

HERODOTUS BOOK 1: CYRUS THE GREAT AND RISE OF PERSIA

107. After this Kyaxares died, having reigned forty years including those years during which the Scythians had rule, and Astyages son of Kyaxares received from him the kingdom. To him was born a daughter whom he named Mandane; and in his sleep it seemed to him that there passed from her so much water as to fill his city and also to flood the whole of Asia. This dream he delivered over[122] to the Magian interpreters of dreams, and when he heard from them the truth at each point he became afraid. And afterwards when this Mandane was of an age to have a husband, he did not give her in marriage to any one of the Medes who were his peers, because he feared the vision; but he gave her to a Persian named Cambyses, whom he found to be of a good descent and of a quiet disposition, counting him to be in station much below a Mede of middle rank.

108. And when Mandane was married to Cambyses, in the first year Astyages saw another vision. It seemed to him that from the womb of this daughter a vine grew, and this vine overspread the whole of Asia. Having seen this vision and delivered it to the interpreters of dreams, he sent for his daughter, being then with child, to come from the land of the Persians. And when she had come he kept watch over her, desiring to destroy that which should be born of her; for the Magian interpreters of dreams signified to him that the offspring of his daughter should be king in his room. Astyages then desiring to guard against this, when Cyrus was born, called Harpagos, a man who was of kin near him and whom he trusted above all the other Medes, and had made him manager of all his affairs; and to him he said as follows: "Neglect not by any means, Harpagos, the matter which I shall lay upon thee to do, and beware lest thou set me aside, and choosing the advantage of others instead, bring thyself afterwards to destruction. Take the child which Mandane bore, and carry it to thy house and slay it; and afterwards bury it in whatsoever manner thou thyself desirest." To this he made answer: "O king, never yet in any past time didst thou discern in me an offence against thee, and I keep watch over myself also with a view to the time that comes after, that I may not commit any error towards thee. If it is indeed thy pleasure that this should so be done, my service at least must be fitly rendered."

109. Thus he made answer, and when the child had been delivered to him adorned as for death, Harpagos went weeping to his wife all the words which had been spoken by Astyages. And she said to him: "Now, therefore, what is it in thy mind to do?" and he made answer: "Not according as Astyages enjoined: for not even if he shall come to be yet more out of his senses and more mad than he now is, will I agree to his will or serve him in such a murder as this. And for many reasons I will not slay the child; first because he is a kin to me, and then because Astyages is old and without male issue, and if after he is dead the power shall come through me, does not the greatest of dangers then await me? To secure me, this child must die; but one of the servants of Astyages must be the slayer of it, and not one of mine."

110. 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 Agbatana towards the North Wind and towards 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:[124] and I have been appointed to see that the child is laid forth."

111. 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 child-bearing 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."

112. 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."

113. 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.

114. 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,[125] 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.

115. 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."

116. 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,[126] 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.

117. So when the herdsman had made known the truth, Astyages now cared less about him, but with Harpagos he was very greatly displeased and bade his spearmen summon him. And when Harpagos came, Astyages asked him thus: "By what death, Harpagos, didst thou destroy the child whom I delivered to thee, born of my daughter?" and Harpagos, seeing that the herdsman was in the king's palace, turned not to any false way of speech, lest he should be convicted and found out, but said as follows: "O king, so soon as I received the child, I took counsel and considered how I should do according to thy mind, and how without offence to thy command I might not be guilty of murder against thy daughter and against thyself. I did therefore thus:--I called this herdsman and delivered the child to him, saying first that thou wert he who bade him slay it--and in this at least I did not lie, for thou didst so command. I delivered it, I say, to this man commanding him to place it upon a desolate mountain, and to stay by it and watch it until it should die, threatening him with all kinds of punishment if he should fail to accomplish this. And when he had done that which was ordered and the child was dead, I sent the most trusted of my eunuchs and through them I saw and buried the child. Thus, O king, it happened about this matter, and the child had this death which I say."

118. So Harpagos declared the truth, and Astyages concealed the anger which he kept against him for that which had come to pass, and first he related the matter over again to Harpagos according as he had been told it by the herdsman, and afterwards, when it had been thus repeated by him, he ended by saying that the child was alive and that that which had come to pass was well, "for," continued he, "I was greatly troubled by that which had been done to this child, and I thought it no light thing that I had been made at variance with my daughter. Therefore consider that this is a happy change of fortune, and first send thy son to be with the boy who is newly come, and then, seeing that I intend to make a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the preservation of the boy to those gods to whom that honour belongs, be here thyself to dine with me."

119. When Harpagos heard this, he did reverence and thought it a great matter that his offence had turned out for his profit and moreover that he had been invited to dinner with happy augury; and so he went to his house. And having entered it straightway, he sent forth his son, for he had one only son of about thirteen years old, bidding him go to the palace of Astyages and do whatsoever the king should command; and he himself being overjoyed told his wife that which had befallen him. But Astyages, when the son of Harpagos arrived, cut his throat and divided him limb from limb, and having roasted some pieces of the flesh and boiled others he caused them to be dressed for eating and kept them ready. And when the time arrived for dinner and the other guests were present and also Harpagos, then before the other guests and before Astyages himself were placed tables covered with flesh of sheep; but before Harpagos was placed the flesh of his own son, all but the head and the hands and the feet, and these were laid aside covered up in a basket. Then when it seemed that Harpagos was satisfied with food, Astyages asked him whether he had been pleased with the banquet; and when Harpagos said that he had been very greatly pleased, they who had been commanded to do this brought to him the head of his son covered up, together with the hands and the feet; and standing near they bade Harpagos uncover and take of them that which he desired. So when Harpagos obeyed and uncovered, he saw the remains of his son; and seeing them he was not overcome with amazement but contained himself: and Astyages asked him whether he perceived of what animal he had been eating the flesh: and he said that he perceived, and that whatsoever the king might do was well pleasing to him. Thus having made answer and taking up the parts of the flesh which still remained he went to his house; and after that, I suppose, he would gather all the parts together and bury them.

120. On Harpagos Astyages laid this penalty; and about Cyrus he took thought, and summoned the same men of the Magians who had given judgment about his dream in the manner which has been said: and when they came, Astyages asked how they had given judgment about his vision; and they spoke according to the same manner, saying that the child must have become king if he had lived on and had not died before. He made answer to them thus: "The child is alive and not dead: and while he was dwelling in the country, the boys of the village appointed him king; and he performed completely all those things which they do who are really kings; for he exercised rule, appointed to their places spearmen of the guard and doorkeepers and bearers of messages and all else. Now therefore, to what does it seem to you that these things tend?" The Magians said: "If the child is still alive and became king without any arrangement, be thou confident concerning him and have good courage, for he shall not be ruler again the second time; since some even of our oracles have had but small results, and that at least which has to do with dreams comes often in the end to a feeble accomplishment." Astyages made answer in these words: "I myself also, O Magians, am most disposed to believe that this is so, namely that since the boy was named king the dream has had its fulfilment and that this boy is no longer a source of danger to me. Nevertheless give counsel to me, having well considered what is likely to be most safe both for my house and for you." Replying to this the Magians said: "To us also, O king, it is of great consequence that thy rule should stand firm; for in the other case it is transferred to strangers, coming round to this boy who is a Persian, and we being Medes are made slaves and become of no account in the eyes of the Persians, seeing that we are of different race; but while thou art established as our king, who art one of our own nation, we both have our share of rule and receive great honours from thee. Thus then we must by all means have a care of thee and of thy rule. And now, if we saw in this anything to cause fear, we would declare all to thee beforehand: but as the dream has had its issue in a trifling manner, both we ourselves are of good cheer and we exhort thee to be so likewise: and as for this boy, send him away from before thine eyes to the Persians and to his parents."

121. When he heard this Astyages rejoiced, and calling Cyrus spoke to him thus: "My son, I did thee wrong by reason of a vision of a dream which has not come to pass, but thou art yet alive by thine own destiny; now therefore go in peace to the land of the Persians, and I will send with thee men to conduct thee: and when thou art come thither, thou shalt find a father and a mother not after the fashion of Mitradatae the herdsman and his wife."

122. Thus having spoken Astyages sent Cyrus away; and when he had returned and come to

the house of Cambyses, his parents received him; and after that, when they learnt who he was, they welcomed him not a little, for they had supposed without doubt that their son had perished straightway after his birth; and they inquired in what manner he had survived. And he told them, saying that before this he had not known but had been utterly in error; on the way, however, he had learnt all his own fortunes: for he had supposed without doubt that he was the son of the herdsman of Astyages, but since his journey from the city began he had learnt the whole story from those who conducted him. And he said that he had been brought up by the wife of the herdsman, and continued to praise her throughout, so that Kyno was the chief person in his tale. And his parents took up this name from him, and in order that their son might be thought by the Persians to have been preserved in a more supernatural manner, they set on foot a report that Cyrus when he was exposed had been reared by a bitch: and from that source has come this report.

123. Then as Cyrus grew to be a man, being of all those of his age the most courageous and the best beloved, Harpagos sought to become his friend and sent him gifts, because he desired to take vengeance on Astyages. For he saw not how from himself, who was in a private station, punishment should come upon Astyages; but when he saw Cyrus growing up, he endeavoured to make him an ally, finding a likeness between the fortunes of Cyrus and his own. And even before that time he had effected something: for Astyages being harsh towards the Medes, Harpagos communicated severally with the chief men of the Medes, and persuaded them that they must make Cyrus their leader and cause Astyages to cease from being king. When he had effected this and when all was ready, then Harpagos wishing to make known his design to Cyrus, who lived among the Persians, could do it no other way, seeing that the roads were watched, but devised a scheme as follows:--he made ready a hare, and having cut open its belly but without pulling off any of the fur, he put into it, just as it was, a piece of paper, having written upon it that which he thought good; and then he sewed up again the belly of the hare, and giving nets as if he were a hunter to that one of his servants whom he trusted most, he sent him away to the land of the Persians, enjoining him by word of mouth to give the hare to Cyrus, and to tell him at the same time to open it with his own hands and let no one else be present when he did so.

124. This then was accomplished, and Cyrus having received from him the hare, cut it open; and having found within it the paper he took and read it over. And the writing said this: "Son of Cambyses, over thee the gods keep guard, for otherwise thou wouldst never have come to so much good fortune. Do thou therefore^[133] take vengeance on Astyages who is thy murderer, for so far as his will is concerned thou art dead, but by the care of the gods and of me thou art still alive; and this I think thou hast long ago learnt from first to last, both how it happened about thyself, and also what things I have suffered from Astyages, because I did not slay thee but gave thee to the herdsman. If therefore thou wilt be guided by me, thou shalt be ruler of all that land over which now Astyages is ruler. Persuade the Persians to revolt, and march any army against the Medes: and whether I shall be appointed leader of the army against thee, or any other of the Medes who are in repute, thou hast what thou desirest; for these will be the first to attempt to destroy Astyages, revolting from him and coming over to thy party. Consider then that here at least all is ready, and therefore do this and do it with speed."

125. Cyrus having heard this began to consider in what manner he might most skilfully persuade the Persians to revolt, and on consideration he found that this was the most convenient way, and so in fact he did:--He wrote first on a paper that which he desired to write, and he made an assembly of the Persians. Then he unfolded the paper and reading from it said that Astyages appointed him commander of the Persians; "and now, O Persians," he continued, "I give you command to come to me each one with a reaping-hook." Cyrus then proclaimed this command. (Now there are of the Persians many tribes, and some of them Cyrus gathered together and persuaded to revolt from the Medes, namely those, upon which all the other Persians depend, the Pasargadai, the Maraphians and the Maspian, and of these the Pasargadai are the most noble, of whom also the Achaimenidai are a clan, whence are sprung the Perseid kings. But other Persian tribes there are, as follows:-- the Panthaliaians, the Derusiaians and the Germanians, these are all tillers of the soil; and the rest are nomad tribes, namely the Daoi, Mardians, Dropicans and

Sagartians.)

126. Now there was a certain region of the Persian land which was overgrown with thorns, extending some eighteen or twenty furlongs in each direction; and when all had come with that which they had been before commanded to bring, Cyrus bade them clear this region for cultivation within one day: and when the Persians had achieved the task proposed, then he bade them come to him on the next day bathed and clean. Meanwhile Cyrus, having gathered together in one place all the flocks of goats and sheep and the herds of cattle belonging to his father, slaughtered them and prepared with them to entertain the host of the Persians, and moreover with wine and other provisions of the most agreeable kind. So when the Persians came on the next day, he made them recline in a meadow and feasted them. And when they had finished dinner, Cyrus asked them whether that which they had on the former day or that which they had now seemed to them preferable. They said that the difference between them was great, for the former day had for them nothing but evil, and the present day nothing but good. Taking up this saying Cyrus proceeded to lay bare his whole design, saying: "Men of the Persians, thus it is with you. If ye will do as I say, ye have these and ten thousand other good things, with no servile labour; but if ye will not do as I say, ye have labours like that of yesterday innumerable. Now therefore do as I say and make yourselves free: for I seem to myself to have been born by providential fortune to take these matters in hand; and I think that ye are not worse men than the Medes, either in other matters or in those which have to do with war. Consider then that this is so, and make revolt from Astyages forthwith."

127. So the Persians having obtained a leader willingly attempted to set themselves free, since they had already for a long time been indignant to be ruled by the Medes: but when Astyages heard that Cyrus was acting thus, he sent a messenger and summoned him; and Cyrus bade the messenger report to Astyages that he would be with him sooner than he would himself desire. So Astyages hearing this armed all the Medes, and blinded by divine providence he appointed Harpagos to be the leader of the army, forgetting what he had done to him. Then when the Medes had marched out and began to fight with the Persians, some of them continued the battle, namely those who had not been made partakers in the design, while others went over to the Persians; but the greater number were wilfully slack and fled.

128. So when the Median army had been shamefully dispersed, so soon as Astyages heard of it he said, threatening Cyrus: "But not even so shall Cyrus at least escape punishment." Thus having spoken he first impaled the Magian interpreters of dreams who had persuaded him to let Cyrus go, and then he armed those of the Medes, youths and old men, who had been left behind in the city. These he led out and having engaged battle with the Persians he was worsted, and Astyages himself was taken alive, and he lost also those of the Medes whom he had led forth.

129. Then when Astyages was a prisoner, Harpagos came and stood near him and rejoiced over him and insulted him; and besides other things which he said to grieve him, he asked him especially how it pleased him to be a slave instead of a king, making reference to that dinner at which Astyages had feasted him with the flesh of his own son. He looking at him asked him in return whether he claimed the work of Cyrus as his own deed: and Harpagos said that since he had written the letter, the deed was justly his. Then Astyages declared him to be at the same time the most unskilful and the most unjust of men; the most unskilful because, when it was in his power to become king (as it was, if that which had now been done was really brought about by him), he had conferred the chief power on another, and the most unjust, because on account of that dinner he had reduced the Medes to slavery. For if he must needs confer the kingdom on some other and not keep it himself, it was more just to give this good thing to one of the Medes rather than to one of the Persians; whereas now the Medes, who were guiltless of this, had become slaves instead of masters, and the Persians who formerly were slaves of the Medes had now become their masters.

130. Astyages then, having been king for five-and-thirty years, was thus caused to cease from being king; and the Medes stooped under the yoke of the Persians because of his cruelty, after they had ruled Asia above the river Halys for one hundred and twenty-eight years, except during that period for which the Scythians had rule. Afterwards however it repented them that they had done this, and they revolved from Dareios, and having revolted they were subdued again, being conquered

in a battle. At this time then, I say, in the reign of Astyages, the Persians with Cyrus rose up against the Medes and from that time forth were rulers of Asia: but as for Astyages, Cyrus did no harm to him besides, but kept him with himself until he died. Thus born and bred Cyrus became king; and after this he subdued Cræsus, who was the first to begin the quarrel, as I have before said; and having subdued him he then became ruler of all Asia.

131. These are the customs, so far as I know, which the Persians practise:--Images and temples and altars they do not account it lawful to erect, nay they even charge with folly those who do these things; and this, as it seems to me, because they do not account the gods to be in the likeness of men, as do the Hellenes. But it is their wont to perform sacrifices to Zeus going up to the most lofty of the mountains, and the whole circle of the heavens they call Zeus: and they sacrifice to the Sun and the Moon and the Earth, to Fire and to Water and to the Winds: these are the only gods to whom they have sacrificed ever from the first; but they have learnt also to sacrifice to Aphrodite Urania, having learnt it both from the Assyrians and the Arabians; and the Assyrians call Aphrodite Mylitta, the Arabians Alitta,[136a] and the Persians Mitra.

132. Now this is the manner of sacrifice for the gods aforesaid which is established among the Persians:--they make no altars neither do they kindle fire; and when they mean to sacrifice they use no libation nor music of the pipe nor chaplets nor meal for sprinkling; but when a man wishes to sacrifice to any one of the gods, he leads the animal for sacrifice to an unpolluted place and calls upon the god, having his /tiara/wreathed round generally with a branch of myrtle. For himself alone separately the man who sacrifices may not request good things in his prayer, but he prays that it may be well with all the Persians and with the king; for he himself also is included of course in the whole body of Persians. And when he has cut up the victim into pieces and boiled the flesh, he spreads a layer of the freshest grass and especially clover, upon which he places forthwith all the pieces of flesh; and when he has placed them in order, a Magian man stands by them and chants over them a theogony (for of this nature they say that their incantation is), seeing that without a Magian it is not lawful for them to make sacrifices. Then after waiting a short time the sacrificer carries away the flesh and uses it for whatever purpose he pleases.

133. And of all days their wont is to honour most that on which they were born, each one: on this they think it right to set out a feast more liberal than on other days; and in this feast the wealthier of them set upon the table an ox or a horse or a camel or an ass, roasted whole in an oven, and the poor among them set out small animals in the same way. They have few solid dishes, but many served up after as dessert, and these not in a single course; and for this reason the Persians say that the Hellenes leave off dinner hungry, because after dinner they have nothing worth mentioning served up as dessert, whereas if any good dessert were served up they would not stop eating so soon. To wine-drinking they are very much given, and it is not permitted for a man to vomit or to make water in presence of another. Thus do they provide against these things; and they are wont to deliberate when drinking hard about the most important of their affairs, and whatsoever conclusion has pleased them in their deliberation, this on the next day, when they are sober, the master of the house in which they happen to be when they deliberate lays before them for discussion: and if it pleases them when they are sober also, they adopt it, but if it does not please them, they let it go: and that on which they have had the first deliberation when they are sober, they consider again when they are drinking.

134. When they meet one another in the roads, by this you may discern whether those who meet are of equal rank,--for instead of greeting by words they kiss one another on the mouth; but if one of them is a little inferior to the other, they kiss one another on the cheeks, and if one is of much less noble rank than the other, he falls down before him and does worship to him. And they honour of all most after themselves those nations which dwell nearest to them, and next those which dwell next nearest, and so they go on giving honour in proportion to distance; and they hold least in honour those who dwell furthest off from themselves, esteeming themselves to be by far the best of all the human race on every point, and thinking that others possess merit according to the proportion which is here stated, and that those who dwell furthest from themselves are the worst. And under the

supremacy of the Medes the various nations used also to govern one another according to the same rule as the Persians observe in giving honour, the Medes governing the whole and in particular those who dwelt nearest to themselves, and these having rule over those who bordered upon them, and those again over the nations that were next to them: for the race went forward thus ever from government by themselves to government through others.

135. The Persians more than any other men admit foreign usages; for they both wear the Median dress judging it to be more comely than their own, and also for fighting the Egyptian corslet: moreover they adopt all kinds of luxuries when they hear of them, and in particular they have learnt from the Hellenes to have commerce with boys. They marry each one several lawful wives, and they get also a much larger number of concubines.

136. It is established as a sign of manly excellence next after excellence in fight, to be able to show many sons; and to those who have most the king sends gifts every year: for they consider number to be a source of strength. And they educate their children, beginning at five years old and going on till twenty, in three things only, in riding, in shooting, and in speaking the truth: but before the boy is five years old he does not come into the presence of his father, but lives with the women; and it is so done for this reason, that if the child should die while he is being bred up, he may not be the cause of any grief to his father.

137. I commend this custom of theirs, and also the one which is next to be mentioned, namely that neither the king himself shall put any to death for one cause alone, nor any of the other Persians for one cause alone shall do hurt that is irremediable to any of his own servants; but if after reckoning he finds that the wrongs done are more in number and greater than the services rendered, then only he gives vent to his anger. Moreover they say that no one ever killed his own father or mother, but whatever deeds have been done which seemed to be of this nature, if examined must necessarily, they say, be found to be due either to changelings or to children of adulterous birth; for, say they, it is not reasonable to suppose that the true parent would be killed by his own son.

138. Whatever things it is not lawful for them to do, these it is not lawful for them even to speak of: and the most disgraceful thing in their estimation is to tell an lie, and next to this to owe money, this last for many other reasons, but especially because it is necessary, they say, for him who owes money, also sometimes to tell lies: and whosoever of the men of the city has leprosy or whiteness of skin, he does not come into a city nor mingle with the other Persians; and they say that he has these diseases because he has offended in some way against the Sun: but a stranger who is taken by these diseases, in many regions[144] they drive out of the country altogether, and also white doves, alleging against them the same cause. And into a river they neither make water nor spit, neither do they wash their hands in it, nor allow any other to do these things, but they reverence rivers very greatly.

139. This moreover also has chanced to them, which the Persians have themselves failed to notice but I have not failed to do so:--their names, which are formed to correspond with their bodily shapes or their magnificence of station, end all with the same letter, that letter which the Dorians call /san/ and the Ionians /sigma/; with this you will find, if you examine the matter, that all the Persian names end, not some with this and others with other letters, but all alike.

140. So much I am able to say for certain from my own knowledge about them: but what follows is reported about their dead as a secret mystery and not with clearness, namely that the body of a Persian man is not buried until it has been torn by a bird or a dog. (The Magians I know for a certainty have this practice, for they do it openly.) However that may be, the Persians cover the body with wax and then bury it in the earth. Now the Magians are distinguished in many ways from other men, as also from the priests in Egypt: for these last esteem it a matter of purity to kill no living creature except the animals which they sacrifice; but the Magians kill with their own hands all creatures except dogs and men, and they even make this a great end to aim at, killing both ants and serpents and all other creeping and flying things. About this custom then be it as it was from the first established; and I return now to the former narrative.