, and the Persians would come upon the cattle and take them, and having taken them they were elated at what they had done.

6 As this happened often, at length Darius began to be in straits; and the kings of the Scythians perceiving this sent a herald bearing as gifts to Darius a bird and a mouse and a frog and five arrows. The Persians accordingly asked the bearer of the gifts as to the meaning of the gifts which were offered; but he said that nothing more had been commanded to him but to give them and get away as speedily as possible; and he bade the Persians find out for themselves, if they had wisdom, that which the gifts were meant to express.

7 Having heard this the Persians took counsel with one another; and the opinion of Darius was that the Scythians were giving to him both themselves and also earth and water, making his conjecture by this, namely that a mouse is produced in the earth and feeds on the same produce of

the earth as man, and a frog in the water, while a bird has great resemblance to a horse; and moreover that in giving the arrows they were delivering up their own might in battle. This was the opinion expressed by Darius; but the opinion of Gobryas, one of the seven men who killed the Magian, was at variance with it, for he conjectured that the gifts expressed this: "Unless ye become birds and fly up into the heaven, O Persians, or become mice and sink down under the earth, or become frogs and leap into the lakes, ye shall not return back home, but shall be smitten by these arrows."

8 The Persians then, I say, were making conjecture of the gifts: and meanwhile the single division of the Scythians, that which had been appointed at first to keep guard along the Maiotian lake and then to go to the Ister and come to speech with the Ionians, when they arrived at the bridge spoke as follows: "Ionians, we have come bringing you freedom, if at least ye are willing to listen to us; for we are informed that Darius gave you command to guard the bridge for sixty days only, and then, if he had not arrived within that time, to get you away to your own land. Now therefore, if ye do as we say, ye will be without blame from his part and without blame also from ours: stay the appointed days and then after that get you away." They then, when the Ionians had engaged themselves to do this, hastened back again by the quickest way:

9 and meanwhile, after the coming of the gifts to Darius, the Scythians who were left had arrayed themselves against the Persians with both foot and horse, meaning to engage battle. Now when the Scythians had been placed in battle-array, a hare darted through them into the space between the two armies, and each company of them, as they saw the hare, began to run after it. When the Scythians were thus thrown into disorder and were raising loud cries, Darius asked what was this clamour arising from the enemy; and hearing that they were running after the hare, he said to those men to whom he was wont to say things at other times: "These men have very slight regard for us, and I perceive now that Gobryas spoke rightly about the Scythian gifts. Seeing then that now I myself too

think that things are so, we have need of good counsel, in order that our retreat homewards may be safely made." To this replied Gobryas and said: "O king, even by report I was almost assured of the difficulty of dealing with these men; and when I came I learnt it still more thoroughly, since I saw that they were mocking us. Now therefore my opinion is, that as soon as night comes on, we kindle the campfires as we are wont to do at other times also, and deceive with a false tale those of our men who are weakest to endure hardships, and tie up all the asses and get us away, before either the Scythians make for the Ister to destroy the bridge or something be resolved by the Ionians which may be our ruin."

10 Thus Gobryas advised; and after this, when night came on, Darius acted on this opinion. Those of his men who were weakened by fatigue and whose loss was of least account, these he left behind in the camp, and the asses also tied up: and for the following reasons he left behind the asses and the weaker men of his army—the asses in order that they might make a noise which should be heard, and the men really because of their weakness, but on a pretence stated openly that he was about to attack the Scythians with the effective part of the army, and that they meanwhile were to be defenders of the camp. Having thus instructed those who were left behind, and having kindled campfires, Darius hastened by the quickest way towards the Ister: and the asses, having no longer about them the usual throng, very much more for that reason caused their voice to be heard; so the Scythians, hearing the asses, supposed surely that the Persians were remaining in their former place.

Talk About It

1. Idanthyrsus says the Scythians have "neither cities nor land sown with crops" (13.2). Why does that make them so hard to beat?
2. Darius and Gobryas read the gifts in opposite ways (13.7). Which reading did you expect? What made you think so?

3. Darius leaves the weak men and the asses behind to fool the Scythians (13.10). Was that clever, cruel, or both?

14. Gorgo and the Map of Bronze

Sparta, in the winter of 499 BC. The Greek cities of Ionia have rebelled against Persia. Aristagoras, the ruler of Miletus, the greatest of those cities, comes to Sparta to ask for help. Cleomenes, king of Sparta, is the man he must persuade.

Aristagoras brings something new: a map engraved on bronze. He uses it to show how rich the lands of Asia are and how easily they could be won. A talent, the sum he mentions, was a large weight of silver.

Listen for the one question that ruins his plan, and for the voice of the child in the room.

Reading 14. *Gorgo and the Map of Bronze. Herodotus, Histories, Book V, chapters 49–51, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 However, Aristagoras the despot of Miletos arrived at Sparta while Cleomenes was reigning: and accordingly with him he came to speech, having, as the Lacedaemonians say, a tablet of bronze, on which was engraved a map of the whole Earth, with all the sea and all the rivers. And when he came to speech with Cleomenes he said to him as follows: "Marvel not, Cleomenes, at my earnestness in coming hither, for the case is this.—That the sons of the Ionians should be slaves instead of free is a reproach and a grief most of all indeed to ourselves, but of all others most to you, inasmuch as ye are the leaders of Hellas. Now therefore I entreat you by the gods of Hellas to rescue from slavery the Ionians, who are your own kinsmen: and ye may easily achieve this, for the Barbarians are not valiant in fight, whereas ye have attained to the highest point of valour in that

which relates to war: and their fighting is of this fashion, namely with bows and arrows and a short spear, and they go into battle wearing trousers and with caps on their heads. Thus they are easily conquered. Then again they who occupy that continent have good things in such quantity as not all the other nations of the world together possess; first gold, then silver and bronze and embroidered garments and beasts of burden and slaves; all which ye might have for yourselves, if ye so desired. And the nations moreover dwell in such order one after the other as I shall declare:—the Ionians here; and next to them the Lydians, who not only dwell in a fertile land, but are also exceedingly rich in gold and silver,"—and as he said this he pointed to the map of the Earth, which he carried with him engraved upon the tablet—"and here next to the Lydians," continued Aristagoras, "are the Eastern Phrygians, who have both the greatest number of sheep and cattle of any people that I know, and also the most abundant crops. Next to the Phrygians are the Cappadocians, whom we call Syrians; and bordering upon them are the Kilikians, coming down to this sea, in which lies the island of Cyprus here; and these pay five hundred talents to the king for their yearly tribute. Next to these Kilikians are the Armenians, whom thou mayest see here, and these also have great numbers of sheep and cattle. Next to the Armenians are the Matienians occupying this country here; and next to them is the land of Kissia here, in which land by the banks of this river Choaspes is situated that city of Susa where the great king has his residence, and where the money is laid up in treasuries. After ye have taken this city ye may then with good courage enter into a contest with Zeus in the matter of wealth. Nay, but can it be that ye feel yourselves bound to take upon you the risk of battles against Messenians and Arcadians and Argives, who are equally matched against you, for the sake of land which is not much in extent nor very fertile, and for confines which are but small, though these peoples have neither gold nor silver at all, for the sake of which desire incites one to fight and to die—can this be, I say, and will ye choose some other way now, when it is possible for you easily to have the rule over all

Asia?" Aristagoras spoke thus, and Cleomenes answered him saying: "Guest-friend from Miletos, I defer my answer to thee until the day after tomorrow."

2 Thus far then they advanced at that time; and when the appointed day arrived for the answer, and they had come to the place agreed upon, Cleomenes asked Aristagoras how many days' journey it was from the sea of the Ionians to the residence of the king. Now Aristagoras, who in other respects acted cleverly and imposed upon him well, in this point made a mistake: for whereas he ought not to have told him the truth, at least if he desired to bring the Spartans out to Asia, he said in fact that it was a journey up from the sea of three months: and the other cutting short the rest of the account which Aristagoras had begun to give of the way, said: "Guest-friend from Miletos, get thee away from Sparta before the sun has set; for thou speakest a word which sounds not well in the ears of the Lacedaemonians, desiring to take them a journey of three months from the sea."

3 Cleomenes accordingly having so said went away to his house: but Aristagoras took the suppliant's branch and went to the house of Cleomenes; and having entered in as a suppliant, he bade Cleomenes send away the child and listen to him; for the daughter of Cleomenes was standing by him, whose name was Gorgo, and this as it chanced was his only child, being of the age now of eight or nine years. Cleomenes however bade him say that which he desired to say, and not to stop on account of the child. Then Aristagoras proceeded to promise him money, beginning with ten talents, if he would accomplish for him that for which he was asking; and when Cleomenes refused, Aristagoras went on increasing the sums of money offered, until at last he had promised fifty talents, and at that moment the child cried out: "Father, the stranger will do thee hurt, if thou do not leave him and go." Cleomenes, then, pleased by the counsel of the child, departed into another room, and Aristagoras

went away from Sparta altogether, and had no opportunity of explaining any further about the way up from the sea to the residence of the king.

Talk About It

1. Aristagoras tells Cleomenes the Persians are "easily conquered" because of how they dress and fight (14.1). Is that a good argument?
2. Why does the answer "three months" end the talk (14.2)? Was Aristagoras foolish to tell the truth?
3. Gorgo, eight or nine years old, says, "Father, the stranger will do thee hurt" (14.3). What did she understand that a grown man might miss?

15. The Run at Marathon

The plain of Marathon, on the coast northeast of Athens, in 490 BC. A Persian army sent by Darius has landed, guided by Hippias, a former ruler of Athens who hopes to rule again. The Athenians have marched out to meet it, joined by the small city of Plataea. Before the battle they sent a runner, Pheidippides, to ask Sparta for help; the Spartans promised to come but would not march before the full moon.

Athens had ten generals that year, and they were split. The deciding vote belonged to an official called the polemarch, a title that means war leader. That year he was Callimachus.

Listen for the speech that decides the battle, and for the "marvel" Herodotus tells at the end.

Reading 15. *The Run at Marathon. Herodotus, Histories, Book VI, chapters 109–117, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 Now the opinions of the generals of the Athenians were divided, and the one party urged that they should not fight a battle, seeing that they were too few to fight with the army of the Medes, while the others, and among them Miltiades, advised that they should do so: and when they were divided and the worse opinion was like to prevail, then, since he who had been chosen by lot to be polemarch of the Athenians had a vote in addition to the ten (for in old times the Athenians gave the polemarch an equal vote with the generals) and at that time the polemarch was Callimachos of the deme of Aphidnai, to him came Miltiades and said as follows: "With thee now it rests, Callimachos, either to bring Athens under

slavery, or by making her free to leave behind thee for all the time that men shall live a memorial such as not even Harmodios and Aristogeiton have left. For now the Athenians have come to a danger the greatest to which they have ever come since they were a people; and on the one hand, if they submit to the Medes, it is determined what they shall suffer, being delivered over to Hippias, while on the other hand, if this city shall gain the victory, it may become the first of the cities of Hellas. How this may happen and how it comes to thee of all men to have the decision of these matters, I am now about to tell. Of us the generals, who are ten in number, the opinions are divided, the one party urging that we fight a battle and the others that we do not fight. Now if we do not, I expect that some great spirit of discord will fall upon the minds of the Athenians and so shake them that they shall go over to the Medes; but if we fight a battle before any unsoundness appear in any part of the Athenian people, then we are able to gain the victory in the fight, if the gods grant equal conditions. These things then all belong to thee and depend on thee; for if thou attach thyself to my opinions, thou hast both a fatherland which is free and a native city which shall be the first among the cities of Hellas; but if thou choose the opinion of those who are earnest against fighting, thou shalt have the opposite of those good things of which I told thee."

2 Thus speaking Miltiades gained Callimachos to his side; and the opinion of the polemarch being added, it was thus determined to fight a battle. After this, those generals whose opinion was in favour of fighting, as the turn of each one of them to command for the day came round, gave over their command to Miltiades; and he, accepting it, would not however yet bring about a battle, until his own turn to command had come.

3 And when it came round to him, then the Athenians were drawn up for battle in the order which here follows:—On the right wing the polemarch Callimachos was leader (for the custom of the Athenians then was this, that the polemarch should have the right wing); and he leading, next after him came the tribes in order as they were numbered one after an-

other, and last were drawn up the Plataians occupying the left wing: for ever since this battle, when the Athenians offer sacrifices in the solemn assemblies which are made at the four-yearly festivals, the herald of the Athenians prays thus, "that blessings may come to the Athenians and to the Plataians both." On this occasion however, when the Athenians were being drawn up at Marathon something of this kind was done:—their army being made equal in length of front to that of the Medes, came to drawn up in the middle with a depth of but few ranks, and here their army was weakest, while each wing was strengthened with numbers.

4 And when they had been arranged in their places and the sacrifices proved favourable, then the Athenians were let go, and they set forth at a run to attack the Barbarians. Now the space between the armies was not less than eight furlongs: and the Persians seeing them advancing to the attack at a run, made preparations to receive them; and in their minds they charged the Athenians with madness which must be fatal, seeing that they were few and yet were pressing forwards at a run, having neither cavalry nor archers. Such was the thought of the Barbarians; but the Athenians when all in a body they had joined in combat with the Barbarians, fought in a memorable fashion: for they were the first of all the Hellenes about whom we know who went to attack the enemy at a run, and they were the first also who endured to face the Median garments and the men who wore them, whereas up to this time the very name of the Medes was to the Hellenes a terror to hear.

5 Now while they fought in Marathon, much time passed by; and in the centre of the army, where the Persians themselves and the Sacans were drawn up, the Barbarians were winning—here, I say, the Barbarians had broken the ranks of their opponents and were pursuing them inland, but on both wings the Athenians and the Plataians severally were winning the victory; and being victorious they left that part of the Barbarians which had been routed to fly without molestation, and bringing together the two wings they fought with those who had broken their centre, and the Athenians were victorious. So they followed after the Persians as they

fled, slaughtering them, until they came to the sea; and then they called for fire and began to take hold of the ships.

6 In this part of the work was slain the polemarch Callimachos after having proved himself a good man, and also one of the generals, Stesilaos the son of Thrasylaos, was killed; and besides this Kynegeiros the son of Euphorion while taking hold there of the ornament at the stern of a ship had his hand cut off with an axe and fell; and many others also of the Athenians who were men of note were killed.

7 Seven of the ships the Athenians got possession of in this manner, but with the rest the Barbarians pushed off from land, and after taking the captives from Eretria off the island where they had left them, they sailed round Sunion, purposing to arrive at the city before the Athenians. And an accusation became current among the Athenians to the effect that they formed this design by contrivance of the Alcmaionidai; for these, it was said, having concerted matters with the Persians, displayed to them a shield when they had now embarked in their ships.

8 These then, I say, were sailing round Sunion; and meanwhile the Athenians came to the rescue back to the city as speedily as they could, and they arrived there before the Barbarians came; and having arrived from the temple of Heracles at Marathon they encamped at another temple of Heracles, namely that which is in Kynosarges. The Barbarians however came and lay with their ships in the sea which is off Phaleron, (for this was then the seaport of the Athenians), they anchored their ships, I say, off this place, and then proceeded to sail back to Asia.

9 In this fight at Marathon there were slain of the Barbarians about six thousand four hundred men, and of the Athenians a hundred and ninety and two. Such was the number which fell on both sides; and it happened also that a marvel occurred there of this kind:—an Athenian, Epizelos the son of Cuphagoras, while fighting in the close combat and proving himself a good man, was deprived of the sight of his eyes, neither having received a blow in any part of his body nor having been hit with a missile,

and for the rest of his life from this time he continued to be blind: and I was informed that he used to tell about that which had happened to him a tale of this kind, namely that it seemed to him that a tall man in full armour stood against him, whose beard overshadowed his whole shield; and this apparition passed him by, but killed his comrade who stood next to him. Thus, as I was informed, Epizelos told the tale.

Talk About It

1. Miltiades tells Callimachus, "With thee now it rests" (15.1). How does he persuade him? Which of his arguments is strongest?
2. The Persians think the Athenians are mad to attack "at a run" (15.4). Why might running have helped them?
3. Epizelus said he saw a tall warrior whose beard covered his shield (15.9). What do you make of his story?

16. Hippocleides Dances Away His Marriage

Sicyon, a city near Corinth, in the early sixth century BC. Cleisthenes, the ruler of Sicyon, has won the chariot race at the Olympic Games and wants to marry his daughter Agariste to the best man in all Greece. He invites suitors to come and stay for a whole year while he tests them.

The suitors come from all over the Greek world, and Herodotus names every one. You can read the list quickly, or enjoy the names. Two Athenians lead the field: Megacles and Hippocleides.

Listen for Hippocleides' answer at the end of the feast. It became a Greek saying.

Reading 16. *Hippocleides Dances Away His Marriage. Herodotus, Histories, Book VI, chapters 126–130, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

1 Then in the next generation after this, Cleisthenes the despot of Sikyon exalted the family, so that it became of much more note among the Hellenes than it had been formerly. For Cleisthenes the son of Arisonymos, the son of Myron, the son of Andreas, had a daughter whose name was Agariste; and as to her he formed a desire to find out the best man of all the Hellenes and to assign her to him in marriage. So when the Olympic games were being held and Cleisthenes was victor in them with a four-horse chariot, he caused a proclamation to be made, that whosoever of the Hellenes thought himself worthy to be the son-in-law of Cleisthenes should come on the sixtieth day, or before that if he would, to Sikyon; for Cleisthenes intended to conclude the marriage within a year, reckoning

from the sixtieth day. Then all those of the Hellenes who had pride either in themselves or in their high descent, came as wooers, and for them Cleisthenes had a running-course and a wrestling-place made and kept them expressly for their use.

2 From Italy came Smindyrides the son of Hippocrates of Sybaris, who of all men on earth reached the highest point of luxury (now Sybaris at this time was in the height of its prosperity), and Damasos of Siris, the son of that Amyris who was called the Wise; these came from Italy: from the Ionian gulf came Amphimnestos the son of Epistrophos of Epidamnos, this man from the Ionian gulf: from Aetolia came Males, the brother of that Titormos who surpassed all the Hellenes in strength and who fled from the presence of men to the furthest extremities of the Aetolian land: from Peloponnesus, Leokedes the son of Pheidon the despot of the Argives, that Pheidon who established for the Peloponnesians the measures which they use, and who went beyond all other Hellenes in wanton insolence, since he removed from their place the presidents of the games appointed by the Eleians and himself presided over the games at Olympia —his son, I say, and Amiantos the son of Lycurgos an Arcadian from Trapezus, and Laphanes an Azanian from the city of Paios, son of that Euphorion who (according to the story told in Arcadia) received the Dioscuroi as guests in his house and from thenceforth was wont to entertain all men who came, and Onomastos the son of Agaios of Elis; these, I say, came from Peloponnese itself: from Athens came Megacles the son of that Alcmaion who went to Croesus, and besides him Hippocleides the son of Tisander, one who surpassed the other Athenians in wealth and in comeliness of form: from Eretria, which at that time was flourishing, came Lysanias, he alone from Euboea: from Thessalia came Diactorides of Crannon, one of the family of the Scopadai: and from the Molossians, Alcon.

3 So many in number did the wooers prove to be: and when these had come by the appointed day, Cleisthenes first inquired of their native countries and of the descent of each one, and then keeping them for a

year he made trial continually both of their manly virtue and of their disposition, training and temper, associating both with each one separately and with the whole number together: and he made trial of them both by bringing out to bodily exercises those of them who were younger, and also especially in the common feast: for during all the time that he kept them he did everything that could be done, and at the same time he entertained them magnificently. Now it chanced that those of the wooers pleased him most who had come from Athens, and of these Hippocleides the son of Tisander was rather preferred, both by reason of manly virtues and also because he was connected by descent with the family of Kypselos at Corinth.

4 Then when the appointed day came for the marriage banquet and for Cleisthenes himself to declare whom he selected from the whole number, Cleisthenes sacrificed a hundred oxen and feasted both the wooers themselves and all the people of Sikyon; and when the dinner was over, the wooers began to vie with one another both in music and in speeches for the entertainment of the company; and as the drinking went forward and Hippocleides was very much holding the attention of the others, he bade the flute-player play for him a dance-measure; and when the flute-player did so, he danced: and it so befell that he pleased himself in his dancing, but Cleisthenes looked on at the whole matter with suspicion. Then Hippocleides after a certain time bade one bring in a table; and when the table came in, first he danced upon it Laconian figures, and then also Attic, and thirdly he planted his head upon the table and gesticulated with his legs. Cleisthenes meanwhile, when he was dancing the first and the second time, though he abhorred the thought that Hippocleides should now become his son-in-law, because of his dancing and his shamelessness, yet restrained himself, not desiring to break out in anger against him; but when he saw that he thus gesticulated with his legs, he was no longer able to restrain himself, but said: "Thou hast danced away thy marriage however, son of Tisander!" and Hippocleides answered and said: "Hippocleides cares not!"

5 and hence comes this saying. Then Cleisthenes caused silence to be made, and spoke to the company as follows: "Men who are wooers of my daughter, I commend you all, and if it were possible I would gratify you all, neither selecting one of you to be preferred, nor rejecting the remainder. Since however it is not possible, as I am deliberating about one maiden only, to act so as to please all, therefore to those of you who are rejected from this marriage I give as a gift a talent of silver to each one for the worthy estimation ye had of me, in that ye desired to marry from my house, and for the time of absence from your homes; and to the son of Alcmaion, Megacles, I offer my daughter Agariste in betrothal according to the customs of the Athenians." Thereupon Megacles said that he accepted the betrothal, and so the marriage was determined by Cleisthenes.

Talk About It

1. How does Cleisthenes test the suitors during the year (16.3)? What would you test, if you were choosing?
2. Hippocleides was the favorite. What exactly does he do wrong at the feast (16.4)?
3. "Hippocleides cares not!" (16.4). Is he being brave, rude or wise? When might that answer be the right one?

17. Xerxes Weeps at Abydos

Abydos, on the Asian shore of the Hellespont, the narrow strait now called the Dardanelles, in 480 BC. Xerxes, son of Darius, is king of Persia. He has gathered a huge army to invade Greece, and his engineers have bridged the strait so that it can cross into Europe.

His uncle Artabanus had advised against the war. Xerxes went ahead, Herodotus says, after a dream urged him on. Now the two men talk on a hilltop above the army.

Listen for why the king weeps, and for the two great enemies Artabanus names.

Reading 17. *Xerxes Weeps at Abydos. Herodotus, Histories, Book VII, chapters 44–52, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

1 When Xerxes had come into the midst of Abydos, he had a desire to see all the army; and there had been made purposely for him beforehand upon a hill in this place a raised seat of white stone, which the people of Abydos had built at the command of the king given beforehand. There he took his seat, and looking down upon the shore he gazed both upon the land-army and the ships; and gazing upon them he had a longing to see a contest take place between the ships; and when it had taken place and the Phoenicians of Sidon were victorious, he was delighted both with the contest and with the whole armament.

2 And seeing all the Hellespont covered over with the ships, and all the shores and the plains of Abydos full of men, then Xerxes pronounced himself a happy man, and after that he fell to weeping.

3 Artabanos his uncle therefore perceiving him—the same who at first boldly declared his opinion advising Xerxes not to march against Hellas —this man, I say, having observed that Xerxes wept, asked as follows: "O king, how far different from one another are the things which thou hast done now and a short while before now! for having pronounced thyself a happy man, thou art now shedding tears." He said: "Yea, for after I had reckoned up, it came into my mind to feel pity at the thought how brief was the whole life of man, seeing that of these multitudes not one will be alive when a hundred years have gone by." He then made answer and said: "To another evil more pitiful than this we are made subject in the course of our life; for in the period of life, short as it is, no man, either of these here or of others, is made by nature so happy, that there will not come to him many times, and not once only, the desire to be dead rather than to live; for misfortunes falling upon us and diseases disturbing our happiness make the time of life, though short indeed, seem long: thus, since life is full of trouble, death has become the most acceptable refuge for man; and God, having given him to taste of the sweetness of life, is discovered in this matter to be full of jealousy."

4 Xerxes made answer saying: "Artabanos, of human life, which is such as thou dost define it to be, let us cease to speak, and do not remember evils when we have good things in hand: but do thou declare to me this:—If the vision of the dream had not appeared with so much evidence, wouldest thou still be holding thy former opinion, endeavouring to prevent me from marching against Hellas, or wouldest thou have changed from it? Come, tell me this exactly." He answered saying: "O king, may the vision of the dream which appeared have such fulfilment as we both desire! but I am even to this moment full of apprehension and cannot contain myself, taking into account many things besides, and also seeing that two things, which are the greatest things of all, are utterly hostile to thee."

5 To this Xerxes made answer in these words: "Thou strangest of men, of what nature are these two things which thou sayest are utterly hostile to me? Is it that the land-army is to be found fault with in the matter of

numbers, and that the army of the Hellenes appears to thee likely to be many times as large as ours? or dost thou think that our fleet will fall short of theirs? or even that both of these things together will prove true? For if thou thinkest that in these respects our power is deficient, one might make gathering at once of another force."

6 Then he made answer and said: "O king, neither with this army would anyone who has understanding find fault, nor with the number of the ships; and indeed if thou shalt assemble more, the two things of which I speak will be made thereby yet more hostile: and these two things are—the land and the sea. For neither in the sea is there, as I suppose, a harbour anywhere large enough to receive this fleet of thine, if a storm should arise, and to ensure the safety of the ships till it be over; and yet not one alone ought this harbour to be, but there should be such harbours along the whole coast of the continent by which thou sailest; and if there are not harbours to receive thy ships, know that accidents will rule men and not men the accidents. Now having told thee of one of the two things, I am about to tell thee of the other. The land, I say, becomes hostile to thee in this way:—if nothing shall come to oppose thee, the land is hostile to thee by so much the more in proportion as thou shalt advance more, ever stealing on further and further, for there is no satiety of good fortune felt by men: and this I say, that with no one to stand against thee the country traversed, growing more and more as time goes on, will produce for thee famine. Man, however, will be in the best condition, if when he is taking counsel he feels fear, reckoning to suffer everything that can possibly come, but in doing the deed he is bold."

7 Xerxes made answer in these words: "Artabanos, reasonably dost thou set forth these matters; but do not thou fear everything nor reckon equally for everything: for if thou shouldest set thyself with regard to all matters which come on at any time, to reckon for everything equally, thou wouldest never perform any deed. It is better to have good courage about everything and to suffer half the evils which threaten, than to have fear beforehand about everything and not to suffer any evil at all: and if, while

contending against everything which is said, thou omit to declare the course which is safe, thou dost incur in these matters the reproach of failure equally with him who says the opposite to this. This then, I say, is evenly balanced: but how should one who is but man know the course which is safe? I think, in no way. To those then who choose to act, for the most part gain is wont to come; but to those who reckon for everything and shrink back, it is not much wont to come. Thou seest the power of the Persians, to what great might it has advanced: if then those who came to be kings before me had had opinions like to thine, or, though not having such opinions, had had such counsellors as thou, thou wouldest never have seen it brought forward to this point. As it is however, by running risks they conducted it on to this: for great power is in general gained by running great risks. We therefore, following their example, are making our march now during the fairest season of the year; and after we have subdued all Europe we shall return back home, neither having met with famine anywhere nor having suffered any other thing which is unpleasant. For first we march bearing with us ourselves great store of food, and secondly we shall possess the corn-crops of all the peoples to whose land and nation we come; and we are making a march now against men who plough the soil, and not against nomad tribes."

8 After this Artabanos said: "O king, since thou dost urge us not to have fear of anything, do thou I pray thee accept a counsel from me; for when speaking of many things it is necessary to extend speech to a greater length. Cyrus the son of Cambyses subdued all Ionia except the Athenians, so that it was tributary to the Persians. These men therefore I counsel thee by no means to lead against their parent stock, seeing that even without these we are able to get the advantage over our enemies. For supposing that they go with us, either they must prove themselves doers of great wrong, if they join in reducing their mother city to slavery, or doers of great right, if they join in freeing her: now if they show themselves doers of great wrong, they bring us no very large gain in addition; but if they show themselves doers of great right, they are able then to cause

much damage to thy army. Therefore lay to heart also the ancient saying, how well it has been said that at the first beginning of things the end does not completely appear."

9 To this Xerxes made answer: "Artabanos, of all the opinions which thou hast uttered, thou art mistaken most of all in this; seeing that thou fearest lest the Ionians should change side, about whom we have a most sure proof, of which thou art a witness thyself and also the rest are witnesses who went with Darius on his march against the Scythians—namely this, that the whole Persian army then came to be dependent upon these men, whether they would destroy or whether they would save it, and they displayed righteous dealing and trustworthiness, and nought at all that was unfriendly. Besides this, seeing that they have left children and wives and wealth in our land, we must not even imagine that they will make any rebellion. Fear not then this thing either, but have a good heart and keep safe my house and my government; for to thee of all men I entrust my sceptre of rule."

Talk About It

1. Xerxes "pronounced himself a happy man, and after that he fell to weeping" (17.2). How can both be true at once?
2. Artabanus says the land and the sea are the king's enemies (17.6). What does he mean?
3. Xerxes says that "great power is in general gained by running great risks" (17.7). Artabanus says a man should feel fear while planning and be bold while acting (17.6). Whose advice would you rather follow?

18. Demaratus Tells the Truth

Doriscus, in Thrace, on Xerxes' road to Greece, in 480 BC. Xerxes has reviewed his army and fleet. With him marches a Greek: Demaratus, once king of Sparta, who was removed from the throne about 491 BC and fled to the Persian court. His fellow king Cleomenes, Gorgo's father in Tale 14, had worked to have him put out.

Xerxes asks him whether the Greeks will dare to fight. Demaratus asks first whether the king wants the truth or something pleasant.

Listen for what Demaratus says the Spartans fear more than the Persians fear their king, and for how Xerxes takes the answer. Demaratus will speak to him about the Spartans again in Tale 21.

Reading 18. *Demaratus Tells the Truth. Herodotus, Histories, Book VII, chapters 101–105, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

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1 Now when he had sailed through these and had disembarked from his ship, he sent for Demaratos the son of Ariston, who was marching with him against Hellas; and having called him he asked as follows: "Demaratos, now it is my pleasure to ask thee somewhat which I desire to know. Thou art not only a Hellene, but also, as I am informed both by thee and by the other Hellenes who come to speech with me, of a city which is neither the least nor the feeblest of Hellas. Now therefore declare to me this, namely whether the Hellenes will endure to raise hands against me: for, as I suppose, even if all the Hellenes and the remaining nations who dwell towards the West should be gathered together, they are not strong enough in fight to endure my attack, supposing them to

be my enemies. I desire however to be informed also of thy opinion, what thou sayest about these matters." He inquired thus, and the other made answer and said: "O king, shall I utter the truth in speaking to thee, or that which will give pleasure?" and he bade him utter the truth, saying that he should suffer nothing unpleasant in consequence of this, any more than he suffered before.

2 When Demaratos heard this, he spoke as follows: "O king, since thou biddest me by all means utter the truth, and so speak as one who shall not be afterwards convicted by thee of having spoken falsely, I say this:—with Hellas poverty is ever an inbred growth, while valour is one that has been brought in, being acquired by intelligence and the force of law; and of it Hellas makes use ever to avert from herself not only poverty but also servitude to a master. Now I commend all the Hellenes who are settled in those Dorian lands, but this which I am about to say has regard not to all, but to the Lacedaemonians alone: of these I say, first that it is not possible that they will ever accept thy terms, which carry with them servitude for Hellas; and next I say that they will stand against thee in fight, even if all the other Hellenes shall be of thy party: and as for numbers, ask now how many they are, that they are able to do this; for whether it chances that a thousand of them have come out into the field, these will fight with thee, or if there be less than this, or again if there be more."

3 Xerxes hearing this laughed, and said: "Demaratos, what a speech is this which thou hast uttered, saying that a thousand men will fight with this vast army! Come tell me this:—thou sayest that thou wert thyself king of these men; wilt thou therefore consent forthwith to fight with ten men? and yet if your State is such throughout as thou dost describe it, thou their king ought by your laws to stand in array against double as many as another man; that is to say, if each of them is a match for ten men of my army, I expect of thee that thou shouldest be a match for twenty. Thus would be confirmed the report which is made by thee: but if ye, who boast thus greatly are such men and in size so great only as the Hellenes who come commonly to speech with me, thyself included, then beware

lest this which has been spoken prove but an empty vaunt. For come, let me examine it by all that is probable: how could a thousand or ten thousand or even fifty thousand, at least if they were all equally free and were not ruled by one man, stand against so great an army? since, as thou knowest, we shall be more than a thousand coming about each one of them, supposing them to be in number five thousand. If indeed they were ruled by one man after our fashion, they might perhaps from fear of him become braver than it was their nature to be, or they might go compelled by the lash to fight with greater numbers, being themselves fewer in number; but if left at liberty, they would do neither of these things: and I for my part suppose that, even if equally matched in numbers, the Hellenes would hardly dare to fight with the Persians taken alone. With us however this of which thou speakest is found in single men, not indeed often, but rarely; for there are Persians of my spearmen who will consent to fight with three men of the Hellenes at once: but thou hast had no experience of these things and therefore thou speakest very much at random."

4 To this Demaratos replied: "O king, from the first I was sure that if I uttered the truth I should not speak that which was pleasing to thee; since however thou didst compel me to speak the very truth, I told thee of the matters which concern the Spartans. And yet how I am at this present time attached to them by affection thou knowest better than any; seeing that first they took away from me the rank and privileges which came to me from my fathers, and then also they have caused me to be without native land and an exile; but thy father took me up and gave me livelihood and a house to dwell in. Surely it is not to be supposed likely that the prudent man will thrust aside friendliness which is offered to him, but rather that he will accept it with full contentment. And I do not profess that I am able to fight either with ten men or with two, nay, if I had my will, I would not even fight with one; but if there were necessity or if the cause which urged me to the combat were a great one, I would fight most willingly with one of these men who says that he is a match

for three of the Hellenes. So also the Lacedaemonians are not inferior to any men when fighting one by one, and they are the best of all men when fighting in a body: for though free, yet they are not free in all things, for over them is set Law as a master, whom they fear much more even than thy people fear thee. It is certain at least that they do whatsoever that master commands; and he commands ever the same thing, that is to say, he bids them not flee out of battle from any multitude of men, but stay in their post and win the victory or lose their life. But if when I say these things I seem to thee to be speaking at random, of other things for the future I prefer to be silent; and at this time I spake only because I was compelled. May it come to pass however according to thy mind, O king."

5 He thus made answer, and Xerxes turned the matter to laughter and felt no anger, but dismissed him with kindness. Then after he had conversed with him, and had appointed Mascames son of Megadostes to be governor at this place Doriscos, removing the governor who had been appointed by Darius, Xerxes marched forth his army through Thrace to invade Hellas.

Talk About It

1. Demaratus asks, "shall I utter the truth in speaking to thee, or that which will give pleasure?" (18.1). Why is that a brave question to ask a king?
2. Xerxes thinks free men will not fight against great odds unless someone drives them with a whip (18.3). How does Demaratus answer him (18.4)?
3. Demaratus says the Spartans are "free, yet they are not free in all things" (18.4). What do you think he means?

19. Two Spartans Go to the King

Sparta and Susa, before Xerxes' invasion. Years earlier, King Darius had sent heralds to the Greek cities to demand earth and water, the sign of surrender. In Athens and in Sparta the heralds were killed. Heralds were supposed to be sacred and safe, and the Spartans came to believe they were being punished for it by Talthybius, the herald of Agamemnon in the old stories, who had a shrine in Sparta.

Two noble Spartans, Sperthias and Bulis, offer themselves to the Persian king to pay for the dead heralds with their own lives. On the way they meet a Persian governor, Hydarnes.

Listen for what the two Spartans say about freedom, and for what Xerxes decides.

Reading 19. *Two Spartans Go to the King. Herodotus, Histories, Book VII, chapters 133–136, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

1 Thus ran the oath which was taken by the Hellenes: Xerxes however had not sent to Athens or to Sparta heralds to demand the gift of earth, and for this reason, namely because at the former time when Darius had sent for this very purpose, the one people threw the men who made the demand into the pit and the others into a well, and bade them take from thence earth and water and bear them to the king. For this reason Xerxes did not send men to make this demand. And what evil thing came upon the Athenians for having done this to the heralds, I am not able to say, except indeed that their land and city were laid waste; but I do not think that this happened for that cause:

2 on the Lacedaemonians however the wrath fell of Talthybios, the herald of Agamemnon; for in Sparta there is a temple of Talthybios, and there are also descendants of Talthybios called Talthybiads, to whom have been given as a right all the missions of heralds which go from Sparta; and after this event it was not possible for the Spartans when they sacrificed to obtain favourable omens. This was the case with them for a long time; and as the Lacedaemonians were grieved and regarded it as a great misfortune, and general assemblies were repeatedly gathered together and proclamation made, asking if any one of the Lacedaemonians was willing to die for Sparta, at length Sperthias the son of Aneristos and Bulis the son of Nicolaos, Spartans of noble birth and in wealth attaining to the first rank, voluntarily submitted to pay the penalty to Xerxes for the heralds of Darius which had perished at Sparta. Thus the Spartans sent these to the Medes to be put to death.

3 And not only the courage then shown by these men is worthy of admiration, but also the following sayings in addition: for as they were on their way to Susa they came to Hydarnes (now Hydarnes was a Persian by race and commander of those who dwelt on the sea coasts of Asia), and he offered them hospitality and entertained them; and while they were his guests he asked them as follows: "Lacedaemonians, why is it that ye flee from becoming friends to the king? for ye may see that the king knows how to honour good men, when ye look at me and at my fortunes. So also ye, Lacedaemonians, if ye gave yourselves to the king, since ye have the reputation with him already of being good men, would have rule each one of you over Hellenic land by the gift of the king." To this they made answer thus: "Hydarnes, thy counsel with regard to us is not equally balanced, for thou givest counsel having made trial indeed of the one thing, but being without experience of the other: thou knowest well what it is to be a slave, but thou hast never yet made trial of freedom, whether it is pleasant to the taste or no; for if thou shouldest make trial of it, thou wouldest then counsel us to fight for it not with spears only but also with axes."

4 Thus they answered Hydarnes; and then, after they had gone up to Susa and had come into the presence of the king, first when the spearmen of the guard commanded them and endeavoured to compel them by force to do obeisance to the king by falling down before him, they said that they would not do any such deed, though they should be pushed down by them head foremost; for it was not their custom to do obeisance to a man, and it was not for this that they had come. Then when they had resisted this, next they spoke these words or words to this effect: "O king of the Medes, the Lacedaemonians sent us in place of the heralds who were slain in Sparta, to pay the penalty for their lives." When they said this, Xerxes moved by a spirit of magnanimity replied that he would not be like the Lacedaemonians; for they had violated the rules which prevailed among all men by slaying heralds, but he would not do that himself which he blamed them for having done, nor would he free the Lacedaemonians from their guilt by slaying these in return.

Talk About It

1. Hydarnes offers the Spartans power and honor if they join the king (19.3). Why do they refuse?
2. They say Hydarnes knows "what it is to be a slave, but thou hast never yet made trial of freedom" (19.3). Can you understand something you have never tried?
3. Xerxes refuses to kill them (19.4). Why? Who comes out of this story best?

20. The Wooden Wall

Delphi and Athens, in 480 BC. Xerxes' army is coming. The Athenians send to Delphi to ask the oracle what to do, and the answer is terrifying. They ask again and receive a second, stranger answer: a "bulwark of wood" will save them, and the island of Salamis, near Athens, will "cause sons of women to perish."

What is the wooden wall? The Athenians argue about it. One of their leaders, Themistocles, has an answer. A few years before, on his advice, Athens had used new-found silver from its mines to build a large fleet of warships.

Listen for the two meanings people find in the bulwark of wood, and for the one word Themistocles fastens on.

Reading 20. *The Wooden Wall. Herodotus, Histories, Book VII, chapters 140–143, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

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For the Athenians had sent men to Delphi to inquire and were preparing to consult the Oracle; and after these had performed the usual rites in the sacred precincts, when they had entered the sanctuary and were sitting down there, the Pythian prophetess, whose name was Aristonike, uttered to them this oracle:

"Why do ye sit, O ye wretched? Flee thou to the uttermost limits,
Leaving thy home and the heights of the wheel-round city behind thee!
Lo, there remaineth now nor the head nor the body in safety—
Neither the feet below nor the hands nor the middle are left thee—
All are destroyed together; for fire and the passionate War-god,
Urging the Syrian car to speed, doth hurl them to ruin.

Not thine alone, he shall cause many more great strongholds to perish,
Yes, many temples of gods to the ravening fire shall deliver—
Temples which stand now surely with sweat of their terror down-streaming,
Quaking with dread; and lo! from the topmost roof to the pavement
Dark blood trickles, forecasting the dire unavoidable evil.
Forth with you, forth from the shrine, and steep your soul in the sorrow!"

Hearing this the men who had been sent by the Athenians to consult the Oracle were very greatly distressed; and as they were despairing by reason of the evil which had been prophesied to them, Timon the son of Androbulos, a man of the Delphians in reputation equal to the first, counselled them to take a suppliant's bough and to approach the second time and consult the Oracle as suppliants. The Athenians did as he advised and said: "Lord, we pray thee utter to us some better oracle about our native land, having respect to these suppliant boughs which we have come to thee bearing; otherwise surely we will not depart away from the sanctuary, but will remain here where we are now, even until we bring our lives to an end." When they spoke these words, the prophetess gave them a second oracle as follows:

"Pallas cannot prevail to appease great Zeus in Olympos,
Though she with words very many and wiles close-woven entreat him.
But I will tell thee this more, and will clench it with steel adamantine:
Then when all else shall be taken, whatever the boundary of Kecrops
Holdeth within, and the dark ravines of divinest Kithairon,
A bulwark of wood at the last Zeus grants to the Trito-born goddess
Sole to remain unwasted, which thee and thy children shall profit.
Stay thou not there for the horsemen to come and the footmen unnumbered;
Stay thou not still for the host from the mainland to come, but retire thee,
Turning thy back to the foe, for yet thou shalt face him hereafter.
Salamis, thou the divine, thou shalt cause sons of women to perish,

Or when the grain is scattered or when it is gathered together."

27 This seemed to them to be (as in truth it was) a milder utterance than the former one; therefore they had it written down and departed with it to Athens: and when the messengers after their return made report to the people, many various opinions were expressed by persons inquiring into the meaning of the oracle, and among them these, standing most in opposition to one another:—some of the elder men said they thought that the god had prophesied to them that the Acropolis should survive; for the Acropolis of the Athenians was in old time fenced with a thorn hedge; and they conjectured accordingly that this saying about the "bulwark of wood" referred to the fence: others on the contrary said that the god meant by this their ships, and they advised to leave all else and get ready these. Now they who said that the ships were the bulwark of wood were shaken in their interpretation by the two last verses which the prophetess uttered:

"Salamis, thou the divine, thou shalt cause sons of women to perish,
Or when the grain is scattered or when it is gathered together."

30 In reference to these verses the opinions of those who said that the ships were the bulwark of wood were disturbed; for the interpreters of oracles took these to mean that it was fated for them, having got ready for a sea-fight, to suffer defeat round about Salamis.

31 Now there was one man of the Athenians who had lately been coming forward to take a place among the first, whose name was Themistocles, called son of Neocles. This man said that the interpreters of oracles did not make right conjecture of the whole, and he spoke as follows, saying that if these words that had been uttered referred really to the Athenians, he did not think it would have been so mildly expressed in the oracle, but rather thus, "Salamis, thou the merciless," instead of "Salamis, thou the divine," at least if its settlers were destined to perish round about it: but in truth the oracle had been spoken by the god with reference to the enemy, if one understood it rightly, and not to the Athenians: therefore he

counselled them to get ready to fight a battle by sea, for in this was their bulwark of wood. When Themistocles declared his opinion thus, the Athenians judged that this was to be preferred by them rather than the advice of the interpreters of oracles, who bade them not make ready for a sea-fight, nor in short raise their hands at all in opposition, but leave the land of Attica and settle in some other.

Talk About It

1. The Athenians refuse to leave Delphi until they get a better answer (20.14). Was that brave, or rude to the god?
2. Some elders think the wooden wall is the old thorn hedge around the Acropolis (20.27). Others think it means ships. What would you have argued?
3. Themistocles says that if the oracle meant the Athenians would die, it would have said "Salamis, thou the merciless" (20.31). Is that a good argument?

21. The Spartans Comb Their Hair

Thermopylae, in central Greece, late summer of 480 BC. The name means hot gates, after the hot springs there. Between the mountains and the sea the road ran through a narrow pass, much narrower then than now, and a small Greek force led by Leonidas, king of Sparta, has come to hold it against Xerxes' army.

Xerxes sends a horseman to look at the Greeks, and does not understand what he hears. He asks Demaratus, the exiled Spartan king of Tale 18. Then he attacks, first with Medes and then with his best troops, the Persians he called the Immortals.

Listen for what the scout sees the Spartans doing, and for how many times the king leaps from his seat.

Reading 21. *The Spartans Comb Their Hair. Herodotus, Histories, Book VII, chapters 207–212, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

1 These, I say, had intended to do thus: and meanwhile the Hellenes at Thermopylai, when the Persian had come near to the pass, were in dread, and deliberated about making retreat from their position. To the rest of the Peloponnesians then it seemed best that they should go to the Peloponnese and hold the Isthmus in guard; but Leonidas, when the Phocians and Locrians were indignant at this opinion, gave his vote for remaining there, and for sending at the same time messengers to the several States bidding them to come up to help them, since they were but few to repel the army of the Medes.

2 As they were thus deliberating, Xerxes sent a scout on horseback to see how many they were in number and what they were doing; for he had heard while he was yet in Thessaly that there had been assembled in this place a small force, and that the leaders of it were Lacedaemonians together with Leonidas, who was of the race of Heracles. And when the horseman had ridden up towards their camp, he looked upon them and had a view not indeed of the whole of their army, for of those which were posted within the wall, which they had repaired and were keeping a guard, it was not possible to have a view, but he observed those who were outside, whose station was in front of the wall; and it chanced at that time that the Lacedaemonians were they who were posted outside. So then he saw some of the men practising athletic exercises and some combing their long hair: and as he looked upon these things he marvelled, and at the same time he observed their number: and when he had observed all exactly, he rode back unmolested, for no one attempted to pursue him and he found himself treated with much indifference. And when he returned he reported to Xerxes all that which he had seen.

3 Hearing this Xerxes was not able to conjecture the truth about the matter, namely that they were preparing themselves to die and to deal death to the enemy so far as they might; but it seemed to him that they were acting in a manner merely ridiculous; and therefore he sent for Demaratos the son of Ariston, who was in his camp, and when he came, Xerxes asked him of these things severally, desiring to discover what this was which the Lacedaemonians were doing: and he said: "Thou didst hear from my mouth at a former time, when we were setting forth to go against Hellas, the things concerning these men; and having heard them thou madest me an object of laughter, because I told thee of these things which I perceived would come to pass; for to me it is the greatest of all ends to speak the truth continually before thee, O king. Hear then now also: these men have come to fight with us for the passage, and this is it that they are preparing to do; for they have a custom which is as follows; —whenever they are about to put their lives in peril, then they attend to

the arrangement of their hair. Be assured however, that if thou shalt subdue these and the rest of them which remain behind in Sparta, there is no other race of men which will await thy onset, O king, or will raise hands against thee: for now thou art about to fight against the noblest kingdom and city of those which are among the Hellenes, and the best men." To Xerxes that which was said seemed to be utterly incredible, and he asked again a second time in what manner being so few they would fight with his host. He said; "O king, deal with me as with a liar, if thou find not that these things come to pass as I say."

4 Thus saying he did not convince Xerxes, who let four days go by, expecting always that they would take to flight; but on the fifth day, when they did not depart but remained, being obstinate, as he thought, in impudence and folly, he was enraged and sent against them the Medes and the Kissians, charging them to take the men alive and bring them into his presence. Then when the Medes moved forward and attacked the Hellenes, there fell many of them, and others kept coming up continually, and they were not driven back, though suffering great loss: and they made it evident to every man, and to the king himself not least of all, that human beings are many but men are few. This combat went on throughout the day:

5 and when the Medes were being roughly handled, then these retired from the battle, and the Persians, those namely whom the king called "Immortals," of whom Hydarnes was commander, took their place and came to the attack, supposing that they at least would easily overcome the enemy. When however these also engaged in combat with the Hellenes, they gained no more success than the Median troops but the same as they, seeing that they were fighting in a place with a narrow passage, using shorter spears than the Hellenes, and not being able to take advantage of their superior numbers. The Lacedaemonians meanwhile were fighting in a memorable fashion, and besides other things of which they made display, being men perfectly skilled in fighting opposed to men who were unskilled, they would turn their backs to the enemy and make

a pretence of taking to flight; and the Barbarians, seeing them thus taking a flight, would follow after them with shouting and clashing of arms: then the Lacedaemonians, when they were being caught up, turned and faced the Barbarians; and thus turning round they would slay innumerable multitudes of the Persians; and there fell also at these times a few of the Spartans themselves. So, as the Persians were not able to obtain any success by making trial of the entrance and attacking it by divisions and every way, they retired back.

6 And during these onsets it is said that the king, looking on, three times leapt up from his seat, struck with fear for his army. Thus they contended then: and on the following day the Barbarians strove with no better success; for because the men opposed to them were few in number, they engaged in battle with the expectation that they would be found to be disabled and would not be capable any longer of raising their hands against them in fight. The Hellenes however were ordered by companies as well as by nations, and they fought successively each in turn, excepting the Phocians, for these were posted upon the mountain to guard the path. So the Persians, finding nothing different from that which they had seen on the former day, retired back from the fight.

Talk About It

1. Why does Xerxes think the Spartans are "acting in a manner merely ridiculous" (21.3)? What does Demaratus tell him?
2. Herodotus says the battle showed that "human beings are many but men are few" (21.4). What do you think that means?
3. How do the Spartans use the narrow pass and a pretended retreat to fight a much larger army (21.5)?

22. The Last Stand at Thermopylae

Thermopylae, the third day of the battle. A local man, Ephialtes, has shown Xerxes a path over the mountain, and Persian troops have marched round it by night to come down behind the Greeks. Before dawn the Greeks learn that they are surrounded.

Most of the Greek force leaves. Leonidas stays with his three hundred Spartans, the men of Thespiae, who refuse to go, and the Thebans. With them is Megistias, the seer who read the omens.

This is the saddest tale in the book. Listen for the choices people make when they know what is coming, and for the words carved on the stones afterward.

Reading 22. *The Last Stand at Thermopylae. Herodotus, Histories, Book VII, chapters 219–228, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 To the Hellenes who were in Thermopylai first the soothsayer Megistias, after looking into the victims which were sacrificed, declared the death which was to come to them at dawn of day; and afterwards deserters brought the report of the Persians having gone round. These signified it to them while it was yet night, and thirdly came the day-watchers, who had run down from the heights when day was already dawning. Then the Hellenes deliberated, and their opinions were divided; for some urged that they should not desert their post, while others opposed this counsel. After this they departed from their assembly, and some went away and dispersed each to their several cities, while others of them were ready to remain there together with Leonidas.

2 However it is reported also that Leonidas himself sent them away, having a care that they might not perish, but thinking that it was not seemly for himself and for the Spartans who were present to leave the post to which they had come at first to keep guard there. I am inclined rather to be of this latter opinion, namely that because Leonidas perceived that the allies were out of heart and did not desire to face the danger with him to the end, he ordered them to depart, but held that for himself to go away was not honourable, whereas if he remained, a great fame of him would be left behind, and the prosperity of Sparta would not be blotted out: for an oracle had been given by the Pythian prophetess to the Spartans, when they consulted about this war at the time when it was being first set on foot, to the effect that either Lacedaemon must be destroyed by the Barbarians, or their king must lose his life. This reply the prophetess gave them in hexameter verses, and it ran thus:

"But as for you, ye men who in wide-spaced Sparta inhabit,
Either your glorious city is sacked by the children of Perses,
5 Or, if it be not so, then a king of the stock Heracleian
Dead shall be mourned for by all in the boundaries of broad
Lacedaemon.
Him nor the might of bulls nor the raging of lions shall hinder;
For he hath might as of Zeus; and I say he shall not be restrained,
Till one of the other of these he have utterly torn and divided."

10 I am of opinion that Leonidas considering these things and desiring to lay up for himself glory above all the other Spartans, dismissed the allies, rather than that those who departed did so in such disorderly fashion, because they were divided in opinion.

11 Of this the following has been to my mind a proof as convincing as any other, namely that Leonidas is known to have endeavoured to dismiss the soothsayer also who accompanied this army, Megistias the Acarnanian, who was said to be descended from Melampus, that he might not perish with them after he had declared from the victims that which was about to come to pass for them. He however when he was bidden to go would

not himself depart, but sent away his son who was with him in the army, besides whom he had no other child.

12 The allies then who were dismissed departed and went away, obeying the word of Leonidas, and only the Thespians and the Thebans remained behind with the Lacedaemonians. Of these the Thebans stayed against their will and not because they desired it, for Leonidas kept them, counting them as hostages; but the Thespians very willingly, for they said that they would not depart and leave Leonidas and those with him, but they stayed behind and died with them. The commander of these was Demophilos the son of Diadromes.

13 Xerxes meanwhile, having made libations at sunrise, stayed for some time, until about the hour when the market fills, and then made an advance upon them; for thus it had been enjoined by Epialtes, seeing that the descent of the mountain is shorter and the space to be passed over much less than the going round and the ascent. The Barbarians accordingly with Xerxes were advancing to the attack; and the Hellenes with Leonidas, feeling that they were going forth to death, now advanced out much further than at first into the broader part of the defile; for when the fence of the wall was being guarded, they on the former days fought retiring before the enemy into the narrow part of the pass; but now they engaged with them outside the narrows, and very many of the Barbarians fell: for behind them the leaders of the divisions with scourges in their hands were striking each man, ever urging them on to the front. Many of them then were driven into the sea and perished, and many more still were trodden down while yet alive by one another, and there was no reckoning of the number that perished: for knowing the death which was about to come upon them by reason of those who were going round the mountain, they displayed upon the Barbarians all the strength which they had, to its greatest extent, disregarding danger and acting as if possessed by a spirit of recklessness.

14 Now by this time the spears of the greater number of them were broken, so it chanced, in this combat, and they were slaying the Persians with their swords; and in this fighting fell Leonidas, having proved himself a very good man, and others also of the Spartans with him, men of note, of whose names I was informed as of men who had proved themselves worthy, and indeed I was told also the names of all the three hundred. Moreover of the Persians there fell here, besides many others of note, especially two sons of Darius, Abrocomes and Hyperanthes, born to Darius of Phratagune the daughter of Artanes: now Artanes was the brother of king Darius and the son of Hystaspes, the son of Arsames; and he in giving his daughter in marriage to Darius gave also with her all his substance, because she was his only child.

15 Two brothers of Xerxes, I say, fell here fighting; and meanwhile over the body of Leonidas there arose a great struggle between the Persians and the Lacedaemonians, until the Hellenes by valour dragged this away from the enemy and turned their opponents to flight four times. This conflict continued until those who had gone with Epialtes came up; and when the Hellenes learnt that these had come, from that moment the nature of the combat was changed; for they retired backwards to the narrow part of the way, and having passed by the wall they went and placed themselves upon the hillock, all in a body together except only the Thebans: now this hillock is in the entrance, where now the stone lion is placed for Leonidas. On this spot while defending themselves with daggers, that is those who still had them left, and also with hands and with teeth, they were overwhelmed by the missiles of the Barbarians, some of these having followed directly after them and destroyed the fence of the wall, while others had come round and stood about them on all sides.

16 Such were the proofs of valour given by the Lacedaemonians and Thespians; yet the Spartan Dienekes is said to have proved himself the best man of all, the same who, as they report, uttered this saying before they engaged battle with the Medes:—being informed by one of the men of Trachis that when the Barbarians discharged their arrows they obscured

the light of the sun by the multitude of the arrows, so great was the number of their host, he was not dismayed by this, but making small account of the number of the Medes, he said that their guest from Trachis brought them very good news, for if the Medes obscured the light of the sun, the battle against them would be in the shade and not in the sun.

17 This and other sayings of this kind they report that Dienekes the Lacedaemonian left as memorials of himself; and after him the bravest they say of the Lacedaemonians were two brothers Alpheos and Maron, sons of Orsiphantos. Of the Thespians the man who gained most honour was named Dithyrambos son of Harmatides.

18 The men were buried where they fell; and for these, as well as for those who were slain before being sent away by Leonidas, there is an inscription which runs thus:

"Here once, facing in fight three hundred myriads of foemen,
20 Thousands four did contend, men of the Peloponnese."

21 This is the inscription for the whole body; and for the Spartans separately there is this:

"Stranger, report this word, we pray, to the Spartans, that lying
Here in this spot we remain, faithfully keeping their laws."

24 This, I say, for the Lacedaemonians; and for the soothsayer as follows:

25 "This is the tomb of Megistias renowned, whom the Median foemen,
Where Sperchios doth flow, slew when they forded the stream;
Soothsayer he, who then knowing clearly the fates that were coming,
Did not endure in the fray Sparta's good leaders to leave."

29 The Amphictyons it was who honoured them with inscriptions and memorial pillars, excepting only in the case of the inscription to the soothsayer; but that of the soothsayer Megistias was inscribed by Simonides the son of Leoprepes on account of guest-friendship.

Talk About It

1. Herodotus gives two accounts of why the allies left (22.1, 22.2). Which does he believe, and why?
2. Megistias would not leave, but "sent away his son who was with him in the army" (22.11). What does that tell you about him?
3. Read the Spartans' epitaph aloud (22.22–23). What does it ask the stranger to do? Why might so short a poem be remembered for so long?

23. The Message in the Night

Salamis, an island in the bay west of Athens, September 480 BC. The Persians have captured Athens, which its people had left empty. The Greek fleet is at Salamis, and its commanders are quarreling. The men from the Peloponnese want to sail away to defend their own land; the Athenians want to fight here, in the narrow strait, where the Persians' greater numbers count for less.

Themistocles, the Athenian leader of Tale 20, is losing the argument. So he sends a secret messenger across the water to the enemy.

Listen for the message, and for the meeting between Themistocles and his old enemy Aristides.

Reading 23. *The Message in the Night. Herodotus, Histories, Book VIII, chapters 75–82, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

❧

1 Then Themistocles, when his opinion was like to be defeated by the Peloponnesians, secretly went forth from the assembly, and having gone out he sent a man to the encampment of the Medes in a boat, charging him with that which he must say: this man's name was Sikinnos, and he was a servant of Themistocles and tutor to his children; and after these events Themistocles entered him as a Thespian citizen, when the Thespians were admitting new citizens, and made him a wealthy man. He at this time came with a boat and said to the commanders of the Barbarians these words: "The commander of the Athenians sent me privately without the knowledge of the other Hellenes (for, as it chances, he is disposed to the cause of the king, and desires rather that your side should

gain the victory than that of the Hellenes), to inform you that the Hellenes are planning to take flight, having been struck with dismay; and now it is possible for you to execute a most noble work, if ye do not permit them to flee away: for they are not of one mind with one another and they will not stand against you in fight, but ye shall see them fighting a battle by sea with one another, those who are disposed to your side against those who are not."

2 He then having signified to them this, departed out of the way; and they, thinking that the message deserved credit, landed first a large number of Persians in the small island of Psyttaleia, which lies between Salamis and the mainland; and then, as midnight came on, they put out the Western wing of their fleet to sea, circling round towards Salamis, and also those stationed about Keos and Kynosura put out their ships to sea; and they occupied all the passage with their ships as far as Munychia. And for this reason they put out their ships, namely in order that the Hellenes might not even be permitted to get away, but being cut off in Salamis might pay the penalty for the contests at Artemision: and they disembarked men of the Persians on the small island called Psyttaleia for this reason, namely that when the fight should take place, these might save the men of one side and destroy those of the other, since there especially it was likely that the men and the wrecks of ships would be cast up on shore, for the island lay in the way of the sea-fight which was to be. These things they did in silence, that the enemy might not have information of them.

3 They then were making their preparations thus in the night without having taken any sleep at all: and with regard to oracles, I am not able to make objections against them that they are not true, for I do not desire to attempt to overthrow the credit of them when they speak clearly, looking at such matters as these which here follow:

"But when with ships they shall join the sacred strand of the goddess,
5 Artemis golden-sword-girded, and thee, wave-washed Kynosura,
Urged by a maddening hope, having given rich Athens to plunder,
Then shall Justice divine quell Riot, of Insolence firstborn,

Longing to overthrow all things and terribly panting for bloodhshed:
Brass shall encounter with brass, and Ares the sea shall empurple,
10 Tinging its waves with the blood: then a day of freedom for Hellas
Cometh from wide-seeing Zeus and from Victory, lady and mother."

12 Looking to such things as this, and when Bakis speaks so clearly, I do not venture myself to make any objections about oracles, nor can I admit them from others.

13 Now between the commanders that were at Salamis there came to be great contention of speech and they did not yet know that the Barbarians were surrounding them with their ships, but they thought that they were still in their place as they saw them disposed in the day.

14 Then while the commanders were engaged in strife, there came over from Egina Aristeides the son of Lysimachos, an Athenian who had been ostracised by the people, a man whom I hold (according to that which I hear of his character) to have been the best and most upright of all Athenians. This man came into the council and called forth Themistocles, who was to him not a friend, but an enemy to the last degree; but because of the greatness of the present troubles he let those matters be forgotten and called him forth, desiring to communicate with him. Now he had heard beforehand that the Peloponnesians were pressing to take the ships away to the Isthmus. So when Themistocles came forth to him, Aristeides spoke these words: "Both at other times when occasion arises, and also especially at this time we ought to carry on rivalry as to which of us shall do more service to our country. And I tell thee now that it is indifferent whether the Peloponnesians say many words or few about sailing away from hence; for having been myself an eyewitness I tell thee that now not even if the Corinthians and Eurybiades himself desire to sail out, will they be able; for we are encompassed round by the enemy. Go thou in then, and signify this to them."

15 He made answer as follows: "Thou advisest very well, and also the news which thou hast brought is good, since thou art come having witnessed

with thine own eyes that which I desired might come to pass: for know that this which is being done by the Medes is of my suggestion; because, when the Hellenes would not come to a battle of their own will, it was necessary to bring them over to us against their will. Do thou however, since thou art come bearing good news, thyself report it to them; for if I say these things, I shall be thought to speak that which I have myself invented, and I shall not persuade them, but they will think that the Barbarians are not doing so. Do thou thyself however come forward to speak, and declare to them how things are; and when thou hast declared this, if they are persuaded, that will be the best thing, but if this is not credible to them, it will be the same thing so far as concerns us, for they will no longer be able to take to flight, if we are encompassed on all sides, as thou sayest."

16 Aristeides accordingly came forward and told them this, saying that he had come from Egina and had with difficulty escaped without being perceived by those who were blockading them; for the whole encampment of the Hellenes was encompassed by the ships of Xerxes; and he counselled them to get ready to defend themselves. He then having thus spoken retired, and among them again there arose dispute, for the greater number of the commanders did not believe that which was reported to them:

17 and while these were doubting, there came a trireme manned by Tenians, deserting from the enemy, of which the commander was Panaitios the son of Sosimenes, which brought them the whole truth. For this deed the Tenians were inscribed at Delphi on the tripod among those who had conquered the Barbarians. With the ship which deserted at Salamis and the Lemnian ship which deserted before and came to Artemision, the naval force of the Hellenes was completed to the number of three hundred and eighty ships, for before this two ships were yet wanting to make up this number.

Talk About It

1. Themistocles' message tells the Persians the truth and a lie at once (23.1). Which part is true? Which part is false?
2. Aristides says the two rivals should compete "as to which of us shall do more service to our country" (23.14). What would that kind of rivalry look like today?
3. Why does Themistocles ask Aristides to give the news himself (23.15)?

24. A Victor Says No

Plataea, in Boeotia, in central Greece, in August 479 BC. The Greeks have won the battle that ended the Persian invasion, and the Persian general Mardonius has been killed. The Greek commander is Pausanias of Sparta, nephew of Leonidas, the king who died at Thermopylae.

Lampon, one of the leading men of Aegina, comes to Pausanias with a suggestion, which Herodotus calls most impious before he even tells it. The Persians had mistreated Leonidas' body after Thermopylae. Why not do the same to Mardonius?

Listen for Pausanias' reasons for saying no.

Reading 24. *A Victor Says No. Herodotus, Histories, Book IX, chapters 78–79, translated by G. C. Macaulay.*

1 At Plataia among the troops of the Aeginetans was Lampon the son of Pytheas, one of the leading men of the Aeginetans, who was moved to go to Pausanias with a most impious proposal, and when he had come with haste, he said as follows: "Son of Cleombrotos, a deed has been done by thee which is of marvellous greatness and glory, and to thee God has permitted by rescuing Hellas to lay up for thyself the greatest renown of all the Hellenes about whom we have any knowledge. Do thou then perform also that which remains to do after these things, in order that yet greater reputation may attach to thee, and also that in future every one of the Barbarians may beware of being the beginner of presumptuous deeds towards the Hellenes. For when Leonidas was slain at Thermopylai, Mardonios and Xerxes cut off his head and crucified him: to him therefore

do thou repay like with like, and thou shalt have praise first from all the Spartans and then secondly from the other Hellenes also; for if thou impale the body of Mardonios, thou wilt then have taken vengeance for Leonidas thy father's brother."

2 He said this thinking to give pleasure; but the other made him answer in these words: "Stranger of Egina, I admire thy friendly spirit and thy forethought for me, but thou hast failed of a good opinion nevertheless: for having exalted me on high and my family and my deed, thou didst then cast me down to nought by advising me to do outrage to a dead body, and by saying that if I do this I shall be better reported of. These things it is more fitting for Barbarians to do than for Hellenes; and even with them we find fault for doing so. However that may be, I do not desire in any such manner as this to please either Aeginetans or others who like such things; but it is enough for me that I should keep from unholy deeds, yea and from unholy speech also, and so please the Spartans. As for Leonidas, whom thou biddest me avenge, I declare that he has been greatly avenged already, and by the unnumbered lives which have been taken of these men he has been honoured, and not he only but also the rest who brought their lives to an end at Thermopylai. As for thee however, come not again to me with such a proposal, nor give me such advice; and be thankful moreover that thou hast no punishment for it now."

Talk About It

1. Lampon thinks his idea will win Pausanias praise (24.1). Why does Pausanias think the opposite?
2. Pausanias says Leonidas "has been greatly avenged already" (24.2). Do you agree? Is revenge ever enough?
3. This book began with tales of a king who learned humility. Which person in these tales would you most like to have met?

Notes on the Texts

1.1 "the man who gave information about the oracle to Thrasybulos": just before this tale (Book I, chapter 20) Herodotus tells how Periander warned his friend Thrasybulus, ruler of Miletus, of an oracle given to the king of Lydia.

1.1 "dithyramb": an ancient Greek hymn sung and danced in honor of Dionysus. Tradition credits Arion with making it a work of art.

1.2 "Tainaron": Cape Taenarum, now Cape Matapan, the southern tip of the Peloponnese.

2.2 "all the wise men of the Hellas": so printed. The phrase is odd in English but has been left as it stands.

2.4 "wain": a large farm wagon. "five-and-forty furlongs": Macaulay's furlong renders the Greek stade, about 185 meters, so the brothers pulled the cart roughly eight kilometers.

2.5 "intercalated month": a month inserted into a calendar to keep it in step with the seasons. Solon reckons a year of 360 days, so seventy years make 25,200 days, and adds a month every other year.

2.5 "the Deity is altogether envious": the idea that the gods resent great good fortune comes back in Tale 10 (10.2) and Tale 17 (17.3).

3.1 "deprived of his son": Croesus' son Atys had been killed in a hunting accident, a story Herodotus tells in Book I, chapters 34–45.

3.2 "the shrine of Ammon in Libya": the oracle of Ammon at the oasis of Siwa, in the western desert of Egypt.

3.3 "the Pythian prophetess": the Pythia, high priestess of Apollo at Delphi. Her answers were given in dactylic hexameter, a line of six metrical feet.

4.2 "war rather peace": so printed. The sense requires the word "than" after "war."

4.5 "firstfruits": the first share of a harvest or a victory, given to a god. Croesus says the fetters are all he gained from his war.

4.6 "Loxias": a name of Apollo. Some ancient writers connected it with his twisting, ambiguous oracles.

4.6 "his fifth ancestor": Gyges, who killed King Candaules and took the throne of Lydia. Herodotus tells that story in Book I, chapters 8–13.

4.6 "a mule": an earlier oracle (Book I, chapter 55) told Croesus to flee when a mule should become king of the Medes. The Pythia explains the riddle here: Cyrus had a Median mother and a Persian father.

5.1 "Kyno" and "Spaco": the herdsman's wife's name in Greek and in Median. The text explains that both mean "bitch," a female dog. The tale's sequel (Book I, chapter 122) explains why that mattered: Cyrus' parents spread a report that he had been reared by a dog.

5.2 "Cambyses the son of Cyrus": this Cambyses is the baby's father, a Persian. The baby's grandfather on this side was also named Cyrus.

5.5 "the eye of the king" and the bearer of messages: offices of a royal court, which the boy hands out in the game.

5.7 The tale stops as the herdsman confesses. In Book I, chapters 117–122, Herodotus goes on to tell of Astyages' terrible revenge on Harpagus, and of how Cyrus was sent home to his real parents.

6.1 "Psammetichos": Psamtik I, first king of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, who ruled from Sais in the Nile Delta from 664 to 610 BC.

6.1 "*bekos*": Herodotus says this was the Phrygian word for bread. The Phrygians lived in central Asia Minor. No other surviving source confirms the story.

7.1 "seventeen cubits": a Greek cubit was about 46 centimeters, so about 7.8 meters.

7.1 "the trochilus": often identified with a plover. Herodotus' picture of a bird cleaning a crocodile's mouth has never been documented on

film or in photographs, and the identification of the bird is doubtful.

7.4 "The river-horse": the hippopotamus. The English word comes from the Greek for river horse.

7.6 "the phoenix": Herodotus says he knew the bird only from paintings. Some scholars link it with the Bennu, a bird of Egyptian religion, though that link is made with caution.

8.1 "the 'Long-lived' Ethiopians": the Macrobians, a people Herodotus places at the southern edge of the known world. Where, if anywhere, they lived is uncertain; the scholar Heeren placed them in Somali territory.

8.6 "having unbent the bow": having unstrung it. The king sends Cambyses an unstrung bow and dares the Persians to string it.

8.8 After this tale Herodotus tells (Book III, chapter 25) how Cambyses marched against the Ethiopians without supplies and turned back in disaster. Modern historians treat his picture of Cambyses as a madman with much skepticism.

9.2 "Pindar": a lyric poet from near Thebes (c. 518–438 BC), best known for his odes for athletic victors.

10.1 "a hundred fifty-oared galleys": these were penteconters, warships with a single row of twenty-five oars on each side.

10.4 "went away to this house": so printed. The sense requires "his house."

10.5 "a fearful and great mishap": about 522 BC Oroetes, the Persian governor at Sardis, lured Polycrates to the mainland with a promise of money and had him killed.

11.1 "smaller than dogs but larger than foxes": Michel Peissel argued in *The Ants' Gold* (1984) that these "ants" were Himalayan marmots of the Deosai Plateau, and that Herodotus may have confused the Old Persian words for marmot and mountain ant.

11.2 This short paragraph on the camel's legs and body may be skipped when reading to young children without losing the story.

12.1 "the river Borysthenes": the Dnieper. Herodotus records this ancient name for it.

12.2 "Scolotoi": Herodotus gives this as the Scythians' name for themselves, taken from the name of a king; "Scythians" was the Greeks' name for them.

12.3 "feathers": later in Book IV (chapter 31) Herodotus gives his own explanation: in the far north it snows continually, and falling snow looks like feathers, so he thinks the Scythians mean snow.

13.3 "the bridge of the Ister": the Ister is the Danube. The Ionian Greeks of Darius' army were guarding his bridge.

13.7 "one of the seven men who killed the Magian": in 522 BC Darius and six other Persian nobles killed the man Darius called Gaumata, a Magian, and Darius became king.

13.10 How the campaign ended is disputed. Darius claimed to have conquered the Scythians; the Greek tradition that follows Herodotus says they defeated him.

14.1 "five hundred talents": on the Athenian standard a talent weighed about 26 kilograms, so this is many tons of silver every year.

14.3 "Gorgo": she later married Leonidas, who became king of Sparta. Herodotus tells (Book VII, chapter 239) that before Xerxes' invasion she guessed the secret of a warning that Demaratus sent from Susa, written on the wood of a tablet and hidden under wax.

15.1 "polemarch": one of the nine archons, the magistrates Athens chose each year. Callimachus' vote decided the debate.

15.1 "Harmodios and Aristogeiton": two Athenians who in 514 BC killed Hipparchus, brother of the ruler Hippias. Athens later honored them as heroes of its freedom.

15.3 "came to drawn up": so printed. A word seems to be wrong or missing; the sense is that the Athenian army, stretched to match the Persian front, came to be drawn up only a few ranks deep in the middle.

15.4 "not less than eight furlongs": about 1,500 meters. Historians doubt that men in full armor ran all of it; more likely they marched, then ran the last stretch under the Persian arrows.

15.9 The Athenian dead were buried on the battlefield in a mound, the Soros. The story of a runner who carried news of the victory from Marathon to Athens and died is not in Herodotus; it first appears in writers of the first and second centuries AD.

16.2 "Sybaris": a Greek city in southern Italy so famous for luxury that the word *sybarite* still means a person devoted to pleasure.

16.5 The marriage mattered. Megacles and Agariste were the parents of Cleisthenes, who reformed the government of Athens. Through their son Hippocrates, Herodotus says, they were also the grandparents of another Agariste, the mother of Pericles.

17.1 "Abydos": the town on the Asian side of the Hellespont where Herodotus says Xerxes' two bridges of boats were built.

17.4 "the vision of the dream": in Book VII, chapters 12–18, Herodotus tells how a tall man appeared to Xerxes in his sleep and urged him not to give up the war.

17.9 "the rest are witnesses who went with Darius on his march against the Scythians": Xerxes recalls the Ionians who guarded Darius' bridge over the Danube (Tale 13, 13.8).

18.1 "Demaratos": king of Sparta from about 515 to 491 BC. His fellow king Cleomenes, Gorgo's father, had him removed, and he fled to the Persian court.

19.1 "the one people threw the men who made the demand into the pit and the others into a well": the Athenians used the pit, the Spartans the well.

19.4 Herodotus goes on (Book VII, chapter 137) to tell how the anger of Talthybius fell years later on the sons of Sperthias and Bulis.

20.15 "Pallas": Pallas Athena, the goddess of Athens. She is also "the Triton-born goddess" of 20.20.

20.31 Herodotus next tells (Book VII, chapter 144) how Themistocles had earlier persuaded the Athenians to spend the silver from their mines on two hundred ships. Silver was found at the Laurion mines in 483 BC.

21.1 "Thermopylai": the name means hot gates, from hot sulfur springs. Since 480 BC the shoreline has moved out by as much as nine kilometers, so the pass is no longer narrow.

21.3 "He said; "O king": so printed, with a semicolon where a colon would be usual.

21.5 "Immortals": an elite corps of Persian infantry. Herodotus says they numbered exactly ten thousand and that every man lost was replaced at once.

22.12 The Thespians numbered about seven hundred, led by Demophilus.

22.16 Plutarch, writing centuries later, gives a remark like Dienekes' to Leonidas himself.

22.22–23 The stone with this epitaph is lost; a new one was carved in 1955. The verse is traditionally attributed to Simonides, but modern scholars doubt it.

22.25–28 The epitaph for Megistias is the one epigram attributed to Simonides that scholars consider unquestionably his.

23.2 "Psyttaleia": a small island in the strait. Aristides later led Athenian troops across to it and destroyed the Persian force there.

23.8 "bloodhshed": so printed, for "bloodshed."

23.14 "Aristeides": Aristides, called the Just. He had been banished from Athens by ostracism a few years before and was recalled early in 480 BC.

24.1 "Leonidas thy father's brother": Pausanias' father was Cleombrotus, Leonidas' brother. Pausanias commanded as regent for his cousin Pleistarchus, the young king.

24.2 Pausanias' later life was less admirable. Accused of plotting with Xerxes, he took refuge in a temple, where he was walled in and starved to death.

Glossary

Acropolis: the upper fortified part of an ancient Greek city; at Athens, its citadel.

Barbarians: in Herodotus, simply people who do not speak Greek. The word did not yet carry the contempt it later gained.

Cubit: a measure of length, about 46 centimeters.

Despot: in these tales, the sole ruler of a Greek city, such as Periander of Corinth (1.1) or Cleisthenes of Sicyon (16.1). The Greeks called such a ruler a tyrannos, one who came to power without constitutional right; in this early period the word was not an insult.

Dithyramb: a hymn sung and danced in honor of the god Dionysus.

Earth and water: the tokens the Persian king demanded from a people as a sign that they surrendered their land to him.

Fetters: chains or shackles for the feet.

Fifty-oared galley: a penteconter, a warship with twenty-five oars on each side.

Furlong: Macaulay's word for the Greek stade, a distance of about 185 meters.

Guest-friend: a person bound to another, often in a foreign city, by ritual friendship and exchange of gifts and hospitality. The Greeks called the bond xenia.

Hellas, Hellenes: the Greeks' own names for Greece and for themselves.

Herald: an official messenger sent between leaders, especially in war.

Hexameter: a line of verse of six metrical feet, the meter of the Pythia's answers.

Ionians: one of the main branches of the Greek people, living in Ionia on the west coast of Asia Minor and on islands of the Aegean.

Lacedaemonians: the Spartans. Their state was called Lacedaemon.

Libation: a drink poured out as an offering to a god.

Magian: one of the Magi, a tribe of the Medes whose members interpreted omens and dreams.

Medes: an Iranian people whose kingdom Cyrus conquered. Greeks often called the Persians "Medes."

Myriad: ten thousand.

Obeisance: a bow or movement of the body made to show submission.

Oracle: a shrine where a god was believed to answer questions, and also the answer given there.

Polemarch: an Athenian magistrate, one of the nine archons chosen each year; the title means war leader.

Pythian prophetess: the Pythia, the priestess of Apollo who gave the god's answers at Delphi.

Signet: a seal used in place of a signature, often set in a finger ring.

Soothsayer: a person who foretells the future; Megistias did it by looking into sacrificed animals (22.1).

Suppliant: a person who humbly begs for help, often holding a branch as a sign.

Talent: a large weight of gold or silver, about 26 kilograms on the Athenian standard.

Trireme: a Greek warship with three rows of oars and a bronze ram at the bow.

Wain: a large farm wagon.

Chronology

664–610 BC · Psamtik I (Psammetichus) rules Egypt.

c. 627–585 BC · Periander rules Corinth; Arion lives at his court.

c. 600–560 BC · Cleisthenes rules Sicyon and holds the contest for his daughter's hand.

594 BC · Solon is chosen archon of Athens and gives the city new laws.

c. 560 BC · Croesus becomes king of Lydia.

c. 553–550 BC · Cyrus overthrows his grandfather Astyages, king of the Medes.

547 or 546 BC · The traditional date for Cyrus' capture of Sardis and of Croesus; historians now say the date is uncertain.

530 BC · Cyrus dies; his son Cambyses becomes king.

525 BC · Cambyses conquers Egypt.

522 BC · Darius and six other nobles seize power; Darius becomes king of Persia. About the same year Polycrates of Samos is killed by the Persian governor Oroetes.

513 BC · Darius invades Scythia.

499 BC · The Ionian Revolt begins; Aristagoras visits Sparta.

494 BC · The Ionians are defeated at sea off Lade, and Miletus falls.

c. 491 BC · Demaratus is removed as king of Sparta and flees to Persia.

490 BC · The Athenians defeat the Persians at Marathon.

486 BC · Darius dies; Xerxes becomes king.

c. 484 BC · Herodotus is born at Halicarnassus.

480 BC · Xerxes invades Greece; the battles of Thermopylae (late summer) and Salamis (September).

479 BC · The Greeks win at Plataea (August); Mardonius is killed.

c. 430–420 BC · Herodotus dies; the exact year is unknown.

Further Reading

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Sources of the Texts

- **G. C. Macaulay (1852–1915):** Herodotus, *The History of Herodotus*, translated by G. C. Macaulay, first published by Macmillan and Co., London, in two volumes in 1890 (reissued 1904 and 1914); Readings 1–24. The text is taken from the Standard Ebooks edition (2024), whose colophon gives the translation's date as 1904 and which is based on Project Gutenberg transcriptions and Internet Archive scans of the Macmillan volumes. Standard Ebooks' editors standardize typography and may modernize spelling and hyphenation, so the text here differs lightly from the printed volumes. This edition leaves out Macaulay's notes and their reference numbers, the Herodotus chapter numbers printed in the text (they are given instead in each reading line), and the book headings. Standard Ebooks prints several chapters in one long paragraph; in this edition each chapter begins a new paragraph. Reading 6 ends partway through chapter 3 of Book II. No word of the Standard Ebooks text has been changed.

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