

Ch. II. *Of the originall and first  
greatnesse of the Persians*

Ch. III. *Of Cyrvs*

Ch. IV. *The estate of things  
from the death of Cyrvs to the  
Raigne of Darivs*

Ch. V. *Of Darivs the Sonne of  
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Ch. VI. *Of Xerxes<sup>1</sup>*

§1. *The preparation of Xerxes against Greece.*

§2. *Xerxes Armie entertained by Pythius: his cutting off Mount  
Athos from the Continent . . .*

§3. *Of the fights at Thermopylæ and Artemisium.*

§4. *The attempt of Xerxes vpon Apollo's temple: and his  
taking of Athens.*

<sup>1</sup> Xerxes' invasion of Greece may appear to be a unit independent of the rest of the *History*; but the final section (pp. 231 f.) places the account within Raleigh's comprehensive design. Cf. above, p. 32.

When *Xerxes* had passed the straites of *Thermopylæ* he wasted the Country of the *Phocians* and the regions adjoining: as for the inhabitants they chose rather to flie, and reserue themselves to a day of battaile, than to aduenture their liues into his hands, vpon hope of sauing their wealth by making proffer vnto him of their seruice. Part of his armie he sent to spoile the Temple of *Delphi*; which was exceeding rich by meanes of many offerings that had there been made by diuers Kings and great personages; Of all which riches it was thought that *Xerxes* had a better Inuentorie than of the goods left in his owne Palace. To make relation of a great astonishment that fell vpon the companies which ariued at the Temple to haue sacked it, and of two Rockes that breaking from the mount *Parnassus* ouerwhelmed many of the *Barbarians*, it were peraduenture somewhat superstitious. Yet *Herodotus*, who liued not long after, saith, That the broken Rocks remained euen to his memorie in the Temple of *Minerua*, whither they rowled in their fall. And surely this attempt of *Xerxes* was impious; for seeing he beleued that *Apollo* was a God, he should not haue dared to entertaine a couetous desire of inriching himselfe by committing sacriledge vpon his Temple. Wherefore it may possibly be true, that licence to chastise his impietie, in such manner as is reported, was granted vnto the Deuill, by that Holie one, who saith, *Will a man spoile his Gods?* and elsewhere; *Hath any nation changed their Gods, which yet are no Gods? Go to the Iles of Kittim, and behold, and send to Kedar and take diligent heed, and see whether there be any such things.* Now this impietie of *Xerxes* was the more inexcusable, for that the *Persians* alleadged the burning of *Cybeles* Temple by the *Athenians*, when they set fire on the Citie of *Sardis* in *Asia*, to be the ground and cause of the wast which they made in burnings of Cities and Temples in *Greece*. Whereas indeed, in the enterprise against *Delphos*, this Vizzor of holie and zealous reuenge falling off, discovered the face of couetousnesse so much the more ouglie, by how much the more themselves had professed a detestation of the offence which the *Athenians* had committed in that kind by meere mischance.

The remainder of that which *Xerxes* did may be expressed

briefly thus. *He came to Athens, which finding forsaken he tooke, & burnt the Cittadel and temple which was therein.* The Cittadell indeed was defended a while by some of more courage than wisdom, who literally interpreting *Apollo's Oracle; that Athens should bee safe in wooden walls,* had fortified that place with boords and *Palissadoes:* too weake to hold out long, though by their desperate valour so well maintained at the first assault, that they might haue yeilded it vpon tolerable conditions, had they not vainely relied vpon the prophetic: whereof (being somewhat obscure) it was wisely done of *Themistocles,* to make discretion the interpreter, applying rather the wordes to the present neede, than fashioning the businesse to wordes.

§5. *How Themistocles the Athenian drew the Greekes to fight at Salamis.*

The *Athenians* had, before the coming of *Xerxes,* removed their wiues and children into *Træzene, Ægina,* and *'Salamis,* not so highly prizing their houses, and lands, as their freedome, and the common libertie of *Greece.* Neuerthelesse this great zeale, which the *Athenians* did shew for the generall good of their Countrie, was ill requited by the other *Greekes,* who with much labour were hardly intreated to stay for them at *Salamis,* whilst they removed the wiues and children out of their Citie. But when the Citie of *Athens* was taken, it was presently resolved vpon, that they should forsake the Ile of *Salamis,* and withdraw the fleet to *Isthmus:* which neck of land they did purpose to fortifie against the *Persians,* and so to defend *Peloponnesus* by Land, and Sea, leauing the rest of *Greece,* as indefensible, to the furie of the enimie. So should the Ilands of *Salamis* and *Ægina* haue bene abandoned, and the Families of the *Athenians* (which were there bestowed as in places of securitie) haue bene giuen ouer into merciless bondage. Against this resolution *Themistocles,* Admirall of the *Athenian* fleet, very strongly made opposition; but in vaine. For the *Peloponnesians* were so possessed with feare of loosing their owne, which they

would not hazard, that no perswasions could obtaine of them, to regard the estate of their distressed friends, and Allies. Many remonstrances *Themistocles* made vnto them, to allure them to abide the enemie at *Salamis*; As first in priuate vnto *Eurybiades* the *Lacedæmonian*, Admirall of the whole fleet; That the selfe same feare which made them forsake those coasts of *Greece*, vpon which they then anchored, would afterward (if it found no check at the first) cause them also to disseuer the fleet, and euery one of the Confederates to with-draw himselfe to the defence of his owne Citie and estate; Then to the Councill of Warre which *Eurybiades* vpon this motion did call together (forbearing to obiect what want of courage might worke in them hereafter) he shewed that the fight at *Isthmus* would be in an open Sea, whereas it was more expedient for them, hauing the fewer ships, to determine the matter in the straights; and that, besides the safeguard of *Ægina*, *Megara*, and *Salamis*, they should by abiding, where they then were, sufficiently defend *Isthmus*, which the *Barbarians* should not so much as once looke vpon, if the *Greekes* obtained victorie by Sea: which they could not so well hope for else-where, as in that present place which gaue them so good aduantage. All this would not serue to retaine the *Peloponnesians*, of whom one, vnworthy of memorie, vpbraided *Themistocles* with the losse of *Athens*, blaming *Eurybiades* for suffering one to speake in the Councill, that had no Countrie of his owne to inhabite. A base and shamefull obiection it was, to lay as a reproch that losse, which being voluntarily sustained for the common good, was in true estimation by so much the more honourable, by how much it was the greater. But this indignitie did exasperate *Themistocles*, and put into his mouth a reply so sharpe, as auailed more than all his former perswasions. Hee told them all plainely, That the *Athenians* wanted not a fairer Citie, than any Nation of *Greece* could boast of; hauing well-neare two hundred good ships of Warre, the better part of the *Græcian* fleet, with which it was easie for them to transport their Families and substance into any part of the world, and settle themselues in a more secure habitation, leauing those to shift as well as they might, who in their extremitie had refused to stand by them. Herewithall he

mentioned a Towne in *Italie* belonging of old to the State of *Athens*, of which Towne he said an Oracle had foretold, That the *Athenians* in processe of time should build it a-new, and there (quoth hee) will we plant our selues, leauing vnto you a sorrowfull remembrance of my words, and of your owne vnthankfulnessse. The *Peloponnesians* hearing thus much, beganne to enter into better consideration of the *Athenians*, whose affaires depended not, as they well perceiued, vpon so weake termes, that they should be driuen to crouch to others; but rather were such, as might inforce the rest to yeeld to them, and condescend euen to the vttermost of their owne demands.

For the *Athenians*, when they first embraced that Heroicall resolution of leauing their grounds and houses to fire and ruine, if necessitie should inforce them so farre, for the preseruation of their libertie; did imploy the most of their priuate wealth, and all the common treasure, in building a great Nauie. By these meanes they hoped (which accordingly fell out) that no such calamitie should befall them by land, as might not well be counterpoised by great aduantages at Sea: Knowing well, that a strong fleet would either procure victorie at home, or a secure passage to any other Countrie. The other States of *Greece* held it sufficient, if building a few new ships they did somewhat amend their Nauie. Whereby it came to passe, that, had they beene vanquished, they could not haue expected any other fortune than either present death, or perpetuall slauerie; neither could they hope to be victorious without the assistance of the *Athenians*, whose forces by Sea did equall all theirs together; the whole consisting of no more than three hundred and fourescore bottomes. Wherefore these *Peloponnesians* beginning to suspect their owne condition, which would haue stood vpon desperate points, if the fleet of *Athens* had forsaken them; were soone perswaded, by the greater feare of such a bad euent, to forget the lesser, which they had conceiued of the *Persians*: and laying a-side their insolent brauerie, they yeelded to that most profitable counsaile of abiding at *Salamis*.

§6. *How the Persians consulted about giuing battaile: and how Themistocles by policie held the Greekes to their resolution; with the victorie at Salamis thereupon ensuing.*

In the meane season the *Persians* had entred into consultation, whether it were conuenient to offer battaile to the *Greekes*, or no. The rest of the Captaines giuing such aduise as they thought would best please the King their Master, had soone agreed vpon the fight: but *Artemisia* Queene of *Halicarnassus*, who followed *Xerxes* to this warre in person, was of contrarie opinion. Her counsaile was, that the King himselfe directly should march toward *Peloponnesus*, whereby it would come to passe that the *Greeke* Nauie, (vnable otherwise to continue long at *Salamis* for want of prouision) should presently be disseuered, and euery one seeking to preserue his owne Citie and goods, they should, being diuided, proue vnable to resist him, who had wonne so farre vpon them when they held together. And as the profit will bee great in forbearing to giue battaile; so on the other side the danger will bee more (said shee) which wee shall vnder-goe, than any neede requireth vs to aduenture vpon; and the losse, in case it fall vpon vs, greater than the profit of the victorie which we desire. For if we compell the enemies to flie, it is no more than they would haue done, wee sitting still: but if they, as better Sea-men than ours, put vs to the worst, the iourney to *Peloponnesus* is vtterly dasht, and many that now declare for vs, will soone reuolt vnto the *Greekes*. *Mardonius*, whom *Xerxes* had sent for that purpose to the fleet, related vnto his Master the common consent of the other Captaines, and withall this disagreeing opinion of *Artemisia*. The King well pleased with her aduise, yet resolued vpon following the more generall, but farre-worse counsaile of the rest; which would questionlesse haue bene the same which *Artemisia* gaue, had not feare and flatterie made all the Captaines vtter that as out of their owne iudgement, which they thought most conformable to their Princes determination. So it was indeede that *Xerxes* had entertained a vaine perswasion of much good, that his owne presence vpon the shore to behold the conflict, would worke among the Souldiers. Therefore he incamped vpon the

Sea-side, pitching his owne Tent on the mount *Ægaleus* which is opposite vnto the Ile of *Salamis*, whence at ease hee might safely view all which might happen in that action, hauing Scribes about him to write downe the acts and behaiour of euery Captaine. The neare approch of the *Barbarians*, together with the newes of that timorous diligence, which their Countrimen shewed in fortifying the *Isthmus*, and of a *Persian* Armie marching a-pace thither, did now againe so terrifie and amaze the *Peloponnesians*, that no intreatie, nor contestation would suffice to hold them together. For they thought it meere madnesse to fight for a Countrie alreadie lost, when they rather should endeauour to saue that which remained vnconquered; propounding chiefly to themselues what miserie would befall them, if loosing the victorie, they should be driuen into *Salamis*, there to bee shut vp, and besieged round in a poore desolate Iland.

Hereupon they resolued forth-with to set saile for *Isthmus*: which had presently beene done, if the wisdome of *Themistocles* had not preuented it. For he perceiuing what a violent feare had stopt vp their cares against all good counsaile, did practise another course, and forth-with labour to preuent the execution of this vnwholsome decree; not suffering the very houre of performance to find him busie in wrangling altercation. As soone as the Councill brake vp, hee dispatched secretly a trustie Gentleman to the *Persian* Captaines, informing them truely of the intended flight, and exhorting them to send part of their Nauie about the Iland, which incompassing the *Greekes* might preuent their escape: giuing them withall a false hope of his assistance. The *Persians* no sooner heard than beleued these good newes, well knowing that the victorie was their owne assured, if the *Athenian* fleet ioyned with them; which they might easily hope, considering what abilitie their Master had to recompence for so doing, both the Captaines with rich rewards, and the People with restitution of their Citie, and Territories. By these meanes it fell out, that when the *Greekes* very early in the morning were about to waigh Anchor, they found themselues inclosed round with *Persians*, who had laboured hard all night, sending many of their ships about the Ile of *Salamis*, to charge the enimie in reare, and landing many of

their men in the Isle of *Psytalea*, which lieth ouer against *Salamis*, to saue such of their owne, and kill such of the *Græcian* partie, as by any misfortune should be cast vpon the shore. Thus did meere necessitie enforce the *Græcians* to vndertake the battaile in the Straights of *Salamis*, where they obtained a memorable victorie, stemming the formost of their enemies, and chasing the rest, who falling foule one vpon another, could neither conueniently fight nor flie. I doe not finde any particular occurrences in this great battaile to be much remarkeable. Sure it is that the Scribes of *Xerxes* had a wearisome taske of writing downe many disasters that befell the *Persian* fleet, which ill acquitted it selfe that day, doing no one peece of seruice worthie the presence of their King, or the registering of his Notaries. As for the *Greekes*, they might well seeme to haue wrought out that victorie with equall courage, were it not that the principall honour of that day was ascribed to those of *Ægina*, and to the *Athenians*, of whom it is recorded, That when the *Barbarians* did flie towards *Phalerus*, where the Land-Armye of *Xerxes* lay, the ships of *Ægina* hauing possessed the straights did sinke or take them, whilst the *Athenians* did valiantly giue charge vpon those that kept the Sea, and made any countenance of resisting.

§7. *Of thinges following after the battaile of Salamis: and of the flight of Xerxes.*

After this victorie, the *Greekes* intending, by way of scrutinie, to determine which of the Captaines had best merited of them, in all this great seruice; euery Captaine, being ambitious of that honour, did in the place write downe his owne name, but in the second place, as best deseruing next vnto himselfe, almost euery Suffrage did concurre vpon *Themistocles*. Thus priuate affection yeilded vnto vertue, as soone as her owne turne was serued. The *Persian* King, as not amazed with this calamitie, beganne to make new preparation for continuance of warre; but in such fashion, that they which were best acquainted with his temper, might easily discern his faint heart, through his painted lookes. Especially *Mardonius*, Author of the warre, began to



cast a warie eie vpon his Master, fearing least his counsaile should bee rewarded according to the euent. Wherefore purposing rather to aduenture his life in pursuit of the victorie, than to cast it away by vnder-going his Princes indignation; he aduised the King to leaue vnto him three hundred thousand men, with which forces he promised to reduce all *Greece* vnder the subiection of the *Persian* Scepter. Herewithall he forgot not to sooth *Xerxes* with many faire wordes; telling him, that the cowardise of those *Ægyptians*, *Phœnicians*, and *Cilicians*, with others of the like mettall, nothing better than slaues, who had so ill behaued themselues in the late Sea-seruice, did not concerne his honour, who had alwaies beene victorious, and had alreadie subdued the better part of *Greece*, yea taken *Athens* it selfe, against which the Warre was principally intended. These wordes found very good acceptance in the Kings eare, who presently betooke himselfe to his iourney homewards, making the more hast, for that he vnderstood, how the *Greekes* had a purpose to saile to *Hellespont*, and there to breake downe his bridge, and intercept his passage. True it was that the *Greekes* had no such intent, but rather wished his hastie departure, knowing that he would leaue his Armie not so strong, as it should haue beene, had he in person remained with it. And for this cause did *Eurybiades* giue counsaile that by no meanes they should attempt the breaking of that bridge, least necessitie should inforce the *Persians* to take courage, and rather to fight like men, than die like beasts. Wherefore *Themistocles* did, vnder pretence of friendship, send a false aduertisement to this timorous Prince, aduising him to conuay himselfe into *Asia* with all speede, before his bridge were dissolued: which counsaile *Xerxes* tooke very kindly, and hastily followed, as before is shewed. Whether it were so that he found the bridge whole, and thereby repassed into *Asia*; or whether it were torne in sunder by tempests, and he thereby driuen to imbarke himselfe in some obscure vessell, it is not greatly materiall; though the *Greekes* did most willingly imbrace the later of these reports. Howsoeuer it were, this flight of his did well ease the Countrie; that was thereby disburdened of that huge throng of people, which, as Locusts, had before ouerwhelmed it.

- §8. *The negotiations betweene Mardonivs and the Athenians...*
- §9. *The great battaile of Platæa.*
- §10. *The battaile of Mycale . . .*
- §11. *Of the barbarous qualitie of Xerxes: with a transition from the Persian affaires, to matters of Greece, which from this time grew more worthie of regard.*

*Xerxes* lay at *Sardis*, not farre from the place of this battaile; but little minde had hee to reuenge either this or other his great losses, being wholly giuen ouer to the loue of his Brothers Wife: with whom when hee could not preuaile by intreatie, nor would obtaine his desire by force, because hee respected much his Brother her husband, he thought it best to make a match betweene his owne Sonne *Darius*, and the Daughter of this Woman; hoping by that meanes to finde occasion of such familiaritie, as might worke out his desire. But whether it were so, that the chastitie of the Mother did still reject him, or the beautie of her Daughter allure him; hee soone after fell in loue with his owne Sonnes wife, being a vitious Prince, and as ill able to gouerne himselfe in peace, as to guide his Armie in Warre. This yong Ladie hauing once desired the King to giue her the Garment which hee then wore, being wrought by his owne Wife; caused the Queene thereby to perceiue her husbands conuersation with her, which shee imputed not so much to the beautie of her Daughter-in-law, as to the cunning of the Mother, against whom thereupon shee conceiued extreme hatred. Therefore at a Royall feast, wherein the custome was that the King should grant euery request, shee craued that the Wife of *Masistes*, her husbands Brother, the yong Ladies Mother, might bee giuen into her disposition. The barbarous King, who might either haue reformed the abuse of such a custome, or haue deluded the importunate crueltie of his Wife, by threatning her selfe with the like, to whatsoever shee should inflict vpon the innocent Ladie, granted the request; and sending for his brother perswaded him to put away the Wife which hee had, and take one of his Daughters in her stead. Hereby it seemes, that hee vnderstood how villainously

that poore Ladie should bee intreated, whom hee knew to bee vertuous, and whom himselfe had loued. *Masistes* refused to put her away; alleaging his owne loue, her deseruing, and their common Children, one of which was married to the Kings Sonne, as reasons important to moue him to keepe her. But in most wicked manner *Xerxes* reuiled him; saying, That hee now should neither keepe the Wife which hee had, nor haue his Daughter whome hee had promised vnto him. *Masistes* was much grieued with these wordes, but much more, when returning home, hee found his Wife most butcherly mangled by the Queene *Amestris*, who had caused her Nose, Lips, Eares, and Tongue to bee cut off, and her Breasts in like manner, which were cast vnto Dogs. *Masistes* enraged with this vilanie, tooke his way with his children, and some Friends, towards *Bactria*, of which Prouince hee was Gouvernour, intending to rebell and auenge himselfe. But *Xerxes* vnderstanding his purpose, caused an Armie to bee leauied which cut him off by the way, putting him and all his Companie to the sword. Such was the tyrannicall condition of the *Persian* Gouvernement; and such are generally the effects of Luxurie, when it is ioyned with absolute power.

Yet of *Xerxes* it is noted, that he was a Prince of much vertue. And therefore *Alexander* the Great, finding an Image of his ouer-throwne, and lying vpon the ground, said, That hee doubted, whether, in regard of his vertue, hee should againe erect it, or, for the mischief done by him to *Greece*, should let it lie. But surely whatsoever his other good qualities were, he was foolish, and was a coward, and consequently mercilesse. . . .

## Ch. VII. *Of things that passed in Greece from the end of the Persian Warre to the beginning of the Peloponnesian*