

CHAPTER XV

CONQUEST OF ASIATIC GREECE BY THE LYDIANS AND THE PERSIANS

560-493 B.C.

185. Character of the Ionians. — Although successful in developing government and the art of war, the Athenians as well as the Lacedaemonians were thus far inferior to the Greeks of Asia Minor in the finer elements of civilization. Aeolis and Ionia were the homes of the first great poets of Greece. The earliest geographers, historians, and philosophers were Ionians. The same people took the lead in useful inventions: the Ionians were the first of the Greeks to coin money; their ships plied the Mediterranean Sea from Egypt to Massalia. For five hundred years (about 1000-494 B.C.) they were the standard-bearers of Hellenic civilization.

But though admirable for their many excellent qualities, the Ionians were lacking in political ability. The communities rarely acted together, and could not think of joining in one strong state. They loved complete independence for their towns, and enjoyed the privilege of making war on their neighbors as the diversion of a summer; yet they were a commercial people, not fond of long-continued military service. Their character was their political ruin. It is no wonder that they proved inferior to the empires of Asia, based as these were on unthinking submission to one all-controlling will.

186. Croesus, King of Lydia (560-546 B.C.). — As long as there was no great foreign power in their neighborhood, these Asiatic Greeks remained free. But gradually Lydia, in the interior, became a strong state. Croesus, who ascended the throne of this country in 560 B.C.,¹ admired the Greeks and wished to have them as willing subjects; but when they resisted, he waged war upon

¹ § 63.

them and conquered them with no great difficulty. He ruled them well, however, as he sought to gain their favor and support against the rising power of Persia. He stole his way into their affections by making costly presents to their gods, especially to Apollo at Delphi.¹ Under him, Lydia reached its height in wealth and power. His treasury was full of gold dust from the sands of the Lydian rivers and of tributes from the cities he had conquered; and as he was the wealthiest he supposed himself to be the happiest man on earth. His empire had come to include all Asia Minor west of the Halys River; but it was destined soon to become a part of the far vaster Persian empire, and the happy monarch was doomed to end his life in captivity.

187. The Relations between Cyrus, King of Persia, and the Greeks (546-529 B.C.). — In an earlier chapter we have seen how Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered the Median empire and then defeated Croesus and took him captive.² The Ionians, who were favored subjects of Croesus and had supported him in the war, now begged Cyrus to grant them the same terms of submission which Croesus had given; but Cyrus angrily refused, telling the messengers who came to him from them the fable of the piper and the fishes. "There was a certain piper," he said, "who was walking one day by the seaside, when he espied some fish; so he began to pipe to them, imagining that they would come out to him upon the land. But as he found at last that his hope was vain, he took a net, and enclosing a great draught of fishes, drew them ashore. The fish then began to leap and dance; but the piper said, 'Cease your dancing now, as you did not choose to come and dance when I piped to you.' " As the Ionians saw that Cyrus would not give them good terms, they began to wall their towns, and met in council to concert measures of defence. They first asked help of Lacedaemon. When their deputies reached Sparta, the one who was to speak dressed himself in a purple robe so as to attract as large an audience as possible; and, in a long speech, he besought the Lacedaemonians to come to the aid of his countrymen. But it was all in vain; for the Spartans liked neither long speeches nor purple robes, and they were just then at war

¹ § 103. ² Ch. v. The history of Persia, §§ 63-69, should now be reviewed.

with Argos for the possession of Cynuria.¹ But they showed their good will toward their Asiatic kinsmen by warning Cyrus on his peril not to harm the Hellenic cities. "But when he received this warning from the herald, he asked some Greeks who were standing by, who these Lacedaemonians were, and what was their number, that they dared send him such a notice. When he had received their reply, he turned to the Spartan herald and said, 'I have never yet been afraid of any men who have a set place in the middle of their city, where they come together to cheat each other and perjure themselves. If I live, the Spartans shall have trouble enough of their own to talk of, without concerning themselves about the Ionians.' Cyrus intended these words as a reproach against all the Greeks, because of their having market-places where they buy and sell, which is a custom unknown to the Persians, who never make purchases in open marts, and, indeed, have not in their whole country a single market-place."²

Cyrus then returned to the East, leaving an army to conquer the Greeks of Asia Minor. As the cities could not unite in defence of freedom, they fell one by one into his hands.

188. Cambyses and Darius, Kings of Persia (529-522, 521-485 B.C.). — The Persian yoke was far more oppressive than the Lydian had been. For the king of Persia insisted that the Greek cities should be ruled by tyrants, through whom he expected to keep his new subjects obedient; and in addition to the payment of tribute, they now had to serve in the Persian armies. Cambyses, son and successor of Cyrus, required them accordingly to help him conquer Egypt.³ And when Darius, the following king, was preparing to invade Europe at the head of a great army,⁴ to conquer the Scythians, he ordered the tyrants of the Greek cities to furnish six hundred ships and their crews for his use. He crossed the Bosphorus on a bridge of boats arranged for him by a Greek engineer. Meanwhile the tyrants with their fleet sailed up the Danube and bridged the river with their boats that Darius might be able to cross; for the Scythians, a people without settled homes, roamed

¹ § 146.

² Herodotus, i. 153.

³ § 64.

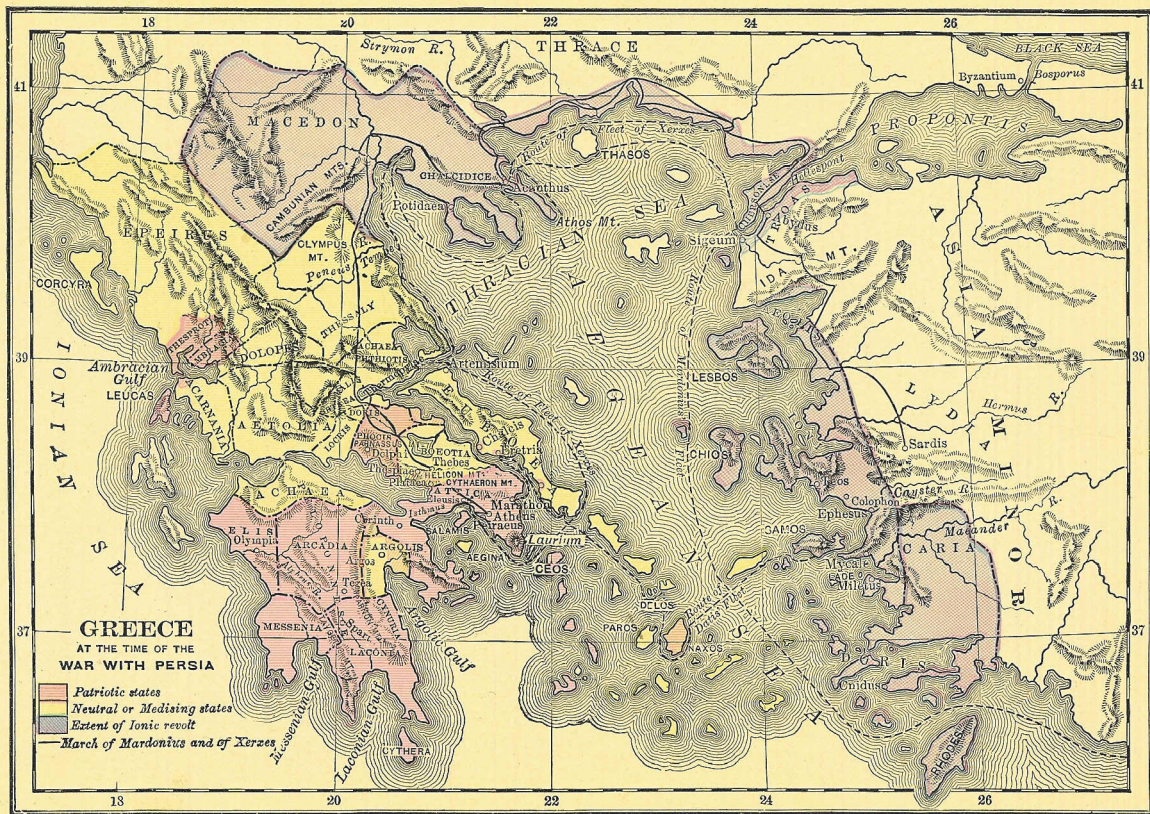
⁴ The estimate of Herodotus, iv. 87, is seven hundred thousand men — doubtless a great exaggeration. On the reason for the expedition, see § 65.

about in the country north of the Danube and the Black Sea. It was galling to the Greeks to perform such compulsory service, as they felt it a shame to be slaves of the Persians while their kinsmen in Europe were free. Even some of the tyrants, voicing the spirit of their subjects, proposed to cut off the return of Darius by breaking up the bridge he had left in their keeping. Mil-ti'a-des, an Athenian, who was then tyrant of Cher-so-nese', a colony of Athens, favored the plan; but His-ti-ae'us, despot of Miletus, persuaded the tyrants that the people would depose them if they should lose the support of the Persian king, and in this manner he led them to vote against the proposal. An important result of the expedition of Darius was the annexation of Thrace and Macedon to the Persian empire, which now extended therefore to the border of Thessaly.

189. The Ionic Revolt (499-494 B.C.): the Beginning. — The king rewarded Histiaeus for his loyalty by inviting him to Susa,¹ to pass the remainder of his life as a courtier in the palace. To the ambitious Greek the life at court was no better than exile. Desiring therefore to return to his native land, he sent a secret message to his son-in-law, Ar-is-tag'o-ras, then tyrant of Miletus, urging him to revolt. The latter needed little pressure from his father-in-law, for he was already thinking of taking this step. He had promised the Persians to conquer Naxos, and had received help from them on this assurance; but failing in his attempt, he now felt that he should be punished for not keeping his word. He decided accordingly to take the lead in a revolt which he knew was threatening. His first step was to resign his tyranny and give Miletus a democratic government. He then helped depose the tyrants of the neighboring cities, and in a few weeks all Ionia followed him in a rebellion against Darius.

190. Aristagoras at Sparta and at Athens (winter of 499-498 B.C.). — Aristagoras spent the next winter in looking about for allies. First he went to Sparta, and addressed King Cleomenes as follows: "That the sons of the Ionians should be slaves instead of free is a reproach and grief most of all indeed for 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

¹ § 66, n. 2.



slavery the Ionians, who are your own kinsmen: and ye may easily achieve this, for the foreigners are not valiant in fight, whereas ye have attained to the highest point of valor in 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 may easily be conquered. Then again, they who occupy that continent have good things in such quantities as not all the other nations in the world 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.”¹

Aristagoras then proceeded to indicate the location of the various Asiatic nations on a map traced on a plate of bronze, the first the Spartans had ever seen. He tried to show how easily the Lacedaemonians could conquer the whole Persian empire. “How long a journey is it from the Ionian coast to the Persian capital?” Cleomenes asked. “A three-months’ journey,” Aristagoras answered incautiously. “Guest-Friend from Miletus,” the Spartan king interrupted, “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 on a journey of three months from the sea.” The smooth Ionian then tried to win him with a bribe, but was frustrated by the king’s daughter, Gorgo, a child of eight or nine years of age, who exclaimed, “Father, the stranger will harm thee, if thou do not leave him and go!”

Aristagoras then went to Athens, where he found his task easier. The Athenians were near kinsmen of the Ionians and in close commercial relations with them. And recently the governor of Sardis had ordered the Athenians to take back Hippias as their tyrant, if they wished to escape destruction. They had refused, and felt in consequence that a state of war now existed between them and Persia. They therefore sent twenty ships to help the Ionians, and their neighbor, Eretria, sent five.

191. The Suppression of the Revolt (498-494 B.C.). — The allies captured and burned Sardis, the most important city under Persian

¹ Herodotus, v. 49. This speech gives a truthful summary of the facts, except in one particular, — the Persians were not cowardly; § 68.

control in Asia Minor. Then, as they were on their way back to Ionia, the Persians attacked and defeated them near Ephesus. This repulse so thoroughly discouraged the Athenians that they returned home and would give no more help.

The burning of Sardis encouraged the rest of the Asiatic Greeks to join in the revolt, but at the same time stirred Darius to greater exertions for putting it down, and angered him especially against Athens and Eretria. The decisive battle of the war was fought at La'de, off Miletus (497 B.C.). The Greeks had three hundred and fifty-three ships; the Phoenicians in the service of Persia had six hundred. Yet the Greeks would certainly have won the day, if they had shown the right spirit; but they were disunited, and allowed themselves to be influenced by secret agents from the enemy. At the very opening of the battle, many ships treacherously sailed away, and though a few remained and fought bravely, the battle was lost. United resistance was now at an end, and the separate states were subdued one by one or surrendered to avoid attack. The Persians brought the war to a close by the capture of Miletus (494 B.C.), after a siege of four years. They plundered and burned the city, together with its temples, and carried the people into captivity. Thus they blotted out of existence the fairest city of Hellas, the city which up to this time had done most in building up European civilization. Though it was again inhabited by Greeks, it never regained its former splendor.

The expedition of Darius into Europe¹ had resulted in the conquest of Thrace, which however rebelled in imitation of the Ionians. After suppressing the Ionic revolt, the Persians immediately proceeded against Thrace. As the Phoenician fleet approached Chersonese, Miltiades, the ruler, fled in his triremes² loaded with wealth. Though the Phoenicians hotly pursued him, he came safe to Athens.

192. Effect of the War on Athens. — Miltiades found his native city greatly disturbed by the recent events in Ionia. A strong party led by Hipparchus, a near kinsman of Hippias, wished to secure peace with Darius by recalling the exiled tyrant, and if need be, by sending the king "earth and water," the tokens of submission.

¹ § 188.

² For a description of the trireme see § 200, n. 1.

Opposed to the tyrant's party were the republicans, who upheld the form of government established by Cleisthenes, and were ready to fight for their country against Persia. As Archon for 493 B.C. they elected Them-is'to-cles, their leader, a man of wonderful energy and intelligence. Heretofore the Athenians had moored their ships in the open bay of Phal-e'rum, but Themistocles occupied his term of office in making the triple harbor of Pei-rae'us



A HARBOR OF PEIRAEUS

(From a photograph taken by Dr. A. S. Cooley)

ready for a navy. He believed that war with Persia could not be avoided, and intended that Athens should have a navy-yard and a powerful fleet; for it would be necessary to meet not only the Persian army on land, but also the combined fleets of the Phoenicians and the Asiatic Greeks on the sea.

193. Was Hellás ready for War with Persia? (about 493 B.C.). — Hellas was to be at a great disadvantage in the coming war with Persia, because her states could not bring themselves to act together. In most of them were strong factions which favored the Persians. Many of them immediately yielded through fear. Commercial jealousy of Athens prompted Aegina to send earth and water to the king; through dislike of Sparta, Argos favored the

Persian cause. Within the Peloponnesian League alone was unity. In addition to most of the Peloponnesian states, this league now included Athens, and within the next few years it was to be joined by several minor states in central Greece and the neighboring islands.¹ And yet in territory, in number of fighting men, and in wealth, the league, even when most widely extended, was insignificant in comparison with the Persian empire. Darius supposed that he had only to send a great army into Greece to crush all resistance in a single campaign; and so it seemed to many Greeks. But the contest did not prove so unequal as many imagined. The Persians were at a disadvantage in fighting far from their base of supplies; and the Hellenic arms and military organization were vastly superior to the Persian. It is a fact, too, that the system of city-states, when at its best, is the strongest possible for resistance. An empire may be overthrown in a single battle; but a union of little city-states, when fighting for independence in a country like Greece, is well-nigh unconquerable.

Summary

(1) The Ionians of Asia Minor created the most brilliant civilization which the world had yet seen. (2) But lacking political unity, they fell under the rule of Croesus, king of Lydia, who treated them well. (3) Soon afterward Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Croesus and annexed Lydia to his empire. (4) As the Ionians refused to submit, the Persians conquered them. (5) The kings of Persia favored tyrannies in the Ionic cities, and imposed military service and regular taxes on them. (6) The invasion of Europe by Darius added Thrace and Macedon to his empire, but increased the discontent already seething in Ionia. (7) The Asiatic Greeks revolted against him, and were aided by the Athenians and Eretrians. (8) The burning of Sardis by the Greeks brought home to Darius the necessity of punishing those European Greeks who were encouraging rebellion in his empire. (9) The insurgent Greeks were overthrown in the naval battle off Lade. (10) Miletus was taken by siege and destroyed, and (11) Athens began preparations for meeting the inevitable Persian invasion. (12) As yet, however, the European Greeks had thought of no general plan of defence.

Suggestive Questions

1. Why were the Ionians of Asia Minor the most advanced of all the Hellenes in civilization? 2. Compare the Ionians with the Spartans; with

¹ § 202.

the Athenians. 3. What did Cyrus mean by the fable of the piper and the fishes? 4. How can we account for the difference in the attitude of Croesus and Cyrus toward the Asiatic Greeks? 5. Why were the Ionians unwilling to unite in one state? 6. What objections had the Spartans to purple robes? How did they dress? 7. To what degree were the Lacedaemonians kinsmen of the Ionians? Were they as near as the Athenians in kinship? 8. Why should we consider the Scythian expedition of Darius an indirect cause of the Greco-Persian war? 9. Describe the location of Ionia, Miletus, Lade, Ephesus, Chersonese, Bosphorus, Danube River, Thrace, and Macedon.

Note-book Topics

I. **The Story of Croesus and Solon.** — Herodotus, i. 29-33; Plutarch, *Solon*, 27 f.

II. **The Battle of Lade.** — Herodotus, vi. 6-18.

III. **The Ionic Revolt.** — Holm, *History of Greece*, ii. ch. i; Bury, *History of Greece*, ch. vi. § 6; Grundy, *Great Persian War*, ch. iii.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:
Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature
which can be purchased on our Website :

www.Brainfly.net

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :

Brainfly Inc.

5100 Garfield Ave. #46

Sacramento CA 95841-3839

TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website (www.Brainfly.net) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

webcomments@brainfly.net