

THE GREEK
RENAISSANCE

P. H. UEBER



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THE GREEK RENAISSANCE

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THE GREEK RENAISSANCE

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P. N. URE, M.A.

PROFESSOR OF CLASSICS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, READING

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PREFACE

THE object of this little volume is to indicate the scope and character of what the Greeks achieved in the first two centuries of their recorded history. With this end in view it deals with as many sides as possible of ancient Greek achievement, with art and industry, literature and science, no less than with politics and economics ; but in each case the endeavour has been not to summarise the subject, but to write an introduction that will give the reader who is not familiar with Greek history some opportunity of seeing whether it might not be worth his while to follow up further the particular topic with which it deals.

Books that will help him to do so are mentioned in the course of the work. My obligations are for the most part acknowledged in the sections where they have been incurred, but I should like here to express my indebted-

ness to two of my colleagues, my wife and Mr. E. R. Dodds, who have been constantly ready with help and suggestions.

P. N. URE

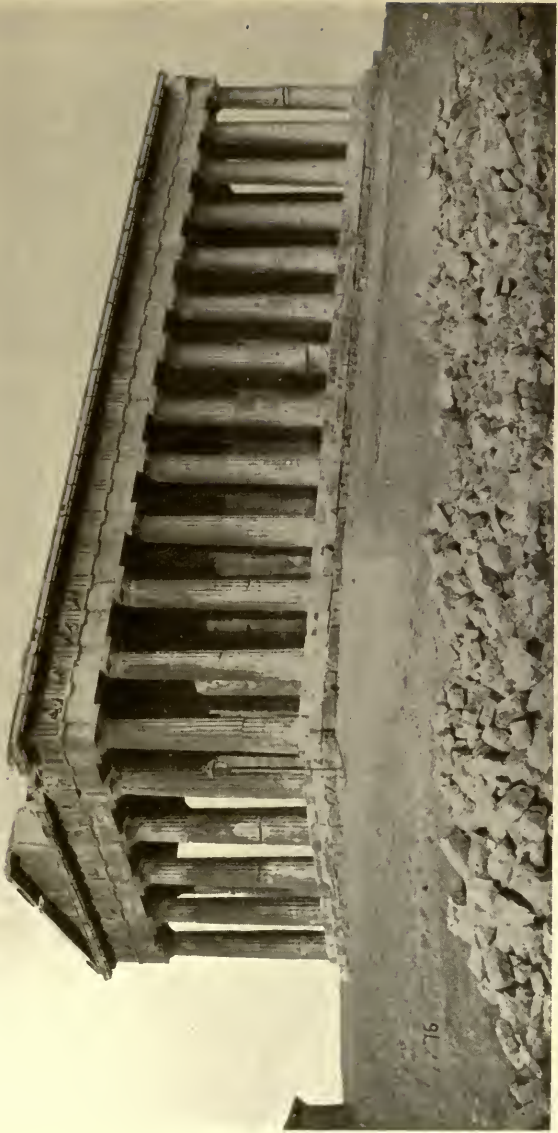
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(a) GEOMETRIC VASE FROM DIPYLON CEMETERY IN ATHENS
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ATTIC BLACK FIGURE VASE
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ΕΥΦΡΟΝΙΟΣ ΕΡΑΡΙΣΤΕΝ

ΣΑΡΡΥΛΙΩΝ ΕΡΕΙΣΤΕΝ

ATTIC RED FIGURE VASE PAINTING BY EUPHRONIOS
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COINS OF LYDIA (?), AEGINA, ATHENS, AND CORINTH

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THE GREEK RENAISSANCE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

GREECE AND HER FORERUNNERS

THE study of history has been profoundly influenced by the great scientific movement of the last few generations. On the whole this influence has been good. It has taught the historian how to use his material and, what is more important still, where to look for it. It has put an end to the catastrophic history in which a succession of picturesque figures hanging loose in space and time deal with a series of disconnected military and political crises that arise out of nothing and lead nowhere except to dungeons and palaces and scaffolds and thrones. But this advance has not been made without certain attendant losses. The evolution dogma which has been the inspiration of so much modern scientific

work, particularly in the sciences most allied to history, has sometimes been applied to history itself with unfortunate results. The golden age has been shifted from the past to the future, and our respect for the past has naturally suffered. Furthermore, in abandoning the catastrophic view of history there has been a very natural tendency to forget that there are a number of well-marked epochs even in the comparatively recent history of the human race. Inspired by the discovery that we have in some ways got far beyond any previous age, we have been tempted to imagine that we are completely emancipated from the past, and that it is not only possible but desirable to fix our eyes exclusively on the future. Because Hippocrates is now out of date as a manual for medical students it does not follow that the study of Greek is a cancer in our educational system, or even that it might not be fatal for us to cease to study the history of the past.

Fortunately such false impressions, which at first were only intensified by the absurd conservatism of classical scholars, are now being rapidly dispelled. History and pre-history are linking up with such sciences as geology at the one end and economics at the other and finding their rightful place in the general intellectual movement of the period. Taken

in its broadest sense history is perhaps destined to be the most important science of the immediate future. Already it is of all subjects the most widely studied. It is the one subject in which our knowledge is brought more or less up to date in periodicals that appear not yearly or monthly or weekly, but twice a day, and that too in the whole of the civilised world. The urgency for a better study of modern history will not now be disputed anywhere. Governments are, indeed, constantly placing difficulties in the way of this particular study, but even those who daily suppress historical truth in detail are loud on the need of publishing it as a whole. Only, where is an educated democracy to begin the study of the conditions in which it finds itself? To-day is not to be entirely explained by yesterday, or even by last year. Simply in order to realise our bondage to the present—and till the bondage has been recognised there is little hope of escaping from it—we are driven quickly back into the past. And science itself shows us that we must be prepared to go back a long way. To those who approach history from the point of view of modern geology and anthropology a thousand years may well be but as yesterday; possibly they will be found to be earlier phases of the present day.

We have, in fact, to go back more than twice that period to reach the age when modern civilisation took its essential form and features. It was probably in the Greek world of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. that all the main streams of modern thought and energy first took shape. All our knowledge of earlier civilisations points to fundamental differences between them and our own. It is among the Greeks of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. that we first find men who intellectually and politically share our outlook in a way that is becoming more and more striking the more the world emancipates itself from the mediævalism that it is in the process of casting off.

The civilisation that developed so remarkably in the age that we are about to consider does not appear to have been the result of a long period of evolution. It was a rapid and almost sudden renaissance. The remarkable ancient civilisation that had its centre in Crete, after lasting for at least as long as from the Norman Conquest to the present day, had come to a sudden end at some time near the close of the second millennium B.C. : the still more ancient civilisation of Egypt had collapsed at about the same time. Only in Mesopotamia had there been no such catastrophe. To understand the movements of the seventh-century renaissance

sance it is necessary to have some idea of these earlier civilisations and of the dark ages that followed their eclipse. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Crete. Chapter two will deal somewhat less hastily with the dark age of the first three centuries of the first millennium, which bring us down to the period with which we are immediately concerned.

EGYPT.—The great achievements of Egypt belong to the early dynastic period (about 3400–2500 B.C.). Already in the days of the earliest pharaohs the floods of the Nile were under human control, and Egypt was a land of expert engineers and agriculturalists. The pyramids were mainly built by the kings of the third to sixth dynasties (about 3000–2500 B.C.), and as works of mechanical skill they still excite wonder. Some of the masterpieces of Egyptian sculpture and painting belong to this same early period. The statues are often life-like portraits. There are kings and nobles, overseers and scribes, who died in Egypt more than forty-five centuries ago, but whose features are as well known to us as if we had their photographs. Some of the paintings and relief sculptures of birds and animals might well be used as illustrations in modern

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works on natural history. Politically the whole country enjoyed the full benefits of orderly government, and perhaps we people of the twentieth century A.D., who are attempting to introduce law and order into the relationships of the warring states of the world, can particularly well appreciate the achievements of these statesmen of five thousand years ago, who first established law and order among the warring tribes and interests of a single great country. Most important of all, this early age of Egypt evolved a system of writing and developed the habit of keeping records. The museum of Palermo in Sicily possesses fragments of an Egyptian chronicle composed early in the third millennium B.C. and dealing with the kings of the first five dynasties.

Those of us who are not Egyptologists are probably inclined to exaggerate the sameness of the monuments of ancient Egypt and of the products of its art and industries. But making all allowance for misleading perspective and imperfect knowledge, there is probably a great deal of truth in this first impression of extreme conservatism. The things which Egypt appears never to have attempted are sometimes as striking as those which she achieved. If the pyramids bear witness to extraordinary mechanical skill they are monuments also of

the most absolute autocracy. Ancient Egypt often enjoyed a strong government, but never anything resembling freedom. When the central government weakened it meant merely a multiplication of autocrats and a corresponding diminution of material prosperity. The political system was early sheltered by religion and remained so till the end. But most serious of all was the limitation in intellectual outlook, which was early fastened on the Egyptians by their peculiar religious beliefs. Egypt is the land above all others where the works of man are least liable to decay. The results of this on Egyptian thought were most unfortunate. It caused it to be side-tracked into speculations upon crudely material forms of personal immortality. In the land of pyramids and mummies there was little that could inspire or foster anything at all resembling modern developments either political or intellectual. Somewhere about the time when Cretan civilisation was overthrown in the Ægean, Egypt was affected in a similar way and relapsed into a state of semi-feudal anarchy from which it only emerged in the seventh century B.C., when a strong central government was re-established by a new dynasty, the twenty-sixth, that had its home at Sais in the Delta at no great distance from the Mediterranean,

Saite Egypt shared in the great renaissance of the period, and there will be occasion to revert to it in a later chapter.

MESOPOTAMIA.—The Garden of Eden has long been recognised as one of the regions where the human race first began to lead a civilised life, but it is only within the last few generations that archæology has given us a fairly clear notion of its historical significance. As early as 3800 B.C. there was in the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates a great kingdom ruled over by a certain Sargon of Accad whose subjects made a serious study of astronomy, carved gems with considerable skill, and used a system of writing, of which we still have specimens, written in arrow-headed characters on tablets of clay. There is no need here to follow the various changes in dynasty and seat of power that occurred in the three thousand years following, during which Mesopotamia was dominated by a succession of great centralised states. As a typical specimen of one of these rulers we may take Khammurabi, the Amraphel of Genesis,¹ who was king of Babylon about 2340 B.C. Khammurabi issued a code of laws of which a copy was recently discovered.²

¹ Gen. xiv. 9.

² C. H. W. Johns, *The Oldest Code of Laws in the World*, from which the extracts above are taken.

These laws throw much light on the life of the period and show that society was fairly complex and highly organised. There are elaborate provisions as to the liabilities of market gardeners who cultivate plots of land on lease, of doctors negligent or even unfortunate in treating their patients, of contractors who put up jerry-built houses and the like. A few samples will best show the character of the code.

If a man has given a field to a gardener to plant a garden and the gardener has planted the garden, four years he shall rear the garden, in the fifth the owner of the garden and the gardener shall share equally, the owner of the garden shall cut off his share and take it.

If the gardener has not included all the field in the planting, has left a waste place, he shall set the waste place in the share that he takes.

If the doctor has treated a gentleman for a severe wound with a lancet of bronze and has caused the gentleman to die, or has opened an abscess of the eye for a gentleman with the bronze lancet and has caused the loss of the gentleman's eye, one shall cut off his hands.

If a doctor has treated the severe wound

of a slave of a poor man with a bronze lancet and has caused his death, he shall render slave for slave.

If a builder has built a house for a man and has not made strong the work and the house he built has fallen and he has caused the death of the owner of the house, that builder shall be put to death.

If he has caused the son of the owner of the house to die, one shall put to death the son of the builder.

The picture suggested by these laws is one of justice untempered by mercy, and this impression is probably correct. When a king of Babylon wished to commemorate the reduction of a rebel or enemy town, he had his achievements carved in sculptures that showed his defeated enemies writhing on the tops of poles on which they had been impaled. Technically these sculptures are remarkable achievements. Huge figures were carved in the hardest stone, and they adorned massive palaces built of similar material. But for the most part the art of Nineveh and Babylon is inhuman and repellent. Its typical product is the winged bull whose human head with its Semitic nose and long and elaborately curled beard gives perhaps the best representation of combined

strength, cruelty, and pride that any artist has so far achieved.

It would be unfair to suppose that nothing flourished between the banks of the two great rivers besides militarism, commercialism, and a purely vindictive form of justice. It seems as though those qualities can never be rampant without provoking some sort of passionate reaction. But however that may be, in the region of ideas the Greeks of the seventh century B.C. do not seem to have owed much to the great empires of the East. What they did probably owe to them was much of their technical and mechanical skill and their introduction to such practical sciences as astronomy. How Greece of the seventh and sixth centuries came into contact with Assyria and Babylonia will best be explained in the third chapter, when we come to consider the relations of the Asiatic Greeks to the Lydia of King Gyges, who for part at any rate of his reign acknowledged himself the vassal of the great king of Assyria.

CRETE.—Till the beginning of the present century only two great early civilisations were known, those, namely, that have just been touched on, both of which arose on the banks of great rivers and had their character largely determined by that fact. It is thanks to the

excavations of Sir Arthur Evans at Cnossus, followed by those of other archæologists, mainly British, American, Italian, and Greek, that we now have some idea of the remarkable civilisation that sprang up almost as early in the island of Crete and spread from there over many of the Greek islands, much of the mainland of Greece, as far West as South Italy and Sicily, and as far East as Philistia. In the days of the earliest Egyptian dynasties Crete was hardly abreast of Egypt, though Egyptian influence was already felt in the island and the art of writing was already known. But by the time of the eleventh and twelfth Egyptian dynasties, which correspond roughly with the middle period (Middle Minoan) of the three into which Evans has divided this early Cretan history, Crete had attained a culture that will compare with that of Egypt itself. Palaces were built of the most solid and finely wrought masonry, metals and precious stones were worked with great skill, while the pottery of the period has never been surpassed for fineness and delicacy. The third of Evans' epochs (Late Minoan) corresponds roughly with the eighteenth to twentieth dynasties in Egypt. In the first part of this period Crete made still further progress. Her palaces show a drainage system that would meet the requirements of a modern sanitary

inspector ; her frescoes, reliefs in plaster, vase paintings and the like are works of real art. But about the year 1400 B.C. the prosperity of Crete began to decline. The great palaces were destroyed, and though they were again occupied it was not on the same scale, and after a few centuries of decline the great Cretan civilisation came to an end.

These recent Cretan discoveries have enabled us to place in their proper historical setting the remarkable remains at such places as Mycenæ and Tiryns on the mainland of Greece, the cities whose excavation by Schliemann in the 'eighties of the last century first revealed to the modern world the existence of a great prehistoric civilisation in the area of the Ægean Sea. The most striking of these remains are the buildings. At Tiryns there is a citadel wall built of enormous stones which in parts of the wall are roughly squared, in other and earlier parts left nearly in their natural shape with only the surface roughly worked into an approximate plane. These walls imply an extremely skilful band of builders and masons. At one part a gallery has been constructed within the thickness of the walls with a roof that has the appearance though not the construction of a Gothic arch. At Mycenæ also the citadel walls are still standing. They are

built of squared stones several feet in height and broad and deep in proportion. The main entrance is by the famous lion gate, which has a lintel composed of one enormous block of stone surmounted by a triangular slab on which is carved in relief a pair of lions grouped heraldically on either side of a sacred pillar. But even more impressive than the walls of the city are the tombs of the dead. These beehive tombs, as they are generally called, consist of a subterranean chamber shaped much like the old-fashioned beehive, but sometimes nearly fifty feet in height and wrought of beautifully squared stones some feet in dimension either way. They are built in the side of a hill and approached by passages of similar masonry which lead to a spacious doorway that is often like the lion gateway built of enormous stones. The lintel of the largest measures some twenty-seven feet wide by fifteen deep and three thick.

In and around these dwellings of the living and the dead there have been found vast numbers of small objects in stone, metal and other materials wrought with the highest skill ; for example, precious stones elaborately carved, gold ornaments with embossed decoration, daggers with hunting scenes inlaid in the blade. The walls themselves sometimes show remains of frescoes painted with considerable skill. The

mass of pottery found on the sites is overwhelming. After repeated excavations and explorations, conducted with increasing care, it is still possible to pick up on a site during a casual visit pocketfuls of potsherds showing the typical "Mycenæan" decoration. Pottery, frescoes, and the other finds all show that the great days of Mycenæ and Tiryns correspond to the "Late Minoan" period of Cretan history. Of other Mycenæan sites on the Greek mainland the most interesting historically is Thebes, where some ten years ago the Greek archæologist Keramopoulos discovered remains of a palace with frescoed walls and painted pottery in the "Late Minoan" style. The Thebans of this early period buried their distinguished dead in beehive tombs like those at Mycenæ itself.

Schliemann was inspired to explore Mycenæ by reading in his youth, when he was a grocer's assistant in Germany, the two great Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey. These two poems are the key to a proper understanding of the relationship of Mycenæan civilisation to the renaissance of the seventh century, and before proceeding further it will be well to summarise their contents and character.

At the opening of the Iliad a great Greek expedition has for nine years been besieging the city of Troy in the north-west corner of

Asia Minor, near the southern entrance to the Dardanelles. A council of war is being held. The debate leads to a violent quarrel between Agamemnon, the commander-in-chief, and Achilles, the strongest and bravest of his lieutenants, who finally refuses to have anything more to do with the fighting, and retires to his quarters among his followers, the Myrmidons, where he waits to see Agamemnon mismanage the campaign without him. His hopes are not disappointed. The Greeks are driven back to their ships and would have come to disaster if Achilles had not been influenced by his great friend Patroclus and allowed him to lead out the Myrmidon forces to help the other Greeks. Achilles has sworn to take no further part himself, but he allows his friend to wear his armour, and Patroclus "went forth like to the god of war, but it was for him the beginning of evil." He is killed by Hector, the Trojan commander. Then Achilles in fury forgets his oath and marches out and kills Hector in battle. "So the Trojans busied themselves with the burying of Hector, tamer of horses," with which statement the poem closes.

In the *Odyssey* Troy has already fallen. The poem recounts the subsequent adventures and wanderings of the Greek hero Odysseus

(Latin Ulysses) on his way home and after his arrival there. On his journey home he was carried out of his way far into the west and encountered Circe, the witch who turned her victims into beasts; Polyphemus, the one-eyed savage who eat up most of Odysseus' crew and came very near to making a meal of the hero himself; the Sirens who, with their beautiful singing, lure men to shipwreck, and various other perils of a similar kind. Finally, after ten years of wanderings he arrives alone in his native island of Ithaca, where he finds all the eligible young men in the island, and some too of maturer years, living in his house and wasting his substance till his wife Penelope shall decide which of them she intends to marry. Disguising himself as a beggar he manages to get them together unarmed in a single room, where he shoots them all down with a bow. Next he proceeds to hang a few of Penelope's maids who had abetted the wicked suitors, after which he makes himself known to Penelope and the tale is practically at an end.

The excavations of the last half century have revolutionised our views as to the historical background of the Homeric poems. For Mr. Gladstone Homer pictured the youthful prime of the pagan world, and his epics are a sort of secular Old Testament which might fairly claim

a place side by side with the Jewish writings in the normal liberal education. Schliemann and Evans have taught us that this Garden of Eden outlook is entirely mistaken. The Homeric poems come at the end, not the beginning, of a long period of civilisation. In fact, they are our main source of information as to how the great Cretan-Mycenæan civilisation came to an end. The yellow-haired, beef-eating heroes of Homer, whose favourite title of honour is "sacker of cities," are now generally recognised as leaders of Northern tribes forcing their way southward to a place in the sun much as was done fifteen centuries later by the Goths, Huns, and Vandals who overthrew the empire of Rome. It was an age of sieges, of which the most important appear to have been that of Troy and the two sieges in two successive generations of the great mainland city of Thebes. The epic which told of the Theban exploits has been lost, but the legends are preserved in later writers, and it would seem that the first floods of invasion swept past the great city, which fell at last to forces that attacked it from the south.

Of any great struggle in Crete itself legend says nothing, but this silence agrees with the archaeological evidence. To the present day the walls of Tiryns, Mycenæ and other main-

land sites of this ancient culture impress by their extraordinary massiveness and strength. If little sign of such walls is left at Thebes it is that, unlike so many Mycenæan sites, it has been thickly populated all through classical and mediæval times. Keramopoulos has carried on his digging under considerable difficulties owing to the buildings that still occupy the site. But in Crete the great Minoan sites are all unwalled. Crete relied on the power of its navy, and the struggle with the invader was probably settled before he reached the island. Only one legend bears directly on the dissolution of the Cretan power. In the days of Minos, a name which appears to cover all the kings of prehistoric Crete, the people of Athens had to send yearly to the island a contingent of young men and women to feed the Minotaur, a bull-headed monster who probably played an important part in the Cretan religion. But when Prince Theseus was of age to be one of these victims he volunteered to be sent, and on his arrival killed the Minotaur, rescued his fellow-captives, and brought them safely back to Athens, after which the Athenians ceased to pay tribute to the Cretan power. Another legend about Theseus and Minos tells how the Cretan king cast into the sea a ring which the prince of Athens went down and secured for

himself. Whether or no in this last legend the ring of Minos is like the ring with which the doge of Venice used to wed the ocean, and the Theseus exploit means that the Athenians wrested from the Cretans the control of the sea,¹ Theseus is certainly a half-historical figure like our own Arthur who, when the Roman empire is breaking up, refuses any longer to pay tribute to the great lords of Rome.

The parallel is, indeed, suggestive in more ways than one. Just as Arthur, the half Romanised rebel from decaying Rome, spends most of his time in trying to put down the robber barons of his own realm and to maintain an order that is passing away, so we find Theseus engaged in a whole series of campaigns against the robber chiefs who infested Attica. It would, of course, be foolish to look for much historical truth in legends such as those of Theseus and Arthur. But their similarity is of some significance. They arose independently under similar circumstances and tend to make us realise that even in the most destructive periods there are conservative forces at work. We know that much of Rome survived the dark age which began in the fifth century of the present era. How much precisely Classical Greece owed to the civilisations from whose

¹ This explanation is due to the French scholar, S. Reinach.

wreck she rose is harder to determine, principally because we have nothing from Crete or even from Egypt or Babylon that can be remotely compared with the literature that has come down to us from ancient Rome. But even with this limitation it must profoundly alter our conception of Classical Greek civilisation when we realise that the darkness out of which it emerged was not the darkness of primal chaos but a temporary eclipse. Indeed, enough is known of this dark period to make it possible and desirable to devote to it the whole of the following chapter.¹

¹ For a particularly vivid picture of the break up of the old Cretan civilisation see Gilbert Murray's *Rise of the Epic*, a book to which the account here given is much indebted. J. M.

CHAPTER II

THE DARK AGE IN GREECE

ACCORDING to the writers of the four gospels mastery of mind tends to manifest itself in mastery over matter, and history supports this view. In our own country, for instance, the Roman period has left impressive monuments like the walls of Silchester or Caerwent, the great wall from Newcastle to Carlisle, and the vast masses of small objects of excellent workmanship that are found all over the country. The mediæval period again has left its monument almost in every village. But the Angles and Saxons and all the other destroyers of cities who forced Roman Britain back to barbarism were equally unconstructive in all directions. Some fairly well made iron weapons, a few objects of personal adornment for the great chiefs of the period, and a certain amount of astonishingly incompetent coarse pottery is all that the whole long period of the Saxon conquest has left behind it. The same is true of the dark age that came on Greece after

the great war lords from the North had overthrown the Mycenæan civilisation. It has left us no great buildings like the palaces and gates and tombs of Cnossus and Mycenæ or the temples of Classical Greece. In fact, it has left us no buildings at all nor any other monuments wrought in stone. Like our own Saxon period it is known mainly from its metal work and pottery. Both these are technically competent. The potter of this period could throw a vase several feet high, excellently proportioned and strongly made. Such vases were placed over the graves of great nobles at this period in lieu of tombstones, and a fine series of them may now be seen in the National Museum at Athens.¹ But the decoration of these vases is childish. The human figure is rendered by a combination of triangles and straight lines. For ornament there is nothing but zigzags, meanders, concentric circles, and the like; and the whole effect is so linear and angular that the name geometric is commonly given to this whole class of vases, a specimen of which is figured below, Plate VIII (a).

The remains are what might be expected from the period, which was one of wanderings as

¹ Some good examples are also to be seen in the Louvre at Paris.

well as wars. Odysseus is the prototype of many chieftains who roamed over the whole Greek world in search of adventure and plunder, and a whole cycle of lost epics celebrated the doings of these adventurers. It was quite good manners to ask a sailor whether he was a merchant or a pirate. Such an age does not foster architecture or any of the more monumental arts. There is no point in a nomad erecting a settled abiding place either for himself or his gods. Even if he has the skill he will hardly have the desire. The potter, on the other hand, may be the more in demand from the lack of most of the conveniences of material civilisation. "Potter falls out with potter" is how the one writer of this period tells us that two of a trade never agree.

But the most important industry for a military race is the working of metals and the making of weapons, and in this the men of the Dark Ages excelled their predecessors. The civilised inhabitants of Cnossus and Mycenæ were skilful goldsmiths and coppersmiths, but iron appears to have been practically unknown to them till the arrival of the destroyers of cities, who threw the whole Ægean region back into barbarism. The early history of iron is obscure. Partly this is due to difficulties in interpreting the literary evidence. Copper is

certainly the older metal, and all smiths were originally coppersmiths. When iron first entered the Greek area it seems fairly certain that the smiths who now worked both copper and iron, and perhaps mainly the latter, still called themselves coppersmiths, much as in England we still call pennies coppers though they are made of bronze, and the French call all money silver though they long ago began coining in gold. When therefore we find Homer speaking normally of coppersmiths and arms of copper we cannot be sure that he means what he says. This would be the case even if the word iron never occurred in his poems, which in fact it occasionally does. Archæologically, again, the evidence may be misleading, since iron rusts away so much more easily than the softer metals. If all our evidence came from carefully conducted excavations this would not so much matter, for though iron disintegrates it does not so often completely disappear. Unfortunately much of our archæological material comes from chance finds or from digs carelessly conducted. We must be cautious, therefore, in advancing negative evidence as to the exclusive use of copper in any age.¹ But the material

¹ Some years ago when excavating a Greek grave of the sixth century B.C. the writer found a small iron vessel with bronze handles and a bronze stand: the handles and stand

available for writing the history of the metals in the Minoan period is now considerable, and it may be fairly claimed for it that it establishes the Minoan period as essentially an age of bronze, and that the end of it coincides with the appearance of iron in the Ægean area. The coincidence was no accident. It was the hard iron swords of the sackers of cities that decided the issue between Cretan culture and Northern barbarism. So early in the world's history do we find civilisation suffering a disastrous set-back through the discovery of some new powerful weapon of offence.

Modern archæologists are not the first to have seen that this post-Cretan age of darkness was an age of iron replacing an age of bronze and gold. It is so described by a Greek who actually lived during that period and whose works have fortunately come down to us. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to giving some account of this remarkable writer. His name was Hesiod, and he lived in Bœotia, close under Mount Helicon at a place called Ascra, a miserable hamlet, to use his own words, "bad in winter, sultry in summer, and good at no time." The poet was not a Bœotian by

were in excellent condition, but the vessel was reduced to a mass of small corroded fragments that were only found by careful search.

descent. His father had come over from Cyme in North-West Asia Minor, one of the Greek settlements established on that coast in the generations following the siege of Troy, and not so very far from Troy itself. He left Cyme, "crossing a great stretch of sea" to the Greek mainland, and "fled not from riches and substance, but from wretched poverty, which Zeus lays on men." Hesiod himself was not a wanderer. He tells us that he had no skill in seafaring nor in ships, and that he had never sailed by ship over the wide sea, but only from Aulis in Bœotia, the starting place of the Trojan expedition, to the island of Eubœa opposite, to the games of wise Amphidamas. "And there," he writes, "I boast that I gained the victory with song and carried off a tripod with handles which I dedicated to the muses of Helicon in the place where they first set me in the way of clear song."

Three poems have come down to us under Hesiod's name. The "Shield of Heracles," 480 lines long, is a descriptive piece in the heroic vein of the Homeric epic. Perhaps it was with some such composition that the poet won the prize at the games of the wise Amphidamas. It need not here detain us. A second poem, the "Theogony," just over 1000 lines in length, is, as its title implies, a book of the

pedigrees of the numerous Greek divinities. Such a celestial birthday book is always interesting. The "Theogony" enables us to form some notion of the religious background of Hesiod's days, just as legends of the saints supplement the picture of our own Middle Ages that is to be drawn from the rolls and charters of the period. In a later chapter we shall have to revert to the "Theogony" and the attacks that were made on it in the sixth century B.C. by reason of its low and obsolescent moral tone. Space forbids us to discuss it here.

The third of these poems, and that which most concerns us here, is named the "Works and Days." Its theme is farming and how and when the farmer should perform his various tasks. It is addressed to the poet's brother Perses, who appears to have been rather a waster, and the treatment is discursive. But the work is meant to be a practical manual, quite as much as the similarly discursive treatises on similar subjects written by William Cobbett, who too sometimes addresses to a relative advice and instruction intended for the public at large. Even the metrical form of the "Works and Days" was not without its practical usefulness in times when most possible students of the manual were unable to read and had to learn their handbook off by heart. The poet

begins by impressing on his brother the law of God that man must work. This leads him to explain why the world is such a hard place to live in, and why evil must be accepted as an inevitable fact. "Full is the earth of evils, full the sea." The reason is to be found in the law of deterioration, which for Hesiod was as absolute a dogma as the law of progress was in Europe for the century just past. Mankind for Hesiod had passed through successive ages of gold, silver, and bronze, and was now living in the age of iron. In the paradise of the golden age "men lived like gods without sorrow . . . and dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks: and when they died it was as though they were overcome with sleep." The next age, that of silver, was "less noble by far." The men of this age took one hundred years to grow up and then soon died, destroyed by Zeus, "because they could not keep from wronging one another, nor would they sacrifice on the holy altars of the blessed ones as it is right for men to do wherever they dwell." Third comes the age of bronze. The men of the bronze age were "terrible and strong: they loved the woeful works of the war god: they ate no bread, but were hard of heart like adamant, fearful men. . . . Their armour was

of bronze and their houses of bronze, and of bronze were their implements: there was no black iron. These were destroyed by their own hands." Between this bronze age and the age of iron that would naturally follow the poet inserts an age of heroes, "the race before our own," "nobler and more righteous than the age of bronze." "Grim war and dread battle destroyed a part of these, some at seven gated Thebes and some at Troy."

Finally we have the iron age, the poet's own age, when "men never rest from labour and sorrow by day and from perishing by night." "Would," says the poet, "that I were not among the men of this generation, but had either died before or been born afterwards." Even this last wish is a lapse into unwarranted optimism, since on the whole things seem to be going from bad to worse. "Might," he prophesies of the coming generation, "shall be their right; and one man shall sack another's city . . . bitter sorrows shall be left for mortal men, and there will be no help against evil."

Such is the historical outlook of the "Works and Days." The picture is not in the main fanciful. The poet was right in asserting that as far as the memory of his age and country went back the state of things had been invariably getting worse, sometimes by a steady

process of deterioration, as depicted in the transition from the age of gold to that of silver, sometimes catastrophically, as in the age of bronze. The only exception is the age of heroes, and even that is only an apparent one, for the age of heroes interrupts the metallic sequence and is probably an alternative version of the age of bronze, treated more historically and written from a standpoint that could see nothing disastrous to Ægean culture in the downfall of two of its chief centres, Troy and Thebes.

Even the names given by Hesiod to his four ages are now seen to have been based on and suggested by a profound historical fact. Silver began to be worked much later than gold, and though bronze was also worked much earlier than silver, Hesiod is right in the dating of his bronze age if, as his account implies, he means an age of violence earlier than the age of the great invasions by the men with the swords of iron.

It is not surprising that Hesiod should have preserved for us such traditions as were still in his days surviving concerning the great vanished past. His father's home at Cyme was not fifty miles distant from the Troad, and his own home in Bœotia was near the great city of Thebes. Thebes played no great part

in the renaissance of the seventh century B.C. ; but, as we have noticed already, she had been one of the greatest centres of the old civilisation, and legend made her the place where mainland Greeks first learned to write.

What gives the "Works and Days" its unique value is the picture that it draws for us of the age in which it was written. The picture is, of course, incomplete. The book is a manual for farmers and not a history. But the very fact that Hesiod had no intention of writing contemporary history perhaps increases the historical value of what he says about his own age. His directions for wood-cutting, plough-making, sowing, reaping, threshing, and the like are detailed and precise, and this means that they give us a fair notion of the technical skill commanded by the people of his age. Incidentally they often throw an interesting light on the general life of the period. When, for instance, the ploughman is told to begin operations by going into the forest and looking about for a suitable tree for cutting down and shaping into a plough, we see at once that he lived in an age that had no conception of the division of labour, and we are not surprised a little further on to find the farmer told how to weave the cloth for his winter clothes. The market town which bulks so largely in the life

of the modern farmer and was equally important in the Italy of the days of Virgil does not exist for Hesiod. The only common centre for the whole district appears to be the court of the chief. The poet is very insistent on the danger of spending too much time in these courts either as a litigant or as a mere spectator of cases in which neighbours were concerned. Nearer home the smithy is the great temptation. It seems to have had all the seductiveness of the village inn, and the farmer is warned to pass it by "in winter time when cold keeps men from field work; for then an industrious man can greatly prosper his home." The social instinct receives little sympathy anywhere in the whole poem. "Let a brisk fellow of forty follow (the oxen) with a loaf of four quarters and eight slices for his dinner, one who will attend to his work . . . for a man less staid gets disturbed, hankering after his fellows." There is here and there a curious lack of the feeling of social obligation. "So soon as you have safely stored all your stuff indoors I bid you put your bondman out of doors and look out for a servant girl with no children, for a servant with a child to nurse is troublesome." This dislike of "encumbrances" goes, as so often, with indulgence in a primitive form of parasitic luxury. The North wind that pierces

the farmer and his beasts "does not blow through the tender maiden who stays indoors with her dear mother and washes her soft body and anoints herself with oil and lies down in an inner room within the house." Economically the state of things is equally primitive. As there is no division of labour it naturally follows that there can be no co-operative undertakings, nor anything to check man's primal acquisitiveness. "It is better to have your stuff at home, for whatever is abroad may mean loss." Logically enough the poet preaches the practices of the French peasant proprietor: "There should be an only son . . . for so wealth will increase in the home." Generosity is a mistake. "Give to one who gives, but do not give to one who does not give."

The wisdom of which specimens have just been quoted was probably inherited by the poet. It is of the sort that men must have learned right at the beginning of the Dark Ages. There are, however, other passages of the poem where Hesiod seems to be dealing with the problems and aspirations of his own age, when life though still hard was becoming more settled. Such are, for instance, the numerous passages where he dwells on the need for peace and expresses his hatred of war and violence. "Cease altogether to think of

violence. For the son of Cronus has ordained this law for men, that fishes and beasts and winged fowl should devour one another, for justice is not in them. But to mankind he gave justice." The problem of strife caused Hesiod much thought: his conclusion was this, that there are two kinds of strife: "one fosters evil war and battle, being cruel; her no man loves, but perforce, through the will of the deathless gods, men pay harsh strife due honour . . . but the other is far kinder to men. She stirs up even the shiftless to toil, for a man grows eager to work when he considers his neighbour, a rich man who hastens to plough and plant, and neighbour vies with his neighbour as he hurries after wealth." This idea of setting against the strife of war the rivalries of industrial competition recalls the common language of a much more recent period of darkness. Already in the days of Hesiod the peaceful form of strife had its cruel side and could practise its cruelty in the name of religion: "sacrifice to the gods and propitiate them . . . that they may be gracious to you . . . and so you may buy another's holding and not another yours."

Another sign of the times in which Hesiod lived is to be found in his bitter attacks on the princes who ruled the land, "bribe swallowing

lords . . . fools who know not how much more the half is than the whole." "The people pay for the mad folly of their princes who evilly minded pervert judgment." Historians have long noticed how different this language is from that of Homer, whose princes rule by divine right and whose only agitator is soundly beaten amidst universal laughter and approval. To some extent, no doubt, the difference between the two poets is due to the different audiences for whom they wrote, but this difference of audience is itself a sign of the times. Literature has ceased to be inspired exclusively by princely patrons. But it is highly probable that the princes themselves had changed in character, and that the change had been all for the worse. The more or less benevolent military autocrat had been succeeded by the greedy landlord with the law courts behind him to help him in his exactions. Hesiod has no alternative government to propose, but he tells the princes very plainly that they are bleeding their subjects to economic ruin, and that the ruin of the subject will mean the ruin of the master.

But perhaps the most characteristic of all the precepts of Hesiod are his repeated exhortations to work. Work is for Hesiod the law of life. "Both gods and men are angry with the man who lives idle, for in nature he is like the

stingless drones who waste the labour of the bees, eating without working." . . . "Work is no disgrace ; it is idleness that is a disgrace." The law of labour is of divine origin : " the gods keep hidden from men the means of life. Else would you easily do work enough in a day to supply you for a full year even without working." In preaching the dignity of labour, as in protesting against despotism and violence, Hesiod is deliberately breaking with the age of feudalism in which he lived and heralding the age of renewed enlightenment that led to the great renaissance.¹

¹ In quoting from the "Works and Days" use has been made of the excellent translation by H. Evelyn White, published in the Loeb Classical Library. Considering the shortness of the poem detailed references have not been given.

CHAPTER III

GREECE AND HER NEIGHBOURS AT THE END OF THE DARK AGES

HESIOD shows sufficiently that the Greeks of his age were ready for a new order of things. But the influence that inspired and moulded the new age that begins early in the seventh century B.C. did not come from Bœotia or from any of the old seats of civilisation on the Greek mainland. The new light came mainly from the East, and to understand how it reached the Greeks it is necessary to have some notion of their geographical distribution at this period and of the races with whom they were brought in contact.

Ancient Greece was not a country as we understand it. There was no state or organisation that could speak in the name of the whole nation. The political unit was the city. Each city had its own government, its own laws, its own army, and, when metal coins began to be issued, its own coinage struck on its own

particular metrical system. Social customs differed widely from city to city, and in religion though all the Greeks acknowledged up to a point the godhead of all the Greek gods, in practice each city had its own particular patron on whom it concentrated its devotions and whom it worshipped in its own particular way. The growth of these small city states is to be explained by the physical geography of the country. The southern parts of the Balkan peninsula, which from the days of Homer onwards have been the central home of the Greeks, are largely wild mountainous regions, where human settlement on any scale has always been impossible. From the very nature of the land the population has always been concentrated in the small plains that are found here and there, principally in the eastern part of the country. Each of these plains is a separate and, from the landward point of view, a self-contained entity. As a rule they are bounded on one side by the sea and on the rest by high and barren mountains. The sea connects them with the outer world, the mountains cut them off from it.

When the country began to be overrun by the invading Achæans and Dorians and the other hordes of sackers of cities who brought the Mycenæan civilisation to an end, the old

inhabitants took to their ships and fled over the seas and there established fresh city states like those that they had left. Soon the earlier of these invaders, crowded out by later hordes that followed them from the North, took ship in like manner and founded similar settlements overseas. Since most of the cities on the Greek mainland look east and the eastward route across the Ægean archipelago has far fewer terrors than the voyage across the less known open seas towards the West, these earliest emigrants fled eastward, with the result that the whole of the west coast of Asia Minor was soon fringed with Greek cities. In the South, opposite the island of Rhodes, there was a group of cities founded by the Dorians, one of the latest races to pour southwards into Greece after the downfall of Mycenæ. In the North, spreading southwards from the Troad, was a group of cities of Æolian race, a name which implies that they were of mixed ancestry. Between them lay the largest group, belonging to the ancient Ionian race. The land they occupied was known as Ionia. We shall have frequent occasions to refer to the name in the succeeding pages.

Before the end of the Dark Ages the whole western coast of Asia Minor had been completely settled by these various Greeks and the

stream of emigration had turned west, principally to Sicily and South Italy. In Sicily Greek settlers of various races founded cities on the most important sites all round the coast, except in the extreme west, where the Carthaginians had anticipated them. In Italy they settled in a similar way all round the coast from Cumæ close by Naples on the west coast to Brindisi on the east. So completely was this southern part of Italy dominated by the Greek settlers that it got to be known as Greater Greece. The beginning of this westward movement goes back to days before Hesiod, who tells us how Agrios and Latinos and Telegonos, sons of Odysseus and Circe, "ruled over the famous Etruscans very far off in a recess of the holy islands." But the great period of colonisation in these distant western regions begins in the second half of the eighth century B.C. and continues through the seventh century into the sixth. In the course of it Greek settlers penetrated even farther west and founded Marseilles and other cities on the south coast of France and one or two settlements of less importance on the east coast of Spain, two of which, Rhode and Emporiæ, still preserve their Greek names in the forms Rosas and Ampurias.

To complete the picture of the Greek world at this time mention should be made of the group of cities that was founded on the African coast due south of Greece in the latter part of the seventh century, of which the most famous was Cyrene, of the cities founded by Chalcis in the great three-pronged peninsula that lies to the south and east of Salonika, and of the colonies planted mainly by Megara and Miletus on the Sea of Marmora and the straits at either end of it and the Black Sea. Of these one of the earliest and most important was Byzantium, now known as Constantinople.

The Greeks who founded these colonies were plainly a nation of sailors. This is implied even in Hesiod. Personally, as we have seen already, he intensely disliked the sea. "For my part I do not praise it, for my heart does not like it" is what he says about spring voyages and obviously felt about seafaring at all times of the year. Nobody, he practically says, would ever become a sailor unless he either had a "misguided heart" or wished "to escape from debt and joyless hunger." But all the same he proceeds to give directions as to sea voyaging that assume it to be the normal alternative to agriculture.

This constant association with the sea is one

of the determining factors in Greek history. The sea itself played an enormous part in educating the Greeks and in moulding their outlook. But besides doing that it brought them into contact with a variety of foreign races. It was this familiarity with a large number of widely differing foreign races that made the Greeks at the same time so very conscious of their nationality and (except, of course, in periods of war) comparatively free from the intense provincialism that is so distressing a feature of much modern nationalism. Before proceeding further it will be well, therefore, to give some brief account of these various foreign influences.

Some of these foreigners were still in a fairly primitive state, notably the Scythians, who occupied the lands just north of the Black Sea, and the Thracians to the south-west of them, who occupied the country behind the north coast of the Sea of Marmora and the region westwards towards Macedonia. The Scythians were in race, too, very different from the Greeks, and may have had a Mongolian strain. Elsewhere, as in North Africa, Macedonia, Sicily, and South Italy the natives were probably more advanced in culture and more akin in race. The Macedonians appear to have been closely related to some of the tribes who had forced

their way down into Greece in the Dark Ages. Others, however, of the tribes in these parts must have belonged to the original small dark-haired type that alone seems able to maintain its own permanently in those southern lands, and to the same Mediterranean race belonged the peoples whom the Greeks found occupying the Cyrenaica in North Africa, the race which has survived Greek, Punic, Roman, Vandal, Arab, and Italian invasions, and is now known as Berber.

Only one fully civilised race met the Greeks in any of the regions just mentioned: but that was one that for some centuries had been playing an important part in the development of Greece. This race was the Punic or Phœnician, which occupied the principal sites in the west corner of Sicily. The Phœnicians had been before the Greeks in the Far West and, in fact, over the whole area of the Mediterranean. In Homer articles of luxury come mainly from their great city of Sidon on the Syrian coast, and tradition dated the foundation of Carthage by the people of Tyre, the neighbour of Sidon, somewhere in the middle of the ninth century B.C. or even earlier. It was from Carthage, which lay only some hundred miles south-west of the western end of Sicily, that the Phœnicians had settled in the island. Like some other great

branches of the Semite stock the Phœnicians seem to have been transmitters rather than creators, but in this middleman capacity they did much for the early Greeks. To the south of their home in the land of Canaan lay Egypt, to the east lay Mesopotamia, and the people of the Phœnician trading cities felt the power and influence of both these states. Thus in the Far West the Greeks found themselves in close touch with the people who for centuries had been their chief means of communication with the old civilisations of the East. In later ages, from the fifth century onwards, Greeks and Canaanites were deadly enemies in Sicily, and this fact has rather obscured the friendly relations that at first existed. There is little doubt that one of the most notable of the earliest Greek rulers of whom we hear in Sicily was much devoted to the worship of the Canaanitish god Moloch. That at least seems the only explanation of his unhappy habit of roasting human victims alive in a brazen bull, a proceeding quite familiar in Syria as an act of religious devotion, but altogether alien to Greek feeling and practice. It would be unfair to Phalaris, the ruler in question, to suppose that when he borrowed this practice from his Phœnician neighbours he was not indebted to them in other ways as well.

But the neighbours who most influenced the Greeks of our period are those whom they found as a result of their settlement of Asia Minor, and about these it will be necessary to speak in rather more detail. The powers in question are Lydia and Egypt, and it will be convenient to deal first with Lydia. Lydia only comes into prominence about the year 700 B.C. Its rise thus coincides with the beginnings of the Greek renaissance, and the two events were probably not unconnected. It may help us to understand the connection if for a moment we revert to an earlier period.

In the days of the siege of Troy and of the Greek settlement of the western coast of Asia Minor the greatest and most civilised power in the peninsula was that of the Hittites. Remains of this rather elusive people have been found between Sardis and the sea, but the sites where they can be traced grow increasingly numerous as we proceed eastward, and the centre of their power lay right at the other end of the peninsula. It extended southward into Syria, and thus came into contact with Egypt, and eastward up to the Euphrates, where it touched the great power of Mesopotamia. The remains, and particularly the inscriptions, still unfortunately undeciphered, show the influence of these two main centres of earliest civilisation.

The Hittites were already a great power before the middle of the second millennium B.C., and their long ascendancy determined the character of the civilisation of the whole of the peninsula.¹ But towards the end of the eighth century the whole land from the Euphrates to the Ægean was overrun by barbaric hordes from the North known as the Cimmerians, a name still synonymous with the blackest barbarism. The peoples of Central and Eastern Asia Minor appear to have been the worst sufferers. None of them ever again played any important part. It was this disaster to the peoples further east that opened the way to the predominance of Lydia, much as the destruction of the great Etruscan power in North Italy by the Gauls about the year 400 B.C. opened the way for the rise of Rome, the power against which the flood of Gallic barbarism finally broke. In both cases we find the new power advancing as the wave of invasion recedes, and before long the kings of Lydia had extended their frontier to the Halys, which rises a little north-east of the source of the Euphrates and flowing first in a south-westerly direction then sweeps round in a great semicircle into the Black Sea. In this way Lydia was brought into direct contact with

¹ On this subject see D. G. Hogarth, *Ionia and the East*.

Assyria, which from its capital Nineveh (Mosul) on the upper Tigris had dominated the whole of Mesopotamia from the opening years of the first millennium B.C. Gyges, the king who founded the dynasty under which Lydia rose to this dominant position, acknowledged the king of Assyria as his overlord, and a clay tablet, discovered in Assyria and brought to the British Museum by George Smith in the 'seventies of the last century, tells us how this Gyges, or Gugu, as the tablet calls him, met his death at the hands of the Cimmerians.

It is easy to see how these changes affected the Greeks of the cities on the coast. They were now the immediate neighbours of the greatest power in the Near East, and had only that power between them and what had been for the last few centuries the greatest and most civilised power in the whole world. Relations were not always friendly. There were, in fact, perpetual wars between the Lydians and one or other of the Greek states, and occasionally they proved disastrous for the Greeks. The long-suffering Greek city of Smyrna was captured in one of these Lydian invasions. But as a rule the struggle was not carried to extremities. This, for instance, is how the war was carried on against the city of Miletus: "Every year

when the crops were ripe the king marched his army into the land. The army marched to the music of mouth organs and harps and flutes, both male and female. And when they reached the Milesian territory they neither pulled down nor set fire to the houses in the country, nor removed their doors, but left them as they found them. But after destroying the trees and the crops on the land they went back home; for the Milesians had control of the sea, so that there was no point in a siege. The reason why the Lydian did not pull down the houses was this, that the Milesians might have the means of sowing and working their land again, and as a result he might be able to damage them at the next invasion. In this way he carried on the war for eleven years.”¹ The words just quoted are taken from a Greek historian who was born in one of these Asiatic coast cities only two generations after the order of things that he here describes had passed away. The explanation he gives may be half fanciful and humorous, but it probably embodies a fundamental fact when it says that these Lydian invaders realised that it was not to their own interest to destroy the prosperity of their Greek neighbours even if for the time

¹ Herodotus, i. 17.

they found themselves in a state of war with them.

Such phenomenal intelligence calls for an explanation. Partly it may have been due to the fact that Lydia had risen to power as the leader of the resistance to the Cimmerians, who threatened Greeks and Lydians alike. One of the earliest fragments of Eastern Greek literature comes from a poem by Callinus of Ephesus, in which he exhorts his countrymen to take up arms against the Cimmerian hordes. Without the Lydians the Greeks would have gone under, and they may have felt a lasting gratitude.

But the main reason why Lydia dealt on the whole gently with the Greek cities of the coast was that without them she would have ceased at once to be a great and wealthy power. The greatness of Lydia depended partly on her mines, of which we shall have more to say in a moment. But the mines owed much of their importance to the other great factor in the history of the country, and that was the great road that ran eastwards from Sardis, the Lydian capital, through the whole length of the peninsula and enabled caravans to convey the products of Babylon and Nineveh and the civilised East into the young and newly developing countries of the Far West. It is not

difficult to see why about this time Sardis became the most important point in the whole route. Situated as it was at roughly the same distance from quite a number of the Greek seaports it became the clearing house where the Easterners discharged their caravan loads for distribution by the Lydians themselves among the Greek cities of the coast. These latter in their turn would carry them by ship all over the Mediterranean and the Black Sea and return with the raw products, which would be collected at Sardis and there be loaded on to the caravans that transported them to the Far East. The statements just made are not mere deductions from the geographical situation. The Greeks themselves recognised the great part played in commercial history by the Lydians, who are actually said to have been the earliest merchants. The authority for this statement is Herodotus, the historian who has just been quoted on Lydian relationships with the Greeks of Asia.¹

A still more important part in the history of commerce is ascribed to the Lydians by several good ancient authorities,² according to whom they were the first people in the world to strike

¹ Herodotus, i. 94.

² Among them Herodotus (i. 94).

and issue metal coins. Some modern critics have disputed the Lydians' claim to this epoch-making discovery, but the evidence is all in favour of the ancient tradition. The earliest extant coins are very thick and rather amorphous pieces with a type only on one side (see Plate XII, 1). They are found principally in West Asia Minor, and if not struck by the Lydians must have been the work of their Greek neighbours to the west. If hitherto they have been found mainly on the coast the reason may well be that the coast has been much more accessible than the interior, and the Greeks who still inhabit it are much more alive than the Turks of the interior to the value of finds of ancient coins. The metal used for these very early pieces is neither gold nor silver, but a natural mixture of the two known as white gold or electrum. The sources of this metal were the mines on the Lydian Mount Tmolus and the washings of the Lydian River Pactolus, and though, of course, the metal need not have been coined where it was found, the Lydian origin of the metal lends a certain probability to the claims of Lydia to be the maker of the coins.¹

¹ The early date of these electrum coins is shown by the find recently made by the British Museum authorities when excavating the temple of Artemis (Diana) at Ephesus. This

If we try to visualise the state of things that led to the great invention, we shall be further confirmed in the belief that the tradition that attributes it to Lydia is true. So far as a metal currency has been a blessing to mankind, it has been so because it made it possible for property to be transferred and distributed much more expeditiously and with much less waste of labour than had been possible under any earlier system of exchange. Who then, about the time at which we know that coins were first struck, would have found the greatest benefit from the invention? The Greeks, as pointed out by the French scholar Radet in his history of Lydia,¹ were essentially merchant seamen. They would set out from Ephesus or Miletus with a cargo of manufactured articles or materials from their own cities or the civilised

building was first erected on a grand scale in the days of Crœsus, king of Lydia from about 560 to 546 B.C. The excavators found the remains of two successive buildings that must have been earlier than the temple of Crœsus, and in a position that showed them to be earlier than the earliest of these buildings they found a large number of these electrum coins. The same date is suggested by the style of the coins. We know that by about 550 B.C. coins were struck with "heads" and "tails" like those we still use (see e.g. Plate XII, 3). The primitive electrum coins have a design on one side only and are technically not nearly so advanced as the coins known to have been current in the middle of the sixth century.

¹ G. Radet, *La Lydie et le Monde Grec*.

countries further east, and return with the raw products of some such undeveloped country as Italy, Spain, or South Russia. It is a matter of exchanging cargo for cargo. The whole transaction is best done without the use of anything like money as we now understand it. But at Sardis the state of things was different. The baggage animals that came with carpets and the like from Central Asia were in no need of heavy loads to serve as ballast on the homeward route. Very often they would be more than contented to return with a small but precious load of gold or silver from the Far West or electrum from Lydia itself. We may be fairly sure that the precious metals travelled eastward in some abundance in this caravan trade, and consequently that the Lydian merchants in the bazaars at Sardis would have a strong motive for keeping their stock of these metals in the form most convenient for trade. It is hardly rash to assume that a nation of shopkeepers, such as the Lydians unquestionably were, must have realised that the middleman's profits are safest and probably in the long run greatest when the largest possible amount of business passes through his hands. In other words, we find in Lydia precisely the circumstances that would inspire the invention of a metal coinage. The trader who kept his

precious metals in the form of coins of a fixed weight and guaranteed quality would have struck his bargain and be already getting on with the next piece of business while his old-fashioned rival was only at the beginning of the elaborate operation of sawing up gold bars or sorting out gold rings in order to make some corresponding payment, the operation being rendered the more complicated by the fact that like Lot and Abraham he still kept his accounts in units of sheep and oxen.

It would probably be difficult to over-estimate the influence that Lydia exercised on the Greeks of the coast just west of it. It made them the nation of traders that they have been ever since, and that by itself, with a people gifted like the Greeks, meant that it made them exceptionally quick-witted and keen observers. But that was only a small part of the effect of contact with the people who controlled the great East road. All sorts of wrought articles passed westwards along it, and their skilful workmanship stimulated the Greeks to emulate and later to surpass their models. Nor was it only material things that travelled thus. Skilled workmen from the East may have come at least as far west as the royal residence at Sardis, and directly or in-

directly Greek workmen must have become their pupils. In engineering, too, and in some of the sciences, notably astronomy, the peoples of Mesopotamia were comparative experts, and in these spheres also the wisdom of the East came now in some measure to cities like Miletus and Ephesus along the great Lydian road.

While Gyges was building up Lydia into a great power in Asia Minor, Egypt was recovering its lost greatness under a prince named Psamtek, or, as the Greeks called him, Psammetichus. The centuries that followed the overthrow of Mycenæan civilisation in the Ægean had been equally black for Egypt. The country had broken up into a number of petty principalities whose rulers spent their time in feuds with one another like so many mediæval barons. We even find tournaments organised in a way that curiously recalls those of our own mediæval period,¹ while the subject of the joust, a piece of armour belonging to a dead prince, and the general behaviour of the chieftains and the angry impotence of their nominal overlord suggest a comparison with Agamemnon and his unruly subordinates before

¹ Maspero, *Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt*, translated by Mrs. C. H. W. Johns, pp. 217 f. (*The High Emprise for the Cuirass*).

the walls of Troy. These internal dissensions had opened the way for foreign invaders, and the kings of Assyria had entered the country from the north-east, while the Ethiopians had advanced into it from the south, and in the eighth century established some sort of supremacy over the whole country. Psamtek, who was prince of Sais in the western part of the Delta, made himself king of the whole country, reducing the other princes to the position of vassals and driving the Assyrians and Ethiopians out of the land. This, of course, meant that he had more men and more money than his rivals, and it was to secure these advantages that he opened up the country to the Greeks. He made his money by trading with foreigners across the sea, among whom were certainly the Greeks of the Asiatic coast, and he enlisted to fight for him Ionian Greeks, that is, Greeks from the central cities of that same region. When Psammetichus was firmly established he did not disband these mercenaries, but concentrated them in a camp on the Suez frontier in a place known to the Greeks as Daphnæ : in the Bible the name appears in the form Tapahnes : it is the place where Jeremiah sought refuge from the Babylonians. Some thirty years ago the site was excavated by Flinders Petrie, and the numerous finds that

he made there of objects both Greek and Egyptian enable us to form some picture of the ancient town and to fill in many historical details as to the Greek occupation.

Psamtek founded a dynasty, the twenty-sixth, which continued to prosper and govern Egypt during the whole period of the Greek renaissance. All through this period of over one hundred and fifty years the Egyptian pharaohs depended largely on their Greek mercenaries, and continued the facilities for the Greeks to trade in Egypt. Somewhere towards the end of the seventh century a brother of the poetess Sappho is known to have traded with Egypt in the wines of his native Mitylene. The chief port in Egypt for this Greek trade was Naucratis, a city lying some way up the most western branch of the Nile. This site, too, has been excavated, and the finds show what a flourishing place this Greek emporium was.¹

These traders and mercenaries must have kept their fellow-countrymen in touch with Egypt all through the period whose history we

¹ Some doubts have been expressed as to whether the Greek settlement goes back to the early days of Psamtek, but a full examination of the evidence of both excavations and ancient writers shows fairly decisively that it did.

are tracing, and it is inconceivable that under these circumstances Egypt should not have played a considerable part in the great movements that were taking place in the Greek world. Now Egypt herself, under the twenty-sixth dynasty, witnessed a remarkable revival of all her ancient prosperity, the armed retainers of the petty chiefs of the preceding period giving place to armies of artisans and craftsmen engaged in building great temples, carving great statues, and generally in making good the losses of some centuries of anarchy and civil war. We cannot here trace in detail the ways in which Egyptian influence was felt in Greece, but the influence is manifest at the first glance to anyone who has ever compared an early sixth century Greek statue (e.g. Plate III) with the work of Egyptian sculptors. There can be little doubt, too, that the antiquity of the temples and monuments that he saw everywhere in Egypt roused the historical imagination of the Greek visitor, while his geographical sense was similarly stimulated by the mighty river which in so obvious and striking a manner positively makes the land of Egypt. Here again we are not indulging in pure speculation or a priori probabilities. We can detect these influences in the Greek historian Herodotus, who visited Egypt less than a cen-

ture after the overthrow of the dynasty that Psamtek founded.

The Greeks who at this period traded with Egypt or supplied its kings with soldiers came mainly from the same Asiatic cities that saw so much of the armies and the traders of the kingdom of Lydia. The original mercenaries of Psamtek are said to have been Ionians, their earliest settlement in Egypt was known as the Milesians' Fort, while of twelve Greek cities that enjoyed the privilege of permanent quarters in Naucratis only one, the island of Ægina, belonged to European Greece : the rest all lay on the Asiatic coast or on the islands immediately off it. In Egypt and in the Further East these comparatively new Greek cities were brought face to face with civilisations much older and more developed than their own. In other directions, as observed already, they were constantly meeting with peoples very much more primitive. Miletus, for instance, was engaged in planting her settlements round the shores of the Black Sea, which, with the vast rich plains behind them, soon came to mean to the Greek world something of what Canada has meant for modern England. The neighbouring Samians, in a famous voyage to which we shall have occasion to revert in Chapter VII, explored as far as Tartessos, the Biblical Tar-

shish, in Spain, and won enormous wealth by exploiting its silver mines, or rather the natives who worked them.

This concludes our very brief survey of the geographical distribution and grouping of the Greek race and the alien races with which at this time it found itself in contact. It remains in this chapter to indicate some of the ways in which the Greeks of this period were moulded and influenced by their environment.

One inevitable effect of the wanderings of the Greeks themselves was that they had become a very mixed race. The population of the mother country itself was the result of successive waves of immigration. In some spots no doubt, and notably in Sparta, two separate streams of invaders and the aboriginal stock each maintained all through the historical period a quite separate existence. In others, including perhaps Athens, the floods of invasion had swept past and left the original population practically undisturbed, except by refugees of their own race. But even in regions that escaped invasion there must often have been much peaceful penetration by foreign elements, notably in Athens itself, while in most invaded districts there must have been much inter-

marriage. On the Asiatic coast not only did the original Greek settlers come in three different groups, but on their arrival they intermarried largely with the various native races whom they dispossessed. This may safely be assumed from the character of such expeditions, where among the invaders men are bound to be in an immense preponderance, while the invasion is almost certain to leave the native women more numerous than the marriageable men of their race. In the case of the Milesians, whose city soon won the first place among the new settlements, we are expressly told that the invaders intermarried largely with the native Carian women. If we wish for a more vivid picture of the sort of thing that must have been constantly happening we have only to read the story of Briseis in the Iliad, whom Achilles took to live with him after he had sacked her city and killed off all her male relations. The Greeks of this period were, therefore, a mixed race, and the mixture was by no means uniform. In the main, however, it was the union of the youthful North with the more ancient and sophisticated South, a union that more than once has been found to produce a particularly gifted progeny. As a work of art no doubt the prize goes to the thoroughbred, but from the point of view of creative genius and

intelligence the mixed breed is generally found to come easily first.

Antecedents and upbringing also played their part in making the Greeks what they were. For generations past they had been an adventurous people. In the days of the actual migrations there must have, indeed, been restless spirits, with something in them of Homer's Odysseus, who took their whole future into their hands and sought a new home across the seas. Right on into the days of the renaissance this thirst for adventure continued equally strong. Without it the Black Sea would never have been fringed with Ionian colonies, and Psamtek of Egypt would never have gathered together the Ionian mercenaries with whose help he became pharaoh and re-established Egypt as a great power.

But what differentiated these adventurers of the seventh century B.C. from their ancestors in the eighth century and earlier was that their wanderings were not due merely to external pressure or aimless unrest. They had by now become the enterprises of an organised society with definite constructive aims.

The period of exploration was practically at an end. The whole Mediterranean area had been opened up to Greek trade, and every Greek city began to form more or less regular

and recognised connections with mother or sister cities in other parts of this greater Greek world. Each of the cities of Sicily or South Italy, for instance, was in fairly constant communication with some definite group of cities in the mother country and with one or more of the Greek settlements still further to the north and west. Even the Greek cities of Spain are shown by archæological finds to have been in frequent touch with their mother cities in Asia Minor. Life was still sufficiently rich in adventure and variety to drive home the fact that human nature is not static and uniform. On the other hand, it was sufficiently stable and ran on definite enough lines to allow for and encourage a continuous growth and development. This was the case all over the Greek world, but most of all in the Ionic cities, and this is perhaps the main reason why they took the lead.

In one other point Ionia was peculiarly favoured. Too often it happens that the milk and honey of the promised land prove the ultimate downfall of its possessors. The enterprising nation pushing its way to a place in the sun advances just a little too far so that the warmth produces enervation. To the modern inhabitant of Northern Europe the climate of the East Ægean may seem too warm

for a really energetic life ; but on this point it is necessary to remember that climate may change in the course of twenty-five centuries : the retirement northwards of the great ice belt of the last glacial period is a comparatively recent event, and apart from such purely natural considerations it must be remembered that the climate of any given region can be to some extent affected by the people who inhabit it according as they treat the vegetation and the surface water of their land. The neglected Mesopotamia of the Turks must be very different climatically from the elaborately irrigated and canalised Mesopotamia of the great empires of antiquity. And not only may the actual climate change but also the climatic requirements of humanity in its varying phases of development. Bearing these facts in mind there is no reason for not accepting for this period the words of Herodotus, who asserts that from the point of view of climate Ionia was favoured above all the regions of the known world.¹

But though the Asiatic cities were thus specially favoured and took the lead, the rest of the Greek world followed close behind. What they severally achieved in the

¹ Herodotus, i. 142.

various spheres of art and literature, science and philosophy, political and social organisation will be indicated in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER IV

THE RENAISSANCE IN ARTS, CRAFTS AND COMMERCE

THE disastrous effects of an age of wars and invasions are not to be measured merely by an inventory of positive destruction. Achilles and Agamemnon did more than destroy Troy. They destroyed for the time being at any rate the will to reconstruct it. Men will build well and strongly only when there is a reasonable prospect of their work enduring, and the fall of Troy and Cnossus must have meant to the men of that period that no such prospect longer existed. It was nearly half a millennium before any serious attempt at reconstruction began. Some of the factors that inspired the renaissance have been touched on already in Chapter III, but none of them would have had any serious permanent effect on Greece but for the fact that the Greeks themselves were settling down and becoming comparatively peaceful and law-abiding

members of organised societies. To the end of their history the Greek city states were in a chronic state of war with one another, but from the seventh century B.C. onward within the city walls life was comparatively safe. Men began to go about the streets of their own city unarmed. It was an epoch-making change and from it Thucydides dates the beginning of Greek greatness.

The new sense of security profoundly altered the whole life of the Greeks. There was an outburst of constructive activity such as the world has seldom seen. It affected thought still more than action, but even the material results were sufficiently remarkable. Greek art still sets our standards even where it does not furnish us with models. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to giving a short account of the way in which it developed its main characteristics.

In architecture the great achievement of seventh-century Greece was the evolution of the Greek temple, the general plan and style of which will be familiar to most readers of these pages. A rectangular hall is surrounded externally by a colonnade and the whole covered by a gabled roof. Until late in Greek history all Greek temples were erected in one or other of two styles. In the simpler and

severer, which is known as the Doric (see Plate I), the pillars rise directly from the platform on which the temple is erected; the pillar itself tapers upward, not, however, in a straight line but with a slight convex curve that adds greatly to the impression of strength; the broad shallow flutings that run from top to bottom of the pillar are carved so close together that only a sharp edge is left between them; the capital of the column consists of a round member, something like an inverted bun, placed beneath a square plinth on which rests the architrave, or principal horizontal member for the support of the roof; over the architrave is another horizontal member divided into squares known alternately as metopes and triglyphs: the triglyph is always carved vertically with sharp angular flutings, the metopes are sometimes left plain but more often decorated with sculpture.

In Ionic architecture (Plate II) the pillars rest on a base; the pillar itself is slenderer and has not the subtle curve of the Doric; the flutings are placed slightly apart from one another; the capital consists of two volutes; the architrave is carved horizontally to give the effect of three courses of which the two highest each slightly overlaps the one beneath;

while over this again, in the place of the Doric triglyphs and metopes, we find a continuous band of sculpture. There is no need here to describe in detail the other parts of a Greek temple. Of the general character of Greek architecture some idea may be formed from such modern imitations as the British Museum or St. Pancras Church in London, both of which are strictly correct in their rendering of details. But these modern copies and adaptations never catch anything of the atmosphere of the old Greek buildings, while even in externals they give no idea of two of the most striking characteristics of the ancient Greek temple. The first of these is the rigid way in which it adhered to a single plan and to one or other of these two schemes of decoration. The great cathedrals left us by our own Middle Ages have accustomed us to expect great variety of shape and the promiscuous use in one and the same building of numerous styles of decoration. But with one or two exceptions the Greek temple keeps rigidly to its rectangular form, and almost without exception it will be found that any given temple is pure Doric throughout or pure Ionic. If a modern tourist could follow in the footsteps of the Greek Pausanias, who wrote a sort of Baedeker's guide to Ancient Greece in the second century A.D.,

he would probably feel that there was a good deal of monotony about these old temples. But that was not the feeling of the men who put them up. There is no doubt that they were out to realise an ideal, and that mathematical theories played a large part in their conceptions. They had a keen practical sense of proportion. That is shown in the extant remains of their buildings. But they had something else besides this. Their work had a mathematical basis. The sense of proportion was for them not a matter of intuition, but of mathematical reasoning. This unremitting intellectual control gives to Greek architecture perhaps its most outstanding character. The Greek architect sometimes made mistakes, but he was never silly in the way that more recent architects so often are. There is another aspect of this rigid adherence to type that deserves our notice. It has no connexion with the apparently similar phenomenon that may be observed in modern slum architecture. This latter means simply intellectual idleness on the part of the builders, who will not be bothered to think out plans of their own. Greek uniformity meant something quite different. It meant that a whole band of workers was concentrated on solving a single problem, much like the great builders of any one generation of the Gothic

period, or the great artists of modern times who have evolved our steam engines and ships and aeroplanes, or their minor contemporaries who have perfected the cricket bat and the tennis racket. All these men have worked under the same inspiration, namely, that of believing that by infinite pains something like perfection might be obtained within a given limited sphere.

The other great difference between, let us say, the British Museum as we see it to-day and a Greek temple as it appeared while still in repair is in the matter of colour. Greek temples were coloured outside as well as in, the various details being picked out in blue, red, and other bright colours. This may sound cheap and garish to readers whose ideas of good external architecture are all based on the weathered stone and brick of our own best buildings, especially if he connects coloured exteriors with the modern atrocities in glazed tiles that at present disfigure so many of our streets. But there is little doubt that our own great mediæval architects only refrained from colouring the outsides of their buildings because they could not in our moist climate devise any scheme of outside colouring that would not quickly wear off. Internally their buildings were one mass of colours, walls and roof as well

as windows. If they had had the means and material, they would have coloured their exteriors quite as freely as did the mediæval builders of Florence or Orvieto. But whereas Giotto's tower at Florence and the great western façade of Orvieto Cathedral produce their colour schemes by the lavish use of coloured marbles, the Greeks, on the other hand, when they came to build stone temples, secured coloured exteriors by the use of paint. The morals and merits of this process will be discussed later in the chapter, when something has been said of Greek sculptors, who also made considerable use of it. A word, however, may here be said about the history of the practice as applied to the outside of buildings. The marble temple was not in Greece the result of a gradual evolution. It was a translation into more monumental material of a type of building that in its earlier stages had been mainly of wood and in the next stages of soft stone. Both these materials need protection from the weather. When wood was employed this had been secured by facing the more exposed parts of the building (as well, of course, as the roof) with terra-cotta. The terra-cotta vases of this period were gaily coloured, and the architectural terra-cottas, which were doubtless produced by the same firms as the

vases, were coloured in the same way.¹ These highly coloured architectural terra-cottas were used widely and for a long period; there are many specimens in our museums.² When wood and bricks gave way to stone, the stone first employed, being soft and by no means weather-proof, was largely protected by means of stucco and paint. This painted stone architecture was very prevalent in the sixth century. But even when marble was employed numerous details were still picked out in colours. A building of bare white marble unrelieved by any colour would have struck a Greek as chilly and bleak.

It is not only in its colouring that the marble temple betrays its wooden prototype. Many details of the ornamentation are almost literal translations from wood into stone. For instance, the triglyphs described above represent the wooden beams that bore the weight of the roof, while the metopes were originally slabs of

¹ In North Nigeria, so I am informed by my friend, J. W. S. Macfie, of the West African medical service, they actually use plates for this purpose, particularly soup plates, which from their shape can be better embedded in the walls of the native mud huts.

² See, e.g., the fine set from Lanuvium now in the British Museum. Fresh examples are constantly being discovered, e.g. the splendid fragments recently unearthed by Orsi at Syracuse.

terra-cotta or other material placed between these beam ends to prevent the damp getting in and rotting the woodwork.

This bold borrowing of forms that were structural in the older material to serve for purely ornamental purposes in the new is particularly interesting to students of modern architecture; for modern architects are face to face with a similar problem, namely, how far they are to preserve the effects of brick and stone in the new buildings whose structure is based on concrete and iron.

In sculpture the Greeks are generally admitted to have produced works that have never been surpassed. Complete mastery was only reached in the fifth century B.C., but it is easier to realise what was being done in the sixth century if we first turn for a moment to the achievements of the fifth. These latter can nowhere be better studied than in the British Museum, which possesses a magnificent series of reliefs and figures in the round that once adorned the Parthenon, the chief temple of Athens, erected between the years 447 and 438 B.C., but were brought to England by Lord Elgin a century ago. It is difficult and dangerous to try to write a verbal appreciation of a work of art, but among the words that best suggest what these Greek artists achieved we

may safely put beauty, sanity, appropriateness, and a certain solemn restfulness. The modern world is only too familiar with sculptures that abound in force and in nothing else. In all periods when sculptors have thoroughly mastered their technique they tend to try and express in bronze and marble conceptions that are quite unsuitable to such materials. Sometimes, again, sculpture has been captured by mysticism and symbolism and ceased to appeal to any except sectarians and the historians who study their aberrations. In process of time the Greek artists fell astray in all these ways ; but unlike the sculptors of most races and epochs they were not perverted till after they had for one brief period expressed in bronze and marble statues just what is best expressed in that way and cannot so adequately be expressed in any other.

Why the Greeks excelled so in sculpture is hard to state. In painting they were probably not nearly so successful. To judge from such evidence as we have at our disposal it is probable that Greek painting even of the very best period would have seemed to us charming but rather thin, and not nearly so expressive as the best modern work. It is, indeed, arguable that the Greeks were just at that stage of development when artistic ideas were best

expressed by sculpture, whereas in modern life, where form appeals less and atmosphere more, sculpture is an archaism, except for decorative purposes, and the picture, stationary or moving, the one live vehicle for artistic ideas.

But to pass from so controversial a point there seems little doubt that one reason why Greek sculpture succeeded in attaining its goal was this: it enjoyed a natural and uninterrupted evolution with just sufficient external stimulus and assistance, but no more. This fact may serve to remind us that we are concerned here only with the earlier stages of the evolution to which it is time that we now reverted.

In sculpture as in architecture the Dark Ages have left us practically nothing. Possibly the gods and great men of the period were represented in wood, since some of the earliest stone statues of the Renaissance appear to have a partly wooden pedigree. In some of them, as for instance a statue of the goddess Artemis found on the island of Delos (Plate III), the body is flat and rectangular like a piece of squared wood; in others, as in a statue of Hera found on the island of Samos (Plate IV), the body is round in section like the trunk of a tree and the folds of the drapery are treated

in a way that rather recalls the grain of wood. These earliest Greek statues often strike the spectator as Egyptian in character, and it is not unlikely that Egypt supplied part at least of the inspiration and possibly of the technique. None of them goes back earlier than the Egyptian revival under the Saite dynasty and the Greek settlements in Egypt early in the seventh century B.C. But Greek tradition ascribed the first debt of Greek sculpture not to Egypt but to Crete, and though modern excavation has not directly confirmed this tradition, it accords well with the recent discovery of the great part played by Crete in prehistoric times.

To turn from origins to developments, the statues of Artemis and Hera above referred to both represent standing draped female figures, and it so happens that we are particularly well able to trace the progressive treatment of this type. Draped female figures were set up in numbers on the Acropolis at Athens, where they were doubtless regarded as particularly appropriate, since Athens was the city of the virgin goddess Athena. In 480 B.C., when the Persians sacked Athens, they damaged and overthrew a whole series of such statues. It was a period when fashions in art were rapidly changing, and so instead of restoring and

re-erecting these damaged works the Athenians made new ones and used the old as building material to help to raise the level of the Acropolis. There they lay buried till 1886, when the Greek archæological society excavated the site, rediscovered these buried statues, and re-erected them in a place of honour in the new museum on the Acropolis within a few yards of the places where they must have stood till Xerxes cast them down. They have been studied with great care and classed in various groups according to their dates and schools. Some of them (see e.g. Plate V) show obvious affinities with the primitive Artemis of Delos, but others (see e.g. Plate VI) show a very high skill and advanced technique. In more ways than one, however, the whole series contradicts our common conceptions of Greek art. The treatment is not broad and simple and severe, but elaborate and sophisticated and even modish. The ladies' dress is highly complicated and has been the subject of much controversy among experts. Their hair must have required hours of attention daily. Even their smile is highly cultivated. In many ways their merits are those that are commonly claimed for Japanese art rather than for Greek. But side by side with this draped female type of statue the Greeks were developing another

that even from its earlier stages had a character pre-eminently Greek. This was the nude male figure (Plate VII). At first the type is treated in a primitive enough way, standing at attention with arms glued to the side, mouth straight like a slot or curved upwards in what is now known among archæologists as the archaic smile, and large staring eyes such as befit a new arrival upon our earth. Statues of this type have been found in many parts of Greece, and a development of treatment can be easily traced. The legs are detached from one another and the arms from the body; muscles and anatomical details generally get to be represented with more and more skill; similar progress is made in the treatment of the face, though eyes and mouth long baffled the artist.

Greek art found its true self when these two conflicting currents at last converged. It was, indeed, long held that no such convergence ever took place; that the Athenian elaboration of the sixth century B.C. was something that conflicted radically with all that was best in the Greek genius; and that Greek art only found its true expression when the Persian wars had swept away this over-elaboration, and caused all Greece, Athens included, to adopt the ideals of the severe Dorian school that had

developed the virile athletic type in art. Such a view is not supported by the archæological evidence. Athens was already casting aside this over-elaboration before the Persian wars began, and Greek art of the fifth century B.C. is not a repudiation of Athenian art of the sixth. The simplicity of Pheidias is like that of Plato : it is the last word in culture and refinement, which nearly always passes through a stage of over-elaboration before it reaches its goal. Like the corresponding change that took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century this revolution in dress reflected a revolution in politics and thought. It was Rousseau and the French Revolution that put an end to wigs and powder and introduced the Byronic collar, and the course of events in Greece towards the end of the sixth century was probably not dissimilar. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. were an age of enlightened despotism and luxurious refinement. In all probability the movement towards simplicity in the latter part of the sixth century B.C. was closely bound up with the overthrow of these enlightened but luxurious despots.

One striking feature of ancient Greek sculpture that has already been mentioned in the section on architecture remains to be noticed

a little more fully here. The statues were coloured. In most extant specimens the colouring has entirely disappeared. The only series where it is preserved at all completely is that of the draped female statues from the Athenian Acropolis. From them, however, we can still get a fair idea of the original effect. Heavy opaque colours are used only for minor details, such as the hair and patterns (generally borders) on the dresses (see Plates V, VI). Larger surfaces are treated with light transparent stains that leave the texture of the marble visible. The result is something far less tiring to the eye and far more beautiful and expressive than anything that can be achieved in plain white stone. It is important to realise that it is we and not the Greeks who are abnormal in this respect. The ancient Egyptians made use of colour in their statues and reliefs. So, too, did the great sculptors of mediæval Europe. White stone statues came in with whitewashed churches and other artistic aberrations of the Puritan movements of the seventeenth century. Why a reaction towards normal conditions has been so slow in coming may be easily explained. The choice, as we generally see it now, is between honest work in plain marble and highly coloured efforts in wax or plaster that are thoroughly meritricious in

every way. Colour, in short, as connected with statuary, has come to connote cheap material and bad art. But the connotation is purely accidental. We have only to look beyond the narrow limits of our own epoch to see it for what it is worth and treat it accordingly.

But for the study of early Greek handwork far the most abundant material is supplied by pottery, and Greek pottery is exceptionally valuable from the historical point of view. In the first place the Greeks of this period were very fond of painting pictures on their vases, and these vase paintings, besides being often very interesting from their subjects, are now our chief source of knowledge as to the achievements of Greek painters and draughtsmen. The potters of the Dark Ages had also painted pictures on their pots, but their drawing, as already mentioned,¹ was childish in the extreme, a primitive form of cubism in which the human figure was represented by various arrangements of squares, triangles, and straight lines. This geometric pottery (Plate VIII a) lasted well into the seventh century, but after 700 B.C. it was no longer the most popular style. The new school of vase painters was less aspiring in

¹ Above, p. 23.

its subjects, but far more skilful in the execution. Instead of attempting long funeral processions or battle scenes and such difficult problems as that of representing the deceased in his coffin or the internal arrangements of a man of war, the new artists spent most of their time in drawing long friezes of animals or birds, and it was only after a long apprenticeship at this sort of work that they began to paint men and gods. Two schools of these animal artists are to be distinguished, one of which flourished in the Greek cities of Asia Minor and is generally known as Ionian (Plate VIII b), the other on the Greek mainland at Corinth. Both schools got their main effect by drawing in black silhouette on a creamy ground ; but the Corinthians painted the whole figure in silhouette and then expressed or emphasised details by means of patches of purple paint or by incised lines (Plate IX), whereas the Ionian painters only used silhouettes for the main part of their figures, while the heads were left in outline, thus enabling them to paint in such details as the eyes and mouth. Both schools alike are decorative rather than descriptive, and filled up the empty spaces between the various animals and even the voids left between their legs or above their backs with ornamental

patterns such as rosettes.¹ These fill ornaments, as they are called, cause vase paintings in these two styles to look not unlike pieces of tapestry or Persian carpet. The resemblance is probably not accidental. Homer praises the woven work of the women of Sidon, and it was probably some such work that afforded the models used by the potters of Miletus and Corinth.

In the change from animal decoration to subjects that are mainly human and descriptive the Corinthians and Ionians certainly contributed,² but the leading part was soon assumed by Athens. The Athenian potters come to the fore early in the sixth century. One of the earliest of their masterpieces is reproduced on Plate X. Like the Corinthians they drew their figures in black silhouette with details expressed by incised lines, and like them too they sometimes used other colours for details, notably white for the flesh of women and purple for the beards of men. The latter seems to have no relation to the facts of nature, but the white probably tells a melancholy truth. The women of Athens seldom left their houses, and the

¹ Differently drawn in the two styles, cp. Plate VIII b with Plate IX.

² See, e.g. Plate VIII b, a comparatively late specimen of its style.

unhealthy pallor of their complexions must have offered a striking contrast to the bronzed faces of the men. The ground colour of Athenian vases is not cream but red.

Now that the vase painters were drawing real pictures the rosettes and other fill ornaments of the earlier styles were only in the way, and soon they disappeared. Their places, however, were not always left vacant. More and more frequently the potter is a man who can read and write and he labels his gods and heroes with their respective names. Sometimes, again, he puts words into the mouths of his figures: one of these vase painters, for instance, has drawn us two elegant Athenians sitting very lightly clad and both looking at a swallow. "See, the swallow!" says one of them. "By Heracles, spring already," replies the other. Another symptomatic fact is that these Athenian potters often sign their names. Some vases bear the signature of the potter, some of the painter, a few of both. Of one of these potters, by name Nicosthenes, we possess over ninety signed vases. Perhaps it is no accident that this particular potter turned out on the whole worse ware than any of his less productive and pushful contemporaries.

About the year 530 B.C. the Attic potters developed a new style of vase painting, known

generally as red figure in contradistinction to the black figure style that it replaced. In the red figure style (Plate XI) the artist drew his outline as before on the red or terra-cotta coloured ground of the vase ; but instead of filling in the outline in black he filled in the background with black and left the figures in red. This enabled him to paint in details with fine pencil lines instead of the incisions used on the black figure vases, and as regards individual figures enabled him to express himself as freely as the modern artist working in pen and ink. This is perhaps as far as the great artists got whose pictures the vase painter humbly borrowed from. There is no evidence that the possibilities of background and atmosphere were realised even by the greatest of Greek painters. Even in drawing the sixth-century Attic vase painters were not yet technically perfect. They had not, for instance, realised that though the human eye is almond-shaped it does not appear so and therefore should not be drawn so when the face is in profile. We may, indeed, love them simply for their very quaintness. But there is also a refinement and charm about their drawings that will be sought in vain among the facile and florid productions of later ages.

Greek vases of the styles just described have

been found in enormous quantities not only in Attica and other parts of Greece, but also in Italy, Egypt, South Russia, and elsewhere. This fact by itself is enough to show how Greek trade was developing in all directions. For the vases discovered can only form a minute fraction of those that were exported, and if Greek vases penetrated everywhere in this way we may be sure that other kinds of Greek goods did so equally. Pottery is not a particularly portable commodity. Where it differs from most others is in being practically indestructible. If we visit any ancient site, Greek, Roman, ancient British, or even early Saxon, we shall if we use our eyes find plenty of potsherds of the period, but of other remains often none at all. Wood rots, metal rusts, most stones are more or less friable, while such as are not get taken away to be used elsewhere for other purposes. But potsherds have no intrinsic value. Violent treatment diminishes their size but increases their number, and thus the amount and quality of pottery on a site gives some idea of the amount and quality of other products that were once in use there.

Apart from the archæological evidence we know from ancient writers that commerce and industry were rapidly developing. Thucydides regarded the growth of trade and shipping as

one of the dominant features of our period. The Dark Ages had been ages of isolation and exclusiveness. Ships there were, indeed, and in some number : but they were mostly pirates or ships equipped to keep the pirates off. But in the seventh century B.C. we begin to hear of Greek merchant adventurers somewhat of the Dick Whittington description, who sail away into distant lands and come back incredibly wealthy as a result of bartering Greek goods for the products of the lands they visit. After a time the leading Greek cities began to have regular trade connexions with this or that quarter of the foreign world or the Greek world overseas. There were, for instance, close trade connexions between Miletus in Asia Minor and Sybaris in South Italy.

On the land, too, a similar development was taking place. The city states were still in a condition of chronic antagonism as acute and as absurd as that which prevails in Europe at this day. But the governments of this particular period were largely trying to mitigate this condition of things. Most of the leading states established about this time a typically Greek institution in the shape of solemn games, held in some cases annually, in some biennially, in some once every four years. These games were primarily athletic and literary competitions in

which all Greeks were eligible to compete. In point of fact they became as well a kind of great fair held under conditions that recall the mediæval truce of God. All kinds of people gathered at these meetings and they came to mean among other things that at regular periods members of all Greek cities, whether allies, neutrals, or belligerents, had an opportunity of discussing business, politics, or even ideas. Pindar, who began writing at the close of our period, and whose extant works are all occasional poems written in honour of victors at these games, makes frequent allusions to the commercial ties of the cities that he glorifies. For him, as for the other more enlightened supporters of these institutions, the games were great inter-city, or as we should say, international gatherings that made for understanding and reconciliation among the states assembled. His hopes, it is true, proved as baseless as those of the men who organised the Great Exhibition of 1851, not to mention more recent aspirations in the same direction. But though these festivals failed to achieve all that poets hoped of them, it would be a mistake to estimate lightly the value of what they did in fact achieve. When all is said these Greek games remain one of the few notable efforts to reconcile a deeply rooted local patriotism with a

really live internationalism that the world has so far seen.¹

¹ No popular books are devoted exclusively to the arts and industries of Greece during the archaic period, but they are, of course, dealt with incidentally in all general accounts of the subjects, e.g. (to quote only works of very modest prices) H. B. Walters' little volume on *Greek Art* in the Little Books on Art series, and the *Guide to Greek and Roman Antiquities in the British Museum* and the similar *Guide to Greek and Roman Life*, both published by the Museum Authorities and obtainable at the Museum. Better still, of course, if these can be supplemented by a study of the originals. For sculpture, see the earlier part of E. Gardner's *Handbook of Greek Sculpture*.

CHAPTER V

THE RENAISSANCE IN THOUGHT

THE artists and craftsmen whose work was the subject of Chapter IV were conscious of their debt to more ancient civilisations, and particularly to that of Crete. Some of them are described as sons of Dædalus, the marvellous craftsman who had worked for the Cretan King Minos. Dædalus had put such life into his statues that they had to be chained up to prevent them from walking away from their pedestals, and it was very possibly the rediscovery of Cretan masterpieces that inspired the artists of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. just as the discovery of Greek and Roman masterpieces fired the artists of the modern European renaissance.

Whether the renaissance in thought had a similar origin is hard to say. Some of the earliest Greek writers and speculators are said to have travelled in Egypt, where they undoubtedly were much impressed by the written wisdom of the priests. But the wisdom of

ancient Egypt is a dull and dead thing compared with that of these early Greeks; and even if it was greater than the extant documents suggest, it is doubtful how far it was accessible to casual Greek tourists. Perhaps the inaccessibility of Egyptian wisdom to the Greeks made it the more inspiring. Early Greek thinkers became acutely conscious of the existence of learning and accomplishments that in some ways obviously far surpassed their own: but knowing nothing precise about Egyptian learning they were not led to fancy that wisdom could be attained by any definite and prescribed course of study, however long and thorough, and, equally important, they were thrown back on themselves to make good their deficiencies. Whatever the other factors that contributed to the sudden outburst of intellectual activity in seventh-century Greece, there can be no question that much was due to the fact that a powerful stimulus to thought was combined as it has seldom been at any other period with a remarkable absence of any influence to force the new thought into old and misleading channels. This explains the freshness and independence that to this day marks off early Greek writers from those who have written under the incubus of a classical tradition.

The writers who were least obviously opening up new paths were the poets ; for poetry had continued in Greece throughout the Dark Ages. But even the poetry of the new age shows a fundamental break with the past. The Iliad and the Odyssey tell us as little of the men who wrote them as the Waverley novels tell us of Sir Walter Scott. But the new writers of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. were above all things interested in themselves and the people and happenings of their own age. Time has not treated the writers of this period kindly ; all through this chapter we shall have to deal with mere fragments of literature, accidentally preserved through being quoted by some learned professor or grammarian of a later age, or else rediscovered recently on some Egyptian rubbish heap. But even these fragments, preserved in such casual ways, are enough to show the quality of the men and women who wrote them.

One of the earliest and greatest of the new poets was Archilochus. He was a native of the island of Paros, and lived his adventurous life in the first half of the seventh century. Only one complete poem of his has come down to us and that one is only four lines long. It tells us how the poet behaved in a battle against the Saians :

“One of the Saians is rejoicing in my shield, that blameless weapon which reluctantly I left behind a bush. But I myself escaped the doom of death. So let the shield go hang: I’ll get another just as good.”

On the same island as Archilochus there lived a young lady of high rank named Iambe, with whom the poet fell in love. But her people, who appear to have looked down on the poet and his family, would not allow a marriage, and the lady seems to have accepted their decision. This so enraged the poet that his passion was turned from love to hatred, and he published such scathing verses about Iambe and her whole family that they one and all went and hanged themselves. The correct thing now for Archilochus to do was plainly to be overcome with remorse, and either follow their example or spend the rest of his days in shame and misery. But Archilochus was distinctly unconventional. Instead of doing anything of the kind he wrote another poem exulting in the success of his previous attacks. Only one line of it has survived, but that by itself is sufficiently expressive. It refers to the family he had driven to suicide and it runs as follows :

“ They bowed their heads and gurgled forth their pride.”

Another poet of this period who had an immense reputation in antiquity was Alcæus, who lived a generation or two after Archilochus in the island of Lesbos or Mitylene. He, too, ran away in battle and recorded the fact in a poem, and he, too, expressed his pleasure in the death of his enemy without mincing his words :

“ Now we must get drunk, now we must drink hard, for Myrsilus has been killed.”

But probably the most notable of all the great poets of this period was a woman, also a native of Mitylene. Sappho lived at the same time as well as in the same town with Alcæus, who tells us that she had black hair and a sweet smile. She established a sort of school in which she educated a small band of young women. Little is known of her aims and less of her methods, except that her training was by no means purely intellectual. It is, however, as a poet rather than as a pioneer in the higher education of women that Sappho best deserves to be remembered. The two complete poems of hers that have fortunately survived are too long to quote here in full and too good to quote

otherwise ; but a few of her fragments will give some notion of her character :

“ The moon has set and the Pleiads ; midnight has come ;
my bloom is passing and I sleep alone.”

“ Sweet mother, I cannot ply the loom, for I am subdued
with longing for a lad through tender Aphrodite.”

“ As for me, I love luxury.”

One other poet of the period who must here be mentioned is Mimnermus of Smyrna, who was writing about 620 B.C. His fragments illustrate the decadent realism which seems to be an inevitable by-product of an age of enlightenment. Everywhere around him the poet sees death, except where he finds immortality, and either alternative fills him equally with gloom. The immortal sun has been sentenced to hard labour for eternity without the prospect of even a day's release. Mortal men can but snatch a few hurried pleasures before they are carried off by death, or its still more horrible alternative old age.

What is life, what pleasure without Aphrodite the golden ?

Let me die when I cease longer to love what she brings,
Stolen kisses and honey sweet gifts and lovers' embraces.

These and the like are the great glorious prizes of youth
Both for men and for women : but when with his aches
and his agues

Oncoming age makes a man ugly and villainous too,

Villainous cares ever ring him around and pull at his heart strings ;

Nor doth he longer rejoice seeing the light of the sun.

Young men eye him with hate, he is held in scorn by the women.

Such an affliction to men age has been made by the god.

These bald translations of a few scattered fragments nevertheless suggest something of the quality of the writers from whom they are taken. They show that all alike are intensely concerned with their own personal experiences, and all alike are passionately, almost extravagantly, anxious to discover and state the truth about their own inner selves. This by itself makes them noteworthy figures. In most ages such seeking after truth has been taboo. The normal practice has been to try to train and alter human nature by methods of repression. A man must not confess his fears even to himself, and still less must a woman avow her passions. But these are the very things about which Archilochus, Alcæus, and Sappho write. They lead the way in the line of great writers who have held self-knowledge as a passionate faith and preached the doctrine in the only practicable way by publishing confessions of their own. The form and the spirit have differed in different writers and in different periods. Byron, perhaps, comes nearest to these

early Greeks in both respects ; but something of the same spirit has inspired writers as different in other ways as the writer of some of the psalms, St. Augustine, and some of our modern novelists. The writer of confessions is open to obvious dangers. The thirst for self-knowledge may be contaminated by a craving for sensational revelation. Everyone is familiar with the Byronic pose. But as far as the evidence allows us to judge, the Greek poets suffered remarkably little from the defects of their qualities.¹

In writing of themselves in this intimate way the early Greek poets were obeying the precept, "know thyself," which was written up on the front of the great national temple at Delphi. But this precept is one that nobody can properly follow without knowing all that is possible of his surroundings. The personal poetry of Sappho and Archilochus illustrates one side of a movement that on another side found its expression in a great outbreak of purely scientific work. The city that led the way here was Miletus, and modern scholars have noticed that Miletus was said to have belonged originally to the Carians, a race constantly associated with early Crete, and that

¹ For a good short account of Greek literary achievements, see Gilbert Murray's *Ancient Greek Literature*.

this tradition of Cretan connexions is confirmed by finds made recently on the site. It is perhaps equally significant that Miletus lay on the mainland of Asia Minor at the end of the trade route which led up the River Meander towards the Far East, and further that the Milesians were the first Greeks to settle in any numbers in Egypt. All these influences, Cretan, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian, may have contributed towards the Milesian movement, and there may well have been a fundamental truth behind the story that one of these Milesian "philosophers" (as all students and speculators were then called) went and studied in Egypt and then proceeded to start teaching his instructors. He taught them, so it is said, to measure the height of a pyramid. Geometry and astronomy occupied much of the time of these early speculators. Thales, the philosopher just mentioned, is stated further to have invented a method of measuring the distance of ships at sea, and to have foretold the date of an eclipse.

But the pivot of this scientific movement appears to have been the attempt to determine what the earth is made of. There was a general belief that all things came from a single primal substance; but on the question as to what that substance was there was a variety of

opinions. Thales thought that the earth was made of water. We know little of his lines of argument. No doubt he had realised how mistaken is the notion that the solid state is the most permanent: probably, too, he thought of the vital force as something liquid, and observed how all things alike depend on moisture in some form or other to keep them alive. Another of these philosophers, Anaximenes by name, went further and maintained that the primal element was air. He seems to have pondered much on problems of condensation and rarefaction, and to have regarded condensation as the deviation from the normal, a view that seems to imply that body is spirit that has deviated from its normal rarefied state.

Somewhat earlier than Anaximenes a still more advanced view had been put forward by Anaximander, who taught that all created things came from what he called the "undefined" or "infinite."

Another particularly interesting philosopher of this period was Heraclitus, who held that the primary element was fire. He taught that nothing was permanent, all things being in a state of flux. "All flows and nought stands firm," or, as he put it figuratively, "You cannot step into the same stream twice." This conception of fire as the fundamental element

was a marked advance on the theory of Thales ; for fire was not clearly differentiated from heat, and thus the Heraclitan doctrine to some extent anticipates the modern theories of the material world in which chemistry tends to become subordinate to physics.

A word of warning is perhaps desirable at this point. Reading of these old philosophers in the light of modern scientific work there is a danger of overestimating the amount of attention that they paid to pure science. In spite of their being so absorbed in the problem of the composition of the earth they were not specialists in geo-chemistry. In the truest sense they were philosophers. The surroundings in which they lived forced them to realise with special clearness the transitory nature of much that had long been thought permanent, and the uncertain character of much that had long been accepted without dispute. The object of their quest was ultimate reality. They were emerging from a crude materialistic period, and almost inevitably in their search for the true nature of things they turned first to the material universe out of which our world presumably came. The sort of part played by purely physical speculations in their general outlook may be illustrated from Heraclitus, whose views are known to us rather better than

those of Thales, Anaximander, or Anaximenes. We know, for instance, that he had doubts as to the evidence of the senses: "Eyes and ears," he tells us, "are bad witnesses to men if they have souls that understand not their language." He is the first of a long line of thinkers, ancient and modern, who have attempted to interpret sense experiences in the light of the critical reason so as to form a truer notion of the underlying reality. His solution of the problem in some respects strikingly resembles that of Hegel. The world of appearances, the world we know through our eyes and ears, is one of contradictory opposites, such as life and death, war and peace, heat and cold, surfeit and hunger. In the world of reality all these apparent contradictions are reconciled. Even good and evil are one in the world of God. "To God all things are fair and good and right, but men hold some things wrong and some right." "It is the same thing in us that is quick and dead, awake and asleep, young and old; the former are shifted and become the latter, and the latter in turn are shifted and become the former." As to how this metaphysical teaching about opposites was combined with the physical doctrine about fire some idea may be gleaned from other fragments: "God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and

hunger, just as fire when it is mingled with spices is named according to the savour of each." "Fire lives the death of air, and air lives the death of fire; water lives the death of earth, and earth that of water." With Heraclitus it is plain that natural science played a secondary and subordinate rôle to metaphysics; but there was no such sharp distinction between the two subjects as has been drawn in modern times. This comes out particularly plainly in the teaching of Anaximander, who introduced curious ideas of justice and injustice into his explanations of purely material phenomena: "And into that form from which things take their rise they pass away once more as is ordained; for they make reparation and satisfaction to one another for their injustice according to the appointed time."

But of all the men who speculated on the nature of things a generation or so after Thales the most interesting is perhaps Pythagoras. More than any of the thinkers just mentioned Pythagoras struck the general imagination, and, as so often happens, it was not his main doctrine that most interested the public, but the circumstance that he founded brotherhoods to live in accordance with them, and still more perhaps the fact that he was peculiar in his diet and had a conscientious objection to

eating beans. The Pythagoreans sought ultimate truth by the road of advanced mathematics. Much of their researches dealt with problems of musical notes and sound generally. Some of the discoveries that they made in this direction were epoch-making. They are the pioneers who led the way to the advanced mathematics of the present day. On certain other sides, however, the teaching of Pythagoras and his school was reactionary and obscurantist. He seems to have accepted a whole system of taboos. His disciples were, for instance, forbidden to touch a white cock, to sit on a quart measure, or to look in a mirror beside a light. When a Pythagorean took a pot off the fire, he was not to leave the mark of it in the ashes but stir them together. When he rose from bed, he must roll the bedclothes together and smooth out the impress of his body. Even in the region of pure mathematics, where the school did such epoch-making work, serious research went hand in hand with the most childish fancies. Numbers became a sort of fetish, the origin and explanation of all things. Things, in fact, were numbers, justice, for instance, being identified with four, marriage with three. It is instructive to bear in mind how closely the wheat and tares grew up together in the systems of these great thinkers.

There can be no question that the system of Pythagoras made a tremendous appeal. Ultimately, however, the mystical fervour of the school caused its members to be generally suspected as bad unpatriotic persons and they were extirpated, but fortunately for us their mathematical studies were followed up in the fourth century by Plato and his school.

To the man-in-the-street these thinkers were a curious phenomenon. People used to tell how Thales was so absent-minded and incapable of looking after himself that he fell down a well while looking at the stars. But there was at the same time an uncomfortable feeling abroad that, even measured by the wisdom of the generation in which they lived, perhaps these philosophers were not such fools as they looked. It was a money-making age (we owe to it the proverb, "Money maketh man"), and Thales, so the story tells us, was criticised for following so profitless an occupation. There seemed in those days to be no money in natural science. But Thales was among other things a meteorologist, and he foresaw a particularly good olive harvest. With this in view he quietly made a corner in oil presses, proceeded without excessive profiteering to make a fortune in oil, and then at once got on with his researches,

On the whole, science in this early period did not turn itself to practical applications as it has done in recent times with such varied and notable effects. But there were other ways in which it did come into collision with everyday life. Greek religion had hitherto been a chaotic medley of all sorts of beliefs and traditions clustering round all sorts of devils and divinities. In Homer gods and goddesses mingle freely with men, and being stronger and cleverer than mortals allow themselves all sorts of licences that the human beings in the poem fear to take. The gods to whom Hesiod devotes his "Theogony" are mostly gloomy forbidding beings whom the poet tells us about for the strictly practical purpose of enabling us to influence or placate them or get out of their way. These two poets in course of time had become a sort of Bible to the Greeks, and the result was what always happens in similar cases. Many really religious natures with a natural capacity for conformity found it easy enough, by fixing their attention on the more edifying parts of the medley, to draw from it the spiritual nourishment that they needed; but with the masses the immorality and worse of their sacred books and stories must have found a congenial reflexion in their own lives, and probably did much to prevent any general

raising of their moral standards. No doubt these orthodox upholders of the old immoralities were often enough shocked by the views of the new scientists.¹ The feeling, however, was reciprocated, as we know from a fragment of Xenophanes', who survived as an old man into the fifth century B.C., but lived most of his life in the sixth and had been a pupil of Anaximander. The views of the new science on the old religion cannot be better expressed than in Xenophanes' own words :

God is one : alone of gods and men the most mighty,
Neither in bodily form like men nor in understanding,
All of him seeing and all of him thinking and all of him
hearing.

Labouring not by the thought of his heart he ordereth all
things.

Ever the same unchanged he abides nor doth anything
move him.

How were it fitting that he should go seeking now hither
now thither ?

Only mortals imagine that gods are made after their image
Having the selfsame senses as men and voices and bodies.
But if fingers and hands were possessed by oxen and lions,
And they could paint with their hands and perform the
work that men can,

Horses would paint the gods like horses and oxen like
oxen,

¹ In the fifth century B.C. an Athenian philosopher was suspected of immorality and atheism for saying that the moon was as big as the Morea.

Making the shapes and forms of their bodies such as their own are.

All things Homer ascribed to the gods and Hesiod also,
 All that is held among men a reproach and utterly blameful,
 Picking and stealing, committing adultery, cheating each other.¹

The Greek word for research was *historia*, and it is only in comparatively recent times that "history" has been narrowed down to embrace nothing but the recorded activities of the human race. A relic of the wider use is still to be found in the term "natural history." History as we now understand it developed in Greece rather later than the "natural history" or inquiry into the works of nature pursued by the Ionian philosophers. The reason for this order of events may have been accidental. The Dark Ages had left the Greeks with little of their own past except a mass of legend which the best minds were beginning to regard as valueless as records of fact. Political circumstances were also against their taking a broad view of history, since the city state with all its good qualities tended to make its citizens deeply and disastrously regardless of

¹ Readers interested in early Greek Science and Philosophy are recommended to consult *Early Greek Philosophy*, by J. Burnet (3rd edition, 1920), whose versions have been adopted in all the fragments here quoted except the last, where the writer has attempted to reproduce the original metrical form.

all that went on outside it.¹ Chroniclers, indeed, arose in the sixth century B.C., but to judge from the scanty fragments that have been preserved none of them showed any very remarkable abilities. The first great Greek historian, one of the greatest of the world's historians, was not born till a generation or so after the close of our period. But he was a native of Asia Minor and wrote in the dialect of the Ionic philosophers, and a short account of him may reasonably be included in this chapter, which would, indeed, be incomplete without it. We have already had occasion to quote him more than once.

His name was Herodotus, and his native city was Halicarnassus, which lay in the south-west corner of Asia Minor, not far from the island of Rhodes. The date of his birth was about 484 B.C., and his history mentions events of 430 B.C., but is conspicuously silent about the events of 415-413 B.C., and appears to be ignorant of what happened in 424. He was a great traveller and made far journeys north, south, east, and west, including a visit to Egypt and a prolonged stay in South Italy. The subject of his work is the great war between

¹ Again and again in later Greek history we find great foreign powers like Persia and Macedonia regarded merely as sources from which to raise money, munitions, or men to help in some petty domestic quarrel.

Persia and Greece, of which the main events were the unsuccessful invasion of Greece by the fleet of King Darius I of Persia in 490 B.C., and the much more serious but equally unsuccessful invasion by Xerxes, the son and successor of Darius, in 480-479 B.C. But our historian took a broad view of his subject. He saw these Persian wars as one phase in the age-long struggle between Europe and Asia, in which the most famous incident previous to the age of Herodotus had been the siege of Troy by the Greeks, and of which later periods have been marked by the Crusades, the Turkish invasion of Europe, and the various steps by which the Turks have been driven out of the lands they had enslaved.

From the point of view of Herodotus it was impossible to understand the Persian wars without some knowledge of the Persians and the various countries that they had overthrown and incorporated in their empire. Accordingly the first half of his work deals mainly with the history and habits of such nations as the Lydians, Babylonians, Medes, Egyptians, Scythians, and Thracians. But even within these broad limits Herodotus allows himself the most discursive treatment. For instance, the section on Egypt, which covers a ninth of the whole work, describes the best way to catch a

crocodile, the method of constructing a pyramid, the various explanations of the periodic inundations of the Nile, and the habits and appearance of the phoenix, the last from a picture since, as the writer himself informs us, it was only in pictures that he had encountered that particular bird. Not only is the history full of good stories, but the stories are told extremely well, so that for many ages Herodotus was regarded rather as a first-class story-teller than a great historian. We realise now that he is both. His arrangement of his material may be criticised, but no serious historian will now complain of its character. If Herodotus describes the nature of the crocodile in his history of the great war of his own period, the most notable history so far written as the result of a corresponding catastrophe in our own day describes creatures quite as extraordinary as the crocodile or phoenix. It is only the more recent and scientific school of historians (as distinguished from the old-fashioned writers on politics and strategy) that have realised the absolute relevance of Herodotus' excursions into natural history, geography, economics, sociology and all the other sciences of which the discovery and development forms one of the main chapters in human history.

A proper conception of the scope of history

profits little, however, if it is not combined with a proper appreciation of and regard for concrete facts, and on this latter ground Herodotus has been frequently assailed. These attacks must go back almost to his own days, since he is charged with carelessness and inaccuracy by Thucydides, who cannot have been much more than twenty years his junior. But the charges made by Thucydides tend rather to vindicate than to damage the reputation that he attacks. The points which he selects as typical of his predecessor's alleged inaccuracy are a very minor matter about the royal vote in the Spartan senate and the name of a regiment of the Spartan army. Inaccuracies are in a sense always unpardonable in a historian, but within limits they are almost inevitable in a work of any length, and it is hard to imagine cases more trivial than those specified by Thucydides. Two other criticisms of Herodotus need to be noticed. In the first place he certainly did record a number of assertions that are not facts. But in most of these cases he quotes his authorities and tells us that he does not accept them. Some of these false assertions and opinions are among the most valuable parts of his work. Few chapters of history are more important and illuminating and more worthy of a faithful record than that

which deals with human errors and misconceptions. The second direction in which Herodotus frequently goes wrong is that of basing wrong conclusions upon careful but inadequate observations. Once more his treatment of the crocodile offers a case in point. He observes quite rightly that of all rivers he knew none but the Nile bred crocodiles. He could find no one who had followed up the Nile from Egypt to its source. But in Cyrene he had heard of men who had travelled from that city far to the south-west and found a river flowing east and containing crocodiles. The stream in question, as we now know, must have been the upper part of the Niger; but Herodotus, writing at the time he did, made a very reasonable suggestion when he used this zoological evidence for what was till quite recently an unsolved problem of geography. If a fuller record has shown that he was mistaken he is no more to be blamed than modern archæologists and historians who sometimes allow themselves to draw plausible conclusions from equally inadequate evidence.¹

¹ For further specimens of Herodotus see particularly below Chapter VII. Readers who are beginning the study of Greek history are strongly urged to procure a complete translation of this most entertaining of ancient historians and to read it from end to end. An inexpensive version is that of Rawlinson, edited by Blakeney for the Everyman Library.

In the modern movement it is mainly in the younger sciences, such as archæology, that serious workers still tend to draw sweeping conclusions from inadequate material. In the days of the Greek scientists this tendency was universal, and the circumstances under which these early thinkers worked made it almost inevitable that this should be so. In all branches of history and geography there was a grievous want of records, and a want that is universal is seldom acutely felt. The same was true in subjects like botany and zoology, at least till the period of Alexander the Great. Students of pure science were similarly handicapped by want of instruments with which to conduct minute and accurate observations. It was this alone that prevented the followers of Thales and Heraclitus from anticipating the discoveries of the last century. They had the modern curiosity and capacity for observation, and more perhaps than the modern capacity for drawing acute inferences from such observations as they made.

In their beliefs or illusions as to the possibility and power of knowledge these early Greeks curiously anticipated the modern attitude. The questions they put and the way they tried to solve them both assume that the universe is fundamentally simple, and that

its secrets can be discovered and understood by human intelligence. Even the world we live in was assumed to have its surface laid out on a symmetrical plan, and Herodotus was confirmed in his view that the Upper Niger was the Upper Nile by his equally false opinion that the Danube rose in the Pyrenees: for make independently these two false assumptions and you have both in Europe and in Africa a great river running from West to East parallel to the central sea, an arrangement so symmetrical that it must be true. Such a view may seem comic to the modern reader, but it is not more so than many theories of uniform human progress that were formulated in the nineteenth century under the influence of the new doctrine of evolution.

Why was it that the movement started in the seventh century came to a standstill a few centuries later and was not resumed for pretty well two thousand years? There is no evidence that it had not within itself the seed of indefinite developments. When Alexander the Great opened up half the world to the Greeks one immediate result was that Greek scientists produced works on botany and zoology that are entirely modern in their accuracy of detail and methods of classification. In history a younger contemporary of Herodotus himself wrote an

account of the great war of the period which, though in some ways narrow and reactionary, was not only a great masterpiece of literature, but also a conscientious and accurate collection of detailed fact, while Aristotle and his pupils engaged in scientific historical work on a large scale when they collected all the known facts about the political constitutions of over 150 states. Other movements of the same period were, no doubt, less promising. The hope and enthusiasm that had inspired the early Ionians was suffering something of a set-back. Men were realising that the universe was not quite so simple a proposition as it had seemed in the first days of the movement. The Academy that Plato founded in the fourth century B.C. preserved the master's words, but very soon lost his spirit, so that the term academic soon ceased to have any connotation of progress and discovery. The same is true of the Sceptics, who also date from the fourth century. The word sceptic is in origin almost synonymous with researcher, but almost from the beginning it came to denote a researcher who sets out with the conviction that he cannot be successful in his quest. Thoughtful men of a more practical bent were turning away from research of any kind and concentrating their attention on immediate problems of conduct and morality.

Hence arose the systems of the Stoics and the Epicureans, whose founders, Zeno and Epicurus, both flourished at the beginning of the new epoch.¹ But a reaction such as this is inevitable in any great movement. It is no more than the despondent utterances of Mimnermus, a proof that Greek thought had passed its prime. The reason why the Greek scientific movement never recovered from this fit of depression and was thus finally arrested before reaching the stage of organised experiment is perhaps to be sought in the political changes that occurred just at this time. The hand that seemed to give it its opportunity may, in fact, have given it its death blow. The victories of Alexander had other effects besides that of providing Greek scientists for the first time with adequate zoological and botanical material. His conquests were inherited by his generals, and for the next few centuries there were two great empires, the Ptolemaic in Egypt and the Seleucid in Asia, where Greek was the official language and there was a whole hierarchy of Greek administrators and officials. When Rome took over these Greek conquests the great patriotic poet of the Roman empire told his countrymen that their task was to spare the vanquished and subdue the proud. Art, litera-

¹ Zeno came to Athens in 320 B.C. ; Epicurus in 306.

ture, and science must be left to others. No Greek of the third century B.C. is known to have preached this doctrine to his fellow-countrymen. But something like it may well have induced many a young Greek of the period to turn back from following Plato or Aristotle for the less arduous service of some Ptolemy or Seleucus.

CHAPTER VI

THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE DARK AGES AND THE RISE OF CAPITALISTS TYRANTS

ALL through the Dark Ages the governments of the various city states that made up Greece had remained in the hands of the nobles and princes, the "Zeus-born princes" of Homer, the "princes that devour their people" as they are termed by Hesiod, who saw them from a different point of view. Originally these dark-age governments appear to have been monarchies; but before long, as we see, for instance, in the case of Agamemnon in Homer, the king tended to be at the mercy of his nobles, and in most cities the monarchy was gradually converted into an aristocracy (government by the best people), or as the Greeks generally preferred to call it, an oligarchy (government by the few). This change was by no means an improvement for the common people. As in England in the days of the barons, so in early Greece, the

most powerful of the monarchs probably treated the commons best. As the monarchy decreased in power and the government fell into the hands of the nobles these latter began to oppress the commons as they had never been oppressed before.

With the great changes in other directions that began in the seventh century B.C. a new political order arose. The new governments were monarchies, but they were monarchies of an entirely new sort. The new monarchs were known by a new name, and were called tyrants, a word that is not found at all in the writings of Homer and Hesiod and first occurs in Archilochus. Later in this chapter some general account will be given of this new form of government, while in the chapter that follows we shall deal with some of the tyrants individually and discuss the origin and basis of their power. But before coming to that part of the subject it will be well to say something of the political, social, and economic conditions under which tyranny first arose. Fortunately there is a fair amount of almost contemporary evidence on these points.

The writers to whom we owe this evidence are Solon and Theognis. Solon was an Athenian statesman who flourished about the year 600 B.C. For reasons that will be explained in the

next chapter tyranny was established in Athens rather later than it reached most Greek cities. There had been an unsuccessful attempt to set one up about 630 B.C., but no tyrant permanently established himself till right at the end of Solon's long career, a large part of which was spent in trying to prevent the rise of a tyrant by removing the conditions that led to tyranny. With this end in view Solon published a series of pamphlets of which extracts have been preserved. Like all literature of this period they were written in verse. The extant fragments number some hundreds of lines.

Theognis appears to have lived in the city of Megara, half-way between Athens and the Isthmus of Corinth, about the middle of the sixth century B.C., when the tyranny had already been overthrown. His gnomes or wise sayings have come down to us in the form of over one thousand verses addressed to a young noble named Kyrnos, whom he wished to guide in the right way. His verses show that at least in Megara the aristocracy had learnt nothing from the experiences that they had so recently undergone. In the attitude that they express they are far behind the times, and for that very reason it will be convenient to examine them first.

To a large extent the verses consist of precepts as to the social behaviour suitable to a young nobleman. The picture presented or rather implied in these precepts is not a very pleasing one. Some of the advice on the subject of wine is worth quoting for the light that it throws on social conditions at the time.

“To drink much wine is bad, but if a man drinks it sensibly wine is not bad but good.”

This is a precept in which many will concur. But the poet's ideal of temperance seems to have been rather loose, and his pupil seems seldom to have lived up to even this loose ideal. The time to “stop drinking and go home” is “when things which are above appear to be below.” What the drinking was really like is implied clearly enough in the poet's advice as to how the host should treat his guests on these occasions.

“Constrain not any of them to stop with us against his will, nor show any to the door if he wants not to depart : nor wake up from his sleep whichever of us is drunk with wine and held by sweet sleep : nor bid the wakeful go to sleep against his will ; for compulsion is always a disagreeable thing. And when a man

wants to drink let the wine-bearer fill his cup. It is not every night that we can have a gay time. But I, since I have had my measure of honey sweet wine, will go home and bethink me of sleep that sets free from trouble. For I am neither sober longer nor yet unduly drunk."

These idle, drunken young nobles cannot have been very attractive people even when seen among their friends, the people whom they speak of with evident conviction as "the good." When dealing with those whom they regarded as their inferiors, which meant anyone outside their own set, they must have been intolerable. Theognis, it is true, tells them to be all things to all men—

"Among the mad I'm very mad, but among the righteous I am of all men the most righteous."

But this advice in the mouth of Theognis means something very different from what it means in the mouth of St. Paul. For Theognis it meant simply that his pupils ought to be careful not to display their real feelings till it was to their interest to do so.

"Speak your enemy fair: but when

you have him in your power, then take your revenge without offering any pretext."

A writer who addresses himself to such an audience and in such a tone is not likely to be very sympathetic towards the distress and discontent of the common people, and, in fact, for Theognis any popular movement was a proof that the unprivileged classes are going to the bad and have lost all sense of their proper position.

"Kyrnos, this city is still a city, but the people are changed. In the good old days they knew nought of rights or laws, but wore goat skins on their backs and herded outside this city like cattle. But now, Kyrnos, they are gentlemen, while they that before were of high estate are now brought low. Who could endure the sight of this?"

The whole poem is full of pathetic complaints of the poverty that has overtaken the upper classes and the disastrous effects, physical, mental, and moral, that "soul-destroying poverty" has produced.

"Ah, cruel poverty, why dost thou plant

thyself on my back and cripple both my body and my mind ? ”

“ It is better, dear Kyrnos, for a poor man to die than to live oppressed by cruel poverty.”

Such being the character of poverty the poet very logically counsels his pupil to avoid it above all things.

“ You must traverse the earth and the broad back of the sea in quest, Kyrnos, of a release from cruel poverty.”

One method of escape seems to have been practised then that has again found favour in recent times.

“ He knows how mean her birth, and yet he is marrying her, induced by money, despite his own good name and her ill-fame ; for strong necessity has hold of him, which makes a man submissive.”

Such were the petty cares and interests of the upper classes in Megara in the period of which we are writing. But there were other classes, more numerous and more important, whose thoughts and cares were of a very different order. For the great mass of the

Megareans life did not present itself as intolerable simply because there seemed no third alternative to either working for one's living or marrying a rich plebeian wife. In city after city during the seventh and sixth centuries there had been extreme economic crises which had been felt far more acutely by the poor than the rich. But on this subject we must turn to the evidence of Solon, a man whose sympathies were as broad as those of Theognis were narrow. This is the state of the poorer classes in Attica about the year 600 B.C. as described by Solon :

“ Of the poor many are going off to foreign lands, bound fast in cruel bonds and sold as slaves : thus does the trouble of the State come home to each man.”

The fact was that the whole Greek world was going through one of the greatest economic revolutions in all history, and this economic revolution was affecting the social and political life of the whole community.

The cause of it all was an invention with which everyone is now so familiar that we find it hard to realise the state of things that preceded it. It was, in short, no other than the invention of a metal coinage, already described and discussed in Chapter III.

Students of history during the last few generations have been in a position to realise the significance of this great financial invention in a way that was impossible till then. What gives the last few generations this greater insight is the fact that they have lived through a similar financial revolution. Recent events have only hastened on the change from a currency of metal coins to a system of trade in which the metal coin is replaced by a currency of paper, partly in the form of Government notes, partly in that of private cheques, or stocks, shares, and the like.

The effects of this financial revolution are in their main outlines familiar to everyone. Wealth has acquired a mobility that it never possessed before. With the aid of these new paper currencies private fortunes are being made on a scale and at a rate that would have seemed inconceivable in the old days of metallic currency. This increased mobility has also made it very much more difficult for the Government to control the currency. So striking is this phenomenon that it has led a perplexed but picturesque American financier to declare that a few financial magnates in his country possess a secret by which paper dollars may be "made from nothing in un-

limited quantities subject to no law of man or nature."¹

Our natural tendency is to follow William Cobbett and contrast this elusive paper currency with the more stable metal currencies that it is displacing. But in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., when metal coins were a new phenomenon, it was this new metallic currency that was the mobile and elusive thing. And for this very reason it was also in all probability the form of wealth that the Government found hardest to control. We are apt to think of the image and superscription of Cæsar on the Roman coinage and the royal or national emblems on the coins of our own day and to assume that from the very beginning a metal coinage was a Government monopoly. No decisive evidence is available on the point, but the balance of evidence inclines in the opposite direction, and makes it probable that the earliest coins ever struck were private issues.²

The scope of this little book does not allow us to resume the evidence for this view. It is based partly on the character of the earliest

¹ Thos. W. Lawson, *Frenzied Finance*, p. 35.

² The evidence for this view has been presented in a short and attractive form by a French numismatist, E. Babelon, in a volume entitled *Les Origines de la Monnaie*.

coins themselves, some of which show groups of punch marks that seem to bear more resemblance to the various trade marks found, for instance, on modern spoons, than to anything in the way of a Government stamp, partly on the analogies of various other countries where the coinage is known to have been first a private concern which was only subsequently taken over by the State. In fact, everything points to a considerable resemblance between the early history of metal currency some two and a half thousand years ago and the early history of paper currency of which the record is contemporary history.

There was the same wild pursuit of money in all directions. To quote once more Theognis :

“ There is no limit of wealth established among mortals ; for those of us who have most riches redouble the pursuit. Who could sate all ? Money is becoming a craze among mortals. And from this craze ruin is arising, and when that is sent by Zeus to weary men now one is involved therein and now another.”

With these facts before us we may revert to the question raised at the beginning of this chapter and ask what was the relationship between this economic revolution and

the new form of government that arose at this time, the peculiar form of monarchy to which the Greeks gave the name of tyranny.

One fact stands out very plainly. The normal tyrant made his city a pleasanter place both to look at and to live in than it had been in the days of the Zeus-born princes. They were all great builders and put up fine temples of stone, the remains of which are in some cases still to be seen. Their secular buildings are equally impressive. Greece is a dry, ill-watered land, and in cities of any size the water supply was a serious problem. The tyrants dealt with this problem with remarkable success. Repeatedly we find them bringing water from a considerable distance to the heart of the city. The tyrant of Samos, for example, pierced a great mountain for this purpose, and the tunnel that he dug is still to be seen. The idea of laying on the water to each private house was at the time inconceivable, but fine fountains were erected at which a number of people might fill their pitchers simultaneously from elegant spouts conveniently arranged on a raised platform under a colonnade. How popular these new erections were is shown from the frequency with which they are depicted on contemporary vases, as, for instance, on

the vase figured on Plate X (in the zone below the handle).

The tyrant of Samos also made improvements in the harbour there, and is said to have invented a new kind of ship.

These "public works" as the Greeks called them must have meant whole armies of workers. In Classical Greece from the fifth century B.C. onwards manual work was regarded as degrading, but this attitude seems to have developed with the growth of the slave market. In the days of Homer princes were proud of their skill as carpenters, and princesses did the palace washing and thoroughly enjoyed it. Solon states in one of his poems that many of his fellow-citizens were manual labourers. Everything shows that the men who worked for the tyrants were likewise free citizens. The tyrants are, in fact, accused of having raised their great works simply because they were afraid that unemployment would breed discontent among their subjects and give them leisure to plot against the government. This statement comes from an unfriendly source, and the statement about the tyrants' motives is therefore less trustworthy than that about their action. The latter is probably to be brought into connexion with another item of policy sometimes ascribed to the tyrants, that, namely,

of forcing their subjects to work on the land and not allowing them to live in the city. As it stands this contradicts the statement about the employment of citizens on the "public works," which nearly all meant much concentration of labour within the city walls. The two statements of fact can, however, be easily reconciled if we dismiss the motives to which they are ascribed and see in the land law a restriction on the tendency of urban employment to draw the agricultural population away from the land.

In short, everything points to the age of the tyrants having been a period of considerable material prosperity in which the mass of the population to some extent shared. From the modern standpoint there may have been much to criticise. Housing accommodation must have been inadequate and sanitary arrangements shocking. But against these and similar defects must be set some very solid compensations. The climate made an open-air life possible, and the men (though unfortunately not the women also) spent the greater part of their leisure time as well as their working hours in the open air. Much of the work too, assuming anything like tolerable conditions for it, must have been enjoyable to the workmen. Masons, builders, decorators, potters, and vase painters

were expert craftsmen and their work not yet unduly specialised. Potters and vase painters, as noticed above, begin to put their names on their products, which means probably that they took a conscious pride in their work. Life was altogether a less gloomy affair than in the surroundings pictured by Hesiod and longed for by Theognis.

Lastly, the tyranny as a rule seems to have brought comparative peace. Wars were, indeed, frequent enough and many of the tyrants were also soldiers. But on the whole the wars of this period seem to have been rather minor sort of affairs. The tyrants seem to have organised their cities mainly not for war, but for industry and peace. We hear little of wars between tyrant and tyrant. The tendency was quite the other way. Tyrannies flourished side by side for over two generations in the great neighbouring cities of Corinth and Sicyon with no apparent friction. The tyrants of Athens and Samos were on the friendliest of terms. The age of the tyrants is, in fact, the one period in Classical Greek history in which the energies of the country were not being disastrously distracted and devastated by war on the grand scale. Mention has been made already in Chapter IV of the great games which at this period did so much to encourage peaceful

communication between the various Greek states. The early history of these gatherings is naturally obscure, but a large number of them are known to have been fostered and developed by the tyrants. Pheidon, tyrant of Argos, for instance, is known to have controlled the games at Olympia ; Cleisthenes reorganised those of Sicyon when he was tyrant of that city ; the Panathenaic games are similarly associated with the tyrants of Athens. Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos, celebrated the Delian games. These last, which were held on the barren little island of Delos, in the very centre of the Greek archipelago, were certainly much older than the reign of the Samian tyrant, which dates from about 540 to 522 B.C., whereas the games are described, as an established institution, in a Greek hymn that is not likely to have been written after 600 B.C. Already in the hymn these Delian games were frequented by people from all over the Greek archipelago and the shores of the surrounding mainland. In patronising them the Samian tyrant was encouraging a form of peaceful communication that must on the whole have tended to make war less likely, and when war did break out provided a common meeting-ground for the belligerents.

But in spite of the peace and prosperity that

the tyrants brought to the cities that they governed the fact remains that tyranny nowhere succeeded in establishing itself permanently. In many cases, as for instance in Argos, Agrigentum, and Samos, it practically perished with its founder. Only rarely, as at Corinth, did it maintain itself for three generations, while the case of Sicyon, where four generations of a single family held the tyranny for a century, is quite exceptional. In part this failure may be due to the fact that all the tyrants tried to keep the tyranny in their own family. The first tyrant must obviously have reigned by sheer ability, but this was not always inherited by his successor, and where it was not men would soon remember or be reminded by the tyrant's enemies that he was not of the race of Zeus-born kings. But this is not an entire explanation. Usurpers in a general way find no insuperable difficulty in securing the necessary pedigree if they possess all else that is needful. In some cities, too, there are indications of rival aspirants to the tyranny; but in no case when the first holder or his family is overthrown do we find a member of some rival family securing the position. Nobles and commons alike seem to have decided that they had no use for tyrants of this early type in spite of all their beneficent

activities. To understand why tyranny was so completely overthrown it is necessary to examine more closely the manner in which it arose. The origin of tyranny will be dealt with in our next chapter.

CHAPTER VII

THE TYRANTS

THE new currency of our epoch has given our financial magnates a vast political power that is as unquestionable as it is hard to define. Modern students of Roman history, reading it in the light of existing conditions in Europe and America, have seen that in a similar way wealth acquired similar powers at Rome when the State passed from being a community of farmers and became an elaborate organisation of paupers and profiteers. We realise, for instance, how the millions of the arch-profitier Crassus were behind the political and military adventures of Pompey and Cæsar. Compared with the empires of Rome or Great Britain the Greek city states were very simple organisms. It would therefore not be surprising if the financial revolutions which they witnessed in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. reacted with exceptional directness on the political situation. Such evidence as we still possess points to their

having done so. If it is not altogether misread in the pages that follow the new monarchs owed their tyrannies to wealth acquired directly or indirectly as a result of the economic revolution, and it was this circumstance of political supremacy being based on wealth that made the new monarchs a new phenomenon in history and caused them to receive the new title of tyrant.

In this little book it is not possible at all adequately to present the evidence for this view, most of which involves the very detailed discussion of particular types of Greek coins, vases, inscriptions, or the like. Still less is it possible here to point out in detail the various difficulties involved in the various conflicting accounts of these early tyrants that have been published during the last two thousand years.¹ With this warning, however, it is hoped that it will not be misleading to quote here the principal passages that lend support to the

¹ The view here taken was first put forward by the writer fifteen years ago in a paper published in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (Vol. XXVI, 1906, pp. 131-42), on which the account here offered is mainly based. A full presentation and discussion of the evidence is being published, under the title of *The Origin of Tyranny*, by the Cambridge University Press, and to this the writer would refer any readers who wish to go fully into the question of the connexions between the origins of coinage and of tyranny.

view that the early tyrannies were normally gained and maintained by wealth. As far as possible the statements of ancient writers are given in close translations, with brief observations as to the dates at which they wrote and the historical value of their writings.

The first city in Greece proper to fall under a tyrant was Argos. This famous city lies only a few miles from Mycenæ, which it supplanted in importance about the beginning of the first millennium B.C., when the Dorians conquered the Peloponnese. It continued to be ruled by hereditary kings down to the fifth century B.C. But right at the very opening of the renaissance period one of these kings so changed the character of the royal power that we find him classed by Aristotle and other writers as the founder of a tyranny. What was the step that caused him to be so regarded? The earliest account of Pheidon appears in Herodotus. It appears there as a digression from a digression and is naturally short; but from its form it is plainly intended to give the outstanding features of the tyrant's rule. It runs as follows: "And from the Peloponnesus came Leokedes, the son of Pheidon the tyrant of the Argives, the Pheidon who created for the Peloponnesians their measures and behaved quite the most

outrageously of all the Greeks, for having removed the Eleian directors of the games he himself directed the games at Olympia.”

The significance of this interference in the great games at Olympia has been already touched on.¹ It was very possibly an attempt to secure control of one of the chief channels of peaceful commercial intercourse in the Greece of the period. But in the narrative of Herodotus this venture only occupies the second place in his summary of Pheidon. The tyrant is first and foremost the man who instituted the Peloponnesian metric system, a description which plainly defines this early tyrant as a commercially-minded type of ruler. Later writers, beginning with Ephorus, who wrote in the fourth century B.C., state that Pheidon was the first man to strike coins in Greece, and that he did so in Ægina. The Æginetan coins (Plate XII, 2), stamped on one side with a tortoise and the other with a sort of square windmill pattern, are generally admitted to have been the first coins to be struck in Europe ; but the claim of Pheidon to have struck them has been frequently disputed. The evidence, however, for accepting Ephorus is stronger than these critics are inclined to admit. To

¹ Above, Chap. VI, p. 135.

a large extent it hangs together with the difficult question of Pheidon's date, on which also there is much divergence of opinion among authorities both ancient and modern. Without attempting here to deal with so very involved a question of chronology it may be safely asserted that the balance of opinion all points to the conclusion that Pheidon was the earliest ruler of the new type to arise in Greece. Thus two converging lines of evidence point to the interesting conclusion that the earliest tyrant to arise in this continent was also the first man to strike coins in it, and that it was as master of this new money power that he became recognised as a new kind of ruler, a tyrant ruling by right of the purse instead of a Zeus-born king ruling by divine right.

This view as to the essential character of Pheidon's government is borne out by evidence derived from Lydia. In a previous chapter we have seen how important a part in the commercial developments of the seventh century was played by that country, whose capital, Sardis, occupied so commanding a position on the great caravan route from the Far East to the Ægean. We saw, too, that according to the high authority of Herodotus the Lydians were the first people to strike coins. This latter claim is, of course, quite compatible

with the statement of Ephorus about the coinage of Pheidon. For European Greeks the inventor of coinage would be the first man to strike coins in their own part of the world. The case is something like that of many modern inventions, including that of the steam engine, where at any rate in school history books the name of the inventor tends to vary with the language in which the book is written. We may therefore accept the statements about the coinage both of Pheidon and the Lydians as essentially true, and proceed to note that in Asia Minor as in European Greece the beginnings of coinage are associated with the beginning of tyranny, for according to certain late Greek writers the first tyrant to arise anywhere was Gyges of Lydia. This statement may, it is true, be only a conjecture based on the fact that the title tyrant is associated with the name of Gyges by his contemporary, the Greek poet Archilochus (see p. 121), the first writer known to have used the word. But even so the statement may be true enough. The word is certainly not Greek, and may well be Lydian. The internal history of Lydia hardly falls within the scope of this little book, but we may notice in passing that from the middle of the eighth century till the end of our period there are repeated indications that in

this special home of tyranny the monarch owed his throne to his money.

In European Greece the next two cities of importance after Argos to fall under tyrants were Corinth and Sicyon. Corinth was at this time probably the most important commercial centre in all Greece. It lay on the narrow isthmus that afforded the one means of communication by land between North and South Greece, and it also controlled what was for the sailors of that time the one safe route from Asia Minor and Eastern Greece to Western Greece and the Greek cities across the Adriatic in Sicily and South Italy. As observed by Thucydides, writing at the end of the fifth century B.C. of the Corinthians some three hundred years earlier, "offering a market in both directions they raised their city to power through its revenues of money."¹ Corinth was not only a great emporium. It was also a very important centre of industry, where even as late as the time of Herodotus manual labourers were held in less contempt than anywhere else in Greece.² Beyond a few brief scattered allusions like the two just quoted ancient Greek writers tell us little about economic and industrial conditions in ancient

¹ Thucydides, I, 13.

² Herodotus, II, 167.

Corinth. Fortunately archæology comes at this point to our aid. From excavations and chance finds we now know that in the seventh century B.C. the city supplied a large part of the Greek world with painted pottery (Plate IX). The finds are so widespread and so abundant that it is plain that Corinth at this period must have been the pottery town *par excellence* in the Greek world.

With this fact in mind it is interesting to turn to the story told in Herodotus about the early days of Cypselus, the man who, about the year 660 B.C., established tyranny in the city. According to this account Cypselus was the son of an undistinguished father named Eetion and a lady of high birth named Labda. The government of the city was in the hands of a nobility much like that which we find in many other Greek cities at the end of the Dark Ages. Labda belonged to this governing nobility, and only married so much beneath her because she was deformed and could not find a husband of her own rank. Shortly before the birth of the child an oracle prophesied that when it grew up it would bring disaster on the reigning nobility, and the prophecy came to the ears of the nobles. What happened next we will leave Herodotus to tell in his own words. His version of the

story would be spoilt if we tried to paraphrase or abbreviate.

“As soon as the woman had given birth they sent ten of their number to the deme in which Eetion dwelt to slay the child. And they, coming to Petra and passing into the courtyard of Eetion, asked for the child: and Labda, knowing nothing of why they had come, and thinking they were asking out of friendship to the father, brought it and gave it into the arms of one of them. Now they had resolved on the way, that the first of them to take the child should dash it to the ground. But when Labda brought it and gave it, by a divine chance the child smiled on the man who took it: and he, noticing this, was stayed by a kind of compassion from slaying it: and pitying it, he passed it to the second; and he to the third; and in this way it passed through the hands of all the ten, not one of them being willing to despatch it. So giving back the child to its mother and going out, they stood at the door and tried to fasten the blame on one another, and most of all on the first to take the child, because he had not acted in accordance with their resolutions: until, after a time, they resolved to go in again and all take part in the murder. But it was bound to be that from the race of Eetion troubles should arise for

Corinth. For Labda was listening to all this, standing right by the door; and fearing that they would change their minds and take the child again and slay it, she took it and hid it in what seemed to her the place they were least likely to think of, namely, in a cypsele, knowing that if they returned to make a search they were sure to look everywhere. And this is just what happened. They came and searched, but since the child was not to be found they decided to depart and to say to those who had sent them that they had carried out all their instructions. So they went off and reported accordingly. . . . And after that the son of Eetion grew up, and since he had escaped this danger in a cypsele he was given the name of Cypselus.”¹

As it stands this anecdote is perhaps too good to be true. But it affords a good illustration of the way in which stories that are obviously not mere unvarnished records of facts may yet be valuable historical material. It is part of the historian's task to study the various ways in which facts tend to get perverted or embellished. Even if a story is patently unauthentic it is often worth while trying to determine why it has been attached to this or

¹ Herodotus, V, 92.

that historical personage. We may notice, therefore, that a cypsele was a large kind of pot, and that the name Cypselus means a particular kind of potter. Even if the Cypselus story as we have it was developed to explain the name it is still interesting to observe that the tyrant of the pottery town bore a name connected with pots. It suggests the possibility that the king of the potteries had previously been the pottery king, somewhat after the pattern of the oil kings and similar industrial magnates of the present age.

Space forbids any detailed account of the interesting tyrant family that arose in Sicyon. We can only note that according to a recently discovered fragment of some unknown Greek historian the founder of the dynasty "until he reached maturity continued to receive the nurture and education natural for the son of a butcher."¹ The fragment is one of the many scraps of papyrus rescued by the two Oxford scholars, Grenfell and Hunt, from an ancient rubbish heap in Egypt. It would be interesting to have had the author's views on the sort of education that is natural for the

¹ Grenfell and Hunt, *Oxyrhincus Papyri*, Vol. XI, No. 1365. The author of this fragment is thought to have lived in the third century B.C.

son of a butcher, but for our present purpose it is enough to notice that there can be no education natural for the son of a butcher unless we assume that the son was to follow his father's trade, or at any rate to be some sort of tradesman. In other words, the first tyrant of Sicyon is described as a man of humble origin who had been brought up to a trade.

Athens only fell under a tyrant in 560 B.C., when Peisistratus made himself supreme in the city. An attempt made two generations earlier by a certain Cylon seems to have failed because the agricultural element was still stronger than the city population, while events in the first third of the sixth century were guided and perhaps guided out of their natural course by the remarkable personality of Solon. One result of the tyranny arising so late in what was soon to become the centre of the world's literature was that the records of the tyrants' career are comparatively abundant and well authenticated. Fortunately, too, from our immediate point of view Peisistratus had a constant struggle to maintain his position and was twice banished and twice returned to power. We possess a certain number of well-attested statements both as to how he first rose to power, how he recovered the tyranny when in banish-

ment, and how he finally established his position. Naturally enough with a self-made man like the Athenian tyrant the later phases of his life are better attested than the earlier, and, apart from that, the last years of the tyrant's life must have come within the personal recollection of some of the informants of Herodotus, since Peisistratus did not die till 527 B.C., only forty-three years before the historian's birth. It will be best, therefore, to proceed from the better known to the less known and begin with the last phase of the tyrant's career. The statements as to the character of his power during this latest period of his reign could not be more explicit. "He rooted his tyranny on a crowd of mercenaries and on revenues of money that came in, some from the home country, some from the River Strymon."¹ The foreign revenues were not the result of his restoration. On the contrary, the restoration was due to the control of these revenues. When banished for the second time the tyrant had "crossed to the districts round Pangaion. There he made money and hired troops, and then in the eleventh year he proceeded to Eretria and made his first attempt to recover his throne by force," the

¹ Herodotus, I, 64.

result was that "he now held the tyranny securely."¹

The Strymon is the Struma, the river that recently figured so largely in reports from the Salonica front. Mount Pangaion is the mountain region just to the west of it that was so famous in antiquity for its mines of gold and silver. There is every reason for assuming that the money made by Peisistratus in this mining district came from the mines. Now Attica itself also contains important mines. They formed, indeed, one of the main sources of the wealth of the country, which had a notoriously poor soil that offered little attraction for the farmer. These facts have led a French scholar to suggest that Peisistratus' home revenues were derived from the Attic mines, a suggestion which implies that mining revenues were the one great root of the tyrant's power.²

Let us now turn to the accounts of Peisistratus' rise to power. Before his appearance

¹ Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, Chap. XV. This work, written in the second half of the fourth century B.C., was first made known to the modern world in 1891 by Sir F. Kenyon, who published the first edition of the ancient papyrus copy of the treatise that had shortly before been acquired from Egypt by the British Museum.

² Guiraud, *La Main-d'œuvre dans l'ancienne Grèce*, pp. 30-31.

in Athenian politics there were two parties in Athens, the " Plain " and the " Shore," named after the parts of Attica that they occupied and consisting the one of the landed gentry and their supporters, the other of the seafaring population led by the great merchants of the port. The leader of this " Shore " party is known to have acquired enormous wealth by dealings, presumably commercial, with Lydia. Peisistratus rose to power by organising a third party known as the Hill men. To quote the precise words of Herodotus, " When the men of the shore and the men of the plain were engaged in party strife . . . Peisistratus having formed designs on the tyranny raised a third party. He collected members for his party, put himself at the head of what were called the Hill men,¹ and proceeded as follows." Unfortunately Herodotus proceeds to give us only the ruse by which he finally got together a band of armed supporters and seized the acropolis. On the far more important question of the character and occupation of these supporters from the Hill country he tells us nothing. Modern scholars have assumed that they were the shepherds and small farmers of the high mountains of North and Central

¹ Herodotus, I, 59.

Attica. But a careful examination of the evidence shows that there is nothing to support these assumptions. All the evidence points to the conclusion that these Hill men lived in the hilly but not mountainous district of South Attica, where lay the famous silver mines, and that they themselves were miners. Hill men seems to be a natural way of describing miners. Both in Wales and in Germany the common word for miners means literally people of the hills. In short, the tyrant who recovered and rooted his power by means of revenues derived from mines seems to have originally gained it from precisely the same source. The tyrant of the chief mining state in Greece proper appears, in other words, to have been the leader of the mining population.

It would be interesting to know what was the status of miners in those early days. Later, from the fifth century onwards, they were all slaves. But such evidence as there is leads to the conclusion that in the sixth century mining was still a free man's occupation. It is, therefore, not impossible that Peisistratus was not merely the leader but also the employer of the Attic miners, in which case his position at the time that he seized the tyranny may be compared with that of Phalaris described below.

Samos, like Athens, only fell late under a tyranny. The reason appears to have been the same as at Athens. The city of Samos dominated the whole of the large and fertile island on which it is situated, with the result that the landed interest continued longer than in most Greek cities to outweigh any element in the city population. But if in these early times the landed interest was predominant, there was plenty of room for trade and industry as well. When about the year 700 B.C. the Corinthians first began to build ships on what a fifth-century historian calls "the modern pattern" the Samians were the first to adopt the new improvements,¹ and it was not long before they turned them to remarkable account. About the year 620 B.C. a Samian ship actually sailed out beyond the Straits of Gibraltar (or Pillars of Hercules as they were then called), discovered Tartessus (Tarshish), which seems to have been already a considerable place, and returned home laden with silver from the Spanish mines. The adventure and the wealth it resulted in so impressed even Herodotus, writing nearly two hundred years later, that he claims divine guidance for the ship, which, it may be noticed, followed the southern route

¹ Thucydides, I, 13.

along the northern coast of Africa.¹ The route suggests that the Samian vessel was not engaged in pure geographical research or adventure, but rather in following on the track of the Semitic Carthaginians, who were already beginning to exploit the Far West. However that may be this voyage is only one of many indications that already by the end of the seventh century the Samians were great merchant venturers. Perhaps, too, from this great influx of silver dates their reputation as workers in metal and particularly in the precious metals. It is not unlikely also that the fine woollen goods for which Samos was famous in later times were already at this period being made in the island.

Polycrates became tyrant of Samos about the year 540 B.C., and trade and shipping flourished under his government. He built a famous mole to protect the harbour of Samos ; he imported fine sheep from Miletus (very probably with the purpose of improving the Samian wool), and he employed the famous Samian metal-worker Theodorus. Taken by themselves these statements might mean merely that the tyrant patronised home industries much as many more recent monarchs have

¹ Herodotus, IV, 152.

done. But there is a statement in Athenæus that suggests something more than this. "Before he became tyrant," so this writer informs us, "he used to manufacture expensive wraps and drinking vessels and hire them out to people celebrating weddings or holding great receptions." Athenæus is unfortunately not a first-class authority. He lived in the third century A.D., and wrote a long tedious treatise called *Deipnosophistes* (*The Expert Diner*), which, like so much of the literature of the imperial age, is much on the intellectual level of our own snippet weeklies. But the writer makes frequent quotations from other writers, many of them early and reliable authorities. He is a writer of whom it may be said that the parts are greater than the whole. There seems little reason to discredit this particular statement about Polycrates, which says that in Samos the tyranny was secured by a man who had previously been known as a trader in the two chief industries of his city.

Our account of the early career of the tyrant of Agrigentum runs as follows: "Phalaris of Agrigentum was a tax gatherer. When the people wanted to erect a temple of Zeus for two hundred talents on the acropolis . . . he promised, if made contractor for the undertaking, to employ the best workmen

and to provide the material cheap, and to submit reliable securities for the money. The people believed him, thinking that his professional career had given him experience of such proceedings. But when he had got the common funds he hired many foreign workmen, purchased many slaves, and carried up to the citadel a great supply of stone, wood, and iron. When the foundations were now being dug he sent down a messenger to proclaim that anyone who would give information against the persons who had stolen wood and iron on the citadel should receive such and such a reward. The people were much annoyed, since they imagined that the material was being stolen. 'Then,' said he, 'allow me to enclose the citadel.' The city gave him permission to enclose it and to erect a wall all round. He released the slaves, armed them with the stones, axes, and hatchets . . . and having killed most of the men and made himself master of women and children he became tyrant of the city of Agrigentum."

The passage just quoted comes from Polyænus, a Greek writer of the second century A.D., who dedicated to the emperor, Marcus Aurelius, his book of "stratagems," or short historical anecdotes, which he tells us in his preface that he ventured to offer to

the emperor in lieu of personal military service. The value of any given anecdote depends, of course, on the source from which Polyænus derived it. Some of them are drawn from good and early sources such as Herodotus and Thucydides. In this particular case the source is not known, but there is no reason for regarding the story with suspicion. Phalaris only became tyrant about 570 B.C., a date late enough to make contemporary records not unlikely.

Agrigentum (now Girgenti) lies on the south coast of Sicily. It would be easy to follow this inquiry further and show that similar causes appear during this period to have been producing similar effects as far West as Rome and as far East as Egypt. But Egypt and Rome would take us too far afield. The common features in the accounts of the rise of tyranny in Lydia and Argos, Corinth and Sicyon, Athens, Samos, and Agrigentum, are enough in themselves to establish the probability that the normal Greek tyrant of this early period based his power on some outstanding position that he had acquired previously in either the financial, the commercial, or the industrial world.

The commercial tyrant is not a phenomenon peculiar to this early period of Mediterranean

history. He reappears some two thousand years later in Italy. Of these commercial despots of the early days of our own renaissance the most notable are the Medici of Florence.¹ Unlike France and England mediæval Italy was never united into a single state. The political unit was the free and independent city, much as it had been in Classical Greece, with forms of government that varied from city to city and from age to age. In Florence during the fourteenth century the government was a republic in which, however, most of the power rested with the "greater guilds" or associations of merchants and manufacturers of the wealthier sorts. The greatness of the house of Medici begins with Giovanni (A.D. 1360-1429), who realised an enormous fortune by trade, establishing banks in Italy and abroad, which in his successors' hands became the most efficacious engine of political power. He himself led the way in this direction, and gained much influence in his city by making liberal loans of money to all who were in need of it. His son Cosimo (known generally as Cosimo the elder, 1389-1464), the first of the family to be supreme in the city, was trained to commerce and remained devoted to it till the day

¹ See the article Medici in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, eleventh edition, on which the following account is based.

of his death. To further his political aims he lent and gave money generously. At one stage in his career he was banished by his opponents the Albizzi, but in exile he spent money lavishly to recover his position, with the result that he returned to Florence in triumph in 1434 and was thenceforth practically master of the city. We cannot here follow the further fortunes of this great family, which maintained its position in Florence till less than two centuries ago ; but some general features of their government call here for comment. When Giovanni dei Medici started his banking operations, banking was still in a fairly primitive stage. He was, in fact, one of the pioneers in a great financial revolution. His family established their political supremacy in Florence only after they had made themselves kings of the new finance, and they maintained their power by the same means by which they had first acquired it. Even as late as the time of a second Cosimo (known generally as Cosimo I), who reigned from 1537-1574, the despot relied chiefly on his personal talents and wealth. Our own Tudors were given to selling to their subjects monopolies or the exclusive right of engaging in this or that branch of trade. The Medici went one step further and repeatedly established practical monopolies for commercial enter-

prises which they themselves conducted. Their quarrels were mainly with rivals who threatened to compete with them in wealth.¹ They were constant patrons of all sorts of creative geniuses, whether poets like Pulci (whose "Morgante" inspired Byron's "Don Juan"), men of science like the great astronomer Galileo, or artists like Luca della Robbia and Donatello. They were great promoters of public works, which included not only palaces and churches, but also the cutting of canals, the draining of marshes, and the harbour works that founded the greatness of Leghorn. Like the ancient tyrants of Athens they preserved, if only in name, the institutions of the republic, and like them again they consistently supported the poorer classes against the rich and won their favour by public festivities.

The points just quoted are enough to show how striking are the resemblances between the Florentine Medici and such ancient Greek tyrants as the Athenian Peisistratus or the Samian Polycrates. Important differences are, of course, also to be found. There is, for instance, nothing in any Greek tyrant's career that quite corresponds to the dealings of the

¹ See, e.g. their treatment of the Pazzi, *Encyc. Brit.*, article Medici, p. 33.

Medici with the papacy.¹ But when all allowances of this kind have been made, the analogies between the tyrants of ancient Greece and the despots of renaissance Italy are still extremely striking. In both cases we have city states and a period of financial revolution, and in both cases the result is a commercial or financial despotism.

¹ Some of the Greek tyrants and would-be tyrants had interesting dealings with the Delphic oracle, but this analogy is at the best remote.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

IN giving to this little book the title of *The Greek Renaissance* the author was not unaware that it might prove misleading. The word renaissance has come to be so closely associated with the great revival that spread over Western Europe at the close of our own Middle Ages, and that revival was so largely a Greek creation that the name, as he realised, might very well suggest this later period. But in spite of this difficulty the title was still retained. Renaissance is not a phenomenon peculiar to the period of Michael Angelo. It is a permanent if perhaps intermittent factor in the whole course of human history. And while this is so it is equally true that within the limits of recorded history there are two outstanding periods when the world's great age has begun anew, namely, that which began little more than four centuries ago, and the period when Greek life and thought took shape in the world. Clearness of vision and not

confusion must be the result of describing these parallel phenomena by one and the same name. A very brief résumé will suffice to recall how close the parallel is.

Greece in the seventh century B.C. received her great stimulus from the more ancient civilisations of lands further to the East. Our own renaissance was due directly to the influx of learned Greeks into Western Europe, caused by the break up of the Byzantine empire and its final overthrow by the Turks in A.D. 1453. Greece in the seventh century B.C. was at last settling down after suffering for centuries from streams of barbaric invasion from the North. The same is true of renaissance Italy and to an almost equal extent of England and France, where Northmen of various descriptions had been gradually fusing with the earlier population. Perhaps it would not be extravagant to compare the part played by the Crusades in welding modern Europe with that played by the great Trojan expedition in the making of ancient Greece. The barons who typify the political structure of mediæval Europe have been frequently compared with the princely families of Homeric literature. The evolution from the Viking type depicted in the *Odyssey* to the nobility who prey upon their own people is very similar in the two cases.

Passing from these earlier ages to the actual periods of renaissance the resemblances become still more striking and profound. This fact need not here be further stressed. The theme of the last five chapters has been the essential modernity of the ancient Greek movement alike in its literature and science, its philosophy and art, and in its whole economic, political, and social outlook. All the more interesting is it, therefore, to observe certain important differences that distinguish the Greek movement from that which took shape in the fifteenth century and is still in progress.

Politically, as has been seen already, the Greek unit was the city state. At the beginning of our own renaissance autonomous cities like Florence played a considerable part at least in Italy, but the whole trend of the last four centuries has been against the city state. Everywhere in the West of Europe large centralised national states have absorbed all smaller units. The process was not unnatural. In an age when communications are easy and international morality practically non-existent the city state is bound to be unduly susceptible to destruction from without. But that fact should not blind us to the advantages of the smaller community so long as it could manage to maintain its existence. Within the limits

of its citizen population the Greek city state allowed the individual to develop his full faculties more completely perhaps than any other way of life that has so far been evolved. In spite of newspapers and facilities for travel the modern man has generally little real acquaintance with anything except one particular section of the community in which he lives. Every class of the population seems tending to concentrate in some sort of self-constituted ghetto. At first sight this tendency may seem the inevitable corollary of modern specialisation. But this is the point at which a wider survey of history comes to our aid by teaching us that the achievements of any age are not inevitably bound up with its failures. We realise that it was an accident that the city states of the Greek renaissance did not develop experimental science and all its applications, and conversely it becomes questionable whether modern conditions make it impossible for us to enjoy something like the advantages of the city state.

Intellectually it was in this failure to develop experimental science that the Greek renaissance compares most unfavourably with our own. It limited not only their sphere of thought, but also their mechanism for the diffusion of knowledge and for political organisation. On

this point, however, enough has been said already in Chapter V.

But if the Greeks suffered in some vital directions from lack of adequate material, our own renaissance has been hampered in another by a superabundance. In discussing the influences that inspired the Greek movement we had occasion to notice that the seventh-century Greeks were fortunate in drawing from earlier civilisations just the requisite amount of inspiration and just the requisite amount of guidance. In our own renaissance the case has been very different. When the classical literatures of Greece and Rome were suddenly revealed in all their fullness to the first few generations of renaissance scholars the effect was almost overwhelming. Both these old literatures were vastly superior to the writings of the Middle Ages, alike in breadth of knowledge and in power of thought and expression. Even to the most active and independent minds of this period it must have seemed as though the main task for the age in which they lived was to bring to life and light again the wisdom of Greece and Rome. A few of the ablest doubtless looked beyond this stage to one of independent thought and research, and by their attitude and outlook prepared the way for the great scientific developments of the

present age. But to the bulk of intelligent but not over-imaginative students the fount of ancient wisdom must have seemed boundless. They could find no subject on which these wonderful ancients had not said the last word. And just when this first overwhelming impression might have been modified by greater familiarity there came the period of theological bibliolatry which could not but profoundly affect the general attitude towards the literatures of Greece and Rome. They became something like a pagan counterpart to the sacred scriptures, and received a sort of reflected glory from the doctrine of verbal inspiration. In other words, they were exalted into the classics *par excellence*, the models on which all orthodox thinking and writing on secular subjects had to be based.

Nothing could have been more unfortunate. From making an author a classic it is only a step to converting him into a species of fetish, and that is what, till recently at any rate, was often done with the classics of Greece and Rome. In the case of the Greeks, and especially of those great pioneers with whom we are here particularly concerned, the result has been curious. Hosts of people whose natural sympathies are all with Heraclitus, and Archilochus and Xenophanes have been estranged from

Greek studies, while among those who uphold them have been found many who would be shocked inexpressibly if they thought that these writers meant what they said. Fortunately there is growing up a large body of more enlightened opinion. More and more people are turning to ancient Greece because they realise that the men who made it have a special significance for this present age. Like ourselves they were in revolt against existing conditions, they questioned existing institutions and existing reputations, they challenged the blind acceptance of authority and feared nothing but the lie in the soul. They were on the side of Samuel Butler and H. G. Wells and all similar assailants of a classical education. It is the extreme of irony that these early Greek rebels and innovators and flouters of convention should have been commandeered for the services of an education which with all its merits was fundamentally opposed to their teaching. To explain in detail how this came about is beyond our present scope. It would require us to describe how Rome treated Greek literature and thought, and how in more recent times Greece has been constantly seen through Roman spectacles.

The time has come for removing these spectacles, and they are, in fact, in process of

being removed, with the result already that ancient Greece and the men who made it have been brought far nearer to us than ever they were to our fathers. They have not lost but gained by this nearer and clearer view. We see now what they have to offer us, and that the offer is unique. It is nothing less than the opportunity of comparing experiences with the one people of an earlier age who have sought similar objectives to our own and done so with a not dissimilar equipment.¹

¹ Readers who wish to pursue the study of Greek history will find an admirable handbook in J. B. Bury's *History of Greece*. For the place of these early Greeks in Universal History they are referred to H. G. Wells' epoch-making *Outline of History*.

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