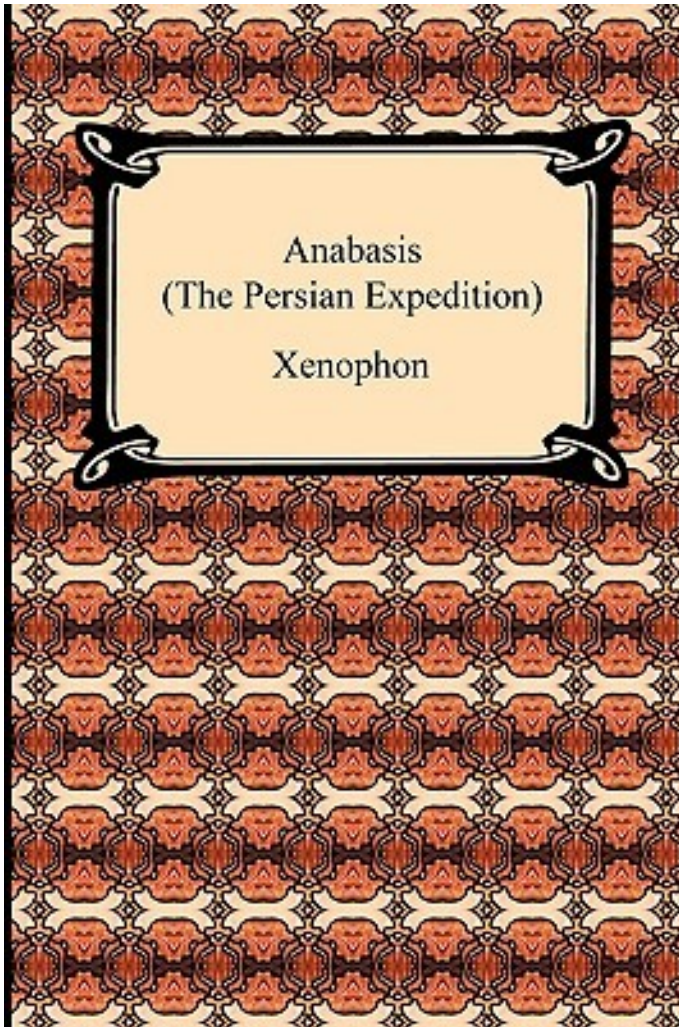

Henry Graham Dakyns

Anabasis: The Persian Expedition



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Description

Widely considered the most famous work of the professional soldier and writer Xenophon, "Anabasis" is a true tale of dangerous adventure in ancient Greece. Though advised not to join the army of 10,000 by his friend Socrates, Xenophon does set out with Cyrus the Great in that man's attempt to gain the empire of Persia from his brother. When this leader is killed in battle, however, the army loses cause and direction, and the result is a 'marching republic' in which the remainder of the army must fight their way home. Through endless miles of hostile territory where their foes crop up at every turn, Xenophon emerges as one of the few men capable of making decisions and leading the army through a variety of difficulties in a perilous retreat back to Greece. When at last they reach the sea and know they near their homeland, their cries of fierce joy resound and become the stuff of legend. Told in forthright and unpretentious prose, this epic journey of extraordinary endurance over hardship remains an entertaining account that exemplifies Socratic philosophy, clear Greek writing, and the bygone valor of remarkable warriors.

Insightful reviews

Darwin8u: Herodotus might have been the Father of History, but Xenophon was the cool, older brother. This one-time pupil of Socrates is one of those soldier/scholars who makes both intellectuals and warriors feel inadequate. 'The Persian Expedition' or 'March of the Ten Thousand' or 'Anabasis' (all depending on your version or translation) relates the story told by Xenophon of his experiences fighting with and leading the 10,000 Hellene mercenaries hired by Cyrus the Younger and the army's 3000+ mile march into Persian.

This experience, which Will Durrant once called "one of the great adventures in human history," can be read as history, adventure story, leadership manual, or a real-life application of Socratic philosophy.

Jefferson: "Conquerors do not, as a rule, give up their arms"

After ten thousand Greek mercenaries are somewhat tricked into fighting for the Persian prince Cyrus against his elder brother King Artaxerxes in 401 BC, they are suddenly left leaderless by the deaths of Cyrus in battle and of their generals in treachery. Stranded without provisions at least 1000 miles from their homes in the middle of the vast, powerful, and hostile Persian Empire, "the Hellenes lay in deep perplexity--a prey to painful reflections." Luckily for them (and for us), "there was in that host a certain man, an Athenian, Xenophon, who had accompanied Cryus, neither as a general, nor as an officer, nor yet as a private soldier, but simply on the invitation of an old friend, Proxenus." Xenophon, a student of Socrates, is more philosopher than soldier, but he it is who awakes from a dream of thunder and lightening in the middle of the first night of paralyzed despair, asks himself, "Why am I lying here?" and inspires his fellow Hellenes to unite and organize so as to avoid "an ignominious death" by fighting their way home.

About the resulting year-and-a-half journey, he later wrote a true classic called *Anabasis* (=

going up country): part exciting military textbook, part convincing "lesson on leadership," part exotic travel-log, part paean to Greek bravery, piety, and oratory, part exploration of human nature under stress. Marching for parasangs, stages, and days across deserts and rivers, over plains and mountains, and through snowstorms and ambushes. Slingers, archers, peltasts, heavy infantry, and cavalry engaging in pitched battles, raids, routs, and sieges. Scoundrels and heroes, treachery and loyalty, ingratitude and generosity, fear and morale. The local color of umpteen different cultures, from places like Arabia, Assyria, Babylon, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Media, Phoenicia, and Phrygia, to peoples like the Chaldaeans, Colchians, Karducians (Kurds), Macrones, Phasians, Thracians, and Tibarenians.

One of the points of interest in the work is how alien and human, ancient and modern the 10,000 Greeks and their leaders seem. Xenophon and his fellow Hellenes define conquest as keeping one's own possessions while seizing another's. Most of them are quite openly adventuring for fame and wealth, and, although they leave hospitable villages more or less in peace, people who close their gates to them and deny them markets and provisions become fair game for pillaging and enslavement (especially beautiful boys and women). When under intense threat, the Greeks are united by a common Hellenic culture, but when things are going well and they have time and energy to remember past rivalries and feuds, they are fragmented according to their various specific homelands: Messaly, Sparta, Rhodes, Laconia, Crete, Athens, Arcadia, Achaia, and so on. Unlike a modern army, the Hellene mercenaries are bracingly democratic, "a marching republic." Whenever crucial decisions must be made, they let anyone speak who wants to and then vote on the best course of action. The soldiers willingly follow their officers, but only if the officers lead them effectively and treat them fairly (i.e., pay and feed them). And the army quite often decides to do something against the advice of their generals. The Greeks are quite susceptible to good speakers like Xenophon, who must repeatedly make speeches to calm the soldiers down or to fire them up or to defend himself from calumny and rumor, usually by appealing to rational ethics. They are also highly superstitious, being sensitive to signs (a dream, an eagle, a sneeze) and sacrificing animals before any vital venture to determine whether or not the victims are smiling.

Given his historical and cultural contexts, Xenophon is remarkably ethical, loyal, and humane, especially when compared to other generals like Clearchus the Spartan ("war was his mistress") and Menon the Thessalian ("what he sought after insatiably was wealth"), for the Athenian (in his version of events) believed "that no fairer or brighter jewel can be given to a man, and most of all to a prince, than the threefold grace of valour, justice, and generosity." One marvels at Xenophon's patience and forbearance, for no sooner has he delivered his men from one dangerous crisis than they vote on a new foolish course of action, get into trouble, and then want to stone him for leading them astray and costing them their pay.

Anabasis, especially in H. G. Daykns' vivid, clean, heroic, and laconic translation (which is how Xenophon's Greek has been described), bristles with great lines:

--"To my mind a man's chief ornament is the adornment of nobly-adorned friends."

--"That river is a hundred feds broad, and is stocked with tame fish which the Syrians regard as gods, and will not suffer to be injured--and so too the pigeons of the place."

--"But you are men, and brave you must be, being men."

--"Those [dates] put aside for the masters are picked specimens, and are simply marvellous for their beauty and size, looking like great golden lumps of amber."

--"We have nothing left but our arms and our valour. If we keep the former, we imagine we can make use of the latter."

--"For on this day they will behold ten thousand Clearchuses instead of one."

--"Now is the season to be brave ourselves, and to stimulate the rest by our example."

--"The sea! The sea!"

I listened to the free public domain LibriVox audiobook read by a committee of readers, some better than others, but such is the quality of Xenophon's writing and Daykn's translation of it that *Anabasis* was still a fascinating and exciting listen. Fans of ancient Greek history, concise epic narratives, and eye-witness accounts of amazing martial feats of courage, endurance, and improvisation, should find much nourishment and pleasure in it.

Jeremy: I read this, not as a history book, but as a Greek translation project. What's interesting is that the story shows the strength of the Democratic way of operating. No other army would have remained in force after their leaders were assassinated. And yet the Greeks managed to do it.

David: "In *The Persian Expedition*, Xenophon, a tender Athenian noble who sought his future abroad, offers a charming eyewitness account of the try out by way of a Greek mercenary military - the 10 Thousand - to assist Prince Cyrus overthrow his brother and take the Persian throne. whilst the Greeks have been then betrayed by way of their Persian employers, they have been compelled to march domestic via 1000s of miles of adverse terrain - adrift in a adversarial nation and below consistent assault from the unforgiving Persians and warlike neighborhood tribes." I'm inspired by means of the readability of this Warner translation. The quoted negotiations in the military and between generals and their enemies is impressive. And such information because the numerous dances of the warriors and the paths via deep snow make the historical past vivid. My variation of "The Anabasis" and translated by means of Rex Warner, is a transparent succinct background of this crusade among the 2 brothers Artaxerxes and Cyrus, from Sardis (very close to Colophon) via all of Anatolia (Turkey today) and Syria into Babylonia (Iraq this present day -- the place Cyrus was once killed in battle, and Xenophon grew to become one of many leaders at the large military retreat -- again north via Armenia and alongside the shore of the Black Sea to Byzantium after which all the way down to Pergamon the place Xenophon left the army. "When the 10 Thousand began their trip in 401 BC, Xenophon tells us that they numbered round 10,400. on the time Xenophon left them years later, their quantity had diminished to simply less than 6,000." there isn't any corroboration for particular info of his recognized history.

Nemo: *Anabasis* (also rendered because the March of the 10 Thousand or *The Persian Expedition*) is a firsthand account of the Greeks' participation in Cyrus the Younger's rebellion opposed to his brother King Artaxerxes II, and their perilous go back trip to the Black Sea after Cyrus' loss of life within the conflict of Cunaxa. Xenophon highlights the myriads of demanding situations a normal faces in major a military and accomplishing a winning campaign. as well as delivering for a wide army, commanding their admire and obedience regardless of his personal

shortcomings, and motivating them for a standard purpose, he has to contend opposed to nature, comparable to inclement climate and surprising terrain; opposed to his enemies, their guerrilla and attrition warfare; opposed to his personal comrades, who try to usurp management for his or her personal achieve to the detriment of the army. As Xenophon has acknowledged elsewhere, a statesman faces a similar form of demanding situations in governing a nation. Ironically, simply as a statesman will be maligned by way of the fickle public particularly in the course of nationwide crisis, Xenophon used to be persecuted by way of his squaddies twice, nearly to the purpose of death, after being praised by means of them for his selfless carrier and leadership. Ultimately, i feel of Anabasis as an analogy of the adventure of life, and the successful pleasure with which the Greeks cry out, "The Sea, The Sea!" awaits us all.

Palmyrah: The marched and fought their manner correct around Turkey! And a very good chew of Iraq, too! the entire method from the Ionian coast to Mesopotamia — they fought inside battling distance of Babylon – after which all of the as far back as the Bosphorus (here's a map). They fought the Persians, the Kurds, the Armenians, the Thracians and somebody else who received of their way. And all they have been doing used to be attempting to get home. It took them fifteen months. there have been 10000 of them first of all and 8 thousand left on the end. a few have been killed in battle, a few perished from chilly within the excessive mountain passes, a few died of treachery. And once they reached the relative defense of the Black Sea coast, they took to quarrelling among themselves. An totally remarkable story—a blend of traveller's tale, experience story, guide of army strategies and meditation on man's ingratitude. one of many nice literary works of civilisation, the Anabasis is usually a damn reliable read.

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