Herodotus: On The Scythians

Herodotus, the "Father of History," was born in Halicarnassus, a town in Asia Minor, in the eighties of the fifth century B.C. He lived on Samos and in Athens (where he was admitted into the circle of Pericles and became friends with Sophocles), and died in the Greek colony of Thurii in Italy around 430 B.C.

His grandiose history of the decisive event of his century, the Persian Wars, includes a rich variety of information on the customs, cultures, and geography of the ancient world. As he collected information for his book, his many travels led him to Egypt and Libya, the coasts of Syria and Cyprus, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Southern Italy and Sicily, the islands of the Aegean, Macedonia, Thrace, and the Black Sea. His account of the Scythians—who had humiliated the Persian army sent out to subdue them—was based in part on his voyage by ship along the shore of the Black Sea, and on first-hand information gathered in Olbia, the Greek settlement and trading post on the fringes of Scythian territory; he must also have made several excursions on land. The value of his narrative lies in his skillful combination of personal observations with stories told him by others, as well as information already compiled by other historians and geographers whose works are now mostly lost. Incredible as some of his stories of Scythian customs may seem, many of them have been borne out by modern archaeology, and his account remains the basis for present-day knowledge of the Scythian people.

1. After the taking of Babylon, an expedition was led by Darius into Scythia.1 Asia abounding in men, and vast sums flowing into the treasury, the desire seized him to exact vengeance from the Scyths, who had once in days gone by invaded Media, defeated those who met them in the field, and so begun the quarrel. During the space of twenty-eight years, as I have before mentioned, the Scyths continued lords of the whole of Upper Asia. They entered Asia in pursuit of the Cimmerians, and overthrew the empire of the Medes, who till they came possessed the sovereignty. On their return to their homes after the long absence of twenty-eight years, a task awaited them little less troublesome than their struggle with the Medes. They found an army of no small size prepared to oppose their entrance. For the Scythian women, when they saw that time went-on, and their husbands did not come back, had intermarried with their slaves.

2. Now the Scythians blind all their slaves, to use them in preparing their milk. The plan they follow is to thrust tubes made of bone, not unlike our musical pipes, up the vulva of the mare, and then to blow into the tubes with their mouths, some milking while the others blow. They say that they do this because when the veins of the animal are full of air, the udder is forced down. The milk thus

1The date of Darius' campaign seems to be 512 B.C. Although chapters 1-144 have little to do with Herodotus' main subject, they are important as the earliest study we possess of an uncivilised people.

obtained is poured into deep wooden casks, about which the blind slaves are placed, and then the milk is stirred round. That which rises to the top is drawn off, and considered the best part; the under portion is of less account. Such is the reason why the Scythians blind all those whom they take in war; it arises from their not being tillers of the ground, but a pastoral race.

3. When therefore the children sprung from these slaves and the Scythian women, grew to manhood, and understood the circumstances of their birth, they resolved to oppose the army which was returning to Media. And first of all, they cut off a tract of country from the rest of Scythia by digging a broad dyke from the Tauric mountains to the vast lake of the Maeotis. Afterwards, when the Scythians tried to force an entrance, they marched out and engaged them. Many battles were fought, and the Scythians gained no advantage, until at last one of them thus addressed the remainder, "What are we doing, Scythians? We are fighting our slaves, diminishing our own number when we fall, and the number of those that belong to us when they fall by our hands. Take my advice—lay spear and bow aside, and let each man fetch his horse-whip, and go boldly up to them. So long as they see us with arms in our hands, they imagine themselves our equals in birth and bravery; but let them behold us with no other weapon but the whip, and they will feel that they are our slaves, and flee before us."

4. The Scythians followed this counsel, and the slaves were so astounded, that they forgot to fight, and immediately ran away. Such was the mode in which the Scythians, after being for a time the lords of Asia, and being forced to quit it by the Medes, returned and settled in their own country. This inroad of theirs it was that Darius was anxious to avenge, and such was the purpose for which he was now collecting an army to invade them.

5. According to the account which the Scythians themselves give, they are the youngest of all nations. Their tradition is as follows. A certain Targitaus was the first man who ever lived in their country, which before his time was a desert without inhabitants. He was a child—I do not believe the tale, but it is told nevertheless—of Zeus and a daughter of the Borysthenes. Targitaus, thus descended, begat three sons, Leipoxais, Arpoxais, and Colaxais, who was the youngest born of the three. While they still ruled the land, there fell from the sky four implements, all of gold,—a plough, a yoke, a battle-axe, and a drinking-cup. The eldest of the brothers perceived them first, and approached to pick them up; as he came near, the gold took fire, and blazed. He therefore went his way, and the second coming forward made the attempt, but the same thing happened again. The gold rejected both the eldest and the second brother. Last of all the youngest brother approached, and immediately the flames were extinguished; so he picked up the gold, and carried it to his home. Then the two elder agreed together, and made the whole kingdom over to the youngest born.

6. From Leipoxais sprang the Scythians of the race called Auchatae; from Arpoxais, the middle brother, those known as the Catari and Traspians; from Colaxais, the youngest, the Royal Scythians, or Paralatae. All together they are named Scoloti, after one of their kings: the Greeks, however, call them Scythians.

7. Such is the account which the Scythians give of their origin. They add that from the time of Targitaus, their first king, to the invasion of their country by Darius, is a period of 1,000 years, neither less nor more. The Royal Scythians guard the sacred gold with most especial care, and year by year offer great sacrifices in its honour. At this feast, if the man who has the custody of the gold should fall asleep in the open air, he is sure (the Scythians say) not to outlive the year. His pay therefore is as much land as he can ride round on horseback in a day. As the extent of Scythia is very great, Colaxais gave each of his three sons a separate kingdom, one of which was of ampler size than the other two: in this the gold was preserved. Above, to the northward of the farthest dwellers in Scythia, the country is said to be concealed from sight and made impassable by reason of the feathers which are shed abroad abundantly. The earth and air are alike full of them, and this it is which prevents the eye from obtaining any view of the region.

8. Such is the account which the Scythians give of themselves, and of the country which lies above them. The Greeks who dwell about the Pontus tell a different story. According to them, Heracles, when he was carrying off the cows of Geryon, arrived in the region which is now inhabited by the Scyths, but which was then a desert. Geryon lived outside the Pontus, in an island called by the Greeks Erytheia, near Gades, which is beyond the Pillars of Heracles upon the Ocean. Now some

2 Herodotus explains (iv. 31) that the so-called feathers are snow-flakes.
3 The modern Cadiz.
say that the Ocean begins in the east, and runs the whole way round the world; but they give no proof that this is really so. Heracles came from thence into the region now called Scythia, and being overtaken by storm and frost, drew his lion's skin about him, and fell fast asleep. While he slept, his mares, which he had loosed from his chariot to graze, by some wonderful chance disappeared.

9. On waking, he went in quest of them, and, after wandering over the whole country, came at last to the district called the Woodland, where he found in a cave a strange being, between a maiden and a serpent, whose form from the buttocks upwards was like that of a woman, while all below was like a snake. He looked at her wonderingly; but nevertheless inquired, whether she had chanced to see his strayed mares anywhere. She answered, "Yes, and they were now in her keeping; but never would she consent to give them back, before he had intercourse with her." So Heracles, to get his mares back, agreed; but afterwards she put him off and delayed restoring the mares, since she wished to keep him with her as long as possible. He, on the other hand, was only anxious to secure them and to get away. At last, when she gave them up, she said to him, "When your mares strayed hither, it was I who saved them for you; now you have paid a reward; for I bear in my womb three sons of yours. Tell me therefore when your sons grow up, what must I do with them? Would you wish that I should settle them here in this land, whereof I am mistress, or shall I send them to you?" Thus questioned, they say, Heracles answered, "When the lads have grown to manhood, do thus, and assuredly you will not err. Watch them, and when you see one of them bend this bow as I now bend it, and gird himself with this girdle thus, choose him to remain in the land. Those who fail in the trial, send away. Thus you will at once please yourself and obey me."

10. Hereupon he strung one of his bows—up to that time he had carried two—and showed her how to fasten the belt. Then he gave both bow and belt into her hands. Now the belt had a golden goblet attached to its clasp. So after he had given them to her, he went his way; and the woman, when her children grew to manhood, first gave them severally their names. One she called Agathyrsus, one Gelonus, and the other, who was the youngest Scythes. Then she remembered the instructions she had received from Heracles, and, in obedience to his orders, she put her sons to the test. Two of them, Agathyrsus and Gelonus, proving unequal to the task enjoined, their mother sent them out of the land; Scythes, the youngest, succeeded, and so he was allowed to remain. From Scythes, the son of Heracles, were descended the after kings of Scythia; and from the circumstance of the goblet which hung from the belt, the Scythians to this day wear goblets at their girdles. This was the only thing which the mother of Scythes did for him. Such is the tale told by the Greeks who dwell around the Pontus.

11. There is also another different story, now to be related, in which I am more inclined to put faith than in any other. It is that the wandering Scythians once dwelt in Asia, and there warred with the Massagetae, but with ill success; they therefore quitted their homes, crossed the Araxes, and entered the land of Cimmeria. For the land which is now inhabited by the Scyths was formerly the country of the Cimmerians. On their coming, the natives, who heard how numerous the invading army was, held a council. At this meeting opinion was divided, and both parties stiffly maintained their own view, but the counsel of the Royal tribe was the braver. For the others urged that the best thing to be done was to leave the country and avoid a contest with so vast a host; but the Royal tribe advised remaining and fighting for the soil to the last. As neither party chose to give way, the one determined to retire without a blow and yield their lands to the invaders; but the other, remembering the good things which they had enjoyed in their homes, and picturing to themselves the evils which they had to expect if they gave them up, resolved not to flee, but rather to die and at least be buried in their fatherland. Having thus decided, they drew apart in two bodies, the one as numerous as the other, and fought together. All of the Royal tribe were slain, and the people buried them near the river Tyras, where their grave is still to be seen. Then the rest of the Cimmerians departed, and the Scythians, on their coming, took possession of a deserted land.

12. Scythia still retains traces of the Cimmerians; there are Cimmerian walls, and a Cimmerian ferry, also a tract called Cimmeria, and a Cimmerian Bosporus. It appears likewise that the Cimmerians, when they fled into Asia to escape the Scyths, made a settlement in the peninsula where the Greek city of Sinope was afterwards built. The Scyths, it is plain, pursued them, and missing their road, poured into Media. For the Cimmerians kept the line which led along the sea-shore, but the Scyths in their pursuit held the Caucasus upon their right, thus proceeding inland, and falling upon Media. This account is one which is common both to Greeks and barbarians.

4 Herodotus considered that the eastern and northern boundaries of the earth were unknown, and that the general belief that the sea encompassed the land was a pure conjecture resting on no certain data.

5 It seems that the Araxes here represents the Volga.

6 The Cimmerians have given their name to the Crimea.
13. Aristeas also, son of Cystrobius, a native of Proconnesus,\(^7\) says in the course of his poem, that inspired by Phoebus, he went as far as the Issedones. Above them dwelt the Arimaspi, men with one eye; still further, the gold-guarding griffins; and beyond these, the Hyperboreans, who extended to the sea. Except the Hyperboreans, all these nations, beginning with the Arimaspi, were continually encroaching upon their neighbours. Hence it came to pass that the Arimaspi drove the Issedonians from their country, while the Issedonians possessed the Scyths; and the Scyths, pressing upon the Cimmerians, who dwelt on the shores of the Southern sea,\(^8\) forced them to leave their land. Thus even Aristeas does not agree in his account of this region with the Scythians.

16. With regard to the regions which lie above the country whereof this portion of my history treats, there is no one who possesses any exact knowledge. Not a single person can I find who professes to be acquainted with them by actual observation. Even Aristeas, the traveller of whom I lately spoke, does not claim—and he is writing poetry—to have reached any farther than the Issedonians. What he relates concerning the regions beyond is, he confesses, mere hearsay, being the account which the Issedonians gave him of those countries. However, I shall proceed to mention all that I have learnt of these parts by the most exact inquiries which I have been able to make concerning them.

17. Above the trading-port of the Borystenites, which is situated in the very centre of the whole sea-coast of Scythia, the first people who inhabit the land are the Callippidae, a Graeco-Scythic race. Next to them, as you go inland, dwell the people called the Alazonians. These two nations in other respects resemble the Scythians in their usages, but sow and eat corn, also onions, garlic, lentils, and millet. Beyond the Alazonians reside Scythian cultivators, who grow corn, not for their own use, but for sale.\(^9\) Still higher up are the Neuri. Northwards of the Neuri the continent, as far as it is known to us, is uninhabited. These are the nations along the course of the river Hypanis, west of the Borystenes.

18. Across the Borystenes, the first country after you leave the coast is the Woodland. Above this dwell the Scythian Husbandmen, who the Greeks living near the Hypanis call Borystenites, while they call themselves Olbiopolites. These Husbandmen extend eastward a distance of three days' journey to a river bearing the name of Panticapes,\(^10\) while northward the country is theirs for eleven days' sail up the course of the Borystenes. Further inland there is a vast tract which is uninhabited. Above this desolate region dwell the Cannibals, who are a people apart, much unlike the Scythians. Above them the country becomes an utter desert; not a single tribe, so far as we know, inhabits it.

19. Crossing the Panticapes, and proceeding eastward of the Husbandmen, we come upon the wandering Scythians, who neither plough nor sow. Their country, and the whole of this region, except the Woodlands, is quite bare of trees. They extend towards the east a distance of fourteen days' journey, occupying a tract which reaches to the river Gerrhus.

20. On the opposite side of the Gerrhus is the Royal district, as it is called: here dwells the largest and bravest of the Scythian tribes, which looks upon all the other tribes in the light of slaves. Its country reaches on the south to Taurica, on the east to the trench dug by the sons of the blind slaves, the mart upon Lake Maeotis, called the Cliffs, and in part to the river Tanais.\(^11\) North of the country of the Royal Scythians are the Black-cloaks, a people of a quite different race from the Scythians. Beyond them lie marshes and a region without inhabitants, so far as our knowledge reaches.

21. When one crosses the Tanais, one is no longer in Scythia; the first region on crossing is that of the Sauro matae, who, beginning at the upper end of Lake Maeotis, stretch northward a distance of fifteen days' journey, inhabiting a country which is entirely bare of trees, whether wild or cultivated. Above them, possessing the second region, dwell the Budini, whose territory is thickly wooded with trees of every kind.

22. Beyond the Budini, as one goes northward, first there is a desert, seven days' journey across; after which, if one inclines somewhat to the east, the Thyssagetae are reached, a numerous nation quite distinct from any other, and living by the chase. Adjoining them, and within the limits of the same region, are the people who bear the

\(^7\) Proconnesus is the island now called Marmora, which gives its modern appellation to the Sea of Marmora.

\(^8\) That is, the Euxine, in contradistinction from the Northern Sea, on the shores of which dwelt the Hyperboreans, according to Aristeas.

\(^9\) The corn-trade of the Scythians appears to have been chiefly with the Greeks. Its extent is indicated in Herodotus by his assignment of the whole country west, and a portion of that east, of the Borystenes to Scythian husbandmen, who raised corn only for sale.

\(^10\) Here the description of Herodotus, which has been hitherto excellent, begins to fail.

\(^11\) Now the Don.
name of Iyrcæ; they also support themselves by hunting, which they practice in the following manner. The hunter climbs a tree, the whole country abounding in wood, and there sets himself in ambush; he has a dog at hand, and a horse, trained to lie down upon its belly, and thus make itself low; the hunter keeps watch, and when he sees his game, lets fly an arrow; then mounting his horse, he gives the beast chase, his dog following hard all the while. Beyond these people, a little to the east, dwells a distinct tribe of Scyths, who revolted once from the Royal Scyths, and migrated into these parts.

23. As far as their country, the tract of land whereof I have been speaking is all a smooth plain, and the soil deep; beyond you enter on a region which is rugged and stony. Passing over a great extent of this rough country, you come to a people dwelling at the foot of lofty mountains, who are said to be all—both men and women—bald from their birth, to have flat noses, and very long chins. These people speak a language of their own, but the dress which they wear is the same as the Scythian. They live on the fruit of a certain tree, the name of which is Ponticum; in size it is about equal to our fig-tree, and it bears a fruit like a bean, with a stone inside. When the fruit is ripe, they strain it through cloths; the juice which runs off is black and thick, and is called by the natives "aschy." They lap this up with their tongues, and also mix it with milk for a drink; while they make the lees, which are solid, into cakes, and eat them instead of meat; for they have but few sheep in their country, in which there is no good pasture. Each of them dwells under a tree, and they cover the tree in winter with a cloth of thick white felt, but take off the covering in the summer-time. No one harms these people, for they are looked upon as sacred,—they do not even possess any warlike weapons. When their neighbours fall out, they make up the quarrel; and when one flies to them for refuge, he is safe from all hurt.

They are called the Argippaeans.

24. Up to this point the territory of which we are speaking is very completely explored, and all the nations between the coast and the bald-headed men are well known to us. For some of the Scyths are accustomed to penetrate as far, of whom inquiry may easily be made, and Greeks also go there from the trading-stations on the Bosporus, and from the other trading-stations along the Euxine. The Scythians who make this journey communicate with the inhabitants by means of seven interpreters and seven languages.

25. Thus far therefore the land is known; but beyond the bald-headed men lies a region of which no one can give any exact account. Lofty and precipitous mountains, which are never crossed, bar further progress. The bald men say, but it does not seem to me credible, that the people who live in these mountains have feet like goats; and that after passing them you find another race of men, who sleep during one half of the year. This latter statement appears to me quite unworthy of credit. The region east of the bald-headed men is well known to be inhabited by the Issedonians, but the tract that lies to the north of these two nations is entirely unknown, except by the accounts which they give of it.

26. The Issedonians are said to have the following customs. When a man's father dies, all the near relatives bring sheep to the house; which are sacrificed, and their flesh cut in pieces, while at the same time the dead body undergoes the like treatment. The two sorts of flesh are afterwards mixed together, and the whole is served up at a banquet. The head of the dead man is treated differently: it is stripped bare, cleansed, and set in gold. It then becomes an ornament on which they pride themselves, and is brought out year by year at the great festival which sons keep in honour of their fathers' death, just as the Greeks keep their feast of the dead. In other respects the Issedonians are reputed to be observers of justice: and it is to be remarked that their women have equal authority with the men. Thus our knowledge extends as far as this nation.

27. The regions beyond are known only from the accounts of the Issedonians, by whom the stories are told of the one-eyed race of men and the gold-guarding griffins. These stories are received by the Scythians from the Issedonians, and by them passed on to us Greeks: whence it arises that we give the one-eyed race the Scythian name of Arimaspi, arima being the Scythic word for one, and spu for the eye.

28. The whole district whereof we have here discussed has winters of exceeding rigour. During eight months the frost is so intense, that water poured upon the ground does not form mud, but if a fire be lighted on it mud is produced. The sea freezes, and the Cimmerian Bosporus is frozen over. At that season the Scythians who dwell inside the trench make warlike expeditions upon the ice, and even drive their waggons across to the country of the Sindians. Such is the intensity of the cold during eight months out of the twelve, and even in the remaining four the climate is still cool. The character of the winter likewise is unlike that of the same season in any other country; for at that time, when the rains ought to fall, in Scythia there is scarcely any rain worth mentioning, while in summer it never gives over raining; and thunder, which elsewhere is frequent then, in Scythia is unknown in that part of the year, coming only in summer, when it is very heavy. Thunder in the wintertime
is there accounted a prodigy; as also are earthquakes, whether they happen in winter or summer. Horses bear the winter well, cold as it is, but mules and asses are quite unable to bear it; whereas in other countries mules and asses are found to endure the cold, while horses, if they stand still, are frost-bitten.  

31. With respect to the feathers which are said by the Scythians to fill the air, and to prevent persons from penetrating into the remoter parts of the continent, or even having any view of those regions, my opinion is, that in the countries above Scythia it always snows, less, of course, in the summer than in the wintertime. Now snow when it falls looks like feathers, as every one is aware who has seen it come down close to him. These northern regions, therefore, are uninhabitable by reason of the severity of the winter; and the Scythians, with their neighbours, call the snow-flakes feathers because, I think, of the likeness which they bear to them. I have now related what is said of the most distant parts of this continent whereof any account is given.

46. The Euxine sea, where Darius now went to war, has nations dwelling around it, with the one exception of the Scythians, more unpolished than those of any other region that we know of. For, setting aside Anacharsis and the Scythian people, there is not within this region a single nation which can be put forward as having any claims to wisdom, or which has produced a single person of any high repute. The Scythians indeed have in one respect, and that the very most important of all those that fall under man's control, shown themselves wiser than any nation upon the face of the earth. Their customs otherwise are not such as I admire. The one thing of which I speak, is the contrivance whereby they make it impossible for the enemy who invades them to escape destruction, while they themselves are entirely out of his reach, unless it please them to engage with him. Having neither cities nor forts, and carrying their dwellings with them wherever they go; accustomed, moreover, one and all of them, to shoot from horseback; and living not by husbandry but on their cattle, their waggons the only houses that they possess, how can they fail of being unconquerable, and unassailable even?

47. The nature of their country, and the rivers by which it is intersected, greatly favour this mode of resisting attacks. For the land is level, well-watered, and abounding in pasture; while the rivers which traverse it are almost equal in number to the canals of Egypt. Of these I shall only mention the most famous and such as are navigable to some distance from the sea. They are, the Ister, which has five mouths; the Tyras, the Hypanis, the Borysthenes, the Panticapes, the Hypacyris, the Gerhus, and the Tanais. The courses of these streams I shall now proceed to describe.

48. The Ister is of all the rivers with which we are acquainted the mightiest. It never varies in height, but continues at the same level summer and winter. Counting from the west it is the first of the Scythian rivers, and the reason of its being the greatest is, that it receives the waters of several tributaries. Now the tributaries which swell its flood are the following: first, on the side of Scythia, these five—the stream called by the Scythians Porata, and by the Greeks Pyretus, the Tiarantus, the Ararus, the Naparis, and the Ordessus. The first-mentioned is a great stream, and is the easternmost of the tributaries. The Tiarantus is of less volume, and more to the west. The Ararus, Naparis, and Ordessus fall into the Ister between these two. All the above-mentioned are genuine Scythian rivers, and go to swell the current of the Ister.

49. From the country of the Agathyrsi comes down another river, the Maris, which empties itself into the same; and from the heights of Haemus descend with a northern course three large streams, the Atlas, the Auras, and the Tibisis, and pour their waters into it. Thrace gives it three tributaries, the Athrys, the Noes, and the Artanes, which all pass through the country of the Crobyzian Thracians. Another tributary is furnished by Paeonia, namely the Scius; this river, rising near Mount Rhodope, forces its way through the chain of Haemus, and so reaches the Ister. From Illyria comes another stream, the Angrus, which has a course from south to north, and after watering the Triballian plain, falls into the Brongus, which falls into the Ister. So the Ister is augmented by these two streams, both considerable. Besides all these, the Ister receives also the waters of the Carpis and the Alpis, two rivers running in a northly direction from the country above the Umbrians. For the Ister flows through the whole extent of Europe, rising in the country of the Celts (the most westerly of all the nations of Europe, excepting the Cynetians), and

10 As Herodotus plunges deeper into the European continent, his knowledge is less and less exact. He knows that the Danube receives two great tributaries from the south in the upper part of its course, but he conceives the rivers, of which he had heard the Umbrians tell as running northwards from the Alps above their country, to be identical with the great tributaries whereof the dwellers on the middle Danube spoke. The length of the Nile is 4,000 miles; of the Danube, 1,760 miles.
thence running across the continent till it reaches Scythia, whereof it washes the flanks.

50. All these streams, then, and many others, add their waters to swell the flood of the Ister, which thus increased becomes the mightiest of rivers; for undoubtedly if we compare the stream of the Nile with the single stream of the Ister, we must give the preference to the Nile, of which no tributary river, nor even rivulet, augments the volume. The Ister remains at the same level both summer and winter—owing to the following reasons, as I believe. During the winter it runs at its natural height, or a very little higher, because in those countries there is scarcely any rain in winter, but constant snow. When summer comes, this snow, which is of great depth, begins to melt, and flows into the Ister, which is swelled at that season, not only by this cause but also by the rains, which are heavy and frequent at that part of the year. Thus the various streams which go to form the Ister, are higher in summer than in winter, and just so much higher as the sun’s power and attraction are greater; so that these two causes counteract each other, and the effect is to produce a balance, whereby the Ister remains always at the same level.

51. This, then, is one of the great Scythian rivers; the next to it is the Tyras, which rises from a great lake separating Scythia from the land of the Neuri, and runs with a southerly course to the sea. Greeks dwell at the mouth of the river, who are called Tyritae.

52. The third river is the Hypanis. This stream rises within the limits of Scythia, and has its source in another vast lake, around which wild white horses graze. The lake is called, properly enough, the Mother of the Hypanis. The Hypanis, rising here, during the distance of five days’ navigation is a shallow stream, and the water sweet and pure; thence, however, to the sea, which is a distance of four days, it is exceedingly bitter. This change is caused by its receiving into it at that point a brook the waters of which are so bitter that, although it is but a tiny rivulet, it nevertheless taints the entire Hypanis, which is a large stream among those of the second order. The source of this bitter spring is on the borders of the Scythian Husbandmen, where they adjoin upon the Alazonians; and the place where it rises is called in the Scythic tongue Exampaeus, which means in our language, the Sacred Ways. The spring itself bears the same name. The Tyras and the Hypanis approach each other in the country of the Alazonians, but afterwards separate, and leave a wide space between their streams.

53. The fourth of the Scythian rivers is the Borystenes. Next to the Ister, it is the greatest of them all; and, in my judgment, it is the most productive river, not merely in Scythia, but in the whole world, excepting only the Nile, with which no stream can possibly compare. It has upon its banks the loveliest and most excellent pasturages for cattle; it contains abundance of the most delicious fish; its water is most pleasant to the taste; its stream is limpid, while all the other rivers near it are muddy; the richest harvests spring up along its course, and where the ground is not sown, the heaviest crops of grass; while salt forms in great plenty about its mouth without human aid, and large fish are taken in it of the sort called sturgeon, without any prickly bones, and good for pickling. Nor are these the whole of its marvels. As far inland as the place named Gerrhus, which is distant forty days’ voyage from the sea, its course is known, and its direction is from north to south; but above this no one has traced it, so as to say through what countries it flows. It enters the territory of the Scythian Husbandmen after running for some time across a desert region, and continues for ten days’ navigation to pass through the land which they inhabit. It is the only river besides the Nile the sources of which are unknown to me, as they are also (I believe) to all the other Greeks. Not long before it reaches the sea, the Borystenes is joined by the Hypanis, which pours its waters into the same lake. The land that lies between them, a narrow point like the beak of a ship, is called Cape Hippolaus. Here is a temple dedicated to Demeter, and opposite the temple upon the Hypanis is the dwelling-place of the Borystenites. But enough has been said of these streams.

54. Next in succession comes the fifth river, called the Panticapes, which has, like the Borystenes, a course from north to south, and rises from a lake. The space between this river and the Borystenes is occupied by the Scythians who are engaged in husbandry. After watering their country, the Panticapes flows through the Woodland, and empties itself into the Borystenes.

55. The sixth stream is the Hypacyris, a river rising from a lake, and running directly through the middle of the Nomadic Scythians. It falls into the sea near the city of Carcinitis, leaving the Woodland and the Race-course of Achilles to the right.

56. The seventh river is the Gerrhus, which is a branch thrown out by the Borystenes at the point where the course of that stream first begins to be known, the region called by the same name as the stream itself, Gerrhus. This river on its passage towards the sea divides

20 The salt of Kinburn is still of the greatest importance to Russia.

21 The Dnieper is navigable for barges all the way from Smolensk to its mouth, a distance of not less than 1,500 miles.
the country of the Nomadic from that of the Royal Scyths. It runs into the Hygrys.

57. The eighth river is the Tanais, a stream which has its source, far up the country, in a lake of vast size, and which empties itself into another still larger lake, the Palus Maeotis, whereby the country of the Royal Scyths is divided from that of the Sauromatae. The Tanais receives the waters of a tributary stream, called the Hyrgis.

58. Such then are the rivers of chief note in Scythia. The grass which the land produces is more apt to generate gall in the beasts that feed on it than any other grass which is known to us, as plainly appears on the opening of their carcases.

59. Thus abundantly are the Scythians provided with the most important necessaries. Their manners and customs come now to be described. They worship only the following gods, namely, Hestia, whom they reverence beyond all the rest, Zeus and Earth, whom they consider to be the wife of Zeus; and after these Apollo, Celestial Aphrodite, Heracles, and Ares. These gods are worshipped by the whole nation: the Royal Scyths offer sacrifice likewise to Poseidon. In the Scythic tongue Hestia is called Tabiti, Zeus (very properly, in my judgment) Papaeus, Earth Apia, Apollo Oetosyrs, Celestial Aphrodite Artimpasa, and Poseidon Thamimasadas. They use no images, altars, or temples, except in the worship of Ares; but in his worship they do use them.

60. The manner of their sacrifices is everywhere and in every case the same; the victim stands with its two fore-feet bound together by a cord, and the person who is about to offer, taking his station behind the victim, gives the rope a pull, and thereby throws the animal down; as it falls he invokes the god to whom he is offering; after which he puts a noose round the animal's neck, and, inserting a small stick, twists it round, and so strangles him. No fire is lighted, there is no consecration, and no pouring out of drink-offerings; but directly that the beast is strangled the sacrificer flays him, and then sets to work to boil the flesh.

61. As Scythia, however, is utterly barren of firewood, a plan has had to be contrived for boiling the flesh, which is the following. After flaying the beasts, they take out all the bones, and (if they possess such gear) put the flesh into boilers made in the country, which are very like the cauldrons of the Lesbians, except that they are of a much larger size; then, placing the bones of the animals beneath the cauldron, they set them alight, and so boil the meat. If they do not happen to possess a cauldron, they make the animal's paunch hold the flesh, and pouring in at the same time a little water, lay the bones under and light them. The bones burn beautifully, and the paunch easily contains all the flesh when it is stripped from the bones, so that by this plan the ox is made to boil himself, and other victims also to do the like. When the meat is all cooked, the sacrificer offers a portion of the flesh and of the entrails, by casting it on the ground before him. They sacrifice all sorts of cattle, but most commonly horses.

62. Such are the victims offered to the other gods, and such is the mode in which they are sacrificed; but the rites paid to Ares are different. In every district, at the seat of government, there stands a temple of this god, whereof the following is a description. It is a pile of brushwood, made of a vast quantity of faggots, in length and breadth 600 yards; in height somewhat less, having a square platform upon the top, three sides of which are precipitous, while the fourth slopes so that men may walk up it. Each year 150 waggon-loads of brushwood are added to the pile, which sinks continually by reason of the rains. An antique iron sword is planted on the top of every such mound, and serves as the image of Ares; yearly sacrifices of cattle and of horses are made to it, and more victims are offered thus than to all the rest of their gods. When prisoners are taken in war, out of every hundred men they sacrifice one, not however with same rites as the cattle, but with different. Libations of wine are first poured upon their heads, after which they are slaughtered over a vessel; the vessel is then carried up to the top of the pile, and the blood poured upon the scimitar. While this takes place at the top of the mound, below, by the side of the temple, the right hands and arms of the slaughtered prisoners are cut off, and tossed on high into the air. Then the other victims are slain, and those who have offered the sacrifice depart, leaving the hands and arms where they may chance to have fallen, and the bodies also, separate.

63. Such are the observances of the Scythians with respect to sacrifice. They never use swine for the purpose, nor indeed is it their wont to breed them in any part of their country.

64. In what concerns war, their customs are the following. The Scythian soldier drinks the blood of the first man he overthrows in battle. Whatever number he slays, he cuts off all their heads, and carries them to the king; since he is thus entitled to a share of the booty, whereto...
he forfeits all claim if he does not produce a head. In order to strip the skull of its covering, he makes a cut around the head above the ears, and, laying hold of the scalp, shakes the skull out; then with the rib of an ox he scrapes the scalp clean of flesh, and softening it by rubbing between the hands, uses it thenceforth as a napkin. The Scyth is proud of these scalps, and hangs them from his bridle-rein; the greater the number of such napkins that a man can show, the more highly is he esteemed among them. Many make themselves cloaks, like the sheepskins of our peasants, by sewing a quantity of these scalps together. Others flay the right arms of their dead enemies, and make of the skin, which is stripped off with the nails hanging to it, a covering for their quivers. Now the skin of a man is thick and glossy, and would in whiteness surpass almost all other hides. Some even flay the entire body of their enemy, and, stretching it upon a frame, carry it about with them wherever they ride. Such are the Scythian customs with respect to scalps and skins.

65. The skulls of their enemies, not indeed of all, but of those whom they most detest, they treat as follows. Having sawn off the portion below the eyebrows, and cleaned out the inside, they cover the outside with leather. When a man is poor, this is all that he does; but if he is rich, he also lines the inside with gold: in either case the skull is used as a drinking cup. They do the same with the skulls of their own kith and kin if they have been at feud with them, and have vanquished them in the presence of the king. When strangers whom they deem of any account come to visit them, these skulls are handed round, and the host tells how that these were his relations who made war upon him, and how that he got the better of them; all this being looked upon as proof of bravery.

66. Once a year the governor of each district, at a set place in his own province, mingles a bowl of wine, of which all Scythians have a right to drink by whom foes have been slain; while they who have slain no enemy are not allowed to taste of the bowl, but sit aloof in disgrace. No greater shame than this can happen to them. Such as have slain a very large number of foes, have two cups instead of one, and drink from both.

67. Scythia has an abundance of soothsayers, who foretell the future by means of a number of willow wands. A large bundle of these wands is brought and laid on the ground. The soothsayer unties the bundle, and places each wand by itself, at the same time uttering his prophecy: then, while he is still speaking, he gathers the rods together again, and makes them up once more into a bundle. This mode of divination is of home growth in Scythia. The Enarees, or womanlike men, have another method, which they say Aphrodite taught them. It is done with the inner bark of the linden-tree. They take a piece of this bark, and, splitting it into three strips, keep twining the strips about their fingers, and untwining them, while they prophesy.

68. Whenever the Scythian king falls sick, he sends for the three soothsayers of most renown at the time, who come and make trial of their art in the mode above described. Generally they say that the king is ill, because such or such a person, mentioning his name, has sworn falsely by the royal hearth. This is the usual oath among the Scythians, when they wish to swear with very great solemnity. Then the man accused of having forsworn himself is arrested and brought before the king. The soothsayers tell him that by their art it is clear he has sworn a false oath by the royal hearth, and so caused the illness of the king—he denies the charge, protests that he has sworn no false oath, and loudly complains of the wrong done to him. Upon this the king sends for six new soothsayers, who try the matter by soothsaying. If they too find the man guilty of the offence, straitway he is beheaded by those who first accused him, and his goods are parted among them: if, on the contrary, they acquit him, other soothsayers, and again others, are sent for, to try the case. Should the greater number decide in favour of the man’s innocence, then they who first accused him forfeit their lives.

69. The mode of their execution is the following: a waggon is loaded with brushwood, and oxen are harnessed to it; the soothsayers, with their feet tied together, their hands bound behind their backs, and their mouths gagged, are thrust into the midst of the brushwood; finally the wood is set alight, and the oxen, being startled, are made to rush off with the waggon. It often happens that the oxen and the soothsayers are both consumed together, but sometimes the pole of the waggon is burnt through, and the oxen escape with a scorching. Diviners—lying diviners, they call them—are burnt in the way described, for other causes besides the one here spoken of. When the king puts one of them to death, he takes care not to let any of his sons survive: all the male offspring are slain with the father, only the females being allowed to live.

Cat. no. 76
70. Oaths among the Scyths are accompanied with the following ceremonies: a large earthen bowl is filled with wine, and the parties to the oath, wounding themselves slightly with a knife or an awl, drop some of their blood into the wine; then they plunge into the mixture a scimitar, some arrows, a battle-axe, and a javelin, all the while repeating prayers; lastly the two contracting parties drink each a draught from the bowl, as do also the chief men among their followers.

71. The tombs of their kings are in the land of the Gerrhi, who dwell at the point where the Borysthenes is first navigable. Here, when the king dies, they dig a grave, which is square in shape, and of great size. When it is ready, they take the king’s corpse, and, having opened the belly, and cleaned out the inside, fill the cavity with a preparation of chopped cypress, frankincense, parsley-seed, and anise-seed, after which they sew it up the opening, enclose the body in wax, and, placing it on a waggon, carry it about through all the different tribes. On this procession each tribe, when it receives the corpse, imitates the example which is first set by the Royal Scythians; every man chops off a piece of his ear, crops his hair close, makes a cut all round his arm, lacerates his forehead and his nose, and thrusts an arrow through his left hand. Then they who have the care of the corpse carry it with them to another of the tribes which are under the Scythian rule, followed by those whom they first visited. On completing the circuit of all the tribes under their sway, they find themselves in the country of the Gerrhi, who are the most remote of all, and so they come to the tombs of the kings. There the body of the dead king is laid in the grave prepared for it, stretched upon a mattress; spears are fixed in the ground on either side of the corpse, and beams stretched across above it to form a roof, which is covered with a thatching of twigs. In the open space around the body of the king they bury one of his concubines, first killing her by strangling, and also his cup-bearer, his cook, his groom, his lackey, his messenger, some of his horses, firstlings of all his other possessions, and some golden cups; for they use neither silver nor brass. After this they set to work, and raise a vast mound above the grave, all of them vying with each other and seeking to make it as tall as possible.

72. When a year is gone by, further ceremonies take place. Fifty of the best of the late king’s attendants are taken, all native Scythians—for, as bought slaves are unknown in the country, the Scythian kings choose any of their subjects that they like, to wait on them—fifty of these are taken and strangled, with fifty of the most beautiful horses. When they are dead, their bowels are taken out, and the cavity cleaned, filled full of chaff, and straightway sewn up again. This done, a number of posts are driven into the ground, in sets of two pairs each, and on every pair half the felly of a wheel is placed archwise; then strong stakes are run lengthways through the bodies of the horses from tail to neck, and they are mounted upon the fellies, so that the felly in front supports the shoulders of the horse, while that behind sustains the belly and quarters, the legs dangling in midair; each horse is furnished with a bit and bridle, which latter is stretched out in front of the horse, and fastened to a peg. The fifty strangled youths are then mounted severally on the fifty horses. To effect this, a second stake is passed through their bodies along the course of the spine to the neck; the lower end of which projects from the body, and is fixed into a socket, made in the stake that runs lengthwise down the horse. The fifty riders are thus ranged in a circle round the tomb, and so left.

73. Such, then, is the mode in which the kings are buried: as for the people, when any one dies, his nearest of kin lay him upon a waggon and take him round to all his friends in succession: each receives them in turn and entertains them with a banquet, whereat the dead man is served with a portion of all that is set before the others; this is done for forty days, at the end of which time the burial takes place. After the burial, those engaged in it to purify themselves, which they do in the following way. First they well soap and wash their heads; then, in order to cleanse their bodies, they act as follows: they make a booth by fixing in the ground three sticks inclined towards one another, and stretching around them woollen felts, which they arrange so as to fit as close as possible: inside the booth a dish is placed upon the ground, into which they put a number of red-hot stones, and then add some hemp-seed.

74. Hemp grows in Scythia: it is very like flax; only that it is a much coarser and taller plant: some grows wild about the country, some is produced by cultivation: the Thracians make garments of it which closely resemble linen; so much so, indeed, that if a person has never seen hemp he is sure to think they are linen, and if he has, unless he is very experienced in such matters, he will not know of which material they are.

75. The Scythians, as I said, take some of this hemp-seed, and, creeping under the felt coverings, throw it upon the red-hot stones; immediately it smokes, and gives out such a vapour as no Grecian vapour-bath can exceed; the Scyths, delighted, shout for joy, and this vapour serves them instead of a waterbath;23 for they never by any chance wash their bodies with water. Their women make a mixture of cypress, cedar, and frankincense wood,
which they pound into a paste upon a rough piece of stone, adding a little water to it. With this substance, which is of a thick consistency, they plaster their faces all over, and indeed their whole bodies. A sweet odour is thereby imparted to them, and when they take off the plaster on the day following, their skin is clean and glossy.

76. The Scythians have an extreme hatred of all foreign customs, particularly of those in use among the Greeks, as the instances of Anacharsis, and, more lately, of Scylas, have fully shown. The former, after he had travelled over a great portion of the world, and displayed wherever he went many proofs of wisdom, as he sailed through the Hellespont on his return to Scythia, touched at Cyzicus. There he found the inhabitants celebrating with much pomp and magnificence a festival to the Mother of the gods, and was himself induced to make a vow to the goddess, whereby he engaged, if he got back safe and sound to his home, that he would give her a festival and a night-procession in all respects like those which he had seen in Cyzicus. When, therefore, he arrived in Scythia, he betook himself to the district called the Woodland, which lies opposite the Race-course of Achilles, and is covered with trees of all manner of different kinds, and there went through all the sacred rites with the tambourine in his hand, and the images tied to him. While thus employed, he was noticed by one of the Scythians, who went and told king Saulius what he had seen. Then king Saulius came in person, and when he perceived what Anacharsis was about, he shot at him with an arrow and killed him. To this day, if you ask the Scyths about Anacharsis, they pretend ignorance of him, because of his Grecian travels and adoption of the customs of foreigners. I learnt, however, from Tymnes, the steward of Ariapeithes, that Anacharsis was paternal uncle to the Scythian king Idanthyrsus, being the son of Gnurus, who was the son of Lycus and the grandson of Spargapeithes. If Anacharsis were really of this house, it must have been by his own brother that he was slain, for Idanthyrsus was a son of the Saulius who put Anacharsis to death.

77. I have heard, however, another tale, very different from this, which is told by the Peloponnesians: they say, that Anacharsis was sent by the king of the Scyths to make acquaintance with Greece—that he went, and on his return home reported, that the Greeks were all occupied in the pursuit of every kind of knowledge, except the Lacedaemonians; who, however, alone knew how to converse sensibly. A silly tale, this, which the Greeks have invented for their amusement! There is no doubt that Anacharsis suffered death in the mode already related, on account of his attachment to foreign customs, and the intercourse which he held with the Greeks.

78. Scylas, likewise, the son of Ariapeithes, many years later, met with almost the very same fate. Ariapeithes, the Scythian king, had several sons, among them this Scylas, who was the child, not of a native Scyth, but of a woman of Istria. Bred up by her, Scylas gained an acquaintance with the Greek language and letters. Some time afterwards, Ariapeithes was treacherously slain by Spargapeithes, king of the Agathyrsi; whereupon Scylas succeeded to the throne, and married one of his father's wives, a woman named Opoea. This Opoea was a Scythian by birth, and had brought Ariapeithes a son called Oricus. Now when Scylas found himself king of Scythia, as he disliked the Scythic mode of life, and was attached, by his bringing up, to the manners of the Greeks, he made it his usual practice, whenever he came with his army to the town of the Borystenites, who, according to their own account, are colonists of the Milesians,—he made it his practice, I say, to leave the army before the city, and, having entered within the walls by himself, and carefully closed the gates, to exchange his Scythian dress for Grecian garments, and in this attire to walk about the marketplace, without guards or retinue. The Borystenites kept watch at the gates, that no Scythian might see the king thus apparelled. Scylas, meanwhile, lived exactly as the Greeks, and even offered sacrifices to the gods according to the Grecian rites. In this way he would pass a month, or more, with the Borystenites, after which he would clothe himself again in his Scythian dress, and so take his departure. This he did repeatedly, and even built himself a house in Borystenes, and married a wife there who was a native of the place.

79. But when the time came that was ordained to bring him woe, the occasion of his ruin was the following. He wanted to be initiated in the rites of the Bacchic Dionysus, and was on the point of obtaining admission to the rites, when a most strange prodigy occurred to him. The house which he possessed, as I mentioned a short time back, in the city of the Borystenites, a building of great extent and erected at a vast cost, round which there
stood a number of sphinxes and griffins carved in white marble, was struck by lightning from on high, and burnt to the ground. Scylas, nevertheless, went on, and received the initiation. Now the Scythians are wont to reproach the Greeks with their Bacchanal rage, and to say that it is not reasonable to imagine there is a god who impels men to madness. No sooner, therefore, was Scylas initiated in the Bacchic mysteries than one of the Borysthenites went and carried the news to the Scythians. "You Scythians laugh at us," he said, "because we rave when the god seizes us. But now our god has seized upon your king, who raves like us, and is maddened by the influence. If you think I do not tell you true, come with me, and I will show him to you." The chiefs of the Scythians went with the man accordingly, and the Borysthenite, conducting them into the city, placed them secretly on one of the towers. Presently Scylas passed by with the band of revellers, raving like the rest, and was seen by the watchers. Regarding the matter as a very great misfortune, they instantly departed, and came and told the army what they had witnessed.

80. When, therefore, Scylas, after leaving Borysthenes, was about returning home, the Scythians broke out into revolt. They put at their head Octamasadas, grandson (on the mother's side) of Teres. Then Scylas, when he learned the danger with which he was threatened, and the reason of the disturbance, made his escape to Thrace. Octamasadas, discovering whither he had fled, marched after him, and had reached the Ister, when he was met by the forces of the Thracians. The two armies were about to engage, but before they joined battle, Sitalces sent a message to Octamasadas to this effect, "Why should there be trial of arms between us? You are my own sister's son, and you have in your keeping my brother. Surrender him into my hands, and I will give Scylas back to you. So neither you nor I will risk our armies." Sitalces sent this message to Octamasadas by a herald, and Octamasadas, with whom a brother of Sitalces had formerly taken refuge, accepted the terms. He surrendered his own uncle to Sitalces, and obtained in exchange his brother Scylas. Sitalces took his brother with him and withdrew; but Octamasadas beheaded Scylas upon the spot. Thus rigidly do the Scythians maintain their own customs, and thus severely do they punish such as adopt foreign usages.

81. What the population of Scythia is, I was not able to learn with certainty; the accounts which I received varied from one another. I heard from some that they were very numerous indeed; others made their numbers but scanty for such a nation as the Scyths. Thus much, however, I witnessed with my own eyes. There is a tract called Exampaeus between the Borysthenes and the Hypanis. I made some mention of it in a former place, where I spoke of the bitter stream which rising there flows into the Hypanis, and renders the water of that river undrinkable. Here then stands a brazen bowl, six times as big as that at the entrance of the Euxine, which Pausanias, the son of Cleombrotus, set up. Such as have never seen that vessel may understand me better if I say that the Scythian bowl holds with ease six hundred amphorae, and is of the thickness of six fingers' breadth. The natives gave me the following account of the manner in which it was made. One of their kings, by name Ariantas, wishing to know the number of his subjects, ordered them all to bring him, on pain of death, the point off one of their arrows. They obeyed, and he collected thereby a vast heap of arrow-heads, which he resolved to form into a memorial that might go down to posterity. Accordingly he made of them this bowl, and dedicated it at Exampaeus. This was all that I could learn concerning the number of the Scythians.

82. The country has no marvels except its rivers, which are larger and more numerous than those of any other land. These, and the vastness of the great plain, are worthy of note, and one thing besides, which I am about to mention. They show a footprint of Heracles, impressed on a rock, in shape like the print of a man's foot, but three feet in length. It is in the neighbourhood of the Tyras. Having described this, I return to the subject on which I originally proposed to discourse.

83. The preparations of Darius against the Scythians had begun, messengers has been dispatched on all sides with the king's commands, some being required to furnish troops, others to supply ships, others again to bridge the Thracian Bosporus, when Artabanus, son of Hystaspes and brother of Darius, entreated the king to desist from his expedition, urging on him the great difficulty of attacking Scythia. Good, however, as the advice of Artabanus was, it failed to persuade Darius. He therefore ceased his reasonings, and Darius, when his preparations were complete, led his army forth from Susa.

84. It was then that a certain Persian, by name Oeobazus, the father of three sons, all of whom were to accompany the army, came and prayed the king that he would

26 Pausanias set up this bowl at the time that he was besieging Byzantium, 477 B.C.

27 About 5,400 gallons.
allow one of his sons to remain with him. Darius made answer, as if he regarded him in the light of a friend who had urged a moderate request, that he would allow them all to remain. Oeobazus was overjoyed, expecting that all his children would be excused from serving; the king however bade his attendants take the three sons of Oeobazus and forthwith put them to death. Thus they were all left behind, but not till they had been deprived of life.

85. When Darius, on his march from Susa, reached the territory of Calchedon on the shores of the Bosphorus, where the bridge had been made, he took ship and sailed thence to the Cyanean islands, which, according to the Greeks, once floated. He took his seat also in the temple and surveyed the Pontus, which is indeed well worthy of consideration. There is not in the world any other sea so wonderful: it extends in length 1,280 miles, and its breadth, at the widest part, is 380 miles. The mouth is but one-half mile wide, and this strait, called the Bosphorus, and across which the bridge of Darius had been thrown, is fourteen miles in length, reaching from the Euxine to the Propontis. The Propontis is sixty miles across, and 160 miles long. Its waters flow into the Hellespont, the length of which is fifty miles, and the width no more than 1,400 yards. The Hellespont opens into the wide sea called the Aegean.

86. The mode in which these distances have been measured is the following. In a long day a vessel generally accomplishes about 70,000 fathoms, in the night 60,000. Now from the mouth of the Pontus to the river Phasis, which is the extreme length of this sea, is a voyage of nine days and eight nights, which makes the distance 1,110,000 fathoms, or 11,100 furlongs. Again, from Sindica to Themiscyra on the river Thermodon, where the Pontus is wider than at any other place, is a sail of three days and two nights; which makes 330,000 fathoms, or 3,300 furlongs. Such is the plan on which I have measured the Pontus, the Bosphorus, and the Hellespont, and such is the account which I have to give of them. The Pontus has also a lake belonging to it, not very much inferior to itself in size. The waters of this lake run into the Pontus; it is called the Maeotis, and also the mother of the Pontus.

87. Darius, after he had finished his survey, sailed back to the bridge, which had been constructed for him by Mandrocles a Samian. He likewise surveyed the Bosphorus, and erected upon its shores two pillars of white marble, whereupon he inscribed the names of all the nations which formed his army—on the one pillar in Greek, on the other in Assyrian characters. Now his army was drawn from all the nations under his sway, and the whole amount, without reckoning the naval forces, was 700,000 men, including cavalry. The fleet consisted of 600 ships. Some time afterwards the Byzantines removed these pillars to their own city, and used them for an altar which they erected to Orthosian Artemis. One block remained behind: it lay near the temple of Dionysus at Byzantium, and was covered with Assyrian writing. The spot where Darius bridged the Bosphorus was, I think but I speak only from conjecture, half-way between the city of Byzantium and the temple at the mouth of the strait.

88. Darius was so pleased with the bridge thrown across the strait by the Samian Mandrocles, that he not only bestowed upon him all the customary presents, but gave him ten of every kind. Mandrocles, by way of offering firstfruits from these presents, caused a picture to be painted which showed the whole of the bridge, with King Darius sitting in a seat of honour, and his army engaged in the passage. This painting he dedicated in the temple of Hera at Samos, attaching to it the inscription following:

The fish-fraught Bosphorus bridged, to Hera's fane
Did Mandrocles this proud memorial bring;
When for himself a crown he'd skill to gain,
For Samos praise, contenting the Great King.
Such was the memorial of his work which was left by the architect of the bridge.

89. Darius, after rewarding Mandrocles, passed into Europe, while he ordered the Ionians to enter the Pontus, and sail to the mouth of the Ister. There he bade them throw a bridge across the stream and await his coming. The Ionians, Aeolians, and Hellespontians were the nations which furnished the chief strength of his navy. So the fleet, threading the Cyanean Isles, proceeded straight to the Ister, and, mounting the river to the point where its channels separate, a distance of two days' voyage from

28 These measurements are extremely incorrect. The distance from the mouth of the Bosphorus to the Phasis is little more than 630 miles. Again, the distance across from the Thermodon to the Hindic peninsula is about 270 miles.
29 This is under the true length, which is about sixteen miles.
30 The Propontis is nearer forty-three miles across and 110 miles long.
31 The length is about forty miles; Herodotus' width is correct.
32 These figures are given in miles in the preceding chapter. It will be noted that Herodotus regularly overestimates ships' speeds.

33 It is commonly supposed that Herodotus fell here into a very gross mistake, since the Sea of Azov is not now much more than one-twelfth of the size of the Euxine; but it is possible that Lake Maeotis may have been very greatly larger in the time of Herodotus than it is at present.
the sea, yoked the neck of the stream. Meantime Darius,
who had crossed the Bosporus by the bridge over it,
marched through Thrace; and happening upon the
sources of the Tearus, pitched his camp and made a stay
of three days.

90. Now the Tearus is said by those who dwell near
it, to be the most healthful of all streams, and to cure,
among other diseases, the scab either in man or beast. Its
sources, which are thirty-eight in number, all flowing
from the same rock, are in part cold, in part hot. They lie
at an equal distance from the town of Heraeum near
Perinthus, and Apollonia on the Euxine, a two days’ jour-
ney from each. This river, the Tearus, is a tributary of
the Contadesdus, which runs into the Agrianes, and that
into the Hebrus. The Hebrus empties itself into the sea
near the city of Aenus.

91. Here then, on the banks of the Tearus, Darius
stopped and pitched his camp. The river charmed him
so, that he caused a pillar to be erected in this place also,
with an inscription to the following effect, "The foun-
tains of the Tearus afford the best and most beautiful
water of all rivers: they were visited, on his march into
Scythia, by the best and most beautiful of men, Darius,
son of Hystaspes, king of the Persians, and of the whole
continent." Such was the inscription which he set up at
this place.

92. Marching thence, he came to a second river, called
the Artiscus, which flows through the country of the
Odrysians. Here he fixed upon a certain spot, where
every one of his soldiers should throw a stone as he
passed by. When his orders were obeyed, Darius con-
tinued his march, leaving behind him great hills formed
of the stones cast by his troops.

93. Before arriving at the Ister, the first people whom
he subdued were the Getae, who believe in their immor-
tality. The Thracians of Salmydessus, and those who
dwelt above the cities of Apollonia and Mesembria—the
Scyrmiadae and Nipsaeans, as they are called—gave them-

94. Having so said, the king took a leathern thong,
and tying sixty knots in it, called together the Ionian
tyrants, and spoke thus to them, "Men of Ionia, my
former commands to you concerning the bridge are now
withdrawn. See, here is a thong; take it, and observe my
bidding with respect to it. From the time that I leave you
to march forward into Scythia, untie every day one of the
knots. If I do not return before the last day to which the
knots will hold out, then leave your station, and sail to
your several homes. Meanwhile, understand that my re-
solve is changed, and that you are to guard the bridge
with all care, and watch over its safety and preservation.
By so doing you will oblige me greatly." When Darius
had thus spoken, he set out on his march with all speed.

95. Before you come to Scythia, on the sea coast, lies
Thrace. The land here makes a sweep, and then Scythia
begins, the Ister falling into the sea at this point with its
mouth facing the east. Starting from the Ister I shall now
describe the measurements of the sea-shore of Scythia.
Immediately that the Ister is crossed, Old Scythia begins, and continues as far as the city called Carcinitis, fronting towards the south wind and the midday. Here upon the same sea, there lies a mountainous tract projecting into the Pontus, which is inhabited by the Tauri, as far as what is called the Rugged Chersonese, which runs out into the sea upon the east. For the boundaries of Scythia extend on two sides to two different seas, one upon the south, and the other towards the east, as is also the case with Attica. And the Tauri occupy a position in Scythia like that which a people would hold in Attica, who, being foreigners and not Athenians, should inhabit the highland of Suniun, from Thoricus to the township of Anaphlystus, if this tract projected into the sea somewhat further than it does. Such, to compare great things with small, is the Tauric territory. For the sake of those who may not have made the voyage round these parts of Attica, I will illustrate in another way. It is as if in Iapygia a line were drawn from Port Brundusium to Tarentum, and a people different from the Iapygians inhabited the promontory. These two instances may suggest a number of others, where the shape of the land closely resembles that of Taurica.

100. Beyond this tract, we find the Scythians again in possession of the country above the Tauri and the parts bordering on the eastern sea, as also of the whole district lying west of the Cimmerian Bosphorus and Lake Maeotis, as far as the river Tanais, which empties itself into that lake at its upper end. As for the inland boundaries of Scythia, if we start from the Ister, we find it enclosed by the following tribes, first the Agathyrsi, next the Neuri, then the Black-cloaks, and last of all, the Man-eaters.

101. Scythia then, which is square in shape, and has two of its sides reaching down to the sea, extends inland to the same distance that it stretches along the coast, and is equal every way. For it is a ten days' journey from the Ister to the Borysthenes, and ten more from the Borysthenes to Lake Maeotis while the distance from the coast inland to the country of the Black-cloaks, who dwell above Scythia, is a journey of twenty days. I reckon the day's journey at twenty-five miles. Thus the two sides which run straight inland are 500 miles each, and the transverse sides at right angles to these are also of the same length, which gives the full size of Scythia.

34 The mountains lie only along the southern coast of the Crimea. All the rest of the peninsula belongs to the steppes.

35 This passage was evidently written for the benefit of readers in Magna Graecia. Herodotus at Thurii would have Iapygia before his eyes, as it were. Writing from Ionia, or even from Greece Proper, he would never have thought of such an illustration.  

102. The Scythians, reflecting on their situation, perceived that they were not strong enough by themselves to contend with the army of Darius in open fight. They, therefore, sent envoys to the neighbouring nations, whose kings had already met, and were in consultation upon the advance of so vast a host. Now they who had come together were the kings of the Tauri, the Agathyrsi, the Neuri, the Man-eaters, the Black-cloaks, the Geloni, the Budini, and the Sauromatae.

103. The Tauri have the following customs. They offer in sacrifice to the virgin goddess all shipwrecked persons, and all Greeks compelled to put into their ports by stress of weather. The mode of sacrifice is this. After the preparatory ceremonies, they strike the victim on the head with a club. Then, according to some accounts, they hurl the trunk from the precipice whereon the temple stands, and nail the head to a cross. Others grant that the head is treated in this way, but deny that the body is thrown down the cliff—on the contrary, they say, it is buried. The goddess to whom these sacrifices are offered the Tauri themselves declare to be Iphigenia the daughter of Agamemnon. When they take prisoners in war they treat them in the following way. The man who has taken a captive cuts off his head, and carrying it to his home, fixes it upon a tall pole, which he elevates above his house, most commonly over the chimney. The reason that the heads are set up so high, is (it is said) in order that the whole house may be under their protection. These people live entirely by war and plundering.

104. The Agathyrsi are a race of men very luxurious, and very fond of wearing gold on their persons. They have intercourse promiscuously, that so they may be all brothers, and, as members of one family, may neither envy nor hate one another. In other respects their customs approach nearly to those of the Thracians.

105. The Neurian customs are like the Scythian. One generation before the attack of Darius they were driven from their land by a huge multitude of serpents which invaded them. Of these some were produced in their own country, while others, and those by far the greater number, came in from the deserts on the north. Suffering grievously beneath this scourge, they quitted their homes, and took refuge with the Budini. It seems that these people are conjurers: for both the Scythians and the Greeks who dwell in Scythia say, that every Neurian once a year becomes a wolf for a few days, at the end
104. The Man-eaters. The Man-eaters are a race of savage men, nor are governed by any laws. They are nomads, and customs are Scythic. and from this derive the name which they bear. Their they have all deep blue eyes, and bright red hair. There is a city in their territory, called Gelonus, which is sur-

105. Their dress is Scythian; but the language which they speak is peculiar to themselves. Unlike any other nation in these parts, they are cannibals.

106. The manners of the Man-eaters are more savage than those of any other race. They neither observe justice, nor are governed by any laws. They are nomads, and their dress is Scythian; but the language which they speak is peculiar to themselves. Unlike any other nation in these parts, they are cannibals.

107. The Black-cloaks wear, all of them, black cloaks, and from this derive the name which they bear. Their customs are Scythic.

108. The Budini are a large and powerful nation: they have all deep blue eyes, and bright red hair. There is a city in their territory, called Gelonus, which is surrounded with a lofty wall, four miles each way, built entirely of wood. All the houses in the place and all the temples are of the same material. Here are temples built in honour of the Grecian gods, and adorned after the Greek fashion with images, altars, and shrines, all in wood. There is even a festival, held every third year, in honour of Dionysus, at which the natives fall into the Bacchic fury. For the fact is that the Geloni were ancien-
tly Greeks, who, being driven out of the trading-ports along the coast, fled to the Budini and took up their abode with them. They still speak a language half Greek, half Scythian.

109. The Budini, however, do not speak the same language as the Geloni, nor is their mode of life the same. They are the aboriginal people of the country, and are nomads; unlike any of the neighbouring races, they eat lice. The Geloni, on the contrary, are tillers of the soil, eat bread, have gardens, and both in shape and complexion are quite different from the Budini. The Greeks notwithstanding call these latter Geloni, but it is a mistake to give them the name. Their country is thickly planted with trees of all manner of kinds. In the very woodiest part is a broad deep lake, surrounded by marshy ground with reeds growing on it. Here otters are caught, and beavers, with another sort of animal which has a square face. With the skins of this last the natives border their leather cloaks: and their testicles provide a remedy, for diseases of the womb.

110. It is reported of the Sauromatae, that when the Greeks fought with the Amazons, whom the Scythians call Oiorpata or man-slayers, as it may be rendered, Oior being Scythic for man, and pata for to slay—it is reported, I say, that the Greeks after gaining the battle of the Thermodon, put to sea, taking with them on board three of their vessels all the Amazons whom they had made prisoners; and that these women upon the voyage rose up against the crews, and massacred them to a man. As however they were quite strange to ships, and did not know how to use either rudder, sails, or oars, they were carried, after the death of the men, where the winds and the waves listed. At last they reached the shores of Lake Maeotis and came to a place called Cremni or the Cliffs, which is in the country of the free Scythians. Here they went ashore, and proceeded by land towards the inhabited regions; the first herd of horses which they fell in with they seized, and mounting upon their backs, fell to plundering the Scythian territory.

111. The Scyths could not tell what to make of the attack upon them—the dress, the language, the nation itself, were alike unknown—whence the enemy had come even, was a marvel. Imagining, however, that they were all men of about the same age, they went out against them, and fought a battle. Some of the bodies of the slain fell into their hands, whereby they discovered the truth. Hereupon they deliberated, and made a resolve to kill no more of them, but to send against them a detachment of their youngest men, as near as they could guess equal to the women in number, with orders to encamp in their neighbourhood, and do as they saw them do—when the Amazons advanced against them, they were to retire, and avoid a fight—when they halted, the young men were to approach and pitch their camp near the camp of the enemy. All this they did on account of their strong desire to obtain children from so notable a race.

112. So the youth departed, and obeyed the orders which they had been given. The Amazons soon found out that they had not come to do them any harm, and so they on their part ceased to offer the Scythians any molestation. And now day after day the camps approached nearer to one another; both parties led the same life, neither having anything but their arms and horses, so that they were forced to support themselves by hunting and pillage.

113. The Amazons scattered by ones and twos at noon, wandering off to relieve themselves. The Scyths noticed this and did likewise; one of them attacked an Amazon who was alone; she did not resist but let him have his way. Then she bade him by signs (for they did not understand each other’s language) to bring a friend the next day to the spot where they had met—promising on her part to bring with her another woman. He did so, and the woman kept her word. When the rest of the youths heard what had taken place, they had intercourse with the other Amazons.

39 As Herodotus recedes from the sea his accounts become more mythic, and less trustworthy.

40 Photius defines the same word as fir-cone.
114. The two camps were then joined in one, each Scythian having the Amazon with whom he first had intercourse as his wife. The men were unable to learn the tongue of the women, but the women soon caught up the tongue of the men. When they could thus understand one another, the Scythians addressed the Amazons in these words, "We have parents, and properties, let us therefore give up this mode of life, and return to our nation, and live with them. You shall be our wires there no less than here, and we promise you to have no others." But the Amazons said, "We could not live with your women—our customs are quite different from theirs. To draw the bow, to hurl the javelin, to brestride the horse, these are our arts—of womanly employments we know nothing. Your women, on the contrary, do none of these things; but stay at home in their waggons, engaged in womanish tasks, and never go out to hunt, or to do anything. We should never agree together. But if you truly wish to keep us as your wives, and would conduct yourselves with strict justice towards us, go you home to your parents, bid them give you your inheritance, and then come back to us, and let us and you live together by ourselves."

115. The youths approved of the advice, and followed it. They went and got the portion of goods which fell to them, returned with it, and rejoined their wives, who then addressed them in these words following, "We are ashamed, and afraid to live in the country where we now are. Not only have we stolen you from your fathers, but we have done great damage to Scythia by our ravages. As you like us for wives, grant the request we make of you. Let us leave this country together, and go and dwell beyond the Tanais." Again the youths complied.

116. Crossing the Tanais they journeyed eastward a distance of three days' march from that stream, and again northward a distance of three days' march from Lake Maeotis. Here they came to the country where they now live, and took up their abode in it. The women of the Sauromatae have continued from that day to the present, to observe their ancient customs, frequently hunting on horseback with their husbands, sometimes even unaccompanied; in war taking the field; and wearing the very same dress as the men.

117. The Sauromatae speak the language of Scythia, but have never talked it correctly, because the Amazons learned it imperfectly at the first. Their marriage-law lays it down, that no girl shall wed till she has killed a man in battle. Sometimes it happens that a woman dies unmarried at an advanced age, having never been able in her whole lifetime to fulfil the condition.

118. The envoys of the Scythians, on being introduced into the presence of the kings of these nations, who were assembled to deliberate, made it known to them, that the Persian, after subduing the whole of the other continent, had thrown a bridge over the strait of the Bosporus, and crossed into the continent of Europe, where he had reduced the Thracians, and was now making a bridge over the Ister, his aim being to bring under his sway all Europe also. "Stand not aloof then from this contest," they went on to say, "look not on tamely while we are perishing—but make common cause with us, and together let us meet the enemy. If you refuse, we must yield to the pressure, and either quit our country, or make terms with the invaders. For what else is left for us to do, if your aid be withheld from us? The blow, be sure, will not light on you more gently upon this account. The Persian comes against you no less than against us: and will not be content, after we are conquered, to leave you in peace. We can bring strong proof of what we here advance. Had the Persian leader indeed come to avenge the wrongs which he suffered at our hands when we enslaved his people, and to war on us only, he would have been bound to march straight upon Scythia, without molesting any nation by the way. Then it would have been plain to all, that Scythia alone was aimed at. But now, what has his conduct been? From the moment of his entrance into Europe, he has subjugated without exception every nation that lay in his path. All the tribes of the Thracians have been brought under his sway, and among them even our next neighbours, the Getae."

119. The assembled princes of the nations, after hearing all that the Scythians had to say, deliberated. At the end opinion was divided—the kings of the Gelo, Budini, and Sauromatae were of accord, and pledged themselves to give assistance to the Scythians; but the Agathysian and Neurian princes, together with the sovereigns of the Man-eaters, the Black-cloaks, and the Tauri, replied to their request as follows, "If you had not been the first to wrong the Persians, and begin the war, we should have thought the request you make just; we should then have complied with your wishes, and joined our arms with yours. Now, however, the case stands thus—you, independently of us, invaded the land of the Persians, and so long as God gave you the power, lorded it over them: raised up now by the same God, they are come to do to you the like. We, on our part, did no wrong to these men in the former war, and will not be the first to commit wrong now. If they invade our land, and begin aggressions upon us, we will not suffer them; but, till we see this come to pass, we will remain at home. For we believe that the Persians are not
come to attack us, but to punish those who are guilty of first injuring them.”

120. When this reply reached the Scyths, they resolved, as the neighbouring nations refused their alliance, that they would not openly venture on any pitched battle with the enemy, but would retire before them, driving off their herds, choking up all the wells and springs as they retreated, and leaving the whole country bare of forage. They divided themselves into three bands, one of which, namely that commanded by Idanthyrus, with the enemy, but would retire before them, driving they retreated, and leaving the whole country bare of forage. They divided themselves into three bands, one of which, namely that commanded by Scopasis, it was agreed should be joined by the Sauromatae, and if the Persians advanced in the direction of the Tanais, should retreat along the shores of Lake Maeotis and make for that river; while if the Persians retired, they should at once pursue and harass them. The two other divisions, the principal one under the command of Idanthyrus, and the third, of which Taxacis was king, were to unite in one, and, joined by the detachments of the Geloni and Budini, were, like the others, to keep at the distance of a day’s march from the Persians, falling back as they advanced, and doing the same as the others. At first, they were to take the direction of the nations which had refused to join the alliance, and were to draw the war upon them: that so, if they would not of their own free will engage in the contest, they might by these means be forced into it. Afterwards, it was agreed that they should retire into their own land, and, should it on deliberation appear to them expedient, join battle with the enemy.

121. When these measures had been determined on, the Scyths went out to meet the army of Darius, sending on in front as scouts the fleetest of their horsemen. Their waggons, wherein their women and their children lived, and all their cattle, except such a number as was wanted for food, which they kept with them, were made to precede them in their retreat, and departed, with orders to keep marching, without change of course, to the north.

122. The scouts of the Scyths found the Persian host advanced three days’ march from the Ister, and immediately took the lead of them at the distance of a day’s march, encamping from time to time, and destroying all that grew on the ground. The Persians no sooner caught sight of the Scythian horse than they pursued upon their track, while the enemy retired before them. The pursuit of the Persians was directed towards the single division of the Scythian army, and thus their line of march was eastward towards the Tanais. The Scyths crossed the river, and the Persians after them, still in pursuit. In this way they passed through the country of the Sauromatae, and entered that of the Budini.

123. As long as the march of the Persian army lay through the countries of the Scyths and Sauromatae, there was nothing which they could damage, the land being waste and barren; but on entering the territories of the Budini, they came upon the wooden fortress above mentioned, which was deserted by its inhabitants and left quite empty of everything. This place they burnt to the ground; and having so done, again pressed forward on the track of the retreating Scyths, till, having passed through the entire country of the Budini, they reached the desert, which has no inhabitants, and extends a distance of seven days’ journey above the Budinian territory. Beyond this desert dwell the Thyssagetae, out of whose land four great streams flow. These rivers all traverse the country of the Maeotians, and fall into Lake Maeotis. Their names are the Lycus, the Oarus, the Tanais, and the Syrgis.

124. When Darius reached the desert, he paused from his pursuit, and halted his army upon the Oarus. Here he built eight large forts, at an equal distance from one another, eight miles apart or thereabouts, the ruins of which were still remaining in my day. During the time that he was so occupied, the Scyths whom he had been following, made a circuit by the higher regions, and re-entered Scythia. On their complete disappearance, Darius, seeing nothing more of them, left his forts half finished, and returned towards the west. He imagined that the Scyths whom he had seen were the entire nation, and that they had fled in that direction.

125. He now quickened his march, and entering Scythia, fell in with the two combined divisions of the Scythian army, and instantly gave them chase. They kept to their plan of retreating before him at the distance of a day’s march; and, he still following them hotly, they led him, as had been previously settled, into the territories of the nations that had refused to become their allies, and first of all into the country of the Black-cloaks. Great disturbance was caused among this people by the invasion of the Scyths first, and then of the Persians. So, having harassed them after this sort, the Scyths led the way into the land of the Man-eaters, with the same result as before; and thence passed onwards into Neuris, where their coming likewise spread dismay among the inhabitants. Still retreating they approached the Agathyrsi; but this people, which had witnessed the flight and terror of their neighbours, did not wait for the Scyths to invade them, but sent a herald to forbid them to cross their borders, and to forewarn them, that, if they made the

41. The conjecture is probable that these supposed “forts” were ruined barrows. Herodotus would hear of them from the Greek traders. His words do not necessarily imply that he had himself seen them.
attempt, it would be resisted by force of arms. The Agathyrsi then proceeded to the frontier, to defend their country against the invaders. As for the other nations, the Black-cloaks, the Man-eaters, and the Neuri, instead of defending themselves, when the Scyths and Persians overran their lands, they forgot their threats, and fled away in confusion to the deserts lying towards the north. The Scythians, when the Agathyrsi forbade them to enter their country, refrained; and led the Persians back from the Neurian district into their own land.

126. This had gone on so long, and seemed so interminable, that Darius at last sent a horseman to Idanthrysus, the Scythian king, with the following message, "Strange man, why do you keep on flying before me, when there are two things you might do so easily? If you deem yourself able to resist my arms, cease your wanderings and come, let us engage in battle. Or if you are conscious that my strength is greater than yours—even so you should cease to run away—you have but to bring your lord earth and water, and to come at once to a conference."

127. To this message Idanthrysus, the Scythian king, replied, "This is my way, Persian. I never fear men or fly from them. I have not done so in times past, nor do I now fly from you. There is nothing new or strange in what I do; I only follow my common mode of life in peaceful years. Now I will tell you why I do not at once join battle with you. We Scythians have neither towns nor cultivated lands, which might induce us, through fear of their being taken or ravaged, to be in any hurry to fight with you. If, however, you must needs come to blows with us speedily, look you now, there are our fathers' tombs—seek them out, and attempt to meddle with them—then you shall see whether or no we will fight with you. Till you do this, be sure we shall not join battle, unless it pleases us. This is my answer to the challenge to fight. As for lords, I acknowledge only Zeus my ancestor, and Hestia, the Scythian queen. Earth and water, the tribute you ask, I do not send, but you shall soon receive more suitable gifts. Last of all, in return for calling yourself my lord, I say to you, 'Go howl.' " (This is what men mean by the Scythian mode of speech.) So the herald departed, bearing this message to Darius.

128. When the Scythian kings heard the name of slavery they were filled with rage, and despatched the division under Scopasis to which the Sauromatae were joined, with orders that they should seek a conference with the Ionians, who had been left at the Ister to guard the bridge. Meanwhile the Scythians who remained behind resolved no longer to lead the Persians hither and thither about their country, but to fall upon them when-ever they should be at their meals. So they waited till such times, and then did as they had determined. In these combats the Scythian horse always put to flight the horse of the enemy; these last, however, when routed, fell back upon their foot, who never failed to afford them support; while the Scythians, on their side, as soon as they had driven the horse in, retired again, for fear of the foot. By night too the Scythians made many similar attacks.

129. There was one very strange thing which greatly aided the Persians, and was of equal disservice to the Scyths, in these assaults on the Persian camp. This was the braying of the asses and the appearance of the mules. For, as I observed before, the land of the Scythians produces neither ass nor mule, and contains no single specimen of either animal, by reason of the cold. So, when the asses brayed, they frightened the Scythian cavalry; and often, in the middle of a charge, the horses, hearing the noise made by the asses, would take fright and wheel round, pricking up their ears, and showing astonishment. This was owing to their having never heard the noise, or seen the form, of the animal before: and it was not without some little influence on the progress of the war.

130. The Scythians, when they perceived signs that the Persians were becoming alarmed, took steps to induce them not to quit Scythia, in the hope, if they stayed, of inflicting on them the greater injury, when their supplies should altogether fail. To effect this, they would leave some of their cattle exposed with the herdsmen, while they themselves moved away to a distance: the Persians would make a foray, and take the beasts, whereupon they would be highly elated.

131. This they did several times, until at last Darius was at his wits' end; hereon the Scythian princes, understanding how matters stood, despatched a herald to the Persian camp with presents for the king: these were, a bird, a mouse, a frog, and five arrows. The Persians asked the bearer to tell them what these gifts might mean, but he made answer that he had no orders except to deliver them, and return again with all speed. If the Persians were wise, he added, they would find out the meaning for themselves. So when they heard this, they held a council to consider the matter.

132. Darius gave it as his opinion, that the Scyths intended a surrender of themselves and their country, both land and water, into his hands. This he conceived to be the meaning of the gifts, because the mouse is an inhabitant of the earth, and eats the same food as man,
while the frog passes his life in the water; the bird bears 
a great resemblance to the horse, and the arrows might 
signify the surrender of all their power. To the expla-
nation of Darius, Gobryas, one of the seven conspirators 
against the Magus, opposed another which was as fol-
lows, "Unless, Persians, you can turn into birds and fly 
up into the sky, or become mice and burrow under the 
ground, or make yourselves frogs, and take refuge in the 
fens, you will never make escape from this land, but die 
pierced by our arrows." Such were the meanings which 
the Persians assigned to the gifts.

133. The single division of the Scyths, which in the 
early part of the war had been appointed to keep guard 
about Lake Maeotis, and had now been sent to get speech 
of the Ionians stationed at the Ister, addressed them, on 
reaching the bridge, in these words, "Men of Ionia, we 
bring you freedom, if you will only do as we recommend. 
Darius, we understand, enjoined you to keep your guard 
here at this bridge just sixty days; then, if he did not 
appear, you were to return home. Now, therefore, act so 
as to be free from blame, alike in his sight, and in ours. 
Tarry here the appointed time, and at the end go your 
ways." Having said this, and received a promise from the 
Ionians to do as they desired, the Scythians hastened 
back with all possible speed.

134. After the sending of the gifts to Darius, the part 
of the Scythian army, which had not marched to the Ister, 
drew out in battle array horse and foot\(^{42}\) against the

Persians, and seemed about to come to an engagement. 
But as they stood in battle array, it chanced that a hare 
started up between them and the Persians, and set to 
rushing off in pursuit, with great confusion, and loud cries 
and shouts. Darius, hearing the noise, inquired the cause 
of it, and was told that the Scythians were all engaged 
in hunting a hare. On this he turned to those with whom 
he was wont to converse, and said, "These men do indeed 
despise us utterly: and now I see that Gobryas was right 
about the Scythian gifts. As, therefore, his opinion is now 
mine likewise, it is time we form some wise plan, 
whereby we may secure ourselves a safe return to our 
homes." "Sire," Gobryas rejoined, "I was almost sure, 
before I came here, that this was an impracticable race—
since our coming I am yet more convinced of it, especially 
now that I see them making game of us. My advice is, 
therefore, that, when night falls, we light our fires as we 
do at other times, and leaving behind us on some pretext 
that portion of our army which is weak and unequal to 
hardship, taking care also to leave our asses tethered, 
retreat from Scythia, before our foes march forward to 
the Ister and destroy the bridge, or the Ionians come to 
any resolution which may lead to our ruin."

135. So Gobryas advised; and when night came, 
Darius followed his counsel, and leaving his sick sol-
diers, and those whose loss would be of least account, 
with the asses also tethered about the camp, marched 
away. The asses were left that their noise might be heard: 
the men, really because they were sick and useless, but 
under the pretense, that he was about to fall upon the 
Scythians with the flower of his troops, and that they 
meanwhile were to guard his camp for him. Having thus 
declared his plans to the men whom he was deserting, 
and having caused the fires to be lighted, Darius set forth, 
and marched hastily towards the Ister. The asses, aware 
of the departure of the host, brayed louder than ever; and 
the Scythians, hearing the sound, entertained no doubt of 
the Persians being still in the same place.

136. When day dawned, the men who had been left 
behind, perceiving that they were betrayed by Darius, 
stretched out their hands towards the Scythians, and 
spoke as befitted their situation. The enemy no sooner 
heard, than they quickly joined all their troops in one, 
and both portions of the Scythian army—alike that which 
consisted of a single division, and that made up of two, 
accompanied by all their allies, the Sauromatae, the 
Budini, and the Geloni, set off in pursuit, and made 
straight for the Ister. As, however, the Persian army was 
chiefly foot, and had no knowledge of the routes, which 
are not cut out in Scythia; while the Scyths were all

\(^{42}\) We now hear for the first time of the Scythians having 
infantry. It is scarcely possible that they really possessed any 
such force. If they had had a force of foot-soldiers, Darius 
might have compelled them to a general engagement.
horsemen and well acquainted with the shortest way; it
so happened that the two armies missed one another, and
the Scythians, getting far ahead of their adversaries, came
first to the bridge. Finding that the Persians were not yet
arrived, they addressed the Ionians, who were aboard
their ships, in these words, "Men of Ionia, the number
of your days is out, and you do wrong to remain. Fear
doubtless has kept you here hitherto: now, however, you
may safely break the bridge, and hasten back to your
homes, rejoicing that you are free, and thanking for it
the gods and the Scythians. Your former lord and master
we undertake so to handle, that he will never again make
war upon any one."

137. The Ionians now held a council. Miltiades the
Athenian who was king of the Chersonesites upon the
Hellespont, and their commander at the Ister, recom-
manded the other generals to do as the Scythians wished,
and restore freedom to Ionia. But Histiaeus the Milesian
opposed this advice. "It is through Darius," he said, "that
we enjoy our thrones in our several states. If his power
be overturned, I cannot continue lord of Miletus, nor you
of your cities. For there is not one of them which will not
prefer democracy to kingly rule." Then the other cap-
tains, who, till Histiaeus spoke, were about to vote with
Miltiades, changed their minds, and declared in favour
of the last speaker.

138. The following were the voters on this occasion,
all men who stood high in the esteem of the Persian king:
the tyrants of the Hellespont—Daphnis of Abydos,
Hippocles of Lampasus, Herophantus of Prium, Met-
rodorus of Proconnesus, Aristogoras of Cyzicus, and
Ariston of Byzantium; the Ionian princes—Strattis of
Chios, Aeaces of Samos, Laodamas of Phocaea, and
Histiaeus of Miletus, the man who had opposed Milti-
ades. Only one Aeolian of note was present, to wit,
Aristogoras of Cyme.

139. Having resolved to follow the advice of Histi-
aeus, the Greek leaders further determined to speak and
act as follows. In order to appear to the Scythians to be
doing something, when in fact they were doing nothing
of consequence, and likewise to prevent them from forc-
ing a passage across the Ister by the bridge, they resolved
to break up the part of the bridge which abutted on

Scythia, to the distance of a bowshot from the river bank;
and to assure the Scythians, while the demolition was
proceeding, that there was nothing which they would not
do to please them. Such were the additions made to the
resolution of Histiaeus; and then Histiaeus himself stood
forth and made answer to the Scythians in the name of all
the Greeks, "Good is the advice which you have brought
us, Scythians, and well have you done to come here with
such speed. Your efforts have now put us into the right
path, and our efforts shall not be wanting to advance your
cause. Your own eyes see that we are engaged in breaking
the bridge, and, believe us, we will work zealously to
procure our own freedom. Meantime, while we labour
here at our task, be it your business to seek them out, and,
when found, for our sakes, as well as your own, to visit
them with the vengeance which they so well deserve."

140. Again the Scythians put faith in the promises of the
Ionian chiefs, and retraced their steps, hoping to fall in
with the Persians. They missed, however, the enemy's
whole line of march; their own former acts being to
blame for it. Had they not ravaged all the pasturages of
that region, and filled in all the wells, they would have
easily found the Persians whenever they chose. But, as it
turned out, the measures which seemed to them so wisely
planned were exactly what caused their failure. They took
a route where water was to be found and fodder could
be got for their horses, and on this track sought their
adversaries, expecting that they too would retreat through
regions where these things were to be obtained. The
Persians, however, kept strictly to the line of their former
march, never for a moment departing from it; and even
so gained the bridge with difficulty. It was night when
they arrived, and their terror, when they found the bridge
broken up, was great; for they thought that perhaps the
Ionians had deserted them.

141. Now there was in the army of Darius a certain
man, an Egyptian, who had a louder voice than any other
man in the world. This person was bid by Darius to stand
at the water's edge, and call Histiaeus the Milesian.
The fellow did as he was bid; and Histiaeus, hearing him at
the very first summons, brought the fleet to assist in con-
voying the army across, and once more made good the
bridge.

142. By these means the Persians escaped from Scy-
thia, while the Scythians sought for them in vain, again
missing their track. And hence the Scythians are accus-
tomed to say of the Ionians, by way of reproach, that, if
they be looked upon as free-men, they are the basest and
most dastardly of all mankind—but if they be considered
as under servitude, they are the faithfulest of slaves, and
the most fondly attached to their lords.

48 Concerning this sovereignty of Miltiades see Book vi. 34-36.
44 One cannot but suspect that the list of Herodotus is im-
perfect, and that more contingents were present than he names.
It may be conjectured that the list came from a Hellespontine
source (from the family of Miltiades, most probably); and
thus, while the catalogue of the Hellespontine cities is tolerably
complete, there being no important omission but that of Cal-
chedon, only those Ionian and Aeolian leaders who were of
particular repute obtained any mention.