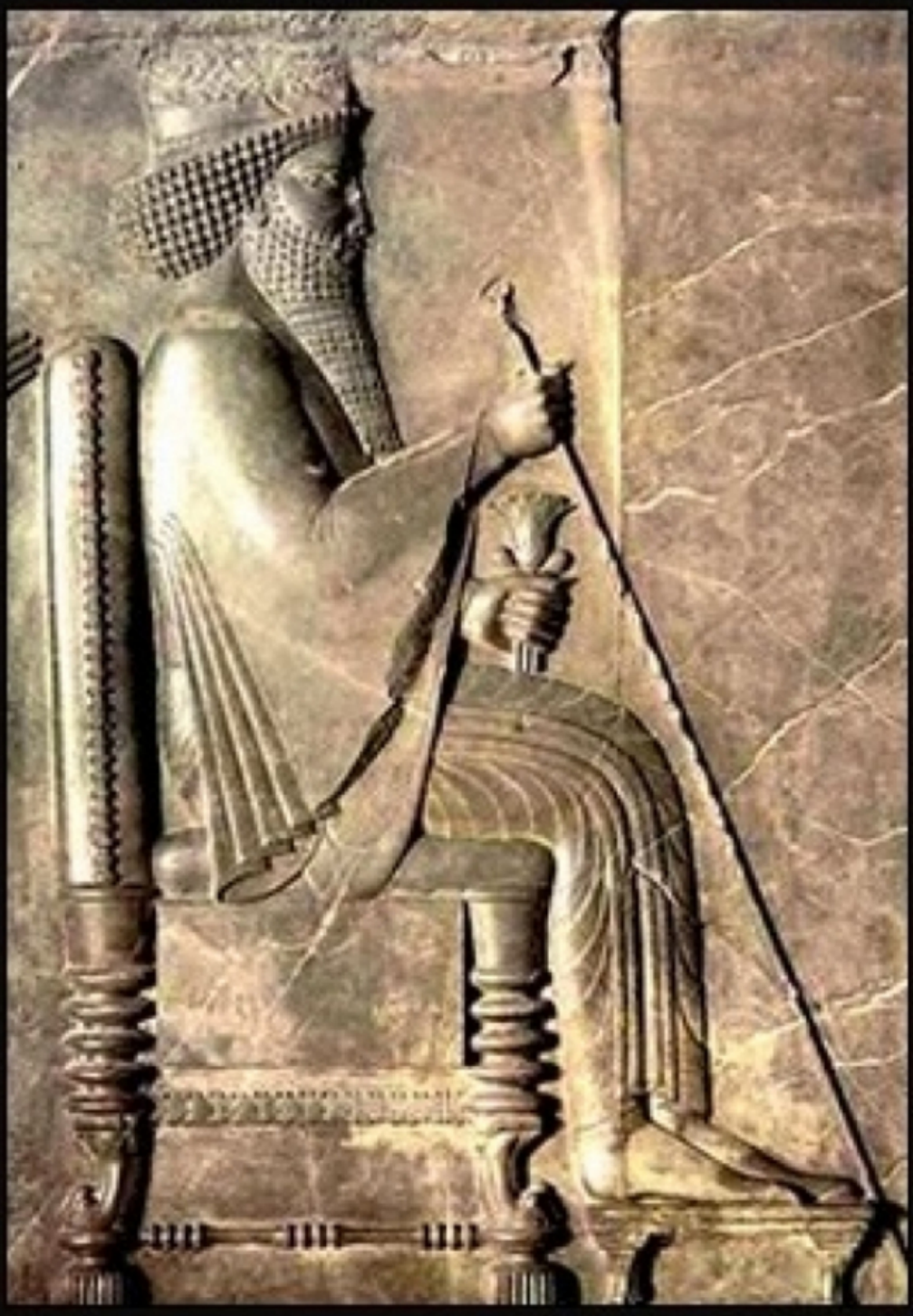
DARIUS THE GREAT



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BookRix GmbH & Co. KG
81371 Munich

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CAMBYSES

B.C. 530-524

Cyrus the Great.—His extended conquests.—Cambyses and Smerdis.—Hystaspes and Darius.—Dream of Cyrus.—His anxiety and fears.—Accession of Cambyses.—War with Egypt.—Origin of the war with Egypt.—Ophthalmia.—The Egyptian physician.—His plan of revenge.—Demand of Cyrus.—Stratagem of the King of Egypt.—Resentment of Cassandane.—Threats of Cambyses.—Future conquests.—Temperament and character of Cambyses.—Impetuosity of Cambyses.—Preparations for the Egyptian war.—Desertion of Phanes.—His narrow escape.—Information given by Phanes.—Treaty with the Arabian king.—Plan for providing water.—Account of Herodotus.—A great battle.—Defeat of the Egyptians.—Inhuman conduct of Cambyses.—His treatment of Psammenitus.—The train of captive maidens.—The young men.—Scenes of distress and suffering.—Composure of Psammenitus.—Feelings of the father.—His explanation of them.—Cambyses relents.—His treatment of the body of Amasis.—Cambyses's desecrations.—The sacred bull Apis.—Cambyses stabs the sacred bull.—His mad expeditions.—The sand storm.—Cambyses a wine-bibber.—Brutal act of Cambyses.—He is deemed insane.

ABOUT five or six hundred years before Christ, almost the whole of the interior of Asia was united in one vast empire. The founder of this empire was Cyrus the Great. He was originally a Persian; and the whole empire is often called the Persian monarchy, taking its name from its founder's native land.

Cyrus was not contented with having annexed to his dominion all the civilized states of Asia. In the latter part of his life, he conceived the idea that there might possibly be some additional glory and power to be acquired in subduing certain half-savage regions in the north, beyond the Araxes.

He accordingly raised an army, and set off on an expedition for this purpose, against a country which was governed by a barbarian queen named Tomyris. He met with a variety of adventures on this expedition, all of which are fully detailed in our history of Cyrus. There is, however, only one occurrence that it is necessary to allude to particularly here. That one relates to a remarkable dream which he had one night, just after he had crossed the river.

To explain properly the nature of this dream, it is necessary first to state that Cyrus had two sons. Their names were Cambyses and Smerdis. He had left them in Persia when he set out on his expedition across the Araxes. There was also a young man, then about twenty years of age, in one of his capitals, named Darius. He was the son of one of the nobles of Cyrus's court. His father's name was Hystaspes. Hystaspes, besides being a noble of the court, was also, as almost all nobles were in those days, an officer of the army. He accompanied Cyrus in his march into the territories of the barbarian queen, and was with him there, in camp, at the time when this narrative commences.

Cyrus, it seems, felt some misgivings in respect to the result of his enterprise; and, in order to insure the tranquillity of his empire during his absence, and the secure transmission of his power to his rightful successor in case he should never return, he established his son Cambyses as regent of his realms before he crossed the Araxes, and delivered the government of the empire, with great formality, into his hands. This took place upon the frontier, just before the army passed the river. The mind of a father, under such circumstances, would naturally be occupied, in some degree, with thoughts relating to the arrangements which his son would make, and to the difficulties he would be likely to encounter in managing the momentous concerns which had been committed to his charge. The mind of Cyrus was undoubtedly so occupied, and this, probably, was the origin of the remarkable dream.

His dream was, that Darius appeared to him in a vision, with vast wings growing from his shoulders. Darius stood, in the vision, on the confines of Europe and Asia, and his wings, expanded either way, overshadowed the whole known world. When Cyrus awoke and reflected on this ominous dream, it seemed to him to portend some great danger to the future security of his empire. It appeared to denote that Darius was one day to bear sway over all the world. Perhaps he might be even then forming ambitious and treasonable designs. Cyrus immediately sent for Hystaspes, the father of Darius; when he came to his tent, he commanded him to go back to Persia, and keep a strict watch over the conduct of his son until he himself should return. Hystaspes received this commission, and departed to execute it; and Cyrus, somewhat relieved, perhaps, of his anxiety by this measure of precaution, went on with his army toward his place of destination.

Cyrus never returned. He was killed in battle; and it would seem that, though the import of his dream was ultimately fulfilled, Darius was not, at that time, meditating any schemes of obtaining possession of the throne, for he made no attempt to interfere with the regular transmission of the imperial power from Cyrus to Cambyses his son. At any rate, it was so transmitted. The tidings of Cyrus's death came to the capital, and Cambyses, his son, reigned in his stead.

The great event of the reign of Cambyses was a war with Egypt, which originated in the following very singular manner:

It has been found, in all ages of the world, that there is some peculiar quality of the soil, or climate, or atmosphere of Egypt which tends to produce an inflammation of the eyes. The inhabitants themselves have at all times been very subject to this disease, and foreign armies marching into the country are always very seriously affected by it. Thousands of soldiers in such armies are sometimes

disabled from this cause, and many are made incurably blind. Now a country which produces a disease in its worst form and degree, will produce also, generally, the best physicians for that disease. At any rate, this was supposed to be the case in ancient times; and accordingly, when any powerful potentate in those days was afflicted himself with ophthalmia, or had such a case in his family, Egypt was the country to send to for a physician.

Now it happened that Cyrus himself, at one time in the course of his life, was attacked with this disease, and he dispatched an embassador to Amasis, who was then king of Egypt, asking him to send him a physician. Amasis, who, like all the other absolute sovereigns of those days, regarded his subjects as slaves that were in all respects entirely at his disposal, selected a physician of distinction from among the attendants about his court, and ordered him to repair to Persia. The physician was extremely reluctant to go. He had a wife and family, from whom he was very unwilling to be separated; but the orders were imperative, and he must obey. He set out on the journey, therefore, but he secretly resolved to devise some mode of revenging himself on the king for the cruelty of sending him.

He was well received by Cyrus, and, either by his skill as a physician, or from other causes, he acquired great influence at the Persian court. At last he contrived a mode of revenging himself on the Egyptian king for having exiled him from his native land. The king had a daughter, who was a lady of great beauty. Her father was very strongly attached to her. The physician recommended to Cyrus to send to Amasis and demand this daughter in marriage. As, however, Cyrus was already married, the Egyptian princess would, if she came, be his concubine rather than his wife, or, if considered a wife, it could only be a secondary and subordinate place that she could occupy. The physician knew that, under these circumstances, the King of Egypt would be extremely unwilling to send her to Cyrus, while he

would yet scarcely dare to refuse; and the hope of plunging him into extreme embarrassment and distress, by means of such a demand from so powerful a sovereign, was the motive which led the physician to recommend the measure.

Cyrus was pleased with the proposal, and sent, accordingly, to make the demand. The king, as the physician had anticipated, could not endure to part with his daughter in such a way, nor did he, on the other hand, dare to incur the displeasure of so powerful a monarch by a direct and open refusal. He finally resolved upon escaping from the difficulty by a stratagem.

There was a young and beautiful captive princess in his court named Nitetis. Her father, whose name was Apries, had been formerly the King of Egypt, but he had been dethroned and killed by Amasis. Since the downfall of her family, Nitetis had been a captive; but, as she was very beautiful and very accomplished, Amasis conceived the design of sending her to Cyrus, under the pretense that she was the daughter whom Cyrus had demanded. He accordingly brought her forth, provided her with the most costly and splendid dresses, loaded her with presents, ordered a large retinue to attend her, and sent her forth to Persia.

Cyrus was at first very much pleased with his new bride. Nitetis became, in fact, his principal favorite; though, of course, his other wife, whose name was Cassandane, and her children, Cambyses and Smerdis, were jealous of her, and hated her. One day, a Persian lady was visiting at the court, and as she was standing near Cassandane, and saw her two sons, who were then tall and handsome young men, she expressed her admiration of them, and said to Cassandane, "How proud and happy you must be!" "No," said Cassandane; "on the contrary, I am very miserable; for, though I am the mother of these children, the king neglects and despises me. All his kindness is bestowed on this Egyptian woman." Cambyses, who heard this conversation,

sympathized deeply with Cassandane in her resentment. "Mother," said he, "be patient, and I will avenge you. As soon as I am king, I will go to Egypt and turn the whole country upside down."

In fact, the tendency which there was in the mind of Cambyses to look upon Egypt as the first field of war and conquest for him, so soon as he should succeed to the throne, was encouraged by the influence of his father; for Cyrus, although he was much captivated by the charms of the lady whom the King of Egypt had sent him, was greatly incensed against the king for having practiced upon him such a deception. Besides, all the important countries in Asia were already included within the Persian dominions. It was plain that if any future progress were to be made in extending the empire, the regions of Europe and Africa must be the theatre of it. Egypt seemed the most accessible and vulnerable point beyond the confines of Asia; and thus, though Cyrus himself, being advanced somewhat in years, and interested, moreover, in other projects, was not prepared to undertake an enterprise into Africa himself, he was very willing that such plans should be cherished by his son.

Cambyses was an ardent, impetuous, and self-willed boy, such as the sons of rich and powerful men are very apt to become. They imbibe, by a sort of sympathy, the ambitious and aspiring spirit of their fathers; and as all their childish caprices and passions are generally indulged, they never learn to submit to control. They become vain, self-conceited, reckless, and cruel. The conqueror who founds an empire, although even his character generally deteriorates very seriously toward the close of his career, still usually knows something of moderation and generosity. His son, however, who inherits his father's power, seldom inherits the virtues by which the power was acquired. These truths, which we see continually exemplified all around us, on a small scale, in the families of the wealthy and the powerful, were

illustrated most conspicuously, in the view of all mankind, in the case of Cyrus and Cambyses. The father was prudent, cautious, wise, and often generous and forbearing. The son grew up headstrong, impetuous, uncontrolled, and uncontrollable. He had the most lofty ideas of his own greatness and power, and he felt a supreme contempt for the rights, and indifference to the happiness of all the world besides. His history gives us an illustration of the worst which the principle of hereditary sovereignty can do, as the best is exemplified in the case of Alfred of England.

Cambyses, immediately after his father's death, began to make arrangements for the Egyptian invasion. The first thing to be determined was the mode of transporting his armies thither. Egypt is a long and narrow valley, with the rocks and deserts of Arabia on one side, and those of Sahara on the other. There is no convenient mode of access to it except by sea, and Cambyses had no naval force sufficient for a maritime expedition.

While he was revolving the subject in his mind, there arrived in his capital of Susa, where he was then residing, a deserter from the army of Amasis in Egypt. The name of this deserter was Phanes. He was a Greek, having been the commander of a body of Greek troops who were employed by Amasis as auxiliaries in his army. He had had a quarrel with Amasis, and had fled to Persia, intending to join Cambyses in the expedition which he was contemplating, in order to revenge himself on the Egyptian king. Phanes said, in telling his story, that he had had a very narrow escape from Egypt; for, as soon as Amasis had heard that he had fled, he dispatched one of his swiftest vessels, a galley of three banks of oars, in hot pursuit of the fugitive. The galley overtook the vessel in which Phanes had taken passage just as it was landing in Asia Minor. The Egyptian officers seized it and made Phanes prisoner. They immediately began to make their preparations for the return voyage, putting Phanes, in the mean time, under the charge of guards, who

were instructed to keep him very safely. Phanes, however, cultivated a good understanding with his guards, and presently invited them to drink wine with him. In the end, he got them intoxicated, and while they were in that state he made his escape from them, and then, traveling with great secrecy and caution until he was beyond their reach, he succeeded in making his way to Cambyses in Susa.

Phanes gave Cambyses a great deal of information in respect to the geography of Egypt, the proper points of attack, the character and resources of the king, and communicated, likewise, a great many other particulars which it was very important that Cambyses should know. He recommended that Cambyses should proceed to Egypt by land, through Arabia; and that, in order to secure a safe passage, he should send first to the King of the Arabs, by a formal embassy, asking permission to cross his territories with an army, and engaging the Arabians to aid him, if possible, in the transit. Cambyses did this. The Arabs were very willing to join in any projected hostilities against the Egyptians; they offered Cambyses a free passage, and agreed to aid his army on their march. To the faithful fulfillment of these stipulations the Arab chief bound himself by a treaty, executed with the most solemn forms and ceremonies.

The great difficulty to be encountered in traversing the deserts which Cambyses would have to cross on his way to Egypt was the want of water. To provide for this necessity, the king of the Arabs sent a vast number of camels into the desert, laden with great sacks or bags full of water. These camels were sent forward just before the army of Cambyses came on, and they deposited their supplies along the route at the points where they would be most needed. Herodotus, the Greek traveler, who made a journey into Egypt not a great many years after these transactions, and who wrote subsequently a full description of what he saw and heard there, gives an account of another method by which the

Arab king was said to have conveyed water into the desert, and that was by a canal or pipe, made of the skins of oxen, which he laid along the ground, from a certain river of his dominions, to a distance of twelve days' journey over the sands! This story Herodotus says he did not believe, though elsewhere in the course of his history he gravely relates, as true history, a thousand tales infinitely more improbable than the idea of a leathern pipe or hose like this to serve for a conduit of water.

By some means or other, at all events, the Arab chief provided supplies of water in the desert for Cambyses's army, and the troops made the passage safely. They arrived, at length, on the frontiers of Egypt. Here they found that Amasis, the king, was dead, and Psammenitus, his son, had succeeded him. Psammenitus came forward to meet the invaders. A great battle was fought. The Egyptians were routed. Psammenitus fled up the Nile to the city of Memphis, taking with him such broken remnants of his army as he could get together after the battle, and feeling extremely incensed and exasperated against the invader. In fact, Cambyses had now no excuse or pretext whatever for waging such a war against Egypt. The monarch who had deceived his father was dead, and there had never been any cause of complaint against his son or against the Egyptian people. Psammenitus, therefore, regarded the invasion of Egypt by Cambyses as a wanton and wholly unjustifiable aggression, and he determined, in his own mind, that such invaders deserved no mercy, and that he would show them none. Soon after this, a galley on the river, belonging to Cambyses, containing a crew of two hundred men, fell into his hands. The Egyptians, in their rage, tore these Persians all to pieces. This exasperated Cambyses in his turn, and the war went on, attended by the most atrocious cruelties on both sides.

In fact, Cambyses, in this Egyptian campaign, pursued such a career of inhuman and reckless folly, that people at

last considered him insane. He began with some small semblance of moderation, but he proceeded, in the end, to the perpetration of the most terrible excesses of violence and wrong.

As to his moderation, his treatment of Psammenitus personally is almost the only instance that we can record. In the course of the war, Psammenitus and all his family fell into Cambyses's hands as captives. A few days afterward, Cambyses conducted the unhappy king without the gates of the city to exhibit a spectacle to him. The spectacle was that of his beloved daughter, clothed in the garments of a slave, and attended by a company of other maidens, the daughters of the nobles and other persons of distinction belonging to his court, all going down to the river, with heavy jugs, to draw water. The fathers of all these hapless maidens had been brought out with Psammenitus to witness the degradation and misery of their children. The maidens cried and sobbed aloud as they went along, overwhelmed with shame and terror. Their fathers manifested the utmost agitation and distress. Cambyses stood smiling by, highly enjoying the spectacle. Psammenitus alone appeared unmoved. He gazed on the scene silent, motionless, and with a countenance which indicated no active suffering; he seemed to be in a state of stupefaction and despair. Cambyses was disappointed, and his pleasure was marred at finding that his victim did not feel more acutely the sting of the torment with which he was endeavoring to goad him.

When this train had gone by, another came. It was a company of young men, with halters about their necks, going to execution. Cambyses had ordered that for every one of the crew of his galley that the Egyptians had killed, ten Egyptians should be executed. This proportion would require two thousand victims, as there had been two hundred in the crew. These victims were to be selected from among the sons of the leading families; and their parents, after having seen their delicate and gentle daughters go to

their servile toil, were now next to behold their sons march in a long and terrible array to execution. The son of Psammenitus was at the head of the column. The Egyptian parents who stood around Psammenitus wept and lamented aloud, as one after another saw his own child in the train. Psammenitus himself, however, remained as silent and motionless, and with a countenance as vacant as before. Cambyses was again disappointed. The pleasure which the exhibition afforded him was incomplete without visible manifestations of suffering in the victim for whose torture it was principally designed.

After this train of captives had passed, there came a mixed collection of wretched and miserable men, such as the siege and sacking of a city always produces in countless numbers. Among these was a venerable man whom Psammenitus recognized as one of his friends. He had been a man of wealth and high station; he had often been at the court of the king, and had been entertained at his table. He was now, however, reduced to the last extremity of distress, and was begging of the people something to keep him from starving. The sight of this man in such a condition seemed to awaken the king from his blank and death-like despair. He called his old friend by name in a tone of astonishment and pity, and burst into tears.

Cambyses, observing this, sent a messenger to Psammenitus to inquire what it meant. "He wishes to know," said the messenger, "how it happens that you could see your own daughter set at work as a slave, and your son led away to execution unmoved, and yet feel so much commiseration for the misfortunes of a stranger." We might suppose that any one possessing the ordinary susceptibilities of the human soul would have understood without an explanation the meaning of this, though it is not surprising that such a heartless monster as Cambyses did not comprehend it. Psammenitus sent him word that he could not help weeping for his friend, but that his distress

and anguish on account of his children were too great for tears.

The Persians who were around Cambyses began now to feel a strong sentiment of compassion for the unhappy king, and to intercede with Cambyses in his favor. They begged him, too, to spare Psammenitus's son. It will interest those of our readers who have perused our history of Cyrus to know that Croesus, the captive king of Lydia, whom they will recollect to have been committed to Cambyses's charge by his father, just before the close of his life, when he was setting forth on his last fatal expedition, and who accompanied Cambyses on this invasion of Egypt, was present on this occasion, and was one of the most earnest interceders in Psammenitus's favor. Cambyses allowed himself to be persuaded. They sent off a messenger to order the execution of the king's son to be stayed; but he arrived too late. The unhappy prince had already fallen. Cambyses was so far appeased by the influence of these facts, that he abstained from doing Psammenitus or his family any further injury.

He, however, advanced up the Nile, ravaging and plundering the country as he went on, and at length, in the course of his conquests, he gained possession of the tomb in which the embalmed body of Amasis was deposited. He ordered this body to be taken out of its sarcophagus, and treated with every mark of ignominy. His soldiers, by his orders, beat it with rods, as if it could still feel, and goaded it, and cut it with swords. They pulled the hair out of the head by the roots, and loaded the lifeless form with every conceivable mark of insult and ignominy. Finally, Cambyses ordered the mutilated remains that were left to be burned, which was a procedure as abhorrent to the ideas and feelings of the Egyptians as could possibly be devised.

Cambyses took every opportunity to insult the religious, or as, perhaps, we ought to call them, the superstitious feelings of the Egyptians. He broke into their temples,

desecrated their altars, and subjected every thing which they held most sacred to insult and ignominy. Among their objects of religious veneration was the sacred bull called Apis. This animal was selected from time to time, from the country at large, by the priests, by means of certain marks which they pretended to discover upon its body, and which indicated a divine and sacred character. The sacred bull thus found was kept in a magnificent temple, and attended and fed in a most sumptuous manner. In serving him, the attendants used vessels of gold.

Cambyses arrived at the city where Apis was kept at a time when the priests were celebrating some sacred occasion with festivities and rejoicings. He was himself then returning from an unsuccessful expedition which he had made, and, as he entered the town, stung with vexation and anger at his defeat, the gladness and joy which the Egyptians manifested in their ceremonies served only to irritate him, and to make him more angry than ever. He killed the priests who were officiating. He then demanded to be taken into the edifice to see the sacred animal, and there, after insulting the feelings of the worshipers in every possible way by ridicule and scornful words, he stabbed the innocent bull with his dagger. The animal died of the wound, and the whole country was filled with horror and indignation. The people believed that this deed would most assuredly bring down upon the impious perpetrator of it the judgments of heaven.

Cambyses organized, while he was in Egypt, several mad expeditions into the surrounding countries. In a fit of passion, produced by an unsatisfactory answer to an embassage, he set off suddenly, and without any proper preparation, to march into Ethiopia. The provisions of his army were exhausted before he had performed a fifth part of the march. Still, in his infatuation, he determined to go on. The soldiers subsisted for a time on such vegetables as they could find by the way; when these failed, they