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Wm Wilson

Wm Wilson

2799

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LEONIDAS:

George Taylor

H. A. Taylor
P O E M.

Θανεῖν δ' ὅισιν ἀνάγκη
Τί κε τις ἀνόνημιον γῆρας ἐν σκότει
Καθήμενος ἔφοι ματαν, ἀπάντων
Καλῶν ἄμμορος;

PIND. OLYMP. OD. I.

BY R. GLOVER.

THE SIXTH EDITION.

Revised, corrected, and amended from the last Edition
printed in LONDON.



D U B L I N :

Printed for H. SAUNDERS in Castle-street, and
R. BELL in Stephen-street, opposite Aungier-street.


M D C C L X I I I .





THE

P R E F A C E.

 O 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.

WHILE 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 exposed by an uncertain rumour, which rendered his legitimacy suspected, to the malice and treachery of his colleague, who had conceived 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, named Leotychides, who aspired to succeed him in his dignity. Cleomenes found means to corrupt the Priests of Delphi, who declared 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 signalized 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 ruled 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 publickly recited his history at the Olympic games. In this general
assembly

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 censured by some among so great a multitude, and such a voluntary falsehood must have entirely destroyed that credit and authority, which have procured 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, composed 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 returned with an answer from the priestess of Apollo, that either a king descended from Hercules must die, or Lacedæmon would be entirely destroyed. Leonidas immediately offered to sacrifice his life for the safety of Lacedæmon, and marching to Thermopylæ possessed 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 adjoined to Thermopylæ, composed an army of near eight thousand men.

XERXES was now advanced as far as Thesfalia ; 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 dispatched a single horseman before to observe their numbers, and discover their designs. When this horseman approached, he could not take a view of the whole camp, which lay concealed behind a rampart formerly raised by the Phocians at the entrance of Thermopylæ ; so that his whole attention was employed on those, who were on guard before the wall, and who at that instance chanced to be the Lacedæmonians. Their manner and gestures greatly astonished the Persian ; some were amusing themselves in gymnastic exercises ; others were combing their hair ; and all discovered a total disregard of him, whom they suffered 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

and required him to explain this strange behaviour of his countrymen. Demaratus informed him, that it was a custom among the Spartans to comb down and adjust their hair, when they were determined to fight till the last extremity. Xerxes notwithstanding 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 received with disdain, he commanded the Medes and Saces to seize on the Grecians, and bring them alive into his presence. These nations immediately attacked the Grecians, and were soon repulsed with great slaughter; fresh troops still succeeded, but with no better fortune than the first, being opposed to an enemy not only superior in valour and resolution, but who had the advantage of discipline, and were furnished with better arms both offensive and defensive.

PLUTARCH in his Laconic apophthegms reports, that the Persian king offered 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 trial of
A 4 their

their force, and must therefore have been proposed by Xerxes, after such a series of ill success, as might probably have depressed the insolence of his temper; and it may be easily supposed, 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 reduced to extreme difficulties by this resolute defence of Thermopylæ; till he was extricated from his distress by a Malian named 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 abandoned their station, and put themselves in array upon a neighbouring eminence: but the Persians wisely avoided ~~would~~ an engagement, and with the utmost expedition marched to Thermopylæ. Leonidas no sooner received information, that the Barbarians had passed the mountains, but he commanded the allies to retreat, reserving the
three

three hundred Spartans, and four hundred Thebans, whom, as they followed him with reluctance at first, he now compelled 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 Dieneces, 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 refused to desert Leonidas, though intreated by him to consult his safety, and retire; but sent away his only son; and remained himself behind to die with the Lacedæmonians. Among the three hundred Spartans were two called Eurytus and Aristodemus, who being almost blind were dismissed by Leonidas. Of these Aristodemus returned 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 attacked the very camp of Xerxes in the night. The action is thus described by Diodorus. “ The Grecians having
 “ now rejected all thoughts of safety, prefer-
 “ ing glory to life, unanimously called on their
 “ general to lead them against the Persians,
 “ before they could be apprised, that their
 “ friends had passed round the mountains.
 “ Leonidas embraced the occasion, which the
 “ ready zeal of his soldiers afforded, and com-
 “ manded them forthwith to dine, as men,
 “ who were to sup in Elysium. Himself in
 “ consequence of this command took a repast,
 “ as the means to furnish strength for a long
 “ continuance, and to give perseverance in
 “ danger. After a short refreshment the Gre-
 “ cians were now prepared, and received or-
 “ ders to assail the enemy’s camp; to put all,
 “ they met to the sword, and force a passage
 “ to the royal pavilion. When formed into one
 “ compact body, with Leonidas himself at their
 “ head, they marched against the Persians,
 “ and

“ and entered their camp at the dead of night.
“ The Barbarians wholly unprepared, and
“ blindly conjecturing, that their friends were
“ defeated, and themselves attacked by the
“ united power of Greece, hurry together from
“ their tent with the utmost disorder and con-
“ sternation. Many were slain by Leonidas
“ and his party, but much greater multitudes
“ by their own troops, to whom in the midst
“ of this blind confusion they were not distin-
“ guishable from enemies: for as night took
“ away the power of discerning truly, and
“ the tumult was spread universally over the
“ camp, a prodigious slaughter must natural-
“ ly ensue. The want of command, of a
“ watch-word, and of confidence in them-
“ selves reduced the Persians to such a state of
“ confusion, that they destroyed each other
“ without distinction. Had Xerxes continued
“ 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 utmost precipitation;
“ when the Grecians rushing into the tent, put
“ to the sword most of those, who were left
“ behind: then, while night lasted, they
“ ranged

“ ranged through the whole camp in diligent
“ search of the tyrant. When morning ap-
“ peared, the Persians, perceiving the true
“ state of things, held the inconsiderable num-
“ ber of their enemies in contempt ; yet were
“ so terrified at their valour, that they avoided
“ a near engagement ; but inclosing the Gre-
“ cians on every side, showered their darts and
“ arrows upon them at a distance, and in the
“ end destroyed their whole body. Such was
“ the period of their lives, who under the con-
“ duct of Leonidas defended the pass of Ther-
“ mopylæ. Who can refrain from admiring
“ the virtue of these men, who with one con-
“ sent maintaining the post allotted by their
“ country, cheerfully renounced their lives for
“ the common safety of Greece, and esteem-
“ ed a glorious death more eligible than to live
“ with dishonour ? Nor is the consternation of
“ the Persians incredible. Who among those
“ Barbarians could have conjectured such an
“ event ? who could have expected, that five
“ hundred men would have dared 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 lives was the necessary con-
“ sequence

“ sequence of their undertaking, were yet un-
“ conquered in their spirit; and among all the
“ great names delivered down to remembrance
“ are the only heroes, who obtained more glo-
“ ry in their fall than others from the brightest
“ victories? With Justice may they be deem-
“ ed the preservers of the Grecian liberty, even
“ preferably 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 Barba-
“ rians, while the Greeks were fired with e-
“ mulation to equal such a pitch of magnani-
“ mity. Upon the whole there never were
“ any before these who attained to immortality
“ through the meer excess of virtue; whence
“ the praise of their fortitude has not been re-
“ corded by historians only, but has been ce-
“ lebrated by numbers of poets, among others
“ by Simonides the lyric.”

PAUSANIAS in his Laconics considers the de-
fence of Thermopylæ, as an action superior to
any atchieved 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 for-
“ ces

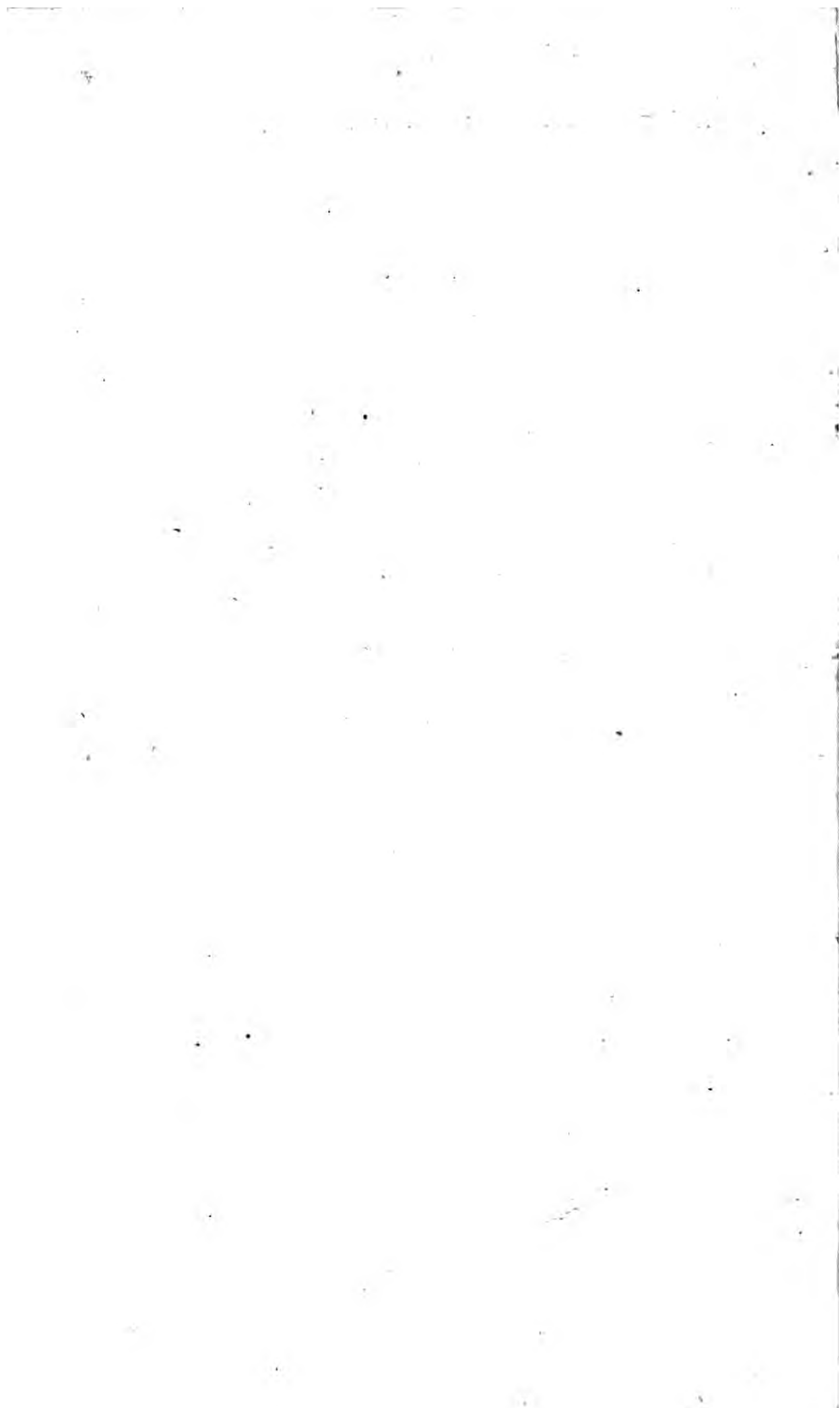
“ces under Hydarnes been conducted through
“a path over Oeta, and by that means incom-
“passing the Greeks overcame and slain Leo-
“nidas.” Nor is it improbable, that Leonidas should have maintained his post in so narrow a pass, till the whole army of Xerxes had perished by famine. At the same time the Persian navy had been miserably shattered 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 obtained such an high degree of veneration and applause 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

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 distinguished by his disinterested zeal, and unshaken fidelity to his country, not less in civil life 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. GLOVER.





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 apprised 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 Thessaly. 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 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*

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.



LEONIDAS.



LEONIDAS.

BOOK I.

HEARSE, O Muse, the deeds and glo-
rious 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

How best their menac'd liberties to guard, 10
 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 council! 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

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 waft them far from such perfidious friends,
And raise new seats in other climes remote, 60
Safe from insulting foes, and false allies?
Then should we soon behold the proud array
Of Xerxes' navy with their hostile beaks
Affront our shores, and deluge all our fields
With inexhausted numbers. Half the Greeks, 65
By us betray'd to bondage, would support
The Persian king, and lift th' avenging spear
For our destruction. But my friends reject
Such mean and dang'rous counsels, which will blast

Your

Book I. L E O N I D A S. 23

Your long establish'd glories, and assist 70

The proud invader. O eternal king

Of Gods and mortals elevate our minds!

Each low and partial passion thence dispel!

Till this great truth in ev'ry heart be known,

That none, but those, who aid the publick cause, 75

Can shield their countries, or themselves from chains.

He 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 made his oracles reveal'd.

main

He came; but discontent and grief o'ercast

His anxious brow. Reluctant he advanced,

And now prepar'd to speak. Th' impatient throng

Was gather'd round him; motionless they stood 85

With expectations; 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 sailor'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 enquired 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 Gorgon features, were congeal'd to stone,
 With ghastly eye-balls on the hero bent,

And

And horror living in their marble form : 110

Thus with amazement rooted, where they stood,

And froze with speechless terrour, on their kings n/

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,

B

Which

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 terrours 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;

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'

Book I. L E O N I D A S. 27

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? 159

He ceas'd; when Alpheus thus: It well becomes
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} ~~from~~ a chosen band, 165
While I returning, will my seat 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 Phocis' youth, appointed to secure

Thermopylæ. This said, not long he paus'd,

But with unwearied steps his course renews.

No w from th' assembly with majestic steps,

Forth moves their godlike king, with conscious worth

His gen'rous bosom glowing; like his fire, 176

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 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

Book I. L E O N I D A S. 29

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 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

B 3

Their

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-lived terrour call'd. What sudden grief,

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

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 wings unwearied shalt protect my tomb, 235

Nor Time himself shall violate my praise.

THE hero thus confirm'd his virtuous soul,

When Agis entered. 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

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 the 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 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

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 bitt'rest 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 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 breast
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.

UNUTTERABLE sorrow here confin'd

Her

Her voice. These words Leonidas return'd. 310

I SEE, 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, 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. 324

—Oh! thou dear mourner! wherefore streams afresh
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

I shamefully refuse to yield that breath, 330
 Which justice, glory, liberty, and heav'n
 Claim for my country, for my sons, 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'er 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 sons behold now worthy of their names,
 And Spartan birth. Their growing bloom must pine
 In shame and bondage, and their youthful hearts

Beat

Beat at the sound 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.

In speechless anguish on the hero's breast

She sinks. On ev'ry side his children press, 365

Hang on his knees, and kiss his honour'd hand.

His soul no longer struggles to confine

Its strong compunction. Down the hero's cheek,

Down flows the manly sorrow. Great in woe

Amid

Amid his children, who inclose him round, 370

He stands indulging tendernefs and love

In graceful tears; when thus with lifted eyes

Address'd to heav'n: Thou ever-living pow'r

Look down propitious, fire of Gods and men!

And to this faithful woman, whose desert 375

May claim thy favour, grant the hours of peace.

And thou, my great forefather, son of Jove,

O Hercules, neglect not these thy race!

But since the spirit, I from thee derive,

Now bears me from them to resistless fate, 380

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 fight

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

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
 Dienece, and Acarnania's seer,
 Megistias sage. The Spartan dames ascend
 The loftiest domes, and thronging o'er the roofs
 Gaze on their sons and husbands, as they march.
 So parted Argo from th' Iolchian strand, 420
 And plough'd the foaming furge. Thessalia's nymphs
 Their hills forsaking, and their hallow'd groves,
 Rang'd on the cliffs, which overshade the deep,
 Still on the distant vessel fix'd their sight;
 Where Greece her chosen heroes had embark'd 425
 To seek the dangers of the Colchian shore.

SWIFT on his course Leonidas proceeds.
 Soon is Eurotas pass'd, and Lerna's banks,
 Where his unconquer'd ancestor subdu'd

The

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-refounding 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 centre of th' ethereal vault,
And o'er the dusky robe of darkness shed 440
Her silver light. Leonidas detains
Dienece 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 slope he treads, and calls aloud. They heard,
And knew the voice of Alpheus. From their seats
They rose, and thus Leonidas began.

O THOU,

O THOU, whom heav'n with swiftnefs hath endu'd
 To match the ardour of thy daring foul, 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 gladfome tidings bears. 455
 Through Greece the voice of liberty is heard,
 And all unfold their banners in her caufe;
 The Thebans only with reluctant hands.

Arcadia's fons with morning fhalt thou join,
 Who on the Isthmus wait thy great command. 460
 With Diophantus Mantinea fends
 Five hundred fpears; nor lefs from Tegea's walls
 With Hegesander move. A thousand more,
 Who in Orchomenus refide, who range
 Along Parrhafius, and Cyllene's brow, 465
 Or near the foot of Erymanthus dwell,
 Or on Alpheus' banks, with various chiefs,
 Attend thy call; but moft is Clonius fam'd
 Of ftature huge: unshaken as a rock,

His

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 myself repair'd

Their dying sense of honour to recal.

A few corrupted by the Persian gold,

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 sloth 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 with Leonidas. This heard,

Four hundred warriors they appoint to march.

The wily Anaxander is their chief,

With Leontiades. I saw their march 500

Begun, then hasten'd to survey the straits,

Which thou shalt render sacred to renown.

Where, ever mingling with the crumbling soil,

Which moulders round the Malian bay, the sea

In slimy farges rolls; upon the rock, 505

Which forms the utmost limit of the bay,

Thermopylæ is stretch'd. Where broadest spread,

It measures threescore paces bounded here,

By the deep ooze, which underneath presents

Its

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

Its dreary surface ; there the lofty cliffs 510

Of woody Oeta overlook the pass,

And far beyond o'er half the surge below

Their horrid umbrage cast. Across the straits

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

Strives on his worth to smile. In silence all

Again

Again remain, and Alpheus thus pursues. 530

A CHOSEN troop hath bold Plataea sent,
 Small in its numbers, but unmatch'd 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 Persians 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 Lacedaemon, and relate, 545
 How thy discerning mind, and active limbs
 Have serv'd thy country. From th' impatient mouth
 Of Alpheus straight these fervent accents broke.

I HAVE not measur'd such a tract of land,

Not

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

For injur'd Greece I hasten to revenge, 560

But for a brother's wrongs. A younger hope

Than I, or Maron bless'd our father's years,

Child of his age, and Polydorus nam'd.

His mind, while tender in its opening 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

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 fervile corsair of the Persian king
 My brother, naked and defenceless, bore
 Ev'n in my sight to Asia, there to waste, 575
 With all the promise of its growing worth,
 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

The hours in friendly converse, and enjoy'd 590

Each other's virtue; happiest of men!

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 enemy's camp from the top of mount Oeta. He is answer'd by Dieneces and Diomedon. Xerxes sends Tigranes and Pbraortes 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 Pbraortes. Epialtes, after a conference with Anaxander, declares his intention of returning to Xerxes.

LEO-



LEONIDAS.

BOOK II.

 URORA spread her purple beams around,
When mov'd the Spartans. Their ap-
proach is known.

The Isthmian council, and the various chiefs,
Who led th' auxiliar bands, proceed to meet
Leonidas; Eupalamus the strong, 5
Alcmæon, Clonius, Diophantus brave,
And Hegesander. At their head advanc'd
Aristobulus, whom Mycenæ's youth
Attend to war; Mycenæ once elate
With pow'r and dazzling wealth, and vaunting still 10

The name of Agamemnon, who along
 The seas of Asia open'd to the wind
 Unnumber'd sails and darken'd half the shore
 Of trembling Phrygia with the hostile shade.
 Aristobulus join'd the Spartan king, 15
 And thus began. Leonidas, survey
 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

Thrice hail. Whate'er by valour we obtain
Your wisdom must preserve. With piercing eyes
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 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

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 75
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,
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, 85
Flames like another sun. A snowy plume
Falls o'er his dazzling casq. 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 90

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 95
Were lost in veneration. Phœbus thus
Appears before his everlasting fire,
When from his altar in th' imbow'ring grove
Of palmy Delos, or the hallow'd bound
Of Tenedos, or Claros, where he hears 100
His hymns and praises from the sons 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 105
Th' illustrious Thespian, and began. My tongue
Would call thee Dithyrambus, for thou bear'st
All in thy aspect to become that name
For valour known and virtue. O reveal
Thy birth and charge; whoe'er thou art, my soul 110
Desires

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 some benevolent and gen'rous friend

To thee have sounded with a partial voice, 115

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. 120

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,

Ere the fourth sun attain'd the sultry noon. 125

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 temples with unfading laurels bound, 130

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. 135
 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, 140
 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, 144
 Which o'er the crags and through the forests wind,
 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 150

From

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 hearts; now prove the vigour of your arms : 155
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 160
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 165
Increases'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 swiftnefs, thro' the glowing ranks 170

The

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 175
 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 180
 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, 185
 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 190

Our

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
To see the great Leonidas, and bid
The hero welcome on this glorious shore ; 195
Where he, by heav'n selected from mankind,
Shall fix the basis of the Grecian weal.

HERE too the wily Anaxander spake.

Hail ! glorious chief. Of all the Theban race
We shall at least with gladsome bosoms meet 200
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 counsels turn
Their countrymen from virtue. Thebes alas ! 205
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 Anaxander from his native gates 210

Here

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 215
 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, 220
 By race a Malian. Eloquent his tongue,
 But false his heart, and abject. He was skill'd
 To grace perfidious counsels, and to clothe
 In swelling phrase the baseness of his soul,
 Foul nurse of treasons. To the tents of Greece 225
 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. 230

With

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 Atlantick, when no shore,
No rock or promontory stops the fight 235
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 : 240
A pow'r unrivall'd by the greatest king,
Or conqueror, that e'er with ruthless hands
Dissolving all the sacred ties, which bind
The happiness of nations, have alarm'd
The sleeping fury Discord from her den. 245
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 Sesostris ; who with trophies fill'd 250
The

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 255
 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 at the rage of dire Semiramis 260
 Peace fled affrighted from the ravag'd East.
 Yet all this hideous face of war dismays
 No Grecian heart. Unterrified they stood.
 Th' immeasurable camp with fearless eyes
 They traverse, while in meditation near 265
 The treach'rous Malian waits, collecting all
 His pomp of words to paint the hostile pow'r ;
 Nor yet with falsehood arms his fraudulent tongue
 To feign a tale of terrour : Truth herself
 Beyond the reach of fiction to inhance 270

Now

Now aids his treason, and with cold dismay
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 275
Attentive ears incline. Oh! Greeks and friends!
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. 280
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 285
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 290
Of

Of Libya and of Asia. Neptune groan'd
 Beneath the burthen, and indignant heav'd
 His neck against th' incumbent weight. In vain
 The violence of Boreas and the West,
 With rage combin'd, against th' unshaken pile 295
 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 300
 With all Thessalia 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, 305
 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, 310
 And

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 315
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, 320
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, 325
Dieneces replied. Not calmly thus
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, 330
Which

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 shun th' avenging steel of Greece, 335
 By pestilence and meagre 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. 340

MEAN time within th' entrenchment of the Greeks
 From Asia's monarch delegated came
 Tigranes and Phraortes. From the hills
 Leonidas conducts th' impatient chiefs.
 Around the hero in his tent they throng, 345
 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, 350
 Invincible,

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 355

By yon refulgent orb, which flames above,

The glorious symbol of th' eternal pow'r,

This military throng, this shew of war

Persuade me, you have never heard that name,

At whose dread sound the billows wide remote 360

Of Indus tremble, and the Caspian wave,

Th' Ægyptian tide, and Hellespontic surge

With homage roll. O impotent and rash!

Whom yet the large beneficence of heav'n,

And our great monarch merciful and kind 365

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, 370

The

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 Sparta's king arising, all is hush'd 375
 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. 380

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 385
 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

The cheek of Dithyrambus. On the face 390

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 395

Of vain Tigranes, swelling at the sight,

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 400

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. 405

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

That I beheld the Marathonian field; 410
 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! 415
 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! 420
 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. 425
 I too would find among the Grecian chiefs
 One, who in battle dare abide my spear.

To him thus answer'd Thespia's gallant youth.
 Thou look'st on me, O Persian. Worthier far

Thou

Thou mightst indeed have singled from our host, 435

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.

THIS said, the Persians to their king repair, 440

Back to their camp the Grecians. There they found

Each soldier 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.

Too soon will come th' insuperable foes,

D

And

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.

W H E N C E, 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 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.

LEONI-



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.



LEONIDAS.



BOOK III.

✱✱✱ O W had Tigranes, and Phraortes gain'd
✱✱✱ N ✱✱✱ 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,
And Hyperanthes, then Pharnuchus brave,
Pandates, Intaphernes, mighty lords,
And numbers more in purple splendour clad,
With homage all attending round the throne,

Whose

Book III. L E O N I D A S . 77

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 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 Oromasdes : so the Persians 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, 25

Who on the hills of Persia from his cave

With flow'rs incircled, and with murm'ring foun's,

That cheer'd the solemn mansion, had reveal'd,

How Oromasdes, radiant source of good,

Original, immortal fram'd the globe 30
 With all its varied beauty : how with stars
 By him the heav'ns were spangled : how the sun,
 Refulgent Mithra, purest spring of light,
 And genial warmth, whence fruitful Nature smiles,
 Burst from the east at his creating voice ; 35
 When straight beyond the golden verge of day
 Night show'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 Oromatdes 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

Infa-

Book III. \ L E O N I D A S. 79

Infatiable, with violence, and rage, 50

Malignity, and folly. If the hand

Of Oromasdes on precarious life

Shed wealth, and pleasure, soon th' infernal God

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

Thou, Oromasdes, 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. 70

At length in humble phrase Tigranes thus.

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 75

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 80

Against thy foes his malice to mankind!

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

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 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?
 Whence all this pow'r, unless th' eternal will
 Had doom'd to give one master to the world,
 And that the earth's extremity alone 115
 Should bound my empire? He for this reduc'd
 Revolted Ægypt, and enlarg'd my sway
 With sandy Libya, and the sultry clime
 Of Æthiopia. He for this subdu'd
 The Hellespontic rage, and taught the sea 120
 Obedience to my pow'r. Then cease to think,
 That heav'n deserting now the cause of kings
 Those despicable Grecians will inspire
 With courage more than human, and expunge
 The common fears of nature from their breasts. 125
 He ceas'd, when thus Abrocomes began.

THE king commands us to reveal our hearts:
 Then may the sun to lightning change his beams
 And blast my head with ruin; may the king

Look

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 sapphires 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

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

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

Book III. L E O N I D A S. 85

Roll back by nations, and admit their lord 170

With all his satraps. 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 ; whēn, as down

Th' immeasurable ranks his sight 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

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 sun expands
 Its gorgeous folds, that beam'd with gold, with
 shields,
 Tiaras, helms environ'd, and with spears
 In number equal to the bladed grafs, 200
 Whose living green in vernal beauty cloaths
 Theffalia's vale. What pow'rs of sounding 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 tongues were practis'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 victor's 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 massy 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 sandals, and the floating reins
Of each proud courser. Daggers from their thighs,
A well-

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 lilies, 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 future harvests; while the bees reside
 Among th'intwining branches of the groves,
 Where with their labours they enrich the leaves,
 Which

Which flow with sweetness. Next, Affyria's sons
Their brazen helms display, th' unskilful 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 feat
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 soil, which Ochus laves, 265
The Bactrians stood, like Persia's bands attir'd,
Though less their jav'lins, 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 cany 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

By lavish Nature. There the plenteous year 280

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

The cinnamon, and spikenard blefs 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

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
Gandarians, and Chorasmians, all attir'd,
Like Bactria's sons. To these the Saces join,
From cold Imaüs drawn, from Oxus' wave
And Cyra built on Iäxartes' brink,
The bound of Persia's empire. Wild, untam'd, 300
And prone to rage, their desarts 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

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 poniards 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 seat remote
 On Nilus' verge above th' Ægyptian bound, 320
 Forc'd by their king's 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

To them were strange. With hardest stone they
point 325

The rapid arrow. Bows of hideous length,
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 poniards, 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-

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 Damascus : all, who bear the name
 Of Cappadocians, swell the Syrian host,
 With those who gather from the fragrant shrub
 The aromatic balsam, and extract 350
 Its milky juice along the lovely side
 Of winding Jordan, till immers'd in sleep
 Beneath the pitchy surface, which obscures
 Th' Asphaltic lake. The Phrygians then advance.
 To them their ancient colony is join'd, 355
 Th' Armenian bands. These see the bursting springs
 Of strong Euphrates cleave the yielding earth,
 And wide in lakes expanding hide the plain.
 Thence with collected waters fierce and deep
 It's passage rending through diminish'd rocks 360
 To Babylon it foams. Not so the wave

Of

Of soft Araxes to the Caspian glides.
But stealing imperceptibly it laves
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-sanded Hermus they allure
The sight enchanted with the graceful dance,
Or with melodious sweetness charm the ear,
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 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 seat 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

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 poniard 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, stood 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, 435
 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 440
 Of

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, 445
 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 450
 Their desert hills with veins of sapphires blue,
 And those, whose azure sparks of gold adorn.
 These from the turban flame. On ev'ry neck
 The coral blushes through the num'rous throng.
 The Allarodians, and Sasperian bands. 455
 Were arm'd with poniards, like the Colchian host;
 Their heads were guarded with a helm of wood.
 Short were their spears, of hides undress'd their
 shields.

The Colchians march'd from Phasis, and the shores,

Where once Medea fair enchantress stood, 460
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. 465
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; 470
She lulls the sleepless dragon, and to Greece
With faithless Jason wafts the radiant prize.
The Colchians then pursu'd their steps with war,
And now with ancient enmity inflam'd,
Or else compell'd by Xerxes to recal 475
The long-forgotten wrong, they menace Greece
With desolation. Next in Persian guise
A crowd advanc'd, who left the various isles
In Persia's gulph, and round Arabia known.

Some

Some in their native topaz were adorn'd, 480

From Ophiodes, and Topazos sprung;

And some with shells of tortoises, which brood

Around Casitis' verge. To them were join'd

Those, who reside, where Erythras intomb'd

Lies all beset with palms, a pow'rful king, 485

Who nam'd of old the Erythraæn main.

The Libyans 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 sway, 490

Could hide her sons; 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 zephyr's wing. A bow of largest size 495

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 500
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, 505
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, 510
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 Thessalian frown'd. 515
There pin'd reluctant multitudes, who bore
The name of Greeks, and peopled all the coast
Between Byzantium, and the Malian bay.

THROUGH

THROUGH all the numbers, which ador'd his
pride,

Or fear'd his pow'r, the monarch now was pass'd;
Nor yet among those myriads could be found 521

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, 525

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 with-holds; which oft to thousands
proves.

Their only refuge from a tyrant's rage; 530

And which by pining sickness, age, or pain
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 535

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 suff'rings to compensate for the tears
 Of Asia's mothers, for unpeopled realms, 540
 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 545
 Thy wandring steps expell'd their native home.
 Ill would it then become thee to beguile
 Thy benefactors, and the truth disguise.
 Look back on all those thousands, and declare,
 If yonder Grecians will oppose their march. 550

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 fland'rer's tongue ;
 Who forc'd me with unmerited disgrace 555

To

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, 560

Encounter twenty Persians? Yet those Greeks

With greater disproportion must confront

Our host to-morrow. Demaratus thus.

By single combat were the trial vain,

And vainer still by my unworthy sword, 565

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, 570

The diff'rence learn of Grecian bands, and thine.

The flow'r, the bulwark of thy pow'rful host

Are mercenaries. These are canton'd round

Thy provinces. No fertile field demands

Their painful hand to turn the fallow glebe. 575

Them to the noon-day toil no harvest calls.

The stubborn oak along the mountain's brow

Sinks not beneath their stroke. With careful eye

They mark not how the flocks, or heifers feed.

To them of wealth, and all possessions void 580

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 585

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

590

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

Infold him joyful, and a num'rous race, 595
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. 600
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, 605
To far severer 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, 610
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

With all its hardships is the seat of rest,
And war itself remission from their toils. 615

THY words are folly, scornful here replied
The Persian monarch. Does not freedom dwell
Among the Grecians? Therefore will they shun
Superior foes, for whosoe'er is free
Will fly from danger; while the Persians know, 620
If from th' allotted station they retreat,
The scourge awaits them, and my heavy wrath.

CONCEIVE not, Xerxes, Sparta's chief return'd,
The Grecians want an object, where to fix
Their eyes with rev'rence, and obedient dread. 625
To them more awful than the name of king
To Asia's trembling millions is the law,
Whose sacred voice enjoins them to confront
Unnumber'd foes, to vanquish or to die.

IN silence now the banish'd king remain'd. 630
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

Nor heed the monarch, nor his gaudy train;
But tofs'd the spear, and whirl'd the rapid dart, 635
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, 640
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, 645
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 650
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

Yet to the breasts of Sparta's sons shall fear
 Be still a stranger. Thus with fervour spake 655
 The exil'd king, when gushing from his eyes
 Resistless grief o'erflow'd his cheek. Aside
 His head he turn'd, and wept in copious streams.
 The sad remembrance of his former state,
 His dignity, his greatness, and the sight 660
 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 665
 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 670
 With exile and dependence. So obscur'd
 By creeping ivy, and by sordid moss
 Some lordly palace, or stupendous fane,

Mag-

Magnificent in ruin stands; where time

Wide-wasting from the nodding roof hath
mow'd

675

The column down, and cleft the pond'rous dome.

Not unobserv'd by Hyperanthes mourn'd

Th' unhappy Spartan. Kindly to his own

The exile's hand he joins, and thus humane.

O Demaratus, this thy grief confirms,

680

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,

685

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,

690

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.



LEO-



LEONIDAS.

BOOK IV.

The Argument.

Leonidas rising by break of day commands a body of Arcadians, with the Thespians, and Platæans to be drawn out for battle in that part of Thermopylæ, 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 Platæans are permitted to continue in the field. By the advice of Diomedon the Grecians advance to the broadest part of Thermopylæ, where they form a line of thirty in depth, consisting of the Platæans, Mantineans, Tegæans, Thebans, Corinthians, Phlians, and Mycænæans. The attack is renew'd with great violence by Hyperanthes, Abrocomes, and the principal Persian leaders at the head of some chosen troops.

LACONIA'S



LEONIDAS.

BOOK IV.

ACONIA's leader with the morning
L rose,
When thus to Alpheus. From Arcadia's
bands

Select a thousand spears. To these unite
The Thespians and Plataeans. 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

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 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

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 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. Resistless rend 30
The glitt'ring standard from their servile hands.
Hurl to the ground their ignominious heads
The warriors helm profaning. Think the shades
Of your forefathers rear their sacred brows
Here to enjoy the glory of their sons. 35

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 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 threatening lance.

And frowns defiance. Bursting from his rank 75

Dismonted 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 turning to the Persians spake.

My friends, and soldiers, check your ardent haste,

While my strong lance yon Grecian's pride confounds.

HE ceas'd. In dreadful opposition now 85

Each combatant advanc'd. With finewy hand

They gripe their spears high-brandish'd. Thrice they

drove

With

With well-directed force the pointed steel
At either's throat, and thrice their shields repel
The destin'd wound. At length the Eastern chief
With all his pow'rs collected for the stroke
His javelin rivets in the Grecian targe.

Afide Diomedon inclines, and shuns

Approaching fate. Then all his martial skill

Undaunted summons. His forsaken lance 95

Beside him cast, his falchion he unsheaths.

The blade descending on Tigranes' arm,

That instant struggling to redeem his spear,

The shiv'ring hand dislevers. 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

Amid the hostile numbers: All with dread
Recoil, where'er the ghastly visage flew
In sanguine 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 oft, as superstition vainly dreams, 115
Some dæmon sits 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 sullen 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

HEAV'NS! can one leader's death appal this host,
Which counts a train of monarchs for its chiefs!

Behold

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 stood the fierce Platæan 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 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 sable plumes shook terrour. Asia's bands
 All shudder backward at the dreadful beams 155
 Of that unconquerable sword, which falls
 With lightning's swiftnefs 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, worn grey, thy youth recal!
 Behold these slaves without resistance bleed. 165
 Advance, my ancient friend. Propitious Fame

Smiles

Smiles on thy years, and gives thy aged hand
To pluck fresh laurels for thy honour'd brow.

As, when indu'd with Promethean heat,
The molten clay respir'd; with sudden warmth 170

So glows the venerable Thespian's age,
With new-born vigour ev'ry sinew 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 Peucestes join'd,

His martial brothers. They attend his doom
By Dithyrambus foil'd. Their hoary fire

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 zephyrs, and with rills
 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

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 Aristander's breast.
 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
 Of 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.
Phraortes sinks, nor yet expiring, sees 235
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.
So, where Alphéus heard the rattling car, 240
And sounding hoofs along his echoing banks,
Two gen'rous coursers link'd in mutual reins
With equal speed and ardour beat the dust
To reach the glories of th' Olympic goal.

THIS

THIS from his lofty chariot Xerxes saw. 245

He saw his numbers pouring from the straits

In crouded flight, then spreading o'er the field,

All broke and scatter'd; as a river bursts

Impetuous from its fountain, then expands.

Its limpid surface o'er the pastures broad. 250

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

To Hyperanthes) haste and meet the Greeks; 255

Their daring rage and insolence repel,

And from dishonour vindicate our name.

THE godlike Hyperanthes through the tents

Obedient moves. Deliberate and brave

Each active prince he summons, and with care 260

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.
 One with the great Abrocomes, with me, 265
 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,
 Orontes, and Mazæus, keep the rest 270
 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,
 The Persian fame dishonour, and the praise 275
 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,
 Should Greece, that narrow portion of the globe, 280
 Your arms defy; when Babylon hath low'r'd
 Its tow'ring head, when Lydia's pride is quell'd,
 And from Eebatana its empire torn.

Think

Think too, ye warlike bands, our army's boast,
 What deeds are ask'd from your superiour swords; 285
 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.

WHILE Hyperanthes marshall'd thus his host,
 Far as th' extremest limit of the pass, 290
 Diomedon and Dithyrambus hung
 Upon the rear of Persia. Now they turn
 Victorious, striding o'er th' impurpled heaps
 Of arms, and mangled dead, themselves with
 gore

Distain'd ; like two grim tigers, who have forc'd 295
 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.
 So pass'd these heroes o'er the crimson rock, 300
 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 305
 Through mortal bosoms, less my soul rejoic'd,
 When Fortune gave the victory before
 Than now to raise thee from this field of death.

THE dying prince his languid sight unclos'd,
 And thus with trembling lips. Vain man, forbear 310
 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.

HE ceas'd. The great, and haughty spirit fled. 315
 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,
 Had Justice giv'n the buckler to thy arm, 320
 And to preserve a people bade thee die!
 Who now shall mourn thee! Thy ungrateful king
 Will

Will soon forget thy worth. For thee no tears
Among thy native countrymen shall tell
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,
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
To no selected race of men confine
The sense of glory, fortitude, and all
The nobler passions, which inspire the mind,
And render life illustrious. These thou plant'st
In ev'ry soil. But freedom, like the sun,
Must warm the gen'rous seeds. By her alone
They bloom and flourish; while oppression blasts
The tender virtues: hence a spurious growth,

False

Falſe honour, ſavage valour taint the ſoul,
 And wild ambition: hence rapacious pow'r
 The ravag'd earth unpeoples, and the brave, 345
 A feaſt for dogs, beſtrew th' infanguin'd plain.

HE ſaid. Around the venerable man
 The Grecians throng'd attentive. Conqueſt huſh'd
 It's joyful tranſports. O'er the horrid field,
 Late the rude ſcene of tumult, all was calm. 350
 So, when the ſong of Thracian Orpheus drew
 To Hebrus' margin from their dreary ſeats
 The ſavage race, which Hæmus wrapt in clouds,
 Pangæus cold, and Rhodopeian ſnows
 In blood and diſcord nurs'd; the ſoothing ſtrain 355
 Flow'd with enchantment through their raviſh'd
 ears:

Their fierceneſs melted, and amaz'd they learn'd
 The ſacred laws of juſtice, which the bard
 Mix'd with the muſick of his heav'nly ſtring.

NOT from the field of ſlaughter far remote 360
 In Oeta's rugged ſide had Nature clove

A rocky

A rocky cavern. This with moss she spread,
And o'er the entrance downward from the roots
She hung the shaggy trunks of branching firs
To heav'n's hot ray impervious. From the sides 365
The vivid laurel spread before the sun
Its broad and glitt'ring foliage; and, above,
The hill was darken'd with a solemn shade
Cast from the sable cypress. This retreat,
Cool as the grot of Thetis, hid beneath 370
The vaulted ocean, with the murm'ring sound
Of waters trickling from the riven stone
The Grecian leaders to its gloom invites.
Their helms they loosen from their glowing cheeks.
Against the rock their bucklers they repose. 375
Propt on their spears they stood, when Agis thus,
Sent by Leonidas, accosts the chiefs.

O E V E R - W O R T H Y of undying names! —
Leonidas recalls you from your toil,
Which has already fill'd our mouths with praise, 380
Our eyes with wonder, that from yonder tow'r

On

On your unequal'd deeds incessant gaz'd.

To whom the bold Diomedon return'd

Go, Agis, say to Lacedæmon's king,

As yet untir'd my hand can poize the spear, 385

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.

To him the Thespian youth. My friend and

guide 390.

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 395

Not to command us from the field of war.

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
 Will not assign a measure to your strength; 405
 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

Their consecrated shields, your native land 410
 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
 Receives the waters in his concave helm; 415
 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

Will

Will I this day pollute thy silver wave, 420
 Which mix'd with gore shall tinge the Malian
 fudge.

So saying from his brimming cask he quaff'd
 The clear, refreshing moisture. 'Thus repairs
 The spotted panther to Hydaspes' side,
 Or eastern Indus, feasted with the blood. 425
 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
 His reeking jaws. The Thespian warrior here. 430

SEE, valiant friend, Leonidas hath fill'd
 The pass with fresh battalions. O furvey
 Yon line of plumed helms, and glitt'ring shields,
 Which emulate the mid-day sun. What joy!
 What ardent hope enlightens ev'ry face! 435
 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

THUS Dithyrambus. The Platæan chief
Approves the counsel, and resumes his arms. 440
Them as a splendid recompence he bore
From grateful Athens, when his conqu'ring sword
Her domes with great Miltiades redeem'd
From Asiatic flames. Th' insculptur'd helm
Now press'd his manly temples. From on high 445
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
Around the spacious verge. Within, the form 450
Of Pallas, martial goddess, was impress'd.
Low, as her feet, the graceful tunic flow'd.
Betwixt two griffins on her helmet sat
A sphinx with wings expanded, while the face
Of dire Medusa on her bosom frown'd. 455
One hand supports her javelin, which confounds
The pride of kings; the other leads along
A blooming virgin, Victory, whose brows

A crown

A crown incircles; laurels she presents;
 But from her shoulders all her plumes were shorn,
 With favour'd Athens ever now to rest. 461
 This, Asia's terrour, on his mighty arm
 Diomedon uprear'd, then snatch'd his lance,
 And thus to Dithyrambus. Lo! my friend,
 Alone of all the Grecians, who sustain'd 465
 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
 Thy valour shall be plac'd, and share, this day, 470
 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;
 Like blooming Hermes in celestial arms, 475
 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

Against the Phrygian tow'rs. With eager speed
 The heroes soon th' imbattled Greeks attain'd, 480
 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,
 Where furthest from the Malian gulf remov'd 485
 The crags of Oeta less confine the straits:
 There let us bend extending wide our front.
 There with more ample scope may havock range.

ALL with assent gave ear. The various bands
 Move on successive. The Platæans first 490
 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,
 Who to our troops this godlike hero joins. 495
 Hail! Dithyrambus. Hail! illustrious chief.
 Well dost thou merit to have reap'd renown
 At Marathon. Amid the glorious front

With

With conscious gladness blushing on his cheek
 The youth his post assumes. Around him croud 500
 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
 The oft-repeated tale. From Sparta's king 505
 Returning, Agis here the chiefs address'd,
 Leonidas permits you still to brave
 The hostile numbers, with Platæa's band,
 If yet by toil unconquer'd. But I see,
 That all unwearied ask the promis'd fight. 510
 Hail! glorious veterans. This signal day
 May your victorious swords augment the wreaths
 Around your venerable brows, and make
 Thermopylæ, like Marathon, renown'd.

THIS said, he hastens back. Meantime advanc'd
 The Mantinéan, Diophantus brave, 516
 And Hegesander, Tegea's dauntless chief,
 With all their troops imbattled; by their side

The

The Thebans form; to them their native files

Alcmæon and Eupalamus unite; 520

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

An hundred warriors form'd th' expanded ranks, 525

And thirty bucklers ev'ry file condens'd.

In strong reserve Dienece behind

Dispos'd the Spartans, and the Locrian line.

There too with Maron Alpheus dauntless stood,

And godlike Agis. There Megistias plac'd 530

His blooming heir, and thus his valour fires.

O MENALIPPUS! born of foreign race,

Yet by these heroes not unworthy deem'd

With them to fight for Sparta! lo! the hour

Is come, my son, to shew thy gen'rous heart; 535

That not with thee the buckler and the spear

Are ill intrusted to maintain a cause

So great and sacred. O remember well,

Leonidas

Leonidas on yonder bulwark stands,
 Who all the war contemplates, and discerns 540
 The bold and fearful. O propitious heav'n!
 Grant me to hear Leonidas this day
 Applaud my son, and let Megistias die!

WHILE thus he spake, the animated soul
 Of Menalippus struggling in his breast 545
 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;
 Yet court not death! By all thy filial love, 550
 By all my cares and fondness I implore!
 Amid the combat, or the warm pursuit,
 Still by the wise Dieneces abide:
 His prudent valour knows th' unerring paths
 Of glory; he will guide thy youthful steps. 555
 This said, to Sparta's leader he retires.

Now are the enemies descried. The van

Abrocomes and Hyperanthes led.

With them Pandates, Intaphernes proud,

Hydarnes, Mindus. Violent their march 560

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

The torrents bursting o'er the pointed crags; 565

The mountains roar, the marble channel foams.

With obvious arms th' intrepid Greeks withstand

The dire encounter. Soon th' impetuous shock

Of thousands and of myriads shakes the ground.

Stupendous scene of terrour! Under hills, 570

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,

The sylvan horrors overshadow the fight. 575

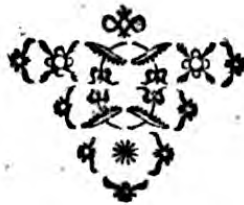
The shrill-mouth'd trumpet, and the deep tun'd

horn,

Mix'd

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

END OF THE FOURTH BOOK.



L E O.



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 Mantinean, 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.

G

AMID



LEONIDAS.

BOOK V.

AMID the van of Persia was a youth
A 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

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 on the sands of Ganges were unheard

The Indian sages, from sequester'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 Sesostris 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'n-fold stream.

Thence o'er th' Ionic coast he stray'd, nor pass'd

Miletus 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

But unreveal'd and silent was his pain ; 50

Nor yet in folitary 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 would'st 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 to the wise Chaldæans will I go,

Or wander on the Ganges ; where to heav'n

With thee my elevated soul shall tour,
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 seiz'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

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 seldom by the fair-one's soft 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 a while, 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 oppress'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 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 skilful hands he grasp'd. 125
 Thus arm'd, tremendous in the front he stood.

Beneath

Beneath his might two bold Phliasians died,
 And three Tegeans, whose indignant chief,
 Brave Hegesander, vengeance breath'd in vain
 With streaming wounds repuls'd. Thus far un-
 match'd

130

His strength prevail'd, when Hyperanthes' voice
 Recall'd his fainting legions. Now each band
 Their languid courage reinforc'd with rest.
 Mean time with Teribazus thus confer'd
 The godlike prince. Thou much-deserving youth!
 O had thy deeds with emulation warm'd

136

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 .
 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.

140

145

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

STILL do I languish mourning o'er the fame,
My arm acquires, O wretched heart! thou seat
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

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 Egypt'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 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

Pierc'd in the throat with founding arms he falls ;
Through ev'ry band the Mantineans 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 the
Might smile upon my trophies. Oh ! vain thought !
Disperse, ye phantom hopes ! Too long, my heart, 196
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' irremeable 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. Ere 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
 Thou deign'st to meet, receive my thanks; and
 know,

The thought of conquest less employs my mind,
 Than that by thee I cannot fall with shame. 215

HE ceas'd. These words the Thespian chief re-
 turn'd.

Of all the praises from thy gen'rous mouth
 The only share, which justice bids me claim,
 Is, that I here adventure to confront
 Thy matchless strength. Believe not, that un-
 mark'd 220

Were thy great deeds. From yon unbounded camp
 None

None yet hath equall'd thy victorious hand.

But whence thy armour of the Grecian form ?

Whence thy tall spear ? thy helmet ? whence the
weight

Of that strong shield unlike thy eastern friends ? 225

O if thou be'st some fugitive, who, lost

To liberty and virtue, art become

A tyrant's vile stipendiary ; with grief

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

Book V. L E O N I D A S. 159

My veneration; and whatever be 241

The malice of thy fortune, what the cares,

Which thus infest thy quiet, they create

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 corsets had transfix'd,

Against the Persian target, shiv'ring breaks, 260

Its

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, ere 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

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 side-ways swung his targe, 285
The fatal moment Dithyrambus watch'd,
And darting forward with his feet out-stretch'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 utt'rance. O my friend!
O Hyperanthes! hear my tongue unfold

What

What thou should'st ne'er have known before this
hour;

When, as I open all my secret soul; 301

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

His fleeting sight eternally o'ershades. 311

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!

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 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 Susa, 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

Stood near reclin'd in sadness o'er his shield,
 And in the pride of victory repin'd,
 Nor mark'd his threatening foe: when swift ap-
 proach'd 340

Diomedon. Before the Thespian youth
 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 thunders from their angry mouths
 In vain; in vain the furrow'd earth they rend: 355
 Wide

Wide rolls the stream, and intercepts the war.
The fierce Platæan satiates his revenge
On vulgar lives. Before his dreaded arm
Whole ranks are scatter'd. But the Persian prince
Borne down the stress 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 b spake.

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

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?

Eupalamus. Artembares he flew 381

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,

Melissus swells the number of the dead.

None could Mycenæ boast of prouder birth

Than young Melissus; 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 with its double top

O'er shades the Pythian games, the envied prize

Of fame obtain'd: low sinks his laurell'd head 395

In

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 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 sceptre 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

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, Hyperanthe's steel 425
 His knee invades, and bursts the sinewy cords.
 The Mycenæans with uplifted shields,
 Corinthians, and Phliasians gather round
 The wounded Grecian. With redoubled rage
 The conflict glows. Abrocomes incites 430
 Each Persian leader ; all obey his voice ;
 Here Abradates, there Mazeus 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

Def-

Despairing, raging, destitute he stands
 Prompt 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 straight desert the broken line
 Not with unpunish'd treachery ; the spears 455

Of fierce Orontes, and Pharnuchus join'd
 With Mindus gor'd their Ithameful flight, and thin'd
 Their bleeding files. Mean time, 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 sons of Lacedæmon to repair
 The difunited phalanx. Ere they move 470
 Dienece 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 spake.
 On either side supported by the might 475

Of

Of Agis and of Alpheus he conducts
 His gen'rous troop, who riveting their shields
 In dense array indissolubly firm
 Confront the Persians, 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 diminish'd ranks,
 Thus Hyperanthes counsell'd. Learn, O chiefs,
 From whence alone success can grace our arms.
 These are a band selected from the Greeks, 485
 Unlike the others, whom we lately chas'd;
 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 preside
 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 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

Amid the gorgeous tincture shone exprest
 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 slow 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,
 Heroic actions are a debt to fame. 531
 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

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 stress of thousands. Alpheus here unmov'd,
And Agis there connect their spacious orbs,
With Menalippus wife Megistias' heir
In one impervious line. Long time the hosts
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 hastes, 575
 Th' illustrious chief of Locris, from the race
 Of Ajax sprung in Trojan fields renown'd :
 To wise Dienece he thus began.

LEONIDAS 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 pa's
 Looks o'er the Malian plain on Persia's camp,

Do

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

THIS heard, Dienece's 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 sun
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 Dienece 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 irresistible career
The eastern legions, shatter'd and o'erturn'd
With all their standards trampled on the plain.
As the swift vessel when a rising gale 630
Disends the canvass, its resistless course
Impells through millions of opposing waves;
Through the Barbarian multitudes so pierc'd

The

The Spartan wedge. Invincible o'er hills
Of arms, and mangled corse they impress 635
Their crimson footsteps. Persia's bravest chiefs,
Ev'n Hyperanthes from the line is driv'n ;
And flying thousands through the pass are swept
Before the Spartans with a Locrian troop
Of hideous depth Dieneces pursues 640
His conqu'ring friends, and hews his purple way
Through Asia's numbers, which again were clos'd.
In vain : himself unconquerable leads
Destruction on, and heaps the rock with death.
But on the broken foe what ruin falls 645
From Alpheus' sword ? O'er all in swift pursuit
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

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 horrouer 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,
Not with severer 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,

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

Now at Thermopylæ's extremest bound

The Spartans check'd their progress. Soon approach'd

Dieneces, and thus began. Behold,

What numbers have we pass'd of Persia's sons.

Be swift, my friends, and form. He said, and fill'd

The narrow straits with order'd files, a depth 686

Of fifty warriors; half on Asia's host,

Half tow'rd the pass were turn'd, a double front,

Where ev'ry rank with twenty javelins flam'd.

The Locrian band to Agis is assign'd, 690

Who stands prepar'd to stop the flying foes ;

Dieneces

Dieneces himself to Persia's camp

Presents the terrours of the Spartan steel.

Now, Muse, the wond'rous stratagem display,

Which Sparta's hero, whose presiding care 695

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, ere 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

Ascend the mountain, which o'erhung the pass.
His charge he soon reveals. A thousand hands
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 levers 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 thronging numbers Intaphernes bold, 730
Beneath

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 seated 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,
 Uaintermitted ruin. Loud resound. 740
 The hollow trunks against the mountain's side,
 Swift bounds each craggy mass. The foes beneath
 Look up aghast, with horreur 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

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 less'ning pass.

Along the mountain's side Platæa's troop, 760

The Mantineans, and Tegæans stood,

An horrid length of war. Th' unwearied swords

Of Dithyrambus and Diomedon

Still blaz'd the terrour of the Barb'rous host.

Before them fled the Persians to the shore, 765

All in a moment by the various bands

Of Greece surrounded. From the gulph profound

Perdition here inevitable frowns,

And there, incircled by a grove of spears,

They stand devoted hecatombs to Mars. 770

Now

Now not a moment's interval delays
Their gen'ral doom, but down the Malian steep
Prone are they hurried to th' expanded arms
Of horror rising from the op'ning deep,
And grasping all their numbers, as they fall. 775
The dire confusion, like a storm, invades
The chafing billows; loud resounds 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 surge forever clos'd.

END OF THE FIFTH BOOK.





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 Hyperantbes, 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



LEONIDAS.

BOOK VI.

IN sable 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

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 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

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 Helen, or the wanton charms

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

Whate'er the lily 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 oft with anguish rends the spotless heart, 45

And oft associates wisdom with despair.

In courteous phrase began the chief humane.

EXALTED

EXALTED fair, who thus adorn'ft 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 fpake, and gently to the lofty tent
Of Sparta's king the lovely stranger guides. 55
At Agis' fummons with a mantle broad
His mighty limbs Leonidas infolds,
And quits his couch. In wonder he furveys
Th' illustrious virgin, whom his prefence aw'd:
Her eye fubmiffive to the ground inclin'd 60
With veneration of the godlike man.
But foon his voice her anxious dread difpell'd,
Benevolent and hofpitable 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 deftiny compell'd,

Thy

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, wise, 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

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 fought.

Fix'd on the weeping queen with steadfast eyes,

Laconia's chief these tender thoughts recall'd.

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 Persians 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 horror 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

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 these unmoving, ghastly orbs

Perceive my gushing anguish! Does that heart,

Which Death's inanimating hand hath chill'd, 135

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 sepulchre, 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 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

O'er the pale dead. Then turning, he bespake
 The slave, who stood beside him. Thou, who
 ledst

Thy queen ill-destin'd to the fatal tents
 Of Lacedæmon, now returning bear
 Her bleeding reliques to the Persian lord; 170
 Thou, and these captives, whom I free from bonds.

ART thou a Spartan (interrupts the slave)
 And dost thou counsel me to seek again
 A clime unblest'd, where freedom never dwells?
 No. Bear me to Leonidas. Alone. 175
 Shall he decide, if wretched, as I seem,
 I may not claim protection from this camp.

WHO'E'ER thou art (amaz'd the chief replies)
 Thou may'st indeed a better lot demand,
 Than I, a stranger to thy hidden worth, 180
 Unconscious offer'd. Thy ignoble garb
 Conceal'd a virtue, which I now revere.
 And since thy suff'ring soul hath long endur'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 superior 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 straight
 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 sight,
 And know your brothers. From their seats they start.
 From either bursts, with tears of transport mix'd,
 The name of Polydorus. On his breast

Each

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. 210

You first shall know, if this unhappy slave

Yet merits your embraces. Now approach'd

Leonidas. Before him all recede,

Ev'n Alpheus' self; and yields his brother's hand,

Which in his own the gen'rous hero press'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
Divests his brother of his base attire,
And his own mantle o'er the shoulders threw
Of Polydorus. Agis too advanc'd,
With friendly arms infolds him, and began.

Now, in thy native liberty secure, 230
Smile on thy past afflictions, and relate,
What chance restor'd thy virtue to the Greeks.

THEN Polydorus to the list'ning chiefs.
I was a Spartan. When my tender prime
On manhood border'd, from my native shore 235
Snatch'd by Phœnician pirates, I was sold
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 240
From Lacedæmon. Demaratus oft
With friendly sorrows would my lot deplore,

Nor

Nor less his own ill-fated virtue mourn'd,
Lost to his country in a servile court,
The center of corruption ; where in smiles 245
Is envy painted, treachery, and hate,
And rankling malice ; where alone sincere
The dissolute seek no disguise : where he
Who all possesses, that a king can give,
Is far less happy than the meanest son 250
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 255
Untimely wither'd, I at last return,
And to my native land the tidings bear
Of distant desolation. Here in grief
He paus'd, when thus Leonidas. Proceed.
Though from thy lips inevitable fate 260
To all be threaten'd, thou art heard by none,
Whose dauntless souls can entertain a thought,

But how to fall the noblest. Thus the chief;

The rest in speechless expectation wait.

Such was the solemn silence, which o'erspread 265

The shrine of Ammon, or Dodona's shades,

When anxious mortals from the mouth of Jove

Their doom explor'd. Nor Polydorus long

Suspends the Grecians, but resumes his tale.

As I this night accompanied the steps 270

Of Ariana, ere we reach'd the straits

Before our view then op'ning, one appear'd

With hasty feet now traversing the way,

Now fix'd intensely towards the Grecian wall;

Then on a sudden starting would renew 275

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 280

The venerable exile, and replied.

Our purpose ask not. Sparta's camp we seek,

And

And oh ! farewel for ever ! He rejoin'd.
Thrice happy Polydorus ! Thou again
Shalt visit Sparta to these eyes denied. 285
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 290
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: 295
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.
Remembering this, to Lacedæmon's chief 300
Report, that newly to the Persian host
Return'd a Malian, Epialtes nam'd,

Who

Who as a spy had fought the Grecian tents.
He to the tyrant magnified his art,
Which with delusive eloquence had wrought 305
The Greeks to such despair, that Asia's king
Had been ere 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 their valour: therefore would the king 310
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 315
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 vaour, or ambition warms, 320
Rous'd by the traitor's eloquence, attends

From

From all the nations, fir'd with eager zeal
 The first to enter Greece. In silence now
 The youth remains. Tremendous from his seat
 Uprose Platæa's chief. His eyes were flames, 325
 And thus on trembling Anaxander burst
 The furious accents from his livid lips.

YET ere we fall, O traitor, shall this arm
 To hell's avenging furies sink thy head.

ALL now is tumult, ev'ry bosom swells 330
 With rage untam'd, and vengeance. Half un-
 sheath'd

Diomedon's impetuous falchion blaz'd.
 But, as the Colchian forcerefs renown'd
 In fables old, or Circe, when they fram'd
 A potent spell from Erebus to wake 335
 The dead in dark and fleeting forms to glide
 Before the moon's dim twilight, with their charms
 Smooth'd all the sea, and silenc'd each rude blast;
 Till not a billow heav'd against the shore,
 Nor ev'n the wanton-winged zephyr breath'd 340

The

The lightest whisper through the magic air :

So, when thy voice, Leonidas, is heard,

Fell discord listens ; Rage with sacred awe

Subsides in silence ; while confusion slept.

WITHHOLD this rashness (interpos'd the king)

Before we punish, let us find the guilt. 346

Not yet hath Persia overturn'd our tents,

Nor yet her Barb'rous shouts our ears alarm.

We still have time for vengeance, and to know,

If yet our swords destruction may repel, 350

Or how to die most glorious. Then arose

Dieneces, and thus the Greeks bespake.

ERE yet they pass our borders, Xerxes' host

Must learn to conquer, and the Greeks to fly.

The spears of Phocis guard the secret pass. 355

Let instant 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. 360

THOU

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 rock's aerial height; 365
And while, around, Dieneces 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. 370
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, 375
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, 380
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 385
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 390
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 servitude thus wasted. Life with me
Hath lost its favour. Then in silent woe 395
He hangs his head. His brother pleads in vain.
He answers only with repeated groans.
Now in his view Dienece's advanc'd

With

With Sparta's band. On them his eyes are fix'd
Immoveable, and thus his mind revolves. 400

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 405
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 sorrow, and the black despair,
Which on my youth has prey'd; propitious once 410
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, 415
While with a kind and hospitable hand,
The gentle Agis by her lover's corse
On one said bier the pallid beauties laid

Of Ariana. He from shackles frees

Two Persian captives, whom his gen'rous arm 420

That day preserv'd from slaughter, then began.

To you I give that freedom, which you fought

To snatch from me. This recompence I ask,

And this alone. Transport to Asia's camp

These bleeding reliques; bid the Persian king 425

Weep o'er this flow'r thus blasted in its pride;

Then say, th' all-judging Gods have thus ordian'd:

Thou, whose ambition o'er the groaning earth

Leads desolation, o'er the nations spreads

Calamity and tears, thou first shalt mourn, 430

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 435

Of Ariana was already told.

He meets the captives, when, with weeping eyes

On Teribazus turn'd, he thus exclaims.

O! AS

O! As thy arms present thee, hadst thou been
Indeed a Grecian! then thy gen'rous heart 440
Its valour ne'er had wasted to support
A king's injustice; then a gentle fate
Had blest'd thy life, or bleeding thou hadst known,
How sweet is death for liberty. A Greek
This friendly wish affords thee, though his head 445
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 450
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 455
Pass o'er the silent pool to happier seats,
Where tyrants ne'er can enter to molest

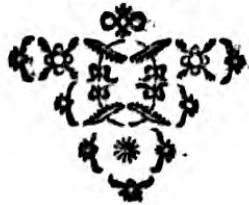
The

The blisful region ; but are far remov'd
To realms of horrou, where from righteous
Heav'n,

They bear those pains, they merit from man-
kind! . 460

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

END OF THE SIXTH BOOK.





LEONIDAS.

BOOK VII.

The Argument.

The bodies of Teribazus 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 possessed of the passages in the hills, and were hastening to Thermopylae, 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.

LEO-



LEONIDAS.

BOOK VII.

BEFORE the tent of Xerxes now ar-
riv'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

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 corpse

Her humble lover now his scorn awak'd.

In tears the captive's mournful tale he heard,

And then first knew compassion ; but ere 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

Led by this Malian ; may not there the Greeks
 With opposition more tremendous still 30
 And ruinous, than yester sun beheld,
 Resistless hold their craggy post ; renew
 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 harshlest truth ;
 Say what remains to hope ? The exile here.

IF truth unblam'd may issue from my lips,
 Too well, imperial Xerxes, you presage
 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 havock 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

Whose lofty summits overlook'd the waves
Of Hermus and Pactolus; either stream 50
Enrich'd with golden sands its tribute bore
To this great satrap; through the servile court
Yet was there none more practis'd in the arts
Of mean submission; none more skill'd to gain
The royal favour; none, who better knew 55
The phrase, the looks, and gesture of a slave.
In soothing words he thus the king bespake.

IF Xerxes, will to spare his faithful bands
And not exert the terrours of his pow'r;
More gentle means of conquest than by arms, 60
Nor less secure, may artifice supply.
Renown'd Darius, thy imperial fire,
Great in the spoil of kingdoms, long in vain
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' foon, 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 win his sword to aid thee. Xerxes here,
 Rous'd from his trance of sorrow, swift replied.

Wise 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

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 fat,
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 blifs 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 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!

HE said. The chief replies not, but commands 121
 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

Sur-

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'reignty 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 straight
 On him direct their fight, who thus began.

ERE 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 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

An inundation of Barbarians pours, 146
 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 terror, 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

De-

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.
You, after all the wonders which your swords 171
Have here accomplish'd, shall enrich your names
With fresh renown. Your valour must compleat,
What we begin. Here first th' astonish'd foe
A dying Spartan shall with terror 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 Platæan 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 forsake 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 dying here ? A more illustrious tomb 190

Where can I gain, than underneath the heaps

Of Persians fall'n the victims of our swords.

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 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 counsel from thee, who art wise as brave,
 If then thy magnanimity retain
 Thee too, with great Leonidas to fall,
 At either's side our limbs shall press the ground, 225

And drop together in the arms of Death ;
 So if th' attentive traveller we draw
 To our cold reliques, wond'ring shall he trace
 The diff'rent scene, and pregnant with applause,
 O wise old man, exclaim, thou well hast chose 230
 The hour of fate : and O ! unequall'd youth,
 Who to thy country didst thy bloom devote,
 Mayst thou remain for ever dear to Fame !
 May Time rejoice to name thee ! and may Peace
 With gentlest pinions hover o'er thy urn ! 235

THIS said, the hero with his lifted shield
 His face o'er shades, and drops a secret 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

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;

Nor have I yet one benefit repay'd. 251

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 tenderness revere.

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 glo-

A glorious grave; but spare thy father's eye
 The bitter anguish to behold thy youth
 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 terror 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 are his lips and trembling: such the mind
 Of slaves corrupt, to them the beauteous face 285

Of

Of virtue turns to horror. 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 Persians hasten 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

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 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 sight, and ruthless furies shook 320
Their hissing serpents. All the Greeks assent,
With clamours echoing through the concave rock.

FORTH

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;
Accus'd by one alone, a banish'd wretch, 331
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 soil,
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

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 sage, 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 terror 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

In

In time's eternal records, and inhance
Your country's lustre ; lo ! the setting sun
Inflames the broad horizon. All retire,
And in your tents invoke the pow'r of sleep 365
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 :
For soon, as Cynthia from the vault of heav'n 370
Hath hung her shining lamp, through Asia's host
Shall death with horror and amazement rage.
Their camp is open to our swords, depriv'd
Of all its chosen warriors. But I charge
All, ev'n the Spartans, who are maim'd, or weak,
To pain, or toil unequal, from our camp 376
This hour to hasten. You our brave allies
Of Corinth, Phlius, with th' Arcadian bands
And Mycenæans must not yet return,
But here, while we repose, in arms remain ; 380
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.

O AGIS, hear and mark my last command. 385
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.
Nor yet with us the faithless band must join, 390
Not with such base associates must we trust
Our great design. Their perfidy might soon
Find means to rouse the unsuspecting foe,
And all our glorious enterprise confound.
Then, O my faithful Agis, ere we move, 395
While on the solemn sacrifice intent,
As Lacedæmon's sacred laws ordain,
Our pray'rs we offer to the tuneful nine,
Do thou in whispers charge the Theban train,
Slow and in silence to disperse and fly. 400

This

This said, they parted. On his couch alone
Reclines the hero, where he thus revolves.

My fate is now impending. O my heart!
What more auspicious period could I chuse
For death, than now; when beating high with joy
Thou tell'st me, I am happy? If to live, 406
Or die, as Virtue dictates, be to know
The purest bliss; if she her charms display
Still beauteous, still unfading, still serene
To youth, to age, to death; whatever be 410
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
The wretched offspring of Injustice prove? 415
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,
Where guilt resides? Leonidas forego 420

The

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
 The black impresson of a guilty thought: 425
 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
 Suppresses fear. Oft hurried on they lose 430
 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,
 When glory only, and the gen'ral good 435
 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.
 The man thus great and happy, in the scope 440
 Of

Of his large mind is stretch'd beyond his date;
Ev'n on this shore of being he in thought
Supremely blest anticipates the good,
Which late posterity from him derives.

THE hero clos'd his meditation here. 445

The swelling transports of his mind subside
In soft oblivion, while the silken plumes
Of sleep envelop his extended limbs.

END OF THE SEVENTH BOOK.





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.

LEO-



LEONIDAS.

BOOK VIII.

*** CARCE was begun the second watch of
S 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
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

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 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

Leo-

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.
Ere 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

L

Th'

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 tumbling o'er a craggy shore.

Again I turn'd. An ocean there appear'd

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

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 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 clust'ring 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 con-
tain'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
 O Asia, and of Libya 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 die to save their country. Here again
 Leonidas th' exulting chiefs address'd.

SINCE

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,
Ere 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.
Mean time, ye leaders, ev'ry band instruct
To move in silence, nor with shouts alarm
The midnight stillness. Mindful of their charge
The chiefs depart. Leonidas provides 120
His various armour. First the breast-plate 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 centre on the swelling brass
 Th'inimitable artist had imbos'd
 The shape of great Alcides, whom to gain
 Two Goddeffes 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
 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

Book VIII. L E O N I D A S. 247

Not undescr'd by Pleasure, where she lay 145

Stretch'd on a gorgeous carpet which bespread

The meadow with magnificence. Around

Were flow'rets 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 with excess of sweet allurements smil'd :

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

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

They fill'd the surface of the spacious targe.

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

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

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 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.
 Swift from the limbs the fuming hide is torn, 220
 The flesh dissever'd on the altar heap'd.
 Now smoaks the pile, then sudden flames abroad.

A burst

A burst of splendor 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.

Mean time the great Leonidas drew nigh,

And stood before the altar. There his helm

Unclasp'd to Agis he commits, his shield

And spear to Dythyrambus, then his arms 230

Extending thus in supplications 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 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

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 ennoble 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

The midnight calm! Then turn Destruction wild.

Bid Terrour 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,

My last commands attend. Your gen'ral's voice 271

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

This night may send ev'n Xerxes' self to lead
 Th' innumerable train of Persian ghosts
 To Pluto's dreary shade, unless reserv'd, 285
 From all this ruin, to lament his shame,
 And future fight, 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

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 frightened 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 heed your motions. Separate, and fly 320
 With

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 steps
 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 the pathless ocean: so the Greeks
 Exulting gaz'd, as down their op'ning ranks
 Their chief proceeds; from whose majestic grace

A soul

Book VIII. L E O N I D A S. 257

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,

Ere 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

Ev'n now transport him furious to the seat 356

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

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 soil o'ercast. 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 see'st 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 the 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

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,

Megistias, Maron, and Platæa's chief, 405

Dieneces, Demophilus are drawn,

And Dithyrambus. They their fixed sight

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

The

Book VIII. L E O N I D A S. 261

The Barb'rous millions to their deathful steel: 420

So low'ring clouds expanding from the north

A while suspend their horrors, destin'd soon

To blaze in lightnings, and to burst in storms.

END OF THE EIGHTH BOOK.



LEO-



LEONIDAS.

BOOK 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 superior strength and valour sinks down cover'd with wounds, and expires the last of all the Grecian commanders.

LEO-



LEONIDAS.

BOOK IX.



THE waning moon display'd her gleaming
T 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 §
Lay stretch'd in slumber, motionless, and deaf,
Wrapt in the dead security of night,

Nor

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 phantoms in the sky, 20
 Aerial hosts amid the clouds array'd,
 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 Horrour, which to Xerxes' couch,
 And

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 Libya starts,
 (Amaze, affright, distraction in his look)
 And sees 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

M

Through

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 sceptre, late ador'd 55
 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'erthrows the spangled heav'ns,
 And clouds condensing intercept the moon.
 Black o'er the furrow'd main the raging east
 In whirlwinds sweeps the surge. Now roar the coast,
 The crashing forests, and the cavern'd rocks. 65
 Swift through the camp the hurricane impells

Its

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' ethereal concave. Oeta now disclos'd
 Its forehead glitt'ring with eternal frost,

While

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 envelops 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 finged 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 sceptred 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 satraps; 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 cheerful day. 140

When now at Xerxes' tent the Grecian band
Was reunited. What could Fortune more

To

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 150

Their wearied swords to deeds of brighter fame?

What, but th' inspiring hope of glorious death

To crown their labour, and th' auspicious look

Of their heroic chief, which still unchang'd,

Still with superior 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
 In order'd battle to confront the pow'rs 170
 Of Hyperanthes, that selected band
 From Asia's numbers, destin'd with the mora
 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 deaf'ning roar
 Prone from the steep of Elephantis falls
 Its sea of waters, Hyperanthes pours
 His rapid legions o'er the Grecian camp 180
Down

Down from the hills precipitant. No foe
 Is found to stop the torrent; on they roll
 With thund'ring foot-steps o'er the founding pass.

THAT night no sooner had the Theban train
 Thermopylæ forsaken, but their course 185
 They bent along the mountains, till they met
 The pow'rs of Xerxes. Dusky twilight still
 Prevailing, Persia with misguided rage
 Assail'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 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

And rang'd for battle. Hyperanthes soon
Recall'd his chosen warriors from their feet.

Swift on the great Leonidas was bent 220

A grove of darts; th' incourt'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 Bessus 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 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 sight was practis'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 found her name, nor tell the vocal groves
His fruitless sorrows. Then Madauces fell, 250
A Paphlagonian born amid the sound
Of dashing surges, and the roar of winds;
Who o'er th' inhospitable 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

For spoil and slaughter guide his hostile prow.
With these Tithraestes 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,
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

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' Assyrians, and Chaldæans. Asia's camp
 Was still the seat 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'erth'rown, 295
 And round the pastures flocks and herds are cast

In weltring heaps of death; so Persia's host
In horrou mute one boundless scene displays
Of defolation : 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 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 sight 315
Their consternation is at length dispell'd,
And through th' assembling nations hope revives.

Pharnuchus

Pharnuchus then from all the number forms
 A chosen train; Thermopylæ he seeks;
 Their march in loudest clamours is proclaim'd. 320
 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' excell'g 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 powrs
 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

Through Persia's legions, and the proud remains
Of noblest chiefs th' ensanguin'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 massy 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
Expels 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

Him most, the wretch, whom want, and sickness
spreads

On earth's cold breast neglected, shall deplore.

On him the brave Artontes sinks 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

Ere from the dead he disingag'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

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 corse.

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 it's 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 wasted by his flowing wound
 Beside him faints and dies. In Ninus old
 Had his exalted ancestors sustain'd 405
 Th' Assyrian sceptre. Now to Persia's throne
 A tributary lord he rul'd the vales,
 Where Tigris swift between the parted hills
 Of tall Niphates 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 bears his falchion. Through his foes
 With lightning wing'd it scatters wounds and death.
 Artaphrenes in torture feels his arm 416

Lopt

Lopt from the shoulder. Zatis leaves his hand
Yet twining round the long-disputed lance.
On Pheren's neck descends the pond'rous blade;
Down-drops the sever'd head; the vital stream 420
Spouts from its purple sluices. Madorn strides
Across the pointed ash. His weight o'ercomes
The wearied Grecian, who resigns his hold,
Yet cleaves th' exulting Persian to the brain.
But now the fierce Abrocomes approach'd, 425
And low'ring 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

More from his valour, and supine he lies
 In glories ripen'd on his blooming head.
 Him shall the Thespian virgins in their songs
 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,
 Ere 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 splinty wood
Infix'd remains ; the hero then unsheaths 460
His falchion broad ; a second views aghast
His entrails falling, while Platæa'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 impels, a stately turret spreads
Its disuniting ramparts on the plain ;
Joy fills th' assailants, while the battle's tide
Whelms o'er the widening breach. The Persians thus
O'er the late-fear'd Diomedon had rush'd, 475
And

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 compels
 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

His shield, and bursting corselet. From the slain
The victor draws his iron-pointed spear
Bent, and ineebled 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 scaly mail
Immediate death repell'd. Th' indignant king
Gripes 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. Mean while 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 Rhodope, 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

Shakes from his dreary 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 threat'ning 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 breathes the last remains
Of tortur'd life. The Spartan thus maintain'd
Th' unequal combat with his single sword.
But Agis calls Dienece, alarms
Demophilus, Megistias ; they from leaps 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 Fear revives. Astaspes 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 Dieneces 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

Book IX. L E O N I D A S. 293

Springs on the victor. Iäxartes' banks 575

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 dreary 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 Sacian writhes along the lance,

Which gliding 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 Dienece presents 590

His breast obnoxious to a thousand darts.

The shield deserts his unsustaining arm,

And slides 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 forsook 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 Iaxartes' body. Low reclines
 Dieneses 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 Dieneses to Sparta's king
 The fainting Agis bore. The blazing steel
 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,

So, when the giants from Olympus chas'd 615

Th' inferior Gods, themselves in terror 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 :

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, sapless 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 Sacian'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

Restrain'd his valour, and his godlike foe

Admiring view'd. Such majesty and strength

To fierce Pelides all incircled round

With

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 virgin 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 wild 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

With distant terror gaze the savage throng.
 Prolong'd by varied art, the dubious fight 675
 The great event suspended. On the foe
 His well-aim'd spear at last the Spartan drove,
 And pierc'd the shield. Inexorable fate
 That moment hover'd o'er the eastern prince,
 When with unmatch'd celerity aside 680
 He swung his buckler; underneath his arm,
 Unstain'd with blood the hostile javelin pass'd:
 Meantime, with joy, and ardent hopes elate
 Of fame and conquest, sudden he impell'd
 His rapid lance against the Spartan's throat; 685
 But he with wary skill his target rais'd,
 And o'er his shoulder turn'd the glancing steel;
 For one last effort then his scatter'd strength
 Recall'd, and wheeling with resistless force
 His massy buckler dash'd the brazen verge 690
 Against the Persian's forehead: down he sunk
 Without a groan expiring, as o'erwelm'd
 Beneath a marble fragment from its seat

Heav'd

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 sluices 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 sereneest joy
His closing eye contemplates. Fame can twine
No brighter laurels round his glorious head,
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.



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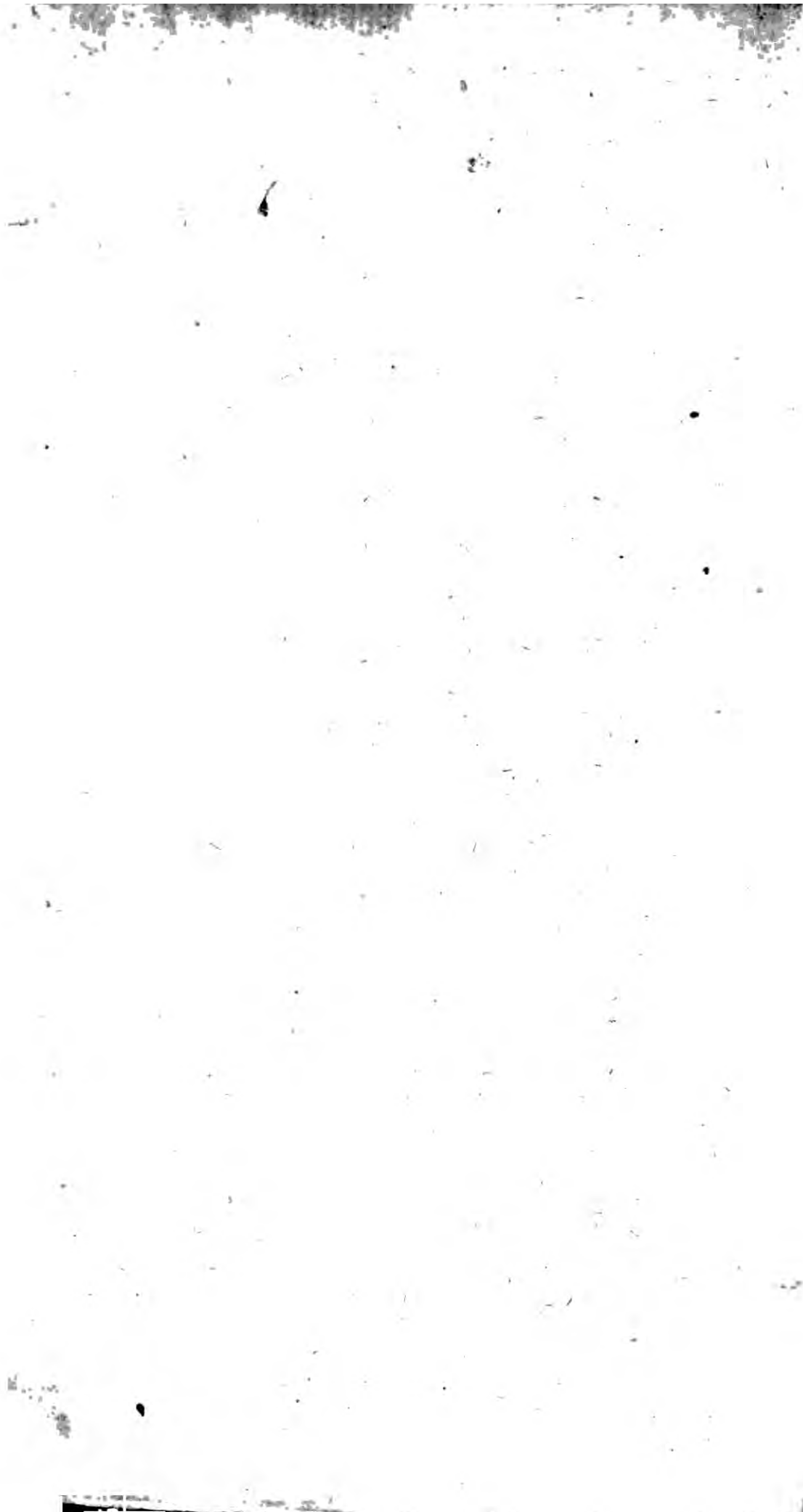
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52



28

