

Siege of Pasargadae Hill

The Siege of Pasargadae Hill, was the first siege between the Persians and Medians.

Background

The motives

The mountain was very high and with steep sides and the way to it led through narrow passes which were here and there overtopped by high walls of rock. Oebares defended the passes with 10,000 heavy armed men As it was impossible to force a way through Astyages gave command that 100,000 men should go round the mountain and seek for a pass there and climb the mountain This movement compelled Cyrus and Oebares to seek shelter during the night on a lower hill for the army together with the women and children.

The battle

Astyages followed quickly, and his army was already between the two mountains and bravely attacked that held by the Persians the approach to which lying through deep gorges thick oak forests and wild olive trees was very difficult The Persians fought still more bravely in one place Cyrus dashed forward and in another Oebares who urged them not to let their wives mothers and old men be massacred and tortured by the Medes So they rushed down with a cry and when their javelins failed they threw down stones in great numbers The Medes were driven back and Cyrus chanced to come to the house in which he once lived with his father as a boy when he pastured goats He kindled a fire of cypress and laurel wood and offered the sacrifice of the man who is distressed and in desperate circumstances Then followed thunder and lightning and when Cyrus sank down in prayer birds of good omen settled on the roof as a sign that he would again reach Pasargadae So the Persians remained for the night on the mountain and when on the following morning the Medes renewed the attack they fought yet more bravely relying on the happy omens But Astyages placed 50,000 men at the foot of the mountain behind those who were attacking and bade them slay all who came down Thus pressed the Medes fought more zealously than on the previous day and the Persians retired to the top of the mountain on which were their women and children These ran to meet the fugitives and cried out to them Cowards whither would ye fly will ye creep back into the bosoms that bore you Seized with shame the Persians turned and in one onslaught drove the Medes down the mountain and slew sixty thousand of them.

Aftermath

But Astyages did not retire from the siege of the mountain.