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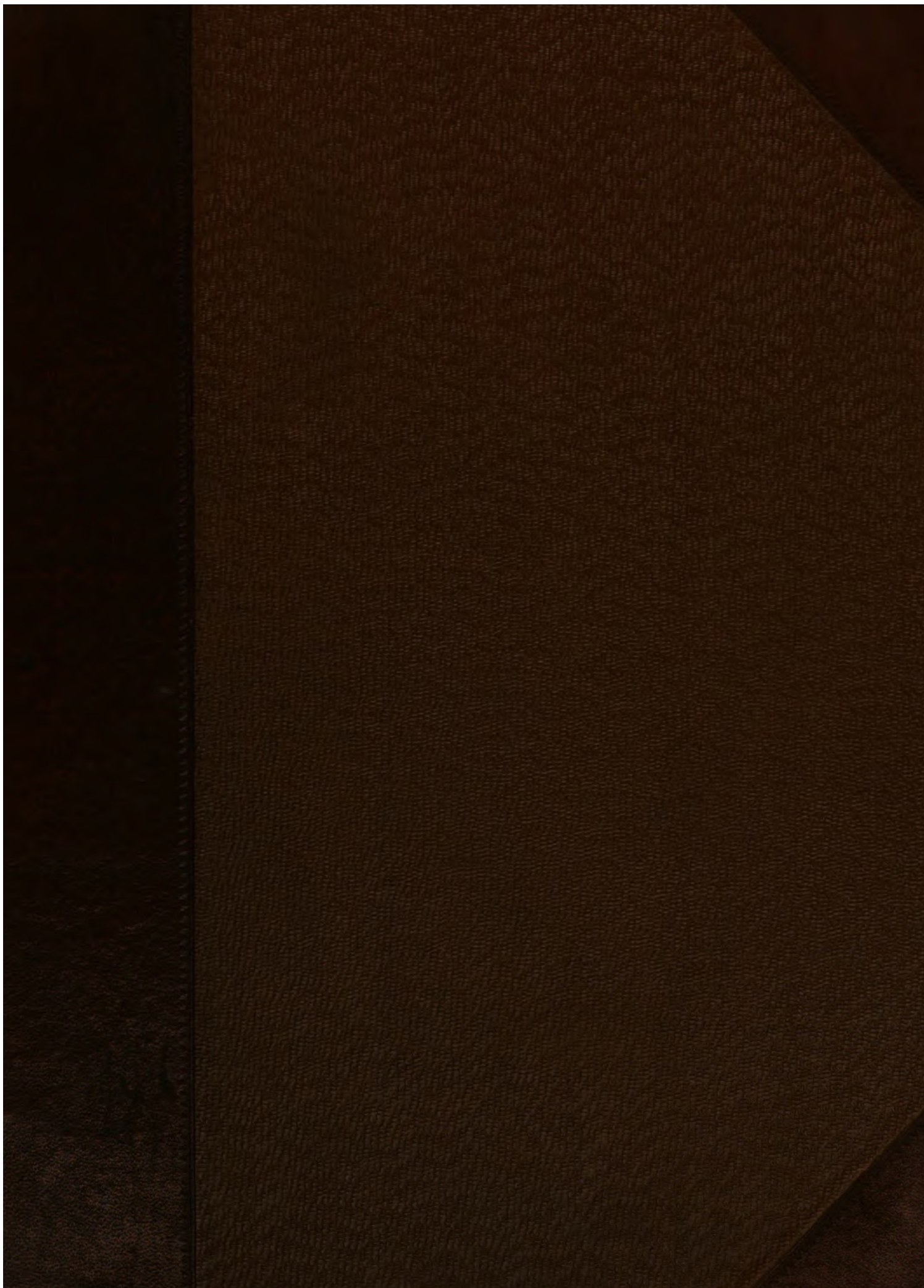
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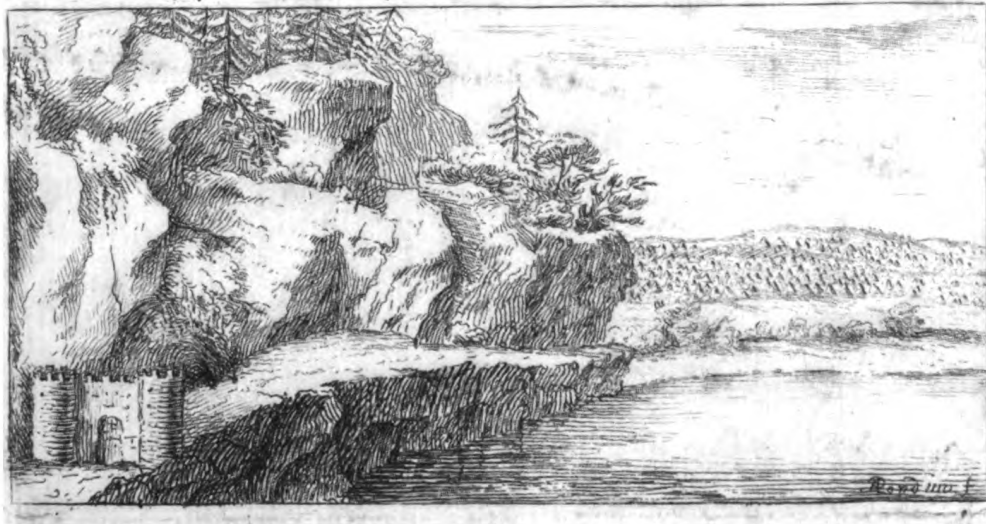
LEONIDAS,

A

P O E M.

———Θανεῖν δ' ὄισιν ἀνάγκη
Τί κε τις ἀνώουμου γῆρας ἐν σκότῳ
Καθήμενος ἔψοι μάταν, ἀπάντων
Καλῶν ἄμμορος;

PIND. OLYMP. OD. I.



L O N D O N:

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

TO illustrate the following poem, to vindicate the subject from the censure of improbability, and to shew by the concurring evidence of the best historians, that such disinterested public virtue did once exist, I have thought, it would not be improper to prefix the subsequent narration.

W H I L E Darius, the father of Xerxes, was yet on the throne of Persia, Cleomenes and Demaratus were kings in Lacedæmon, both descended from Hercules. Demaratus was unfortunately expos'd by an uncertain rumour, which render'd his legitimacy suspected, to the

A

malice

malice and treachery of his colleague, who had conceiv'd a personal resentment against him; for Cleomenes taking advantage of this report, persuaded the Spartans to examine into the birth of Demaratus, and refer the difficulty to the oracle of Delphi; and was assisted in his perfidious designs by a near relation of Demaratus, nam'd Leotychides, who aspir'd to succeed him in his dignity. Cleomenes found means to corrupt the priestess of Delphi, who declar'd Demaratus not legitimate. Thus by the base practices of his colleague Cleomenes, and his kinsman Leotychides, Demaratus was expell'd from his office of king in the commonwealth, after having frequently signaliz'd his valour in its service. He went into voluntary banishment, and retiring to Asia was there protected by Darius; while Leotychides succeeded to the regal authority in Sparta. Upon the death of Cleomenes Leonidas was made king, who rul'd in conjunction with this Leotychides, when Xerxes, the son of Darius, invaded Greece. The

number of land and naval forces, which accompanied that monarch, together with the servants, women, and other usual attendants on the army of an eastern prince, amounted to upwards of five millions, as reported by Herodotus, who wrote within a few years after the event, and publicly recited his history at the Olympic games. In this general assembly not only from Greece itself, but from every part of the world, wherever a colony of Grecians was planted, had he greatly exceeded the truth, he must certainly have been detected, and censur'd by some among so great a multitude, and such a voluntary falsehood must have entirely destroy'd that merit and authority, which have procur'd to Herodotus the veneration of all posterity, with the appellation of the father of history. On the first news of this attempt upon their liberty a convention was immediately held at the Isthmus of Corinth, compos'd of deputies from the several states of Greece, to consult on proper measures for the public safety. The Spartans

also sent messengers to enquire of the oracle at Delphi into the event of the war, who return'd with an answer from the priests of Apollo, that either a king descended from Hercules must die, or Lacedæmon would be entirely destroy'd. Leonidas immediately offer'd to sacrifice his life for the safety of Lacedæmon, and marching to Thermopylæ possess'd himself of that important pass with three hundred of his countrymen; who with the forces of some other cities in the Peloponnesus, together with the Thebans, Thespians, and the troops of those states, which adjoin'd to Thermopylæ, compos'd an army of near eight thousand men.

XERXES was now advanc'd as far, as Thessalia; when hearing, that a small body of Grecians was assembled at Thermopylæ, with some Lacedæmonians at their head, and among the rest Leonidas, a descendant of Hercules, he dispatch'd a single horseman before to observe

THE PREFACE.

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serve their numbers, and discover their designs. When this horseman approach'd, he could not take a view of the whole camp, which lay conceal'd behind a rampart formerly rais'd by the Phocians at the entrance of Thermopylæ; so that his whole attention was employ'd on those, who were on guard before the wall, and who at that instant chanc'd to be the Lacedæmonians. Their manner and gestures greatly astonish'd the Persian; some were amusing themselves in gymnastic exercises; others were combing their hair; and all discover'd a total disregard of him, whom they suffer'd to depart without molestation, and report to Xerxes, what he had seen: which appearing to that prince quite ridiculous, he sent for Demaratus, who was with him in the camp, and requir'd him to explain this strange behaviour of his countrymen. Demaratus inform'd him, that it was a custom among the Spartans to comb down and adjust their hair, when they were determin'd to fight till the last extremity. Xerxes notwithstanding

standing in the confidence of his power sent ambassadors to the Grecians to demand their arms, to bid them disperse, and become his friends and allies; which proposals being receiv'd with disdain, he commanded the Medes and Saces to seize on the Grecians, and bring them alive into his presence. These nations immediately attack'd the Grecians, and were soon repuls'd with great slaughter; fresh troops still succeeded, but with no better fortune than the first, being oppos'd to an enemy not only superiour in valour and resolution, but who had the advantage of discipline, and were furnish'd with better arms both offensive and defensive.

PLUTARCH in his Laconic apothegms reports, that the Persian king offer'd to invest Leonidas with the sovereignty of all Greece, provided he would join his arms to those of Persia. This offer was too considerable a condescension to have been made before a tryal of their force, and must therefore have been propos'd by
Xerxes,

Xerxes, after such a series of ill success, as might probably have depress'd the insolence of his temper; and it may be easily suppos'd, that the virtue of Leonidas was proof against any temptations of that nature. Whether this be a fact, or not, thus much is certain, that Xerxes was reduc'd to extreme difficulties by this resolute defence of Thermopylæ; till he was extricated from his distress by a Malian nam'd Epialtes, who conducted twenty thousand of the Persian army into Greece through a pass, which lay higher up the country among the mountains of Oeta: whereas the passage at Thermopylæ was situated on the sea-shore between the end of those mountains and the Malian bay. The defence of the upper pass had been committed to a thousand Phocians, who upon the first sight of the enemy inconsiderately abandon'd their station, and put themselves in array upon a neighbouring eminence; but the Persians wisely avoided an engagement, and with the utmost expedition march'd to Thermopylæ. Leonidas

no sooner receiv'd information, that the Barbarians had pass'd the mountains, but he commanded the allies to retreat, reserving the three hundred Spartans, and four hundred Thebans, whom, as they follow'd him with reluctance at first, he now compell'd to stay. But the Thespians, whose number amounted to seven hundred, would not be persuaded by Leonidas to forsake him. Their commander was Demophilus, and the most eminent amongst them for his valour was Dithyrambus. Among the Spartans the most conspicuous next to Leonidas was Dienece, who being told, that the multitude of Persian arrows would obscure the sun, replied, the battle would then be in the shade. Two brothers named Alpheus and Maron are also recorded for their valour, and were Lacedæmonians. Megistias a priest, by birth an Acarnanian, refus'd to desert Leonidas, though intreated by him to consult his safety, and retire; but sent away his only son, and remain'd himself behind to die with the Lacedæmonians. Among
the

the three hundred Spartans were two call'd Eurytus and Aristodemus, who being almost blind were dismiss'd by Leonidas. Of these Aristodemus return'd home; but Eurytus waited, till the Persians descended from the hills, and then commanding his slave to lead him among the combatants was slain with the rest of his countrymen.

HERODOTUS relates, that Leonidas drew up his men in the broadest part of Thermopylæ; where, being furrounded by the Persians, they fell with great numbers of their enemies: but Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, and others affirm, that the Grecians attack'd the very camp of Xerxes in the night. The action is thus describ'd by Diodorus. “ The Grecians
 “ having now rejected all thoughts of safety,
 “ preferring glory to life, unanimously call'd
 “ on their general to lead them against the Per-
 “ sians, before they could be appris'd, that
 “ their friends had pass'd round the mountains.

a

“ Leonidas

“ Leonidas embrac’d the occasion, which the
 “ ready zeal of his soldiers afforded, and com-
 “ manded them forthwith to dine, as men, who
 “ were to sup in Elyfium. Himself in confe-
 “ quence of this command took a repaft,
 “ as the means to furnifh ftrength for a long
 “ continuance, and to give perfeverance in
 “ danger. After a fhort refreshment the Gre-
 “ cians were now prepar’d, and receiv’d orders
 “ to affail the enemies camp, to put all, they
 “ met, to the fword, and force a paffage to
 “ the royal pavilion; when, form’d into one
 “ compact body with Leonidas himfelf at their
 “ head, they march’d againft the Perfians, and
 “ enter’d their camp at the dead of night. The
 “ Barbarians wholly unprepar’d, and blindly
 “ conjecturing, that their friends were defeat-
 “ ed, and themfelves attack’d by the united
 “ power of Greece, hurry together from their
 “ tents with the utmoft diforder and confterna-
 “ tion. Many were flain by Leonidas and his
 “ party, but much greater multitudes by their
 “ own

“ own troops, to whom in the midst of this
“ blind confusion they were not distinguishable
“ from enemies: for as night took away the
“ power of discerning truly, and the tumult
“ was spread universally over the camp, a pro-
“ digious slaughter must naturally ensue. The
“ want of command, of a watch-word, and of
“ confidence in themselves reduc’d the Persians
“ to such a state of confusion, that they de-
“ stroy’d each other without distinction. Had
“ Xerxes continu’d in the royal pavilion, the
“ Grecians without difficulty might have
“ brought the war to a speedy conclusion by
“ his death; but he at the beginning of the
“ tumult betook himself to flight with the ut-
“ most precipitation; when the Grecians rush-
“ ing into the tent, put to the sword most of
“ those, who were left behind: then, while
“ night lasted, they rang’d through the whole
“ camp in diligent search of the tyrant. When
“ morning appear’d, the Persians perceiving
“ the true state of things, held the inconsiderable

“ number of their enemies in contempt; yet
“ were so terrified at their valour, that they
“ avoided a near engagement; but inclosing the
“ Grecians on every side shower’d their darts and
“ arrows upon them at a distance, and in the end
“ destroy’d their whole body. Such was the pe-
“ riod of their lives, who under the conduct
“ of Leonidas defended the pass of Thermopy-
“ læ. Who can refrain from admiring the
“ virtue of these men, who with one consent
“ maintaining the post allotted by their country
“ cheerfully renounc’d their lives for the com-
“ mon safety of Greece, and esteem’d a glori-
“ ous death more eligible than to live with dis-
“ honour? Nor is the consternation of the
“ Persians incredible. Who among those Bar-
“ barians could have conjectur’d such an event?
“ who could have expected, that five hundred
“ men would have dar’d to attack a million?
“ Wherefore shall not all posterity from that
“ day reflect on the virtue of these men as the
“ object of imitation, who, though the loss of
“ their

“ their lives was the necessary consequence of
“ their undertaking, were yet unconquer’d in
“ their spirit; and among all the great names
“ deliver’d down to remembrance are the only
“ heroes, who obtain’d more glory in their fall
“ than others from the brightest victories?
“ With justice may they be deem’d the pre-
“ servers of the Grecian liberty, even prefer-
“ ably to those, who were conquerors in the
“ battles fought afterwards with Xerxes; for
“ the memory of their valour, who fell at
“ Thermopylæ, for ever dejected the Barbarians,
“ while the Greeks were fir’d with emulation
“ to equal such a pitch of magnanimity. Upon
“ the whole there never were any before these,
“ who attain’d to immortality through the
“ meer excess of virtue; whence the praise of
“ their fortitude has not been recorded by hi-
“ storians only, but has been celebrated by
“ numbers of poets, among others by Simoni-
“ des the lyric.”

PAUSANIAS

PAUSANIAS in his Laconics considers the defence of Thermopylæ, as an action superior to any atchiev'd by their cotemporaries, and to all the exploits of preceding ages. “ Never “ (says he) had Xerxes beheld Greece, or laid “ in ashes the city of Athens, had not his forces “ under Hydarnes been conducted through a “ path over Oeta, and by that means incom- “ passing the Greeks overcome and slain Leo- “ nidas.” Nor is it improbable, that Leonidas should have maintain'd his post in so narrow a pass, till the whole army of Xerxes had perish'd by famine. At the same time the Persian navy had been miserably shatter'd by a storm, and worsted in an engagement with the Athenians at Artemisium.

To conclude, the fall of Leonidas and his brave companions, so meritorious to their country, and so glorious to themselves, has obtain'd such an high degree of veneration and applause from
from

T H E P R E F A C E.

xv

from past ages, that few among the antient compilers of history have been silent on this amazing instance of magnanimity and zeal for liberty; and many are the epigrams and inscriptions now extant, some on the whole body, others on particulars, who died at Thermopylæ, still preserving their memory in every nation conversant with learning, and at this distance of time still rendering their virtue the object of admiration and praise.

I SHALL now detain the reader no longer, than to take this public occasion of expressing my sincere regard for the LORD VISCOUNT COBHAM, and the sense of my obligations for the early honour of his friendship. To him I inscribe the following poem; and herein might I be justified, independent of all personal motives, from his Lordship's public conduct so highly distinguish'd by his disinterested zeal, and unshaken fidelity to his country, not less in civil life
than

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than in the field: and to whom a poem founded on a character eminent for military glory, and love of liberty is due from the nature of the subject.

R. G L O V E R.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK I.

The argument.

Xerxes king of Persia having drawn together the whole force of his empire, and pass'd over the Hellespont into Thrace with a design to conquer Greece; the deputies from the several states of that country, who had some time before assembled themselves at the Isthmus of Corinth to deliberate on proper measures for resisting the invader, were no sooner apprisd of his march into Thrace, than they determin'd without further delay to dispute his passage at the straits of Thermopylæ, the most accessible part of Greece on the side of Thrace and Theffaly. Alpheus, one of the deputies from Sparta, repairs to that city, and communicates this resolution to his countrymen; who chanced that day to be assembled in expectation of receiving an answer from Apollo, to whom they had sent a messenger to consult about the event of the war. Leotychides, one of their two kings, counsels the people to advance no further, than the Isthmus of Corinth, which separates the Peloponnesus, where Lacedæmon was situated, from the rest of Greece; but Leonidas, the other king, dissuades them from it. Agis, the messenger, who had

B been

been deputed to Delphi, and brother to the queen of Leonidas, returns with the oracle ; which denounces ruin to the Lacedæmonians, unless one of their kings lays down his life for the publick. Leonidas offers himself for the victim. Three hundred Spartans are chosen to accompany him to Thermopylæ, and Alpheus returns to the Isthmus. Leonidas, after an interview with his queen, departs from Lacedæmon. At the end of six days, he encamps near the Isthmus, when he is join'd by Alpheus ; who describes the auxiliaries, that wait at the Isthmus, those, who are already possess'd of Thermopylæ, as also the pass itself ; and concludes with a relation of the captivity of his brother Polydorus in Persia.

REHEARSE, O Muse, the deeds and glorious death
 Of that fam'd Spartan, who withstood the pow'r
 Of Xerxes near Thermopylæ, and fell
 To save his country. When from Asia's coast
 With half the nations of the peopled globe 5
 The Persian king the Hellespont had pass'd,
 And now in Thrace his boundless camp was spread ;
 Soon to the Isthmus, where th'assembled chiefs
 Of Greece in anxious council long had sat,
 How best their menac'd liberties to guard, 10

The

Book I. L E O N I D A S.

3

The dreadful tidings reach'd. The near approach
Of Asia's lord determines their resolves.

These they convey to all the Grecian states.

Back to Eurotas' shores, where Sparta rose,

Laconian Alpheus speeds: in council there

15

He finds the Spartan people with their kings;

Their kings, who boast an origin divine,

From Hercules descended. They the sons

Of Lacedæmon had conven'd to learn

The sacred mandates of th' immortal Gods,

20

That morn expected from the Delphian dome;

But in their presence Alpheus first appear'd,

And thus address'd them. For immediate war

Prepare, O Spartans. Xerxes' num'rous pow'rs

Already fill the trembling bounds of Thrace.

25

The Isthmian council hath decreed to guard

The strait and rocky entrance into Greece,

Thermopylæ; where ev'n a slender force
 May stem the torrent of unnumber'd foes.

HE said, when Leotychides, who shar'd 30
 The rule with great Leonidas, bespake
 The Spartans thus. My countrymen give ear.
 Why from her bosom should Laconia send
 Her valiant sons to wage a distant war
 For others' safety; why exhaust her strength 35
 And thin her numbers in defence of those,
 Who far remote from Lacedæmon dwell
 Beyond the Isthmus? there the Gods have plac'd
 Our native ramparts, there our empire's bound;
 And there alone our country claims our swords. 40

HE ceas'd. The people with assenting shouts
 Replied, when thus Leonidas began.

O MOST ungen'rous counsel! most unjust,
And base desertion of the Grecian weal!
What! shall th'Athenians, whose assiduous fleets 45
Undaunted watch th' innumerable foes,
Where'er they menace our affrighted shores,
And trust th' impending dangers of the field
To Sparta's well-known valour; shall they hear,
That we, disowning thus the gen'ral cause, 50
Maintain the Isthmus only, and expose
The rest of Greece, ev'n Athens, while she guards
Our naked coasts, to all the waste of war,
Her walls to ruin, and her fields to flames,
Her sons, her matrons, and her hoary fires 55
To violation, servitude, and shame?
O should they hear such counsels guide our state,
Would they not court the first propitious gale

To

To waft them far from fuch perfidious friends,
 And raife new feats in other climes remote, 60
 Safe from insulting foes, and falfe allies?
 Then fhould we foon behold the proud array
 Of Xerxes' navy with their hostile beaks
 Affront our fhores, and deluge all our fields
 With inexhausted numbers. Half the Greeks, 65
 By us betray'd to bondage, would fupport
 The Perfian king, and lift th' avenging fpear
 For our deftruction. But my friends reject
 Such mean and dang'rous counfels, which will blaft
 Your long establish'd glories, and affift 70
 The proud invader. O eternal king
 Of Gods and mortals elevate our minds!
 Each low and partial paffion thence difpel!
 Till this great truth in ev'ry heart be known,
 That none, but thofe, who aid the publick caufe, 75
 Can

Can shield their countries, or themselves from chains.

H E said, by shame suppress'd each clam'rous voice
 Was lost in silence ; till a gen'ral shout
 Proclaim'd th' approach of Agis from the fane,
 Where, taught by Phœbus on the Delphic hill, 80
 The Pythian maid his oracles reveal'd.
 He came ; but discontent and grief o'ercaft
 His anxious brow. Reluctant he advanc'd,
 And now prepar'd to speak. Th' impatient throng
 Was gather'd round him ; motionless they stood 85
 With expectation ; not a whisper told
 The silent fear, but all on Agis gaze ;
 And still as death attend the solemn tale.
 As o'er the western waves, when ev'ry storm
 Is hush'd within its cavern, and a breeze 90
 Soft-breathing lightly with its wings along

The slacken'd cordage glides, the failor's ear
 Perceives no sound throughout the vast expanse ;
 None, but the murmurs of the sliding prow,
 Which slowly parts the smooth and yielding main: 95
 So through the wide and listning croud no sound,
 No voice, but thine, O Agis, broke the air,
 Declaring thus the oracle divine.

I WENT to Delphi; I enquir'd what fate
 Was doom'd to Sparta from th'impending war; 100
 When thus th' all-seeing deity replied.
 " Inhabitants of Sparta, Persia's arms
 " Shall lay your proud and ancient feat in dust ;
 " Unless a king from Hercules deriv'd
 " Cause Lacedæmon for his death to mourn." 105

As, when the hand of Perseus had disclos'd
 The snakes of dire Medusa; all, who view'd
 The

The Gorgon features, were congeal'd to stone,
With ghastly eye-balls on the hero bent,
And horror living in their marble form: 110
Thus with amazement rooted, where they stood,
And froze with speechless terrour, on their kings
The Spartans gaz'd: but soon their anxious looks
All on the great Leonidas unite,
Long known his country's refuge. He alone 115
Remains unshaken. Rising, he displays
His godlike presence. Dignity and grace
Adorn his frame, and manly beauty join'd
With strength Herculean. On his aspect shines
Sublimest virtue, and desire of fame, 120
Where justice gives the laurel; in his eye
The inextinguishable spark, which fires
The souls of patriots: while his brow supports

Undaunted valour, and contempt of death.

Serene he rose, and thus address'd the throng. 125

WHY this astonishment on ev'ry face,
 Ye men of Sparta? Does the name of death
 Create this fear and wonder? O my friends!
 Why do we labour through the arduous paths,
 Which lead to virtue? Fruitless were the toil, 130
 Above the reach of human feet were plac'd
 The distant summit, if the fear of death
 Could intercept our passage. But in vain
 His blackest frowns and terrors he assumes
 To shake the firmness of the mind, which knows, 135
 That wanting virtue life is pain and woe,
 That wanting liberty ev'n virtue mourns,
 And looks around for happiness in vain.
 Then speak, O Sparta, and demand my life;

Book I. L E O N I D A S. 11

My heart exulting answers to thy call, 140
And smiles on glorious fate. To live with fame
The Gods allow to many ; but to die
With equal lustre, is a blessing, Heav'n
Selects from all the choicest boons of fate,
And with a sparing hand on few bestows. 145

HE said. New wonder fix'd the gazing throng.
In silence Joy and Admiration sat,
Suspending praise. At length with high acclaim
The arch of heav'n resounded, when amid
Th' assembly stood Dienece, and spake. 150

So from Thermopylæ may Sparta's shouts
Affright the ear of Asia! Haste, my friends,
To guard the gates of Greece, which open stand
To Tyranny and Rapine. They with dread

Will shrink before your standards, and again 155

In servile Persia seek their native seats.

Your wives, your sons, your parents, general Greece

Forbid delay ; and equal to the cause

A chief behold: can Spartans ask for more?

HE ceas'd ; when Alpheus thus. It well becomes 160

The Spartans held the chiefs of Greece, and fam'd

For dauntless courage, and unyielding hearts,

Which neither want, nor pain, nor death, can bend,

To lead the rest to battle. Then with speed

From all your number form a chosen band, 165

While I returning, will my feat resume

Among the Isthmian council, and declare

Your instant march. Our brave allies, I deem,

Now on the Isthmus wait the Spartan king ;

All but the Locrian and Bœotian force, 170

With

With Phocis' youth, appointed to secure
Thermopylæ. This said, not long he paus'd,
But with unwearied steps his course renews.

Now from th' assembly with majestic steps
Forth moves their godlike king, with conscious worth 175
His gen'rous bosom glowing; like his fire,
Th' invincible Alcides, when he trod
With ardent speed to face in horrid war
The triple form of Geryon, or against
The bulk of huge Antæus match his strength. 180

SAY, Muse, who next present their dauntless breasts
To meet all danger in their country's cause?
Dieneces advances sage, and brave,
And skill'd along the martial field to range
The order'd ranks of battle; Maron next, 185

To

To Alpheus dear, his brother, and his friend.

Then rose Megistias with his blooming heir,

Joy of his age, and Menalippus call'd;

Megistias, wife and venerable seer,

Whose penetrating mind, as fame records,

190

Could from the entrails of the victim slain

Before the altar, and the mystic flight

Of birds foresee the dark events of time.

Though sprung a stranger on the distant shore

Of Acarnania, for his worth receiv'd,

195

And hospitably cherish'd; he the wreath

Pontific bore amid the Spartan camp;

Serene in danger, nor his sacred arm

From warlike toils secluding, nor unskill'd

To wield the sword, or poize the weighty spear.

200

Him Agis follow'd, brother to the queen

Of great Leonidas; his friend, in war

His

Book I. L E O N I D A S.

15

His tried companion. Graceful were his steps,

And gentle his demeanour. Still his soul

Preferv'd its rigid virtue, though refin'd

205

With arts unknown to Lacedæmon's race.

High was his office. He, when Sparta's weal

Their aid and counsel from the Gods requir'd,

Was sent the sacred messenger to learn

Their mystic will in oracles declar'd

210

From rocky Delphi, and Dodona's shade,

Or sea-incircled Delos, or the cell

Of dark Trophonius round Bœotia known.

Three hundred more compleat th' intrepid band.

BUT to his home Leonidas retir'd.

215

There calm in secret thought he thus explor'd

His mighty soul, while nature to his breast

A short-liv'd terrour call'd. What sudden grief,

What

What cold reluctance thus unmans my heart,
 And whispers, that I fear?—Can death dismay 220
 Leonidas, so often seen and scorn'd,
 When clad most dreadful in the battle's front?—
 Or to relinquish life in all its pride,
 With all my honours blooming round my head,
 Repines my soul? or rather to forsake, 225
 Eternally forsake my weeping wife,
 My infant offspring, and my faithful friends?—
 Leonidas awake! Shall these withstand
 The public safety? Lo! thy country calls.
 O sacred voice, I hear thee! At that sound 230
 Returning virtue brightens in my heart;
 Fear vanishes before her; Death receive
 My unreluctant hand, and lead me on.
 Thou too, O Fame, attendant on my fall,

With

Book I. L E O N I D A S. 17

With wings unwearied shalt protect my tomb, 235
Nor Time himself shall violate my praise.

THE hero thus confirm'd his virtuous soul,
When Agis enter'd. If till now my tongue
(He thus began) O brother, has delay'd
To pay its grateful off'ring of the praise, 240
Thy merit claims, and only fill'd the cries
Of general applause, forgive thy friend ;
Since her distresses, hers, whom most you love,
Detain'd me from thee. O unequall'd man!
Though Lacedæmon call thy first regard, 245
Forget not her, who now for thee laments
In sorrows, which fraternal love in vain
Hath strove to sooth. Leonidas embrac'd
His gen'rous friend, and thus replied. Most dear
And best of men! conceive not, but my heart 250

D Must

Must still remember her, from whom my life
Its largest share of happiness derives.

Can I, who yield my breath, lest others mourn,
Lest thousands should be wretched; when she pines,
More lov'd than any, though less dear than all, 255

Can I neglect her griefs! In future days

If thou with grateful memory record

My name and fate, O Sparta, pass not this

Unheeded by. The life, I gave for thee,

Knew not a painful hour to tire my soul, 260

Nor were they common joys, I left behind.

So spake the patriot, and his heart o'erflow'd

With fondest passion; then in eager haste

The faithful partner of his bed he sought.

Amid her weeping children sat the queen, 265

Immoveable and mute; her swimming eyes

Fix'd

Fix'd on the earth. Her arms were folded o'er
Her lab'ring bosom blotted with her tears.
As, when a dusky mist involves the sky,
The moon through all the dreary vapours spreads 270
The radiant vesture of its silver light
O'er the dull face of nature; so her charms
Divinely graceful shone upon her grief,
Bright'ning the cloud of woe. The chief approach'd.
Soon as in gentlest phrase his well-known voice 275
Her drooping mind awaken'd, for a time
Its cares were hush'd: she lifts her languid head,
And thus gives utterance to her tender thoughts.

O THOU, whose presence is my only joy,
If thus, Leonidas, thy looks and voice 280
Can dissipate at once the sharpest pangs,
How greatly am I wretched; who no more

Must hear that voice, which lulls my anguish thus,
Nor see that face, which makes affliction smile!

THIS said, returning grief her breast invades. 285
Her orphan children, her devoted lord
Pale, bleeding, breathless on the field of death,
Her ever-during solitude of woe,
All rise in mingled horror to her sight,
When thus in bitterest agony she spoke. 290

O WHITHER art thou going from my arms!
Shall I no more behold thee! Oh! no more
In conquest clad, and wrapt in glorious dust
Wilt thou return to greet thy native soil,
And make thy dwelling joyful! Yet, too brave, 295
Why wouldst thou hasten to the dreary gates
Of death, uncall'd? Another might have fall'n,

Like

Like thee a victim of Alcides' race,
 Less dear to all, and Sparta been secure.
 Now ev'ry eye with mine is drown'd in tears, 300
 All with these babes lament their father lost.
 But oh! how heavy is our lot of pain!
 Our sighs must last, when ev'ry other breath
 Exults with transport, and the public joy
 Will but increase our anguish. Yet unmov'd, 305
 Thou didst not heed our sorrows, didst not seek
 A moment's pause, to teach us how to bear
 Thy endless absence, or like thee to die.

U N U T T E R A B L E sorrow here confin'd
 Her voice. These words Leonidas return'd. 310

I S E E, I feel thy anguish, nor my soul
 Has ever known the prevalence of love,
 E'er prov'd a father's fondness, as this hour;
 Nor

Nor, when most ardent to assert my fame,
 Was once my heart insensible to thee. 315
 How had it stain'd the honours of my name
 To hesitate a moment, and suspend
 My country's fate, till shameful life prefer'd
 By my inglorious colleague left no choice,
 But what in me were infamy to shun, 320
 Not virtue to accept? Then deem no more,
 That of thy love regardless, or thy tears,
 I haste uncall'd to death. The voice of Fate,
 The Gods, my fame, my country bid me bleed.
 --Oh! thou dear mourner! wherefore streams afresh 325
 That flood of woe? Why heaves with sighs renew'd
 That tender breast? Leonidas must fall.
 Alas! far heavier misery impends
 O'er thee and these, if soften'd by thy tears
 I shamefully refuse to yield that breath, 330

Book I. L E O N I D A S.

23

Which justice, glory, liberty, and heav'n
Claim for my country, for my fons, and thee.

Think on my long unalter'd love. Reflect

On my paternal fondness. Has my heart

E'er known a pause of love, or pious care ?

335

Now shall that care, that tenderness be prov'd

Most warm and faithful. When thy husband dies

For Lacedæmon's safety, thou wilt share,

Thou and thy children, the diffusive good.

Should I, thus singled from the rest of men,

340

Alone intrusted by th'immortal Gods

With pow'r to save a people, should my soul

Desert that sacred cause, thee too I yield

To sorrow, and to shame ; for thou must weep

With Lacedæmon, must with her sustain

345

Thy painful portion of oppression's weight.

Thy fons behold now worthy of their names,

And

And Spartan birth. Their growing bloom must pine
 In shame and bondage, and their youthful hearts
 Beat at the found of liberty no more. 350
 On their own virtue, and their father's fame,
 When he the Spartan freedom hath confirm'd,
 Before the world illustrious shall they rise,
 Their country's bulwark, and their mother's joy.

HERE paus'd the patriot. With religious awe 355
 Grief heard the voice of Virtue. No complaint
 The solemn silence broke. Tears ceas'd to flow:
 Ceas'd for a moment; soon again to stream.
 For now in arms before the palace rang'd
 His brave companions of the war demand 360
 Their leader's presence; then her griefs renew'd,
 Too great for utterance, intercept her sighs,
 And freeze each accent on her falt'ring tongue.

Do thou support their virtue! be they taught,
 Like thee, with glorious labour life to grace,
 And from their father let them learn to die!

So saying, forth he issues, and assumes
 Before the band his station of command. 385
 They now proceed. So mov'd the host of heav'n
 Down from Olympus in majestic march,
 On Jove attendant to the flaming plains
 Of Phlegra, there to face the giant sons
 Of Earth and Titan: he before them tow'r'd. 390
 Thus through the streets of Lacedæmon pass'd
 Leonidas. Before his footsteps bow
 The multitude exulting. On he treads
 Rever'd and honour'd. Their inraptur'd sight
 Pursues his graceful stature, and their tongues 395
 Extol and hail him as their guardian God.

Firm in his nervous hand he grasps his spear,
Down from his shoulders to his ankles hangs
The massy shield, and o'er his burnish'd helm
The purple plumage nods. Harmonious youths, 400
Around whose brows entwining laurels play'd,
In lofty-sounding strains his praise record ;
While snowy-finger'd virgins all the ways
With od'rous garlands strew'd. His bosom now
Was all possess'd with glory, which dispell'd 405
Whate'er of grief remain'd, or fond regret
For those, he left behind. The rev'rend train
Of Lacedæmon's senate now approach'd
To give their solemn, last farewell, and grace
Their hero's parting steps. Around him flow'd 410
In civil pomp their venerable robes
Mix'd with the blaze of arms. The radiant troop
Of warriors press'd behind him. Maron here,

With Menalippus warm in flow'ry prime,
 And Agis there with manly grace advanc'd, 415
 Dieneces, and Acarnania's feer,
 Megiftias fage. The Spartan dames afcend
 The loftieft domes, and thronging o'er the roofs
 Gaze on their fons and husbands, as they march.
 So parted Argo from th' Iolchian ftrand, 420
 And plough'd the foaming furge. Theffalia's nymphs
 Their hills forfaking, and their hallow'd groves,
 Rang'd on the cliffs, which overfhade the deep,
 Still on the diftant vefsel fix'd their fight ;
 Where Greece her chofen heroes had embark'd 425
 To feek the dangers of the Cholchian fhore.

SWIFT on his courfe Leonidas proceeds.
 Soon is Eurotas pafs'd, and Lerna's banks,
 Where his unconquer'd anceftor fubdu'd

The

Book I. L E O N I D A S.

29

The many-headed Hydra, and with fame 430
Immortaliz'd the lake. Th'unwearied bands
Next through the pines of Mænalus he led,
And down Parthenius urg'd the rapid toil.
Six days incessant thus the Spartans march,
When now they hear the hoarse-resounding tide 435
Beat on the Isthmus. Here their tents they spread.
Below the wide horizon then the sun
Had sunk his beamy head. The queen of night
Gleam'd from the center of th'ethereal vault,
And o'er the dusky robe of darkness shed 440
Her silver light. Leonidas detains
Dieneces and Agis. Open stands
The tall pavilion, and admits the moon.
As here they sat conversing, from the hill,
Which rose before them, one of noble port 445
Appears with speed descending. Lightly down

The

The flope he treads, and calls aloud. They heard,
 And knew the voice of Alpheus. From their feats
 They rose, and thus Leonidas began.

O THOU, whom heav'n with swiftness hath endu'd
 To match the ardour of thy daring soul, 451
 What calls thee from the Isthmus? Do the Greeks
 Neglect to arm, nor face the public foe?

I COME to meet thee (Alpheus thus return'd)
 A messenger, who gladsome tidings bears. 455
 Through Greece the voice of liberty is heard,
 And all unfold their banners in her cause;
 The Thebans only with reluctant hands.
 Arcadia's sons with morning shalt thou join,
 Who on the Isthmus wait thy great command. 460
 With Diophantus Mantinéa fends
 Five hundred spears; nor less from Tegea's walls
 With

With Hegesander move. A thousand more,
Who in Orchomenus reside, who range
Along Parrhasius, and Cyllene's brow, 465
Or near the foot of Erymanthus dwell,
Or on Alphéus' banks, with various chiefs,
Attend thy call; but most is Clonius fam'd
Of stature huge: unshaken as a rock,
His giant bulk the line of war sustains. 470
Four hundred warriors brave Alcmaeon draws
From stately Corinth's tow'rs. Two hundred march
From Phlius, whom Eupalamus commands.
An equal number of Mycenæ's race
Aristobulus heads. Through fear alone 475
Of thee, and threatening Greece the Thebans arm.
To these inglorious Greeks my self repair'd
Their dying sense of honour to recal.
A few corrupted by the Persian gold,

Unjust

Unjust dominion have usurp'd in Thebes. 480
These in each bosom quell the gen'rous flame
Of liberty. The eloquent they bribe ;
With specious tales the multitude they cheat ;
And prostitute the name of public good
To veil oppression. Others are immers'd 485
In all the floth of riches, and unmov'd
In shameful ease behold their country fall.
I first implor'd their senate's instant aid,
But they with artful wiles demanding time
For consultation, I address'd them thus. 490
The shortest moment may suffice to know,
If to die free be better than to serve ;
But if, deluding Greece by vain delays,
You mean to shew your friendship to the foe,
You cannot then deliberate too long, 495
How to withstand her swift-avenging wrath,

Approaching

An ancient bulwark of the Phocians stands,
 A wall with turrets crown'd. In station here 515
 I found the Locrians, and from Thespia's gates
 Sev'n hundred more. Demophilus hath led.
 His brother's son attends him to the camp,
 Young Dithyrambus greatly fam'd in war,
 But more for temperance of mind renown'd; 520
 Lov'd by his country, and with honours grac'd,
 His early bloom with brightest glory shines,
 Nor wantons in the blaze. Here Agis spake.

WELL hast thou painted that illustrious youth.
 He was my host at Thespia. Though adorn'd 525
 With highest deeds, by fame and fortune crown'd,
 His gentle virtues take from envy's mouth
 Its blasting venom, and her baneful face

Book I. L E O N I D A S. 35

Strives on his worth to smile. In silence all
Again remain, and Alpheus thus pursues. 530

A CHOSEN troop hath bold Plataea sent,
Small in its numbers, but unmatched in arms.
Above the rest Diomedon their chief
Excels in prowess. Signal were his deeds
Upon that day of glory, when the fields 535
Of Marathon were hid with Persian slain.
These guard Thermopylae. Among the hills
A winding path to stranger's feet unknown
Affords another entrance into Greece:
This by a thousand Phocians is secur'd. 540

HERE Alpheus paus'd. Leonidas embrac'd
The noble Spartan, and rejoin'd. Thou know'st
What fate to me th' immortal Gods ordain.

Frame now thy choice. Accompany our march,
 Or go to Lacedæmon, and relate, 545
 How thy discerning mind, and active limbs
 Have serv'd thy country. From th' impatient mouth
 Of Alpheus streight these fervent accents broke.

I HAVE not measur'd such a tract of land,
 Not look'd unwearied on the setting sun, 550
 And through the shade of midnight urg'd my steps
 To rouse the Greeks to battle, that myself
 Might be exempted from the glorious toil.
 Return? Oh! no. A second time my feet
 Shall visit thee, Thermopylæ, and there 555
 With great Leonidas shall Alpheus find
 An honourable grave. And oh! amid
 His country's danger if a Spartan breast
 May feel a private sorrow, not alone

Book I. L E O N I D A S.

37

For injur'd Greece I hasten to revenge, 560
But for a brother's wrongs. A younger hope
Than I; or Maron blest'd our father's years,
Child of his age, and Polydorus nam'd.
His mind, while tender in its op'ning prime,
Was bent to rigid virtue. Gen'rous scorn 565
Of pain and danger taught his early strength
To struggle patient with severest toils.
Oft, when inclement winter chill'd the air,
And frozen show'rs had swoln Eurotas' stream,
Amid th' impetuous channel would he plunge, 570
And breast the torrent. On a fatal day,
As in the sea his active limbs he bath'd,
A servile corsair of the Persian king
My brother, naked and defenceless, bore
Ev'n in my fight to Asia, there to waste, 575
With all the promise of its growing worth,

His

His youth in bondage. Never can my tongue
 My pains recount, much less my father's woes,
 The days he wept, the sleepless nights he beat
 His aged bosom. And shall Alpheus' spear 580
 Be absent from Thermopylæ, nor claim,
 O Polydorus, vengeance for thy bonds
 In that first slaughter of the barb'rous foe?

HERE interpos'd Dienece. The hands
 Of Alpheus and Leonidas he grasp'd, 585
 And joyful thus. Your glory wants no more,
 Than that Lycurgus should himself arise
 To praise the virtue, which his laws inspire.

THUS pass'd these heroes, till the dead of night,
 The hours in friendly converse, and enjoy'd 590
 Each other's virtue; happiest of men!

At

At length with gentle heaviness the hand
Of sleep invades their eyelids. On the ground,
Oppress'd with slumber, they extend their limbs;
When, sliding down the hemisphere, the moon 595
Now plung'd in midnight gloom her silver head.

End of the First Book.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK II.

The argument.

Leonidas, on his approach to the Isthmus, is met by the leaders of the troops sent from other Grecian states, and by the deputies, who compos'd the Isthmian council. He harangues them, then proceeds in conjunction with the other forces towards Thermopylæ; is join'd by Dithyrambus, and arrives at the straits about noon on the fourth day after his departure from the Isthmus. He is receiv'd at Thermopylæ by the Thespian commander Demophilus, and by Anaxander the Theban treacherously recommending Epialtes a Malian, who seeks by a pompous description of the Persian power to intimidate the Grecian leaders, as they are viewing the enemies camp from the top of mount Oeta. He is answer'd by Dienece and Diomedon. Xerxes sends Tigranes and Phraortes to the Grecian camp, who are dismiss'd by Leonidas, and conducted back by Dithyrambus and Diomedon; which last, incens'd with the insolence of Tigranes, treats him with contempt and menaces. This occasions a challenge to single combat between Diomedon and Tigranes, Dithyrambus and Phraortes. Epialtes, after a conference with Anaxander, declares his intention of returning to Xerxes.

AURORA

Mycenæ's race. Should ev'ry other Greek
 Be aw'd by Xerxes, and his Asian host,
 Believe not, we can fear, deriv'd from those,
 Who once conducted o'er the foaming surge 20
 The strength of Greece, who desert left the fields
 Of ravag'd Asia, and her proudest walls
 From their foundations humbled to the dust.

LEONIDAS replied not, but address'd
 The chiefs around. Illustrious warriors hail, 25
 Who thus undaunted signalize your faith,
 And gen'rous ardour in the common cause.
 But you, whose counsels prop the Grecian state,
 O venerable synod, whose decrees
 Have call'd us forth, to vanquish, or to die, 30
 Thrice hail. Whate'er by valour we obtain
 Your wisdom must preserve. With piercing eyes

Each

Book II. LEONIDAS.

43

Each Grecian state contemplate, and discern
Their various tempers. Some with partial care
To guard their own neglect the publick weal. 35
Cold and unmov'd are others. Terrour here,
And there corruption reigns. O fire the brave
With gen'rous zeal to quit their native walls,
And join their valour in the gen'ral cause;
Confirm the wav'ring; animate the cold, 40
And watch the faithless: some there are, betray
Themselves and Greece; their perfidy prevent,
Or call them back to honour. Let us all
Be link'd in sacred union, and the Greeks
Shall stand the world's whole multitude in arms. 45
If for the spoil, which Paris bore to Troy,
A thousand barks the Hellespont o'erspread;
Shall not again confederated Greece
Be rous'd to battle, and to freedom give,

What once she gave to fame. Behold we haste 50
 To stop th' invading tyrant. Till we bleed,
 He shall not pour his millions on your plains.
 But as the Gods conceal, how long our strength
 May stand unconquer'd, or how soon must fall,
 Waste not a moment, till consenting Greece 55
 Range all her free-born numbers in the field.

LEONIDAS concludes, when awful step'd
 Before the sage assembly one, whose head
 Was hoar with aged snow, and thus replied.

THY great example ev'ry heart unites. 60
 From thee her happiest omens Greece derives
 Of concord, freedom, victory, and fame.
 Go then, O first of mortals, and impress
 Amaze and terrour in the Persians breast;

The

Book II. L E O N I D A S. 45

The free-born Greeks instructing life to deem 65
Less dear than virtue, and their country's cause.

THIS heard, Leonidas, thy secret soul
Exulting tasted of the sweet reward
Due to thy name from endless time. His eyes 69
Once more he turn'd, and view'd in rapt'rous thought
His native land, which he alone can save;
Then summon'd all his majesty, and o'er
The Isthmus trod: Behind the Grecians move
In deep arrangement. So th' imperial bark
With stately bulk along the beating tide 80
In military pomp conducts the pow'r
Of some proud navy bounding from the port
To bear the vengeance of a mighty state
Against a tyrant's walls. The Grecians march
Till noon, when halting, as they take repast, 85
Upon.

Upon the plain before them they descry
 A troop of Theſpians. One above the reſt
 In eminence precedes. His glitt'ring ſhield,
 Whoſe ſpacious orb collects th' effulgent beams,
 Which from his throne meridian Phœbus caſt, 90
 Flames like another ſun. A ſnowy plume
 Falls o'er his dazzling caſk. In wanton curls,
 Which floated in the breathing air, around
 The lofty creſt it wav'd. Approaching near
 Beneath the honours of his radiant helm 95
 The warrior now a countenance diſplay'd,
 Where youth in roſy prime with ſweetneſs mix'd
 Its manly beauty. With ſuch modeſt grace
 Reſpectful near Leonidas he came,
 As all ideas of his own deſert 100
 Were loſt in veneration. Phœbus thus
 Appears before his everlaſting fire,

Book II. L E O N I D A S. 47

When from his altar in th' imbow'ring grove
Of palmy Delos, or the hallow'd bound
Of Tenedos, or Claros, where he hears 105
His hymns and praises from the fons of men,
He reascends the high Olympian seats;
Such reverential awe his brow invests,
Diffusing o'er the glowing flow'r of youth
New loveliness and grace. The king receives 110
Th' illustrious Thespian, and began. My tongue
Would call thee Dithyrambus, for thou bear'ft
All in thy aspect to become that name
For valour known and virtue. O reveal
Thy birth and charge; who'er thou art, my soul 115
Desires to know thee, and would call thee friend.

To whom the youth return'd. O first of Greeks,
My name is Dithyrambus, which the lips

Of

Of some benevolent and gen'rous friend

To thee have founded with a partial voice,

120

And thou hast heard with favourable ears.

I come deputed by the Thespian chief,

The Theban, and the Locrian, and the brave

Diomedon, to hasten thy approach.

Three days will bring the Persian pow'rs in view.

125

HE ceas'd. At once the standards are uprear'd.

The host till ev'ning with impetuous pace

Their march continue. Through the earliest dews

Of morning they proceed, and reach the pass,

E'er the fourth sun attain'd the sultry noon.

130

To their impatient fight no sooner rose

The rocks of Oeta, but with rapid feet,

And martial sounds of joy they rush'd along;

As if the present deity of Fame,

Her

Book II. L E O N I D A S. 49

Her temples with unfading laurels bound, 135
And in her hand her adamantine trump,
Had from the hills her radiant form disclos'd,
And bade their valour hasten to the field;
That she their acts beholding might resound
Their name and glory o'er the earth and seas. 140
Before the van Leonidas advanc'd,
His eye confess'd the ardour of his mind,
Which thus found utterance from his eager lips.

ALL hail! Thermopylæ, and you, the pow'rs,
Which here preside. All hail! ye silvan Gods, 145
Ye fountain nymphs, who pour your lucid rills
In broken murmurs down the rugged steep.
Receive us, O benignant, and support
The cause of Greece. Conceal the secret paths,
Which o'er the crags and through the forests wind, 150

Untrod by human feet, and trac'd alone
 By your immortal footsteps. O defend
 Your own recesses, nor let impious war
 Profane the solemn silence of your groves.
 Thus on your hills your praises shall you hear 155
 From those, whose deeds shall tell th' approving world,
 That not to undeservers did you grant
 Your high protection. You my valiant friends
 Now rouse the gen'rous spirit, which inflames
 Your breasts; now prove the vigour of your arms: 160
 That your recorded actions may survive
 Within the breasts of all the brave and free,
 And sound delightful in the ear of Time,
 As long as Neptune beats the Malian bay,
 Or those tall cliffs erect their shaggy tops 165
 So near to heav'n, your monuments of fame.

As in some torrid region, where the head
Of Ceres bends beneath its golden load,
If on the parching ground a fatal spark
Fall from a burning brand; the sudden blaze 170
Increas'd and aided by tumultuous winds
In rapid torrents of involving flames
Sweeps o'er the crackling plain, and mounting high
In ruddy spires illumines half the skies:
Not with less swiftness through the glowing ranks 175
The words of great Leonidas diffus'd
A more than mortal fervour. Ev'ry heart
Distends with great ideas, such as raise
The patriot's virtue, and the soldier's fire,
When danger in its most tremendous form 180
Seems to their eyes most lovely. In their thoughts
Imagination pictures all the scenes

Of war, the purple field, the heaps of death,
And glitt'ring trophies pil'd with Persian arms.

BUT now the Grecian leaders, who before 185
Were station'd near Thermopylæ, accost
The Spartan king. The Thespian chief allied
To Dithyrambus first the silence broke,
An ancient warrior. From behind his casque,
Whose crested weight his aged temples press'd, 190
His slender hairs, which time had silver'd o'er,
Flow'd venerable down. He thus began.

JOY now shall crown the period of my days,
And whether with my father's dust I sleep,
Or slain by Persia's sword I press the earth 195
Our common parent, be it as the Gods
Shall best determine. For the present hour
I bless their bounty, which has giv'n my age

Book II. L E O N I D A S. 53

To see the great Leonidas, and bid
The hero welcome on this glorious shore ; 200
Where he by heav'n selected from mankind
Shall fix the basis of the Grecian weal.

 H E R E too the wily Anaxander spake.
Hail! glorious chief. Of all the Theban race
We shall at least with gladfome bosoms meet 205
The great defender of the Grecian cause.
O! may oblivion o'er the shame of Thebes
Its darkest wing extend, or they alone
Be curs'd by Fame, whose impious counfels turn
Their countrymen from virtue. Thebes alas! 210
Still had been buried in dishonest sloth,
Had not to wake her languor Alpheus come
The messenger of freedom. O accept
Our grateful hearts; thou, Alpheus, art the cause,
That

That Anaxander from his native gates 215
 Here hath not borne a solitary spear,
 Nor these inglorious in their walls remain'd.
 But longer do we loiter? Haste my friends
 To yonder cliff, which points its shade afar,
 And view the Persian camp. The morning sun 220
 Beheld their numbers hide th' adjacent plains.
 Lo! here a Malian, Epialtes nam'd,
 Who with the foe from Thracia's bounds hath march'd.

HE said. His seeming virtue all deceiv'd.
 The camp not long had Epialtes join'd, 225
 By race a Malian. Eloquent his tongue,
 But false his heart, and abject. He was skill'd
 To grace perfidious counsels, and to cloath
 In swelling phrase the baseness of his foul,
 Foul nurse of treasons. To the tents of Greece, 230
Himself

Himself a Greek, a faithless spy he came.
Soon to the friends of Xerxes he repair'd,
The Theban chiefs, and nightly consult held,
How best with consternation to deject
The Spartan valour, or how best betray. 235
With him the leaders climb the arduous hill,
From whence the dreadful prospect they command,
Where endless plains by white pavilions hid
Spread, like the vast Atlantic, when no shore,
No rock or promontory stops the fight 240
Unbounded, as it wanders; but the moon
Resplendent eye of night in fullest orb
Throughout th' interminated surface throws
Its rays abroad, and decks in snowy light
The dancing billows; such was Xerxes' camp: 245
A pow'r unrivall'd by the greatest king,
Or conqueror, that e'er with ruthless hands

Diffolving

Diffolving all the sacred ties, which bind
 The happiness of nations, have alarm'd
 The sleeping fury Discord from her den. 250
 Not from the hundred brazen gates of Thebes,
 The tow'rs of Memphis, and the pregnant fields
 By Nile's prolifick torrents delug'd o'er,
 E'er flow'd such armies with th' Ægyptian lord
 Renown'd Sefostris; who with trophies fill'd 255
 The vanquish'd earth, and o'er the rapid foam
 Of distant Tanais, and the huge expanse
 Of trembling Ganges spread his dreaded name:
 Nor yet in Asia's far extended bounds
 E'er met such numbers, not when Belus drew 260
 Th' Assyrian bands to conquest, or the pride
 Of high-exalted Babylon survey'd
 The plains along Euphrates cover'd wide
 With armed myriads swarming from her walls;

When

Book II. L E O N I D A S. 57

When at the rage of dire Semiramis 265

Peace fled affrighted from the ravag'd East.

Yet all this hideous face of war difmays

No Grecian heart. Unterrified they stood.

Th' immeasurable camp with fearless eyes

They traverse, while in meditation near 270

The treach'rous Malian waits, collecting all

His pomp of words to paint the hostile pow'r;

Nor yet with falshood arms his fraudulent tongue

To feign a tale of terrour: Truth herself

Beyond the reach of fiction to inhance 275

Now aids his treason, and with cold difmay

Might pierce the boldest breast, unless secur'd

By dauntless virtue, which disdains to live

From liberty divorc'd. Requested now

By ev'ry voice the traitor spake, and all 280

Attentive ears incline. Oh! Greeks and friends!

I Can

Can I behold my native Malian fields
 Presenting hostile millions to your fight,
 And not with grief suppress the horrid tale,
 Which you exact from these ill-omen'd lips. 285
 On Thracia's sands I first beheld the foe,
 When, joining Europe with the Asian shore,
 A mighty bridge th' outrageous waves restrain'd,
 And stem'd th' impetuous current; while in arms
 The universal progeny of men 290
 Seem'd all before me trampling o'er the sea
 By thousands and ten thousands: Persians, Medes
 Assyrians, Saces, Indians, swarthy files
 From Æthiopia, Ægypt's tawny sons,
 Arabians, Bactrians, Parthians, all the strength 295
 Of Libya and of Asia. Neptune groan'd
 Beneath the burthen, and indignant heav'd
 His neck against th' incumbent weight. In vain

The

Book II. L E O N I D A S. 59

The violence of Boreas and the West,
With rage combin'd, against th' unshaken pile 300
Dash'd half the Hellespont. The eastern world
Sev'n days and nights uninterrupted pass,
And pour on Thracia's confines. They accept
The Persian lord, and range their hardy race
Beneath his standards. Macedonia's youth 305
With all Theffalia next, and ev'ry Greek,
Who dwells beyond Thermopylæ, attend.
Thus not alone embodied Asia lifts
Her threatening lance, but Macedon and Thrace,
Whose martial loins with daring warriors teem, 310
And faithless Greeks in multitudes untold
The Persian Monarch aid. Celestial pow'rs!
And thou, who reignest over men and Gods,
Who in a moment by thy will supreme
Canst quell the mighty in their proudest hopes, 315

And raise the weak to safety, thou impart
 Thy instant succour; interpose thy arm;
 With lightning blast their legions: Oh! confound
 With triple-bolted thunder Persia's camp,
 Whence like an inundation with the morn 320
 Shall millions rush, and overwhelm the Greeks.
 Resistance else were vain against an host,
 Which covers all Thessalia; for beyond
 The Malian plains thus widely stretch'd below,
 Beyond the utmost measure of the fight 325
 Bent from the height of this aspiring cliff,
 Lie yet more hideous numbers, which might drain
 The streams of copious rivers with their thirst,
 And with their arrows hide the mid-day sun.

THEN shall we join our battle in the shade, 330
 Dienece's replied. Not calmly thus

Diomedon.

Diomedon. On Xerxes' camp he bends
His low'ring brow, which frowns had furrow'd o'er,
And thus exclaim'd. Bellona turn and view
With joyful eyes that field, the fatal stage, 335
Which regal madness hath for you prepar'd
To exercise your horrors. Thou, O Death,
Shalt riot here unceasing, when the rocks
Of yonder pass with bleeding ranks are strew'd;
And all, who thun th' avenging steel of Greece, 340
By pestilence and meager famine seiz'd,
Shall with variety of ruin feast
Thy unabated hunger. Thus he spake,
While on the host immense his gloomy eyes
He fix'd disdainful, and its strength defied. 345

MEANTIME within th' entrenchment of the Greeks
From Asia's monarch delegated came

Tigranes

Tigranes and Phraortes. From the hills
Leonidas conducts th' impatient chiefs.

Around the hero in his tent they throng, 350
When thus Tigranes their attention calls.

AMBASSADORS from Persia's king we stand
Before you Grecians. To display the pow'r
Of our great master, were a needless task.
The name of Xerxes, Asia's mighty lord, 355
Invincible, and seated on a throne
Surpassing human lustre, must have reach'd
Th' extremest border of the earth, and taught
The hearts of men to own resistless force
With awe, and low submission. Yet I swear 360
By yon refulgent orb, which flames above,
The glorious symbol of th' eternal pow'r,
This military throng, this shew of war

Perfuade me, you have never heard that name,
At whose dread found the billows wide remote 365
Of Indus tremble, and the Caspian wave,
Th' Ægyptian tide, and Hellespontic furge
With homage roll. O impotent and rash!
Whom yet the large beneficence of heav'n,
And our great monarch merciful and kind 370
Deign to preserve. Resign your arms; disperse
Each to your cities; there with humblest hands
Before your lord bestrew the way with flow'rs.

As through th' extensive grove, whose leafy boughs
Intwining crown some eminence with shade, 375
The tempests rush sonorous, and between
The crashing branches roar; by fierce disdain
And indignation thus the Grecians mov'd
With clam'rous murmurs close the Persian's speech.

But

But Sparta's king arising, all is hush'd 380
 In sudden silence; when he thus replied.

O PERSIAN, when to Xerxes thou return'st,
 Say thou hast told the wonders of his pow'r;
 Then say, thou saw'st a slender band of Greece,
 Which dares his boasted millions to the field. 385

THE Spartan said. Th'Ambassadors retire.
 Them o'er the limits of the Grecian lines
 Diomedon and Thespia's youth conduct.
 With slow solemnity they all proceed
 In fullen silence. But their looks denote 390
 What speech would shame and weaken. Wrath contracts
 The forehead of Diomedon. His teeth
 Gnash with impatience for delay'd revenge.
 Disdain, which sprung from conscious merit, flush'd

The

Book II. L E O N I D A S. 65

The cheek of Dithyrambus. On the face 395
Of either Persian insolence and pride
Incens'd by disappointment gloomy low'r'd.
But when they reach'd the limits of the straits,
Where Xerxes' camp began to open wide
Its deep, immense arrangement; then the heart 400
Of vain Tigranes, swelling at the fight,
Thus overflows in loud and haughty phrase.

O ARIMANIUS, origin of ill,
Have we demanded of thy ruthless pow'r,
Thus with the curse of madness to afflict 405
These wretched men? But since thy dreadful will
To irresistible perdition dooms
The sons of Greece, in vain should we oppose.
Be thy dire will accomplish'd, let them fall,
And fatten with their blood their native soil. 410

K

ENRAG'D

ENRAG'D the stern Diomedon replies.
 Thou servile, base dependent on a king,
 Inglorious mercenary, slave to those,
 Whom most we scorn, thou boaster, dost thou know,
 That I beheld the Marathonian field; 415
 When, like the Libyan sands before the wind,
 Your host was scatter'd by th'unconquer'd Greeks;
 Where thou perhaps didst turn before this arm
 To ignominious flight thy shiv'ring limbs?
 O may I find thee in to morrow's fight! 420
 Then on this rocky pavement shalt thou lie
 Beneath this arm to feast the vulture's beak.

HE ended here, and thus the Persian chief.
 O thou, whose hand omnipotent protects
 The throne of Xerxes, bend thy sacred ear! 435

For lo! my first victorious fruits of war
To thee I here devote, the gory spoils,
Which from this Grecian with the rising dawn
In fight of either host my arm shall rend.

PHRAORTES interrupting then began.

430

I too would find among the Grecian chiefs
One, who in battle dare abide my spear.

To him thus answer'd Theſſia's gallant youth.
Thou look'ſt on me, O Perſian. Worthier far
Thou might'ſt indeed have ſingled from our hoſt,
But none more willing to eſſay thy force.
Yes, I will prove before the eye of Mars,
How far the valour of the meaneſt Greek
Beyond thy vaunts deſerves the palm of fame.

435

THIS said, the Persians to their king repair, 440
 Back to their camp the Grecians. There they found
 Each foldier poizing his extended spear,
 And his large buckler bracing on his arm,
 For instant war prepar'd. Through all the files
 Each leader moves exulting, and with praise 445
 And exhortations aids their native warmth.
 Alone the Theban Anaxander pin'd,
 Who thus apart address'd his Malian friend.

WHAT has thy lofty eloquence avail'd,
 Alas! in vain attempting to confound 450
 The Spartan valour? With redoubled fires
 See how their bosoms glow. They wish to die,
 And wait impatient for th' unequal fight.

Book II. L E O N I D A S.

69

Too soon will come th' insuperable foes,
And in promiscuous ruin all be whelm'd; 455
Nor shall our merit to the Persian lord
Be told, or known: for whose advent'rous feet
To serve the Thebans, through the guarded pass,
The Grecian watch eluding, will approach
The tents of Asia, that the king may know, 460
And spare his friends amid the gen'ral wreck;
When his high-swoln resentment, like a flood
Increas'd with stormy show'rs, shall cover Greece
With desolation? Epialtes here.

WHENCE, Anaxander, this unjust despair? 465
Is there a path on Oeta's hills unknown
To Epialtes? O'er the trackless rock,
And mazy grove shall pass my secret steps,

This

This night I part. Thy merit shall be told 470
To Persia's king. Thou only watch the hour,
Nor then be tardy, when he wants thy aid.

End of the Second Book.

LEONIDAS.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK III.

The argument.

Tigranes and Phraortes repair to Xerxes, whom they find seated on a throne surrounded by his satraps in a magnificent pavilion; while the Magi stand before him, and sing an hymn containing the religion of Zoroastres. Xerxes, notwithstanding the arguments of his brothers Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, gives no credit to the ambassadors, who report, that the Grecians are determin'd to maintain the pass against him; but commands Demaratus an exil'd king of Sparta to attend him, and ascends his chariot to take a view of the Grecians himself. He passes through the midst of his army, consisting of many nations differing in arms, customs, and manners. He advances to the entrance of the straits, and surpris'd at the behaviour of the Spartans demands the reason of it from Demaratus; which occasions a conversation between them on the mercenary forces of Persia, and the militia of Greece. Demaratus weeping at the sight of his countrymen, is comforted by Hyperanthes. Xerxes still incredulous commands Tigranes and Phraortes to bring the Grecians bound before him the next day, and retires to his pavilion.

NOW:

NOW had Tigranes, and Phraortes gain'd
 The splendid tent of Xerxes. Him they found
 Begirt with princes, and illustrious chiefs,
 The potentates of Asia. Near his side
 His valiant brothers stood, Abrocomes, 5
 And Hyperanthes, then Pharnuchus brave,
 Pandates, Intaphernes, mighty lords,
 And numbers more in purple splendour clad,
 With homage all attending round the throne,
 Whose gorgeous seat erected high upbore 10
 Their regal master. He above their heads
 Look'd down imperious. So the stately tow'r
 Of Belus, mingling its majestick front
 With heav'n's bright azure, from on high survey'd
 The huge extent of Babylon, with all 15
 Its sumptuous domes and palaces beneath.

That

Book III. L E O N I D A S.

73

That day the monarch deem'd to enter Greece,
And hide her fields with war; but first ordains,
That grateful hymns should celebrate the name
Of Oromafdes: so the Perfians call'd

20

The world's great author. By the king's decree
The Magi stood before th' unfolded tent.

Fire blaz'd beside them. Tow' rds the sacred flame
They turn'd, and sent their tuneful praise to heav'n.

FROM Zoroastres was the song deriv'd,
Who on the hills of Persia from his cave
With flow'rs incircled, and with murm'ring founts,
That cheer'd the solemn mansion, had reveal'd,
How Oromafdes, radiant source of good,
Original, immortal fram'd the globe
With all its varied beauty: how with stars
By him the heav'ns were spangled: how the sun,

25

30

L

Refulgent

Refulgent Mithra, purest spring of light,
 And genial warmth, whence fruitful Nature smiles,
 Burst from the east at his creating voice; 35
 When streight beyond the golden verge of day
 Night shew'd the horrors of her distant reign,
 Whence black, and hateful Arimanius sprung,
 The author foul of evil: he with shades
 From his dire mansion veil'd the earth and skies, 40
 Or to destruction chang'd the solar beam,
 When parching fields deny the foodful grain,
 And from their channels fly th' exhaling streams,
 Whence pestilence, and famine: how the pow'r
 Of Oromasdes in the human breast 45
 Benevolence, and equity infus'd,
 Truth, temperance, and wisdom sprung from heav'n;
 When Arimanius blacken'd all the soul
 With falshood, and injustice, with desires
 Infatiable,

Book III. L E O N I D A S. 75

Infatiable, with violence, and rage, 50

Malignity, and folly. If the hand

Of Oromafdes on precarious life

Shed wealth, and pleasure, soon th' infernal God

With wild excess, or av'rice blasts the joy.

Thou, Oromafdes, victory dost give. 55

By thee with fame the regal head is crown'd.

Great Xerxes owns thy succour. When with storms

The hate of direful Arimanius swell'd

The Hellespont, thou o'er the angry surge

The destin'd master of the world didst lead, 60

This day his promis'd glories to enjoy,

When Greece affrighted to his arm shall bend;

Ev'n as at last shall Arimanius fall

Before thy might, and evil be no more.

THE Magi ceas'd their harmony; when now 65

Before the king with adoration bow'd
 Tigranes and Phraortes. Prone they lay,
 And o'er their foreheads spread their abject hands,
 As from a present deity too bright
 For mortal vision to conceal their eyes.
 At length in humble phrase Tigranes thus.

70

O XERXES, live for ever! Gracious lord!
 Who dost permit thy servants to approach
 Thy awful sight, and prostrate thus to own
 Thy majesty and greatness. May the pow'r
 Of Oromasdes stretch thy scepter'd arm
 O'er all the nations from the Indian shores,
 Ev'n to the waters of the western main,
 From northern Tanais to the source of Nile!
 And still from thee may Arimanius turn
 Against thy foes his malice to mankind!

75

80

By

Book III. L E O N I D A S.

77

By him, ev'n now with frenzy smote, the Greeks
Reject thy proffer'd clemency. The morn
Shall see them bleed the victims of thy wrath.

HERE, to his brothers turning, Xerxes spake. 85
Say, Hyperanthes? Does thy soul believe
These tidings? Sure these slaves have never dar'd
To face the Grecians, but delude our ear
With base impostures, which their fears suggest.

To him this answer Hyperanthes form'd. 90
O from his servants may the king avert
His indignation! Greece was fam'd of old
For martial virtue, and intrepid sons:
I have essay'd their valour, and with me
Abrocomes can witness. When our fire 95
The great Darius to th' Athenian shore

With

With Artaphernes, and with Datis sent
 Our tender youth; at Marathon we found,
 How vain the hopes, that numbers should dismay,
 A foe resolv'd on victory, or death. 100
 Yet not as one contemptible, or base
 Let me appear before thee: though the Greeks
 With such unconquer'd spirits be indu'd,
 Soon as the king shall summon me to war,
 He shall behold me in the dang'rous van 105
 Exalt my spear, and pierce the hostile ranks,
 Or sink before them. Xerxes then return'd;

WHY over Asia, and the Libyan foil,
 With all their nations does my potent arm
 Extend its scepter? Wherefore do I sweep 110
 Across the globe with millions in my train?
 Why shade the Ocean with unnumber'd sails?

And blast my head with ruin; may the king
 Look on his fervant with a loathing eye, 130
 If what I here affirm be false, or vain,
 That yonder Grecians will oppose our course.

THE king arose. No more: prepare my Car;
 The Spartan exile Demaratus call:
 We will our selves advance and view the foe. 135

THE monarch will'd; and suddenly he hears
 His trampling horses. High on silver wheels
 The iv'ry car with azure sapphirs shone,
 Cærulean beryls, and the jasper green,
 The emerald, the ruby's glowing blush, 140
 The flaming topaz with its golden beam,
 The pearl, th' impurpled amethyst, and all
 The various gems, which India's mines afford
 To deck the pomp of kings. In burnish'd gold

Book III. L E O N I D A S. 81

A sculptur'd eagle from behind displays 145
Its stately neck, and o'er the monarch's head
Extends its dazzling wings. Eight gen'rous steeds,
Which on the fam'd Nysæan plain were nurs'd
In wintry Media, drew the radiant car.
Not those of old to Hercules refus'd 150
By false Laomedon, nor they, which bore
The son of Thetis through the scatter'd rear
Of Troy's devoted race, might these surpass
In strength, or beauty. With obedient pride
They heard their lord: exulting in the air 155
They toss'd their foreheads, while the silver manes
Smote on their glitt'ring necks. The king ascends:
Beside his footstool Demaratus sat.
The charioteer now shakes the golden reins,
Bold Patiramphes. At the signal bound 160
Th' attentive steeds; the chariot flew; behind

Ten thousand horse in thunder swept the field.
 The eastern bands (so Xerxes had ordain'd)
 Between the sea-beat margin, and the camp
 All wait imbattled, all prepar'd to pass 165
 Thermopylæ. To these with rapid wheels
 Th' imperial car proceeds. Th' approaching king
 Soon through the wide battalions is proclaim'd.
 He now draws nigh. Th' innumerable host
 Roll back by nations, and admit their lord 170
 With all his fatraps. From his crystal dome
 Rais'd on the bottom of the watry world
 Thus when the potent ruler of the floods
 With each cærulean deity ascends,
 Thron'd on his pearly chariot; all the deep 175
 Divides its bosom to th' emerging God.
 So Xerxes rode between the Asian world
 On either side receding; when, as down

Th' immea-

Th' immeasurable ranks his fight was lost,
A momentary gloom o'ercast his mind, 180
While this reflection fill'd his eyes with tears:
That soon, as Time an hundred years had told,
Not one of all those thousands should survive.
Whence to obscure thy pride arose that cloud?
Was it, that once humanity could touch 185
A tyrant's breast? or rather did thy soul
Repine, O Xerxes, at the bitter thought,
That all thy pow'r was mortal? But the veil
Of sadness soon forsook his brightning eyes,
As with adoring homage millions bow'd, 190
And to his heart relentless pride recall'd.
Elate the mingled prospect he surveys
Of glitt'ring files unnumber'd, chariots scyth'd
On thund'ring axles roll'd with haughty steeds
In sumptuous trappings clad (Barbaric pomp) 195

Which tore with spurning hoofs the sandy beach ;
 While ev'ry banner to the fun expands
 Its gorgeous folds, that beam'd with gold, with shields,
 Tiaras, helms environ'd, and with spears
 In number equal to the bladed grass, 200
 Whose living green in vernal beauty cloaths
 Theffalia's vale. What pow'rs of founding verse
 Can to the mind present th' amazing scene?
 Not thee, whom Rumour's fabling voice delights,
 Poetic Fancy, to my aid I call; 205
 But thou, historic Truth, support my song,
 Which shall the various multitude display,
 Their arms, their manners, and their native seats.

THE Persians first in scaly corselets shone
 With colours varying on the gorgeous sleeves, 210
 A gen'rous nation. From their infant age

Their

Their tongues were practic'd in the love of truth,
Their limbs inur'd to ev'ry manly toil,
To brace the bow, to rule th' impetuous steed,
And dart the javelin ; worthy to enjoy 215
The liberty, their injur'd fathers lost,
Whose arms for Cyrus overturn'd the strength
Of Babylon and Sardis, and advanc'd
The victors head above his country's laws.
Such were the Persians ; but untaught to form 220
The ranks of battle, with unequal force
Against the phalanx of the Greeks they stood,
And to the maffy shield, and weighty spear
A target light, and slender lance oppos'd.
On ev'ry head tiaras rose, like tow'rs, 225
Impenetrable. All with burnish'd gold
Blaz'd their gay fandals, and the floating reins
Of each proud courser. Daggers from their thighs,

A well-stor'd quiver from their shoulders hung,
 And strongest bows of mighty size they bore. 230
 Next, with resembling arms the Medes are seen,
 The Cissians, and Hyrcanians. Media once
 From her bleak mountains aw'd the subject East.
 Her kings in cold Ecbatana were thron'd.
 The Cissians march'd from Susa's regal walls, 235
 From sultry fields o'erspread with branching palms,
 And white with lillies, water'd by the tides
 Of fam'd Choaspes, whose transparent waves
 The golden goblet wafts to Persia's kings.
 No other stream the royal lip bedews. 240
 Hyrcania's race forsook their fruitful clime
 Dark with the verdure of expanding oaks,
 To Ceres dear and Bacchus. There the corn
 Bent by its golden burthen sheds unreap'd
 Its plenteous seed impregnating the soil 245

With

With future harvests; while the bees reside
 Among th' intertwining branches of the groves,
 Where with their labours they enrich the leaves,
 Which flow with sweetness. Next, Assyria's sons
 Their brazen helms display, th'unskillful work 250
 Of rude Barbarians. Thick-wove flax defends
 Their chest and loins. A buckler guards their arm.
 Girt with a falchion each a mace sustains
 O'erlaid with iron. On Euphrates' banks
 In Babylon's stupendous walls they dwell, 255
 And o'er the plains, where once with mightier tow'rs
 Old Ninus rear'd its head, th'imperial seat
 Of eldest tyrants. These Chaldæa joins,
 The land of shepherds. On the pastures wide
 There Belus first discern'd the various course 260
 Of heav'n's bright planets, and the clust'ring stars
 With names distinguish'd, whence himself was deem'd

The chief of Gods. His heav'n-ascending fane
 In Babylon the proud Affyrians rais'd.
 Drawn from the fertile foil, which Ochus laves, 265
 The Bactrians stood, like Persia's bands attir'd,
 Though less their javelins, and their bows of cane ;
 The Paricanians next all rough with hides
 Of shaggy goats, with bows and daggers arm'd.
 Alike in horrid garb the Caspian train 270
 From barren mountains, and the dreary coast,
 Which bounds the stormy lake, that bears their name,
 With many bows, and scymetars were led.
 The Indians then a threefold band appear'd.
 Part guide the horse, and part the rapid car; 275
 The rest on foot within the bending cane
 For slaughter held their iron-pointed reeds.
 These o'er the Indus from the distant floods
 Of Ganges pass'd, and left a region lov'd

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By lavish Nature. There the plenteous year 280

Twice crown'd with harvests smiles. The honey'd shrub,

The cinnamon, and spikenard bless their fields.

Array'd in native wealth the warriors shone.

Their ears were grac'd with pendants, and their hands

Incircled wore a bracelet starr'd with gems. 285

These were the nations, who to Xerxes sent

Their mingled aids of infantry and horse.

Now, Muse, recount what numbers yet untold

On foot obscur'd the surface of the shore;

Or who in chariots, or on camels beat 290

The loosen'd sand. The Parthians first advance,

Then weak in numbers o'er the Malian strand

Far from their lonely vales, and woody hills,

Not yet renown'd for warlike steeds, they trod.

With them the Sogdians, Dadices arrang'd, 295

N

Gandarians,

Gandarians, and Chorasmians, all attir'd,
 Like Bactria's sons. To these the Saces join,
 From cold Imaüs drawn, from Oxus' waves,
 And Cyra built on Iäxartes' brink,
 The bound of Persia's Empire. Wild, untam'd, 300
 And prone to rage, their defarts they forfook.
 A bow, a falchion, and a pond'rous ax
 The savage legions arm'd. A pointed cask
 O'er each grim visage rear'd its iron cone.
 In arms, like Persians, the Saranges stood. 305
 High as the knee their buskins stretch'd, and clung
 Around their ham. With glowing colours dy'd
 Gay shone their varied garments. Next are seen
 The Pactyan, Mycian, and the Utian train
 In skins of goats, all horrid. Bows they wield 310
 Of springy reed, with poynards at their sides.
 With spotted hides of leopards all array'd,

Or with the spoil from tawny lions' torn,
In graceful range the Æthiopians stand
Of equal stature, and a beauteous frame; 315
Though scorching Phœbus had imbrown'd their face,
And curl'd their crisped locks. In ancient song
Renown'd for justice, riches they disdain'd,
As foes to virtue. From their feat remote
On Nilus' verge above th' Ægyptian bound, 320
Forc'd by their kings' malignity and pride
These friends of hospitality and peace,
Themselves uninjur'd, wag'd reluctant war
Against a land, whose climate, and whose name
To them were strange. With hardest stone they point
The rapid arrow. Bows of hideous length, 326
Form'd with th'elastic branches of the palm,
They bore, and lances arm'd with horns of goats,
And maces strong with iron. Now, O Muse,

Recite the nations, who in helmets fram'd 330
 Of various parts, and close-connected joints,
 With darts, and poynards, shields, and lances weak,
 A feeble train, attend their tyrant's will,
 All victims destin'd to imbrue with gore
 The Grecian spears; the Paphlagonians first 335
 From where Carambis with projected brows
 O'erlooks the dusky Euxine wrapt in mists,
 And where through flow'rs, that paint its various banks,
 Parthenius flows; the Mariandynians next,
 The Matienian, and the Ligyan bands, 340
 With them the Syrian multitudes, who dwell
 Near Daphne's grove, who cultivate the glebe
 Wide-water'd by Orontes, who along
 Th' extended ridge of Libanus are nurs'd
 Among the cedars, or with foodful dates 345
 Pluckt from the palms, whose fruitage grac'd the plains
 Around

The fruitful herbage of Armenia's meads.
 Next, strange to view, in similar attire, 365
 Though far unlike in manners to the Greeks,
 Appear the Lydians. Wantonness and sport
 Were all their care. Beside Cayster's stream,
 Or smooth Mæander winding silent by,
 Or near Pactolus' wave among the vines 370
 Of Tmolus rising, or the wealthy tide
 Of golden-faned Hermus they allure
 The sight enchanted with the graceful dance,
 Or with melodious sweetness charm the air,
 And melt to softest languishment the soul. 375
 What to the battle's danger could incite
 These tender sons of luxury? The lash
 Of their stern monarch urg'd their shiv'ring limbs
 Through all the tempests, which enrag'd the main,
 And shook beneath their trembling steps the pile, 380
 That

That join'd the Asian and the western worlds.
To these Mæonia hot with sulph'rous mines
Unites her troops. No tree adorns their fields
Unblest'd with verdure, and with ashes strewn.
Black are the rocks, and ev'ry hill deform'd 385
With conflagration. Helmets press'd their brows.
Two darts they brandish'd. Round their woolly vest
A sword was girt, and hairy hides compos'd
Their bucklers round and light. The Mysians left
Olympus wood-envelop'd, and the foil 390
Wash'd by Caicus, and the baneful tide
Of Lycus, nurse of serpents. Targets, helms,
And wooden javelins harden'd in the flames
They bore. By these, imbattled next are seen
An ancient nation, who in early times, 395
By Trojan arms assail'd, their native land
Esteem'd less dear than freedom, and exchange'd

Their

Their feat on Strymon, where in Thrace it pours
 Its freezing current, for the distant shores
 Of fishy Sangar. These Bithynians nam'd 400
 Their habitations to the sacred feet
 Of Dindymus extend. Yet there they groan'd
 Beneath oppression, and their freedom mourn'd
 On Sangar now, as once on Strymon lost.
 The ruddy skins of foxes form'd their cask ; 405
 Their shields were fashion'd like the horned moon ;
 A dart, and slender poynard arm'd their hands ;
 A vest embrac'd their bodies, while abroad
 Ting'd with unnumber'd hues a mantle flow'd.
 But other Thracians, who their former name 410
 Retain'd in Asia, flood with shining helms.
 The horns of bulls in imitating brass
 Adorn'd the lofty crest. Phœnician cloth
 Their legs infolds, with brightest purple stain'd ;

And through the forest went to chase the boar, 415
 A hunter's spear they grasp. What nations still
 On either side of Xerxes, while he pass'd,
 Present their huge array, and swell his soul
 With more than mortal pride? The num'rous train
 Of Moschians and Macronians now succeed, 420
 And Mosynœcians, who, with berries fed,
 In wooden tow'rs along the Pontic shore
 Repose their painted limbs; the mirthful race
 Of Tibarenians next, whose wanton minds
 Delight in sport, and laughter: all in casks 425
 Of wood, with shields, and lances small, whose points
 Beyond proportion lengthen. Then approach,
 In garments o'er their spacious bosom clasp'd,
 And part with javelins, part with Lycian bows,
 A people destin'd in eternal verse, 430
 Ev'n thine, sublime Mæonides, to live.

These are the Milyans, Solymi their name
 In thy celestial strains, Pisidia's hills
 Their dwelling. Once a formidable train,
 They fac'd the great Bellerophon in war, 440
 Now doom'd a more tremendous foe to meet,
 Themselves unnerv'd with bondage, and to leave
 Their putrid bodies for the dogs of Greece.
 Next are the Marian legions furnish'd all
 With shields of skins, with darts, and helmets wove 445
 Of strongest texture. Aria's host pretend
 The Bactrian lance, and brace the Persian bow,
 Drawn from a region horrid all with thorn,
 One hideous waste of sands, which mock the toil
 Of patient culture; save one favour'd spot, 450
 Which, like an isle, emerges from the wild,
 In verdure clad, and interspers'd with vines,
 Whose gen'rous clusters yield a juice, that scorns

The injuries of Time. Yet Nature's hand
Had sown their rocks with coral, and enrich'd 455
Their desert hills with veins of sapphirs blue,
And those, whose azure sparks of gold adorn.
These from the turbant flame. On ev'ry neck
The coral blushes through the num'rous throng.
The Allarodians, and Sasperian bands 460
Were arm'd with poniards, like the Cholchian host;
Their heads were guarded with a helm of wood.
Short were their spears, of hides undress'd their shields.
The Cholchians march'd from Phafis, and the shores,
Where once Medea fair enchantress stood, 465
And wondring view'd the first advent'rous bark,
That stem'd the Pontic foam. From Argo's side
The demigods descended, and repair'd
To her fell fire's inhospitable walls.
His blooming graces Jason there display'd. 470

With ev'ry art of eloquence divine
 He claim'd the golden fleece. The virgin heard,
 She gaz'd with fatal ravishment, and lov'd.
 Then to the hero she resigns her heart ;
 Her magic tames the brazen-footed bulls ; 475
 She lulls the sleepless dragon, and to Greece
 With faithless Jason wafts the radiant prize.
 The Cholchians then pursu'd their steps with war,
 And now with antient enmity inflam'd,
 Or else compell'd by Xerxes to recal 480
 The long-forgotten wrong, they menace Greece
 With desolation. Next in Persian guise
 A croud advanc'd, who left the various isles
 In Persia's gulph, and round Arabia known.
 Some in their native topaz were adorn'd, 485
 From Ophiodes, and Topazos sprung ;
 And some with shells of tortoises, which brood

Around

Around Cafitis' verge. To them were join'd
 Those, who reside, where Erythras intomb'd
 Lies all beset with palms, a pow'rful king, 490
 Who nam'd of old the Erythræan main.
 The Lybians next are plac'd. In chariots scyth'd
 They sat terrific, cloath'd in skins, with darts
 Of wood well-temper'd in the hardning flames.
 Not Libya's deserts from tyrannic fway 495
 Could hide her fons; much less could freedom dwell
 Amid the plenty of Arabia's fields:
 Where spicy cassia, and the fragrant reed,
 And myrrh, and hallow'd frankincense perfume
 The zephir's wing. A bow of largest size 500
 Th' Arabians wield, and o'er their lucid vest
 Loose floats a mantle on their shoulder clasp'd.
 Of these two myriads on the lofty back
 Of camels rode, that match'd the swiftest horse.

SUCH were the numbers, which from Asia led 505
 Bow'd down with low prostration to the wheels
 Of Xerxes' chariot. Yet what legions more
 Expand their mighty range? What banners still
 The Malian sands o'ershadow? Forward rolls
 The regal car through nations, which in arms, 510
 And order'd ranks unlike the eastern throng
 Upheld the spear and buckler. Yet untaught
 To bend the servile knee erect they stood;
 Unless that mourning o'er the shameful weight
 Of their new bondage some their brows depress'd, 515
 And stain'd their arms with sorrow. Europe's race
 Were these, whom Xerxes by resistless force
 Had gather'd to his standards. Murm'ring here
 The sons of Thrace, and Macedonia stood,
 Here on his steed the brave Theffalian frown'd. 520

There pin'd reluctant multitudes, who bore
The name of Greeks, and peopled all the coast
Between Byzantium, and the Malian bay.

THROUGH all the numbers, which ador'd his pride,
Or fear'd his pow'r, the monarch now was pass'd; 525
Nor yet among those myriads could be found
One, who with Xerxes' self in tow'ring size,
Or beauteous features might compare. O wretch!
Possess'd of all, but virtue; doom'd to shew,
How mean without her is unbounded pow'r, 530
The charm of beauty, and the blaze of state,
How insecure of happiness, how vain.
Thou, who couldst mourn the common lot, which heav'n
From none withholds; which oft to thousands proves
Their only refuge from a tyrant's rage; 535
And which by pining sickness, age, or pain

Becomes

Becomes at last a soothing hope to all ;
Thou, who couldst weep, that Nature's gentle hand
Should lay her wearied offspring in the tomb,
Yet couldst remorseless from their peaceful seats 540
Lead half the nations in a clime unknown
To fall the victims of thy ruthless pride ;
What didst thou merit from the injur'd world ?
What sufferings to compensate for the tears
Of Asia's mothers, for unpeopled realms, 545
And all this waste of nature ? On his host
The king exulting bends his haughty sight,
When thus to Demaratus he began.

Now Demaratus to thy soul recal
My father great Darius, who receiv'd 550
Thy wandring steps expell'd their native home.
Ill would it then become thee to beguile

Thy

Thy benefactors, and the truth disguise,
Look back on all those thousands, and declare,
If yonder Grecians will oppose their march. 555

THE exile answer'd. Deem not mighty lord,
I will deceive thy goodness by a tale
Forg'd for their glory, whose deluded minds
Perversely hearken'd to the slanderer's tongue;
Who forc'd me with unmerited disgrace 560
To tread the paths of banishment and woe.
Nor be the king offended, while I speak
The words of truth. The Spartans never fly.

HERE with contemptuous smiles the king return'd.
Wilt thou, who once wert Lacedæmon's chief, 565
Encounter twenty Persians? Yet those Greeks
With greater disproportion must confront
Our host to-morrow. Demaratus thus.

By single combat were the tryal vain,
And vainer still by my unworthy sword, 570
To prove the merit of united force,
Which oft by military skill surmounts
The strength of numbers. Nor in fields of war
The Greeks excel by discipline alone,
But from their manners. Grant thy ear, O king, 575
The difference learn of Grecian bands, and thine.
The flow'r, the bulwark of thy pow'ful host
Are mercenaries. These are canton'd round
Thy provinces. No fertile field demands
Their painful hand to turn the fallow glebe. 580
Them to the noon-day toil no harvest calls.
The stubborn oak along the mountains brow
Sinks not beneath their stroke. With careful eyes
They mark not how the flocks, or heifers feed.

To

Book III. L E O N I D A S. 107

To them of wealth, and all possessions void 585
The name of country with an empty sound
Flies o'er the ear, nor warms their joyless hearts,
Who share no country. Needy, yet with scorn
Rejecting labour, wretched by their wants,
Yet profligate through indolence, with limbs 590
Soft and enervate, and with minds corrupt;
From misery, debauchery, and sloth
Are these to battle drawn against a foe
Inur'd to hardship, and the child of toil,
Wont through the freezing show'r, and wintry storm 595
O'er his own glebe the tardy ox to goad;
Or in the sun's impetuous heat to glow
Beneath the burthen of the yellow sheaves:
Whence on himself, on her, whose faithful arms
Infold him joyful, and a num'rous race, 600

P 2

Which

Which glads his dwelling, plenty he bestows
With independence; and when call'd to war
For these his dearest comfort, and his care,
And for the harvest promis'd to his toil,
He lifts the shield, nor shuns unequal force. 605
Such are the pow'rs of ev'ry state in Greece
One only breeds a race more warlike still,
Ev'n those, who now defend that rocky pass,
The sons of Lacedæmon. They untaught
To break the glebe, or bind the golden sheaves, 610
To far feverer labours are inur'd.
Alone for war, their sole delight, and care.
From infancy to manhood, are they form'd
To want, and danger, to th' unwholesome ground,
To winter watches, and inclement skies, 615
To plunge through torrents, brave the tusky boar,
To arms, and wounds; an exercise of pain

So fierce and constant, that to them a camp
With all its hardships is the seat of rest,
And war itself remission from their toils.

620

THEY words are folly, scornful here replied
The Persian monarch. Does not freedom dwell
Among the Grecians? Therefore will they shun
Superiour foes, for whosoe'er is free
Will fly from danger; while the Persians know,
If from th' allotted station they retreat,
The scourge awaits them, and my heavy wrath.

625

CONCEIVE not, Xerxes, Sparta's chief return'd,
The Grecians want an object, where to fix
Their eyes with reverence, and obedient dread.
To them more awful than the name of king
To Asia's trembling millions is the law,

630

Whose

Whose sacred voice enjoins them to confront
Unnumber'd foes, to vanquish, or to die.

IN silence now the banish'd king remain'd. 635
While near the straits the chariot roll'd; it chanc'd,
The Spartans then were station'd out on guard.
These in gymnastic exercise employ'd,
Nor heed the monarch, nor his gaudy train;
But toss'd the spear, and whirl'd the rapid dart, 640
Or met with adverse shields in single war,
Or trooping swiftly rush'd on ev'ry side
With ranks unbroken, and with equal feet:
While others calm beneath their polish'd helms
Drew down their hair, which hung in fable curls, 645
And spread their necks with terrour. Xerxes here
The exile questions. What do these intend,
Who thus with careful hands adjust their hair?

To whom the Spartan. O imperial lord,
Such is their custom, to adorn their heads, 650
When with determin'd valour they present
Their dauntless breasts before the jaws of death.
Bring down thy myriads all in glitt'ring steel,
Arm, if thou canst, the gen'ral race of man ;
All, who possess the regions unexplor'd 655
Beyond the Ganges, all, whose wand'ring steps
Behind the Caspian range the Scythian wild,
With those, who drink the secret fount of Nile,
Yet to the breasts of Sparta's sons shall fear
Be still a stranger. Thus with fervour spake 660
The exil'd king, when gushing from his eyes
Resistless grief o'erflow'd his cheek. Afide
His head he turn'd, and wept in copious streams.
The sad remembrance of his former state,

His dignity, his greatness, and the fight 665
 Of those brave ranks, which thus unshaken stood,
 And spread amazement through the world in arms,
 Excite those sorrows. Oft with eager eyes
 He views the godlike warriors, who beneath
 His standard once victorious fought, who call'd 670
 Him once their king and leader. Then again
 His head he bows with anguish, and bedews
 His breast with tears; in agony bemoans
 His faded honours, his illustrious name
 Forgotten now, his majesty defil'd 675
 With exile and dependence. So obscur'd
 By creeping ivy, and by sordid moss
 Some lordly palace, or stupendous fane,
 Magnificent in ruin stands; where time
 Wide-wasting from the nodding roof hath mow'd 680
 The column down, and cleft the ponderous dome.

NOT unobserv'd by Hyperanthes mourn'd
 Th' unhappy Spartan. Kindly to his own
 Th' exile's hand he joins, and thus humane.
 O Demaratus, this thy grief confirms, 685
 How well the Greeks deserve thy gen'rous praise,
 Who still repining doſt their loſs deplore,
 Though cheriſh'd here with univerſal love:
 But O let indignation in thy breaſt
 Revive thy wrongs! then bleſs th' auſpicious fate, 690
 Which led thee far from calumny and fraud
 To ſhare the favour of the higheſt king.

As Demaratus with a grateful mind
 Addreſs'd himſelf to answer, Perſia's king
 Thus interrupted. Soon, as morning ſhines, 695

Q

Do

Do thou Tigranes and Phraortes head
The Medes and Saces. Bring those Grecians bound.
This said. The monarch to his tent return'd.

End of the Third Book.

LEONIDAS.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK IV.

The argument.

Leonidas rising by break of day commands a body of Arcadians, with the Thespians, and Plataeans to be drawn out for battle in that part of Thermopylae, which lay under the Phocian wall, from whence he harangues them. The enemy approaches. Diomedon kills Tigranes in single combat. Both armies join battle. Dithyrambus kills Pbraortes. The Persians, entirely defeated, are pursued with great slaughter by Diomedon and Dithyrambus to the extremity of the pass. The Grecian commanders after the pursuit retire for refreshment to a cave in the side of mount Oeta. Leonidas recalls them to the camp, and sends down fresh forces. Diomedon, and Dithyrambus, with the Plataeans are permitted to continue in the field. By the advice of Diomedon the Grecians advance to the broadest part of Thermopylae, where they form a line of thirty in depth, consisting of the Plataeans, Mantineans, Tegaeans, Thebans, Corinthians, Phliasians, and Mycenaeans. The attack is renew'd with great violence by Hyperantbes, Abrocomes, and the principal Persian leaders at the head of some chosen troops.

LACONIA's leader with the morning rose,
 When thus to Alpheus. From Arcadia's bands
 Select a thousand spears. To these unite
 The Thespians and Plateæans. Range their lines
 Before the wall, which fortifies the pass: 5
 There close-imbodied will their might repulse
 The num'rous foe. Obedient to his will
 Th' appointed legions issuing from their tents
 With deep'ning ranks Leonidas inclose.
 So round their monarch in his stormy cave 10
 The winds assemble, from his sable throne
 When Æolus sends forth his dread command
 To swell the main, or heav'n with clouds deform,
 Or bend the forest from the mountain's brow.
 The chief of Sparta from the rampart's height 15
 Thus to the fight the list'ning host inflames.

THIS

THIS day, O Grecians, countrymen, and friends,
Your wives, your offspring, your paternal seats,
Your fathers, country, liberty, and laws
Have sent you hither, from your infant age 20
Vers'd in the various discipline of Mars,
Laborious, active, virtuous, brave, and free,
To match your valour with ignoble foes
In war unskilful, nature's basest dross,
The foes of all utility and worth, 25
And thence a monarch's mercenary slaves;
With spirits broke by servitude and want,
With limbs relax'd by sloth, and wanton ease,
With minds debauch'd by vices, uninspir'd
By all th'indearing cares in free-born hearts, 30
Who cold and drooping fight without a cause,
To whom defeat is neither grief, nor shame,

Who

Who seek no fruit from victory, but spoil.
 These are the flow'r of Asia's host. The rest,
 Who fill their boasted numbers, are a croud 35
 Forc'd from their dwellings to the bloody field,
 From whom till now with jealous care their lord
 Has still withheld the instruments of war.
 These are the people taught with patient grief
 To bear the rapine, cruelty, and spurns 40
 Of Xerxes' mercenary bands, and pine
 In servitude to slaves. With terrour sounds
 The trumpet's clangor in their trembling ears.
 Unwonted loads, the buckler and the lance
 Their hands sustain incumber'd, and present 45
 The mockery of war.—But ev'ry eye
 Flames with impatient ardour, and your breasts
 Too long their swelling spirit have confin'd.
 Go then, ye sons of Liberty, and sweep

These bondmen from the field. Resiftles rend. 50
 The glitt'ring standard from their servile hands.
 Hurl to the ground their ignominious heads.
 The warrior's helm profaning. Think the shades
 Of your forefathers rear their sacred brows
 Here to enjoy the glory of their sons. 55

HE spake. Loud Pæans burst from all the host.
 With fierce reply unnumber'd shouts ascend
 From hostile nations thronging down the pass.
 Such is the roar of Ætna, when her mouth
 Displodes combustion from her sulph'rous depths, 60
 And blasts the smiles of Nature. Dauntless stood
 In deep array before the Phocian wall
 The Greeks close-wedg'd with implicated shields,
 And spears protended, like the graceful range
 Of arduous elms, whose interwoven boughs 65

Before

Before some rural palace wide expand
 Their venerable umbrage to retard
 The North's impetuous wing. As o'er the main
 In lucid rows the rising waves reflect
 The sun's effulgence, so the Grecian helms 70
 Return'd his light, which o'er their convex pour'd,
 And scatter'd splendour on the dancing plumes.
 Down rush'd the foe. Exulting in the van
 Their haughty leader shakes his threaten'g lance,
 And frowns defiance. Bursting from his rank 75
 Diomedon with instant fury fac'd
 Th' impending foes. Meantime he loudly calls
 Their chief Tigranes, whom he thus defies.

Now thou art met, Barbarian. Wouldst thou prove
 Thy actions equal to thy vaunts, command 80
 Thy troops to halt, while thou and I engage.

TIGRANES

That instant struggling to redeem his spear,
 The shiv'ring hand dissevers. Pale affright
 Unmans the Persian, while his active foe 100
 Full on his neck discharg'd the rapid sword,
 And open'd wide the purple gates of life.
 Low sinks Tigranes in eternal shade.
 The conqueror bestrides the prostrate dead,
 Then in the clotted ringlets of the hair 105
 His hand intertwining from the bleeding trunk
 The head disjoin'd, and whirl'd with sudden rage
 Amid the hostile numbers. All with dread
 Recoil, where'er the ghastly visage flew
 In fanguine circles, and pursu'd its track 110
 Of horror through the air. Not less amaz'd
 A barb'rous nation, whom the chearful dawn
 Of science ne'er illumin'd, view on high
 A meteor waving with portentous blaze;

Where

Book IV. L E O N I D A S. 123

Where oft, as superstition vainly dreams, 115

Some dæmon fits amid the baneful fires,

Dispersing plagues and desolation round.

A while the stern Diomedon remains

Triumphant o'er the dire dismay, which froze

The hearts of Persia, then with haughty port, 120

And fullen joy among his gladsome friends

Resumes his station. Still the Asian bands

With consternation motionless behold

Their foes with terrour, and suspend the fight;

When thus Phraortes animates their breasts. 125

H E A V ' N S ! can one leader's death appal this host,

Which counts a train of monarchs for its chiefs!

Behold Phraortes! from Imaüs' ridge

I draw my subject files. With hardy toil

I through the pathless forest have explor'd 130

The tiger's cavern. This unconquer'd arm
 Hath from the lion rent the shaggy spoil.
 So through this field of slaughter will I chase
 Yon vaunting Greek with ruin on his head
 For great Tigranes slain. His words revive 135
 The flame of valour through the drooping van,
 Then on the rear he brandishes his lance.
 Before him shrink th' affrighted croud, and roll
 Their numbers headlong on the Grecian steel
 With loose arrangement, and uncertain feet. 140
 Thus with his trident Ocean's angry God
 From its vast bottom turns the hideous mass
 Of waters upward, and o'erwhelms the beach.
 Terrific flood the fierce Plataean chief
 Amid the Grecian van. His ample targe, 145
 Like a strong bulwark, prominent he rais'd
 Before the line. There thunder'd all the storm

Of

Book IV. L E O N I D A S.

125

Of darts and arrows. His undaunted train

With emulating ardour charge the foe.

Where'er they turn the formidable spears,

150

Which drench'd the glebe of Marathon with gore,

The Persians heap the plain. Diomedon

Leads on the slaughter. From his nodding crest

The fable plumes shook terror. Asia's bands

All shudder backward at the dreadful beams

155

Of that unconquerable sword, which falls

With lightning's swiftness o'er their trembling heads,

And reeking still with slain Tigranes' blood

Their shatter'd ranks o'erturns. The furious chief

Incompass'd round with carnage, and besmear'd

160

With sanguine drops, inflames his warlike friends.

O DITHYRAMBUS! let thy deeds this day
Surmount their wonted lustre! Thou in arms,

Demophilus,

Demophilus, worn grey, thy youth recal!

Behold these slaves without resistance bleed. 165

Advance, my ancient friend. Propitious Fame

Smiles on thy years, and gives thy aged hand

To pluck fresh laurels for thy honour'd brow.

As, when indu'd with Promethéan heat,

The molten clay respir'd; with sudden warmth 170

So glows the venerable Thespian's age,

With new-born vigour ev'ry finew swells.

His falchion thund'ring on Cherafmes' helm

The forehead clove. Ecbatana to war

Sent forth Cherafmes. From her potent gates 175

He proud in hope her swarming numbers led,

With Ariazus and Pencestes join'd,

His martial brothers. They attend his doom

By Dithyrambus foil'd. Their hoary fire

Shall

Book IV. L E O N I D A S. 127

Shall o'er his solitary palace roam, 180
Lamenting loud his childless years, and curse
Ambition's fury, and the lust of war,
Then pining bow with anguish to the grave.
Next by the fierce Plataean's matchless sword
Expires Damates, once the host and friend 185
Of fall'n Tigranes; him that day he join'd,
And left his native bands. Of Syrian birth
In Daphne he resided near the grove,
Whose hospitable laurels in their shade
Conceal'd the virgin fugitive, that scorn'd 190
Th' embrace of Phœbus; hither she repair'd
Far from her parent stream, in fables feign'd
Herself a laurel to have rear'd her head
With verdant bloom in this retreat, the grove
Of Daphne call'd, the seat of rural bliss, 195
Fan'd by the wing of zephirs, and with rills

Of

Of bubbling founts irriguous, Syria's boast,
 And happy rival of Thessalia's vale;
 Now hid for ever from Damates' eyes.
 Nor with unactive spears th' Arcadians stood. 200
 Gigantic Clonius unresisted press'd
 The yielding Persians, who before him sunk,
 Crush'd like vile stubble underneath the steps
 Of some glad hind, who visits o'er the plain
 His new-thorn harvest. With a fearless eye 205
 Phraortes saw the gen'ral rout. He sprung
 O'er hills of carnage to confront the Greeks,
 Reproaching thus his own inglorious friends.

FLY then ye cowards, and desert your chief;
 Yet single here my falchion shall oppose 210
 The might of thousands. Raging thus, he drove
 The deathful steel through Ariftander's breast.

Him

Him Dithyrambus lov'd, a sacred bard
Rever'd for justice, for his verse renown'd,
Which sung the deeds of heroes, those, who fell, 215
Or those, who conquer'd in their country's cause,
Th' inraptur'd soul inspiring with the thirst
Of glory won by virtue. His high strain
The Muses favour'd from their neighb'ring groves,
And bless'd with heav'nly melody his lyre. 220
No more from Thespia shall his feet ascend
The shady steep of Helicon. No more
The streams divine of Aganippe's fount
His tuneful lip shall moisten, nor his hands
Present their off'rings in the Muses bow'r, 225
The prostrate shield and unforfaken lance
Now feebly grasping, never more to swell
His lofty numbers on the sounding string.
Lo! Dithyrambus weeps. Amid the rage

Of war and conquest a swift-gushing tear 230
 Finds one sad moment's interval to fall
 On his pale friend. But soon the victor proves
 His fierce revenge. Through shield and corselet plung'd,
 His furious javelin tore the Persian's chest. 235
 Phraortes sinks, nor yet expiring, sees
 With indignation Persia's myriads fly.
 Swift through their broken legions, side by side,
 Urg'd by the voice of Victory and Fame,
 Diomedon and Dithyrambus rang'd. 240
 So, where Alphéus heard the rattling car,
 And founding hoofs along his echoing banks,
 Two gen'rous courfers link'd in mutual reins
 With equal speed and ardour beat the dust
 To reach the glories of th' Olympic goal. 245

THIS from his lofty chariot Xerxes saw.
 He saw his numbers pouring from the straits
 In crowded flight, then spreading o'er the field,
 All broke and scatter'd ; as a river bursts
 Impetuous from its fountain, then expands 250
 Its limpid surface o'er the pastures broad.
 Thrice started from his seat th' astonish'd king,
 Shame, fear, and indignation rend his breast ;
 As ruin irresistible were near
 To overwhelm his millions. Haste (he calls 255
 To Hyperanthes) haste and meet the Greeks ;
 Their daring rage and insolence repel,
 And from dishonour vindicate our name.

THE godlike Hyperanthes through the tents
 Obedient moves. Deliberate and brave 260

Each active prince he summons, and with care
 Collects the hardiest troops. Around him soon
 Innumerable javelins flame. His voice
 Demands attention, when he thus began.

Now friends divide, and form two equal bands. 265
 One with the great Abrocomes, with me,
 With Intaphernes, and Hydarnes bold,
 With Mindus and Pandates shall advance,
 And snatch this short-liv'd victory from Greece.
 You Abradates with Pharnuchus join'd, 270
 Orontes, and Mazæus, keep the rest
 Imbattel'd ready to impart their aid,
 Shou'd envious Fate exhaust our num'rous ranks;
 For, O great Mithra, may thy radiant eye
 Ne'er see us, yielding to ignoble flight, 275
 The Persian fame dishonour, and the praise

Of our renown'd progenitors, who led
 By Cyrus gave a monarch to the world.
 Think, O ye princes, flow'r of Asia's realms,
 What endless infamy will blast your names, 280
 Should Greece, that narrow portion of the globe,
 Your arms defy; when Babylon hath low'r'd
 Its tow'ring head, when Lydia's pride is quell'd,
 And from Ecbatana its empire torn.
 Think too, ye warlike bands, our army's boast, 285
 What deeds are ask'd from your superiour swords;
 You, who our monarch's largest bounty share,
 You, to whose faith and valour he commits
 Himself, his queens, his realms, and now his fame.

 W H I L E Hyperanthes marshall'd thus his host, 290
 Far as th' extremest limit of the pass,
 Diomedon and Dithyrambus hung

Upon

Upon the rear of Persia. Now they turn
 Victorious, striding o'er th' impurpled heaps
 Of arms, and mangled dead, themselves with gore 295
 Distain'd; like two grim tigers, who have forc'd
 A nightly mansion on the desert rais'd
 By some lone-wandering traveller, and dy'd
 With human slaughter through the forest deep
 Back to their covert's dreary gloom retire. 300
 So pass'd these heroes o'er the crimson rock,
 Approaching now, where gasping on his shield
 Phraortes lay recumbent. Thespia's youth
 Advancing, thus his gen'rous soul express'd.

LIV'ST thou, brave Persian? By propitious Jove,
 From whom the pleasing sense of mercy flows 306
 Through mortal bosoms, less my soul rejoic'd,

When

When Fortune gave the victory before
Than now to raise thee from this field of death.

THE dying prince his languid sight unclos'd, 310
And thus with trembling lips. Vain man, forbear
To proffer me, what soon thyself must crave.
The day is now extinguish'd in these orbs,
Nor shall my heart beat longer than to scorn
Thy mercy, Grecian; then resign to fate. 315

HE ceas'd. The great, and haughty spirit fled.
Demophilus drew nigh. The hoary chief
Long o'er Phraortes' corse his head inclin'd,
Poiz'd on his lance, and thus address'd the slain.

ALAS! how glorious were that bleeding breast, 320
Had Justice giv'n the buckler to thy arm,

And

And to preserve a people bade thee die!
Who now shall mourn thee! Thy ungrateful king
Will soon forget thy worth. For thee no tears
Among thy native countrymen shall tell 325
The public sorrow; what to them avail'd
Thy might and dauntless spirit? Not to guard
Their wives and offspring from the spoil of war,
Not from their walls repel the hostile blaze,
Nor desolation from their fruitful fields, 330
But to extend oppression didst thou fall;
Perhaps with inborn virtues in thy heart,
Which, but thy angry destiny forbade,
By freedom cherish'd might have bless'd mankind.
All-bounteous Nature! thy impartial laws 335
To no selected race of men confine
The sense of glory, fortitude, and all
The nobler passions, which inspire the mind,

And

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And render life illustrious. These thou plant'st
In ev'ry soil. But freedom, like the sun, 340
Must warm the gen'rous seeds. By her alone
They bloom and flourish; while oppression blasts
The tender virtues: hence a spurious growth,
False honour, savage valour taint the soul,
And wild ambition: hence rapacious pow'r 345
The ravag'd earth unpeoples, and the brave,
A feast for dogs, bestrew th' infanguin'd plain.

HE said. Around the venerable man
The Grecians throng'd attentive. Conquest hush'd
Its joyful transports. O'er the horrid field, 350
Late the rude scene of tumult, all was calm.
So, when the song of Thracian Orpheus drew
To Hebrus' margin from their dreary seats
The savage race, which Hæmus wrapt in clouds,

T

Pangæus

Pangæus cold, and Rhodopeian fnows 355

In blood and difcord nurs'd; the fothing ftrain

Flow'd with enchantment through their ravish'd ears:

Their fiercenefs melted, and amaz'd they learn'd

The facred laws of juftice, which the bard

Mix'd with the mufick of his heav'nly ftring. 360

Not from the field of flaughter far remote

In Oeta's rugged fide had Nature clove

A rocky cavern. This with mofs fhe fpread,

And o'er the entrance downward from the roots

She hung the fhaggy trunks of branching firrs 365

To heav'n's hot ray impervious. From the fides

The vivid laurel fpread before the fun

Its broad and glitt'ring foliage; and, above,

The hill was darken'd with a folemn fhade

Caft from the fable cyprefs. This retreat 370

Cool,

Cool, as the grot of Thetis, hid beneath
The vaulted ocean, with the murim'ring sound
Of waters trickling from the riven stone
The Grecian leaders to its gloom invites.
Their helms they loosen, from their glowing cheeks. 375
Against the rock their bucklers they repose.
Propt on their spears they stood, when Agis thus,
Sent by Leonidas, accosts the chiefs.

O EVER-WORTHY of undying names!
Leonidas recals you from your toil, 380
Which has already fill'd our mouths with praise,
Our eyes with wonder, that from yonder tow'r
On your unequal'd deeds incessant gaz'd.

To whom the bold Diomedon return'd.
Go Agis, say to Lacedæmon's king, 385

As yet untir'd my hand can poize the spear,
Nor hangs the buckler heavy on my arm.
And shall I then retire? And once again
Shall not the sun, before he sink, behold
The slaves of Xerxes tremble at my lance.

390

To him the Thespian youth. My friend and guide
To noble actions, since thy gen'rous mind
Intent on fame disdains to rest, O grant,
I too thy glorious labours may partake,
And learn once more to imitate thy deeds.
Thou, gentlest Agis, Sparta's chief intreat
Not to command us from the field of war.

395

THEN interpos'd Demophilus. O friend,
And thou, lov'd offspring of the dearest man,
Who dost restore my brother to my eyes,
My soul your magnanimity applauds.

400

But,

But, O reflect, that unabating toil
Subdues the mightiest. Valour then will fight,
When the weak hand obeys the heart no more.
Yet I declining with the weight of years 405
Will not assign a measure to your strength;
If still you find your vigour undecay'd,
Stay and augment your glory. So, when time
Your heads shall whiten, and your feeble arms
Round the high temple's peaceful vault have hung 410
Their consecrated shields, your native land
Shall then with honours doubled on your age
Requite the gen'rous labours of your prime.
So spake the Senior, and forsook the cave.

Now from the bubbling spring Diomedon 415
Receives the waters in his concave helm;
And thus address'd the genius of the flood.

WHOE'ER thou art, whose deity presides
 O'er this fair fountain, bounteous are thy streams;
 Though ill shall I repay thee: for again 420
 Will I this day pollute thy silver wave,
 Which mix'd with gore shall tinge the Malian surge.

So saying from his brimming cask he quaff'd
 The clear, refreshing moisture. Thus repairs
 The spotted panther to Hydaspes' side, 425
 Or eastern Indus, feasted with the blood
 Of some torn deer, which nigh his cruel grasp
 Had roam'd unheeding through the secret grove:
 Rapacious o'er the humid brink he stoops,
 And in the pure and fluid crystal cools 430
 His reeking jaws. The Thespian warrior here.

SEE, valiant friend, Leonidas hath fill'd
The pass with fresh battalions. O survey
Yon line of plumed helms, and glitt'ring shields,
Which emulate the mid-day sun. What joy! 435
What ardent hope enlightens ev'ry face!
O let us wait no longer, lest they cry,
Our wearied limbs retard us. Let us arm,
And take our station in the glorious van.

THUS Dithyrambus. The Plataean chief 440
Approves the counsel, and resumes his arms.
Them as a splendid recompense he bore
From grateful Athens, when his conqu'ring sword
Her domes with great Miltiades redeem'd
From Asiatic flames. Th' insculptur'd helm 445
Now press'd his manly temples. From on high

A fourfold plumage nodded, and, beneath,
 A golden dragon with effulgent scales
 The gorgeous crest illumin'd. On his arm
 His shield he brac'd. Gorgonian serpents twin'd 450
 Around the spacious verge. Within, the form
 Of Pallas, martial goddess, was impress'd.
 Low, as her feet, the graceful tunic flow'd.
 Betwixt two gryffins on her helmet sat
 A sphinx with wings expanded, while the face 455
 Of dire Medusa on her bosom frown'd.
 One hand supports her javelin, which confounds
 The pride of kings; the other leads along
 A blooming virgin, Victory, whose brows
 A crown incircles; laurels she presents; 460
 But from her shoulders all her plumes were shorn,
 With favour'd Athens ever now to rest.
 This, Asia's terrour, on his mighty arm

Diomedon

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Diomedon uprear'd, then snatch'd his lance,
And thus to Dithyrambus. Lo! my friend, 465
Alone of all the Grecians, who sustain'd
The morning's battle, still unwearied stand
Platæa's sons, and well may keep the field,
They, who endur'd the Marathonian toil.
Then charge with us. Amid the foremost rank 470
Thy valour shall be plac'd, and share, this day,
Command and honour with Platæa's chief.

THE hero ceas'd, and tow'rd the Grecian van
Strides with impetuous steps. Nor slow behind
The boast of Thespia, Dithyrambus mov'd; 475
Like blooming Hermes in celestial arms,
When lightly graceful with his feather'd feet
Along Scamander's flow'ry verge he pass'd,
To aid th' incens'd divinities of Greece

Against the Phrygian tow'rs. With eager speed 480
 The heroes soon th' imbattled Greeks attain'd,
 To whom the brave Diomedon began.

NOT to contend, but vanquish are you come,
 And in the blood of fugitives to stain
 Your lances unoppos'd. My friends, behold, 485
 Where furthest from the Malian gulf remov'd
 The crags of Oeta less confine the straits.
 There let us bend extending wide our front.
 There with more ample scope may havoc range.

ALL with assent gave ear. The various bands 490
 Move on successive. The Plataeans first
 Against the rock are station'd. To their head
 Is Dithyrambus brought. Exulting joy
 Distends their hearts, and flashes in their eyes.
 Thanks to the great Diomedon, they cry, 495
 Who

Who to our troop this godlike hero joins.
 Hail! Dithyrambus. Hail! illustrious chief.
 Well dost thou merit to have reap'd renown
 At Marathon. Amid the glorious front
 With conscious gladness blushing on his cheek 500
 The youth his post assumes. Around him croud
 The hoary warriors their unnumber'd scars
 Before his fight presenting, and recount
 Their various dangers. He their wounds surveys
 With veneration, nor disdains to hear 505
 The oft-repeated tale. From Sparta's king
 Returning, Agis here the chiefs address'd,
 Leonidas permits you still to brave
 The hostile numbers, with Plataea's band,
 If yet by toil unconquer'd. But I see, 510
 That all unwearied ask the promis'd fight.
 Hail! glorious veterans. This signal day

May your victorious swords augment the wreaths
 Around your venerable brows, and make
 Thermopylæ, like Marathon, renown'd.

515

THIS said, he hastens back. Meantime advanc'd

The Mantinéan Diophantus brave,

And Hegesander, Tegea's dauntless chief,

With all their troops imbattled; by their side

The Thebans form; to them their native files

520

Alcmæon and Eupalamus unite;

Last on the margin of the Malian bay

Mycenæ's youth Aristobulus drew;

In one impenetrable phalanx stretch'd

Across the pass. With close-connected force

525

An hundred warriors form'd th' expanded ranks,

And thirty bucklers ev'ry file condens'd.

In strong reserve Dieneces behind

Dispos'd

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149

Dispos'd the Spartans, and the Locrian line.

There too with Maron Alpheus dauntless stood,

530

And godlike Agis. There Megistias plac'd

His blooming heir, and thus his valour fires.

O M E N A L I P P U S ! born of foreign race,

Yet by these heroes not unworthy deem'd

With them to fight for Sparta! lo! the hour

535

Is come, my son, to shew thy gen'rous heart;

That not with thee the buckler and the spear

Are ill intrusted to maintain a cause

So great and sacred. O remember well,

Leonidas on yonder bulwark stands,

540

Who all the war contemplates, and discerns

The bold and fearful. O propitious heav'n!

Grant me to hear Leonidas this day

Applaud my son, and let Megistias die!

W H I L E

WHILE thus he spake, the animated soul 545
 Of Menalippus struggling in his breast
 Demands the fight. This saw the tender fire,
 And thus with tears rejoin'd. Remember too!
 Thy father sees thy danger. Oh! my child!
 To me thy honour as to thee is dear; 550
 Yet court not death! By all thy filial love,
 By all my cares and fondness I implore!
 Amid the combat, or the warm pursuit,
 Still by the wife Dieneces abide :
 His prudent valour knows th' unerring paths 555
 Of glory; he will guide thy youthful steps.
 This said, to Sparta's leader he retires.

Now are the enemies descried. The van
 Abrocomes and Hyperanthes led,

Book IV. LEONIDAS.

151

With them Pandates, Intaphernes proud, 560
Hydarnes, Mindus. Violent their march

With founding footsteps swept the stony way.

So, where th' unequal globe in mountains swells,

A river pours its thund'ring surge between

The steep-erected cliffs; tumultuous roll 565

The torrents bursting o'er the pointed crags:

The mountains roar, the marble channel foams.

With obvious arms th' intrepid Greeks withstand

The dire encounter. Soon th' impetuous shock 570
Of thousands and of myriads shakes the ground.

Stupendous scene of terrour! Under hills,

Whose nodding summits vaulted o'er their heads,

In unextinguishable fury join'd

The dreadful conflict. With inverted trunks

Obliquely bending from the shagged ridge 575

The sylvan horrors overshadow the fight.

The

The shrill-mouth'd trumpet, and the deep-tun'd horn,
Mix'd with the crash of intermingling spears,
The clanging shields, and war's discordant shouts
Awake the echoes through the neighb'ring groves; 580
And rocks and shores return the hideous sound.

End of the Fourth Book.

LEONIDAS.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK V.

The argument.

Hyperanthes discontinuing the fight, while he waits for reinforcements, Teribazus, a Persian remarkable for his merit and learning, and highly belov'd by Hyperanthes, but unhappy in his passion for Ariana, a daughter of Darius, advances from the rest of the army to the rescue of a friend in distress, who lay wounded on the field of battle. Teribazus, is attack'd by Diophantus, the Mantinéan, whom he overcomes, then engaging with Dithyrambus, is himself slain. Hyperanthes hastens to his succour. A general battle ensues. Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, partly by their own valour, and partly by the perfidy of the Thebans, who desert the line, being on the point of forcing the Grecians, are repuls'd by the Lacedæmonians. Hyperanthes composes a select body out of the Persian standing forces, and making an improvement in their discipline renews the attack; upon which Leonidas changes the disposition of his army: Hyperanthes and the ablest Persian generals are driven out of the field, and several thousands of the Barbarians, circumvented in the pass, are entirely destroy'd.

AMID the van of Persia was a youth
 Nam'd Teribazus, not for golden stores,
 Not for wide pastures travers'd o'er with herds,
 With bleating thousands, or with bounding steeds,
 Nor yet for pow'r, nor splendid honours fam'd. 5
 Rich was his mind in ev'ry art divine,
 And through the paths of science had he walk'd
 The votary of wisdom. In the years,
 When tender down invests the ruddy cheek,
 He with the Magi turn'd the hallow'd page 10
 Of Zoroastres; then his tow'ring soul
 High on the plumes of contemplation soar'd,
 And from the lofty Babylonian fane
 With learn'd Chaldæans trac'd the mystic sphere;
 There number'd o'er the vivid fires, that gleam 15
 Upon the dusky bosom of the night.

Nor

Nor on the sands of Ganges were unheard
The Indian fages, from sequefter'd bow'rs
While, as attention wonder'd, they disclos'd
The pow'rs of nature ; whether in the woods, 20
The fruitful glebe, or flow'r, or healing plant,
The limpid waters, or the ambient air,
Or in the purer element of fire.
The fertile plains, where great Sefoftris reign'd,
Mysterious Ægypt next the youth survey'd, 25
From Elephantis, where impetuous Nile
Precipitates his waters, to the sea,
Which far below receives the sev'nfold stream.
Thence o'er th' Ionic coast he stray'd, nor pass'd
Milétus by, which once inraptur'd heard 30
The tongue of Thales, nor Priene's walls,
Where Wisdom dwelt with Bias, nor the feat
Of Pittacus along the Lesbian shore.

Here too melodious numbers charm'd his ear,
Which flow'd from Orpheus, and Musæus old, 35
And thee, O father of immortal verse,
Mæonides, whose strains through ev'ry age
Time with his own eternal lip shall sing.
Back to his native Susa then he turn'd
His wandring steps. His merit soon was dear 40
To Hyperanthes generous and good.
And Ariana from Darius sprung
With Hyperanthes, of th' imperial race,
Which rul'd th' extent of Asia, in disdain
Of all her greatness oft an humble ear 45
To him would bend, and listen to his voice.
Her charms, her mind, her virtue he explor'd
Admiring. Soon was admiration chang'd
To love, nor lov'd he sooner, than despair'd.
But unreveal'd and silent was his pain; 50
Nor

Nor yet in solitary shades he roam'd,
 Nor shun'd resort: but o'er his sorrows cast
 A sickly dawn of gladness, and in smiles
 Conceal'd his anguish; while the secret flame
 Rag'd in his bosom, and its peace consum'd: 55
 His heart still brooding o'er these mournful thoughts.

CAN I, O wisdom, seek relief from thee,
 Who dost approve my passion? From the pow'r
 Of beauty only thou wouldst guard my heart.
 But here thyself art charm'd, where softness, grace, 60
 And ev'ry virtue dignify desire;
 Yet thus to love despairing is to prove
 The sharpest sorrow, which relentless Fate
 Can from her store of woes inflict on life:
 But dost not thou this moment warn my soul 65
 To fly the fatal charmer? Do I pause?

Back

Back to the wife Chaldæans will I go,
 Or wander on the Ganges; where to heav'n
 With thee my elevated soul shall tow'r,
 With thee the secrets of the earth unveil. 70
 There no tumultuous passion shall molest
 My tranquil hours, and ev'ry thought be calm.
 O wretched Teribazus! all conspires
 Against thy peace. Our mighty lord prepares
 To overwhelm the Grecians. Ev'ry youth 75
 Attends the war, and I, who late have poiz'd
 With no inglorious arm the soldier's lance,
 And near the side of Hyperanthes fought,
 Must join the throng. How therefore can I fly
 From Ariana! who with Asia's queens 80
 The splendid camp of Xerxes will adorn.
 Then be it so. Again I will adore
 Her gentle virtue. Her delightful tongue,

Her graceful sweetness shall again diffuse
Resistless magic through my ravish'd heart; 85
And thus when love with double rage inflam'd
Swells to distraction in my tortur'd breast,
Then—But in vain through darkness do I search
My fate: despair and fortune be my guides.

THE hour arriv'd, when Xerxes first advanc'd 90
His arms from Susa's gates. The Persian dames
(So were accustom'd all the eastern fair)
In sumptuous cars accompanied his march;
And Ariana grac'd the beauteous train.
From morn till ev'ning Teribazus guards 95
Her passing wheels; his arm her weight sustains
With trembling pleasure often, as she mounts
Th' imperial chariot; his assiduous hand
From each pure fountain wafts the living flood:

Nor

Nor feldom by the fair-one's foft command 100
 Would he repose him at her feet reclin'd,
 While o'er his lips her lovely forehead bow'd
 Won with his grateful eloquence, that sooth'd
 With sweet variety the tedious march,
 Beguiling time. He too would then forget 105
 His cares awhile, in raptures vain intranc'd,
 Delusion all, and fleeting rays of joy
 Soon overcast with more intense despair;
 Like wintry clouds, which op'ning for a time
 Tinge their black skirts with scatter'd beams of day; 110
 Then swiftly closing, on the brows of Morn
 Condense their horrors, and in thickest gloom
 The ruddy beauty veil. Such woes opprefs'd
 The Persian's heart, not soften'd; for this day
 His daring valour from the bleeding van 115
 Oppos'd the frown of adamantine Mars.

With

With no tiara were his temples bound,
The slender lance of Asia he disdain'd,
And her light target. Eminent he mov'd
In Grecian arms the wonder of his foes. 120
Among th' Ionians had his strenuous limbs
In war been practis'd. A resplendent cask
Flam'd on his head. Before his face and chest
Down to the knees his ample shield was spread.
A pond'rous ash with skillful hands he grasp'd. 125
Thus arm'd, tremendous in the front he stood.
Beneath his might two bold Phlians died,
And three Tegeans, whose indignant chief,
Brave Hegesander, vengeance breath'd in vain
With streaming wounds repuls'd. Thus far unmatch'd
His strength prevail'd, when Hyperanthes' voice 131
Recall'd his fainting legions. Now each band
Their languid courage reforc'd with rest.

Meantime with Teribazus thus confer'd
 The godlike prince. Thou much-deserving youth! 135
 O had thy deeds with emulation warm'd
 The frozen hearts of Persia, Greece had wept
 Her prostrate ranks, not triumph'd in our shame.
 Relaxing now the wearied fight I wait,
 Till from the camp with Abradates strong 140
 The brave Pharnuchus and Mazæus move,
 And with fresh pow'rs renew the drooping war.
 For since surpass'd in valour, we must waste
 By endless numbers, and continual toil
 The matchless ardour of our gallant foes. 145

HE said. Immers'd in sadness scarce replied,
 But to himself thus plain'd the am'rous youth.

STILL

STILL do I languish mourning o'er the fame,
 My arm acquires. O wretched heart! thou feat
 Of constant sorrow, what deceitful smiles 150
 Yet canst thou borrow from illusive hope
 To flatter life. At Ariana's feet
 What if with supplicating knees I bow'd,
 Implor'd her pity, and reveal'd my love?
 Wretch, canst thou climb to yon effulgent orb, 155
 And share the splendours which irradiate heav'n?
 Dost thou aspire to that exalted maid,
 Great Xerxes' sister, rivalling the hopes
 Of Asia's purpled potentates and kings?
 Unless within her bosom I inspir'd 160
 A passion fervent as my own, nay more,
 Such as might dissipate each virgin fear,
 And unrestrain'd disclose its fond desire,

My hopes are fruitless. Plung'd in black despair

He thus revolv'd, when suddenly the cries 165

Of Aribæus smote his pensive ear.

By mutual danger, and by friendship join'd,

They had been long companions in the toils

Of war. Together with victorious steps

The fons of Nile they chas'd, when Ægypt's pride 170

Before the arms of Hyperanthes fell.

Stretch'd on the plain, and cover'd o'er with wounds,

By all abandon'd, Teribazus views

His gallant friend. His languid soul awakes,

And forth he issues from the Persian line. 175

The bleeding warrior in his strong embrace

Swift he conveys. By indignation fir'd

Fierce from the Grecians Diophantus rush'd

With loud defiance. Teribazus leaves

His rescu'd friend. His massy targe he rears, 180

Advances

Advances high his formidable spear,
And turns intrepid on th' approaching foe.
Amazement follow'd. On he strode, and shook
The plumed honours of his shining crest.
Th' ill-fated Greek awaits th' unequal fight; 185
Pierc'd in the throat with sounding arms he falls;
Through ev'ry band the Mantinéans mourn.
Upon the slain the victor fix'd his fight,
And thus reflected. By thy splendid arms
Thou art a Greek of no ignoble rank, 190
And from thy fall perhaps am I adorn'd
With more conspicuous lustre. What if heav'n
Should add new victims, like thyself, to grace
My undeserving hand, who knows, but she
Might smile upon my trophies. Oh! vain thought! 195
Disperse ye fantome hopes! Too long, my heart,
Hast thou in vain contended with thy woes!

I stand this moment on the verge of life,
 By fame invited, by despair impell'd
 To pass th' irremovable bound. No more 200
 Shall Teribazus backward turn his steps,
 But here decide his fate. Then beat no more,
 Thou troubled heart, and ev'ry grief be still
 Now at th' approach of everlasting peace.

HE ended, when a mighty foe drew nigh; 205
 Not less than Dithyrambus. E'er they join'd,
 The Persian thus the Thespian youth address'd.

SAY, art not thou th' unconquerable Greek,
 Whose dauntless valour mow'd our battle down,
 And scatter'd nations? To attempt thy force 210
 This day I purpos'd, when our chiefs from fight
 Their host withdrew? That now my single arm

I

Thou

Thou deign'ft to meet, receive my thanks; and know,
The thought of conquest lefs employs my mind,
Than that by thee I cannot fall with fhame. 215

HE ceas'd. Thefe words the Thefpian chief return'd.
Of all the praifes from thy gen'rous mouth
The only fhare, which juftice bids me claim,
Is, that I here adventure to confront
Thy matchlefs ftrength. Believe not, that unmark'd 220
Were thy great deeds. From yon unbounded camp
None yet hath equall'd thy victorious hand.
But whence thy armour of the Grecian form?
Whence thy tall fpear? thy helmet? whence the weight
Of that ftiong fhield unlike thy eaftern friends? 225
O if thou be'ft fome fugitive, who, loft
To liberty and virtue, art become
A tyrant's vile ftipendiary; with grief

That

That valour, thus triumphant, I behold,
 Which after all its danger, and brave toil 230
 Deserves no honour from the Gods, or men.

HERE Teribazus with a sigh return'd.
 I am to Greece a stranger, and a wretch
 To thee unknown, who seek, this hour, to die;
 Though not ignobly, but in death to raise 235
 My name from darkness, while I end my woes.

THE Grecian then. I view thee, and I mourn.
 A dignity, which virtue only bears,
 And resolution on thy brow enthron'd
 (Though grief hath dim'd thy drooping eye) demand
 My veneration; and whatever be 241
 The malice of thy fortune, what the cares,
 Which thus infest thy quiet, they create

Within

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Within my breast the pity of a friend :
Why hast thou then compell'd me to oppose 245
My arm against thee, while thy might supports
Th' unjust ambition of malignant kings,
The foes to virtue, liberty, and peace?
Yet free from rage, or enmity I lift
My adverse javelin. Victory I ask, 250
Thy life may fate for happier hours reserve.

THIS said, their beaming lances they pretend,
Of hostile hate, or fury both devoid ;
As on the Isthmian, or Olympic sand
For fame alone contending. Either host 255
Pois'd on their spears in silent wonder gaz'd.
The fight begins, when soon the Grecian lance,
Which all the day in constant battle worn
Unnumber'd shields and corselets had transfix'd,

Z

Against

Against the Persian target, shiv'ring breaks, 260
 Its master's hand disarming. Then began
 The sense of honour, and the dread of shame
 To swell in Dithyrambus. Undismay'd
 He grapples with the foe, and instant seiz'd
 The threatening javelin, e'er th'uplifted arm 265
 Could execute the meditated wound.
 The weapon burst betwixt their struggling hands.
 They loose their grasp, and bare their shining swords.
 With equal swiftness to defend, or charge,
 Each active youth advances, or recedes. 270
 On ev'ry side they traverse, now direct,
 Obliquely now the wheeling blades descend.
 Still is the conflict dubious, when the Greek
 Dissembling points his falchion to the earth,
 His arm depress'd, as overcome with toil; 275
 While with his buckler cautious he repels

The blows repeated from th' exulting foe.
Greece trembles for her hero. Joy pervades
The Asian ranks, and Hyperanthes strides
Before the line, preparing to receive 280
His friend triumphant. Teribazus now
Press'd with redoubled efforts. Still the Greek
Sustains th' assault defensive, and at last,
As with unguarded fury of his strokes
Th' unwary Persian sideways swung his targe, 285
The fatal moment Dithyrambus watch'd,
And darting forward with his feet outstretch'd
His falchion buries in th' obnoxious side.
Affection, grief, and terrour wing the speed
Of Hyperanthes. From his bleeding foe 290
The Greek retires, not distant, and awaits
The eastern prince. But he with wat'ry cheeks,
And dumb with sorrow clasps his dying friend,

From whose cold lip with interrupted phrase
These accents broke. O dearest, best of men! 295
My heart is fruitful with ten thousand thoughts
Of gratitude and love to thee; but fate
Denies my voice the utterance. O my friend!
O Hyperanthes! hear my tongue unfold
What thou shouldst ne'er have known before this hour;
When, as I open all my secret soul, 305
I may at once retire, and veil my eyes
In endless night: nor thou presumption deem
What with my dying breath I here divulge.
I love thy sister. With despair I lov'd, 305
And thence perhaps untimely is my date;
Though, witness heav'n, without regret I bleed
With honour thus in Persia's fight and thine.

HE ceas'd: th' inexorable hand of Fate
 Weigh'd down his eyelids, and the gloom of death 310
 His fleeting fight eternally o'er shades.
 Him on Choaspes o'er the blooming verge
 His frantic mother shall bewail, and strew
 Her silver tresses in the crystal tide;
 While all the shore re-echoes to the name 315
 Of Teribazus lost. Th' afflicted prince
 The pallid corse contemplating with tears,
 Thus in the bitterness of grief exclaims.

OH! Teribazus. Oh! my friend, whose loss
 I will deplore for ever. Oh! what pow'r 320
 To me and thee averse thus clos'd thy breast
 To Hyperanthes with distrust unkind.
 She should, she must have lov'd thee. Now no more
Thy

Thy friendly aspect shall delight my eyes,
 While in remembrance thy unequal'd worth 325
 Will live for ever to remind my grief
 Of what I lost. O Sufa, if again
 Thee I revisit from this hostile land,
 Far from the clamours of tumultuous war,
 Then shall my hours be vacant to complaint, 330
 Whole years shalt thou be witness, while I mourn,
 And Ariana shall assist my woes.
 Let fiercest vengeance now possess my soul.

 HE said, and ardent rushes on the Greek,
 Who, while his noble enemy expir'd, 335
 And Hyperanthes snatch'd with tender arms
 The last embraces from his gasping friend,
 Stood near reclin'd in sadness o'er his shield,
 And in the pride of victory repin'd,

Nor

Nor mark'd his threatning foe: when swift approach'd
Diomedon. Before the Thespian youth 341
Aloft he rais'd his targe, and loudly thus.

HOLD thee, Barbarian, from a life more worth,
Than thee, and Xerxes, with his host of slaves.

HIS words he seconds with his rapid lance. 345
Soon a tremendous conflict had ensu'd,
But Intaphernes, Mindus, and the half
Of Persia's leaders anxious for the life
Of Hyperanthes pour'd with all their bands
Betwixt th' encountring chiefs. With mutual wrath 350
They strove in vain the combat to renew.
So rage two bulls upon th' opposing banks
Of some deep flood, which parts the fruitful mead;

Defiance.

Defiance thunders from their angry mouths
 In vain; in vain the furrow'd earth they rend: 355
 Wide rolls the stream, and intercepts the war.
 The fierce Platæan fatiates his revenge
 On vulgar lives. Before his dreaded arm
 Whole ranks are scatter'd. But the Persian prince
 Borne down the strefs of battle gains the shore, 360
 Where then the brave Abrocomes advanc'd;
 With him Orontes and Pharnuchus stood,
 Mazæus, Abradates fam'd in arms,
 And all the boldest of the eastern chiefs
 Begirt with fresh battalions: here with speed 365
 Abrocomes his brother thus bespake.

To Intaphernes is Pandates sent
 With charge to harrafs in perpetual fight
 The Grecians next the mountains. Thou with me

And

Book V. L E O N I D A S. 177

And these unite thy valour. Here the flow'r 370
Of all our army is together drawn,
Here all the weight of battle will impend.
He said. The godlike Hyperanthes seeks
The dang'rous van. He heads the splendid throng
Of satraps, princes, and imperial pow'rs ; 375
Themselves the lords of nations, who before
The throne of Xerxes tributary bow'd.
Now mix'd the war. Th' inverted javelins gleam
From ev'ry part, and fell Bellona roars.

Who first distain'd with Persian blood his sword ? 380
Eupalamus. Artembares he slew
And Derdas fierce, whom Caucasus had rear'd
On its tempestuous brow, the savage sons
Of violence and rapine; but their doom
Great Hyperanthes marks: his angry lance 385

Arrests the victor in his haughty course.

Beneath the strong Abrocomes o'erwhelm'd,

Meliffus swells the number of the dead.

None could Mycenæ boast of prouder birth

Than young Meliffus; blooming, as the son

390

Of Maia, all in radiant arms he grac'd

The front of battle; he in Cirrha's vale,

Where high Parnassus from its double top

O'er shades the Pythian games, the envied prize

Of fame obtain'd: low sinks his laurell'd head

395

In death's cold night, and horrid gore deforms

His graceful locks. Impatient for revenge

Aristobulus strides before the van.

A storm of fury darkens all his brow.

Around he rolls his gloomy eye, and marks

400

Achæmenes for death, of regal blood

Deriv'd from Cræsus, once th' imperial lord

Of

Of nations; him the nymphs of Halys wept,
When with delusive oracles beguil'd
By Delphi's God, he pass'd their fatal waves 405
A mighty empire to dissolve: nor knew
Th' ill-destin'd king, that envious Fortune watch'd
That dreadful moment from his hand to wrest
The scepter of his fathers. In the shade
Of humble life his race on Tmolus' brow 410
Lay hid, 'till rous'd to battle here his breath
Achæmenes resigns. Then Lycis bled
For horrid war ill-chosen. He was skill'd
To tune the lulling flute, and melt the heart;
Or with his pipe's awak'ning strains invite 415
The lovely dames of Lydia to the dance:
They graceful o'er the verdant level mov'd
In varied measures, while the cooling breeze
Beneath their swelling garments wanton'd o'er

Their snowy breasts, and smooth Cayster's wave 420
 Soft-gliding murmur'd by. His op'ning chest
 Pours forth his entrails, and supine he falls.
 Not long the Grecian triumphs. From the slain
 In all the pride of conquest as he rends
 His reeking javelin, Hyperanthes' steel 425
 His knee invades, and bursts the finewy cords.
 The Mycenæans with uplifted shields,
 Corinthians, and Phliansians gather round
 The wounded Grecian. With redoubled rage
 The conflict glows. Abrocomes incites 430
 Each Persian leader; all obey his voice;
 Here Abradates, there Mazæus press'd,
 Orontes, and Hydarnes; none retire
 From toil, or peril: urg'd on ev'ry side
 The Greeks at length th' abandon'd chief resign. 435
 Despairing, raging, destitute he stands

Propt on his spear; his wound forbids retreat.
None, but his brother Eumenes, abide
The dire extremity. His shield defends
The fainting chief, till Hyperanthes' sword 440
Full on his arm its dreadful weight discharg'd.
Down with the buckler drops the fever'd hand,
Nor quits its grasp. Now sink the wretched pair
Beneath the Persian's unresisted steel:
From both their breasts the vital currents flow, 445
And mix their streams. Elate the Persians roll
Their deepning legions on the foes dismay'd.
The Greeks their station painfully maintain.
This soon the faithless Anaxander saw,
When thus to Leontiades he spake. 450

THIS is the time to aid our Persian friends.
Behold the Greeks are press'd. Let Thebes retire,
And yield a bloodless conquest to the king.

THE Thebans streight desert the broken line
 Not with unpunish'd treachery; the spears 455
 Of fierce Orontes, and Pharnuchus join'd
 With Mindus gor'd their shameful flight, and thin'd
 Their bleeding files. Meantime, as he who rul'd
 Than Jove more antient on the throne of heav'n,
 When from the womb of Chaos dark the world 460
 Emerg'd to birth, where'er he view'd the jar
 Of atoms yet discordant and unform'd,
 Confusion thence with pow'rful voice dispell'd,
 Till light and order universal reign'd ;
 So from the wall Leonidas explor'd 465
 The various war. He saw the Theban rout,
 That Corinth, Phlius, and Mycenæ look'd
 Affrighted backward; instantly he charg'd
 The fons of Lacedæmon to repair

The

Book V. L E O N I D A S. 183

The difunitèd phalanx. E'er they move 470

Dieneces inſpires them. Fame, my friends,

Calls forth your valour in a ſignal hour;

For you this glorious period ſhe reſerv'd

To vindicate the Spartan name. He ſpoke.

On either ſide ſupported by the might. 475

Of Agis and of Alpheus he conducts

His gen'rous troop, who riveting their ſhields

In denſe array indiffolubly firm

Confront the Perfians, and with death repulſe

Their ſcatter'd numbers; when with efforts vain 480

They oft renew'd the conteſt, and recoil'd

As oft confounded with diminifh'd ranks,

Thus Hyperanthes counſell'd. Learn, O chiefs,

From whence alone ſucceſs can grace our arms.

Theſe are a band ſelectèd from the Greeks, 485

Unlike the others, whom we lately chas'd;

Perhaps

Perhaps the Spartans, whom we oft have heard
 By Demaratus prais'd. To break their line
 False is the hope, while unarray'd, and lax,
 And wanting union singly we assail 490
 Their strength collected. Do not we prelide
 O'er Asia's myriads, and our valour boast,
 And martial arts above the vulgar herd?
 Let us, ye chiefs, attempt in order'd ranks
 To join our force, and emulate the foe. 495

THEY wait not dubious. Soon a dreadful line
 From Oeta's mountain to the shore extends,
 Compos'd of all the leaders, Mindus bold,
 Pharnuchus, and Mazæus, and the strength
 Of fierce Abrocomes, with each, who bore 500
 The highest honours, and excell'd in war.
 To these succeed a chosen number drawn

From

Book V. L E O N I D A S. 185

From those, whom Asia boasts her bravest sons,
Who from their king perpetual stipends share ;
And station'd round his provinces by arms 505
His tyranny sustain. In ev'ry part
Is Hyperanthes seen with active care
To form the huge battalion. Soon they stand
In just array, when cautious, lest their march
Might still relax their order, Persia's prince 510
Amid the center of the foremost rank
Orontes plac'd, committing to his hand
Th' imperial standard ; whose expanded folds
Glow'd in the air, presenting to the sun
The richest dye of Tyre : the royal bird 515
Amid the gorgeous tincture shone express'd
In flaming gold. On this the eastern chief
Commands each Persian station'd in the front
To turn his eyes regardful, and to guide

His flow and equal feet by this alone 520
 Retiring, or advancing. Next he charg'd,
 That ev'ry warrior through the num'rous files,
 Observing none but those before him rang'd,
 Should watch their motions, and their steps pursue.
 Close by the standard then th' intrepid chief 525
 His post assumes, and animates the band.

ILLUSTRIOUS warriors, whose unconquer'd arms
 Rebellious Ægypt, and the Libyan felt,
 Think what the splendour of your former deeds
 From you demands; remember, from the great 530
 Heroic actions are a debt to fame.
 No middle course remains for them to tread,
 Whom she hath once ennobled; and this hour
 Or with fresh trophies will enlarge your praise,
 Or will for ever with dishonour blast. 535

THE hero said, and all to fight proceed.
As when tempestuous Eurus stems the weight
Of western Neptune struggling through the straits,
Which bound Alcides' labours; here the storm
With rapid wing reverberates the tide, 540
There the contending surge with furrow'd tops
To mountains swells, and whelming o'er the beach
On either coast invests with hoary foam
The Mauritanian and Iberian strand:
Not with less rage in hideous onset meet 545
The Grecians and Barbarians. These preserve
Their foremost ranks unbroken, where was drawn
The prime of Asia's warriors; and the croud,
Though still promiscuous pouring from behind,
Yet added pressure to th' imbattled chiefs 550
With endless numbers. Like the mural strength

Of some proud city bulwark'd round, and arm'd
 With rising tow'rs to guard her wealthy stores;
 Immoveable, impenetrable stood
 The ferried phalanx of the Greeks. Behind, 555
 Their country spread, their fields with plenty crown'd,
 Their native walls and habitations lay
 With each dear pledge of friendship and of love:
 High in the Persian van th' exalted lance
 Of Hyperanthes flam'd. Beside him press'd 560
 Abrocomes, Hydarnes, and the bulk
 Of Abradates terrible in war.
 And here the great Dieneces upheld
 His shield's expanded surface, and alone
 Firm, as a Memphian pyramid, sustain'd. 565
 The strefs of thousands. Alpheus here unmov'd,
 And Agis there connect their spacious orbs,
 With Menalippus wife Megisthias' heir.

Book V. L E O N I D A S. 189

In one impervious line. Long time the hofts
Maintain in strong and unrelax'd array 570
The conflict undecided; nor could Greece
Repel the adverse numbers, nor the force
Of Asia's myriads could remove the Greeks.

BUT now from Sparta's king, who soon discern'd
The Persian's new arrangement, Medon haftes, 575
Th' illustrious chief of Locris, from the race
Of Ajax sprung in Trojan fields renown'd:
To wife Dienece he thus began.

L E O N I D A S commands the Grecian line
To yield before the Persians, and with speed 580
To measure back some paces. Soon, he deems,
The unexperienc'd foe in wild pursuit
Will break their order. Then the charge renew;

Let Agis, join'd with Alpheus, from the line
Rush with Laconia's troop imbattled deep, 585
And force a passage through the Barb'rous host ;
Thou with a strong battalion from the sons
Of Locris drawn must follow swift, and reach
The Spartans led by Agis ; with the rest
Of Locris' youth shall I advance to fill 590
Your vacant station, and the line maintain ;
While in the narrow entrance, where the pass
Looks o'er the Malian plain on Persia's camp,
Do thou arrange to intercept the foe,
Should Asia pour fresh succours from her tents : 595
Then Xerxes soon the slaughter shall deplore
Of all these thousands in the straits inclos'd
For sure destruction ; and the Gods of Greece
Behold their temples with profusion grac'd

Book V. L E O N I D A S. 191

Of splendid off'rings from Barbarian spoils 600
Won by their free-born supplicants this day.

 T H I S heard, Dienece obedient gave
Through ev'ry band the signal of retreat,
When all at once drew backward. Persia stop'd,
As with amazement rooted to the earth 605
At unexpected conquest; 'till the voice
Of fierce Abrocomes their minds awakes
With these triumphant accents. By the fun
They fly before us. My victorious friends,
Delay you then to enter Greece? Away, 610
Rush on undaunted. I already hear,
Our horse and chariots thund'ring o'er their plains,
And view their towns involv'd in Persian fires.

HE said. With hurried violence they roll
Tumultuous forward. All with headlong pace 615
Wide from their ranks expatiate in pursuit,
Disjoin their order, and the line dissolve.
This when the sage Dieneces descries,
The Grecians halt returning to the charge
With sudden onset. In a moment, pierc'd 620
By Lacedæmon's chief, Orontes falls,
And quits th' imperial banner; this the Greek
In triumph waves, and gives the dreadful sign.
At once with Agis tow'ring in the front,
And rapid Alpheus all Laconia's band 625
In deep arrangement bursting from the line
Bear down with irrefistible career
The eastern legions, shatter'd and o'erturn'd
With all their standards trampled on the plain.

Book V. L E O N I D A S. 193

As the fwift vefsel, when a rifing gale 630

Distends the canvafs, its refiftlefs courfe

Impells through millions of oppofing waves;

Through the Barbarian multitudes fo pierc'd

The Spartan wedge. Invincible o'er hills

Of arms, and mangled corfes they imprefs 635

Their crimfon footsteps. Perfia's braveft chiefs,

Ev'n Hyperanthes from the line is driv'n ;

And flying thoufands through the pafs are fwep't

Before the Spartans. With a Locrian troop

Of hideous depth Dieneces purfues 640

His conqu'ring friends, and hews his purple way

Through Afia's numbers, which again were clos'd

In vain: himfelf unconquerable leads

Deftruction on, and heaps the rock with death.

But on the broken foe what ruin falls 645

From Alpheus' fword? O'er all in fwift purfuit

C c

Was

Was he renown'd. His rapid feet had match'd
The son of Peleus in the dusty course,
Or had he run for Atalanta's love,
He had rejected Cytheræa's aid; 650
Nor of her swiftness to beguile the fair
Before her steps had thrown the golden balls.
But now the wrongs, the long-remember'd wrongs
Of Polydorus animate his strength
With tenfold vigour; guided by revenge 655
His falchion reddens with Barbarian blood;
The gory drops besprinkled all his shield,
Like crimson poppies o'er the yellow plain.
As when with horror wing'd a whirlwind rends
A shatter'd navy; from the ocean cast, 660
Th' enormous fragments hide the sandy beach:
Thus o'er the rock the Persians lay bestrewn.
By Alpheus raging in the swift pursuit.

Book V. L E O N I D A S. 195

Not with feverer pangs the God of day
The Theban queen afflicted, when incens'd 665
With her proud vaunts he hurl'd her blooming race
From youth and beauty to the pale abodes;
Than now distracted Hyperanthes' soul,
As round him, bleeding by the Spartan's lance,
His noblest friends lay gasping. Oft he strove 670
To turn his flying legions, oft the fight
With Abradates and his brother's force
Renews, against insuperable foes
In vain repugnant; till by all around
Deserted, mixing with the gen'ral rout 675
He yields to fortune, and the field forsakes.
So with relapsing waves the ebbing tide
Beats for a time against the shelving strand,
Still by degrees retiring, and at last
Within the bosom of the main subsides. 680

Mark'd all the great vicissitudes of fight,
 And rul'd the course of slaughter, had conceiv'd
 To whelm the num'rous, long-resisting foe
 In hideous death, and signalize the day
 With horrors new to war. As o'er the wall, 700
 His constant station, darting through the straits
 His watchful eye, e'er yet the battle clos'd,
 He view'd the hostile myriads swarming down,
 And nations still succeeding from the camp
 Immense, exhaustless, by an horrid length 705
 Of clust'ring helms, and shields, and threatening spears
 Join'd to the Grecian van; the wary chief,
 Left by the long-protracted fight his Greeks
 Might yield o'erlabour'd, from the Locrians chose
 A thousand warriors. These by Maron led 710
 Ascend the mountain, which o'erhung the pass.
 His charge he soon reveals. A thousand hands

At

At once with restless pains assemble stones
 Of hugest bulk, and wither'd trunks upturn
 In elder times by whirlwinds from the grove. 715
 Unwearied then they loosen from the rocks
 Broad, craggy fragments; from the mountain hew'd
 Its venerable firs, and aged oaks
 Of wide circumference, and knotted strength,
 Which of their branches by the lightning bared, 720
 Presented still against its blasting flame
 Their hoary pride unshaken. These the Greeks
 Roll heavy on, with massy leavers heave,
 Or drag with strong-knit cables, till they reach,
 Where o'er the Persian multitudes inclin'd 725
 The mountain's edge; so lofty, that the voice
 Of war below there lost its deafning roar,
 And soften'd into murmurs. Still his post,
 Though Hyperanthes from the field was driv'n,

With

Book V. L E O N I D A S. 199

With thronging numbers Intaphernes bold 730

Beneath the shade of this incumbent hill

Against the fierce Diomedon maintain'd;

Great Intaphernes, progeny of kings,

Whom o'er Damascus, and the Syrian palms

Had Xerxes feated with despotic sway 735

His substitute. This Maron from on high

Surveys, and gives the signal; downward sinks

The nodding pile, stupendous heap of death!

Trees roll'd on trees with mingled rock descend,

Unintermitted ruin. Loud resound 740

The hollow trunks against the mountain's side,

Swift bounds each craggy mass. The foes beneath

Look up aghast, with horror shrink, and die;

Whole legions crush'd beneath the dreadful heaps

Lie hid and lost, as never they had known 745

A name, or being; while around them grew

A hill of ruin. Numbers still survive,
 Who shun destruction with impetuous flight;
 But Agis stops them: Intaphernes falls
 Before his thund'ring arm. Again they turn 750
 To meet resistless ruin. From behind
 With twice two hundred Locrians Agis pours.

MEANTIME the Grecian line (so Sparta's king
 Decreed) had left its station, and beyond
 The heaps of dreadful carnage was advanc'd; 755
 There, stretch'd from Oeta to the Malian bay,
 The Locrians led by Medon had dispos'd,
 With Corinth, Phlius and Mycenæ's train
 Their hostile phalanx o'er the lefs'ning pass.
 Along the mountain's side Platæa's troop, 760
 The Mantinéans, and Tegæans stood,

An

An horrid length of war. Th' unwearied fwords
Of Dithyrambus and Diomedon
Still blaz'd the terrour of the Barb'rous host.
Before them fled the Perfians to the shore, 765
All in a moment by the various bands
Of Greece furrounded. From the gulph profound
Perdition here inevitable frowns,
And there, incircled by a grove of fpears,
They ftand devoted hecatombs to Mars. 770
Now not a moment's interval delays
Their gen'ral doom, but down the Malian fteep
Prone are they hurried to th' expanded arms
Of Horrour rifing from the op'ning deep,
And grafping all their numbers, as they fall. 775
The dire confufion, like a ftorm, invades
The chafing billows; loud refounds the shore :

And o'er whole troops by fell Bellona roll'd
In one vast ruin from the craggy ridge,
O'er all their arms and ensigns deep ingulph'd, 780
With hideous roar the furge for ever clos'd.

End of the Fifth Book.

LEONIDAS.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VI.

The argument.

Night coming on, the Grecians retire to their tents. A guard is plac'd on the Phocian wall under the command of Agis. He admits into the camp a lady accompanied by a single slave, and conducts them to Leonidas; when she discovers herself to be Ariana, sister of Xerxes and Hyperanthes, and sues for the body of Teribazus; which being found among the slain, she kills herself upon it. The slave, who attended her, proves to be Polydorus, brother of Alpheus and Maron, and who had been formerly carried into captivity by a Phœnician pirate. He relates before an assembly of the chiefs a message from Demaratus to the Spartans, which discloses the treachery of the Thebans, and of Epialtes, the Malian, who had undertaken to lead part of the Persian army through a pass among the mountains of Oeta. This information throws the council into a great tumult, which is pacified by Leonidas, who sends Alpheus to observe the motions of these Persians, and Dieneces with a party of Lacedæmonians to support the Phocians, with whom the defence of these passages in the hills had been intrusted. In the mean time Agis sends the bodies of Teribazus and Ariana to the camp of Xerxes.

IN fable pomp with all her starry train
The night assum'd her throne. Recall'd from war
Her long-protracted labours Greece forgets,
Dissolv'd in silent slumber; all but those,
Who watch'd th' uncertain perils of the dark, 5
An hundred warriors: Agis was their chief.
High on the wall intent the hero sat,
As o'er the surface of the tranquil main
Along its undulating breast the wind
The various din of Asia's host convey'd 10
In one deep murmur swelling in his ear:
When by the sound of footsteps down the pass
Alarm'd he calls aloud. What feet are those,
Which beat the echoing pavement of the rock?
With speed reply, nor tempt your instant fate. 15

HE

HE said, and thus return'd a voice unknown.
Not with the feet of enemies we come,
But crave admittance with a friendly tongue.

THE Spartan answers. Through the midnight shade
What purpose draws your wandering steps abroad? 20

To whom the stranger. We are friends to Greece,
And to the presence of the Spartan king
Admission we implore. The cautious chief
Of Lacedæmon hesitates again.
When thus with accents musically sweet 25
A tender voice his wondring ear allur'd.

O GEN'ROUS Grecian, listen to the pray'r
Of one distress'd! whom grief alone hath led

In this dark hour to these victorious tents,

A wretched woman innocent of fraud.

30

THE Greek descending through th'unfolded gates

Upheld a flaming brand. One first appear'd

In servile garb attir'd; but near his side

A woman graceful and majestic stood;

Not with an aspect rivalling the power

35

Of fatal Hellen, or the wanton charms

Of Love's soft queen; but such as far excell'd,

Whate'er the lilly blending with the rose

Paints on the cheek of beauty soon to fade;

Such as express'd a mind, which wisdom rul'd,

40

And sweetness temper'd, virtue's purest light

Illumining the countenance divine,

Yet could not sooth remorseless fate, nor teach

Malignant Fortune to revere the good,

Which

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207

Which oft with anguish rends the spotless heart, 45
And oft associates wisdom with despair.
In courteous phrase began the chief humane.

EXALTED fair, who thus adorn't the night,
Forbear to blame the vigilance of war,
And to the laws of rigid Mars impute; 50
That I thus long unwilling have delay'd
Before the great Leonidas to place
This your apparent dignity and worth.

HE spake, and gently to the lofty tent
Of Sparta's king the lovely stranger guides. 55
At Agis' summons with a mantle broad
His mighty limbs Leonidas infolds,
And quits his couch. In wonder he surveys
Th' illustrious virgin, whom his presence aw'd :

Her eye submissive to the ground inclin'd 60

With veneration of the godlike man.

But soon his voice her anxious dread dispell'd,

Benevolent and hospitable thus.

THY form alone, thus amiable and great,

Thy mind delineates, and from all commands 65

Supreme regard. Relate, thou noble dame,

By what relentless destiny compell'd,

Thy tender feet the paths of darkness tread.

Rehearse th' afflictions, whence thy virtue mourns.

ON her wan cheek a sudden blush arose, 70

Like day's first dawn upon the twilight pale,

And wrapt in grief these words a passage broke.

IF to be most unhappy, and to know,
That hope is irrecoverably fled;
If to be great and wretched may deserve 75
Commiseration from the good; behold,
Thou glorious leader of unconquer'd bands,
Behold descended from Darius' loins
Th' afflicted Ariana, and my pray'r
Accept with pity, nor my tears disdain! 80
First, that I lov'd the best of human race,
By nature's hand with ev'ry virtue form'd,
Heroic, wife, adorn'd with ev'ry art;
Of shame unconscious does my heart reveal.
This day in Grecian arms conspicuous clad 85
He fought, he fell. A passion long conceal'd
For me alas! within my brother's arms
His dying breath resigning, he disclos'd.

—OH I will stay my sorrows! will forbid
 My eyes to stream before thee, and my heart, 90
 Thus full of anguish, will from sighs restrain!
 For why should thy humanity be griev'd
 With my distress, and learn from me to mourn
 The lot of nature doom'd to care and pain!
 Hear then, O king, and grant my sole request, 95
 To seek his body in the heaps of slain.

THUS to the Spartan su'd the regal maid
 Resembling Ceres in majestic woe,
 When, supplicant at Jove's resplendent throne,
 From dreary Pluto, and th' infernal gloom 100
 Her lov'd and lost Proserpina she sought.
 Fix'd on the weeping queen with steadfast eyes,
 Laconia's chief these tender thoughts recall'd.

SUCH

SUCH are thy sorrows, O for ever dear!
 Who now at Lacedæmon dost deplore 105
 My everlasting absence! then inclin'd
 His head, and sigh'd; nor yet forgot to charge
 His friend, the gentle Agis, through the straits
 The Persian princess to attend and aid.
 With careful steps they seek her lover's corse. 110
 The Greeks remember'd, where by Fate repress'd
 His arm first ceas'd to mow their legions down,
 And from beneath a mass of Persian slain
 Soon drew the hero by his armour known.
 To Agis' high pavilion they resort. 115
 Now, Ariana, what transcending pangs
 Thy soul involv'd? What horreur clasp'd thy heart?
 But love grew mightiest, and her beauteous limbs
 On the cold breast of Teribazus threw

The grief-distracted maid. The clotted gore 120
 Deform'd her snowy bosom. O'er his wounds
 Loose flow'd her hair, and bubbling from her eyes
 Impetuous sorrow lav'd the purple clay.
 When forth in groans her lamentations broke.

O TORN for ever from my weeping eyes! 125
 Thou, who despairing to obtain her heart,
 Who then most lov'd thee, didst untimely yield
 Thy life to Fate's inevitable dart
 For her, who now in agony unfolds
 Her tender bosom, and repeats her vows 130
 To thy deaf ear, who fondly to her own
 Now clasps thy breast insensible and cold.
 Alas! do those unmoving, ghastly orbs
 Perceive my gushing anguish! Does that heart,
 Which Death's inanimating hand hath chill'd, 135
 Share

Share in my suff'rings, and return my sighs!

—Oh! bitter unfurmountable distress!

Lo! on thy breast is Ariana bow'd,

Hangs o'er thy face, unites her cheek to thine

Not now to listen with enchanted ears

140

To thy persuasive eloquence, no more

Charm'd with the wisdom of thy copious mind!

SHE could no more. Invincible despair
Suppress'd her utterance. As a marble form

Fix'd on the solemn sepulcher, unmov'd

145

O'er some dead hero, whom his country lov'd,

Bends down the head with imitated woe:

So paus'd the princess o'er the breathless clay,

Intranc'd in sorrow. On the dreary wound,

Where Dithyrambus' sword was deepest plung'd,

150

Mute for a space and motionless she gaz'd.

Then

Then with a look unchang'd, nor trembling hand
 Drew forth a poniard, which her garment veil'd,
 And sheathing in her heart th' abhorred steel,
 On her slain lover, silent sinks in death. 155
 In vain the Spartan interven'd. With tears
 He view'd the prostrate lovers, and exclaim'd.

OH! most unhappy, heavy on your heads
 Hath sorrow fall'n, which o'er your pale remains
 Commands this pity from a stranger's eye! 160
 Illustrious ruins, may the grave impart
 That peace, which life denied! And now receive
 This pious office from a hand unknown.

So saying, from his shoulders he unclasp'd
 His ample robe, and strew'd the waving folds 165
 O'er the pale dead. Then turning, he bespake

Conceal'd a virtue, which I now revere.
 And since thy suff'ring soul hath long indur'd
 The gloom of bondage, and the hated face
 Of tyrants view'd, now change the horrid scene; 185
 Here freedom reigns, and justice: come and seek
 With me their great protector. Ending here,
 Swift he conducts him to Laconia's king,
 When Agis thus Leonidas address'd.

Lo! far superiour to the name, which marks 190
 His habit with dishonour, one, who sues
 For thy protection! Here the slave subjoin'd.
 I stand thy suppliant now. Thou soon shalt learn,
 If I deserve thy favour. I intreat
 To see th' assembled leaders of your host, 195
 For I am fraught with tidings, which import
 The weal of all the Grecians. Agis streight

Appointed

Appointed by Leonidas convenes
 The various leaders. To the tent they throng,
 Amidst them plac'd, the stranger thus began. 200

O ALPHEUS! Maron! hither turn your fight,
 And know your brothers. From their seats they start.
 From either burst, with tears of transport mix'd,
 The name of Polydorus. On his breast
 Each fondly strives to rush, but he withstands; 205
 While down his cheek a stream of anguish pours
 From his dejected eyes in torture bent
 On that vile garb, which sham'd his free-born limbs.
 At length these accents intermix'd with groans
 Broke from his heart, while all stood wond'ring round.

YOU first shall know, if this unhappy slave 211
 Yet merits your embraces. Now approach'd

F f

Leonidas.

Leonidas. Before him all recede,
Ev'n Alpheus' self; and yields his brother's hand,
Which in his own the gen'rous hero pres'd: 215
Then with majestic goodness thus bespake
Th' afflicted youth, and mitigates his pains.

FORBEAR to mourn, thou unexampled youth.
Thy friends, thy country, all on thee shall gaze
With veneration, whose unshaken mind 220
The chains of Asia never could debase.
Lo! ev'ry breast is open to thy worth,
Each tongue prepares to hail thee with applause,
Who hast thy country honour'd ev'n in bonds.

HE ceas'd, when Alpheus with an eager hand 225
Divefts his brother of his base attire,
And his own mantle o'er the shoulders threw

Of

Of Polydorus. Agis too advanc'd,
With friendly arms infolds him, and began.

Now, in thy native liberty secure, 235
Smile on thy past afflictions, and relate,
What chance restor'd thy virtue to the Greeks.

THEN Polydorus to the lift'ning chiefs.
I was a Spartan. When my tender prime
On manhood border'd, from my native shore 240
Snatch'd by Phœnician pirates, I was fold,
To Ariana, sister to the king
And Hyperanthes. Fortune there was kind
My bonds committing to that gentle hand.
Yet was I still a captive, and estrang'd 245
From Lacedæmon. Demaratus oft
With friendly sorrows would my lot deplore,

Nor less his own ill-fated virtue mourn'd
Lost to his country in a servile court,
The center of corruption; where in smiles 250
Is envy painted, treachery, and hate,
And rankling malice; where alone sincere
The dissolute seeks no disguise: where he
Who all possesses, that a king can give,
Is far less happy than the meanest son 255
Of liberty, and groveling, as the slave,
Who serves his cruel pride. Yet here the sun
Ten times his annual period hath renew'd,
Since Polydorus hath in bondage groan'd.
My bloom now past, or else by pining care 260
Untimely wither'd, I at last return,
And to my native land the tidings bear
Of instant desolation. Here in grief
He paus'd, when thus Leonidas. Proceed.

Though

His restless pace. As nearer we approach'd,
 He by the moon, which glimmer'd o'er our heads,
 Descried us, when advancing he demands
 Where bent our midnight course. I knew the voice
 Of Demaratus. To my breast I clasp'd 285
 The venerable exile, and replied.
 Our purpose ask not. Sparta's camp we seek,
 And oh! farewell for ever! He rejoin'd.
 Thrice happy Polydorus! Thou again
 Shalt visit Sparta to these eyes denied. 290
 Upon your paths may heav'n's protection smile.
 Soon as you mix with yon triumphant tents,
 Say to the Spartans, whose unconquer'd arms
 Defend those rocks, you saw their exil'd king;
 Say, though their blind credulity depriv'd 295
 The wretched Demaratus of his home,
 From ev'ry joy secluded, which awaits

The parent and the husband, from his wife,
His offspring torn, his friends, and native gates,
Him from his virtue could they ne'er divide: 300

Say, that ev'n here, where all are kings, or slaves,
Amid the riot of flagitious courts

Not quite extinct the Spartan spirit glows
Within his breast, though grief hath dim'd its fires.

Remembring this to Lacedæmon's chief 305

Report, that newly to the Persian host

Return'd a Malian, Epialtes nam'd,

Who as a spy had fought the Grecian tents.

He to the tyrant magnified his art,

Which with delusive eloquence had wrought 310

The Greeks to such despair, that Asia's king

Had been e'er now their sov'reign master own'd,

Had not the spirit of their single chief,

By fear unconquer'd, and on death resolv'd,

Restor'd

Restor'd their valour: therefore would the king 315
 Trust to his guidance a selected band,
 They soon should pierce th' unguarded bounds of Greece,
 Led through a secret passage o'er the hills,
 Where no Leonidas should bar their way.
 Meantime by him the treach'rous Thebans sent 320
 Assurance of their aid. Th' assenting king
 At once decreed two myriads to advance
 With Hyperanthes, with Abrocomes,
 And bold Hydarnes. Ev'ry chief besides,
 Whom youth, or valour, or ambition warms, 325
 Rous'd by the traitor's eloquence, attends
 From all the nations, fir'd with eager zeal
 The first to enter Greece. In silence now
 The youth remains. Tremendous from his feat
 Uprose Plataea's chief. His eyes were flames, 330

And

The lightest whisper through the magic air :
 So, when thy voice, Leonidas, is heard,
 Fell Discord listens; Rage with sacred awe
 Subfides in silence; while Confusion slept.

WITHHOLD this rashness (interpos'd the king) 350
 Before we punish, let us find the guilt.
 Not yet hath Persia overturn'd our tents,
 Not yet her Barb'rous shouts our ears alarm.
 We still have time for vengeance, and to know,
 If yet our swords destruction may repel, 355
 Or how to die most glorious. Then arose
 Dienece, and thus the Greeks bespake.

E'ER yet they pass our borders, Xerxes' host
 Must learn to conquer, and the Greeks to fly.
 The spears of Phocis guard the secret pass. 360
 Let

Let infant messengers be thither sent
To know the Persians progress. Alpheus here.

LEONIDAS, behold, my willing feet
Shall to the Phocians bear thy great commands,
Or climb the hills to mark th' approaching foe. 365

THOU active son of valour (thus returns
The chief of Lacedæmon) in my thoughts
For ever present, when the public cause
Demands the swift, the vigilant, and bold!
Go and surmount the rocks aerial height. 370
And while, around, Dienece conducts
An hundred Spartans to the Phocians aid,
Thou from the hills observe the Persians march.

BEFORE the purple-winged morn the night
Retiring warn'd their conference to cease. 375

They all disperse. When hastning on his course,
 And ready now to climb the lofty crags,
 O Polydorus, Alpheus thus exclaims,
 Long lost and late recover'd! we must part
 Once more, and now for ever. Thou return, 380
 And kiss the sacred soil, which gave thee birth,
 Which calls thee back to freedom? Dearest youth
 I should have tears to give thee—but farewell!
 My country chides me loit'ring in thy arms.

THIS said, he quits his brother, and ascends, 385
 While Polydorus answers. Alpheus no.
 I have the marks of bondage to erase,
 My blood must wash the shameful stain away.

WE have a father (Maron interpos'd)
 Thy unexpected presence will revive 390

His heavy age, that childless else will mourn.
Here Polydorus with a gloomy smile.

ILL should I comfort others. View these eyes;
Faint is their light, and vanish'd is my bloom
Before its hour of ripeness. In my breast 395
Grief as a native will for ever dwell,
Nor yield to time. Unceasing shall my soul
Brood o'er the dire remembrance of my youth
In fervitude thus wasted. Life with me
Hath lost its favour. Then in silent woe 400
He hangs his head. His brother pleads in vain.
He answers only with repeated groans.
Now in his view Dieneces advanc'd
With Sparta's band. On them his eyes are fix'd
Immoveable, and thus his mind revolves. 405

I too, like these, in Lacedæmon sprung,
 Instructed once, like these, to poize the spear,
 And lift the pond'rous shield. Ill-destin'd wretch!
 Thy arm is now enervate, and would fail
 Beneath the buckler's weight. O cruel Heav'n! 410
 Who didst compel my free-born hand to change
 The warrior's arms for ignominious bonds;
 Wouldst thou compensate for my chains, my shame,
 My ten years sorrows, and the black despair,
 Which on my youth has prey'd; propitious once 415
 Grant, I may bear my buckler to the field,
 And known a Spartan seek the shades below.

HE ceas'd, and sudden turn'd his steps aside
 To find the tent of Agis; there the youth

With grateful sorrow ministers his aid, 420
While with a kind and hospitable hand
The gentle Agis by her lover's corse
On one sad bier the pallid beauties laid
Of Ariana. He from shackles frees
Two Persian captives, whom his gen'rous arm 425
That day preserv'd from slaughter, then began.

To you I give that freedom, which you fought
To snatch from me. This recompense I ask,
And this alone. Transport to Asia's camp
These bleeding reliques; bid the Persian king 430
Weep o'er this flow'r thus blasted in its pride;
Then say, th' all-judging Gods have thus ordain'd:
Thou, whose ambition o'er the groaning earth
Leads desolation, o'er the nations spreads

Calamity

Calamity and tears, thou first shalt mourn, 435
 And through thy house destruction first shall range.

THUS charg'd, to Asia's host the captives bend.
 They soon attain the Phocian wall, where now
 Was Dithyrambus station'd. He perceives
 The mournful bier approach. To him the fate 440
 Of Ariana was already told.
 He meets the captives, when, with weeping eyes
 On Teribazus turn'd, he thus exclaims.

O! AS thy arms present thee, hadst thou been
 Indeed a Grecian! then thy gen'rous heart 445
 Its valour ne'er had wasted to support
 A king's injustice; then a gentler fate,
 Had blest'd thy life, or bleeding thou hadst known,

How

How sweet is death for liberty. A Greek
This friendly wish affords thee, though his head 450
Had lost the honours gather'd from thy fall;
When fortune favour'd, or propitious heav'n
Smil'd on the better cause. Ill-fated pair!
Whom with this stream of pity here I lave;
But that my hostile hands imbru'd with gore 455
Must be ungrateful to your loathing shades,
From all the neighb'ring valleys would I cull
Their fairest growth, and strew your hearse with flow'rs.
Yet O accept these tears and pious pray'rs!
May peace attend your ashes! may your shades 460
Pass o'er the silent pool to happier seats,
Where tyrants ne'er can enter to molest
The blissful region; but are far remov'd

To realms of horror, where from righteous heav'n
They bear those pains, they merit from mankind! 465

HE ceas'd in tears. The captives leave the wall,
And slowly down Thermopylæ proceed.

End of the Sixth Book.

LEONIDAS.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VII.

The argument.

The bodies of Teribaxus and Ariana are brought into the presence of Xerxes, soon after a report had reach'd the camp, that half his navy was shipwreck'd. The Persian monarch, quite dispirited, is persuaded by Argestes, one of the satraps, to send an ambassador to the Spartan king. Argestes himself is deputed, who, after revealing his embassy to Leonidas in secret, is by him led before the whole army, and there receives his answer. In the mean time Alpheus returns and declares, that the enemies were possess'd of the passages in the hills, and were hastening to Thermopylæ, upon which Leonidas offers to send away all the army except his three hundred Spartans; but Diomedon, Demophilus, Dithyrambus, and Megistias refuse to depart: he then dismisses Argestes, informs the Grecians of his design to attack the Persian camp in the night, and making all the necessary dispositions retires to his pavilion.

BEFORE the tent of Xerxes now arriv'd
 The Persian captives. On with solemn pace
 And slow they move. The monarch from afar
 Descries their sad demeanour. They approach,
 Nor he forbids. That morn had Rumour told 5
 The loss of half his navy dash'd on rocks
 By angry blasts, or buried in the surge.
 Thus, when his bleeding sister met his eyes,
 Already sunk in sadness, he had lost
 His kingly pride, the parent of disdain, 10
 And cold indifference for others woes;
 Nor ev'n beside his sister's nobler corse
 Her humble lover now his scorn awak'd.
 In tears the captive's mournful tale he heard,
 And then first knew compassion; but e'er long 15
 Those traces vanish'd from the tyrant's breast:

His former gloom redoubles, for himself
His anxious bosom heaves, and now he fears,
Lest he with all his numbers should be cast
A prey to Fortune. Near the monarch stood 20
The Spartan exile, whom he thus bespake.

O DEMARATUS, what will fate ordain!
Lo! Fortune turns against me! Who shall know
How far her daring malice may extend,
Which rages now so near me, and hath made 25
My house the seat of ruin? I have sent
From my unshelter'd side my bravest chiefs,
And choicest troops to pass the desert hill,
Led by this Malian; may not there the Greeks
With opposition more tremendous still 30
And ruinous, than yesternun beheld,
Resistless hold their craggy post; renew

Their

Their stony thunder with augmented rage,
 And send whole quarries down the rocky steep
 Again to crush my legions? Oh! unfold 35
 Thy secret soul, nor hide the harshest truth;
 Say what remains to hope? The exile here.

IF truth unblam'd may issue from my lips,
 Too well, imperial Xerxes, you preface
 What may befall your legions. If the Greeks 40
 Arrang'd within Thermopylæ, a pass
 Accessible and spacious, could repel
 With such destruction their unnumber'd foes;
 What scenes of havoc must th' untrodden paths,
 Confin'd among the craggy hills, afford? 45

IMMERS'D in care the monarch silent sat.
 Amid th' incircling peers Argestes stood.

A potent prince. On Sipylus he reign'd.
 Whose lofty fummits overlook'd the waves
 Of Hermus and Pactolus; either fstream 50
 Enrich'd with golden fands its tribute bore
 To this great fatrap: through the fervile court
 Yet was there none more practic'd in the arts
 Of mean fubmiffion; none more skill'd to gain
 The royal favour; none, who better knew 55
 The phrafe, the looks, and gefture of a flave.
 In foothing words he thus the king befpoke.

IF Xerxes will to fpare his faithful bands,
 And not exert the terrours of his pow'r ;
 More gentle means of conqueft than by arms, 60
 Nor lefs fecure may artifice fupply.
 Renown'd Darius, thy imperial fire
 Great in the fpoil of kingdoms, long in vain

The

The fields of proud Euphrates with his host
 O'erspread; at length confiding in the wiles 65
 Of Zopyrus the mighty king subdu'd
 The Babylonian tow'rs: but who shall count,
 What num'rous states by policy have fall'n;
 And let corruption once her aid impart,
 Not one shall stand. What race of men possess 70
 Such probity and wisdom, whom the veil
 Of craft may blind not, nor corruption's charm
 Seduce. O Xerxes, thou, whom heav'n hath rais'd
 To more than mortal greatness, canst thou find
 Through all thy empire, which from India's shore 75
 Shall reach Eurotas soon, no dazzling gift
 To gain the Grecian leader? O dispel
 The cloud of sadness from those sacred eyes,
 And proffer streight to Lacedæmon's chief,
 What may thy own munificence declare, 80
 And

And win his sword to aid thee. Xerxes here,
Rous'd from his trance of sorrow, swift replied.

WIS E are thy words and counsels. Go, repair,
My faithful servant, to the Grecian chief;
Fall down before him; bid him join our arms, 85
And he shall reign o'er all the Grecian states.

AT once Argestes leaves the monarch's side.
He now approaches to the Phocian wall.
Thence Dithyrambus leads him to the tent
Of Lacedæmon's king. Retreated there 90
Alone the hero meditating sat
On future woes to Persia. At his feet
Prone bows Argestes, and begun. Thus low
Before thy awful presence Xerxes wills,
That I should bend me prostrate to the earth, 95

And thus accost thee. Great and matchless chief,
 By fortune favour'd, and belov'd by heav'n,
 Thus says the lord of Asia; join our arms,
 And we reward thee with the sov'reign rule
 O'er all the pow'rful states of haughty Greece. 100
 And, O illustrious warrior, heed my words.
 Think on the bliss of royalty, the pomp
 Of courts, their endless pleasures, trains of slaves,
 Who restless watch for thee and thy delights,
 With all the glories of unrivall'd sway. 105
 Look on th' Ionic and Æolian Greeks
 From them their phantom liberty is flown,
 While in each province, rais'd by Xerxes' hand,
 Some favour'd chief presides (exalted state,
 Which envious freedom gives not) on his head 110
 He bears the gorgeous diadem, and sees
 His equals once now prostrate at his throne.

Yet

Yet how much greater thou, whom gen'ral Greece,
 That teems with mightiest states, shall call her lord,
 Thee only worthy. How will Greece rejoice 115
 Around thy throne, and hail th' auspicious hour,
 When thou, selected by the Persian king
 To bless consenting nations with thy sway,
 Didst calm the fury of unsparing war,
 Which else had delug'd all with blood and flames! 120

HE said. The chief replies not, but commands
 The Thespian youth, who near the tent had watch'd,
 To summon all the Grecians. He obeys.
 While from his seat the hero mov'd, and bade
 The Persian follow. He amaz'd attends, 125
 Surrounded soon by all the Grecian bands;
 When him the godlike Spartan thus bespake:

HERE, Persian, tell thy ambassy, repeat,
 That to obtain my friendship Asia's lord
 Bids me accept the sov'ignty of Greece; 130
 Then view this band, whose valour shall preserve
 That Greece unconquer'd, which your king bestows,
 And strew your bodies on its crimson plains:
 The indignation painted on their looks,
 And gen'rous scorn shall answer for their chief. 135

THE hero ceas'd, when suddenly return'd
 The speed of Alpheus; all suspended streight
 On him direct their fight, who thus began.

E'ER I could join the Phocians, from the hill,
 Which overhung the close defile, I view'd 140
 The pow'rs of Persia. Down the narrow strait

No

No sooner gleam'd th' innumerable spears,
 But by our angry destiny misled,
 Or some curst dæmon, enemy to Greece,
 The Phocians quit their station. Through the pass 145
 An inundation of Barbarians pours,
 The traitor Epialtes is their guide,
 And to Thermopylæ directs their course.

HE here concludes. Unutterable fear
 In horrid silence wrapt the list'ning throng, 150
 Aghast, confounded; silent too were those,
 Who knew no terrouir, yet with wonder mute,
 Thick-wedg'd inclos'd Leonidas around,
 Who thus with calmest elocution spoke.

I NOW behold my destiny compleat, 155
 And how at last Leonidas must die.

Here with the Spartans shall I rest behind
 While you, my faithful, brave allies, retreat.
 Then art thou near, thou glorious, sacred hour,
 Which shalt my country's liberty confirm! 160
 All hail! thou solemn period! thee the tongues
 Of Virtue, Fame, and Freedom shall record,
 And celebrate in ages yet unborn.
 Then O farewell, Megistias wife and brave;
 Thou too experienc'd, venerable chief, 165
 Demophilus farewell: farewell to thee
 Invincible Diomedon, to thee
 Unequall'd Dithyrambus, and to all,
 You other dauntless warriors, who may claim
 Praise from my lips, and friendship from my heart, 170
 You after all the wonders, which your swords
 Have here accomplish'd, shall enrich your names
 With fresh renown. Your valour must compleat,

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247

What we begin. Here first th' astonish'd foe

A dying Spartan shall with terrour view,

175

And tremble, while he conquers; then, by fate

Led from his dreadful victory dismay'd

Against the phalanx of united Greece,

By your unconquer'd spears himself shall fall.

HERE interpos'd the fierce Plataean chief.

180

By the twelve Gods enthron'd in heav'n supreme,

By my fair name unfullied yet I swear,

Ne'er shall thy eyes, Leonidas, behold

Diomedon forfake thee. First let strength

Desert my limbs, and valour shun my heart.

185

Did I not face the Marathonian war?

Have I not seen Thermopylæ? O Fame,

What more canst thou bestow, or I receive?

Where can I living purchase brighter praise,

Than

Than dying here? A more illustrious tomb 190
 Where can I gain, than underneath the heaps
 Of Persians fall'n the victims of our sword.
 He ended, when Demophilus subjoin'd,

O KING of Sparta, pride of human race,
 Whom none e'er equall'd, but the seed of Jove, 195
 Thy own forefather number'd with the Gods,
 Lo! I am old. With faltring steps I tread
 The prone descent of years. The winged hours
 By me, as one unequal to their speed,
 Who can no more their fleeting joys attain, 200
 Unheeding slide. My youth my country claim'd,
 My age no more can serve her; what remains?
 What eligible hope can wisdom form,
 But to die well? Upon this glorious earth
 With thee, unrivall'd hero, will I close 205

The

The eve of life. So spake the hoary chief,
When Dithyrambus next. O first of Greeks,
Me too think worthy to attend thy fame
With this most dear and venerable man
For ever honour'd from my tend'rest age, 210
Ev'n till on life's extremity we part.
Nor too aspiring let my hopes be deem'd;
Should the Barbarian in his triumphs mark
My youthful limbs among the gory heaps,
Thence may his fears be doubled, when again 215
He meets in fields hereafter to be known
The Grecian standards, trembling at a foe,
To whom the flow'r, and blooming joys of life
Are less alluring than a noble fate.

To him Demophilus. Wilt thou too bleed, 220
My Dithyrambus?—But I here withhold

All counfel from thee, who art wife, as brave.
 If then thy magnanimity retain
 Thee too with great Leonidas to fall,
 At either's fide our limbs fhall prefs the ground, 225
 And drop together in the arms of Death;
 So if th' attentive traveller we draw
 To our cold reliques, wondring fhall he trace
 The diff'rent fcene, and pregnant with applaufe,
 O wife old man, exclaim, thou well haft chofe 230
 The hour of fate: and O unequal'd youth,
 Who to thy country didft thy bloom devote,
 Mayft thou remain for ever dear to Fame!
 May Time rejoice to name thee! and may Peace
 With gentleft pinions hover o'er thy urn! 235

THIS faid, the hero with his lifted fhield
 His face o'erfhades, and drops a fecret tear;

Not this the tear of anguish, but deriv'd
From fond affection grown mature with time;
Which in a feebler mind to pain had turn'd, 240
But in the Thespian's firm and virtuous breast,
Alone a manly tenderneſs awak'd
Unmix'd with pity, or with vain regret.

MEGISTIAS laſt address'd the Spartan chief.
Thou, whom the Gods have choſen to exalt, 245
Above mankind in virtue and renown,
O call not me preſumptuous, who implore
Among theſe heroes thy regardful ear!
To Lacedæmon I a ſtranger came.
You there preſerv'd me, there with honours clad; 250
Nor have I yet one benefit repay'd.
That now the gen'rous Spartans may behold

In me their high beneficence not vain,
Here to their cause I consecrate my breath.

NOT so Megistias (interpos'd the king) 255
Thou and thy son retreat. Again the fear.

FORBID it, thou eternally ador'd,
O Jove, confirm my persevering soul!
Nor let my fear neglect this happy hour
To shew the Spartans, I deserv'd their care. 260
Thou, Menalippus, hear the king's command,
And my paternal tendernefs reverse.
Do thou withdraw thee from me, to my hand
Thy arms resigning. Fortune will supply
Fresh toil for valour. Vanquish then, or find 265
A glorious grave; but spare thy father's eye
The bitter anguish to behold thy youth

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Untimely bleed before him. Grief suspends
His speech, and interchangeably their arms
Impart their last embraces. Either wept, 270
The hoary parent, and the blooming son.
But from his temples the pontific wreath
Megistias now unloofens, and resigns
His hallow'd vestments; while the youth with tears
The helmet buckles o'er his snowy locks, 275
And on his breast adjusts the radiant mail.

WHILE such contempt of life, such fervid zeal
To die with glory animate the Greeks,
Far other thoughts possess Argestes' soul.
Amaze with mingled terrour smote his heart; 280
Cold drops, distill'd from ev'ry pore, bedew
His shiv'ring limbs; his bosom pants; his knees
Yield to their burthen; ghastly pale his cheeks,

Pale

Pale are his lips and trembling: such the minds
 Of slaves corrupt, to them the beauteous face 285
 Of Virtue turns to horrour. But the chief
 Of Lacedæmon now the wretch bespake.

RETURN to Xerxes; tell him on this rock
 The Grecians faithful to their post await
 His chosen myriads; tell him, thou hast seen, 290
 How far the lust of empire is below
 A free-born mind: and tell him, to behold
 A tyrant humbled, and by virtuous death
 To seal my country's freedom, is a good
 Surpassing all, his boasted pow'r can give. 295

HE said, the Persian hastens through the pass.
 But now once more Diomedon arose.
 Wrath overcasts his forehead, while he spake.

YET more must stay and bleed. Inglorious Thebes
Ne'er shall receive her traitors back, but here 300
Shall they atone their perfidy by death
Ev'n from their swords, to whom their abject hearts
Have sacrific'd their faith. Nor dare to hope,
Ye vile deserters of the public weal,
Ye coward slaves, that mingled with the heaps 305
Of those, who perish in their country's cause,
You shall your shame conceal. Whoe'er shall pass
Along this field of glorious slain, and trace
With veneration ev'ry nobler corse ;
His soul, though warm with generous applause, 310
A while shall curb the transport to repeat
Its execrations o'er your impious heads,
On whom that fate, which gives to others fame,
Is infamy and vengeance. Dreadful thus

On

On the pale Thebans sentence he pronounc'd, 315
 Like Rhadamanthus, from th' infernal throne
 When with inexorable frowns he doom'd
 The guilty dead to ever-during pain;
 While Phlegethon its flaming billows roll'd
 Before their fight, and ruthless furies shook 320
 Their hissing serpents. All the Greeks assent
 With clamours echoing through the concave rock.

FORTH Anaxander in th' assembly stood,
 And thus began with indignation feign'd.
 If yet your clamours, Grecians, are allay'd, 325
 Behold, I stand before you to demand,
 Why these my brave companions, who alone
 Of all the Thebans under my command
 Durst force their passage through dissuading crouds
 To join your host, should now be traitors deem'd; 330
 Accus'd

Accus'd by one alone, a banish'd wretch,
 Whom Lacedæmon in her anger drove
 Far from her confines; one, who meanly fought
 A servile court for shelter: has he drawn
 Such virtues thence, that Sparta, who before 335
 Held him unworthy of his native foil,
 Should trust him now, before auxiliar friends?
 Injurious Greeks! we scorn the thought of flight.
 Let Asia bring her millions; unconstrain'd
 We wait the conflict, and for Greece will die. 340

THUS in the garb of virtue he adorn'd
 Necessity, deluding ev'ry Greek
 Except Laconia's hero. He perceiv'd
 Through all its fair disguise the traitor's heart.
 So, when at first mankind in science rude 345
 Rever'd the moon, as bright with native beams,

Some fage, that walk'd with Nature through her works,
 By Wisdom led, discern'd, the various orb
 Itself was dark, in foreign splendours clad.
 Now unexpected with his troop return'd 350
 Dienece, and thus to Sparta's king.

. I NEED not tell thee, that the Persian pow'rs
 Have pass'd the secret strait. This night they halt,
 But with the morning will invade us here.
 We come to die with thee. United thus, 355
 Our strength a fiercer contest shall maintain;
 Whence a more bright example to our friends,
 And stronger terrour of the Grecian name.

HE said, when thus Leonidas began.
 O Spartans, hear, and all you other Greeks, 360
 Whose matchless virtue shall inroll your names

Book VII. LEONIDAS.

259

In Time's eternal records, and inhance
Your country's lustre; lo! the fetting fun
Inflames the broad horizon. All retire, 365
And in your tents invoke the pow'r of sleep
To aid your vigour, and to give your limbs
Unwearied patience of continued toil;
But when the second watch begins, let all
With mutual exhortation rouse to arms: 370
For soon, as Cynthia from the vault of heav'n
Hath hung her shining lamp, through Asia's host
Shall death with horreur and amazement rage.
Their camp is open to our swords, depriv'd
Of all its chosen warriors. But I charge 375
All, ev'n the Spartans, who are maim'd, or weak,
To pain, or toil unequal, from our camp
This hour to hasten. You, our brave allies
Of Corinth, Phlius, with th' Arcadian bands

L 1 2

And

And Mycenæans must not yet return, 380
 But here, while we repose, in arms remain;
 When we our tents abandon, then depart.

HE said, all heard obedient, and dispers'd;
 While to his tent the godlike chief repairs,
 And with him Agis, whom he thus bespake. 385

O AGIS, hear and mark my last command.
 With wary skill dispose the nightly guard,
 That no deserter from the Theban tents
 May reach the camp of Asia, or ascend
 To those now halting on the neighb'ring hills: 390
 Nor yet with us the faithless band must join.
 Not with such base associates must we trust
 Our great design. Their perfidy might soon
 Find means to rouse the unsuspecting foe,

And

To youth, to age, to death; whatever be
 Those other climes of uncorruptive joy,
 Which Heav'n in dark futurity conceals,
 Still here, O Virtue, thou art all our good.
 Then what a black, unspeakable reverse 415
 The wretched offspring of Injustice prove?
 What in the struggle of departing day,
 When life's last glimpse extinguishing presents
 Th' unknown, inextricable gloom of death?
 But can I paint the terrors of a breast, 420
 Where guilt resides? Leonidas forego
 The horrible conception, seek again
 Thy own untroubled heart, and grateful bow
 To those benignant pow'rs, who fram'd thy mind
 In crimes unfruitful, never to admit 425
 The black impression of a guilty thought.
 Else could I fearless thus relinquish life?

No. Such unshaken calmness from th' unjust
Is ever absent. Oft in them the rage
Of some prevailing passion for a time 430
Suppresses fear. Oft hurried on they lose
The sense of danger, when dominion, pow'r,
And purple pomp their dazzled sight enchant.
Yet still the joys of life alone they seek.
But he, who calmly meets resistless fate, 435
When glory only, and the gen'ral good
Invite him forward, must possess a soul,
Which all content deducing from itself
Can by unerring virtue's constant light
Discern, when death is worthy of his choice. 440
The man thus great and happy, in the scope
Of his large mind is stretch'd beyond his date;
Ev'n on this shore of being he in thought

Supremely

Supremely blest'd anticipates the good,
Which late posterity from him derives.

445

THE hero clos'd his meditation here,
The swelling transports of his mind subside
In soft oblivion, while the filken plumes
Of sleep envelop his extended limbs.

End of the Seventh Book.

LEONIDAS.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VIII.

The argument.

Leonidas rising about three hours before midnight relates to an assembly of the leaders a dream, which is interpreted by Megistias; he then arms himself, and marches in procession with his whole troop to an altar newly rais'd on a neighbouring meadow, and there offers a sacrifice to the Muses: he invokes the assistance of those Goddesses, he animates his companions, and then placing himself at their head leads them against the enemy in the dead of the night.

SCARCE was begun the second watch of night,
 When his pavilion Agis left, and fought
 The chief of Lacedæmon. Him he found
 Spread on his tranquil couch, while, o'er his face

M m

Diffus'd,

Diffus'd, a glad serenity with smiles 5
 His slumber painted; like an ev'ning sky
 Yet streak'd with ruddy light, when summer suns
 Have veil'd their beaming foreheads. Transport fill'd
 The eye of Agis. Friendship swell'd his heart,
 And veneration. On his knee inclin'd 10
 The hero's hand he kiss'd, and thus began.

O THOU with more than human virtues great,
 Accept this homage! and may gentle sleep
 Yet longer close thy eyelids, that unblam'd
 I thus may bow before thee. Thus he spake, 15
 And, prostrate bent, his godlike friend rever'd,
 Whose eye the shades of slumber now forsake.
 So, when new rising heav'n's resplendent orb
 Illumines first the sable skirts of night,
 The white-rob'd Magi, or the Indian seers 20

Are

Are seen from Ganges, or Euphrates' side,
 Before th' emerging glory bow'd to hail
 The radiant emblem of th' immortal mind.

BOTH heroes rose, and mix'd their friendly arms,
 And now to Agis had the Spartan king 25
 Disclos'd his soul; when lo! the Grecian chiefs,
 All rous'd, advancing with the sudden gleam
 Of armour pierc'd the twilight shade. With joy
 Leonidas accosts them. O thrice hail!
 My virtuous friends. Approach, and all attend, 30
 While I relate, and you with wonder hear.
 This night no sooner sleep oppress'd my brows,
 But o'er my head the empyreal form
 Of my great sire Alcides seem'd display'd.
 I saw his magnitude divine; his voice 35
 I heard, his solemn mandate to arise.

I rose. He bade me follow: I obey'd.
 Up to a mountain, whose ethereal brow
 Th' involving clouds divided, we ascend.
 E'er long we rested, suddenly the howl 40
 Of wolves, and dogs, the vulture's piercing shriek,
 The yell of ev'ry beast and fowl of prey,
 Within my ears discordant broke. I turn'd.
 When lo! a surface all with gore deform'd
 Beyond my view illimitable stretch'd, 45
 One vast expanse of horror. There a corse,
 Which with its huge dimensions seem'd to hide
 Th' unbounded plain, lay welt'ring, red with wounds
 Delv'd in th' enormous limbs, which bleeding gorg'd
 The vulture's famine. Wond'ring I beheld, 50
 When from behind I heard a second sound,
 Like surges trembling o'er a craggy shore.
 Again I turn'd. An ocean there appear'd

With

Book VIII. LEONIDAS.

269

With riven keels, and shrouds, and shiver'd oars,
With arms, and mangled carcases bestrewn 55
Innumeros. The billows foam'd with blood,
And whelm'd a crimson deluge o'er the strand.
But where the waters unobserv'd before
Between two adverse shores contracting roll'd
A stormy tide, upon the beach, forlorn, 60
One of majestic stature I descried
In ornaments imperial. Oft on me
He bent his clouded eye-balls. On my name
With imprecations oft he call'd aloud,
Then rent his splendid garments, and his head 65
In rage divested of its graceful hairs.
Impatient now he ey'd a slender skiff,
Which mounted on the curling foam approach'd.
With indignation, and reluctant grief
Once more his sight reverting, he embark'd 70
Amid

Amid the perils of the frowning waves.

O thou, whose virtue rank'd thee with the Gods

(I here exclaim'd) instruct me what produc'd

This desolation ; when the God return'd.

Let thy astonish'd eye again review

75

What thou didst late abhor. I look'd and saw

A land, where Plenty with disporting hand

Pour'd all the fruits of Amalthea's horn ;

Where bloom'd the olive, and the clustring vine

With its broad foliage mantled ev'ry hill ;

80

Where Ceres with exuberance inrob'd

The pregnant bosom of the fields in gold ;

Where spacious towns, whose circuits proud contain'd

The dazzling works of wealth, unnumber'd shone,

The strength and splendour of the peopled land.

85

Then in a moment clouds obscur'd my sight,

And all was vanish'd from my waking eyes.

THRICE we salute the omen (thus began
The sage Megistias) in thy mystic dream
I see the Grecian victories. The earth, 90
The deep shall own their triumphs ; and the tears
Of Asia, and of Lybia shall bewail
Their offspring cast before the vulture's beak,
And all the monstrous natives of the main.
Those joyous fields of plenty shall be Greece 95
Enrich'd with conquest, and Barbarian spoils.
And whom thou saw'st in regal vesture clad
Print on the sands his solitary steps,
Is Xerxes foil'd and fugitive from Greece.

MEGISTIAS thus, while ev'ry bosom felt 100
Enthusiastic rapture, joy beyond
All sense, and all conception but of those,
Who

Who die to save their country. Here again
Leonidas th' exulting chiefs address'd.

SINCE happiness from virtue is deriv'd, 105
Who for his country dies, that moment proves
Most happy, as most virtuous. Such our lot.
To this the gods shall add eternal fame.
But now go forth, Megistias, and with speed
Prepare the victim, and the sacred flames; 110
That to the Muses, as the Spartan law
Commands, our pray'rs and off'rings may be paid,
E'er to yon camp our hostile feet we bend.
But, O remember, from the solemn rites
Let ev'ry sound be absent, not the pipe, 115
Nor ev'n the music-breathing flute be heard.
Meantime, ye leaders, ev'ry band instruct
To move in silence, nor with shouts alarm

The

Book VIII. LEONIDAS.

273

The midnight stillness. Mindful of their charge

The chiefs depart. Leonidas provides 120

His various armour. First the breastplate arms

His ample chest. O'er this the hero spreads

The mailed cuirass from his shoulders hung.

The shining belt infolds his mighty loins.

Next on his stately temples he erects 125

The plumed helm, then grasps his pond'rous shield;

Where nigh the center on the swelling brass

Th' inimitable artist had imbos'd

The shape of great Alcides, whom to gain

Two Goddesses contended. Pleasure here 130

Won with soft wiles th' attracted eye, and there

The form of Virtue dignified the scene.

In her majestic sweetness was disclos'd

The mind sublime and happy. From her lips

Seem'd eloquence to flow. With looks serene, 135

N n

But

But fix'd intent upon the son of Jove,
 She wav'd her hand, where winding to the skies
 Her paths ascended. On the summit stood
 Fame, and protended her eternal trump,
 Incumbent on a trophy near to heav'n. 140
 The youth attentive to her wisdom own'd
 The prevalence of Virtue; while his eye
 With all the spirit, which redeem'd the world
 From tyranny and monsters, ardent flam'd;
 Not undescrid by Pleasure, where she lay 145
 Stretch'd on a gorgeous carpet, which bespread
 The meadow with magnificence. Around
 Were flourets strewn, and wantonly in rills
 Soft streams mæander'd. All relax'd her limbs:
 Nor wanting yet sollicitude to gain, 150
 What lost she fear'd, as struggling with despair
 She seem'd collecting all her power of charms,

And

And with excess of sweet allurements smil'd:

In vain; for Virtue sway'd Alcides' mind.

Hence all his labours. Trac'd with various art 155

They fill'd the surface of the spacious target.

This portraiture of glory on his arm

Leonidas supports. Then forth he tow'rs

From his pavilion. With their troops array'd

The chiefs attended. Flaming torches blaz'd 160

In ev'ry hand. And now with silent pace

All to the solemn sacrifice proceed.

First Polydorus with the hallow'd knife,

And barley strew'd with sacred salt advanc'd.

Diomedon beside him, in his grasp 165

A weighty mace sustaining. Like the rest

All bright in armour with his shield and spear

Megistias follow'd, an unspotted priest,

And dauntless warrior: From on high his helm

With wreaths around the shining crest reveal'd 170
 His sacerdotal honours. By the horns,
 Where laurels twin'd, with Alpheus Maron leads
 The consecrated ox. And lo! behind
 Leonidas approaches. Ne'er before
 With such transcending majesty he trod, 175
 Nor his own virtue, as that hour, enjoy'd.
 Then venerable moves the Thespian chief,
 And great Dienece. To them the bloom
 Of Dithyrambus glowing with the sense
 Of future praise succeeds, with graceful steps 180
 The gen'rous Agis next; the Thebans last
 Repining and inglorious. Then slow march
 The host all mute, nor shake their brazen arms.

NOT from Thermopylæ remote the hills
 Of Oeta yielding to a fruitful dale 185

Within

Within their side half-circling had inclos'd
 A fair expanse with verdure smooth. The bounds
 Were edg'd with wood o'erlook'd by snowy cliffs,
 Which from the clouds bent frowning. From a rock
 Above the loftiest summit of the groves 190
 A tumbling torrent wore the shagged stone,
 Then gleaming through the interwoven shade
 The valley water'd. O'er the level shone
 Its glassy bosom, and with placid waves
 The smiling lawn divided. Near the banks, 195
 Which flow'rs made various, new-erected stood.
 A rustic altar, which a chosen train,
 Appointed by Megistias, rais'd with turf
 Cut by their falchions from the verdant mead:
 Broad was the surface, high with piles of wood, 200
 The plenteous tribute of th' adjacent groves,
 All interspers'd with laurel. Here a vase

Fill'd

Fill'd with the briny waters of the sea,
 (More pure than ev'ry stream, or fountain, deem'd)
 Was plac'd beside the altar. There with wine 205
 Unmix'd capacious goblets stood arrang'd.
 Here is the victim brought. Megistias freight
 His helm unloosens. With his hoary head
 Uncover'd round the solemn pile he treads,
 And with a branch of laurel scatters wide 210
 The sacred moisture of the main. His hand
 With mingled salt and barley next bestrews
 The altar, and the victim. O'er the horns
 Th' inverted goblet foaming with the grape
 Diffus'd the rich libation. Now advanc'd 215
 Diomedon. Megistias gave command.
 Down sunk the victim with a deathful stroke,
 Nor groan'd. Megistias buries in the throat
 The hallow'd steel. A crimson deluge flows.

Book VIII. LEONIDAS. 279

Swift from the limbs the fuming hide is torn, 220

The flesh diffever'd on the altar heap'd.

Now smoaks the pile, then sudden flames abroad.

A burst of splendour dissipates the dark.

Greece throngs around. Each lifts a sparkling brand

With beaming javelins intermix'd, and shields, 225

And polish'd helms, which multiply the blaze.

Meantime the great Leonidas drew nigh,

And stood before the altar. There his helm

Unclasp'd to Agis he commits, his shield

And spear to Dithyrambus, then his arms 230

Extending thus in supplication spoke.

HARMONIOUS daughters of Olympian Jove,

Who on the top of Helicon ador'd,

And high Parnassus, with delighted ears

Bend to the warble of Castalia's wave, 235

And

And Aganippe's murmurs, if from thence
 We must invoke your presence ; or along
 The ridge of neighb'ring Pindus if your steps
 Now wander through your consecrated bow'rs,
 Thence turn, ye Muses, nor for once disdain 240
 Each with her beauteous form these hills to grace,
 And stand th' immortal witness of our fate!
 But with you bring fair Liberty, whom Jove
 And you most honour. Let her sacred eyes
 Approve her dying Grecians, let her voice 245
 With exultation tell the earth and heav'ns,
 These are her sons; then strike your tuneful shells,
 And with our praise bid harmony rejoice.
 Record us guardians of our parents age,
 Our matrons virtue, and our infants bloom, 250
 And glorious bulwarks of our country's laws,
 Who shall enoble the historian's page,

Or on the joyous festival inspire
With loftier strains the virgins choral song.
Then, O celestial maids, on yonder camp 255
Let night sit heavy, and a sleep, like death,
Weigh down the eye of Asia! O infuse
A cool, untroubled spirit in our breasts,
Which may in silence guide our daring feet
Through all the paths of slaughter, nor affright 260
The dark with tumult, till the dying groans
Of gasping tyrants into horror wake
The midnight calm! Then turn Destruction wild.
Bid Terror and Confusion revel round,
And in one carnage heap the Barb'rous ranks, 265
Their horse, and chariots. Let the spurning steed
Imbrue his hoofs with blood, and shatter'd cars
Crush with their brazen weight the prostrate necks
Of kings, and purpled chiefs incircled round

By nations fall'n.—You, countrymen and friends, 270

My last commands attend. Your gen'ral's voice

Once more salutes you, not to rouse the brave,

Or minds resolv'd and dauntless to confirm.

Too well by this expiring blaze I view

Impatient valour flash from ev'ry eye. 275

But temper well your ardour, and your lips

Close on the rising transport. Lo! how sleep

Hath folded millions in its black embrace.

No sound is wafted from th' unnumber'd foe.

The winds themselves are silent. All conspires 280

To this great sacrifice, where thousands soon

Shall only wake to die. Perhaps our swords

This night may send ev'n Xerxes' self to lead

Th' innumerable train of Persian ghosts

To Pluto's dreery shade, unless reserv'd 285

From all this ruin, to lament his shame,

And

And future flight, when Greece confounds that pow'r,
 Which we will shake. But now the second watch
 Is verging to its period, and the moon
 Prepares to glimmer on our darksome steps. 290
 Let each his head distinguish with a wreath
 Of twining laurel, then the goblet crown,
 And share the victim. Take your last repast,
 For with your fathers, and the heroes old
 You next shall banquet in the blest abodes. 295

WHILE thus the hero, through the thronging files
 Presenting round a hideous depth of war
 All shook with ardour their erected spears
 Thick, as the fruitful growth of lofty pines,
 Which from high Pelion's cloud-invested brow 300
 To heav'n's blue vault their stately honours bear,
 Megistias soon through all the band divides
 The sacred laurel: snatch'd with eager zeal,

By ev'ry hand, and round each helmet wove
 It blends its verdure with the floating plumes. 305
 Then is the victim portion'd, while the bowl
 Flows with the vine's impurpled stream. Aloof
 The Theban train in wan dejection mute
 Brood o'er their shame, or cast a frighted eye
 On that determin'd virtue, which unmov'd 310
 At fate's approach with chearful lips could taste
 The sparkling goblet, and with joy partake
 That last and glorious banquet. Ev'n the heart
 Of Anaxander now forgets its wiles,
 Its fear no more dissembling. Agis here 315
 For ever mindful of his friend's command
 Mix'd with the Thebans, and in whispers thus.

LEONIDAS permits you to retire:

While in the rites of sacrifice employ'd

None

Book VIII. LEONIDAS. 285

None heed your motions. Separate, and fly 320
With silent steps. At once the Theban troop
Its ranks dissolving from the Greeks withdraws.
Unseen it moulders from the host, like snow,
Which from the mountains in ten thousand rills,
Soon as the sun exerts his orient beam, 325
Descends soft-trickling, while the hoary heap
Insensibly decays. The Grecians soon
Conclude the solemn banquet, and their chief
Now reassumes his arms. Before his step
The croud rolls backward. In their gladden'd fight 330
His crest irradiate with th' uplifted brands
Its purple splendour shakes. The tow'ring oak
Thus from a lofty promontory waves
Its majesty of verdure, while with joy
The sailor marks its heav'n-ascending pride, 335
Which from afar directs his foamy course

Along

Along the pathless Ocean: so the Greeks
 Exulting gaz'd, as down their op'ning ranks
 Their chief proceeds; from whose majestic grace
 A soul like thine, O Phidias, might conceive 340
 In Parian marble, or effulgent brass,
 The form of great Apollo; when the God,
 Won by the pray'rs of man's afflicted race,
 In arms forsook his lucid throne to pierce
 The monster Python in the Delphian vale. 345
 Close by the hero Polydorus waits
 To guide destruction through the Asian tents.
 As the young eagle near his parent's side
 In wanton flight essays his vig'rous wings,
 E'er long with her to penetrate the clouds, 350
 To dart impetuous on the fleecy train,
 And dye his beak with gore; by Sparta's king
 The injur'd Polydorus thus prepares

His arm for death, and feasts his angry soul
With promis'd vengeance: his impatient thoughts 355
Ev'n now transport him furious to the feat
Of his long sorrows not with shackled hands,
But now once more a Spartan with his shield,
And dreadful spear to lead his country's bands,
And with them vengeance. Nor the rest of Greece 360
Neglect to form. Their helmets now unite
Their various plumage, as th' intertwining boughs
Mix their broad foliage in Dodona's grove;
Or like the cedars on the Syrian hills,
Which with their shady texture, as with night, 365
The gloomy foil o'ercaft. In order'd ranks
While thus they stand, behold a warlike form
In gleaming arms slow-moving through the shade,
Led by a slave, approach'd Laconia's king,
And thus address'd him. O Leonidas, 370
Thou

Thou seest before thee Eurytus, a name
 To thee and ev'ry Spartan not unknown.
 Thy ruling voice forbade the maim'd to stay ;
 I, whose dark orbs no longer know the sun,
 Immers'd in sudden blindness since our march 375
 From Lacedæmon, with the rest withdrew,
 Not to revisit Sparta, but, resolv'd
 To meet the Persians, in the public way
 I sat ; not long, before th' increasing sound
 Of trampling feet alarm'd me, which I deem'd 380
 Were Persia's numbers rushing from the hills :
 I started upward grasping in my hand
 My spear and buckler, by my slave withheld,
 Who told me, they were Thebans. Lo! I bear
 The tidings of their flight. And now, my chief 385
 And countrymen, farewell. Do you proceed,
 With death and terror fill the hostile camp ;

While I the fury of th' exulting foe

Descending from the mountains here await

To yield the last remains of tedious life.

390

Now to my country useless, and to me,

And close these shaded eyes in endless night.

HE ceas'd, when thus Leonidas began.

Then stay, my faithful soldier, and obtain

Not the least honours in this glorious night;

395

And you, my brave associates, all exult;

One spirit now inspires us; from our band

Doubt, fear, and treason with the Thebans fly:

While all with mutual confidence advance,

And equal fires. This said, once more the king

400

On the deep phalanx his attentive eye

Reverts, and through the ruddy gleam descries

One face of gladness; but th' illustrious van

He most contemplates: Agis, Alpheus there,
 Megiftias, Maron, and Plataea's chief, 405
 Dienece, Demophilus are drawn,
 And Dithyrambus. They their fixed fight
 On him too bend with inexpressive joy,
 With love, and veneration, till they hear
 His last command; when instant to the earth 410
 Are cast th' extinguish'd brands. On all around
 Drops sudden darkness, on the hills, the woods,
 The silver stream, the rocks, and floating main.
 It now was midnight. To the hostile camp
 With steps compos'd and silent down the pass 415
 The phalanx moves. Each patient bosom hush'd
 Its struggling spirit, nor in whispers breath'd
 The rapt'rous ardour, virtue then inspir'd;
 But all await the moment doom'd to give

Book VIII. L E O N I D A S.

291

The Barb'rous millions to their deathful steel:

420

So low'ring clouds expanding from the north

Awhile suspend their horrors, destin'd soon

To blaze in lightnings, and to burst in storms.

End of the Eighth Book.

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L E O N I D A S.

L E O N I D A S.

B O O K IX.

The argument.

Leonidas and the Grecians penetrate through the Persian camp to the very pavilion of Xerxes, who avoids destruction by flight. The Barbarians are slaughter'd in great multitudes, and their camp is set on fire. Leonidas conducts his men back to Thermopylæ, engages the Persians, who were descended from the hills, and after numberless proofs of superiour strength and valour sinks down cover'd with wounds, and expires the last of all the Grecian commanders.

THE waning moon display'd her gleaming horns,
 When o'er th' unguarded bound of Asia's camp
 Now pass'd the Grecians. Through th' unnumber'd tents,
 Where all was mute and tranquil, they pursue

Their silent march. The eastern world around 5
Lay stretch'd in slumber, motionless, and deaf,
Wrapt in the dead security of night,
Nor mark'd the steps of Fate. The wary Greeks
By Polydorus guided still proceed.
Ev'n to the center of th' extensive host 10
Unseen they pierc'd, when now th' imperial tent
Yet distant rose before them. Wide around
The proud pavilion stretch'd an ample space,
Where myriads might imbattle. Here a band
Of chosen Persians watchful round their king 15
Held their nocturnal station. As the hearts
Of anxious nations menac'd with the waste
Of meager famine, and the ruthless sword
Sink in their frozen bosoms, while despair
Sees fear-inger'd fancies in the sky, 20
Aërial hosts amid the clouds array'd,

Which

Which seem to shake the firmament with war;
 Portending woe and death; the Persians thus
 Are smote with consternation, as the moon
 By her faint beam discover'd from afar 25
 The glimpse of Grecian arms. With sudden cries
 They waken Horror, which to Xerxes' couch,
 And o'er th' astonish'd host, swift-winged flew
 Dispelling sleep and silence. All the camp
 Pours forth its numbers naked, pale, unarm'd, 30
 Wild with amazement, blinded by dismay,
 To ev'ry foe obnoxious; when at once
 Plung'd in ten thousand breasts the Grecian steel
 Reeks with destruction. Deluges of blood
 Float o'er the field, and foam around the heaps 35
 Of wretches slain unconscious of the hand,
 Which mows them down by legions. From his couch
 The lord of Asia, and of Lybia starts,

(Amaze,

(Amaze, affright, distraction in his look)

And fees in thought united Greece advance. 40

Where then was fled the empty pride of kings,

The hope of glory, and the lust of pow'r?

What then avail'd th' innumerable range

Of thy huge camp save only to conceal

Thy trembling steps, O Xerxes, while thou fliest. 45

Leonidas before the Grecian van

Through bleeding thousands hews his dreadful way.

Before him Terrour strides. Gigantic Death,

And Desolation at his side attend,

With all the Furies of insatiate war. 50

To Xerxes' tent the hero speeds, nor finds

His victim. Ardent throngs of Grecians fill

The stately mansion; to the ground are hurl'd

The glitt'ring ensigns of imperial pow'r:

The diadem, the scepter, late ador'd 55

And

And fear'd by millions, underneath their feet
With mingled rage and scorn the Grecians crush,
A sacrifice to Freedom. Now return
The furious bands. Leonidas exalts
For new destruction his resistless spear, 60
When sudden night o'ershrouds the spangled heav'ns,
And clouds condensing intercept the moon.
Black o'er the furrow'd main the raging east
In whirlwinds sweeps the fuge. Now roars the coast,
The crashing forests, and the cavern'd rocks. 65
Swift through the camp the hurricane impells
Its dire career, when Asia's numbers, veil'd
Amid the shelt'ring horrors of the storm,
Evade the Spartan lance. The Grecians halt,
By great Leonidas restrain'd, and wait 70
Near Xerxes' tent their mighty leader's will.

BESIDE the high pavilion from the time,
That Xerxes near Thermopylæ had drawn
His num'rous bands, perpetual fire had shone;
Before whose sacred light the Persian lord 75
Was wont among his Magi to adore
The power of Oromasdes: piles of wood
Lay nigh, prepar'd to feed the constant flame.
These on the altar by the Greeks are strewn,
So wills Laconia's hero; while the winds 80
Excite the blaze, his phalanx he divides;
Four bands are form'd by Dithyrambus led,
By Alpheus, by Diomedon, the last
Himself commands. The word is giv'n; the Greeks
Press to the fire; soon shrink the burning heaps; 85
Destructive flames they brandish, and, injoin'd

To reassemble at the regal tent,
By various paths the hostile camp invade.

RESISTLESS defolation now involves
The Malian fields, as o'er the eastern tents 90
From diff'rent stations flew ten thousand brands
Hurl'd by the Greeks unrespited. The winds
With violence redoubled breathing round
Tempestuous rage exasperate the blaze.
The conflagration, like a sea, expands ; 95
Collected now from ev'ry part it forms
One waving surface of unbounded fire.
In ruddy volumes mount the curling flames
To heav'n's dark vault, and paint the midnight clouds.
So, when the north emits its purpled lights, 100
The undulating radiance streaming wide,
As with a burning canopy, invests

Th'

Th' ethereal concave. Oeta now disclos'd
Its forehead glitt'ring with eternal frost,
While down the rocks the foamy torrents shone. 105
Far o'er the main the pointed rays were thrown;
Night snatch'd her mantle from the ocean's breast;
The billows glimmer from the distant shores.
But where ascends a pillar huge of smoke
With wreathing flames incircled, Horror there 110
And Death on great Leonidas attend.
He bade th' exulting Polydorus lead,
Where Asia's horse and chariots stood arrang'd;
There at his word devouring Vulcan feasts
On all the tribute, which Theffalia's meads 115
Yield to the scythe, and riots on the heaps
Of Ceres emptied of the ripen'd grain.
A flood of fire envelopes all the ground;
The cordage bursts of ev'ry blazing tent;

Down sink the roofs, and overwhelm the throng 120
 Of wretches panting from the Spartan sword,
 Close-wedg'd with fear; the Libyan chariot burns,
 Th' Arabian camel, and the Persian steed
 Bound through the fiery deluge; wild with pain
 They shake their ringed manes, with madding hoofs 125
 Dash through the blood of thousands mix'd with flames,
 That rage augmented by the whirlwind's blast.

MEANTIME the scepter'd lord of half the globe
 Through the wide tumult, like a guilty slave,
 From tent to tent precipitates his flight. 130
 Dispers'd are all his stratagems; Pride itself
 Shuns his dejected brow; Despair alone
 With pale Confusion, and with frantic Fear
 Wait on th' imperial fugitive, and shew,
 As round the camp his eye distracted roves, 135

No limits to destruction. Now was seen
Aurora mounting from the eastern hills
In rosy sandals, and with dewy locks:
The winds subside before her, darkness flies,
And streams of light proclaim the chearful day. 140

When now at Xerxes' tent the Grecian band
Was reunited. What could Fortune more
To aid the valiant, and to gorge revenge?
Lo! Desolation o'er the Persian host
Hath emptied all its horrors; ev'n the hand 145

Of languid slaughter drops its crimson steel;
Nor Nature longer can sustain the toil
Of ever-during conquest. Yet what pow'r
Among the Grecians once again reviv'd
Their drooping warmth; new-brac'd their nerves, and call'd
Their wearied swords to deeds of brighter fame? 151
What, but th' inspiring hope of glorious death

To

To crown their labour, and th' auspicious look
Of their heroic chief, which still unchang'd,
Still with superiour majesty declar'd 155
No toil had yet relax'd his matchless strength,
Nor worn the vigour of his godlike soul.
Down to the pass with gentle march he leads
Th' imbattled warriors. There behind the shrubs,
Which near the verdant feet of Oeta sprung, 160
Beside the entrance of the straits the Greeks
In ambush lay. The tempest now was calm'd;
Soft breezes only from the Malian wave
O'er each grim face besmear'd with smoke and gore
Their cool refreshment breath'd. The healing gale 165
Dispells the languor from their harass'd limbs,
Which swell with strength returning. After all
Th' incessant labours of the horrid night
Through flames and war continu'd, they prepare

Book IX. L E O N I D A S. 303

In order'd battle to confront the pow'rs 170

Of Hyperanthes, that selected band

From Asia's numbers, destin'd with the morn

To pass the mountains in triumphant march

With strength unwasted, and with souls elate.

Not long the Greeks in expectation stood 175

Impatient. Sudden with tumultuous shouts,

Like Nile's swift current, where with deafning roar

Prone from the steep of Elephantis falls

Its sea of waters, Hyperanthes pours

His rapid legions o'er the Grecian camp 180

Down from the hills precipitant. No foe

Is found to stop the torrent; on they roll

With thund'ring footsteps o'er the founding pass.

THAT night no sooner had the Theban train

Thermopylæ forsaken, but their course 185

They

They bent along the mountains, till they met
 The pow'rs of Xerxes. Dusky twilight still
 Prevailing, Persia with misguided rage
 Affail'd her friends unknown. Th' impetuous spear
 Of Hyperanthes clove the faithless heart 190
 Of Anaxander; on, the hero press'd,
 And spread destruction through their bleeding ranks;
 Nor check'd his ardent valour, till he heard
 The name of Thebes in suppliant cries proclaim'd:
 The Persians then receive them, in the front 195
 As guides they place them, and, amaz'd to learn,
 That daring Greece should Xerxes' camp invade,
 Haste from the mountains, rush along the pass,
 And now tumultuous issue from its mouth.
 At once Laconia's leader gives the sign, 200
 When, as th' impulsive ram with dreadful sway
 O'erturns the nodding rampart from its base,
 And

And strews a town with ruin, so the band
Of ferried heroes down the Malian steep,
An hideous depth, the blended numbers swept 205
Of Thebes and Persia. There no waters flow,
But horrid rocks present their craggy sides ;
There dash'd whole legions. From their mangled limbs
A tide of blood rolls foaming to the sea.
Again thy voice, Leonidas, is heard ; 210
The Grecians turn ; against the op'ning pass
They point their wheeling phalanx ; on they rush.
Astonish'd Persia stops in full career,
Ev'n Hyperanthes starts with terrour back.
Confusion drives fresh numbers from the shore, 215
Whelm'd in the Malian slime. Th' undaunted king
Of Lacedæmon enter'd now the straits,
And rang'd for battle. Hyperanthes soon
Recall'd his chosen warriors from their fear.

Swift on the great Leonidas was bent 220

A grove of darts ; th' incount'ring armies clos'd.

WHOM first, whom last, great Spartan, didst thou foil?

What rivers heard along their echoing banks

Thy name in curses founded from the lips

Of mothers wailing for their slaughter'd sons! 225

What towns with empty monuments were fill'd

For those, whom thy unconquerable sword

This day to vultures cast! First Beffus died,

A haughty satrap, whose tyrannic hand

Despoil'd Hyrcania of her golden sheaves, 230

And laid her forests waste. For him the bees

Among the branches interwove their sweets ;

For him the fig was ripen'd, and the vine

With rich profusion o'er the goblet foam'd.

Then Dinis bled. On Hermus' side he reign'd, 235

And

And long had fought with unavailing love
Great Artemisia fam'd in Xerxes' fleet,
The martial queen of Caria. She disdain'd
The lover's soft complaint; her dauntless ear
Was taught to mark the tempest, while it rag'd; 240
Her fight was practic'd from the rolling deck
To brave the chafing billows; doom'd to meet
That day of horror, when the weeping eye
Of Xerxes saw the blood of nations flow,
And to its bottom tinge the briny floods 245
Of Salamis, whence she with Asia fled,
She only not inglorious: low reclines
Her lover now, on Hermus' banks no more
To sound her name, nor tell the vocal groves
His fruitless furrows. Then Madauces fell, 250
A Paphlagonian born amid the sound
Of dashing surges, and the roar of winds;

Who o'er th' un hospitable Euxine waves
 Was wont from high Carambis' cliff to watch
 Th' ill-fated bark, which cut the Pontic stream, 255
 Then with his dire associates through the deep
 For spoil and slaughter guide his hostile prow.
 With these Tithraustes far from Medus fall'n,
 His native tide, with blooming strength indu'd,
 And manly grace, Lilæus, who had left 260
 The balmy fragrance of Arabia's fields,
 And Babylonian 'Tenagon expir'd.
 His bravest friends on ev'ry side o'erthrown
 With indignation Hyperanthes view'd,
 And in fierce haste his dauntless arm oppos'd 265
 To Sparta's hero. Each his lance protends,
 But thousands rush with interposing shields,
 Such sacred lives all anxious to defend;
 Or thither Fortune urg'd the tide of war,

Book IX. L E O N I D A S. 309

Their term protracting for augmented fame. 270

So, when two gallies lab'ring through the foam

Present for battle their destructive beaks,

The billows oft, by hurricanes impell'd,

With mountainous commotion dash between,

And either bark in black'ning tempests veil'd 275

Waft from its distant foe. But fiercer burn'd

Thy ardour, mighty Spartan, while in blood

Thy falchion rag'd unwearied. Now the steeds

Of day were climbing their meridian steep,

And o'er the Persian camp the shouts of war 280

Burst from Thermopylæ. Pharnuchus heard,

Who from his couch beyond the Malian plain,

Rous'd by the tumult in the neighb'ring tents

To aid his lord had left Theffalia's fields

With Syria, Cholchis, and Armenia's bands, 285

Th' Affyrians, and Chaldæans. Asia's camp

Was

Was still the feat of terrour and despair.
As in some fruitful clime, which late hath known
The rage of winds and floods, when now the storm
Is heard no longer and the deluge fled, 290
Still o'er the wasted region Nature mourns
In melancholy silence, through the grove
With prostrate glories lie the stately oak
And elm uprooted, while the plains are spread
With fragments swept from villages o'erthrown, 295
And round the pastures flocks and herds are cast
In weltring heaps of death; so Persia's host
In horror mute one boundless scene displays
Of desolation: half devour'd by fire
Its tall pavilions, and its warlike cars 300
Hide all the field with ruin; here in gore
Its princes lie, and nameless thousands there,
Here legions bleeding by the Grecian steel,

There

Book IX. L E O N I D A S. 311

There Persians slain by Persians still declare
The wild confusion of the direful night, 305
When wanting signals, and their leaders care
They rush'd to mutual slaughter. Xerxes' tent
On its exalted summit, when the dawn
First streaks the glowing sky, was wont to bear
The golden form of Mithra, clos'd between 310
Two lucid crystals, to the Barb'rous host
An awful signal all in arms to leave
Their crouded tents, and numberless to wait
Their monarch's presence; this Pharnuchus rears
High on the proud pavilion: at the fight 315
Their consternation is at length dispell'd,
And through th' assembling nations hope revives.
Pharnuchus then from all the number forms
A chosen train; Thermopylæ he seeks;
Their march in loudest clamours is proclaim'd. 320
His

His phalanx soon Leonidas commands
 To circle backward from the Malian shore :
 Their order changes ; now half-orb'd they stand
 By Oeta's mountains guarded from behind
 With either flank united to the rock. 325
 As, by th' excelling architect dispos'd
 To shield some haven, a stupendous mole
 Fram'd of the grove and quarry's mingled strength
 In ocean's bosom penetrates afar ;
 There stands the pride of art against the weight 330
 Of seas, unmov'd, and breaks the whelming surge :
 So, when Pharnuchus with innum'rous pow'rs
 Thermopylæ had fill'd, th' unyielding Greeks
 Oppos'd the hostile deluge, and its rage,
 Unshaken stem'd. Amid the foremost rank 335
 Leonidas his dreadful station held.
 Before him soon an horrid void is seen

Through

Book IX. LEONIDAS.

313

Through Persia's legions, and the proud remains
Of noblest chiefs th' infanguin'd rock bestrew.

Pharnuchus glowing with revenge and wrath 340

Discharges full at Lacedæmon's chief

His iron-studded mace. Aside it glanc'd,

Turn'd by the maffy shield, and prone to earth

The Persian fell. Alcander to the rock

Transfix'd the prostrate satrap through the reins, 345

Himself receiving in th' unguarded side

The lance of Hyperanthes. Low he lies,

The only Theban, who by Sparta's king

Abode intrepid, and to Greece preserv'd

His faith untainted; a physician sage, 350

Who from Cithæron each benignant herb

Was wont to gather, and expatiate o'er

The Heliconian pastures, where no plant

Of poison springs, but such, whose healing juice

S f

Expells

Expells the venom from the viper's tooth 355
 Fill'd with the sweetness of the soil divine:
 Him all, who languish on the bed of pain,
 Him most, the wretch, whom want, and sickness spreads
 On earth's cold breast neglected, shall deplore.
 On him the brave Artontes sink in death, 360
 Renown'd through wide Bithynia now no more
 The clam'rous rites of Cybele to share,
 While Echo murmurs through the hollow caves
 Of Berecynthian Dindymus. The hand
 Of Alpheus sent him to the shades of night. 365
 E'er from the dead he disengag'd his spear,
 Huge Abradates glorying in his strength,
 Surpassing all of Cissian race, advanc'd
 To grapple with the victor; near him now
 His foremost step the Persian plants, his hand 370
 Grasps at the Spartan's shoulder. Alpheus once

At Nemea's games the wrestlers crown obtain'd,
His art he summons, and his rapid foot
Obliquely strikes against the Persian's heel;
He falling seiz'd on Alpheus' neck, and drag'd 375
His foe upon him. Straight an hundred darts
Of thronging Persia cleave the Grecian's back.
To Abradates' breast the weapons pierce,
And rivet both in death. This Maron saw,
And Polydorus, who with victims fall'n 380
Before their vengeance hide their brother's corpse.
At length the gen'rous blood of Maron warms
The lance of Hyperanthes. On the spear
Of Polydorus falls the pond'rous ax
Of Sacian Mardus; from the yielding wood 385
The steely point is sever'd. Undismay'd
The Spartan stoops to rear the knotted mace
Of slain Pharnuchus; but thy fatal sword,

Abrocomes, that dreadful instant marks
 To rend his op'ning side; unconquer'd still, 390
 Swift he discharges on the Sacian's front
 An horrid wound, that reach'd the bursting brain.
 Down his own limbs the while a torrent flows.
 Of vital crimson; smiling he surveys
 His sorrows ending, and his Spartan name 395
 Renew its lustre. Sudden to his side
 Springs Dithyrambus; through th' uplifted arm
 Of Mindus pointing his impetuous dart
 Against the bleeding Spartan he impells:
 His steel resistless. Polydorus now 400
 Stretch'd his cold hand to Thespia's friendly chief,
 Then bow'd his head in everlasting peace;
 And Mindus wafted by his flowing wound.
 Beside him faints and dies. In Ninus old
 Had his exalted ancestors sustain'd. 405
 Th'

Book IX. L E O N I D A S.

317

Th' Assyrian scepter. Now to Persia's throne
A tributary lord he rul'd the vales,

Where Tigris swift between the parted hills

Of tall Niphátes draws its foaming tide,

Impregnating the glebe. At once a croud 410

Of ardent Persians seize the conqu'ror's lance:

An hundred arms infold it. Thespia's youth

With one strong hand maintains the struggling spear,

The other bares his falchion. Through his foes

With lightning wing'd it scatters wounds and death.

Artáphrenes in torture feels his arm 416

Lopt from the shoulder. Zatis leaves his hand

Yet twining round the long-disputed lance.

On Pheron's neck descends the pond'rous blade;

Down drops the sever'd head; the vital stream 420

Spouts from its purple sluices. Mardon strides

Across the pointed ash. His weight o'ercomes

The

The wearied Grecian, who resigns his hold,
Yet cleaves th' exulting Persian to the brain.
But now the fierce Abrócomes approach'd, 425
And louting shakes his dart. The wary Greek
With his broad buckler intercepts the stroke,
And closes with the Persian. Then what aid
Of mortal force, or interposing heav'n
Preserv'd the eastern warrior? Lo! the friend 430
Of Teribazus eager to avenge
His lov'd companion, and at once to guard
A brother's life, beneath the sinewy arm
That instant rais'd for slaughter plung'd his lance
In Dithyrambus' side. The vital strings 435
At once relax; nor Fame, nor Greece demand
More from his valour, and supine he lies
In glories ripen'd on his blooming head.
Him shall the Thespian virgins in their songs

Book IX. L E O N I D A S. 319

Record one loveliest of the youthful train, 440

The good, the gentle, generous, and brave ;

Now fall'n his country's grace, and parent's pride:

So sinks the cedar, which in verdant bloom

High on the top of Libanus had stood

The mountain's boast, and glory of the grove ; 445

Then to adorn the mansions of the great,

Or dignify some God's high-vaulted fane

Uprooted low'rs its heav'n-aspiring head.

Diomedon bursts forward. Round his friend

He heaps destruction. What a troop of ghosts 450

Attend thy shade, fall'n hero! Long unmatched

Prevail'd his vengeful arm, and Persia bled ;

Till four Assyrians on his shelving lance,

E'er yet extracted from a prostrate corse,

Their pond'rous maces all discharge. It broke. 455

Yet with the truncheon of his shatter'd spear

The

The Greek sustains the contest. Through his eye
 The shiver'd fragment penetrates the brain
 Of one bold warrior; there the splintery wood
 Infix'd remains: the hero then unsheaths 460
 His falchion broad; a second views aghast
 His entrails falling, while Plataea's chief
 From the gash'd belly draws his reeking sword:
 Prone sinks a third beneath the falchion's weight;
 Though with the furious stroke the yielding blade 465
 Flew from the hilt, and left the Greek disarm'd:
 The fourth that instant lifts his knotted mace;
 It falls resistless on the batter'd helm,
 And low the great Diomedon extends
 His mighty limbs. So weaken'd by the force 470
 Of some tremendous engine, which the hand
 Of Mars impells, a stately turret spreads
 Its disuniting ramparts on the plain;

Joy fills th' affailants, while the battle's tide
Whelms o'er the widening breach. The Persians thus
O'er the late-fear'd Diomedon had rush'd, 476
And swept the Greeks before them; when behold
Leonidas! At once their ardour froze.
He had a while within the orb retir'd,
Oppress'd by labour. Now with strength restor'd 480
He pours fresh ruin from the Spartan front.
As, long retarded by th' unmoving calm,
Soon, as a rising gale fresh-breathing curls
The furling main, again the vessel bounds
With all her op'ning sails; the hero thus 485
His buckler huge, and formidable spear
Advancing, through the Asian files renews
His course of slaughter. Destiny compells
The bold Hydarnes to th' unequal fight,
Who proudly vaunting left his weeping bride 490

To mourn his absence on the distant verge
 Of Bactrian Ochus. Victory in vain
 He parting promis'd. Wanton hope no more
 Round his cold heart delusive sports, nor paints
 Th' imagin'd pomp of triumphs, gorgeous spoils, 495
 And trains of shackled Greeks. The Spartan pierc'd
 His shield, and bursting corselet. From the slain
 The victor draws his iron-pointed spear
 Bent, and infebled with the forceful blow.
 Meantime within his buckler's verge, unseen 500
 Amphistreus stealing in th' unguarded flank
 His poniard struck. With swift effusion gush'd
 A crimson torrent, but the sealy mail
 Immediate death repell'd. Th' indignant king
 Grips with resistless might the Persian's throat, 505
 And drags him prostrate. None in Xerxes' court
 Was more corrupt, with insolence more base,

With rancour more fallacious. Phrygia pin'd
Beneath th' oppression of his ruthless sway.
Was there a field once fruitful, or a town 510
Once populous and rich? The horrid change
To want and desolation there declar'd,
The curs'd Amphistreus govern'd. As the spear
Of Tyrian Cadmus riveted to earth
The pois'nous dragon, whose infectious breath 515
Had blasted half Bœotia; so the chief
Of Lacedæmon trampling on the neck
Of fall'n Amphistreus fixes to the rock
The gasping tyrant, and his broken lance
Leaves in the panting corse. Meanwhile thy wound 520
Incessant flows, great hero, and augments
The hopes of Persia. Thou unyielding still
Sustain'st the contest, while unnumber'd darts
Are shiver'd on thy buckler, and thy feet

With glitt'ring points bestrew ; the Cholchian sword, 525
 And Persian dagger leave their shatter'd hilts ;
 Bent is the Caspian scymetar ; in vain
 The Sacian wheels his falchion, and their mace
 The strong Chaldæans and Assyrians raise :
 Thou stand'st unshaken, like a Thracian hill, 530
 Like Rhodopé, or Hæmus ; where in vain
 The thund'rer plants his livid bolt, in vain
 The glancing lightning cleaves th' incrufted snow,
 And Winter beating with eternal war
 Shakes from his dreery wings discordant storms, 535
 Chill fleet, and clatt'ring hail. But now advanc'd
 Abrocomes, and aim'd his deadly spear
 Against the forehead of Laconia's chief,
 Not unperceiv'd ; the Spartan's active hand
 His sword opposing upward rears the blade 540
 Against the threatning javelin ; o'er his crest

Its fury wastes in air, while swift descends
 The pond'rous falchion on the Persian's knee:
 At once the bone is sever'd; prone he falls;
 Crush'd on the ground beneath ten thousand feet 545
 The gallant warrior breaths the last remains
 Of tortur'd life. The Spartan thus maintain'd
 Th' unequal combat with his single sword.
 But Agis calls Diéneces, alarms
 Demophilus, Megistias; they from heaps 550
 Of Allarodian and Sasperian slain
 Haste to their leader, and before him raise
 The brazen bulwark of their massy shields.
 The foremost line of Asia stands and bleeds;
 The rest recoil: but Hyperanthes strides 555
 From rank to rank throughout his various host,
 Their dying hopes rekindles, in the brave
 Excites new valour, and the freezing heart

Of

Of Fear revives. Aftaspes first obey'd
 The hero's voice, a fierce Chaldæan lord 560
 Vain of his birth from antient Belus drawn,
 Proud of his wealthy stores, and stately domes;
 But now more proud by conquest, since his might
 Had foil'd the strong Diomedon. He seeks
 The front of battle. His victorious mace 565
 Against the brave Diéneces he bends;
 The weighty blow bore down th' opposing shield,
 And crush'd the Spartan's shoulder: idle hangs
 The buckler now, and loads th' inactive arm
 Depriv'd of all its functions. Agis bares 570
 His vengeful blade, and severs from the foe
 His hand exalted for a second stroke.
 The dying fingers with convulsive grasp
 The falling mace infold. A Sacian chief
 Springs on the victor. Iäxartes' banks 575
 To

To this brave savage gave his name and birth.
His looks erect, and fierce deportment spoke
A bold and gallant spirit, but untam'd,
With dreery wilds familiar, and a race
Of rude Barbarians horrid as their clime. 580
The hostile spear, against his forehead aim'd,
Glanc'd upward, and o'erturn'd his iron cone:
The blow renew'd his bursting chest divides.
Th' undaunted Sajian writhes along the lance,
Which griding passes through his breast and back, 585
A barbed arrow from his quiver draws,
Deep in the streaming pap of Agis hides
The deadly steel, then grimly smiles and dies.
From him Fate hastens to a nobler prey;
For lo! the brave Diénces presents 590
His breast obnoxious to a thousand darts.
The shield deserts his unfustaining arm,

And

And flides to earth. A grove of javelins rose
 On his broad bosom. Still for ev'ry wound
 He hurl'd a Persian to th' infernal gloom; 595
 But life at length forfook his riven heart,
 And o'er the rock the gasping hero stretch'd
 His dying limbs in gore. Who now can stand
 The torrent of Barbarians? Agis bleeds,
 His spear is irrecoverably plung'd 600
 In Iäxartes' body. Low reclines
 Diéneces in gore. The Spartan chief
 Himself o'erlabour'd, of his lance disarm'd
 The rage of Death can exercise no more.
 One last and glorious effort age performs. 605
 Demophilus, Megistias join their might,
 And stem the floods of conquest; while the spear
 Of slain Diéneces to Sparta's king
 The fainting Agis bore. The blazing steel

Book IX. L E O N I D A S.

329

In that dire hand again for battle rear'd

610

Blasts all the Persian valour. Back in heaps

They roll confounded, by their leader's voice

In vain exhorted longer to endure

The ceaseless waste of that unconquer'd arm.

So, when the giants from Olympus chas'd

625

Th' inferiour Gods, themselves in terrour shun'd

Th' incessant streams of lightning, when the hand

Of heav'n's great father with eternal might

Sustain'd the direful conflict. O'er the field

Awhile Bellona stills the rage of war ;

620

When Thespia's leader, and Megistias drop

At either side of Lacedæmon's king.

Beneath the weight of years and labour bend

The hoary warriors. Not a groan molests

Their parting spirits, but in death's calm night,

625

All-silent, bows each venerable head :

U u

Like

Like aged oaks, whose deep-descending roots
Had pierc'd resistless through the mountain's side,
And there for three long centuries had brav'd
Each angry gust of Eurus, and the North; 630
Till, senseless now by Time's despoiling hand,
Without a blast their mossy trunks recline
Before their parent hill. By Sparta's chief
None now remains but Agis, who implores
The last kind office from his godlike friend, 635
The Saccian's arrow from his pap to draw.
This done, life issues with the sanguine tide.
Thy comely features, Agis, now are pale;
Cold are thy graceful limbs, and dim thy eyes,
Which now no more with placid beams reveal 640
The native virtues of thy gentle breast.
The noble corse Leonidas surveys.
Fate yields him one short interval of peace.

To know how lovely are the patriot's wounds,
And see those honours grace the man, he lov'd. 645
But Hyperanthes with his single spear
Forth from the trembling ranks of Asia tow'rs
His country's glory to redeem, or fall.
The Spartan worn by toil his languid arm
Once more uplifting waits the dauntless prince. 650
The heroes now stood adverse. Each a while
Refrain'd his valour, and his godlike foe
Admiring view'd. Such majesty and strength
To fierce Pelides all incircled round
With Trojan dead; and such to Priam's son 655
By struggling virtue, and by manly shame
From flight recall'd, great Homer's fancy gave.
O thou exalted o'er the laurel'd train
High, as the sweet Calliope is thron'd
Above each vigin of the tuneful hill; 660

Now let one beam of thy celestial light
 Dart through my lab'ring mind; lest Freedom mourn
 Her chosen son dishonour'd in these strains!

Now Hyperanthes, and Laconia's king
 With brandish'd points, and targets high uprear'd 665
 Commence the fatal combat, which must close
 The long-continu'd horrors of the day.
 Fix'd with amaze and fear, the Asian files
 Unmov'd and silent on their bucklers pause:
 Thus o'er th' expanse of India's wilds contend 670
 The elephant, and horn'd rhinoceros;
 Earth groans beneath them, as with wrath untam'd
 Each hideous bulk in dire encounter meets:
 With distant terrour gaze the savage throng.
 Prolong'd by varied art, the dubious fight 675
 The great event suspended. On the foe.

Beneath a marble fragment from its feat
 Heav'd by a whirlwind sweeping o'er the ridge
 Of some aspiring mansion. Gen'rous prince! 695
 What could his valour more? His single might
 He match'd with great Leonidas, and fell
 Before his native bands. The Spartan chief
 Now stands alone. In heaps his slaughter'd friends
 All stretch'd around him lie. The distant foes 700
 Show'r on his head innumerable darts.
 From various fluices gush the vital floods,
 And stain his fainting limbs. Nor yet with pain
 His brow is clouded, but those beauteous wounds,
 The sacred pledges of his own renown, 705
 And Sparta's safety, with serene joy
 His closing eye contemplates. Fame can twine
 No brighter laurels round his glorious head,

His

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His virtue more to labour Fate forbids,
And lays him now in honourable rest 710
To seal his country's liberty in death.

End of the Ninth and Last Book.

ERRATA.

- B. 2. 1. 130. For *sult'ry* r. *sultry*.
160. for *breasts* r. *hearts*.
3. 311. 332. 407. for *poynard* r. *poniard*.
553. for , put .
606. after *Greece* put :
611. dele the full point
4. 177. for *Pencestes* r. *Peucestes*.
375. after *loofen* dele the comma.
5. 393. for *from* r. *with*.
7. 170. for , put .
8. 52. for *trembling* r. *tumbling*.
252. for *enoble* r. *ennoble*.

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