

BOOK XV.

SUMMARY.

The Fifteenth Book contains India and Persia.

CHAPTER I.

1. THE parts of Asia which remain to be described are those without the Taurus, except Cilicia, Pamphylia, and Lycia; extending from India to the Nile, and situated between the Taurus and the exterior Southern Sea.¹

Next to Asia is Africa, which I shall describe hereafter. At present I shall begin from India, the first and the largest country situated towards the east.

2. The reader must receive the account of this country with indulgence, for it lies at a very great distance, and few persons of our nation have seen it; those also who have visited it have seen only some portions of it; the greater part of what they relate is from report, and even what they saw, they became acquainted with during their passage through the country with an army, and in great haste. For this reason they do not agree in their accounts of the same things, although they write about them as if they had examined them with the greatest care and attention. Some of these writers were fellow-soldiers and fellow-travellers, as those who belonged to the army which, under the command of Alexander, conquered Asia; yet they frequently contradict each other. If, then, they differ so much respecting things which they had seen, what must we think of what they relate from report?

3. Nor do the writers who, many ages since Alexander's time, have given an account of these countries, nor even those who at present make voyages thither, afford any precise information.

Apollodorus, for instance, author of the Parthian History, when he mentions the Greeks who occasioned the revolt of Bactriana from the Syrian kings, who were the successors of

¹ The Indian Ocean.

Seleucus Nicator, says, that when they became powerful they invaded India. He adds no discoveries to what was previously known, and even asserts, in contradiction to others, that the Bactrians had subjected to their dominion a larger portion of India than the Macedonians; for Eucratidas (one of these kings) had a thousand cities subject to his authority. But other writers affirm that the Macedonians conquered nine nations situated between the Hydaspes¹ and the Hypanis,² and obtained possession of five hundred cities, not one of which was less than Cos Meropis,³ and that Alexander, after having conquered all this country, delivered it up to Porus.

4. Very few of the merchants who now sail from Egypt by the Nile and the Arabian Gulf to India have proceeded as far as the Ganges; and, being ignorant persons, were not qualified to give an account of places they have visited. From one place in India, and from one king, namely, Pandion, or, according to others,⁴ Porus, presents and embassies were sent to Augustus Cæsar. With the ambassadors came the Indian Gymno-Sophist, who committed himself to the flames at Athens,⁵ like Calanus, who exhibited the same spectacle in the presence of Alexander.

5. If, then, we set aside these stories, and direct our attention to accounts of the country prior to the expedition of Alexander, we shall find them still more obscure. It is probable that Alexander, elated by his extraordinary good fortune, believed these accounts.

According to Nearchus, Alexander was ambitious of conducting his army through Gedrosia,⁶ when he heard that Semiramis and Cyrus had undertaken expeditions against India (through this country), although both had abandoned the enterprise, the former escaping with twenty, and Cyrus with seven men only. For he considered that it would be a glorious achievement for him to lead a conquering army safe through the same nations and countries where Semiramis and Cyrus had suffered such disasters. Alexander, therefore, believed these stories.

6. But how can we place any just confidence in the accounts

¹ Behul or Jelum.

² Beas.

³ The island Cos, or Stanco, one of the earlier names of which was Meropis.

⁴ ἢ κατ' ἄλλους for καὶ ἄλλου.—Groskurd.

⁵ See ch. i. § 73.

⁶ Mekran.

of India derived from such expeditions as those of Cyrus and Semiramis? Megasthenes concurs in this opinion; he advises persons not to credit the ancient histories of India, for, except the expeditions of Hercules, of Bacchus, and the later invasion of Alexander, no army was ever sent out of their country by the Indians, nor did any foreign enemy ever invade or conquer it. Sesostris the Egyptian (he says), and Tearco the Ethiopian, advanced as far as Europe; and Nabocodrosor, who was more celebrated among the Chaldæans than Hercules among the Greeks, penetrated even as far as the Pillars,¹ which Tearco also reached; Sesostris conducted an army from Iberia to Thrace and Pontus; Idanthyrus the Scythian overran Asia as far as Egypt; but not one of these persons proceeded as far as India, and Semiramis died before her intended enterprise was undertaken. The Persians had sent for the Hydraces² from India, a body of mercenary troops; but they did not lead an army into that country, and only approached it when Cyrus was marching against the Massagetæ.

7. Megasthenes, and a few others, think the stories respecting Hercules and Bacchus to be credible, but the majority of writers, among whom is Eratosthenes, regard them as incredible and fabulous, like the Grecian stories. Dionysus, in the *Bacchæ* of Euripides, makes this boasting speech:

¹ It is evident that the name Pillars misled Megasthenes or the writers from whom he borrowed the facts; for it is impossible to suppose that Tearcho, who reigned in Arabia, or that Nabuchodonosor, who reigned at Babylon, ever conducted an army across the desert and through the whole breadth of Africa to the Straits of Gibraltar, to which place nothing invited them, and the existence of which, as well as that of the neighbouring countries, must have been unknown. The Egyptians, Arabians, and Babylonians directed their invasions towards the north, to Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Iberia, and Colchis. This was the line of march followed by Sesostris.

Ptolemy indicates the existence of "Pillars," which he calls "the Pillars of Alexander," above Albania and Iberia, at the commencement of the Asiatic Sarmatia. But as it is known that Alexander never penetrated into these regions, it is clear that the title "of Alexander" was added by the Greeks to the names of mountains, which separated a country partly civilized from that entirely occupied by hordes of savages. Everything therefore seems to show, that these Pillars near Iberia in Asia, and not the Pillars of Hercules in Europe, formed the boundary of the expeditions of Sesostris, Tearcho, and Nabuchodonosor.—*Gosselin*.

² As the Oxydraci are here meant, Groskurd adopts this name in the text. They were settled in Sagur and Outch, of the province of Lahore.

“ But now from Lydia’s field,
 With gold abounding, from the Phrygian realm
 And that of Persia scorch’d by torrid suns,
 Pressing through Bactrian gates, the frozen land
 Of Media, and through Araby the Blest,
 With Asia’s wide extended continent——”

In Sophocles, also, a person is introduced speaking the praises of Nysa,² as being a mountain sacred to Bacchus:

‘ whence I beheld the famed Nysa, the resort of the Bacchanalian bands, which the horned Iacchus makes his most pleasant and beloved retreat, where no bird’s clang is heard,”

and so on. [He is called also Merotraphes.]³

Homer also mentions Lycurgus the Edonian in these words, “ who formerly pursued the nurses of the infuriate Bacchus along the sacred mountain Nysa.”⁴

So much respecting Bacchus. But with regard to Hercules, some persons say, that he penetrated to the opposite extremities on the west only, while others maintain that he also advanced to those of the east.

8. From such stories as those related above, they gave the name of Nysæans to some imaginary nation, and called their city Nysa, founded by Bacchus; a mountain above the city they called Meron, alleging as a reason for imposing these names that the ivy and vine grow there, although the latter does not perfect its fruit; for the bunches of grapes, in consequence of excessive rains, drop off before they arrive at maturity.

They say, also, that the Sydracæ (Oxydracæ) are descendants of Bacchus, because the vine grows in their country, and because their kings display great pomp in setting out on their warlike expeditions, after the Bacchic manner; whenever they appear in public, it is with beating of drums, and are dressed in flowered robes, which is the common custom among the other Indians.

¹ Eurip. Bacchæ, v. 13.—*Wodehull*.

² Many cities and mountains bore the name of Nysa; but it is impossible to confound the mountain Nysa, spoken of by Sophocles, with the Nysa of India, which became known to the Greeks by the expedition only of Alexander, more than a century after the death of the poet.

³ Probably interpolated

⁴ Il. vi. 132. Nysa in India was unknown to Homer, who here refers to Mount Nysa in Thrace.

When Alexander took, on the first assault, Aornos,¹ a fortress on a rock, the foot of which is washed by the Indus near its source, his flatterers exaggerated this act, and said that Hercules thrice assailed this rock and was thrice repulsed.

They pretended that the Sibæ² were descended from the people who accompanied Hercules in his expedition, and that they retained badges of their descent; that they wore skins like Hercules, and carried clubs, and branded with the mark of a club their oxen and mules. They confirm this fable with stories about Caucasus³ and Prometheus, for they transferred hither from Pontus these tales, on the slight pretence that they had seen a sacred cave among the Paropamisadæ.⁴ This they alleged was the prison of Prometheus, that Hercules came hither to release Prometheus, and that this mountain was the Caucasus, to which the Greeks represent Prometheus as having been bound.

9. That these are the inventions of the flatterers of Alexander is evident, first, because the writers do not agree with one another, some of whom speak of these things; others make no mention of them whatever. For it is not probable, that actions so illustrious, and calculated to foster pride and vanity, should be unknown, or if known, that they should not be thought worthy of record, especially by writers of the greatest credit.

Besides, the intervening people, through whose country the armies of Bacchus and Hercules must have marched in their

¹ Strabo takes for the source of the Indus the place where it passes through the mountains to enter the Punjab. The site of Aornos seems to correspond with Renas.—*Gossellin*.

² The Sibæ, according to Quintus Curtius, who gives them the name of Sobii, occupied the confluent of the Hydaspes and the Acesines.

This people appear to have been driven towards the east by one of those revolutions so frequent in all Asia. At least, to the north of Delhi, and in the neighbourhood of Hardouar, a district is found bearing the name of Siba.

³ That is, the Macedonians transferred the name of the Caucasus, situated between the Black Sea and the Caspian, to the mountains of India. The origin of their mistake arose from the Indians giving, as at present, the name of Kho, which signifies "white," to the great chain of mountains covered with snow, from whence the Indus, and the greater part of the rivers which feed it, descend.

⁴ This people occupied the Paropamisus, where the mountains now separate Candahar from Gaour.

way to India, do not exhibit any proofs of their passage through the country. The kind of dress, too, of Hercules is much more recent than the memorials of Troy, an invention of those who composed the Heracleia (or exploits of Hercules,) whether it were Peisander or some one else who composed it. But the ancient wooden statues do not represent Hercules in that attire.

10. Under such circumstances, therefore, we must receive everything that approaches nearest to probability. I have already discussed this subject to the extent of my ability at the beginning of this work; ¹ I shall now assume those opinions as clearly proved, and shall add whatever may seem to be required for the sake of perspicuity.

It appeared from the former discussion, that in the summary given by Eratosthenes, in the third book of his Geography, is contained the most credible account of the country considered as India at the time of its invasion by Alexander.

At that period the Indus was the boundary of India and of Ariana,² situated towards the west, and in the possession of the Persians, for afterwards the Indians occupied a larger portion of Ariana, which they had received from the Macedonians.

The account of Eratosthenes is as follows :—

11. The boundaries of India, on the north, from Ariana to the Eastern Sea,³ are the extremities of Taurus, to the several parts of which the natives give, besides others, the names of Paropamisus, Emodus, and Imaus,⁴ but the Macedonians call them Caucasus; on the west, the river Indus; the southern and eastern sides, which are much larger than the others, project towards the Atlantic Sea, and the figure of the country

¹ Book ii. c. i. 2.

² Under the name of Ariana, the ancients comprehended almost all the countries situated between the Indus and the meridian of the Caspian Gates. This large space was afterwards divided by them according to the position of the different nations which occupied it.—*Gosselin*. There can be no doubt the modern Iran represents the ancient Ariana. See *Smith*, art. Ariana, and b. ii. c. v. § 32, vol. i. p. 196, note ³.

³ Eratosthenes and Strabo believed that the eastern parts of Asia terminated at the mouth of the Ganges, and that, consequently, this river discharged itself into the Eastern Ocean at the place where terminated the long chain of Taurus.

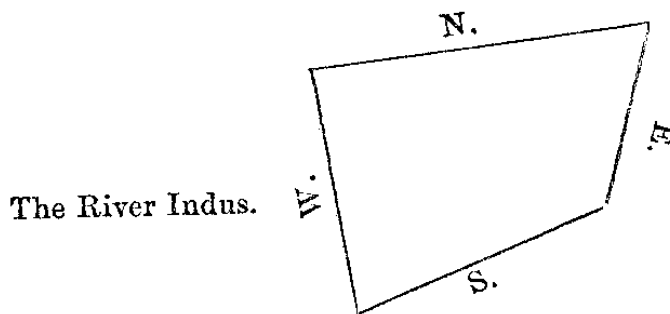
⁴ According to Major Rennell, Emodus and Imaus are only variations of the same name, derived from the Sanscrit word Himmaleh, which signifies "covered with snow."

becomes rhomboidal,¹ each of the greater sides exceeding the opposite by 3000 stadia; and this is the extent of the extremity, common to the eastern and southern coast, and which projects beyond the rest of that coast equally on the east and south.

The western side, from the Caucasian mountains to the Southern Sea, is estimated at 13,000 stadia, along the river Indus to its mouth; wherefore the eastern side opposite, with the addition of the 3000 stadia of the promontory, will be 16,000 stadia in extent. This is both the smallest and greatest breadth of India.² The length is reckoned from west to east. The part of this extending (from the Indus) as far as Palibothra³ we may describe more confidently; for it has been measured by Schœni,⁴ and is a royal road of 10,000 stadia. The extent of the parts beyond depends upon conjecture derived from the ascent of vessels from the sea by the Ganges to Palibothra. This may be estimated at 6000 stadia.

The whole, on the shortest computation, will amount to 16,000 stadia, according to Eratosthenes, who says that he took it from the register of the Stathmi (or the several stages from place to place),⁵ which was received as authentic, and Megasthenes agrees with him. But Patrocles says, that the sum of the whole is less by 1000 stadia. If again we add to this

¹ In some MSS. the following diagram is to be found.



² The extremity of India, of which Eratosthenes speaks, is Cape Comorin, which he placed farther to the east than the mouth of the Ganges.

³ Patelputer or Pataliputra near Patna, see b. ii. ch. i. § 9.

⁴ The reading is *σχαινός*, which Coray changes to *σχοίνος*, Schœni: see Herod. i. 66. The Schœnus was 40 stadia. B. xii. ch. ii. § 12.

⁵ Athenæus (b. xi. ch. 103, page 800, Bohn's Classical Library) speaks of Amyntas as the author of a work on the Stations of Asia. The Stathmus, or distance from station to station, was not strictly a measure of distance, and depended on the nature of the country and the capability of the beasts of burthen.

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