



---

The Battle of Marathon: 490 B. C.

Author(s): W. Watkiss Lloyd

Source: *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 2 (1881), pp. 380-395

Published by: [The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/623580>

Accessed: 16/01/2014 14:50

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

## THE BATTLE OF MARATHON: 490 B.C.

‘Quâ pugnâ nihil adhuc est nobilius.’—C. NEPOS.

MILITARY history proper must begin with the battle of Marathon; it is the first battle of which history preserves for us even a moderately detailed account in respect of the relative numbers and equipments of the contending armies, the precise situation and local peculiarities of the conflict, the positions of the armies before the battle, the circumstances of the actual collision, and the decisiveness of the result. There are uncertainties as to the maps which should illustrate the far later battles of Pharsalus and Philippi, that determined the fate of the empire of the world, but we have a perfectly satisfactory ground-plan, from the country as it still exists, of the first great collision of Hellenic and Asiatic power on the western coast of the Aegean. Herodotus, to whom we are chiefly indebted for an account of it, was not a contemporary, having been born about six years later, 484 B.C. His account, no doubt, is meagre where information would be most valuable, and he is anything but a skilful military critic, and, like many others of the most successful historians, he neglects details that might be dry to make room for others not rigidly authenticated that are pointed and picturesque. Still, even so he supplies us with many circumstances which he might value simply for the sake of sparkle, but that enable us by comparison with other stray notices to divine some very critical facts about the battle, which he himself either did not fully know, or, not duly appreciating, failed to set down. If after study of all subsidiary information duly compared and combined it seems possible to recover a very fairly authentic account of the battle, it will be no doubt

at the cost of some reduction of what is most marvellous in the account of Herodotus ; but the story will still be sufficiently romantic, no moderate remainder of marvel will be left, and there is full compensation for the sacrifice in certified credibility and historical instruction.

The overthrow of the Lydian monarchy by Cyrus (546 B.C.) brought the Hellenic cities of Asia under Persian control ; and after the conquests of Cambyses Persia became a maritime power. The revolt of the Ionian Greeks was finally quelled by a naval victory ; the chief islands of the Archipelago were subdued. In anticipation of a Persian invasion of Macedonia, which took place the next year (492 B.C.), Miltiades left the Chersonnesus on the Hellespont, where he had ruled with independence, in succession to progenitors, and retired to Athens. Athens had given direct provocation to Persia by supporting the Ionian rebellion and burning Sardis ; but the ruling aggressive impulse alone would sufficiently account for the resolution of Darius to clear his frontier by the subjugation of the presumptuous Athenians and Lacedaemonians. Hellenic refugees were never wanting at his court to encourage such an enterprise by intrigue and information ; and now Hippias, the expelled Athenian tyrant, the son of Pisistratus, was particularly active. In consequence, within four years after the suppression of the Ionian revolt (490 B.C.), the Persian generals Datis and Artaphernes in full command of the sea, passed over to Europe with a large army. They first wreaked severe vengeance upon Eretria in Euboea, and then proceeded to cross the straits to Europe to deal like measure to the Athenians. It was now twenty years since the tyrants had been driven out of Athens, and the democratic constitution which owed much to Solon had been importantly settled and consolidated by the corrective legislation of Cleisthenes. Within that period Athens had already done much to vindicate the change by those advances which draw forth the reflection of Herodotus—that surely political freedom, which could so transform a state from insignificance to dignity, is a truly energetic power. Besides the self-reliance that was born of a successful and prosperous revolution, the energy of the democracy was braced by the consciousness that the expelled tyrant was still hopeful of a reaction such as his father had profited by before, and that the city contained

a party dangerously enterprising, which was held in check indeed, but would willingly seize an opportunity to help a counter-revolution. The catastrophe of Eretria brought the warning home. Athenian cleruchs, or settlers, whose assistance had been proffered, received notice from a leading Eretrian that dissension was certain to be fatal to his city, and they withdrew in time across the straits to Oropus. The Persians expected to be opposed in the open field, and putting in at some ports to the south, disembarked the horses—the cavalry, which they had brought over in vessels specially constructed. The Eretrians, however, in opposition to the advice of some who urged retirement to the mountains, kept their walls, and bravely repulsed attacks for six days. Then two of the more distinguished citizens betrayed the place to the Persians, who plundered and burnt the temples, and reduced the inhabitants to slavery. The lesson was well read by the Athenians. When they heard that the enemy was passing over to the plain of Marathon, they resolved to make at least the first resistance in the field. By this policy they postponed certainly, and might perhaps escape, the great danger of the presence of the hostile force before the walls encouraging a rising of the malcontents, or treasonable admission of the enemy within their defences.

Two roads led from the plain of Marathon to Athens; the best and easiest, some twenty-six miles long—a march of between six and seven hours only—followed the coast-line south, to turn inland over the lower slopes of Mount Pentelicus. This was the route which had been successfully pursued by Pisistratus, the father of Hippias, when he regained the tyranny which he kept till death (Herod. i. 62). The other road to the north shorter by four miles, but scarcely carriageable, passed over higher ground and the more difficult mountainous district. The Athenian force was promptly thrown forward beyond the passes, so as to occupy ground which by height, aspect, and other circumstances was peculiarly defensible. Various notices imply that the neighbourhood of Marathon was thickly wooded; the epitaph of Aeschylus mentions 'the grove of Marathon'; and both Seneca in *Hippolytus* (17) and Nonnus (xiii. 189) may be trusted as merely repeating long descended poetical tradition (καὶ τέμενος βαθύδενδρον ἐλαιοκόμου Μαραθῶνος: and 'Vos qua Marathon tramite laevo Saltus aperit'). These

obstructions were decidedly in favour of the smaller force, which, arriving early, was enabled to take ground with good communications and a line of retreat open behind, and every facility for undertaking the defence of whichever pass might be attempted. We shall probably be correct in following Cornelius Nepos here, who assigns the adoption of this movement to the suggestion and influence of Miltiades (Clemens Alexandrinus, i. 29, 162, has no doubt that he got his hint from Moses), after active discussion in the popular assembly. Here, at the temenos of the Marathonian Heracles, they were joined by the entire power, some thousand hoplites, of the allied city of Plataea, otherwise the Athenians stood alone; and this aid is variously stated as raising their total muster to 9,000 or 10,000 men. The application to Lacedaemon for help—the help, in fact, of the main power of Peloponnesus—had brought a promise of assistance at the full of the moon, but not before; from scruples of custom or religion the reply being given on the ninth of the month. Unless, as is quite possible, the sincerity of the Spartans might be doubtful, there was a great temptation to delay ten days for so important a reinforcement. That the temptation was resisted is characteristic of the vigour and decision to which victory was due at last. Yet in some important respects the military maxims in vogue at Athens were as much bound to tradition as those of Lacedaemon. The chief command was given to ten generals in their rotation on successive days, and the all-important question of giving battle was committed to the vote. Miltiades was only one of the ten generals, the leaders severally of the ten Cleisthenean tribes, and was in a less important position than Callimachus the polemarch, to whom a casting vote was given; and even he, if we may trust Herodotus, owed his appointment to the chance of the lot. A council of war, it is said, never fights, and when a vote was taken whether a battle was to be risked—the alternative lying between a retirement upon Athens or inaction at least until the promised and so-highly esteemed reinforcement from Peloponnesus should arrive—the votes were evenly divided, and it was only by the casting vote of Callimachus that it was decided to risk the chances of an engagement, and trust, in the words of Justin, rather in celerity of action than in allies.

The polemarch was the archon to whom was committed the

duty of performing annual rites for Harmodius and Aristogiton, the reputed quellers of tyranny (Julius Poll. 8, ix. 91), and this enables us to recognize a pointed reference in the speech which Herodotus makes Miltiades address to him to bring him to his own view;—his memory would be honoured no less than these his proper heroes (Herod. vi. 109). To Miltiades, who secured this decision, the generals who agreed with him also conceded the full command upon their days; if he acted after all only on the day when his own turn came round, we need not doubt that it was because there was no good strategic reason for engaging sooner. We do not even know how near it may not have been when the vote was taken.

Miltiades, then, was in command of a small but highly trained and well armed force of citizens, animated by a spirit of patriotism that was raised to full heat by animosity towards a tyrant and his foreign allies, and by clear apprehension that the fate of the Eretrians, and even worse, would be the consequence of their subjugation. With this force he was called upon to withstand at least, if not to conquer, an army vastly superior in numbers, indeed what might seem overwhelming numbers, which, include as it might an ill-assorted and half-hearted muster of barbarians of various arms and countries, had also a formidable nucleus of veterans accustomed to victory in previous wars in Asia. Herodotus himself, while noticing the inferiority of Persian arms and armour, speaks in high terms of the military qualities of the men themselves (ix. 63).

How many days intervened between the first debarkation of the Persians and the battle, we are not told, and calculations that have been put forward avowedly end in only a guess. No attempt was made to oppose their landing, and when it was seen that the Greek commander strengthened his naturally strong position by felled trees at several points ('multis locis,' C. Nepos), the Persians may have hesitated either to attack him directly or to expose themselves to a flank attack by attempting the coast road.

Among the motives that influenced Hippias in counselling the debarkation on the coast of Marathon, was the suitability of the plain for the operations and movements of cavalry. The line of coast was sheltered by a projecting promontory, and deep water close in gave facility for landing. The plain itself,

in front of an amphitheatre of rocky hills, is six miles long and never less than a mile and a half broad. It might be traversed in two hours by a march along the sea, a torrent that divided it midway giving no obstruction of consequence; a morass at the southern extremity is dry at the end of summer, and it was now about the 12th of September; another much larger, some miles square, was at the northern extremity, and impassable by a multitude—but this would be left in the rear. From the description of Pausanias we judge its condition to have been worse in antiquity than at present. Over the open plain, then, cavalry could career and might be counted upon to harass a heavy armed force like that of the Greeks, or interrupt communications and cover advancing infantry. Datis and Artaphernes had provided horse transports in Asia, and indeed Herodotus tells us that the cavalry had been disembarked in Euboea in anticipation of a battle there in the field. When then we find no mention of cavalry being concerned in the battle of Marathon, and indeed an implication (*χωρίς ἵππων*), however enigmatical, that they were not, the inference is clear that the Persians were attacked before they had power to complete, or while they were in process of completing or entirely changing their proposed arrangements. It is in accordance with the suggestion that they may have contemplated a change of basis, that we do not read of any camp to be either assailed or plundered after the victory, nothing of an abandonment by the defeated of any of that store of rich appointments that the satraps were wont to take with them to warfare. It may be fairly assumed that the celerity of Miltiades had already taken the enemy by surprise, and that Hippias was disappointed in finding that the passes were to be seriously defended; under these circumstances, after the experience at Eretria and the knowledge that at Athens there was quite as unscrupulous a Medizing party, there was manifestly an inducement to divert the attack—to take advantage of the command of the sea, and gain Athens in the absence of its army.

The battle itself then is thus described by Herodotus:—‘The Athenians were arrayed in order of battle, Callimachus the polemarch leading the right wing according to Athenian usage; [his tribe was that of Aiantis, and he would be at its head, *Plut. Sympos.* 1, x. 3] the other tribes followed in order of enumera-



tion;’ the expression of the historian seems to imply that there was a certain established sequence. The Plataeans were posted at the left wing. The front was extended to equal that of the Medes, and this was done at the expense of the centre, where the files were reduced, while those of either wing were strengthened. ‘When the array was completed,’ says Herodotus, ‘and the sacrifices were favourable and the Athenians were sent forward, they advanced against the barbarians at a run,—the distance between the two armies being not less than eight stadia, that is, more than three quarters of a mile. ‘The Persians seeing them coming on at a run, set about preparing to receive them; and as they saw how, so few in numbers as they were, they were running to the attack unprovided with either cavalry or archers, they ascribed it to fatal insanity.’ But as soon as the Athenians came into conflict with the barbarians they fought bravely nevertheless; ‘for they were the first of all the Hellenes as far as we know who charged their enemies at a run, and the first to bear looking upon the Median costume; for till then the very name of Medes was a terror to the Hellenes. The fighting at Marathon went on some considerable time; and the barbarians had the better at the centre, where the Persians and Sacae were stationed, and broke their opponents and pursued them towards the country. But the Athenians conquered at one extremity and the Plataeans at the other, and then both wings wheeling about engaged those who had broken their centre; and the Athenians conquered and followed the flying Persians with slaughter up to the shore, and there they attacked the ships and were calling for fire.’ Herodotus seems to be borrowing this last incident from the attack of Hector on the galley of Protesilaus in the *Iliad*. Here Callimachus was killed and another general, and Cynegirus son of Euphorion—brother he of Aeschylus, who also was among the combatants. In result the Athenians seized seven ships and destroyed 6,400 of their enemies, losing themselves 192 only. A large proportion of the Persian force still succeeded in re-embarking, and their fleet passed over at once to Euboea and put on board the captives, the guarding of whom must have occupied a part of their army. After some delay, however speedily, they sailed round Sunium in response to a signal from traitors in the city, by the elevation of a shield—probably a bright shield, the ancient



helio-telegraph—from a height; they found, however, that the victorious army had had time to return, and was prepared to oppose them, leaving them no course but to go back to Asia. Herodotus is quite certain that the Alcmaeonid relatives of Pericles were accused falsely of exhibiting a signal to the invaders, but he concedes to the accusers that such a signal was really made, and so by implication leaves their party chargeable with it. It may even have been due to the signal being descried that the movement was made which brought on the battle.

Such is the story of the battle as Herodotus relates it, and in which we may be prepared to assume a large alloy of inaccuracy and considerable incompleteness. We discern very plain traces of his notorious love for a little extravagance in what he says of the terror of Greeks at the Median aspect; and after this we may be excused for thinking it possible that he overstrained his authority elsewhere, and that the Athenian heavy-armed men did not start at a run for a charge of near a mile. The true state of the case however is discernible enough if we take the conditions of it into independent consideration. In the first place there was no doubt a motive for quickened advance in the fact that the great strength of the Persians lay in archery, of which the Greek force was destitute, and after it was within bowshot every moment saved was of consequence; on the other hand, when once at close quarters the long stalwart spear and superior body armour, and trained and well-breathed vigour of the hoplite gave him that advantage which Aristagoras had prophetically declared should make him master of the Persian empire (Herod. v. 49). But that Miltiades, who, however eager, had not hastened to engage as soon as the votes had given him the power to do so whenever he liked, was now so seemingly precipitate, was due to a further—to a master motive. It is not to be doubted that he well knew that his main chance of success depended—considering the odds against him—in watching for a favourable opportunity for action, which with his small army he could not attempt to force, and upon seizing it as soon as offered. If when he did attack his advance was made with such rapidity as to be susceptible of exaggeration to an extent to satisfy Herodotus, this is confirmation of his plan in waiting, no less than of his masterly outlook; as opportunities in war—

especially when battle is engaged or to be engaged, are advantages only for those who command a promptitude that is measurable by minutes. It is more difficult to divine with certainty, but not to conjecture with very considerable probability, what may have been the nature of the opportunity offered. We know, as will appear, that the Persian position was close to the northern morass to their right, which might naturally be counted upon by them as a defence upon that side, as it was here that their ships were protected by the curving promontory of Cynosura, which shut in the bay from the north. Their vast numbers must have covered considerable ground, and the probability appears to be that Miltiades waited and watched for the time when movement was in progress, and they would not have time to extricate and to develop their array before he should be upon them. His own position no doubt was well in their view, and his first movement out of his intrenchments must have been visible; and that the Persians were not utterly unprepared is proved by the proper Persian troops and the Sacae occupying their established position in the centre; this however is quite consistent with the entire army of the barbarians occupying an imprudently confined position. So much is indeed implied by it being possible for Miltiades to spread out his small force with any hope of presenting an equal front, which still was an essential of his plan and project of battle. What that plan was is indeed clear upon a little closer consideration than has usually been given to the subject. He was able to count on the discipline of his men and the coolness of their commanders, and we find that he could determine in consequence not merely the direction of the first onset, but how it was to be followed up. He knew that the most formidable strength of the enemy was, according to their custom, certain to be in their centre, but counted on foiling this, not by concentrating his own chief strength against their best troops, but by declining collision with them—in fact by refusing their attack. With this intention, and in just reliance that the commanders there, who were in fact Aristides and probably Themistocles, would duly second it, he could venture to reduce his own centre. Accordingly it appears certain from the small number of his slain that the victorious pursuit by the Persians here was chiefly and at best a driving in of ranks which obeyed instructions in standing on

the defensive, and were prepared to give ground rather than expose themselves to be uselessly crushed. In strengthening his flanks Miltiades hurled his chief power upon those divisions of the enemy which could offer least resistance, and which he foresaw had only to be thrown into confusion to spread confusion from one point to another and involve the whole. He suddenly engaged the Persian multitudinous levies where there was no retreat open for them by land, where the struggle to escape if a panic could only be excited would carry them crowding to the ships, or hurry them as it did in hundreds and thousands into the morass. The valour of the Persians in the centre was unavailing when they were exposed to attack at either flank disengaged from the main body, and at the rear were pressed upon by the terror-stricken crowds that, thrown out of all order and cohesion, were striving to escape from the compact, well-armed, active, and impetuous hoplites.

The terms of Herodotus are such as naturally convey the impression that the armies were drawn out on either side and put in array with all deliberateness. He again says nothing of how importantly the morass contributed to the seriousness of the Persian catastrophe, and therefore while bewildering us with an almost inconceivable achievement of Athenian valour, fails altogether to do justice to the sagacious generalship of Miltiades. But we have a witness on the point who may not lightly be challenged. The battle of Marathon was the subject of one of the chief pictures which gave its name to the Poecile, or painted Stoa at Athens. In this Pausanias recognized the Plataeans along with the Athenians in full conflict with the barbarians. At one end the fight still raged on even terms, further on or in the background, the barbarians were shown in full flight and pushing each other into the marsh; at the other end of the picture the fugitives were being slaughtered by the Greeks as they were gaining the Phœnician ships. Callimachus and Miltiades were conspicuous among the combatants, together with an heroic personage, Echetus or Echetlaeus — representative of one who was said to have been seen in rustic garb while killing the enemies with a plough, and afterwards to have disappeared. The eponymous Marathon was also introduced, with Heracles, who was connected with the place by various legends as well as by his local worship and temple, and the

goddess Athene. The rudely clothed and armed Echelus seems to be a substitute for Heracles—as if legendary spirit were too much weakened to venture on asserting what it would fain have risked, that Heracles himself was personally helpful, but would not be denied entirely, and provided a substitute of reduced dignity. Herodotus is silent about Echelus, but has his own marvellous tale, which he reports at second hand: he had heard, he says, of an Athenian who ascribed his loss of sight to mere proximity to a daemonic combatant on the opposite side who passed him by to kill the man behind him. The painter of the Stoa was of course at liberty to draw on imagination to any extent for such supernatural interpositions, but the stories which could gain popular acceptance are important historical warnings of how far commonplace facts could be suppressed or changed in their favour. Even Pausanias, who visited the place centuries after, assures us, no doubt after what he held to be satisfactory assurance, that the noise of battle was to be heard every night on the plain. Herodotus mentions in simple terms enough the daring of Cynaëgeirus, who had his hand cut off with an axe as he seized the ornamental prow of a ship, and there perished; but by the time the tale had reached Justin, after becoming a wearisome commonplace meantime, his pertinacity had been exaggerated to absurdity. All know or have opportunities of knowing, the contradictory versions of the incidents of Waterloo, and when Col. Chesney undertook to give a dispassionate analysis of the campaign which led to it and the operations which decided it, the despatches of the commander-in-chief of even the victorious army were scarcely if at all quoted by him, and the memoirs of the conquered Emperor, and the formal and dignified histories, are still less trusted. Herodotus is our substitute as witness nearest to the time for such contemporary commentaries and documents, and he, we find, is open to correction by information supplied by a contemporary of the Emperor Hadrian. Pausanias visiting Marathon finds the marsh, he calls it even a marshy lake, with certain paths across it. It was by ignorance of these paths, he says, that the flying barbarians fell into the morass, where it was in consequence that the greatest slaughter occurred. He concludes his local description by saying that a little beyond the plain is the mountain of Pan and a cave worth a visit: the entrance to

it is narrow, but within are cells, baths, and the so-called goat flock of Pan, rocks, that is, with certain resemblance to goats. Pan therefore had local relations to Marathon, and this goes some way to explain the suggestion of another story.

Herodotus relates that Pheidippides, the herald whom the Athenian generals despatched to Sparta for assistance, reported on his return that when he was on the Parthenian mountain above Tegea, he heard his name called by the god Pan, who bade him expostulate with the Athenians for having neglected him—him who was friendly to them, had been helpful to them before, and would again be. It was in consequence of this announcement that after their success the Athenians constructed a sanctuary for Pan below the Acropolis and propitiated him with annual sacrifices and a lamp race. The site of this cave is shown on coins, and can be still recognized. So far only Herodotus; but Athenaeus preserves a scolion sung in honour of Pan as contributor to the victory (694 D)—and we have the epigram by Simonides for a votive statue;—

‘Me, the goatfooted Pan, the Arcadian, to Medians hostile,  
To the Athenians an aid, here has Miltiades set.’

The *Anthologia* (iv. xii. p. 353) gives another epigram in the name of the Athenians alone. That of Miltiades was still more likely in a city such as Athens to excite invidious comment than the later imprudent inscription of Pausanias on the Delphic dedication for the victory of Plataea. His future misfortunes were largely due to the fact that he gave offence to the demus, or at least was represented offensively to the demus, ever only too susceptible of jealousy on such score, as claiming the merit of the victory exclusively for himself.

Still none of these authorities indicate how and in what manner particularly it was that Pan helped the Athenians against the overwhelming multitudes of the Median army, and modern commentators on the battle have hitherto been careless to inquire. Yet it is upon this point that the decision of this important, this typical battle between Europeans and Asiatics, on which the future relation of European civilization to barbarism was dependent, turned. Thucydides (iv. 125) notices the peculiar liability of large armies to sudden and unreasonable panics; and this tendency is enhanced naturally when the

force is not only not homogeneous, but comprises—as we may fairly assume from what is said of the distinguished quality of the Persians and Sacae—a large proportion of very secondary troops, and those held in union by no bonds of true patriotic or even military spirit. The help which the god Pan was considered to have given must be confidently interpreted as the excitement of that panic-terror which threw the wings of the Median array into confusion, and in consequence hampered and made frustrate the valour and success of the centre, and hurried thousands to destruction, trampling upon one another, and urging masses forward to perish in the fatal morass. It is not required to enter here at length into the origin of the ascription of such terrors to Pan, the god of uncultivated wilds, or to cite the numerous allusions to the exploits of the god from the assistance which he rendered to the Olympians in their contest against the Titans, till Ovid wrote the lines—

‘Ipse deus velox discurrere gaudet in altis  
Montibus; et subitas concitat ille fugas.’—*Fast. II.*

Armies, troops, which justly merit the title of barbarian from deficiency of higher moral inspiration or self-confidence, are doubtless most susceptible, not always of alarm at a direct attack, however formidable, but of panic at unexpected attack, at failure of expected support, at access of confusion among disordered ranks and masses, at consciousness of a line of retreat being threatened if not cut off, difficult or non-existent. This is but an exaggeration of the liability of the very best troops to be shaken by an unexpected attack, or especially by an attack in flank; and it is in this respect that the history of the most successful conflicts of disciplined troops of civilized nations against barbarian numbers constantly repeats the story of Marathon. The general, like Miltiades, watches his opportunity, or makes it, and when it comes strikes hard and strikes rapidly, but strikes chiefly in such a direction as he counts on to probably create confusion—a panic-terror—and then the greater part of his work is done for him by the flying and frightened crowds of the enemies themselves. Against the sudden shock and surprising hardihood of the Athenian attack the Persian army, composed as it was, might have been unable to stand even had

it had time to deploy and open out on fuller ground; receiving the attack as it did, it was infallibly 'rolled up.'

Considering, therefore, all the circumstances, it is reasonable enough to believe that Miltiades, knowing well the composition and characteristics of the army which he had to oppose from his experience during the earlier Persian invasion of Europe by the Bosphorus, had a distinct apprehension from the first news of the debarkation of the enemy at Marathon of how they might be most effectively met and most probably foiled. It is quite intelligible that when all was achieved he could look back at the primary difficulties which he had encountered in the city and at the camp, with full consciousness that to his own strength of character it was due that these were overcome—as it was due to his own individual sagacity, promptitude, and courage above all, that the battle concluded as a victory and that Hellas and civilization were so far saved. It was imprudent of him to let these, his inevitable convictions, find open expression in speech or bearing; but if ever a general was entitled to refer to a victory as his victory, surely it was Miltiades in speaking of Marathon.

Wellington was wiser, who did not disturb the popular conception of the victory of Waterloo as due exclusively to dogged British valour against the full power of Napoleon's army; to have proclaimed from the housetops that it was mainly due to his own sagacious and touching reliance on the pertinacity of Blücher and on his fulfilment at all hazards of his promise to render that help which occupied in time the French reserves, would only have puzzled, if it did not also affront, his countrymen. As it was they were all the more eager to be grateful to him because he let them take the chief merit to themselves.

Herodotus, we have seen, avers that the Athenians were the first who endured to face the Medes undismayed; there may be in this statement some of the exaggeration which has been charged upon it, but there need be no limit to our admiration for the free citizens of the little state who could confront the multitudinous army of conquerors of Asia, Egypt, and Ionia, and that not merely in the noble but headlong despair that prefers death to subjection, but in reliance that any superiority in numbers whatever was open to be countervailed by discipline, vigour, and valour, if only animated and guided by intelligence.



The victory was no doubt largely due to the leading of Miltiades, and none could have known that fact better than himself, after the difficulties he had had to contend with in his own camp. He was accused of assuming and asserting the merit too exclusively; the accusation may have been unjust—it would be but a demonstration of that popular jealousy which was likely to arise without cause, and that it were wise to have avoided furnishing with provocation. But whether the Athenians were unjust or not to their great captain, assuredly they were entitled to great glory on their own part. When we consider what proofs of power and of vindictiveness the Persians had already given on the one hand, on the other that there was an oligarchical party of the Pisistratids who could have brought the city into favour with the great King if only into subjection, it is clear that the democracy distinctly accepted the most desperate issue. The Athenians had extermination staring them in the face as the most probable consequence of resistance, and they chose deliberately to encounter this, after doing their best to avert it, rather than be enslaved. Freedom in life if possible, freedom in death if it must be so; such was the resolve that in later ages wrested the emancipation of Greece from the brutalized tyranny of Turkey—in the very face of the cynicism of the Great Powers.

It is interesting to compare the battle of Marathon with that of Arbela, the earliest recorded conflict in battle of Greek and Persian with the last, the first successful check to aggression with the retaliation that was ruinous, the achievement of the Greek who set the first example of intelligence, guiding discipline, and dash on a field of pitched battle against barbarians, with that of the great Macedonian who under circumstances very similar, though exaggerated in proportions, carried the combination of the practice and the art of war to the highest perfection they ever attained in antiquity.

At Arbela as at Marathon the Greeks were excessively outnumbered, and thus exposed to the danger of being outflanked; Alexander provided against this by a second or reserve line prepared and instructed to wheel round and present a face towards either flank as required; and then by the tactics of declining conflict with one opposed wing as long as possible, unless so far as was required to keep it occupied, while he

directed a furious attack on the enemy's right, and thence, while his own flank was protected by his second line, on the flank of the opposed centre. Again, and for the last time and fatally, the Persian was unable to withstand the Greek in a hand-to-hand conflict, and again the panic-fear of a multitude rendered the desperate valour of particular sections unavailing.

W. WATKISS LLOYD.