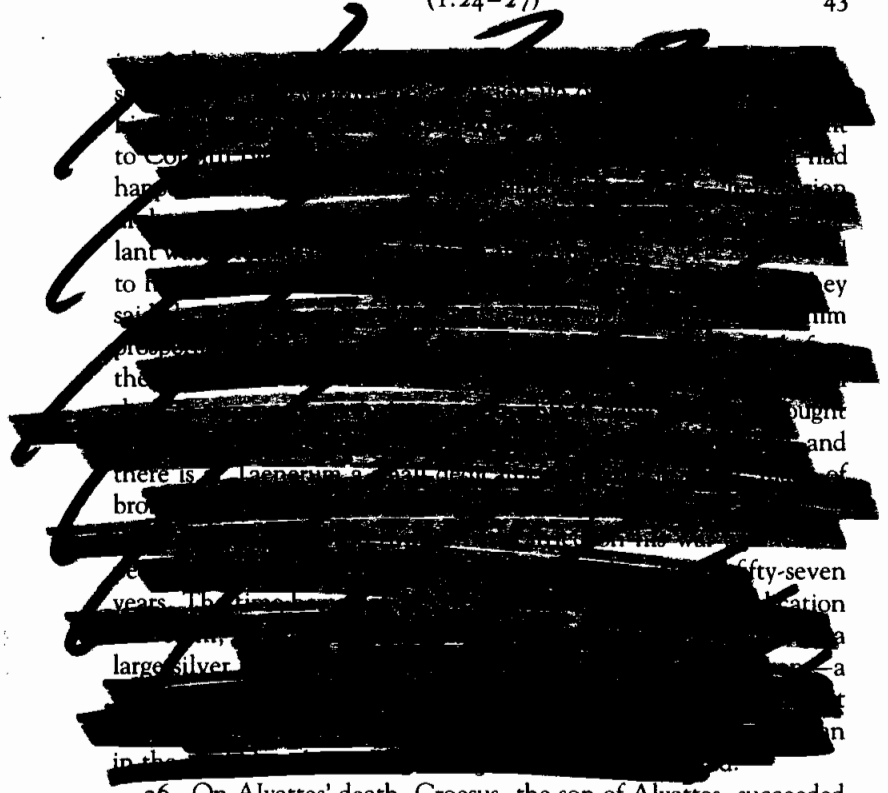
the son of Cypselus and was himself prince of Corinth. It was to him, say the Corinthians (with the agreement of the people of Lesbos), that the greatest wonder in all his life happened—I mean, the safe carriage of Arion of Methymna on a dolphin's back to Taenarum. Arion was second to none of all the lyre-players of his time and was also the first man we know of to compose and name the dithyramb[10] and produce it in Corinth.

24. Arion, then, say, who was spending the greater part of his time at the court of Periander, was seized with a longing to sail to Italy and Sicily; but when he had made a great deal of money there, he wanted to come home to Corinth. So he set sail from Taenarum, and, as he trusted no people more than Corinthians, he hired a boat of men of Corinth. But when they were out to sea, those Corinthians plotted to throw Arion overboard and take his money. When he understood what they would be at, he begged for his life at the sacrifice of the money. However, he could not prevail on them, and they, who were his ferrymen, bade him either kill himself—that he might have a grave when he was landed—or straightway jump into the sea. So, penned in helplessness, Arion besought them, since they were so determined, to stand by and watch him while he sang, standing with all his gear on him on the poop deck of the ship; he promised, once he had sung, to make away with himself. They for their part thought what a pleasure it would be for them to hear the greatest singer in the world, and so they retreated from the stern of the boat to amidships. He put on all his gear, took his lyre in his hand, and taking his stance on the poop went through the High Shrill Song,[12] and, when it was finished, cast himself into the sea,

10. The dithyramb was a performance in which a chorus danced and sang to the accompaniment of a lyre. The term here rendered "produce" is literally "teach," because the poet (in this case, anyway) "taught" the chorus how to render his verses and the dances that accompanied them. The same word "teach" is used of Athenian tragedies when they were "produced" for the great festivals.

11. Apparently singers, or perhaps festival performers other than regular actors (who had their own kind of costumes and masks), wore very formal robes and possibly some sort of garland on the head. The point of this in the story would seem to be the encumbrance with which Arion loaded himself for his leap into the sea and also the consequent effectiveness of his appearance before the pirates in their later encounter.

12. A special and well-known song in honor of Apollo.



26. On Alyattes' death, Croesus, the son of Alyattes, succeeded to the kingdom,[13] being then thirty-five years old; and the first of the Greeks he attacked were the people of Ephesus. Then the Ephesians, being besieged by him, dedicated their city to Artemis by fastening a rope from her temple to their city wall. The distance between the old city, which is what was then being besieged, and the temple was seven stades.[14] The Ephesians were the first whom Croesus attacked, but afterwards he set upon each of the Ionian and Aeolian cities in turn, bringing different charges against them. When he was able to find greater grounds of complaint, he brought forward these, but against some of the cities, just the same, he advanced other offenses, though they were indeed very slight.

27. When, then, the Greeks in Asia had been subdued to the

13. Croesus' reign began in 560 B.C.

14. Nearly a mile.

payment of tribute, Croesus thereafter designed to build ships for himself and attack the people of the islands; but when everything was ready for the shipbuilding, something happened; some say it was Bias of Priene who came to Sardis, others that it was Pittacus of Mitylene; but of one of these, on his coming to Sardis, Croesus made inquiry—"What news in Greece?"—and it was what this man said that stopped the shipbuilding. "Sir," he answered, "the islanders are buying up ten thousand horses, as they have in mind to make a campaign on Sardis and yourself." Croesus imagined that he spoke seriously and said, "Would that the gods would put this idea into their heads: that islanders should come against the sons of the Lydians with horses!" Whereat the other answered him, "Sir, you seem to me to pray very earnestly that you might catch the islanders riding horses on the mainland, and your hope in this matter is very reasonable. But do you believe that the islanders, since they have heard that you are to build ships against them, have any other matter for prayer than that they will catch the Lydians at sea and so take vengeance on yourself, in requital for the Greeks that live on the mainland, whom you have made slaves of and hold as such?" Croesus was extraordinarily pleased with the turn of the answer, and since he thought that the man spoke aptly, he hearkened to him and gave over his shipbuilding; and so Croesus made a guest-friendship with the Ionians who live on the islands.

28. As time wore on, almost all were subdued who lived west of the river Halys; for except for the Cilicians and Lycians, Croesus subdued and held all the rest in his power. These were: Lydians, Phrygians, Mysians, Mariandynians, Chalybes, Paphlagonians, Thynians and Bithynians (these two are Thracians), Carians, Ionians, Dorians, Aeolians, and Pamphylians. All these were subjugated, and Croesus annexed them to his own Lydians. So Sardis was at the height of its wealth.

29. To Sardis, then, all the teachers of learning[15] who lived at that time came from all over Greece; they came to Sardis on their

15. The Greek word here, *sophistai*, was later to win a derogatory sense, when a "sophist" was one who taught for hire and was given to fallacious argument. Here it has only its earlier meaning, "one who seeks for *sophia* [wisdom]"—a kind of self-chosen seeker, from whom one might perhaps, as a favor, learn some of the fruits of that wisdom.

several occasions; and, of course, there came also Solon of Athens. At the bidding of the Athenians he had made laws for them, and then he went abroad for ten years, saying, indeed, that he traveled for sight-seeing but really that he might not be forced to abrogate any of the laws he had laid down; of themselves, the Athenians could not do so, since they had bound themselves by great oaths that for ten years they would live under whatever laws Solon would enact.[16]

30. This, then, was the reason—though of course there was also the sight-seeing—that brought Solon to Egypt to the court of Prince Amasis and eventually to Sardis to Croesus. When he came there, he was entertained by Croesus in his palace, and on the third or fourth day after his arrival the servants, on Croesus' orders, took Solon round the stores of treasures and showed them to him in all their greatness and richness. When he had seen them all and considered them, Croesus, as the opportunity came, put this question to Solon: "My friend from Athens, great talk of you has come to my ears, of your wisdom and your traveling; they say you have traveled over much of the world, for the sake of what you can see in it, in your pursuit of knowledge. So now, a longing overcomes me to ask you whether, of all men, there is one you have seen as the most blessed of all." He put this question never doubting but that he himself was the most blessed. But Solon flattered not a whit but in his answer followed the very truth. He said, "Sir, Tellus the Athenian." Croesus was bewildered at this but pursued his question with insistence. "And in virtue of what is it that you judge Tellus to be most blessed?" Solon said: "In the first place, Tellus' city was in good state when he had sons—good and beautiful they were—and he saw children in turn born to all of them, and all surviving. Secondly, when he himself had come prosperously to a moment of his life—that is, prosperously as it counts with us—he had, besides, an ending for it that was most glorious: in a battle between the Athenians and their neighbors in Eleusis he made a sally, routed the enemy, and died splendidly, and the Athenians gave him a public funeral where he fell and so honored him greatly."

31. Solon led on Croesus by what he said of Tellus when he

16. Solon's reforms date from his archonship at Athens in 594–593.

spoke of his many blessings, so Croesus went further in his questioning and wanted to know whom Solon had seen as second most blessed after the first, for he certainly thought that he himself would win the second prize at least. But Solon answered him and said: "Cleobis and Biton. They were men of Argive race and had a sufficiency of livelihood and, besides, a strength of body such as I shall show; they were both of them prize-winning athletes, and the following story is told of them as well. There was a feast of Hera at hand for the Argives, and their mother needs must ride to the temple; but the oxen did not come from the fields at the right moment. The young men, being pressed by lack of time, harnessed themselves beneath the yoke and pulled the wagon with their mother riding on it; forty-five stades they completed on their journey and arrived at the temple. When they had done that and had been seen by all the assembly, there came upon them the best end of a life, and in them the god showed thoroughly how much better it is for a man to be dead than to be alive.[17] For the Argive men came and stood around the young men, congratulating them on their strength, and the women congratulated the mother on the fine sons she had; and the mother, in her great joy at what was said and done, stood right in front of the statue and there prayed for Cleobis and Biton, her own sons, who had honored her so signally, that the goddess should give them whatsoever is best for a man to win. After that prayer the young men sacrificed and banqueted and laid them down to sleep in the temple where they were; they never rose more, but that was the end in which they were held. The Argives made statues of them and dedicated them at Delphi, as of two men who were the best of all."

32. So Solon assigned his second prize in happiness to these men; but Croesus was sharply provoked and said: "My Athenian

17. I have translated the two verbs (perfect and present infinitives) as I have (and *not* as "It is better to die than to live") because for Herodotus death is not a condition. A Christian might say that our condition after death is better than in this life, but what Solon is after is that, if you are dead, at least the risks of trouble are over. Hence to have the last settlement when you are lavishly winning, with all the assets of youth, beauty, and strength in the moment of triumph on your side, is the supreme gift, while to go on living is to go on being continually at risk.

friend, is the happiness that is mine so entirely set at naught by you that you do not make me the equal of even private men?" Solon answered: "Croesus, you asked me, who know that the Divine is altogether jealous and prone to trouble us, and you asked me about human matters. In the whole length of time there is much to see that one would rather not see—and much to suffer likewise. I put the boundary of human life at seventy years. These seventy years have twenty-five thousand two hundred days, not counting the intercalary month;[18] but if every other year be lengthened by a month so that the seasons come out right, these intercalary months in seventy years will be thirty-five, and the days for these months ten hundred and fifty. So that all the days of a man's life are twenty-six thousand two hundred and fifty; of all those days not one brings to him anything exactly the same as another. So, Croesus, man is entirely what befalls him. To me it is clear that you are very rich, and clear that you are the king of many men; but the thing that you asked me I cannot say of you yet, until I hear that you have brought your life to an end well. For he that is greatly rich is not more blessed than he that has enough for the day unless fortune so attend upon him that he ends his life well, having all those fine things still with him. Moreover, many very rich men are unblessed, and many who have a moderate competence are fortunate. Now he that is greatly rich but is unblessed has an advantage over the lucky man in two respects only; but the latter has an advantage over the rich and unblessed in many. The rich and unblessed man is better able to accomplish his every desire and to support such great visitation of evil as shall befall him. But the moderately rich and lucky man wins over the other in these ways: true, he is not equally able to support both the visitation of evil and and his own desire, but his good fortune turns these aside from him; he is uncrippled and healthy, without evils to afflict him, and with good children and good looks. If, in addition to all this, he shall end his life well, he is the man you seek, the one who is worthy to be called blessed; but wait till he is dead to call him so, and till then call him not blessed but lucky.[19]

18. The intercalary month was the Greek substitute for our leap year.

19. For the subtle nuances of meaning that Herodotus brings to this discussion of "blessedness" or "happiness" (nuances embedded in the Greek terms he employs), see the end note to this passage.

"Of course, it is impossible for one who is human to have all the good things together, just as there is no one country that is sufficient of itself to provide all good things for itself; but it has one thing and not another, and the country that has the most is best. So no single person is self-sufficient; he has one thing and lacks another. But whoso possesses most of them, continuously, and then ends his life gracefully, he, my lord, may justly win this name you seek—at least in my judgment. But one must look always at the end of everything—how it will come out finally. For to many the god has shown a glimpse of blessedness only to extirpate them in the end."

33. That was what Solon said, and he did not please Croesus at all; so the prince sent him away, making no further account of him, thinking him assuredly a stupid man who would let by present goods and bid him look to the end of every matter.

34. After Solon was gone, a great visitation of evil from the god laid hold of Croesus, and one may guess that it was because he thought he was of all mankind the most blessed. Lo, as he lay sleeping, a dream stood over him and declared to him the very truth of the evils that were to befall his son. Croesus had two sons, the one of them quite undone, inasmuch as he was deaf and dumb; but the other was far the first young man of his age; his name was Atys. It was concerning this Atys that the dream communicated with Croesus, namely, that he should have him stricken by an iron spearpoint. When Croesus woke up and considered with himself the dream's message, he was in terror of it and married his son to a wife, and besides, although the young man had been wont to captain the Lydians, he now would send him nowhere on any such business. And as for the javelins and spears and all such things as men use in war, he conveyed all these out of the men's halls and piled them in the chambers lest any of them, as they hung on the walls, might chance to fall on his son.

35. Now when Croesus had in hand the marriage of his son, there came to Sardis a man in the grip of calamity, his hands full of impurity. He was a Phrygian by race and of the royal family. This man came forward into the house of Croesus and begged to win purification of Croesus after the customs of that country. So Croesus purified him. (The manner of purification is the same for the Lydians and the Greeks.) After he had performed the due rites, Croesus

asked him where he came from and who he was, in these words: "Sir, who are you? And from where in Phrygia have you come, that you have become a suppliant at my hearth? What man or woman have you killed?" He answered him: "King, I am the son of Gordias, the son of Midas, and men call me Adrastus; and it is my brother I have killed, and I did it unwittingly. I come before you having been driven out by my father and having had my all taken from me." Croesus answered him and said: "Friends are they from whom you spring, and it is to friends also that you have come. While you remain in my house, you will lack for nothing. As for your calamity, that you must bear as lightly as you may, for so it will be best for you."

36. So he had his daily living in Croesus' house. In that same time, on the Mysian Olympus, there appeared a boar, a great brute indeed. He made his headquarters in that mountain and would issue from it and ravage the tilled fields of the Mysians. Time and again the Mysians went against him but failed to do him hurt; rather, indeed, the suffering was on their side. So, at last, messengers of the Mysians came to Croesus and said: "King, the greatest brute of a wild boar has appeared in our country, and he is destroying our fields. We have sought to kill him, but we cannot. Now, therefore, we beg of you to send with us your son and bands of chosen young men and hounds, that we may drive the boar out of the land." That was what they asked. But Croesus, being mindful of the dream, spoke to them thus: "As to my son, speak of him no more. I will not send him with you. He is but newly married, and that is all his present care. But for the chosen Lydians and all the hunt establishment, that I will send with you and straitly order those who go to show the utmost zeal in helping you drive the beast out of the land."

37. Those were his words, and the Mysians were content with them. But just then there came in the son of Croesus, having heard what the Mysians requested. When Croesus refused to send the boy with them, he said to him: "Father, before this, the fairest and noblest achievements of our family were going to wars and to hunts and finding renown there. Now you have debarred me from both, though I am sure you cannot detect in me either cowardice or want of spirit. With what eyes can I show myself, going to and from the marketplace? What kind of man will I appear to be to my fellow

countrymen? What to my newly married wife? What sort of man will she think she is living with? Either let me go to the hunt, or let your words convince me that this action of yours is for the best."

38. Croesus answered him: "My son, it is not cowardice or anything ugly that I have spied in you that makes me do this but because of a dream vision, which stood by me and declared to me that you would be short-lived. You will die, it said, by an iron spear. So because of this vision I hastened your marriage and will not send you on this present business, guarding how I may possibly steal you through, for my lifetime at least. For you are the only son I have; as to the other, since his hearing is utterly destroyed, I count him as being no son to me."

39. The young man answered and said: "Father, you are not at all to blame for guarding me, since you have seen such a vision. But it is just that I should tell you what you do not understand and how the dream has escaped you. You say the dream declares I shall die by an iron spearpoint. What hands has a boar? Where is there the iron spearpoint you fear? Now, if the dream had said I should die by a tooth or anything else that fits this beast, you might well do what you are doing. But no, it was a spearpoint. Since, then, our fight is not with men, let me go."

40. Croesus answered: "My son, somehow you overcome my judgment in your reading of the dream, and being so overcome I yield to you and will change my resolve. I will send you on this hunt."

41. Having said that, Croesus summoned to him the Phrygian, Adrastus; and when he came, he said to him: "Adrastus, I purified you when you were smitten by an ugly calamity; but I am not taunting you with that. I took you into my house and have supported you altogether. Now then, since you owe me something—I mean the returning of good for my good to you—I would like to send you as my son's guardian when he goes to this hunt, lest on the way some villains of robbers set upon you both, to your hurt. Besides, you yourself ought to go to where brave deeds will cover you with the brightness of glory. That is what comes to you from your own father, and, besides, you are yourself a strong young man."

42. Adrastus answered: "King, were it not that you asked me, I would not go to any such sport. It is not fit that someone loaded with

such a calamity as mine should go among his fellows who are fortunate. Nor have I any such wish myself, and on many grounds I would have refused. But since you are eager for it, and I should surely gratify you—for indeed I owe you good for good—I am ready to do this. As for your son, whom you so urgently would have me guard, you may look to see him come back scatheless as far as this guardian is concerned."

43. Those were the words with which he answered Croesus. Thereafter they went their way, equipped with the chosen bands of young men and the hounds. Coming to the mountain of Olympus, they searched for the beast, and, having found him, they ringed him round and shot javelins at him. Then the guest-friend, he that had been purified of his bloodguilt, that was called Adrastus, cast his spear at the boar and missed him, but struck the son of Croesus. So the son died, struck by the point of the spear, fulfilling the declaration of the dream. And one ran to Croesus to tell him what had happened. This man came to Sardis and told him of the fight and the fate of his son.

44. Croesus was in agony for his son's death and made the more of it because he that had killed him was the one whom he himself had purified of bloodguilt. In his great sorrow for what had befallen, he cried upon Zeus the Purifier, calling him to witness what he had suffered at the hands of his guest-friend.[20] He called also on Zeus of the Hearth and Zeus of Comradeship (it was the same god he named

20. The Greeks felt very strongly about the relationship between *xenoi*, or "guest-friends." This was a relationship entered into with a person of another country (*xenos* means "stranger" or "foreigner" as well as "guest-friend"), usually after an encounter as guest or host. Ideally, the two divided a bone, and each kept his part. The original pair of friends or their descendants matched these tokens (*symbola*, "things united") to verify the truth and meaning of the experience they shared. The alienness of the guest-friend was overcome by emotion or by the feeling of obligation. To betray a *xenos*—for example, to surrender him to enemies or pursuers—was a vile act. Indeed, the *xenos* stood under the protection of Zeus Xenios, god of hospitality and protector of strangers and suppliants.

Guest-friendship could also bind two countries. Such is the situation in chapter 22, above, where Alyattes and Thrasybulus become *xenoi* as heads of state rather than as individuals, and in chapter 27, where Croesus enters into guest-friendship with the Ionian islanders.

Finally, in foreign countries a national of another country usually had the protection of a *proxenos*, which means "one who stands in the stead of a *xenos*."

as all of these): of the Hearth, because he had received this friend into his house and so had unknowingly given food to his son's slayer, and as god of Comradeship because, having sent him to be the boy's guard, he had found him his worst enemy.

45. After that, there came the Lydians, carrying the dead body, and behind the body followed the slayer. He came and stood in front of the body and surrendered himself to Croesus, stretching out his hands and bidding him cut his throat over the corpse. He spoke of his own former calamity and of how, on top of that, he had destroyed his purifier and should surely live no more. Now Croesus, when he heard this, took pity on Adrastus, although he was in such calamity of his own, and said to him: "Sir, from you I have all justice, since you render sentence of death upon yourself. But you are not the cause of my misfortune, save insofar as you unwittingly did the deed. Some god is the cause, who long ago predicted to me what should be." So Croesus buried his son as was right. But Adrastus, the son of Gordias, the son of Midas, he who was the slayer of his own brother and had become the slayer of his purifier, who was, moreover, aware within himself that he was of all men he had ever known the heaviest-stricken by calamity, when there was a silence about the tomb and none was there, cut his throat over the grave.

46. For two years, then, Croesus sat in deep mourning for his son. But after that it was the loss of sovereignty by Astyages, son of Cyaxares, at the hands of Cyrus, son of Cambyses, that put him from his grief—that and the growth of the power of the Persians; and he began to reflect how, if he could at all, he might forestall this increase in power before the Persians had grown really great. After he had framed this thought, he at once made trial of oracles, both those in Greece and those in Libya, sending various messengers, these to Delphi, those to Abae in Phocis, and others still to Dodona. There were some, too, sent to Amphiaraus and Trophonius and some to Branchidae, in the country of Miletus. Such were the Greek oracles that Croesus sent to consult; but to Libya also he sent messengers, to inquire of Ammon. His several sendings were to find out what it was the oracles knew, so that, if they should be found to know the truth of what he asked them, he might then send to them a second time and inquire whether he should make war upon the Persians.

47. His instructions to his Lydian messengers were these: they should reckon the days from the one on which they left Sardis, and on the hundredth day they should consult the oracle and ask what it was at that moment that Croesus, king of Lydia, son of Alyattes, was doing. What each of the oracles gave as its prophetic answer they were to write down and bring it back to him. Now there is no report by anyone of the answers given by the rest of the oracles, but the moment the Lydians entered the great hall at Delphi to make their consultation of the god, and asked their question as they had been instructed, the Pythia spoke as follows, in hexameter verse:

> Number of sand grains I know, and also the measures of ocean;
> I understand him that is dumb and can hearken to the voiceless.
> A smell steals over my senses, the smell of a hard-shelled tortoise,
> seethed in bronze with the meat of lambs, mingled together;
> bronze is the base beneath, and bronze the vestment upon it.

48. This is what the Pythia gave as her answer, and the messengers, having written it down, departed and got them gone to Sardis. Then, as the various messengers who were sent round came in, bearing their oracles, Croesus unfolded each message and looked over what had been written down. Not one of them satisfied him. But the moment he heard the one that came from Delphi, he straightway did obeisance and acknowledged it with a prayer; he was convinced that only the oracle at Delphi *was* an oracle, because it had found out what he had been doing. For when he had sent his messengers to the oracles, he carefully kept track of the due day and contrived the following (setting his wits on something that was impossible to discover or to guess): he chopped up a tortoise and some lamb's meat and boiled them together in a bronze cauldron and put a bronze lid on it.

49. That, then, was the oracle that Delphi gave to Croesus. What answer the oracle of Amphiaraus gave to the Lydians when they performed the customary rites at his shrine, I cannot say, for there is no record of it—only that here, too, Croesus held that he had had a true oracle.

50. After that, Croesus set about propitiating the god at Delphi with great sacrifices; in all, of sacrificial animals he offered up three thousand of each kind, and couches overlaid with gold and silver, and golden goblets and purple cloaks and chitons—he made a great heap of all these and burned them, expecting that thereby he would be likelier to win the favor of the god; besides this, he bade all the Lydians sacrifice to the god whatever each could. When the sacrifice was over, he melted down a vast deal of gold and made out of it ingots, on the long side six palms' length, on the short side three, and in height one palm.[21] The number of these ingots was one hundred seventeen, of which four were of refined gold, each weighing two and a half talents; the rest were of white gold,[22] and each weighed two talents. He had made for him also an image of a lion, of refined gold, which weighed ten talents. This lion, when the temple at Delphi burned down, fell from the ingots on which it stood and now lies in the treasure house of the Corinthians; it now weighs only six and a half talents, for three and a half talents melted off it.

51. When Croesus had completed all these things, he sent them off to Delphi and other things with them: two immensely great mixing bowls, of gold and of silver, whereof the golden one stood to the right as you enter the temple, the silver one to the left. These also were moved about the time of the temple's burning. The gold one now rests in the treasure house of the people of Clazomenae, and it weighs eight and a half talents and twelve minae. The silver one is in the corner of the forecourt of the temple; it can hold six hundred amphorae and is used as a mixing bowl by the Delphians at the Theophania.[23] The Delphians say that it is the work of Theodorus of Samos, and I think it is; certainly it is not an everyday work of art. Croesus also sent four silver jars, which stand in the treasure house

21. A "palm" is four fingers' breadth, and the commentators say that it was taken as some four inches, exactly as "hand" is used in measuring horses today, for the "hand" is also four inches.

22. I.e., of gold alloyed with silver.

23. An amphora was a ceramic jar for storing liquids—here, wine. The Greeks did not drink their wine straight; hence the mixing bowl (*kratēr*), in which water and wine were blended. Since the amphora as a term of liquid measure is nine gallons, the bowl that Croesus sent to Delphi was indeed "immensely great." The Theophania was the festival at Delphi, held in the spring, to celebrate the reappearance of the sun god, Apollo.

of the Corinthians, and he dedicated as well two sprinkling bowls, one of gold and one of silver. On the gold one is an inscription where the Lacedaemonians say that it is their dedicatory offering. But they lie; this, too, is the offering of Croesus, and it was one of the Delphians who put that inscription on it because he wanted to win the favor of the Lacedaemonians; I know his name but will not mention it. However, there is a statue of a boy, the water running through his hand, which *is* a gift of the Lacedaemonians, but neither of the sprinklers is. There were many other unsigned gifts that Croesus sent with these, including certain circular silver castings. There was also the image of a woman three cubits high, made of gold; the Delphians say it is the likeness of her that was Croesus' baker. And, in addition to all these, Croesus dedicated the necklaces from his wife's neck, and her girdles.

52. These are what Croesus sent to Delphi; but to Amphiaraus, because he knew his virtue and what happened him, he made a dedication of a shield altogether of gold, and a spear of solid gold, the shaft and point alike made of gold. And till my day these were both still deposited at Thebes, in the Theban temple of Ismenian Apollo.

53. On those of the Lydians who were to bring these gifts to the shrines Croesus laid command that they should ask the oracles: "Shall Croesus make war on the Persians, and shall he take to himself any allied force?" When the Lydians came to where they were sent and dedicated the offerings, they consulted the oracles, saying: "Croesus, king of the Lydians and of other nations, inasmuch as he has come to think that these are the only oracles among mankind, has sent to you gifts worthy of your discoveries; so now it is you he asks if he should make war upon the Persians and if he should take to himself any allied force." That was their question; and the judgment of both oracles came out the same, declaring to Croesus that if he made war on the Persians he would destroy a mighty empire; and they advised him to find out which were the most powerful of the Greek peoples and make them his friends.

54. When Croesus heard the answers that were returned to him from the god, he was exceedingly pleased at the oracles, expecting of a certainty that he would destroy the kingdom of Cyrus; and he sent to Delphi and paid a fee to the Delphians at two gold staters a man (having found out their number by inquiry). The Delphians in re-

turn gave Croesus and the Lydians the right of primacy of consultation of the oracle, remission of all charges, and the best seats at the festivals; and, moreover, anyone of the Lydians who chose to might become a Delphic citizen for all time to come.

55. So Croesus, having paid this fee to the Delphians, consulted them a third time; for since he had found very truth in the oracle, he was for using it to the fullest. His consultation was now the question: Would his monarchy last long? Whereupon the Pythia gave the following answer:

> Whenever a mule shall become sovereign king of the Medians,
> then, Lydian Delicate-Foot, flee by the stone-strewn Hermus,
> flee, and think not to stand fast, nor shame to be chicken-hearted.

56. When these words came to Croesus, he was most delighted of all; for he thought that a mule would surely never become king of the Medians instead of a man, and so neither he himself nor his issue would ever be deprived of the power. After that he took thought and inquired who were the most powerful of the Greeks that he should win, besides, to be his friends. And in his inquiry he found out that the Lacedaemonians and the Athenians were preeminent, the Lacedaemonians of the Doric race, the Athenians of the Ionic. For these had been the outstanding races from the olden time, the one Pelasgian and the other Hellenic. The Pelasgian has never yet moved out of its land, but the Hellenic has wandered exceedingly. For in the time of King Deucalion the Hellenes inhabited the land of Phthia, and in that of King Dorus, son of Hellen, they lived beneath Ossa and Olympus in what was then called Histiaean country; they were driven from there by the Cadmeans and then lived in Pindus, in the land called Macednus. Then again they resettled to Dryopis, and from Dryopis, you see, they came to the Peloponnesus and were called Dorians.

57. But what language the Pelasgians spoke I cannot say exactly. However, if I should speak on the evidence of those who are still Pelasgians and live in the city of Creston above the Etruscans, and who were once the boundary neighbors of those now called Dorians but who at that time still lived in what is now called Thessaliotis, and

from the evidence of the Pelasgians who once inhabited Placia and Scylace on the Hellespont, who were fellow dwellers[24] with the Athenians, and from the evidence of the other small Pelasgian towns that later changed their names: I say that—if I should speak on the evidence of all this—the Pelasgians originally spoke a non-Greek language.[25] If all this stock was truly Pelasgian, the Attic race, being itself Pelasgian, must also have changed its language when it became one with the Greeks [Hellenes].[26] For the people of Creston do not have a common language with any of their neighbors, nor do the people of Placia either: yet these two peoples share a language. It is clear, therefore, that they are retaining a fashion of speech that they brought with them when they moved into these parts.

58. But the Greek stock, since ever it was, has always used the Greek language, in my judgment. But though it was weak when it split off from the Pelasgians, it has grown from something small to be a multitude of peoples by the accretion chiefly of the Pelasgians but many other barbarian peoples as well. But before that, it seems to me, the Pelasgian people, so long as it spoke a language other than Greek, never grew great anywhere.[27]

59. Of these two peoples, then, the Attic, as Croesus learned, was being held subject and split up by Pisistratus the son of Hippocrates, for Pisistratus being now sovereign lord of Athens. For when his father, Hippocrates, was but a private person and watched the

24. A term for a people who voluntarily or otherwise joined with another people in settling a region or city. What Herodotus means here is that, in the earliest times, there were Pelasgians along with Athenians in Attica.

25. "Non-Greek" translates *barbaros*, as in chapter 4, above.

26. This is all rather confusing. Clearly Herodotus is saying something he resting and, I think, not very palatable to his hearers. He apparently accepts a common belief that the earliest stock (perhaps in all Greece) were Pelasgians." (They are referred to in Homer [*Iliad* 16.429; *Odyssey* 19.177] "divine Pelasgians.") Herodotus then claims that were synoecs ("fellow dwellers," as in note 24) with the Athenians, since they were there *originally*. What is curious, however, is that he now says that the Attic race was Pelasgian, whereas a few lines earlier he had said that the Pelasgians were only part of the Athenian community—the prehistoric part.

27. Herodotus uses the same word here—*barbaros*—for both the people and the language—i.e., other-than-Greek language. He is quite explicit that it is not any ethnicity that made for the significant difference in the growth and success but the use of Greek.

thought to what the man had said, compared it with the oracle, and judged that this must be Orestes; for in his comparison he discovered that the bellows of the smith before his eyes must be the two blasts of wind, and the anvil and the hammers were the blow and counter-blow, and the iron being welded on to iron was the evil laid upon evil, the image being that it was by many mischief that iron was invented. So he compared it, and he went away to Sparta and told the whole business to the Lacedaemonians. They made a pretense of bringing a charge against him and banishing him. So he came to Tegea and spoke of his personal misfortune to the smith and tried to paint the courtyard of him, but the smith would not; at last, however, the smith was overpersuaded, and Lichas settled in to live there, and he dug up the grave and collected the bones, and away he went, bringing them with him to Sparta. And from that time, whenever the two peoples made trial of one another in war, the Lacedaemonians had much the better of it, and, indeed, by now the most of the Peloponnesus was subject to them.

69. All of this, then, Croesus learned, and he sent messengers to Sparta with gifts, to ask for an alliance; and he himself instructed them what to say. The messengers came and said, "Croesus, king of the Lydians and other nations, sent us. What he says is: 'Men of Lacedaemon, the god gave me his oracle that I should win to myself, as a friend, the Greek; now as I understand that *you* are the chief power in Greece, I invite *you*, according to the oracle; and I wish to be your friend and ally, without fraud or deceit.'" This was the invitation that Croesus delivered through his messengers. The Lacedaemonians, who had already heard of the oracle that had been given to Croesus, were very glad at the coming of the Lydians, and they made a sworn compact with him for guest-friendship and alliance. Indeed, certain kindnesses done them before this by Croesus bound them to him already. For the Lacedaemonians had sent to Sardis to buy gold there, intending to use it for the statue of Apollo that has now been set up in Thornax in Laconia; but when they offered to buy the gold, Croesus gave it to them as a free gift.

70. Because of that, and because he had given them precedence, in his choice for friendship, over all the rest of the Greeks, the Lacedaemonians accepted the alliance. So when he made the offer, they were ready; and, moreover, they made a bronze mixing bowl,

filling it on the outside, around the rim, with little figures (the mixing bowl itself was of a capacity of three hundred amphorae) and sent it on its way to Croesus, wishing to match Croesus' gift to them with one of their own to him. But this mixing bowl never did reach Sardis, for which two reasons are given. The Lacedaemonians say that when, in its transport toward Sardis, it came near Samos, the Samians found out about it, sailed out with their long ships, and captured it; but the Samians themselves say that the Lacedaemonians who were bringing it came too late, heard that Sardis and Croesus had been captured, and sold the mixing bowl in Samos, and that some private persons bought it and dedicated it in the temple of Hera. And probably also those who sold it, when they arrived in Sparta, *would* say that it had been taken from them by the Samians. That, then, is the story of the bowl.

71. Croesus missed the meaning of the oracle and so made the campaign into Cappadocia, being convinced that he would destroy Cyrus and the power of the Persians. While he was making his preparations, one of the Lydians gave him some advice. This man had before been thought wise, but from this present counsel of his he won a great name among the Lydians. He was called Sandanis, and what he said was this: "My lord, you are making ready to campaign against men of a sort that wear leather—leather breeches and the rest of their clothing, too, made of leather—and who eat not what they want but what they have, for the country they live in is full of rocks. Besides, they use no wine, but are water-drinkers, have no figs to nibble on, nor any other good thing. Now, sir, if you conquer, what will you take from them—since they have nothing? But if you are the one who is conquered, note how many good things you will lose. For once they have tasted of *our* good things, they will cling to them and will not be cast off. For my part, I give my thanks to the gods, who have not put it into the Persians' heads to make war upon Lydia." This is what he said, but he did not convince Croesus; indeed, the Persians before they conquered the Lydians had nothing of delicate luxury nor any good thing at all.

72. The Cappadocians are called Syrians by the Greeks. These Syrians were, before they were ruled by Persians, the subjects of the Medes and were at this time the subjects of Cyrus. For the dividing boundary of the Median and Lydian empires was the river Halys,

which flows from the Armenian mountains through Cilicia and afterwards flows with the Matieni on the right and Phrygians on the left. When it has passed their territories, it flows north and divides the Syrian Cappadocians on the right from the Paphlagonians on the left. So the Halys cuts off almost the whole of the lower part of Asia, from the Mediterranean opposite Cyprus to the Euxine. This is the neck of all this land, and it is, in length of journeying, five days of travel for an active man.[33]

73. So Croesus advanced into Cappadocia, for these reasons: because he longed for additional territory to that which was his portion but, mostly, because he trusted in the oracle and because he wanted to take vengeance on Cyrus, son of Cambyses, on behalf of Astyages, son of Cyaxares, who was his, Croesus', brother-in-law and king of Media and had been subjugated by Cyrus. Croesus had become brother-in-law to Astyages in the following way. A troop of nomad Scythians, having split off from the rest, stole away into Media. At that time the ruler of Media was Cyaxares, son of Phraortes, son of Deioces. These Scythians King Cyaxares at first treated well, as being his suppliants—so well, indeed, that he entrusted to them some boys, to learn their language and their mastery of the bow. As time went on, the Scythians went constantly to the hunt for the king and constantly brought something home. But one day it so fell out that they took nothing. When they returned empty-handed, Cyaxares, who, as he proved herein, was extreme in his temper, treated them very harshly—and shamefully as well. In so suffering from Cyaxares the Scythians thought they had suffered something that was a personal degradation, and they formed a plot, which was to chop up one of the boys who were their pupils and, having dressed him as they were wont to do their wild game, to bring it to Cyaxares as though it were indeed such and, after that, to betake themselves

33. The distance is 280 miles, seemingly a great deal too much for any man, active or otherwise. The Greek word that I have translated as "active" means "well-zoned" or "well-belted," and some editors suggest that it means "without encumbrance." The difficulty of the distance remains. There is a suggestion that there may be a mistake in the letters of the alphabet involved (the Greeks used letters for numbers, in rather complicated combinations), and a plausible emendation of the text would yield fifteen days instead of five. (The Euxine is the Black Sea.)

with all speed to the court of Alyattes, the son of Sadyattes, at Sardis. This is exactly what happened. Cyaxares and those who were dining with him tasted of this meat, and the Scythians, having done as they planned, became suppliants of Alyattes.

74. After this, inasmuch as Alyattes refused to give up the Scythians to Cyaxares when he demanded them, war broke out between the Lydians and the Medes and lasted for five years, and during this period sometimes the Medes won and sometimes the Lydians; there was also one night battle. As the war was proving to be a draw between the two peoples, in the sixth year it happened that during a fight, when the combatants were already closely engaged, suddenly day became night. The occurrence of this eclipse of daylight had already been predicted to the Ionians by Thales of Miletus, and he had set as his limiting date the year in which the eclipse actually took place.[34] But the Lydians and the Medes, when they saw night instead of day before their eyes, gave over the fight, and both were more eager on their own behalf to make peace. Those who brought the two sides together were Syennesis the Cilician and Labynetus of Babylon. It was these who exerted themselves to bring about a sworn pact and an exchange of marriages; for their decision was that Alyattes should give his daughter, Aryenis, to Astyages, son of Cyaxares; without such strong ties, they said, agreements are not wont to be strong and to persist. These peoples make their sworn agreements as the Greeks do; and besides, when they cut the skin of their arms, they lick one another's blood.

75. This was the Astyages whom Cyrus had subjugated, and, although he was Cyrus' own grandfather on his mother's side, Cyrus held him in captivity on a charge that I shall declare later in my history. Croesus had this ground for blame against Cyrus when he consulted the oracle as to whether he should attack the Persians, and when that false-coin answer came his way, Croesus, supposing that it was truly in his favor, invaded Persian territory. When he came to the river Halys, he brought his army across—over existing bridges, in my opinion, though the general report of the Greeks is different. They say that Thales of Miletus brought the army across for him, and their story is this: Croesus was in perplexity as to how

34. This eclipse occurred on May 28, 585 B.C.

his army should cross the river, for (they *will* have it so) the bridges had *not* yet been built, and Thales was in Croesus' camp, and it was he who contrived that the river, which flowed on the left hand of the army, should flow on the right hand also. This (they say) is how he did it: he began by digging a deep ditch above the camp, and, making it moon-shaped, he led the stream away from its old course so that it would flow into the trench behind the army and, passing the camp, again issue into its old channel; as soon as it was split, the river would become fordable at both places. There are, indeed, still others who say that the old stream was entirely dried up. I personally do not accept this; for how, then, on their homeward course, did they cross it again?

76. Croesus, when he had crossed with his army, came in Cappadocian territory to what is called Pteria. Pteria is the strongest part of all that country and lies on a line with the city of Sinope, on the Euxine Sea.[35] There he encamped, destroying the farms of the Syrians, and he captured the city of the Pterians and made slaves of the people, and he captured all the neighboring towns; moreover, he drove the Syrians from their homes, though they had done him no manner of harm. Cyrus, on his side, gathered his own army and took on, as well, all the peoples who lived between him and Croesus, and he then confronted Croesus. (Before he set out to march at all, he sent heralds to the Ionians and tried to make them desert Croesus. But the Ionians would not listen to him.) So when Cyrus came and encamped over against Croesus, then and there in that land of Pteria they fought against one another with might and main. The battle was fierce, and many fell on both sides. At last they broke off, at the onset of night, without either having the victory; so hard did the two armies fight.

77. Now Croesus blamed the size of his army—and indeed, the army that had fought for him was far smaller than that of Cyrus—and, because it was the numbers he blamed, on the day following the battle, when Cyrus made no further attack, Croesus moved away to Sardis, intending to summon the Egyptians to help him in accordance with the sworn treaty he had made with Amasis, king of Egypt—a treaty he had made even before the one with the Lacedaemonians. He also sent for the Babylonians, since with them, too, he had made an alliance (the king of the Babylonians at the time being Labynetus), and he sent messages to the Lacedaemonians that they should be with him by a fixed date. His plan was that, when he had assembled all these and collected his own army, he would wait the winter out and, at the very beginning of spring, invade Persia. Such were his thoughts when he came to Sardis; and he sent off heralds, forewarning all that, in accordance with their alliance, they should assemble in Sardis by the fifth month from then. As for the army that he had on foot, which had fought the Persians, he dispersed the mercenary part altogether; for he never expected that Cyrus, after so equal an engagement as they had fought, would drive on to Sardis.

35. "On a line with" is a rough approximation of our "longitude."

78. As Croesus thus reflected, lo! the whole of the outer part of his city was filled with snakes. When these appeared, the horses gave over their grazing on their pastures and came and ate up the snakes. To Croesus, seeing this, it seemed a portent—as indeed it was—and he sent straightway to the Telmessian diviners. The embassy arrived and learned from the Telmessians what the portent meant to signify, but matters did not so fall out that they could bring the message back to Croesus. For before they could sail back to Sardis, Croesus was captured. But this was the judgment that the Telmessians passed: that Croesus might look for a host, of alien speech, coming upon his land and that, when it came, it would overcome those who were native there; for, they said, "The serpent is a child of the land, and the horse an enemy and a newcomer." This was the answer given by the Telmessians to Croesus when he was already a prisoner, though when they gave it they had no knowledge of what had befallen Sardis or Croesus himself.

79. Now the moment Croesus moved away after the battle of Pteria, Cyrus, understanding very well that Croesus, once he had gone away, would disband his army, took counsel. What he found was that it would surely be to his advantage to march on Sardis as quickly as he might, before the power of the Lydians was rallied a second time. As he resolved the matter, so he put it into execution quickly; for he drove with his army into Lydia and came himself to Croesus as his own messenger. Croesus was in sore straits, as things had turned out so differently from what he had looked for; yet he led

his Lydians out to battle. There was at this time no people in all Asia who were braver or more valiant soldiers than the Lydians. Their fighting was from horseback, where they carried great lances, and they were themselves excellent horsemen.

80. So the two sides met in the plain, the great treeless plain in front of Sardis. Through it there are rivers flowing, among others the Hyllus, and these break together into the biggest of all, called the Hermus, which, flowing from the mountain sacred to Mother Dindymene, issues into the sea at the city of Phocaea. Now when Cyrus saw the Lydians forming here for battle, because he was afraid of their cavalry he took the following measures on the suggestion of a man, Harpagus, who was a Mede. Cyrus had a number of camels that followed his army to transport the grain and the gear. All these he assembled, stripped them of their loads, and mounted men on them with gear appropriate to cavalrymen; and having so equipped them, he bade them charge Croesus' cavalry, in advance of the rest of the army. He ordered his infantry to follow the camels, and behind the infantry he stationed all his own cavalry. When they had all formed their ranks, he ordered his men to spare no Lydian and kill all before them, save only Croesus. Him they should not kill, even if he fought against them to resist capture. These were his instructions; and he arranged his camels opposite the horse for this reason: the horse fears the camel and cannot abide the sight or the smell of it. Cyrus' stratagem was designed to render the cavalry useless to Croesus, and it was the cavalry by which the Lydian hoped to win glory. Indeed, as soon as the battle was joined, the very moment the horses smelled the camels and saw them, they bolted back; and down went all the hopes for Croesus. Not that, for the rest, the Lydians proved cowards; for as soon as they saw how it was, they jumped down from their horses and joined battle with the Persians on foot. But at last, when very many had fallen on both sides, the Lydians were routed; and being penned within the city walls, they were beleaguered by the Persians.

81. So, then, the siege had set in. Croesus, thinking that it would last a long time, sent from his fortress other messengers to his allies. The former messengers had gone about to warn them to gather in Sardis after five months' space, but these went to request them to come with all possible speed to the help of Croesus, for he was already beleaguered.

82. Among the other allies, he sent, of course, to Lacedaemon. Now it happened that at this very time the Spartans themselves were engaged in a quarrel with the Argives about a place called Thyreae; Thyreae was a part of Argive territory that the Lacedaemonians had cut off and occupied. (At this time the land to the west, as far as Malea, both the mainland and Cythera and the rest of the islands, all belonged to the Argives.) The Argives came against the Spartans, in defense of their own territory as it was being cut off; but then the two sides came to an agreement that three hundred of each should fight and, whichever prevailed, theirs the country should be, the mass of each army to go away to their own land and not remain to watch as the champions fought, for fear that the armies, if present, and seeing their own side being defeated, might rally to their help. They made the agreement and went away, and the chosen champions on each side, being left behind, engaged. So they fought and, as they were so equally matched, there were left out of the six hundred only three—two on the Argive side, Alcenor and Chromios, and, of the Lacedaemonians, Othryades. These were the survivors at nightfall. The two Argives, assuming that they were the victors, made off to Argos; but the Lacedaemonian, Othryades, having despoiled the Argive dead and carried their arms into his own army's camp, stood at his station. Next day both sides came to find out the news. For a while each of the two parties claimed the victory, the one because more of their men had survived, the other claiming that their oppoents had left the field while their man had stood his ground and spoiled the enemy dead. Finally, from disputing, they fell to and fought. Though the losses on both sides were heavy, the Lacedaemonians won. (It is from this time that the Argives, who had formerly, of fixed custom, worn their hair long, now shaved their heads close and made a rule of it, with a curse to back it, that no Argive man should grow his hair long, and no woman among them wear gold, until they should recover Thyreae. The Lacedaemonians introduced a rule that was the contrary; for they, before this, had never worn their hair long, but after this they did so.) The story goes that the single survivor of the three hundred, Othryades, put to shame that he alone should come back to Sparta when all his comrades-at-arms had perished, made away with himself right there in Thyreae.

83. Such was the condition of the Spartans when the envoy from

Sardis arrived to beg them to send help to the beleaguered Croesus. Despite their own difficulties, the Spartans, on hearing the herald, were minded to help. But hardly were their preparations made and their ships ready when there came another message, that the Lydian fortress had fallen and that Croesus himself was made prisoner. So the Spartans, though they were very sorry for it, gave over their aid.

84. This is how Sardis was captured. When the fourteenth day came upon the beleaguered Croesus, Cyrus sent horsemen throughout his army and proclaimed the gifts he would give to the first man who should mount the wall of the fortress. After this the army made trial of it but had no success. When all the rest had given over the attempt, a Mardian named Hyroeades tried the approach at that part of the citadel where no guard had been set; for there was no fear that the citadel would be taken at this point, as the approach was sheer and impossible of attack. This was the only place where the former king of Sardis, Meles, had not carried round the lion cub that his concubine had borne him. The Telmessians had given their judgment that, once the lion cub had been carried round the walls, Sardis would be impregnable. Meles carried the beast around the rest of the fortress, where it was assailable, but he neglected this place, as being too sheer and impossible of attack. This is the side of the city that faces Mount Tmolus. Now this Mardian, Hyroeades, on the day before had seen one of the Lydian soldiers come down this part of the acropolis after his helmet, which had rolled down from above, and he retrieved it. The Mardian noticed that and reflected on it. Then, at the same spot, he climbed up, and other Persians with him; and as more and more of them joined the others, Sardis was captured, like that, and the whole town sacked.

85. But as for Croesus himself, this is what happened. He had a son, of whom I have spoken before, who was in other respects a handsome lad but was dumb. In the days of his former well-being, Croesus had taken all measures on the boy's behalf and, besides his other care for him, he had sent to consult the oracle at Delphi concerning him. The Pythia answered as follows:

Lydian by breed, king of many, still are you a great fool,
Croesus:
Wish not to hear, in your halls, the voice so much prayed
for, the voice

Of your son as he speaks. Nay, for you, far better it were to
go wanting;
For the first day he speaks it shall be a day of luckless
destruction.

Now, when the fortress was being taken, there came upon Croesus, to kill him, one of the Persians who did not know him. Croesus saw the man coming at him, but in his misfortune he was past caring; it was all one to him that he should be stricken and die. But the son who was dumb, when he saw the Persian approaching, his voice broke from him through his fear and the disaster, and he called out, "Sir, it is Croesus; do not kill him." This is the first time the boy spoke, and directly after that he spoke all the rest of his life.

86. So the Persians held Sardis and made Croesus their prisoner. Fourteen years he had reigned[36] and fourteen days been besieged, and he had indeed fulfilled the oracle, in that he had destroyed a mighty empire—his own. The Persians took him and brought him to Cyrus. Cyrus heaped a huge pyre and set Croesus on the top of it, fettered in chains, with fourteen of the children of the Lydians along with him. He had in his mind either to offer these firstfruits to some god or other, or perhaps he wished to fulfill some vow he had made, or perhaps even, since he had heard that Croesus was a god-fearing man, he set him on the pyre to know whether some one of Those-that-are-Divine[37] would rescue him from being burned alive. This, anyway, they say, is what he did. Now as Croesus stood upon the pyre, there came into his head, for all that he was in such calamity, that word of Solon: "No one of them that are living is blessed." How that word had been uttered with god to back it! As this came to him, he heaved a great sigh and broke into lamentation. He had till then held his peace a great while, but now three times he called out the name "Solon!" Cyrus heard him and told his interpreters to ask

36. 560–546 B.C.

37. The Greek word *daimōn* is Herodotus' most general term for divine power. It covers therefore both the single god (*theos*) and the impersonal force of fate. The latter sense is usually expressed by the neuter plural of the adjective *daimonios*, meaning "those things that are out of man's control." In Homer *daimōn* is often used by a speaker to refer to some divine presence that he cannot identify more certainly. Thus Herodotus in this chapter is saying that Cyrus wanted to see whether one of the divine beings (who knew which one!) would rescue Croesus.

Croesus whom it was he called on. They approached Croesus and asked. For a while Croesus was silent, but they forced him to answer, and he said, "One whom I would have every ruler meet; more than a fortune I would have it so." His answer was so obscure that they asked him again what it was he said. And, as they were instant and bore hard on him, he told the story: of how at the beginning there had come to him this Solon, the Athenian, and how he had surveyed all the blessings that he, Croesus, had and had made little of them all ("Thus and thus it was," he said), and how it had all befallen himself as the man had said. "But it concerns me," said Croesus, "no more than every man in the world, and especially those who are in their own eyes blessed." So Croesus told his story, and, as he did so, the fire had been lit and the edges of it were burning. Cyrus listened to the interpreters telling him what Croesus said, and his mind was changed; he recognized that he too was a man and that it was another man, no whit less in great fortune than himself, whom he was giving alive to the fire; besides, he was afraid of what he must pay in retribution and thought again how nothing of all that is in the world of men could be secure. He bade them quench the fire, even as it burned, with all the speed they could, and bring Croesus down and those that were with him. The men tried to do so but could gain no mastery of the fire.

87. Then, as the Lydians tell the story, Croesus became aware of Cyrus' change of heart, and when he saw every man striving to quench the fire and no longer able to do so, he called in a loud voice to Apollo, bidding him, if ever he had received any gift of his that was pleasing, to come to his rescue and deliver him out of his present evil. With tears he called upon the god, and suddenly, out of a clear sky, with no wind in it, there gathered clouds, and a storm burst and a violent rain with it; and the fire was quenched. So Cyrus knew for certain that Croesus was loved of god and a good man, and he had him down from the pyre and asked him, "Croesus, who of all mankind persuaded you to make war upon my land and to be my enemy rather than my friend?" The other answered, "My lord, I myself did—to your good fortune and to my ill fortune; but the cause of it was the god of the Greeks, who incited me to fight. For no one is, of himself, so foolish as to prefer war to peace; in the one, children bury their fathers; in the other, fathers their children. I suppose, however, it was the will of the gods that this should have happened so."

88. These were his words, and Cyrus freed him of his chains and set him beside himself and took much thought for him; as he gazed, he admired him, and so did all the courtiers. But Croesus was in the grip of his own thoughts and was silent. After a while he turned and, as he saw the Persians ravaging the city of the Lydians, he said: "My lord, shall I tell you a thought I have just had, or should I, for now, hold my peace?" Cyrus bade him say cheerfully whatever he liked. At which Croesus asked this question: "What is this great concourse of people doing with such eagerness?" "Plundering and sacking your city and your possessions," said Cyrus. But Croesus answered, "It is no city of mine, and there is no property of mine for them to ravage. I have no share at all any more in any of these things. What they are sacking and pillaging is yours."

89. What Croesus said made an impression on Cyrus, and bidding the rest of the people about him to be gone, he asked Croesus what it was that was so particular that he saw being done there. Said Croesus: "Since the gods have given me to you as your slave, I think it right that, if I see somewhat further into any matter than the others, I should signify it to you. The Persians are by nature arrogant—and they are poor. If now you stand by and watch these men plunder and capture so much property, this is what you must look for from them: the one who wins most of the plunder you may expect next to see as a rebel against yourself. If what I say finds favor with you, do this: from among your own bodyguards take sentries and place them at all the gates. These shall take the stuff from all the men that are carrying it out, telling them that the property must be tithed—that one tenth of it must be dedicated to Zeus. Thus you will not be hated by them for taking away their property violently; they will confess that what you do is done justly and so give you willingly what you ask."

90. Cyrus was delighted at these words, for he thought it was good advice. After praising Croesus warmly and instructing his bodyguards to do what Croesus had suggested, he said to Croesus, "Croesus, since as man and king you are prepared to do so well, both in word and deed, ask of me whatever gift you please, to be yours at once." Croesus said, "Master mine, you will give me most pleasure if you suffer me to send these chains to that god of the Greeks whom I especially honored and to ask of him whether it is a rule with him to cheat those that do him good." Cyrus asked him what complaint

against the god lay behind the request, and Croesus repeated the story to him, of all his own intentions, and of the answers of the oracles, and chiefly of the dedicatory gifts, and how it was that, incited by the oracle, he had made war on Persia. As he told the tale, he came back again to his request that he might be given the chance to insult the god in this matter. At this Cyrus laughed and said, "Croesus, this you shall obtain of me, and anything else that at any time you shall need." When Croesus heard that, he sent some of his Lydians to Delphi and ordered them to set the fetters on the threshold of the temple there and ask the god if he were not ashamed of having incited Croesus by his oracles to make war on Persia with the story that he would destroy Cyrus' power. "Here," they should say, "are the firstfruits of that conquest," and at that should show the chains. That was to be their question of the god and, besides this, another: whether it was the rule for the Greek gods to be ungrateful.

91. It is said that when the Lydians came and said what they had been instructed, the Pythia answered as follows: "Fate that is decreed, no one can escape, not even a god. Croesus has paid for the offense of his ancestor in the fifth generation, who, being a bodyguard of the Heraclidae, following the lead of a treacherous woman, slew his master and took his honor, which in no way befit himself. Loxias[38] was eager that the destruction of Sardis should fall in the time of Croesus' children rather than in his own, but he proved unable to turn aside the Fates. Yet what little they allowed him, he accomplished and did Croesus service; for he postponed the capture of Sardis by three years. So let Croesus know that his fall is three years later than the destined moment. Secondly, the god came to his rescue when he was burning. As for the oracle that was given, Croesus does not rightly find fault. For the prophecy given by Loxias ran: if Croesus made war upon Persia, he would destroy a mighty empire. Now, in the face of that, if he was going to be well advised, he should have sent and inquired again, whether it was his own empire or that of Cyrus that was spoken of. But Croesus did not understand what was said, nor did he make question again, and so he has no one to blame but himself. Furthermore, when he put his last question to the god, and Loxias spoke of the mule, not even that did

38. Loxias is Apollo's title at Delphi.

Croesus comprehend. Truly, Cyrus was that mule. He was born of two parents of different races, whereof his mother was of the higher, his father of the lower, breed. For the mother was a Mede and Astyages' daughter, who was king of Media; but the father was a Persian and a subject of the Medes, and, being in every way beneath her, he cohabited with her that was his sovereign mistress." Such was the answer that the Pythia gave to the Lydians, and they brought it back to Sardis and told it to Croesus. When he heard it, he acknowledged that the fault had been none of the god's but his own. Such is the story of Croesus' empire and of the first conquest of Ionia.