

A  
0  
0  
0  
1  
5  
6  
0  
7  
8  
8



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



nia  
al  
y





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation

ep  

---

75

## TAINÉ'S WORKS

---

- I. ENGLISH LITERATURE. 2 vols.*
- II. ON INTELLIGENCE.*
- III. THE PHILOSOPHY OF GREEK ART.*
- IV. THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART IN THE  
NETHERLANDS.*
- V. THE IDEAL IN ART.*
- VI. ITALY, ROME AND NAPLES.*
- VII. ITALY, FLORENCE AND VENICE.*

HOLT & WILLIAMS, Publishers,

23 Bond Street, New York.

*THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART.*

---

ART

IN

G R E E C E

BY

H. TAINE

TRANSLATED BY

JOHN DURAND



NEW YORK  
HOLT & WILLIAMS.

1871

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1871, by  
HOLT & WILLIAMS,  
in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

STEREOTYPED BY  
WILLIAM McCREA & CO.,  
NEWBURGH, N. Y.



Stack  
Annex

N  
70  
T13pE  
1871

TO

HENRI LEHMANN.

PAINTER.

11205



## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

---

THE following pages form the last of the series of works on the philosophy of art in various countries issued by the author previous to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. Four volumes are now translated and before the American public, namely, "The Philosophy of Art" (published in London), setting forth the theory of the subject in a general manner, "The Ideal in Art," an extension of this work, "The Philosophy of Art in the Netherlands," and now "The Philosophy of Art in Greece." There is still another, "The Philosophy of Art in Italy," which has been omitted on account of its subject matter being contained in the author's larger work on Italy, translated and published along with the above series.

The translator has to express his grateful acknowledgments to Mr. Bryant for translations of the several passages quoted by the author from the *Odyssey*, kindly furnished by him in advance of the publication of his version of that poem; also for the translation of an Olympic chorus from the original Greek on page 145

# SYNOPSIS OF CONTENTS.

---

## INTRODUCTION.

SCULPTURE in Greece.—Its remains, their insufficiency.  
—Necessity of studying the *milieu*. 7

## RACE.

- Influence of physical conditions on the early settlers of a country.—Relationship of the Greek and the Latin 10
- § I. Circumstances causing the diversity of the two characters.—Climate.—Its mild effects.—The soil poor and mountainous.—Temperance of the inhabitants.—Universal presence of the Sea.—Inducements for the coasting trade.—The Greeks seamen and navigators.—Their natural finesse and precocious education. 12
- § II. Evidences of this character in their history.—Ulysses.—The Græculus.—Taste for mathematics and abstractions.—Invention in the sciences.—Philosophic theories.—Sophists and Disputants.—The Attic taste. 24
- § III. Lack of vastness in their landscape.—Mountains, rivers and sea.—Clearness of relief and transparency of the atmosphere.—Analogous effect in their political organization.—Small dimensions of the State in Greece.—The acquired aptitude of the Greek mind for positive and clear conceptions.—Evidences of this trait in their history.—Religion.—

- The sentiment of the universal feeble.—Idea of the Cosmos.—Their gods human and limited.—The Greek finally sports with them.—Government.—Independence of the Colonies.—Cities unable to federate.—Limit and fragility of the Grecian State. Integrity and growth of human nature.—Conception, complete and circumscribed, of human nature and of its destiny. 33
- § IV. Beauty of land and sky.—Natural gayety of the race.—Evidences of this trait in their history.—Aristophanes.—Their idea of the happiness of the Gods.—Religion a festivity.—Opposite purposes of the Greek and the Roman State.—Athenian expeditions, democracy and amusements.—The State becomes a spectacular enterprise.—Earnestness in science and philosophy not perfect.—Adventurous taste in theories.—Dialectical subtleties. 49
- § V. Consequences of these qualities and defects.—They are genuine artists.—Sensitiveness to delicate relationships, propriety and clearness of conception and love of beauty.—Evidences of this in their art.—The Temple.—Its position.—Its proportions.—Its construction.—Its refinements.—Its ornamentation.—Its paintings.—Its sculptures.—The impression it leaves on the mind 63

### THE PERIOD.

- Difference between an ancient and a modern.—Life and intellect more simple among the ancients than among ourselves 75
- § I. Influence of climate on modern civilizations.—Man has greater wants.—The Costume, Dwelling and Public Edifice of Greece and of our time.—Social organization, including public business, military art and navigation formerly and to-day 77

- § II. Influence of the past on modern civilization.—Dante and Homer.—The idea of death and futurity in Greece.—Difference of conception and sentiment in the modern.—Difference between modern languages and the ancient Greek.—Ancient culture and education compared with the modern.—Contrast between a fresh and precocious civilization and an elaborate and complicated civilization 88
- § III. Effects of these differences on the intellect and on art.—Mediæval, Renaissance and contemporary sentiments, figures and characters.—Antique taste opposed to modern taste.—In Literature.—In Sculpture.—Inherent value of the body.—Love of gymnastic perfection.—The Head.—Slight importance of physiognomy.—Interest in physical action and in inexpressive repose.—Suitableness of the moral condition to this form of art 103

## INSTITUTIONS.

- § I. The Orchestral system.—Simultaneous development of institutions which shape the Body and of the arts which shape the Statue.—Comparison of Greece in the VIIth century with the Greece of Homer.—Greek lyric poesy compared with the modern.—Musical pantomime and declamation.—Their universal application.—Their use in private as well as public education, and their use in public and political affairs.—Their use in worship.—Pindar's odes.—Models furnished to sculpture by the orchestral system. 119
- § II. The Gymnastic system.—What it was in Homer's time.—Revised and changed by the Dorians.—Principle of the State, of Education and of Gymnastics at Sparta.—Imitation or importation of Dorian customs by other Greek communities.—Revival and growth of the games.—Gymnasia.—Athletes.—Im-

portance of gymnastic education in Greece.—Its effect on the Body.—Perfection of forms and attitudes.—Taste for physical beauty.—The statue follows the model..... 139

§ III. Religion.—Religious sentiment in the Vth century.—Analogies between this and the epoch of Lorenzo de Medici.—Influence of the early philosophers and physicists.—Man is still sensible of the divine life of natural objects.—Man still distinguishes the natural source of divine personages.—Sentiments of an Athenian at the great Panathenaic festival.—Choruses and Games.—The Procession.—The Acropolis.—The Erectheum, and the legends of Erectheus, Cecrops and Triptolemus.—The Parthenons and the legends of Pallas and Poseidon.—The Pallas of Phidias.—Character of the statue, impression on the spectator, and idea of the sculptor..... 162



RACE.



# THE PHILOSOPHY OF ART IN GREECE.

---

## INTRODUCTION.

GENTLEMEN:—In preceding years I have presented to you the history of the two great original schools which, in modern times, have treated the human form, those of Italy and the Netherlands. I have now to complete this study by familiarizing you with the greatest and most original of all, the ancient Greek school. This time I shall not discourse on painting. Excepting a few vases, some mosaics and the small mural decorations at Pompeii and Herculaneum, the antique monuments of painting have all perished; we cannot speak of them with certainty. Besides, in the display of the human form, there was in Greece a more national art, one better adapted to their social ways and public spirit, and probably more cultivated and more perfect, that

of sculpture; Greek sculpture, accordingly, will be the subject of this course.

Unfortunately, in this, as in all other directions, antiquity is simply a ruin. The remains that have come down to us of antique statuary are almost nothing alongside of what has perished. We are reduced to two heads,\* by which to conjecture the colossal divinities in whom the great century had expressed its thought and whose majesty filled the temples. We have no authentic work by Phidias; we know nothing of Myron, Polycleitus, Praxitiles, Scopas and Lysippus except through copies and more or less remote and doubtful imitations. The beautiful statues of our museums belong, generally, to the Roman era, or, at most, date from the successors of Alexander. The best, moreover, are mutilated. Your collection of casts,† composed of scattered torsos, heads and limbs, resembles that of a battle-field after a combat. Add to this, finally, the absence of any biography of the Greek masters. The

---

\* The head of Juno in the Villa Ludovisi and that of Jupiter of Otricoli.

† That of the Ecole des Beaux Arts studied by the students forming the author's audience.

most ingenious and most patient researches of the erudites\* have been required to discover in the half of one of Pliny's chapters, in a few meagre descriptions by Pausanias and some isolated phrases of Cicero, Lucian and Quintillian, the chronology of artists, the affiliation of schools, the nature of talents and the gradual development and changes in art. We have but one way to supply these deficiencies; in default of a detailed history there is general history; in order to comprehend this work we are more than ever obliged to consider the people who executed it, the social habits which stimulated it, and the *milieu* out of which it sprung.

---

\* *Geschichte der griechischen Plastik*, von J. Overbeck, and *Künstler-Geschichte*, von Brunn.

## RACE.

LET us first try to obtain a clear idea of the race, and to do this we will study the country. A people always receives an impression from the country it occupies, but the impression is the stronger proportionately to the more uncivilized and infantile condition of the people at the time of its establishment. When the French set out to colonize the Island of Bourbon or Martinique, and the English to settle North America and Australia, they carried along with them arms, implements, arts, manufactures, institutions and ideas, in short, an old and complete civilization which served to maintain their acquired type and to resist the influence of their new surroundings. But when the fresh and defenceless man abandons himself to nature, she develops, shapes and moulds him, the moral clay, as yet quite soft and pliant, yielding to and being fashioned by the physical pressure against which the past provides him with no support. Philologists show us a primitive epoch where Indians, Persians,

Germans, Celts, Latins and Greeks had a language in common and the same degree of culture; another epoch, less ancient, when the Latins and the Greeks, already separated from their brethren, were still united,\* acquainted with wine, living on tillage and grazing, possessing row-boats and having added to their old Vedic gods the new one of Hestia or Vesta, the domestic fireside. These are but little more than the rudiments of progress; if they are no longer savages they are still barbarians. From this time forth the two branches that have issued from the same stock, begin to diverge; on encountering them later we find that their structure and fruit instead of being alike are different, one, meanwhile, having grown up in Italy and the other in Greece, and we are led to regard the environment of the Greek plant in order to ascertain whether the soil and atmosphere which have nourished do not explain the peculiarities of its form and the direction of its development.

---

\* Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte*, Vol. I., p. 21.

## I.

Let us examine a map. Greece is a peninsula in the shape of a triangle, with its base resting on Turkey in Europe, extending towards the south, burying itself in the sea and narrowing at the Isthmus of Corinth to form another peninsula beyond, the Peloponnesus, still more southern, and a sort of mulberry leaf attached by a slender stalk to the main land. Add to this a hundred islands with the Asiatic coast opposite; a fringe of small countries stitched fast to the great barbaric continent and a sprinkling of scattered islands on the blue sea which the fringe surrounds—such is the land that has formed and maintained this highly intelligent and precocious people. It was singularly adapted to the work. To the north\* of the Ægean Sea the climate is still severe, like that of the centre of Germany; southern fruits are not known in Roumelia, and its coast produces no myrtles. Descending towards the south, and on entering Greece, the con-

---

\* Curtius, *Grieschesche Geschichte*, Vol. I., p. 4.



trast becomes striking. Forests always green begin in Thessaly, at the 40th degree; at the 39th, in Phthiotis, in the mild atmosphere of the sea and the coast, rice, cotton and the olive grow. In Eubœa and Attica the palm-tree appears, and almonds in the Cyclades; on the eastern coast of Argolis we find thick groves of the orange and the lemon; the African date lives in one corner of Crete. At Athens, which is the centre of Greek civilization, the finest fruits of the South grow without cultivation. Frost is scarcely seen more than once in twenty years; the extreme heats of the summer are modified by the sea-breeze, and, save a few gales in Thrace and the blasts of the sirocco, the temperature is delightful. Nowadays "the people are accustomed to sleeping in the streets from the middle of May to the end of September, while the women sleep on the roofs."\* In such a country everybody lives out of doors. The ancients themselves regarded their climate as a gift of the gods. "Mild and element," said Euripides, "is our atmosphere; the cold of winter is for us without rigor and the ar-

---

\* About: *La Grèce contemporaine*, p. 345.

rows of Phœbus do not wound us." And elsewhere he adds: "The Athenians happy of old, and the descendants of the blessed gods, feeding on the most exalted wisdom of a country sacred and unconquered, always tripping elegantly through the purest atmosphere, where they say that of old the golden-haired Harmonia gave birth to the chaste nine Pierian muses. And they report also that Venus, drawing in her breath from the stream of the fair-flowing Cephisus, breathed over this country gentle, sweetly breathing gales of air; and always entwining in her hair the fragrant wreath of roses, sends the loves as accessory to wisdom; the assistants to every virtue."\* These are the fine expressions of a poet, but through the ode we see the truth. A people formed by such a climate develops faster and more harmoniously than any other; man is neither prostrated nor enervated by excessive heat, nor chilled or indurated by severe cold. He is neither condemned to dreamy inactivity, nor to perpetual labor; he does not lag behind in mystic con-

---

\* *Medea* (Buckley's translation). See also the celebrated chorus in the *Œdipus at Colonus* of Sophocles.

templation nor in brutal barbarism. Compare a Neapolitan or a Provençal with a man of Brittany, a Hollander or a Hindoo, and you will recognize how the mildness and moderation of physical nature endow the soul with vivacity and so balance it as to lead the mind thus disposed and alert to thought and to action.

Two characteristics of the soil operate alike in this sense. In the first place, Greece is a net-work of mountains. Pindus, its central summit, extending towards the south with Othrys, *Æta*, Parnassus, Helicon, Cithæron and their bastions, form a chain the multiplied links of which cross the isthmus, rise up again and intermingle in the Peloponnesus; beyond are the islands consisting of emergent spines and the tops of mountains. This territory, thus embossed, has scarcely any plains; rock abounds everywhere as in our Provence; three-fifths of the surface of it is unfit for cultivation. "Look at the Views" and "Landscapes" by M. de Stackelberg,—everywhere barren stones, small rivers or mountain torrents leaving between their half-dried beds and the sterile rock a narrow strip of productive ground.

Herodotus already contrasts Sicily and Southern Italy, those fat nurses, with meagre Greece, "which at its birth had poverty for its foster-sister." In Attica, especially, the soil is lighter and thinner than anywhere else; the olive, the vine, barley and a little wheat are all that it provided man with. In these beautiful islands of marble, sparkling on the azure of the Ægean Sea, is found now and then a sacred grove, the cypress, the laurel and the palm, some bouquet of rich verdure, scattered vines on rocky slopes, fine fruits in the gardens and a few scanty crops in the hollows or on a declivity; but all this was more calculated for the eye and for a delicate sensibility than for the stomach and merely physical wants. Such a country forms lithe, active, sober mountaineers fed on the purity of its atmosphere. At the present day "the food of an English laborer would suffice in Greece for a family of six persons. The rich are quite content with a dish of vegetables for one of their repasts; the poor with a handful of olives or a bit of salt fish. The people at large eat meat at Easter for the whole year."\*

---

\* About: *La Grèce contemporaine*, p. 41.

ing in this respect to see them at Athens in summer. "Epicures in a group of seven or eight persons are dividing up a sheep's head which cost six cents. These temperate men buy a slice of water-melon or a big cucumber which they eat like an apple." There are no drunkards among them; they are great drinkers but always of pure water. "If they enter a cabaret, it is to gossip." In a café "they call for a penny cup of coffee, a glass of water, a light for their cigarettes, a newspaper, and a set of dominoes." Such a regimen is not calculated to make the mind torpid; in lessening the wants of the stomach it increases those of the understanding. The ancients themselves noticed similar contrasts between Bœotia and Attica, and the Bœotian and the Athenian. One, fed amidst fertile plains and in a dense atmosphere, accustomed to gross food and the eels of Lake Copais, was a great eater and drinker and of a sluggish intellect; the other, born on the poorest soil in Greece, contented with the head of a fish, an onion and a few olives, growing up in a light transparent and luminous atmosphere, displayed from his birth a singular keenness and vivacity of intellect, cease-

lessly inventive and enterprising, sensitive and appreciative regardless of all other things, and "possessing, apparently, nothing peculiar to himself but thought."\*

In the second place, if Greece is a land of mountains it is likewise a land of sea-coasts. Although smaller than Portugal it has more of these than all Spain. The sea penetrates the country through an infinity of gulfs, indentations, fissures and cavities ; in the various views brought back by travellers you will observe, every other one, even in the interior, some blue band, triangle, or luminous semi-circle on the horizon. Generally it is framed in by projecting rocks or by islands which approach each other and form a natural harbor. A situation like this fosters a maritime life, especially where a poor soil and a rocky shore do not suffice to support the inhabitants. In primitive times there is but one species of navigation, and that is coasting, and no sea is better adapted to invite a border trade. Every morning a north wind springs up to waft vessels from Athens to the Cyclades ; every evening a con-

---

\* Thucydides, Book I., Chap. LXX.

trary breeze rises to carry them back. Between Greece and Asia Minor, islands occur like the stones of a ford; in clear weather a ship on this track is always in sight of land. From Corcyra Italy is visible, from Cape Malea the peaks of Crete, from Crete the mountains of Rhodes, from Rhodes, Asia Minor; two days' sail suffice to carry one from Crete to Cyrene, and only three are required to go from Crete to Egypt. Still to-day "there is the stuff of a sailor in every Greek you meet."\* In this

\* About: *La Grèce contemporaine*, p. 146. Two islanders chance to meet in the port of Syra, and the following dialogue ensues:

"Good-day, brother, how are you?"

"Very well, thank you; what is the news?"

"Demitri, the son of Nicholas, has got back from Marseilles."

"Did he make any money?"

"Twenty-three thousand drachmæ, they say. That's a good deal."

"I made up my mind long ago that I ought to go to Marseilles. But I have no boat."

"We two will make one if you say so. Have you any timber?"

"A little."

"Everybody has enough for a boat. I have some canvas and my cousin John has enough rigging; we will put all this together."

"Who will be captain?"

"John, for he has already sailed there."

"We must have a boy to help us."

"There is my little godson, Basil."

"A child only eight years old! He's too small."

"Anybody is big enough to go to sea."

country, with a population of only 900,000, there were, in 1840, 30,000 sailors and 4,000 vessels; they do nearly the whole of the coasting business of the Mediterranean. We find the same ways and habits in the time of Homer; they are constantly launching a ship on the sea; Ulysses builds one with his own hands; they cruise all over, trading and pillaging the surrounding coasts. The Greeks were merchants, travellers, pirates, courtiers, and adventurers at the start and throughout their history; employing skill or force they set out to drain the great Oriental kingdoms or the barbaric populations of the west, bringing back gold, silver, ivory, slaves, ship-timber, all kinds of precious merchandise bought above and below the market, other people's ideas and inventions, those of Egypt, of Phœnicia,

---

“But what cargo shall we take?”

“Our neighbor Petros has some bark (for tanning); daddy has got a few casks of wine, and I know a man in Tinos who has some cotton. We will stop at Smyrna, if you say so, for a freight of silk.”

The vessel is built well or ill as it happens; the crew is obtained in one or two families, and, from friends and neighbors, whatever merchandise they may choose to offer. They set out for Marseilles by the way of Smyrna or even Alexandria, sell the cargo and take another; on returning to Syra, the freight is found to pay for the vessel and the partners divide the profits out of a few drachmæ left over.



of Chaldea, of Persia,\* and of Etruria. A regime of this kind quickens and sharpens the intellect to a remarkable degree. Proof of it lies in the fact that the most precocious, the most civilized and most ingenious people of ancient Greece were mariners; the Ionians of Asia Minor, the Colonists of Magna Græcia, the Corinthians, Æginetans, Sicyonians and Athenians. The Arcadians, confined to their mountains, remained rural and simple; and likewise the Acarnanians, the Epirots and the Locrians who, with their outlet on a less favorable sea, and not being sea-faring, remain semi-barbarous to the last; their neighbors, the Etolians, at the time of the Roman conquest possessed bourgs only, without walls, and were simply rude pillagers. The spur which stimulated the others did not reach them. Such are the physical circumstances which, from the first, served to arouse the Greek intellect. This people may be compared to a swarm of bees born under a mild sky but on a meagre soil, turning to account the routes open to it through the air, foraging everywhere,

---

\* Alcæus extols his brother for having fought in Babylon and for bringing therefrom an ivory-handled sword.

gathering supplies, swarming, relying on its own stings and dexterity for protection, building delicate edifices, compounding delicious honey, excited and humming amidst the huge creatures surrounding it, clashing haphazard and knowing but one master under whom to support itself.

Even in our days, fallen as they are, "they have as much mind as any people in the world; there is no intellectual effort of which they are not capable. They comprehend well and quickly; they acquire with wonderful facility every thing they wish to learn. Young merchants soon qualify themselves to speak five or six languages."\* Mechanics are able in a few months to work at a somewhat difficult trade. A whole village, with its chief at the head of it, will interrogate and attentively listen to travellers. "A most remarkable thing is the indefatigable application of school-children," little and big; hired persons find time while fulfilling their engagements to pass examinations as lawyers or physicians. "You meet at Athens every kind of student except the student who don't study." In

---

\* About: *La Grèce contemporaine.*

this respect no race has been so well endowed by nature, all circumstances apparently having concurred to unfetter the mind and sharpen the faculties.

## II.

Let us follow out this feature in their history. Whether we consider it practically or speculatively, it is always keenness of mind, adroitness and ingenuity, which manifest themselves. It is a strange thing, at the dawn of civilization, when man elsewhere is excitable, rude and childish, to see one of their two heroes, the wise Ulysses, cautious, prudent and crafty, fertile in expedients, inexhaustible in falsehood, the able navigator, always attentive to his own interests. Returning home in disguise, he counsels his wife to get from her suitors presents of necklaces and bracelets, and he does not slay them until they have enriched his mansion. When Circe surrenders herself to him, or when Calypso proposes his departure, he takes the precaution of binding them by an oath. Ask him his name and he has always ready some fresh and appropriate story and genealogy. Pallas herself, to whom, without knowing her, he relates his stories, praises and admires him :

Full shrewd were he and practised in deceit,  
Who should surpass thee in the ways of craft,

Even though he were a god,—thou unabashed  
And prompt with shifts, and measureless in wiles.\*

And the sons are worthy of their sire. At the end, as at the beginning of civilization, the intellect predominates; it was always the stamp of the character, and now it survives them. Greece once subjugated, we see the Greek a paid dilettant, sophist, rhetorician, scribe, critic and philosopher; then the Græculus of the Roman dominion, the parasite, buffoon and pander, ever alert, sprightly and useful; the complacent Protean who, good in every line, adapts himself to all characters, and gets out of all scrapes; infinite in dexterity, the first ancestor of the Scapins Mascarilles and other clever rogues, who, with no other heritage but their art, live upon it at other people's expense.

Let us return to their most brilliant era and consider their master work, science, that which best commends them to the admiration of humanity and which, if founded by them, is owing to the same instinct and the same necessities. The Phenician, who is a merchant, employs arithmetical rules in adjust-

---

\* The Odyssey, translated by W. C. Bryant. \*

ing his accounts. The Egyptian, surveyor and stone-cutter, has geometrical processes by which to pile up his blocks, and estimate the area of his field annually inundated by the Nile. The Greek receives from them these technical systems, but they do not suffice him; he is not content with applying them commercially and industrially; he is investigative and speculative; he wants to know the why, the cause of things;\* he seeks abstract proof and follows the delicate thread of ideas which leads from one theorem to another. Thales, more than six hundred years before Christ, devotes himself to the demonstration of the equality of the angles of the isosceles triangle. The ancients relate that Pythagoras, transported with joy on solving the problem of the square of the hypotenuse, promised the gods a hecatomb. They are interested in abstract truth. Plato, on see-

---

\* Plato's "Theætetus." Take the whole of the part of Theætetus and the comparison he makes between figures and numbers.—See likewise the opening of the "Rivals." Herodotus (Book II., 29) is very instructive in this connection. Among the Egyptians no one could reply to him when he demanded the cause of the periodical rise of the Nile. Neither the priests nor the laymen had made this matter, which affected them so closely, a subject of inquiry or of hypothesis.—The Greeks, on the contrary, had already suggested three explanations of the phenomenon. Herodotus discusses these and suggests a fourth.

ing the Sicilian mathematicians apply their discoveries to machinery, reproaches them with degrading science; in his view of it they ought to confine themselves to the study of ideal lines. In fact they always promoted it without concerning themselves about its utility. For example, their researches on the properties of conic sections found no application until seventeen centuries later, when Kepler discovered the laws which control the movements of the planets. In this work, which constitutes the basis of all our exact sciences, their analysis is so rigid that in England Euclid's geometry still serves as the student's text-book. To decompose ideas and note their dependencies; to form a chain of them in such a way as to leave no link missing, the whole chain being fastened on to some incontestable axiom or group of familiar experiences; to delight in forging, attaching, multiplying and testing all these chains with no motive but that of a desire to find them always more numerous and more certain, is the especial endowment of the Greek mind. The Greeks think for the purpose of thinking, and hence their organization of the sciences. We do not establish one to-day

which does not rest on the foundations they laid ; we are frequently indebted to them for its first story and sometimes an entire wing ;\* a series of inventors succeed each other in mathematics from Pythagoras to Archimedes ; in astronomy from Thales and Pythagoras to Hipparchus and Ptolemy ; in the natural sciences from Hippocrates to Aristotle and the Alexandrian anatomists ; in history from Herodotus to Thucydides and Polybius ; in logic, politics, morality and æsthetics from Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle to the Stoics and neo-platonicians.—Men so thoroughly absorbed by ideas could not fail to admire the most beautiful of all, the university of ideas. For eleven centuries, from Thales to Justinian, their philosophy never ceased to grow ; always some new system arose blooming above or alongside of the old systems ; even when speculation is imprisoned by Christian orthodoxy it makes its way and presses through the crevices ; “the Greek language,” says one of the Fathers of the Church, “is the mother of heresies.” We of to-day still find in this vast store-

---

\* Euclid, Aristotle's theory of the Syllogism and the Morality of the Stoics.



house our most fecund hypotheses;\* thinking so much and with such a sound mind their conjectures are frequently found in accordance with the truth.

In this respect their performance has only been surpassed by their zeal. Two occupations, in their eyes, distinguished man from the brute and the Greek from the barbarian—a devotion to public affairs and the study of philosophy. We have only to read Plato's Theages and Protagoras to see the steady enthusiasm with which the youngest pursued ideas through the briars and brambles of dialectics. Their taste for dialectics itself is still more striking; they never weary in its circuitous course; they are as fond of the chase as the game; they enjoy the journey as much as the journey's end. The Greek is much more a reasoner than a metaphysician or savant; he delights in delicate distinctions and subtle analysis; he revels in the weaving and super-refinement of spiders' webs.† His dexterity in this re-

---

\* Plato's ideal types, Aristotle's Final causes, the Atomic theory of Epicurus and the classifications of the Stoics.

† See, in Aristotle, "Theory of Modal Syllogisms," and in Plato, the "Parmenides" and "Sophistes." There is nothing more ingenious and more fragile than the whole of Aristotle's Physics and Physiology,

spect is unequalled; it is of little consequence to him whether this over-complicated and attenuated web is of any use in theory or in practice; it satisfies him to see the threads spun out and crossing each other in imperceptible and symmetrical meshes. Herein does the national weakness manifest the national talent. Greece is the mother of disputants, rhetoricians and sophists. Nowhere else has a group of eminent and popular men been seen teaching with the same success and fame as Gorgias, Protagoras and Polus, the art of making the worse appear the better cause, and of plausibly maintaining a foolish proposition however absurd.\* It is Greek rhetoricians who are the eulogists of pestilence, fever, bugs, Polyphemus and Thersites; a Greek philosopher asserted that a wise man could be happy in the brazen bull of Phalaris. Schools existed, like that of Carneades, in which pleadings could be made on both sides; others, like that of Ænesidemus, to establish that no proposition is truer than that of the contrary proposition. In the

---

as may be seen in his "Problems." The waste of mental power and sagacity by these schools is enormous.

\* The "Euthydemus" of Plato.

legacy bequeathed to us by antiquity a collection is found, the richest we have, of captious arguments and paradoxes; their subtleties would have been confined to a narrow field could they not have pushed their way as well on the side of error as on that of truth.

Such is the intellectual finesse which, transferred from reasoning to literature, fashioned the "Attic" taste, that is to say, an appreciation of niceties, a sportive grace; delicate irony, simplicity of style, ease of discourse and beauty of demonstration. It is said that Apelles went to see Protogenes, and, not caring to leave his name, took a pencil and drew a fine curved line on a panel ready at hand. Protogenes, on returning, looked at the mark and exclaimed, "No one but Apelles could have traced that!" then, seizing the pencil, he drew around it a second line still more refined and extended, and ordered it to be shown to the stranger. Apelles came back, and, mortified to see himself surpassed, intersected the first two contours by a third, the delicacy of which exceeded both. When Protogenes saw it, he exclaimed: "I am vanquished, let

me embrace my master!" This legend furnishes us with the least imperfect idea of the Greek mind. We have the subtle line within which it circumscribes the contours of things, and the native dexterity, precision and agility with which it circulates amidst ideas to distinguish and bind them together.

## III.

This, however, is but one feature; there is another. Let us revert back to the soil and we shall see the second added to the first. This time, again, it is the physical structure of the country which has stamped the intellect of the race with that which we find in its labors and in its history. There is in this country nothing of the vast or gigantic; outward objects possess no disproportionate, overwhelming dimensions. We see nothing there like the huge Himalaya, nothing like those boundless entanglements of rank vegetation, those enormous rivers described in Indian poems; there is nothing like the interminable forests, limitless plains and the wild and shoreless ocean of Northern Europe. The eye there seizes the forms of objects without difficulty and retains a precise image of them; every object is medial, proportioned, easily and clearly perceptible to the senses. The mountains of Corinth, Attica, Bœotia and the Peloponnesus are

from three to four thousand feet high; only a few reach six thousand; you must go to the extreme north of Greece to find a summit like those of the Alps and the Pyrenees, and then it is Olympus, of which they make the home of the gods. The Peneus and the Achelous, the largest rivers, are, at most, but thirty or forty leagues long; the others, usually, are mere brooks and torrents. The sea itself, so terrible and threatening at the north, is here a sort of lake; we have no feeling of the solitude of immensity; some waste or island is always in sight; it does not leave on the mind a sinister impression; it does not appear like a ferocious and destructive being; it has no leaden, pallid and cadaverous hue; the coasts are not ravaged by it and it has no tides strewing them with mire and stony fragments. It is lustrous, and according to an expression of Homer, "dazzling, wine-colored, violet-colored;" the ruddy rocks of its shores enclose its bright surface within a fretted border which seems like the frame to a picture. Imagine fresh and primitive natures having such phenomena for their cultivation and constant education. Through

these they obtain the habit of clear and defined imagery and avoid the vague tumult, the impetuous revery, the anxious apprehension of the "beyond." Thus is a mental mould formed out of which, later, all ideas are to issue in relief. Countless circumstances of soil and climate combine to perfect it. In this country the mineral character of the ground is visible and appears much stronger than in our own Provence; it is not weakened or effaced, as in our northern moist countries, by the universally diffused strata of arable soil and verdant vegetation. The skeleton of the earth, the geologic bonework, the purplish-gray marble peers out in jutting rocks, prolongs itself in naked crags, cuts its sharp profile against the sky, encloses valleys with peaks and crests so that the landscape, furrowed with bold fractures and gashed everywhere with sudden breaches and angles, looks as if sketched by a vigorous hand whose caprices and fancy in no respect impair the certainty and precision of its touch. The quality of the atmosphere increases likewise this saliency of objects. That of Attica, especially, is of extraordinary transparency. On turning Cape

Sunium the helmet of Pallas on the Acropolis could be seen at a distance of several leagues. Mount Hymettus, two leagues off from Athens, seems to a European just landed a walk before breakfast. The vapory mist with which our atmosphere is always filled does not arise to soften distant contours; they are not uncertain, half-commingled and blotted out, but are detached from their background like the figures on antique vases. Add, finally, the exquisite brilliancy of the sun which pushes to extremes the contrast between light parts and shadows and which gives an opposition of masses to precision of lines. Thus does Nature, through the forms with which she peoples the mind, directly incline the Greek to fixed and precise conceptions. She again inclines him to them indirectly through the order of political association to which she leads and restrains him.

Greece, indeed, is a small country compared with its fame, and it will seem to you still smaller if you observe how divided it is. The principal chains on one side of the sea and the lateral chains on the other separate a number of distinct provinces form-



ing so many circumscribed districts—Thessaly, Bœotia, Argos, Messenia, Laconia and all the islands. It is difficult to traverse the sea in barbarous ages, while mountain defiles are always available for defense. The populations of Greece accordingly could easily protect themselves against invasion and exist alongside of each other in small independent communities. Homer enumerates thirty,\* and, on the establishment and multiplication of colonies, these get to be several hundred. To modern eyes a Greek State seems in miniature. Argos is from eight to ten miles long and four or five wide; Laconia is of about the same size; Achaia is a narrow strip of land on the flank of a mountain which descends to the sea. The whole of Attica does not equal the half of one of our departments; the territories of Corinth, Sicyon and Megara dwindle to a town suburb; generally speaking, and especially in the islands and colonies, the State is simply a town with a beach or a surrounding border of farms. Standing on one acropolis the eye can take in the acropolis or mountains of its neighbor. In so limited a circuit the mind embraces

---

\* Book II. The Enumeration of warriors and vessels.

all distinctly; the moral patrimony possesses no element of the gigantic, abstract or vague as with us; the senses can take it all in; it is compounded with the physical patrimony; both are fixed in the citizen's mind by definite formations. In a mental conception of Athens, Corinth, Argos or Sparta he imagines the configuration of his valley or the silhouette of his city. The citizens belonging to it rise in his mind the same as its natural features; the contracted sphere of his political domain, like the form of his natural domain, provides for him beforehand the average and fixed type in which all his conceptions are to be included. In this respect consider their religion; they have no sentiment of this infinite universe in which a generation of people, every conditioned being, however great, is but an atom in time and place. Eternity does not set up before them its pyramid of myriads of ages like a vast mountain by the side of which a little life is simply a mole-hill or grain of sand; they do not concern themselves as others do,—the Indians, the Egyptians, the Semites and the Germans—with the ever-renewed circle of metempsychoses, with the still and lasting slumber

of the grave; with the formless and bottomless abyss from which issue beings like passing vapor; with the one God, absorbing and terrible, in whom all forces of nature are concentrated, and for whom heaven and earth are simply a tabernacle and a footstool; with that august, mysterious, invisible power which the heart's worship discovers through and beyond all things.\* Their ideas are too clear and constructed on too narrow a model. The universal escapes them, or, at least, half occupies them; they do not form a God of it and much less a person; it remains in their religion in the back-ground, being the *Moirā*, the *Aisa*, the *Eimarmene*, in other terms, the part assigned to each. It is fixed; no being, whether man or god, can escape the circumstances of his lot; fundamentally, this is an abstract truth; if the *Moiræ* of Homer are goddesses, it is but little more than fiction; under the poetic expression, as under a transparent sheet of water, we see appearing the indissoluble chain of facts and the indestructible demarcation of things. Our sciences of to-day admit these con-

---

\* Tacitus: "De Moribus Germanorum."—Deorum nominibus appellat secretum illud, quod sola reverentia vident.

ceptions; the Greek idea of destiny is nothing more than our modern idea of law. Every thing is determined, which is what our formulæ assert and which has been forecast in their divinations.

When they develop this idea it is to still more strengthen the limits imposed on beings. Out of the mute force which unfolds and assigns destinies they fashion their Nemesis,\* who humbles the exalted and represses all excesses. One of the grand sentences of the oracle is "Not too much." Guard against inordinate desire, dread complete prosperity, fortify yourself against intoxication, always preserve moderation, is the counsel which every poet and every thinker of the great epoch enunciates. Instinct and the spontaneous reason have nowhere been so lucid; when, at the first awakening of reflection, they try to conceive the world they form it in the image of their own mind. It is a system of order, a Kosmos, a harmony, an admirable and régular arrangement of things self-subsistent and self-transforming. At a later period the Stoics compare it to a vast city governed by the best laws.

---

\* See Tournier's "Nemesis ou la Jalousie des Dieux."

There is no place here for mystic and incomprehensible gods, nor for destructive and despotic gods. The religious vertigo did not enter into the sound and well-balanced minds which conceived a world like this. Their divinities soon become human beings; they have parents, children, a genealogy, a history, drapery, palaces and a physical frame like ours; they are wounded and suffer; the greatest, Zeus himself, beheld their advent and some day perhaps will see the end of their reign.\*

On the shield of Achilles, which represents an army, "men marched led by Ares and Athena, both in gold, in golden vestments, tall and beautiful, as is proper for gods, for men were much smaller." There is indeed but little difference besides this between them and ourselves. Often, in the *Odyssey*, when Ulysses or Telemachus encounter unawares any tall or fine-looking personage, they ask if he is a god. Human divinities of this stamp do not disturb the minds which conceive them; Homer manages them his own way; he is constantly bringing in Athena for slight offices, such as indicating

---

\* The Prometheus of Æschylus.

to Ulysses the dwelling of Alcinous and marking the spot where his discus fell. The theological poet moves about in his divine world with the freedom and serenity of a playful child. We see him there laughing and enjoying himself; on exhibiting to us Ares surprised in the arms of Aphrodite Apollo indulges his merriment and asks Hermes if he would not like to be in Ares' place :

. . . . . I would that it were so,  
 Oh archer-king Apollo ; I could bear  
 Chains thrice as many and of infinite strength,  
 And all the gods and all the goddesses  
 Might come to look upon me ; I would keep  
 My place with golden Venus at my side.\*

Read the hymn in which Aphrodite offers herself to Anchises, and especially the hymn to Hermes, who, the very day of his birth, shows himself a contriving, robbing, mendacious Greek, but with so much grace that the poet's narrative seems to be the badinage of a sculptor. In the hands of Aristophanes, in the "Frogs" and the "Clouds," Hercules and Bacchus are treated with still greater freedom. All this smooths the way for the decorative gods of Pompeii,

---

\* The Odyssey, translated by W. C. Bryant.

the pretty and sinister pleasantries of Lucian, and the entire Olympic circle of the agreeable the social and the dramatic. Gods so closely resembling man soon become his companions, and later his sport. The clear mind which, to bring them within its reach, deprives them of mystery and infinity, regards them as its own creations and delights in the myths of its own formation.

Let us now glance at their ordinary life. Here, again, they are wanting in veneration. The Greek cannot subordinate himself, like the Roman, to one grand unity, a vast conceivable but invisible patrimony. He has not progressed beyond that form of association in which the State consists of the City. His colonies are their own masters; they receive a pontiff from the metropolis and regard him with sentiments of filial affection; but there their dependence rests. They are emancipated children, similar to the young Athenian who, on reaching manhood, is dependent on nobody and is his own master; whilst the Roman colonies are only military posts, similar to the young Roman who, though married, a magistrate and even consul, always feels on his shoulder

the weight of a father's hand, a despotic authority from which nothing, save a triple sale can set him free. To forego self-control; to submit to distant rulers, never seen by them; to consider themselves part of a vast whole; to lose sight of themselves for a great national benefit, is what the Greeks never could do with any persistency. They shut themselves up and indulged in mutual jealousies; even when Darius and Xerxes invaded their country they could scarcely unite; Syracuse refuses assistance because she is not given the command; Thebes sides with the Medes. When Alexander combines the Greek forces to conquer Asia, the Lacedemonians do not respond to the summons. No city succeeds in forming a confederation of the others under its lead; Sparta, Athens, Thebes, all in turn fail; rather than yield to their compatriots the vanquished apply for money to Persia and make concessions to the Great King. Factions in each city exile each other, and the banished, as in the Italian Republics, attempt to return through violence with the aid of the foreigner. Thus divided, Greece is conquered by a semi-barbarous but disciplined people, the independence of sep-



arate cities ending in the servitude of the nation. This downfall is not accidental, but fatal. The State, as the Greeks conceived it, was too small; it was incapable of resisting the shock of heavy external masses; it is an ingenious and perfect work of art, but fragile. Their greatest thinkers, Plato and Aristotle, limit the city to a community of five or ten thousand free men. Athens had twenty thousand; beyond which, according to them, it was simply a mob. They cannot conceive of the good organization of a larger community. An acropolis covered with temples, hallowed by the bones of the heroes who founded it and by the images of national gods, an agora, a theatre, a gymnasium, a few thousands of temperate, brave, free and handsome men, devoted to "philosophy or public business," served by slave cultivators of the soil and slave artisans, is the city which they conceive, an admirable work of art, daily established and perfected under their own eyes, in Thrace, on the shores of the Euxine, of Italy and of Sicily, outside of which every form of society seems to them confusion and barbarism, but whose perfection, nevertheless, denotes lit-

tleness, and which, amidst the rude shocks of human encounter, lasts only for a day.

These drawbacks are accompanied by corresponding advantages. If their religious conceptions are wanting in gravity and in grandeur; if their political organization lacks stability and endurance, they are exempt from the moral deformities which the greatness of a religion or of a State imposes on humanity. Civilization, everywhere else, has disturbed the natural equilibrium of the faculties; it has diminished some to exaggerate the others; it has sacrificed the present to the future life, man to the Divinity, the individual to the State; it has produced the Indian fakir, the Egyptian and Chinese functionary, the Roman legist and official, the mediæval monk, the subject, *administré* and *bourgeois* of modern times. Man, under this pressure, has in turn simultaneously exalted and debased himself; he becomes a wheel in a vast machine, or considers himself naught before the infinite. In Greece he subjected his institutions to himself instead of subjecting himself to them; he made of them a means and not an end. He used them for a com-

plete and harmonious self-development; he could be at once poet, philosopher, critic, magistrate, pontiff, judge, citizen, and athlete; exercise his limbs, his taste and his intellect; combine in himself twenty sorts of talent without one impairing the other; he could be a soldier without being an automaton, a dancer and singer without becoming a dramatic buffoon, a thoughtful and cultivated man without finding himself a book-worm; he could decide on public matters without delegating his authority to others, honor his gods without the restrictions of dogmatic formulas, without bowing to the tyranny of a super-human might, without losing himself in the contemplation of a vague and universal being. It seems that, having designated the visible and accurate contour of man and of life, they omitted the rest and thus expressed themselves: "Behold the true man, an active and sensitive body, possessing mind and will, the true life of sixty or seventy years between the whining infant and the silent tomb! Let us strive to render this body as agile, strong, healthy, and beautiful as possible; to display this mind and will in every circle of virile activity; to deck this life

with every beauty which delicate senses, quick comprehension and a proud and animated consciousness can create and appreciate." Beyond this they see nothing ; or, if there is a "beyond," it is for them like that Cimmerian land of which Homer speaks, the dim and sunless region of the dead, enshrouded with mournful vapors where, like winged bats, flock helpless phantoms with bitter cries to fill and refresh their veins from its channels, drinking the red gore of victims. The constitution of their mind limited their desires and efforts to a circumscribed sphere, lit up in the full blaze of sunshine, and to this arena, as glowing and as restricted as their stadium, we must resort to see them exercise.

## IV.

To do this we have to look at the country once more and draw together our impression of the whole. It is a beautiful land, inspiring one with a joyous sentiment and tending to make man regard life as a holiday. Scarcely more than its skeleton exists to-day. Like our Provence, and still more than it, it has been shorn and despoiled, scraped, so to say; the ground has sunk away and vegetation is rare; bare, rugged rock, here and there spotted with meagre bushes, absorbs the expanse and occupies three-fourths of the horizon. You may, nevertheless, form an idea of what it was by following the still intact coasts of the Mediterranean from Toulon to Hyères and from Naples to Sorrento and Amalfi, except that you must imagine a bluer sky, a more transparent atmosphere and more clearly defined and more harmonious mountain forms. It seems as if there was no winter in this country. Evergreen oaks, the olive, the orange, the lemon, and the cypress form, in the valleys and on the sides of

the gorges, an eternal summer landscape; they even extend down to the margin of the sea; in February, at certain places, oranges drop from their stems and fall into the water. There is no haze and but little rain; the atmosphere is balmy and the sun mild and beneficent. Man here is not obliged, as in our northern climates, to protect himself against inclemencies by complicated contrivances, and to employ gas, stoves, double, triple and quadruple garments, sidewalks, street-sweepers and the rest to render habitable the muddy and cold sewer through which, without his police and his energy, he would have to paddle. He has no need to invent spectacular halls and operatic scenery; he has only to look around him and find that nature furnishes more beautiful ones than any which his art could devise. At Hyères, in January, I saw the sun rise behind an island; the light increased and filled the atmosphere; suddenly, at the top of a rock, a flame burst forth; the vast crystal sky expanded its arch over the immense watery plain while the innumerable crests of the waves and the deep blue of the uniform surface were traversed with ripples

of gold; at evening the distant mountains assumed the delicate hues of the rose and the lilac. In summer this sunny illumination diffuses through the atmosphere and over the sea such splendor that the surcharged senses and imagination seem to be carried away in triumph and glory; every wave sparkles; the water takes the hues of precious stones, turquoises, amethysts, sapphires, lapis-lazuli, all in motion and undulating beneath the universal and immaculate celestial brightness. It is in this inundation of luminousness that we have to imagine the coasts of Greece like so many marble ewers and fountains scattered here and there through the field of azure.

We need not be surprised if we find in the Greek character that fund of gayety and vivacity, that need of vital and conscious energy which we meet even now among the Provençals, the Neapolitans, and, generally, in southern populations.\* Man ever

---

\* "These races are lively, quiet and gay. The infirm man there is not cast down; he calmly awaits the approach of death; every thing smiles around him. Here is the secret of that divine complacency of the Homeric poems and of Plato; the narrative of the death of Socrates in the "Phædon" scarcely shows a tinge of sadness. To live is

continues to move as nature first directs him, for the aptitudes and tendencies which she firmly implants in him are precisely the aptitudes and tendencies which she daily satisfies. A few lines from

---

to flower and then to give fruit,—could it be more? If, as some may contend, the pre-occupation with death is the distinguishing trait of Christianity and of the modern religious sentiment, the Greek race is the least religious of all. It is a superficial race, regarding life as a thing void of the supernatural or a hereafter. Such simplicity of conception belongs, in great part, to the climate and to the purity of the atmosphere, to the wonderful joyousness which one experiences there, but much more to the instincts of the Hellenic race so adorably idealistic. Any trifle—a tree, a flower, a lizzard, or a tortoise—brings to mind thousands of metamorphoses, sung by the poets; a stream of water, a little crevice in a rock are designated as the abode of nymphs; a well with a cup on its margin, an inlet of the sea so narrow that the butterflies cross it and yet navigable for the largest vessels as at Paros; orange and cypress trees extending their shadows over the water, a small pine grove amid the rocks suffice, in Greece, to produce that contentment which awakens beauty. To stroll in the gardens at night listening to the cicada, and to sit in the moonlight playing the flute; to go and imbibe water from the mountain source, with a piece of bread, a fish and a flask of wine to be drunk while singing; to suspend, at family festivals, a crown of leaves over the portal, and to go with chaplets of flowers; to carry to public festivities a thyrsus decked with verdure; to pass whole days in dancing and to play with tame goats, are Greek enjoyments—the enjoyments of a poor, economical, eternally youthful race, inhabiting a charming country, finding its well-being in itself and in the gifts which the gods have bestowed upon it. The pastoral model of Theocritus was a truth in Hellenic countries; Greece always delighted in this minor kind of refined and pleasing poetry, one of the most characteristic of its literature, a mirror of its own life almost everywhere else silly and affected. The pleasure of living and sprightliness of humor are pre-emi-



Aristophanes will portray to you this frank, sprightly and radiant sensuousness. Some Athenian peasants are celebrating the return of peace.

“I am delighted! I am delighted at being rid of helmet, and cheese, and onions; for I find no pleasure in battles, but to continue drinking beside the fire with my dear companions, having kindled whatever is the driest of firewood which has been sawn up in summer, and roasting some chick-peas, and putting on the fire the esculent acorn, and at the same time kissing my Thracian maid while my wife is washing herself. For there is not any thing

nently Grecian traits. The foliage of youth was always peculiar to that race; for it *indulgere genio* is not the stolid intoxication of the English nor the vulgar pastime of the French; it is rather simply to think that nature is gracious and that one may and ought to yield to her. To the Greek, in fine, nature is the suggestor of elegance, a mistress of rectitude and virtue. ‘Concupiscence,’ the idea that nature incites us to do evil, has no meaning for him. The taste for ornamentation which distinguishes the Greek palikary and shows itself so innocently in the Greek maiden, is not the pompous vanity of the city damsel inflated with the ridiculous conceit of a parvenue; it is the pure and simple sentiment of unaffected youth conscious of being the legitimate offspring of the true parents of beauty.” [“Saint Paul,” by E. Renan, p. 202.] A friend who has travelled some time in Greece tells me that the horse-drivers and guides will often pluck some attractive shrub and carry it carefully in their hand during the day, put it safely by in the evening on going to bed, and resume it in the morning for farther pleasure in it.

more agreeable than for the seed to be already sown, and the god to rain upon it, and some neighbor to say: 'Tell me, O Comarchides, what shall we do at this time of day?' I've a mind to drink, since the god acts so favorably. Come, wife, wash three chenixes of kidney-beans and mix some wheat with them, and bring out some figs, for it is in no wise possible to strip off the vine leaves to-day, or to grub round the roots, since the ground is so wet. And let some one bring forth from my house the thrush and the two finches. And there were also within some beestings and four pieces of hare. \* \* \* Bring in three pieces, boy, and give one to my father, and beg some fruit-bearing myrtles from Æschineades, and at the same time let some one call on Charniades that he may drink with us, since the god benefits and aids our crops. \* \* \* Most august goddess queen, venerable Peace, mistress of choral dances, mistress of nuptials, receive our sacrifice! \* \* \* Grant that our market be filled with multifarious good things; with garlic, early cucumbers, apples and pomegranates; \* \* \* and that we may see people bringing from the Bœotians geese,

ducks, wood-pigeons and sand-pipers, and that baskets of Copaic eels come, and that we, collected in crowds around them, buying fish, may jostle with Morychus and Teleas and other gourmands. \* \* \* Come quick, Dicæopolis, for the priest of Bacchus sends for you. Make haste, all things are in readiness—couches, tables, cushions for the head, chaplets, ointments, sweetmeats; the courtesans are there, cakes of fine flour, honey-cakes, lovely dancing girls, Harmodius' delights." I stop the quotation which becomes too free; antique sensuality and southern sensuality make use of bold gestures and very precise language.

Such a cast of mind leads man to regard life as a continuous holiday. The most serious ideas and institutions in the hands of the Greek become gay; his divinities are "the happy gods that never die." They dwell on the summits of Olympus, "which the winds do not shake; which are never wet by rain or visited by snow; where the cloudless ether is disclosed and where the bright light nimbly dances." Here in a glittering palace, seated on golden thrones, they drink nectar and eat ambrosia while the muses

“sing with their beautiful voices.” Heaven to the Greek, is eternal festivity in broad daylight, and consequently the most beautiful life is that which most resembles the life of the gods. With Homer the happy man is he who can “revel in the bloom of his youth and reach the threshold of old age.” Religious ceremonies are joyous banquets at which the gods are content because they obtain their share of wine and meat. The most imposing festivals are operatic representations. Tragedy, comedy, dancing, choruses and gymnastic games form a part of their worship. In honoring the gods it never occurs to them that it is necessary to fast, mortify the flesh, pray in fear and trembling, and prostrate one’s self deploring one’s sins; but on the contrary, to take part in their enjoyments, to display before them the most beautiful nude forms, to deck the city in their behalf, and, abstracting man for a moment from his mortal condition, elevate him to theirs by every magnificence which art and poesy can furnish. This “enthusiasm” to them is piety; and, after giving vent in tragedy to their grand and solemn emotions, they again seek in comedy an outlet for their extravagant

buffooneries and their voluptuous license. One must have read Aristophanes' "Lysistrata" and "Thesmophoriazusæ" to imagine these transports of animal life, to comprehend a public celebration of the Dionysia and the dramatic dance of the cordax, to comprehend that, at Corinth, a thousand courtesans performed the service of the temple of Aphrodite, and that religion consecrated all the scandal and infatuation of a kermess and a carnival.

The Greeks partook of social life as thoughtlessly as the religious life. The conquest of the Roman is for acquisition; he utilizes vanquished nations as he would so many farms, methodically and continuously, with the spirit of an administrator and business man; the Athenian explores the sea, disembarks and fights without establishing any thing, at irregular times, according to the impulse of the hour, the necessity of action and to gratify a freak of the imagination; through a spirit of enterprise, a love of glory and for the satisfaction of being first among the Greeks. The people, with the funds of their allies, adorn their city and, commanding their artists to produce temples, theatres, statues, decorations

and processions, avail themselves daily, and in every sense, of the public wealth. Aristophanes amuses them with caricatures of their magistrates and politicians. The theatres are open free of expense; at the end of the Dionysia the money on hand in the treasury, contributed by their allies, is distributed. They soon demand pay for their services as dicasts and in the public assemblies. Every thing is for the people. They oblige the rich to defray the expense of choruses, actors, the representations and all the finest spectacles. However poor they may be, they have baths and gymnasia, supported by the treasury, as pleasant as those of the knights.\* Towards the last they give themselves no further care; they hire mercenaries to carry on their wars; if they concern themselves with politics, it is simply for discussion; they listen to their orators as dilettanti and attend to their debates, recriminations and eloquent assaults as they would a performance in a cock-pit. They sit in judgment upon talent and applaud judiciously. The main thing with them is to ensure perfect festivals; they decree the penalty

---

\* Xenophon: "The Athenian Republic."

of death against whosoever shall propose to divert any portion of the money set aside for them to war purposes. Their generals bear witness to this: "Except one alone whom you send to battle," says Demosthenes, "the others follow the sacrifices in the adornment of your festivals." In the equipment and despatch of a fleet they do not act, or else act too late; while, on the contrary, for processions and public performances, every thing is foreseen, arranged, and exactly fulfilled as it ought to be and at the appointed hour. Little by little, under the dominion of primitive sensuality, the State becomes reduced to a spectacular enterprise, whose business it is to provide poetic enjoyment for people of taste.

Likewise, finally, in philosophy and in science, they aimed only to cull the flower of things; they possessed none of the abnegation of the modern savant, who devotes his genius to the elucidation of an obscure point; who gives up years of observation to some species of animal; who incessantly multiplies and verifies his experiments; who, abandoning himself voluntarily to thankless labor, passes his life in patiently hewing two or three stones for an immense

edifice which he cannot see completed, but which is to be of vast service to generations to come. Philosophy, here, is talk; it is born in the gymnasia, under porticoes, and in groves of sycamore; the master converses as he walks, and his pupils follow him. All, at the outset, rush on to lofty conclusions; to generalize is their pleasure; they delight in it and care but little for constructing a good, solid foundation; their proofs dwindle down most frequently to the mere resemblance of truths. They are, in short, speculators, fond of flying over the summit of things, of traversing in three paces, like Homer's gods, a vast new realm, of embracing the entire universe in a single glance. A system is a sort of sublime opera, the opera of comprehensive and inquisitive minds. Their philosophy, from Thales to Proclus, has, like their tragedy, entwined itself around thirty or forty principal themes, and with a multitude of variations, amplification and admixtures. The philosophic imagination manipulated ideas and hypotheses, just as the mythologic imagination manipulated legend and divinity.

Passing from their works to their methods we see



the same intellectual efforts. They are as much sophists as they are philosophers; they exercise the mind for the mind's sake. A subtle distinction, a long and refined analysis, a captious argument of difficult elaboration, attracts and absorbs them. They amuse themselves with and linger over dialectics, quibbles and paradoxes;\* they are not sufficiently in earnest; if they undertake any research it is not with a view to obtain a fixed and definite acquisition; they do not love truth wholly and absolutely, forgetful of and indifferent to the rest. She is game which they often run down, but, to see their reasoning, we soon recognize that, without acknowledging it to themselves, they prefer the chase, the chase with its manœuvrings, its artifices, its circuits, its inspiration and that sentiment of free discursive and victorious action with which it stimulates the nerves and imagination of the hunter. "O

---

\* See logical methods in Plato and Aristotle, and especially the proofs of the immortality of the soul in the "Phædon." In all this philosophy the faculties are superior to the work in hand. Aristotle wrote a treatise on Homeric problems following the example of the rhetoricians who sought to ascertain whether, when Aphrodite was wounded by Diomed, the wound was in the right hand or in the left.

Greeks! Greeks!" said an Egyptian priest to Solon, "what children ye are!" They played, in fact, with life, and all life's gravest things, with religion and the gods, with government and law, with philosophy and truth.

## V.

Hence their position as the greatest artists of the world. They possessed the charming freedom of mind, the superabundance of inventive gayety, the gracious intoxication of invention which leads the child to constantly form and arrange little poems with no object but that of giving full play to new and over lively faculties suddenly awakened. The three leading traits that we have distinguished in their character are just those which constitute the artistic soul and intellect. Delicacy of perception, an aptitude at seizing nice relationships, the sense of gradation, is what allows the artist to construct a totality of forms, colors, sounds and incidents, in short, elements and details, so closely united among themselves by inward dependencies, that their organization constitutes a living thing, surpassing in the imaginary world the profound harmony of the actual world. The necessity of clearness, a feeling for proportion, dislike of the vague and the abstract, contempt for the monstrous and exaggerated,

and a taste for accurate and defined contours, is what leads him to give his conceptions a shape which the imagination and senses can easily grasp, and, consequently, to execute works comprehensible to every race and all ages, and which, being human, are eternal. The love and worship of this life, the sentiment of human energy and the necessity of calmness and gayety, is what leads him to avoid depicting physical infirmity and moral ills, to represent the health of the spirit and perfection of the body, and to complete the acquired beauty of expression by the fundamental beauty of the subject. These are the distinct traits of their entire art. A glance at their literature compared with that of the Orient, of the middle ages and of modern times; a perusal of Homer compared with that of the Divine Comedy, of Faust or of the Indian epics; a study of their prose compared with the prose of every other age and country, will soon furnish convincing proof of it. Every literary style relatively to theirs is pompous, heavy, forced and obscure; every moral type relatively to theirs is overstrained, mournful and morbid; every oratorical and poetic model, every model

in fact which has not been borrowed from them, is disproportioned, distorted and badly put together by the work which it contains.

Our space is limited, and among a hundred examples we can choose but one. Let us take an object exposed to the eye, and that which first attracts attention on entering the city. I refer to the temple. It stands usually on a height called the Acropolis, on a substructure of rocks, as at Syracuse, or on a small eminence which, as at Athens, was the first place of refuge and the original site of the city. It is visible from every point on the plain and from the neighboring hills; vessels greet it at a distance on approaching the port. It stands out in clear and bold relief in the limpid atmosphere.\* It is not, like our mediæval cathedrals, crowded and smothered by rows of houses, secreted, half-concealed, inaccessible to the eye save in its details and its upper section. Its base, sides, entire mass and full proportions appear at a glance. You are not obliged to divine the whole from a part; its situa-

---

\* See the restorations, accompanied with memoirs, by Tetaz, Pacard Boitte and Garnier.

tion renders it proportionate to man's senses. In order that there may be no lack of distinctness of impression, they give it medium or small dimensions. There are only two or three of the Grecian temples as large as the Madeleine. They bear no resemblance to the vast monuments of India, Babylon and Egypt, the storied and crowded palaces, the mazes of avenues, enclosures, halls and colossi, so numerous that the mind at last becomes disturbed and bewildered. They do not resemble the gigantic cathedrals whose naves contain the entire population of a city; which the eye, even if they were placed on a height, could not wholly embrace; whose profiles are lost and the total harmony of which cannot be appreciated except on a perspective plan. The Greek temple is not a place of assembly but the special habitation of a god, a shrine for his effigy, a marble monstrosity enclosing an unique statue. At a hundred paces off from the sacred precincts you can seize the direction and harmony of the principal lines. They are, moreover, so simple that a glance suffices to comprehend the whole. This edifice has nothing complicated, quaint or elaborate about it;

it is a rectangle bordered by a peristyle of columns; three or four of the elementary forms of geometry suffice for the whole, the symmetry of their arrangement setting them forth through their repetitions and contrasts. The crowning of the pediment, the fluting of the pillars, the abacus of the capital, all the accessories and all details contribute yet more to show in stronger relief the special character of each member, while the diversity of polychromy serves to mark and define their respective values.

You have recognized in these different characteristics the fundamental need of pure and fixed forms. A series of other characters shows the subtlety of their tact and the exquisite delicacy of their perceptions. There is a close tie between all the forms and dimensions of a temple as there is between all the organs of a living organism, and this tie they discovered; they established the architectural module which according to the diameter of a column, determines its height, next its shape, next its base and capital, and next the distance between the columns and the general economy of the edifice. They intentionally modified the clumsy strictness of math-

emational forms; they adapted them to the secret exigencies of the eye; they gave a swell to the column by a skilful curve two-thirds its height; they gave convexity to all the horizontal, and inclined to the centre all the vertical lines of the Parthenon; they discarded all the fetters of mechanical symmetry; they gave unequal wings to their Propylæa and different levels to the two sanctuaries of their Eretheum; they intersected, varied and inflected their plans and angles in such a manner as to endow architectural geometry with the grace, the diversity, the unforeseen, the fleeting suppleness of a living thing, without diminishing the effect of the masses; and they decked its surface with the most elegant series of painted and sculptured ornaments. Nothing in all this equals the originality of their taste unless it be its correctness; they combined two qualities apparently excluding each other, extreme richness and extreme gravity. Our modern perceptions do not reach this point; we only half succeed, and by degrees, in divining the perfection of their invention. The exhuming of Pompeii was necessary to enable us to conjecture the charming vivacity and



harmony of decoration with which they clothed their walls; and in our own day, an English architect has measured the imperceptible inflexion of the swollen horizontal lines and the convergent perpendicular lines which give to their most beautiful temple its supreme beauty. We, in their presence, are like an ordinary listener to a musician born and brought up to music; there are in his performance delicacies of execution, purity of tone, fulness of chords and achievements of expression which the listener, partially endowed and badly prepared for it, only seizes in gross and from time to time. We retain only the total impression, and this impression, conformable to the genius of the race, is that of a gay and invigorating fête. The architectural structure is of itself healthy and viable; it does not require, like the Gothic cathedral, a colony of masons at its feet to keep restoring its constant decay; it does not borrow support for its arches from outward buttresses; it needs no iron frame to sustain a prodigious scaffolding of fretted and elaborated pinnacles, to fasten to its walls its marvellously intricate lacework and its fragile stone filagree. It is not the

product of an exalted imagination but of a lucid reason. It is so made as to endure by itself and without help. Almost every temple in Greece would be still intact if the brutality or fanaticism of man had not supervened to destroy them. Those of Pæstum remain erect after twenty-three centuries; it is the explosion of a powder magazine which cut the Parthenon in two. Left to itself the Greek temple stands and continues to stand; we realize this in its great solidity; its mass is consolidated instead of being weighed down. We are sensible of the stable equilibrium of its diverse members; for the architect reveals the inner through the outer structure, the lines which flatter the eye with their harmonious proportions being just the lines which satisfy the understanding with assurances of eternity.\* Add to this appearance of power an air of ease and elegance; mere endurance is not the aim of the Greek edifice as with the Egyptian edifice. It is not crushed down by a weight of matter like our obstinate and ungainly Atlas; it unfolds, ex-

---

\* In this connection the reader is referred to "*La Philosophie de l'architecture en Grèce*," by M. E. Boutmy, a work of a very accurate and delicate spirit.

pands, and rises up like the beautiful figure of an athlete in whom vigor accords with delicacy and repose. Consider again its adornment, the golden bucklers starring its architrave, its golden acroteria, the lions' heads gleaming in sunshine, the threads of gold and sometimes of enamel which entwine the capitals, the covering of vermilion minium, blue, light ochre and green, every bright or quiet tone, which, united and opposed as at Pompeii, affords the eye a sensation of healthy and hearty southern joyousness. Finally, take into account the bas-reliefs, the statues of the pediments, metopes and frise, especially the colossal effigy of the inner cell, the sculptures of ivory, marble and gold, those heroic or divine bodies which place before men's eyes perfect images of manly force, of athletic perfection, of militant virtue, of unaffected nobility, of unalterable serenity and you will arrive at the first conception of their genius and their art.



**THE PERIOD.**



## THE PERIOD.

WE have now to take another step and consider a new characteristic of Greek civilization. The Greek of ancient Greece is not only Greek but again he is antique; he does not differ from the Englishman or Spaniard, because, being of another race, he has other aptitudes and inclinations; he differs from the Englishman, the Spaniard and the modern Greek in this, that, placed at an anterior epoch of history, he entertains other ideas and other sentiments. He precedes us and we follow him. He did not build his civilization on ours; we built our civilization on his, and on many others. He is on the lower floor while we are on the second or third story. Hence certain results which are infinite in number and importance. What can differ more than two lives, one on a level with the ground with all the doors opening on the country, and the other perched aloft and confined to the small compartments of a modern dwelling-house? The contrast may be expressed in

two words: their life, mental and physical, is simple; ours is complicated. Their art, therefore, is simpler than ours, and the conception they form of man's body and soul provides material for works which our civilization no longer warrants.



## I.

A glance at the outward features of their life suffices to show how simple it is. Civilization, in migrating towards the north, had to provide for all sorts of wants which it was not obliged to satisfy in its early condition at the south. In a moist or cold climate, like that of Gaul, Germany, England and North America, man consumes more; he requires closer and more substantial houses, thicker and warmer clothes, a greater amount of fire and light, more shelter and food, more implements and occupations. He necessarily becomes manufacturing, and, as his demands grow with their gratification, he devotes three quarters of his energy to the accumulation of comforts. The conveniences he provides for himself, however, are so many restraints and embarrassments to him, the machinery of his self-gratification keeping him in bondage. How many things are essential nowadays in the dress of an ordinary man! How many more in the toilette of a woman even of

an average station! Two or three wardrobes are not sufficient. You are aware that to-day the women of Naples and Athens borrow our fashions. The accoutrement of a pallikare is as ample as our own. Our northern civilizations, in flowing back upon the unprogressive people of the south, bear to them a foreign costume unnecessarily complicated; we have to go to remote districts, or descend to the poorest class, to find, as at Naples, lazzaroni clad in a kilt, and women, as in Arcadia, wearing but one garment, in short, people who reduce and adapt their dress to their slight climatic exigencies. In ancient Greece a short tunic, without sleeves, for the male, and, for the female, a long tunic, reaching to the feet and brought upward over the shoulders, falling down to the waist, constituted all that was essential in their costume; add to this a large square mantle, and for the woman a veil when she went out, together with sandals, which were often worn,—Socrates only put them on on festival occasions, people frequently going barefoot and likewise bareheaded. All these habiliments could be removed with a turn of the hand; there is no restraint upon the figure; its forms

are indicated and the nude is apparent through their openings and in the movements of the body. They were wholly taken off in the gymnasia, in the stadium and in many of the religious dances; "It is a Greek peculiarity," says Pliny, "to conceal nothing." Dress, with them, is simply a loose accessory which leaves full play to the body, and which can be thrown aside in a moment. There is the same simplicity in man's second envelop, that is to say, his dwelling. Compare a house of St. Germain or Fontainebleau with a house in Pompeii or Herculaneum, two handsome provincial cities which, in relation to Rome, stand in the same position as St. Germain or Fontainebleau do to Paris; sum up all that composes a passable dwelling of the present time, a tall structure of hewn stone two or three stories high, glazed windows, wall-paper, hangings, blinds, double and triple curtains, stoves, chimneys, carpets, beds, chairs, all kinds of furniture, innumerable luxurious trifles and household implements, and contemplate these alongside of the frail walls of a Pompeian house, with its ten or twelve closets ranged around a small court in which bubbles a stream of water, its

delicate painting and its small bronzes; it is a slight shelter to sleep under at night, and for a siesta during the day; in which to enjoy the fresh air and contemplate delicate arabesques and beautiful harmonies of color. The climate requires nothing more.\* White-washed walls which a robber could enter and still barren of paintings in the time of Pericles; a bed with a few coverings, a chest, some beautiful painted vases, weapons hung up and a lamp of a primitive shape; a house of very small dimensions, sometimes only one story high, sufficed for a noble Athenian. He lived out of doors, in the open air, under porticoes, in the Agora, in the gymnasia, while the public edifices which protect him in public life are as indifferently furnished as his own home. Instead of a palace like that of the Corps Legislatif or the Houses of Parliament in London, with its internal arrangement, seats, lights, library and refreshment hall, every kind of apartment and service provided for, he possesses an empty space, the Pnyx, and a few steps of stone serving the speaker as a tribune.

---

\* See for the details of private life the "Charicles" of Becker, and especially the Excursus.

We are now erecting an opera-house, and we demand a spacious front, four or five vast pavilions, reception-rooms, saloons and passages of every description, a wide circle for the attendants, an enormous stage, a gigantic receptacle overhead for scenery and an infinity of boxes and rooms for actors and managers; we expend forty millions, and the house is to hold two thousand spectators. In Greece a theatre contained from thirty to forty thousand spectators, and cost twenty times less than with us; the means are furnished by nature; a hillside in which circular rows of benches are cut, an altar at the foot, and in the centre, a high sculptured wall like that at Orange, to give a reverberation to the actor's voice, the sun for a chandelier, and, for distant scenery, sometimes the sparkling sea and, again, groups of mountains softened in light. They obtain magnificence through economy, their amusements as well as public business being provided for with a degree of perfection unattainable through our profuse expenditure.

Let us pass to moral organizations. A State of the present day comprises thirty or forty million men spread over a territory consisting of thousands of

square miles. It is for this reason more stable than an antique city. On the other hand, however, it is much more complicated, and for a man to perform any duty in it he must be a specialist. Public functions consequently are specific like the rest. The mass take part in general matters only from time to time and through elections; it lives, or contrives to live, in the provinces, unable to form any personal or precise opinions, reduced to vague impressions and blind emotions, compelled to entrust itself to better informed persons whom it despatches to the capital and who act for it in making war and peace and in imposing taxes. The same substitution takes place in relation to religion, justice, the army and the navy. In each of these services we have a body of special agents; a long apprenticeship is necessary to do duty in them; they are beyond the reach of a majority of the citizens. We have nothing to do with them; we have delegates who, appointed by each other or chosen by the State, combat, navigate, judge or pray for us. We cannot do otherwise; the duty is too complicated to be performed hap-hazard by the first comer; the priest must have passed through

a seminary, the magistrate through a law school, the officer through the preparatory schools of the barracks and the navy, and the civil administrator through examinations and clerkships. In a small State, on the contrary, like the Greek city, the common man is on a level with every public requirement; society is not divided up into governed and governors; there is no retired class, everybody being an active citizen. The Athenian decides for himself on common interests; five or six thousand citizens listen to orators and vote on the public square; it is the market-place; people resort to it to pass laws and decrees as well as to sell their wine and olives; the national territory being simply a suburb, the rustic travels but a short distance farther than the citizen. The business that brings him, moreover, is within his capacity, for it is no more than parish interests, inasmuch as the city is merely a township. He has no difficulty in knowing what course to pursue with Megara or Corinth; his personal experience and daily impressions are adequate to this end; he has no need to be a professional politician, versed in geography, history, statistics and the like. In a sim-

ilar manner, he is priest in his own house, and from time to time the pontiff of his phratry or tribe; for his faith is a beautiful fairy tale, the ceremony he performs consisting of a dance or chant familiar to him from his infancy, and of a banquet at which he presides in a certain garment.—Again, he is judge in the civil, criminal, and religious dicasterion, an advocate, and obliged to plead in his own suit. A man of the South, a Greek, is naturally of a vivacious intellect and a fluent and fine speaker; laws are not yet multiplied and jumbled together in a code and in confusion; he knows them in a mass; pleaders cite them to him, and, moreover, custom allows him to consult his instincts, his common sense, his feeling, his passions, to as great an extent, at least, as the strict letter and legal arguments.—If he is rich he is an *impresario*. You are aware of their theatre being less complicated than ours, and that a Greek, an Athenian, always has a taste for seeing dancers, singers, and actors.—Rich or poor he is a soldier; military art being still primitive and the machinery of war unknown, the national militia forms the army. There was no better one up to the appearance of the



Romans. In order to organize it and form the perfect soldier, two conditions are requisite, and these two conditions are provided by the common education, without special instruction, drill, discipline or exercise in the barracks. They require, on the one hand, that each soldier shall be as good a gladiator as possible, with the most robust, supple and agile body, the best calculated to strike, ward off blows and run; the gymnasia suffice for this purpose; they are the youths' colleges; whole days and long years are devoted to teaching them wrestling, jumping, running, and throwing the discus, and, methodically, every limb and every muscle is exercised and fortified. On the other hand, they require the soldiery to march, run and perform their evolutions in regular order; the orchestra suffices for this purpose; all their national and religious festivals teach children and young people the art of forming and separating groups; at Sparta, the chorus of the public dance and of the military company\* are arranged on the same plan. Thus prepared for it by their social arrangements, we can comprehend how the citizen becomes

---

\* *Choros and Lochos.*

a soldier without an effort and from the very beginning.—He gets to be a mariner without much greater apprenticeship. A ship of war in those days was only a coasting vessel, and contained, at most, two hundred men, and never lost sight of land. In a city with a port, and which is supported by a maritime trade, there is no one who cannot manœuvre a vessel of this description, and who cannot judge of, or soon learn, the signs of the weather, the chances of the wind, positions and distances, the technics in full, and every accessory, which our sailors and marine officers acquire only after ten years' study and practice. All these peculiarities of antique life proceed from the same cause, which is the simplicity of a civilization without any precedent; and all end in the same effect, which is the simplicity of a well-balanced mind, no group of aptitudes and inclinations being developed at the expense of others, free of any exclusive direction, and not deformed by any special function. We have at the present day the cultivated and the uncultivated man, the citizen and the peasant, the provincial and the Parisian, besides as many distinct species as there are classes, profes-

sions and trades; the individual everywhere penned up in compartments of his own making and fettered with innumerable self-assigned necessities. Less artificial, less special, less remote from the primitive condition of things, the Greek acted in a political circle better proportioned to human faculties, amidst social ways more favorable to the maintenance of the animal faculties. Nearer to a natural life and less bound down by a superadded civilization he was more emphatically man.

## II.

These are but the surroundings and the exterior moulds which shape the individual. Let us look into the individual himself, his sentiments and his ideas; we shall be yet more impressed with the distance between these and our own. Two kinds of culture fashion them in every age and in every land, religious culture and secular culture, both operating in the same sense, formerly to maintain them simple, now to render them complex. Modern people are Christian, and Christianity is a religion of second growth which opposes natural instinct. We may liken it to a violent contraction which has inflected the primitive attitude of the human mind. It proclaims, in effect, that the world is sinful, and that man is depraved—which certainly is indisputable in the century in which it was born. According to it, man must change his ways. Life here below is simply an exile; let us turn our eyes upward to our celestial

home. Our natural character is vicious ; let us stifle natural desires and mortify the flesh. The experience of our senses and the knowledge of the wise are inadequate and delusive ; let us accept the light of revelation, faith and divine illumination. Through penitence, renunciation and meditation let us develop within ourselves the spiritual man ; let our life be an ardent awaiting of deliverance, a constant sacrifice of will, an undying yearning for God, a revery of sublime love, occasionally rewarded with ecstasy and a vision of the infinite. For fourteen centuries the ideal of this life was the anchorite or monk. If you would estimate the power of such a conception and the grandeur of the transformation it imposes on human faculties and habits, read, in turn, the great Christian poem and the great pagan poem, one the *Divine Comedy* and the other the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. Dante has a vision and is transported out of our little ephemeral sphere into eternal regions ; he beholds its tortures, its expiations and its felicities ; he is affected by superhuman anguish and horror ; all that the infuriate and subtle imagination of the lover of justice and the executioner can conceive of he sees,

suffers and sinks under. He then ascends into light; his body loses its gravity; he floats involuntarily, led by the smile of a radiant woman; he listens to souls in the shape of voices and to passing melodies; he sees choirs of angels, a vast rose of living brightness representing the virtues and the celestial powers; sacred utterances and the dogmas of truth reverberate in ethereal space. At this fervid height, where reason melts like wax, both symbol and apparition, one effacing the other, merge into mystic bewilderment, the entire poem, infernal or divine, being a dream which begins with horrors and ends in rapture. How much more natural and healthy is the spectacle which Homer presents! We have the Troad, the isle of Ithaca and the coasts of Greece; still at the present day we follow in his track; we recognize the forms of mountains, the color of the sea, the jutting fountains, the cypress and the alders in which the sea-birds perched; he copied a steadfast and persistent nature; with him throughout we plant our feet on the firm ground of truth. His book is a historical document; the manners and customs of his contemporaries were such as he describes; his Olym-

pus itself is a Greek family. We are not obliged to strain and exalt ourselves to ascertain if we possess the sentiments he utters, nor to imagine the world he paints—the combats, voyages, banquets, public discourses, and private conversations, the various scenes of real life, of friendships, of paternal and conjugal affection, the craving for fame and action, the quarrels and reconciliations, the love of festivals, the relish of existence, every emotion and every passion of the natural man. He confines himself to the visible circle realized by every generation of human experience; he does not travel out of it; this world suffices for him; it alone is important, the beyond being simply the vague habitation of dissatisfied spectres when Ulysses encounters Achilles in Hades and congratulates him on being first among the dead, the latter replies :

Noble Ulysses, speak not thus of death  
As if thou could'st console me. I would be  
A laborer on earth and serve for hire  
Some man of mean estate who makes scant cheer,  
Rather than reign o'er all who have gone down  
To death. Speak rather of my noble son;  
Whether or not he joined the war to take  
A place among the foremost in the fight.

Thus beyond the grave he is still most concerned with this present life. Then,

—the soul of swift *Æacides*  
 Over the meadows thick with asphodel  
 Departed with long strides, well-pleased to hear  
 From me the story of his son's renown.\*

Different shades of the same sentiment reappear at every epoch of Greek civilization; theirs is the world lit up by sunshine; the hope and consolation of the dying parent is the survival in bright day of his son, his glory, his tomb, and his patrimony. "The happiest man I have seen," said Solon to Cræsus, "is Tellus of Athens; for his country was flourishing in his day, and he himself had sons both beautiful and good, and he lived to see children born to each of them, and these children all grow up; and farther, because after a life spent in what our people look upon as comfort, his end was surpassingly glorious. In a battle between the Athenians and their neighbors, near Eleusis, he came to the assistance of his countrymen, routed the foe, and died upon the field most gallantly. The Athenians gave him a

---

\* The *Odyssey*, translated by W. C. Bryant.



public funeral on the spot where he fell, and paid him the highest honors.”\*

When philosophical reflection comes to dwell upon it the beyond does not appear terrible, infinite, disproportioned to this present life, as certain as it, exhaustless in torments and delights, and like a frightful gulf or an angelic elysium.—“One of two things,” said Socrates to his judges, “either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by the sight of dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private man, but even the great king, will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others. Now if death is like this, I say that to die is gain; for eternity is then only a single night. But if death

---

\* Rawlinson's Herodotus.

is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead are, what good, oh my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If, indeed, when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgment there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Æacus and Triptolemus, and other sons of God who were righteous in their own life, that pilgrimage will be worth making. What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus and Musæus and Hesiod and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again.”\* In both cases, then, we “should nourish good hope on the subject of death.” Twenty centuries later, Pascal, taking up the same question and the same doubt, could see for the incredulous no other hope but “the horrible alternative of utter annihilation or eternal misery.” A contrast like this shows the turmoil which for eighteen hundred years has disordered the human mind. The prospect of a happy or miserable eternity destroyed its balance; up to the close of the middle ages, with this incalculable weight upon it, it was

---

\* The Dialogues of Plato, translated by Jowett.

like uncertain and disjointed scales, now up to the highest point, now down to the lowest, and always in extremes. When, toward the Renaissance, man's oppressed nature recovered itself and assumed the ascendant, -the old ascetic and monastic doctrine stood there to confront and to beat it back, not only with its traditions and institutions, maintained or revived, but again with the enduring unrest with which it had infected dolorous souls and over-excited imaginations. This discord subsists at the present day; there are in us and about us two moral theories, two ideas of nature and of life, whose constant antagonism makes us feel the harmonious ease of a young society where natural instincts displayed themselves intact and loyal under a religion that favored instead of repressed their outgrowth.

If religious culture, with us, has grafted incongruous sentiments on spontaneous tendencies, secular culture has confused our mind with a maze of elaborated and foreign notions. Compare the first and most powerful of educations, that which language gives, in Greece and among ourselves. Our modern tongues, Italian, Spanish, French, and English are

dialects, the shapeless remains of a beautiful idiom impaired by a long decadence and which importations and intermixtures have still further tended to change and obscure. They resemble those edifices built with the ruins of an ancient temple and with other materials picked up at random; the result of which is that, with Latin stones, mutilated and combined in another style, along with pebbles gathered in the street and other rubbish, we have constructed the building in which we live, once a gothic castle and nowadays the modern mansion. Our mind dwells in it because it has become domiciliated; but how much more freely did that of the Greeks move in theirs! We do not readily comprehend our somewhat generalized terms; they are not transparent; they do not expose their root, the evident fact from which they are derived; words have to be explained to us which formerly man understood without an effort through the sole virtue of analogy,—*genus, species, grammar, calculus, economy, law, thought, conception*, and the rest. Even in German, where this obstacle is slighter, the conducting thread is wanting. Almost the whole of our philosophic and scien-

tific vocabulary is foreign; we are obliged to know Greek and Latin to make use of it properly, and, most frequently, employ it badly. Innumerable terms find their way out of this technical vocabulary into common conversation and literary style, and hence it is that we now speak and think with words cumbersome and difficult to manage. We adopt them ready made and conjoined, we repeat them according to routine; we make use of them without considering their scope and without a nice appreciation of their sense; we only approximate to that which we would like to express. Fifteen years are necessary for an author to learn to write, not with genius, for that is not to be acquired, but with clearness, sequence, propriety and precision. He finds himself obliged to weigh and investigate ten or twelve thousand words and diverse expressions, to note their origin, filiation and relationships, to rebuild on an original plan, his ideas and his whole intellect. If he has not done it, and he wishes to reason on rights, duties, the beautiful, the State or any other of man's important interests, he gropes about and stumbles; he gets entangled in long, vague phrases, in sonorous

commonplaces, in crabbed and abstract formulas. Look at the newspapers and the speeches of our popular orators. It is especially the case with workmen who are intelligent but who have had no classical education; they are not masters of words and, consequently, of ideas; they use a refined language which is not natural to them; it is a perplexity to them and consequently confuses their minds; they have had no time to filter it drop by drop. This is an enormous disadvantage, from which the Greeks were exempt. There was no break with them between the language of concrete facts and that of abstract reasoning, between the language spoken by the people and that of the learned; the one was a counterpart of the other; there was no term in any of Plato's dialogues which a youth, leaving his gymnasia, could not comprehend; there is not a phrase in any of Demosthenes' harangues which did not readily find a lodging-place in the brain of an Athenian peasant or blacksmith. Attempt to translate into Greek one of Pitt's or Mirabeau's discourses, or an extract from Addison or Nicole, and you will be obliged to recast and transpose the thought; you will be led to find

for the same thoughts expressions more akin to facts and to concrete experience;\* a flood of light will heighten the prominence of all the truths and of all the errors; that which you were wont to call natural and clear will seem to you affected and semi-obscure, and you will perceive by force of contrast why, among the Greeks, the instrument of thought being more simple, it did its office better and with less effort.

On the other hand, the work with the instrument, has become complicated, and out of all proportion. Besides Greek ideas, we have all that have accumulated for the past eighteen centuries. We have been overburdened, from the first, with our acquisitions. On issuing from a brutal barbarism at the dawn of the middle age, a simple intellect, which could scarcely do more than stammer, had to be en-

---

\* I would refer the reader to the writings of Paul-Louis Courier, who formed his style on the Greek. Compare his translation of the first chapters of Herodotus with those of Larcher. In "François le Champi," the "Maitres Sonneurs" and in the "Mare au Diable," George Sand attains in a great degree to the simplicity, naturalness and admirable directness of the Greek style. The contrast is singular between this and the modern style which she employs when she speaks in her own name or when she gives the conversation of cultivated characters.

cumbered with the remains of classic antiquity and an ancient ecclesiastical literature, with a cavilling Byzantine theology, and the vast and subtle Aristotelian encyclopedia rendered still more obscure and subtle by his Arabian commentators. Then, after the Renaissance, came a revived antiquity to super-add its conceptions to ours, frequently to confuse our ideas and wrongfully impose on us its authority, doctrines and examples; to make us Latin and Greek in mind and language like the Italian men of letters of the fifteenth century; to prescribe to us its dramatic forms and the style of the seventeenth century; to suggest to us its political maxims and utopias as in the time of Rousseau and during the Revolution. The stream, nevertheless, greatly enlarged, grew with the immense influx; with the daily increasing volume of experimental science and human invention; with the separate contributions of growing civilizations, all of them spread over five or six grand territories. Add, after another century, the knowledge diffused among modern languages and literatures, the discovery of Oriental and remote civilizations, the extraordinary progress of history, reviving



before our eyes the habits and sentiments of so many races and so many ages; the current has become a river as variegated as it is enormous; all this is what a human mind is obliged to absorb, and it demands the genius, long life and patience of a Goethe to moderately appreciate it. How much more simple and limpid was the primitive source! In the best days of Greece a youth "learned to read, write, and cipher,\* play the lyre, wrestle and to perform all other bodily exercises."† Education was reduced to this "for the children of the best families." Let us add, however, that in the house of the music-master he was taught how to sing a few national and religious odes, how to repeat passages from Homer, Hesiod and the lyric poets, the pæan to be sung in war and the song of Harmodius to be recited at the table. When he got to be older he listened in the Agora to the discourses of orators, to the decrees and the promulgation of the laws. In the time of Socrates, if inquisitive, he attended the disputes and dissertations of the sophists; he tried to procure a book by Anax-

---

\* *Grammata*. As letters served as ciphers, this term includes all three.

† The "Theages" of Plato.

agoras, or by Zeno of Elea; a few interested themselves in geometrical problems; but, as a whole, education was entirely gymnastic and musical, while the few hours that were devoted to a philosophical discussion, between two spells of bodily exercise, can no more be compared to our fifteen or twenty years of study, than their twenty or thirty rolls of papyrus manuscript to our libraries of three million volumes. All these opposing conditions may be reduced to one, that which separates a fresh and impulsive civilization from an elaborate and complex civilization. Fewer means and tools, fewer industrial implements and social wheels, fewer words learnt and ideas acquired; a smaller heritage and lighter baggage and thus more easily managed; a single, straightforward growth without moral crisis or disparity, and consequently a freer play of the faculties, a healthier conception of life, a less disturbed, less jaded, less deformed spirit and intellect; this is the capital trait of their existence and it will be found in their art.

## III.

The ideal work, indeed, has ever been the summary of real life. Examine the modern spirit and you will find modifications, inequalities, maladies, hypertrophies, so to say, of sentiments and faculties of which its art is the verification.—In the middle ages the exaggerated development of the inner and spiritual man, the pursuit of tender and sublime revery, the worship of sorrow and the contempt of the flesh, lead the excited feelings and imagination on to visions and seraphic adoration. You are familiar with those of the “Imitation” and the “Fioretti” those of Dante and Petrarch, and with the subtle refinements and extravagant follies of chivalry and the courts of love. In painting and sculpture, consequently, the figures are ugly or lacking in beauty, often out of proportion and not viable, almost always meagre, attenuated, wasted and suffering; overcome and absorbed by some conception which turns their thoughts

away from this nether world; transfixed in anticipation or in ravishment; displaying the meek sadness of the cloister or the radiance of ecstasy, too frail or too impassioned to live and already belonging to paradise.—At the time of the Renaissance the universal amelioration of the human condition, the example of antiquity revived and understood, the transports of the mind liberated and ennobled by its grand discoveries, renew pagan sentiments and art. Mediæval institutions and rites however still subsist; in Italy as in Flanders, you see in the finest works the disagreeable incongruity of figures and subjects; there are martyrs who seem to have issued from an antique gymnasium; Christs consisting of destroying Jupiters or tranquil Apollos; Virgins worthy of profane love; angels with the archness of Cupids; Magdalens often the most blooming of sirens, and St. Sebastians only so many hale Hercules; in short, an assembly of male and female saints who, amidst the implements of penance and passion, retain the vigorous health, the lively carnations and the spirited attitudes common to the joyous fêtes of perfect athletes and noble young Athenian virgins.—At the present

day, the accumulations of the human brain, the multiplicity and discord of doctrines, the excesses of cerebral application, sedentary habits, an artificial regime and the feverish excitement of capitals have augmented nervous agitation, extended the craving for new and strong sensations, and developed morbid melancholy, vague aspirations and illimitable lusts. Man is no longer what he was, and what, perhaps, he would have done well to remain, an animal of superior grade, happy in thinking and acting on the earth which nourishes him and beneath the sun which gives him light. On the contrary, he is a prodigious brain, an infinite spirit of which his members are only appendages and of which his senses are simply servants; insatiable in his curiosity and ambition, ever in quest and on conquest, with tremors and outbursts which rack his animal organization and ruin his corporeal strength; led hither and thither within the confines of the actual world and even into the depths of the imaginary world; now exalted and now overwhelmed with the immensity of his acquisitions and of his performances; raging after the impossible or buried in occupation; grand and intense like Bect-

hoven, Heine and the Faust of Goethe, or restrained by the pressure within his social cell, or warped all on one side by a specialty and monomania like the characters of Balzac. For this spirit plastic art no longer suffices; its interest in a figure centres not in the members, the trunk and the entire animated framework, but in the expressive head, the mobile physiognomy, the transparent soul declared in gesture, passion or incorporeal thought pulsating and overflowing through form and externalities; if it loves the beautiful sculptural form that is owing to education, after long preparatory culture, and through the disciplined taste of the dilettant. Multiple and cosmopolite as it is it finds interest in all phases of art, in every period of the past, in every grade of society, and in all the situations of life; it can appreciate the resurrections of foreign and ancient styles, incidents of rustic, popular or barbarous customs, foreign and remote landscapes, all that affords aliment for curiosity, documents for history and subjects for emotion or instruction. Satiated and dissipated as it is it demands of art powerful and strange sensations, new effects of color, physiognomy and site, stimulants

which, at any cost, disturb, provoke, or amuse it, in short, a style which depends on manner, theory, and exaggeration.

In Greece, on the contrary, the sentiments are simple, and, consequently, taste. Consider Greek dramatic works; there are no profound and complicated characters in them like those of Shakspeare; no intrigue cleverly contrived and unravelled, no surprises. The piece turns upon a heroic legend with which people are familiar from their infancy; they know beforehand its incidents and catastrophe. The action can be described in a few words. Ajax, seized with delirium, massacres the cattle of the camp, thinking he is slaying his enemies; chagrined at his folly, he bewails it and kills himself. Philoctetes, wounded, is abandoned on an island with his weapons; he is sought for and found because his arrows are needed; he becomes exasperated, refuses, and, at the command of Hercules, yields. The comedies of Menander, which we know through those of Terence, are made, so to say, out of nothing; it takes two of them to make one Roman piece; the richest scarcely contains the matter of one scene in our comedies. Read

the opening of the "Republic," in Plato, the "Syracuse Women" of Theocritus, the "Dialogues" of Lucian, the last Attic poet, or again, the "Cyropedia" and "Œconomicus" of Xenophon; there is no aim at effect, every thing being uniform; they are common, every-day scenes, the merit of which lies in their charming naturalness; there is no strong emphasis, no vehement, piquant trait; you scarcely smile, and yet are pleased just as when you stop before a wild flower or a limpid brook. The characters sit down and get up, look at each other and say the simplest things with no more effort than the painted figures on the walls of Pompeii. With our forced and paralyzed taste, accustomed to strong drink, we are inclined, at first, to pronounce this an insipid beverage; but, after moistening our lips with it for a few months, we are unwilling to imbibe any but this pure water, and find other literature spice, ragoût or poison.—Trace this disposition in their art, and especially in that we are now studying, sculpture. It is owing to this turn of mind that they have brought it to perfection, and that it is truly their national art, for there is no art which more demands a



simplicity of mind, sentiment and taste. A statue is a large piece of marble or bronze, and a large statue generally stands isolated upon a pedestal; it could not express too vehement action nor a too impassioned air, such as painting admits of, and which is allowable in a bas-relief, for this reason, that the figure would seem affected, got up for effect, running the risk of falling into the style of Bernini. A statue, moreover, is solid; its limbs and torso are weighty; the spectator moves around it and realizes its material mass; it is, besides, generally nude, or almost nude; the statuary, accordingly, is obliged to give the trunk and members equal importance with the head, and to appreciate animal life to as great an extent as moral life. Greek civilization is the only one which has conformed to these two conditions. At this stage of things, and in this form of culture, the body is an interesting object; the spirit has not subordinated it and cast it in the background; it has its own importance. The spectator attaches equal value to its different parts, noble or ignoble, to the breast which breathes so freely, to the strong and flexible neck, to the muscles rising and falling around

the spine, to the arms which project the discus, to the legs and feet whose energetic spring impel the man ahead in racing and jumping. A youth in Plato reproaches his rival for having a stiff body and a slender neck. Aristophanes promises the young man who will follow his advice the best of health and gymnastic beauty: "You will ever have a stout chest, a clear complexion, broad shoulders, large hips. . . You shall spend your time in the gymnastic schools sleek and blooming; you shall descend to the Academy and run races beneath the sacred olives along with some modest compeer, crowned with white reeds, redolent of yew and careless ease, and of leaf-shedding white poplar, rejoicing in the season of spring, when the plane-tree whispers to the elm."\* These are the pleasures and perfections of a blood horse, and Plato somewhere compares young men to fine coursers dedicated to the gods, and which are allowed to stray at will in their pasture-grounds with a view to see if they will not through instinct obtain wisdom and virtue. Such men have no need of study to enable them to contemplate understandingly and

---

\* Aristophanes, translated by Hickie; Bohn's Classical Library.

with pleasure a form like the "Theseus" of the Parthenon or the "Achilles" of the Louvre, the easy position of the body on the pelvis, the suppleness of the joints and limbs, the clean curve of the heel, the network of moving and flowing muscles underneath the firm and transparent skin. They appreciate its beauty the same as an English gentleman fond of hunting appreciates the breed, structure and fine points of the dogs and horses he raises. They are not surprised to see it naked. Modesty has not yet become prudery; the spirit, with them, does not sit by itself enthroned at sublime heights to obscure and degrade organs which fulfil less noble functions; it does not blush at and does not hide them; they excite no shame and provoke no smile. The terms which designate them are neither offensive, provocative nor scientific; Homer's mention of them is the same in tone as that of other portions of the body. The thoughts they awaken are, in Aristophanes, joyous without being filthy as in Rabelais. There is no secret literature devoted to them which austere people and delicate minds avoid. The idea occurs over and over again, on the stage, before full audiences, at

the festivals in honor of the gods, in the presence of magistrates, in the phallus borne by young virgins and which of itself is invoked as a divinity.\* In Greece all the great natural forces are divine, the divorce between the animal and the spirit not yet having taken place.

Here, then, we have the living body, complete and without a veil, admired and glorified, standing on its pedestal without scandal and exposed to all eyes. What is its purpose and what idea, through sympathy, is the statue to convey to spectators? An idea which, to us, is almost without meaning because it belongs to another age and another epoch of the human mind. The head is without significance; unlike ours it is not a world of graduated conceptions, excited passions and a medley of sentiments; the face is not sunken, sharp and disturbed; it has not many characteristics, scarcely any expression, and is generally in repose. Hence its suitability for the statuary; fashioned as it is to-day and as we now see it, its importance would be out of proportion to and a sacrifice of the rest; we would cease to look at the

---

\* Aristophanes, in the "Acharnians."

trunk and limbs or would be tempted to clothe them. On the contrary, in the Greek statue, the head excites no more interest than the trunk and other portions of the figure; its lines and its planes are simply continuations of other lines and other planes; its physiognomy is not meditative, but calm and almost dull; you detect no habitude, no aspiration, no ambition transcending present physical existence, the general attitude, like the entire action, conspiring in the same sense. When a figure displays energetic action for a given purpose, like the "Discobulus" at Rome, the "Fighting Gladiator" in the Louvre, or the "Dancing Fawn" of Pompeii, the effect, entirely physical, exhausts every idea and every desire within its capacity; so long as the discus is well launched, the blow well bestowed or parried, the dance animated and in good tune, it is satisfied, the mind making no further effort. Generally speaking, however, the attitude is a tranquil one; the figure does nothing, and says nothing; it is not fixed, wholly concentrated in a profound or eager expression; it is at rest, relaxed, without weariness; now standing, slightly leaning on one or the other foot now half turning,

now half reclining; a moment ago it was running like the young Lacedemonian girl;\* now, like the Flora, it holds a crown; its action, almost always, is one of indifference; the idea which animates it is so indefinite and, for us, so far removed that we still, after a dozen hypotheses, cannot precisely determine what the Venus of Milo is doing. It lives, and that suffices, and it sufficed for the spectator of antiquity. The contemporaries of Pericles and Plato did not require violent and surprising effects to stimulate weary attention or to irritate an uneasy sensibility. A blooming and healthy body, capable of all virile and gymnastic actions, a man or woman of fine growth and noble race, a serene form in full light, a simple and natural harmony of lines happily commingled, was the most animated spectacle they could dwell on. They desired to contemplate man proportioned to his organs and to his condition and endowed with every perfection within these limits; they demanded nothing more and nothing less; any thing besides would have struck them as extravagance, deformity

---

\* See the collection of casts by M. Ravaisson in the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

or disease. Such is the circle within which the simplicity of their culture kept them, and beyond which the complexity of our culture has impelled us; herein they encountered the art, statuary, which is appropriate to it; hence it is that we have left this art behind us, we of to-day having to resort to them for our models.





INSTITUTIONS.



## I.

IF ever the correspondence of art with life disclosed itself through visible traits, it is in the history of Greek statuary. To produce man in marble or bronze, the Greek first formed the living man, perfect sculpture with them being developed at the same moment as the institution through which was produced the perfect body. One accompanies the other, like the Dioscuri, and, through a fortunate conjunction, the doubtful dawn of distant history is at once lit up by their two growing rays.

The two appear together in the first half of the seventh century (B. C.). At this epoch occur the great technical discoveries of art. About 689 Butades of Sicyon undertakes to model and bake figures of clay, which leads him to decorate the tops of roofs with masks. At the same time Rhoikos and Theodoros of Samos discover the process of casting bronze in a mould. Towards 650 Malas of Chios executes the first statues in marble, and, in successive olympi-

ads, during the latter part of that century, and the whole of the following century, we see statuary blocked out to become finished and perfect after the glorious Median wars. This is the period at which orchestral and gymnastic institutions become regular and fully developed. A social cycle terminates, that of Homer and the epos, while another begins, that of Archilochus, Callinus, Terpander and Olympus and of lyric poesy. Between Homer and his followers, who belong to the ninth and eighth centuries, and the inventors of new metres and new music who belong to the next century, there occurs a vast transformation of social habits and organization.

Man's horizon becomes more and more extended every day. The Mediterranean is thoroughly explored; Sicily and Egypt, which Homer only knew through storied reports, become well known. In 632 the Samians were the first to sail as far as Tartessus, and, out of the tithes of their profits, they consecrated to their goddess Hera a huge bronze cup decorated with griffons and supported by three kneeling figures, eleven cubits high. Multiplied colonies arise to people and cultivate the coasts of Magna Græcia,

Sicily, Asia Minor and the Euxine. Industrial pursuits of all kinds flourish; the fifty-oared boats of ancient poems become galleys with two hundred rowers. A native of Chios discovers the art of softening, tempering and welding iron. The Dorian temple is erected. Money, figures and writing, of which Homer was ignorant, are known. There is a change in tactics; men fight on foot and in line instead of combating in chariots and without discipline. Human society, so scattered in the Iliad and Odyssey, becomes more closely united. Instead of an Ithaca where each family lives apart under its independent head, where there is no public authority, where twenty years could pass without convoking a public assembly, walled and guarded cities, provided with magistrates and subject to a police, are founded and become republics of equal citizens under elected chiefs.

At the same time, and in consequence of this, intellectual culture is diversified, diffused and re-invigorated. It unquestionably remains poetic as prose does not appear until later, but the monotonous melopœia which the epic hexameter sustains gives way to a multitude of varied songs and different metres

The pentameter is added to the hexameter; the trochee, iambic and anapest are invented; new and old metrical measures are combined in the distich, the strophe and others of all descriptions. The cithern which had but four strings receives seven; Terpander establishes his modes and gives the *nomes* of music;\* Olympus, and, next, Thales succeed in adapting the rhythms of the cithern, flute and voice to the various shades of poetic diction which they accompany. Let us attempt to picture to ourselves this world, so remote, and whose fragments are almost all lost; there is none which differs so much from our own and which, to be comprehended, demands so great an effort of the imagination. It is nevertheless the primitive and enduring mould from which the Greek world issued.

When we form a conception of lyric poetry, we recur at once to the odes of Victor Hugo or the stanzas of Lamartine, a poesy which is read silently or in a low voice, alongside of a friend in some quiet and secluded spot; our civilization renders po-

---

\* These *nomes* were simple tunes from which others could be derived by slight variations. Smith's Dictionary.

esy the confidential intercourse of two kindred spirits. That of the Greeks was uttered not only in a loud tone but it was declaimed and chanted to the sound of instruments and, again, accompanied with pantomime and dance. Suppose Delsarte or Madame Viardot singing a *recitative* from "Iphigenia" or "Orpheus," Rouget de l'Isle or Rachel declaiming the "Marseillaise" or a chorus from Gluck's "Alceste," such as we see on the stage, with a corypheus, orchestra and groups moving about before the steps of a temple, not as nowadays before the footlights and surrounded by painted scenery, but on a public square and beneath the splendor of sunshine, and you will have the least imperfect idea of Grecian fêtes and customs. The entire man, body and soul, is in commotion; the verses that remain to us are simply the detached leaves of an opera libretto. At a funeral in a Corsican village the "vocératrice" improvises and declaims songs of vengeance over the corpse of a murdered man; also wailing-songs over the coffin of a young girl who has died before her maturity. In the Calabrian mountains and in Sicily the young people, on days given up to dancing, rep-

resent in their postures and gestures petty dramas and amatory scenes. Imagine, in a similar climate, under a still finer sky, in small cities where everybody is well acquainted with each other, equally gesticulative and imaginative men, as quick in emotion and expression, with a still more animated and fresher impulse, more creative and ingenious mentally, and much more inclined to embellish every action and moment of human existence. This musical pantomime, which we only encounter in isolated fragments and in out-of-the-way places, is that which is to develope and branch out in a hundred different directions and furnish the matter for a complete literature; there is no sentiment that it will not express, no scene of public or private life which it will not adorn, no motive or situation to which it will not suffice. It becomes the natural language, as universal and of as common usage as our written or printed prose; the latter is a sort of dry notation by which nowadays one pure intellect communicates with another pure intellect; when compared with the wholly imitative and material language of the former it is nothing more than algebra and a residue.



The accent of the French language is uniform; it has no rhythmical modulation; its long and short syllables are slightly marked and scarcely distinguishable. One must have heard a musical tongue, the prolonged melody of a beautiful voice reciting one of Tasso's stanzas, to appreciate the effect of auricular sensation on inward emotion; to know what power sound and rhythm exercise over the entire being; how contagious their influence is throughout our nervous machinery. Such was that Greek language of which we have simply the skeleton. We see by the commentators and scholiasts that sound and measure were of equal importance with idea and image. The poet inventor of a species of metre invented a species of sensation. This or that group of long and short syllables is necessarily an *allegro*, another a *largo*, another a *scherzo*, and not only affects the thought, but likewise the action and music, its inflections and character. Thus did the age which produced a vast system of lyric poesy produce at the same stroke the no less vast orchestral system. We are familiar with the names of two hundred Greek dances. Up to sixteen years of age, at Athens, edu-

cation was entirely orchestral. "In those days," says Aristophanes, "the youth of the same quarter of the town marched together through the streets to the school of the Harp-master, in good order and with bare feet, even if it were to snow as thick as meal. There they had their places without sitting cross-legged, and were taught the hymn 'Mighty Pallas, devastator of cities,' or 'The shout heard afar,' raising their voices to a higher pitch with the strong and rugged harmony transmitted by their fathers."

A young man named Hippocleides, belonging to one of the first families, came to Sicyon to the court of the tyrant Cleisthenes and, being skilled in all physical exercises, was desirous of exhibiting his good education.\* Ordering a flute-player to play an appropriate air, he danced it accordingly, and, soon after, causing a table to be brought, he got upon it and danced the Lacedemonian and Athenian figures.— Thus disciplined, they were both "singers and dancers,"† all furnishing all with noble, picturesque and poetic spectacles, and which at a later period

---

\* Herodotus, VI. ch. cxix.

† Lucian.

were obtained for hire. In the banquets of the clubs,\* after the repast, they made libations and sang the pæon in honor of Apollo ; and then came the fête properly so called (*Komos*), the pantomimic declamation, the lyric recitation to the sound of the cithern or flute, a solo followed by a refrain, as subsequently the song of Harmodius and Aristogiton, or a duett sung and danced, like, at a later period, in the banquet of Xenophon, the meeting of Bacchus and Ariadne. When a citizen constituted himself a tyrant, and wished to enjoy his position, he extended festivities of this kind around him and permanently established them. Polycrates of Samos had two poets, Ibycos and Anacreon, to superintend their arrangement and to compose for them music and verses. The actors of these poetic compositions consisted of the handsomest youths that could be found ; Bathyll who played the flute and sang in the Ionian manner, Cleobulus with the beautiful virgin eyes, Simalos who wielded the *pectis* in the chorus, and Smerdis with the flowing locks whom they went in quest of among the Cicones of Thrace. It

---

\* *Philities*, societies of friends.

was an operatic entertainment in private. The lyric poets of this epoch are, in a similar manner, chorus, masters; their dwelling is a species of conservatory,\* a "House of the Muses:" there were several of them at Lesbos, besides that of Sappho, and which were conducted by women; they had pupils from the neighboring islands and coasts, from Miletus Colophon, Salamis and Pamphylia; here, during long years were taught music, recitation and the art of beautiful posture; they ridiculed the ignorant "peasant girls who did not know how to raise their dress above the ankle;" a corypheus was furnished by these establishments and choruses drilled for funeral lamentations and wedding pomps. Thus did private life throughout, in its ceremonies as well as amusements, contribute to make of man—in the best sense of the term, however, and with perfect dignity—what we designate as a singer, a figurant, a model and an actor.

Public life contributed to the same end. In Greece the orchestral system enters into religion and

---

\* Simonides of Ceos usually occupied the "choregion" near the temple of Apollo.

politics, during peace and during war, in honor of the dead and to glorify victors. At the Ionian fête of Thargelia Mimnermus the poet and his mistress Nanno led the procession playing the flute. Callinos, Alcæus and Theognis exhorted their fellow-citizens or their party, in verses which they themselves sung. When the Athenians, repeatedly vanquished, had decreed the penalty of death against whoever should propose to recover Salamis, Solon, in a herald's costume, with Mercury's cap on his head, appeared suddenly in the assembly, mounted the herald's stone, and recited an elegy with so much power that the young men set out immediately "to deliver the lovely island and relieve Athens of shame and dishonor." The Spartans, on a campaign, recited songs in their tents. At evening, after their repast, each in turn arose to repeat and gesticulate the elegy, while the polemarchus gave to the one who bore away the prize a larger ration of meat. It was certainly a fine spectacle to see these tall young men, the strongest and best formed in Greece, with their long hair carefully fastened at the top of the head, and in a red tunic, broad polished bucklers and with

an air of hero and athlete, arise and sing an ode like this:—"With spirit let us fight for this land, and for our children die, being no longer chary of our lives. Fight, then, young men, standing fast one by another, nor be beginners of cowardly flight or fear. But rouse a great and valiant spirit in your breasts, and love not life, when ye contend with men. And the elders, whose limbs are no longer active, the old desert not or forsake. For surely this were shameful, that fallen amid the foremost champions, in front of the youths, an older man should lie low, having his head now white and his beard hoary, breathing out a valiant spirit in the dust; whilst he covers with his hands his gory loins.—Yet all this befits the young whilst he enjoys the brilliant bloom of youth. To mortal men and women he is lovely to look upon, whilst he lives; and noble when he has fallen in the foremost ranks.—Shameful too is a corpse lying low in the dust, wounded behind in the back by the point of a spear. Rather let every one with firm stride await the enemy, having both feet fixed on the ground biting his lip with his teeth, and having covered with the hollow of his broad shield thighs and

shins below and breast and shoulders. Then let him learn war by doing bold deeds, nor let him stand with his shield out of the range of weapons. But let each drawing nigh in close fray, hit his foe, wounding him with long lance and sword. Having set foot beside foot, and having fixed shield against shield and crest on crest, and helmet on helmet, and breast against breast struggle in fight with his man.”\*

There were similar songs for every circumstance of military life, and, among others, anapests for attacks to the sound of flutes. A spectacle of this kind occurred during the early enthusiasm of our Revolution, the day when Dumouriez, placing his hat on the end of his sword, and, scaling the parapet of Jemapes, burst forth with the “Chant du Départ,” the soldiers, on a run, singing it with him. In this great discordant clamor we can imagine a regular battle-chorus, an antique musical march. There was one of these after the victory of Salamis, when Sophocles, fifteen years old, and the handsomest youth in Athens, stripped himself as the ceremony prescribed

an air of hero and athlete, arise and sing an ode like this:—"With spirit let us fight for this land, and for our children die, being no longer chary of our lives. Fight, then, young men, standing fast one by another, nor be beginners of cowardly flight or fear. But rouse a great and valiant spirit in your breasts, and love not life, when ye contend with men. And the elders, whose limbs are no longer active, the old desert not or forsake. For surely this were shameful, that fallen amid the foremost champions, in front of the youths, an older man should lie low, having his head now white and his beard hoary, breathing out a valiant spirit in the dust; whilst he covers with his hands his gory loins.—Yet all this befits the young whilst he enjoys the brilliant bloom of youth. To mortal men and women he is lovely to look upon, whilst he lives; and noble when he has fallen in the foremost ranks.—Shameful too is a corpse lying low in the dust, wounded behind in the back by the point of a spear. Rather let every one with firm stride await the enemy, having both feet fixed on the ground biting his lip with his teeth, and having covered with the hollow of his broad shield thighs and



shins below and breast and shoulders. Then let him learn war by doing bold deeds, nor let him stand with his shield out of the range of weapons. But let each drawing nigh in close fray, hit his foe, wounding him with long lance and sword. Having set foot beside foot, and having fixed shield against shield and crest on crest, and helmet on helmet, and breast against breast struggle in fight with his man.”\*

There were similar songs for every circumstance of military life, and, among others, anapests for attacks to the sound of flutes. A spectacle of this kind occurred during the early enthusiasm of our Revolution, the day when Dumouriez, placing his hat on the end of his sword, and, scaling the parapet of Jemmapes, burst forth with the “Chant du Départ,” the soldiers, on a run, singing it with him. In this great discordant clamor we can imagine a regular battle-chorus, an antique musical march. There was one of these after the victory of Salamis, when Sophocles, fifteen years old, and the handsomest youth in Athens, stripped himself as the ceremony prescribed

and danced a pæon in honor of Apollo in the midst of the military parade and before the trophy.

Worship, however, furnished a much larger contribution to the orchestral system than war or politics. According to the Greeks, the most gratifying spectacle to the gods was that afforded by fine, blooming, fully developed bodies in every attitude that could display health and strength. Hence it is that their most sacred festivals were operatic processions and grave ballets. Chosen citizens, and sometimes as at Sparta, the whole city\* formed choruses in honor of the gods; each important town had its poets who composed music and verse, arranged the groups and evolutions, taught postures, drilled the actors a long time and regulated the costumes; we have but one instance of the kind at the present day to suggest the ceremony, that of the series of performances still given, every ten years, at Ober-Ammergau in Bavaria, where, since the middle ages, the inhabitants of the village, some five or six hundred persons, educated for it from infancy, solemnly perform Christ's Passion. In these fêtes, Alcman and Stesichorus,

---

\* The Gymnopædia.

were at the same time poets, chapel-masters, and ballet directors; sometimes officiating themselves and as leaders in the great compositions wherein choruses of young men and women publicly appeared in heroic or divine legends. One of these sacred ballets, the dithyrambus, became, at a later period, Greek tragedy. This in itself, is at first simply a religious festival, reduced and perfected, and transported from the public square to the enclosure of a theatre; a succession of choruses broken by recitation and by the melopœia of a principal personage analogous to an "Evangile" by Sebastian Bach, the "Seven Works" of Haydn, an oratorio, or a Sixtine-chapel mass in which the same personages would sing the parts and constitute the groups.

Among all these poetic works, the most popular and the best adapted to making us comprehend these remote customs, are the cantatas which honor the victors in the four great games. People came to Pindar for these from all parts of Greece, Sicily and the islands. He went or sent his friend, Æneas of Stymphalus, to teach to the chorus the dance, the music, and the verses of his song. The festival began

we catch from time to time an accent of these vibrating tones; we see as in a flash the grandiose attitude of the crowned youth, advancing out of the chorus to utter the words of Jason or the vow of Hercules; we divine the quick gesticulation, the outstretched arms, the large muscles swelling his breast; we encounter here and there a fragment of the poetic hue as brilliant as a lately disinterred painting in Pompeii.

Now it is the corypheus who advances: "As when a man takes and gives out of his wealthy hand a drinking-cup, frothing within with the dew of the grape, presenting it to a youthful son-in-law on his passing from one house to another, \* \* \* so I now in sending liquid nectar, the gift of the Muses and the sweet fruit of my mind, to men who have carried off prizes from the contest, compliment them as victors at Olympia and Pytho."\*

Now the chorus ceases and then the alternating half-chorus develops in *crescendo* the superb sonorousness of the rolling and triumphant ode. "Whatever Zeus loveth not flies in alarm on hearing the

---

\* The Odes of Pindar, translated by Paley.

loud call of the Pierides both on earth and in the raging sea; and he who lies in the awful hell, that enemy of the gods, Typhœus with his hundred heads, whom erst the Cilician cave of many names did rear, but now the sea-enclosing cliffs beyond Cumæ (do hold), while Sicily presses down his shaggy breast, and that pillar of heaven keeps him fast, the snowy Ætna, all the year through the nurse of bright dazzling snow. From it are belched forth out of its inmost depths the purest jets of unapproachable fire. In the daytime the streams (of lava) pour forth a lurid torrent of smoke, but in the dark ruddy flame rolling in volumes carries rocks into the deep level sea with a horrible clatter. 'Tis that snake-formed monster that sends up from beneath these most dreadful founts of fire,—a prodigy marvellous to behold, and a wonder even to hear of from passers-by, how that he lies imprisoned between the dark-leaved heights of Ætna and the plain below, and his rocky bed, furrowing all his back, galls him as he lies upon it.\*

The bubbling flow of images increases broken at

---

\* The Odes of Pindar, translated by Paley.

each step by sudden jets, refluxes and leaps whose boldness and enormity permit no translation. It is plain that these Greeks, so lucid and calm in their prose, become intoxicated and are thrown off their balance by lyric inspiration and madness. These are excesses out of all harmony with our blunted organs and our circumspect civilization. Nevertheless we can divine enough of them to comprehend what such a culture contributes to the arts which represent the human form. It shapes man through the chorus; it teaches him attitudes and gestures, the sculptural action; it places him in a group which is a moving bas-relief; it is wholly directed to making him a spontaneous actor, one who performs fervidly and for his own pleasure, who sets himself up as a spectacle to himself, who carries the gravity, freedom, dignity and spirit of a citizen into the evolutions of the figurant and the mimiery of the dancer. The orchestral system provided sculpture with its postures, action, draperies, and groupings; the motive of the Parthenon frieze is the Panathenaic procession, while the Pyrrhica suggests the sculptures of Phigalia and of Budrum.

## II.

Alongside of the orchestra there was, in Greece, an institution still more national and which formed the second half of education, the gymnasium. We already meet with it in Homer; his heroes wrestle, launch the discus, and hold foot and chariot races; he who is not skilled in bodily exercises passes for a man of a low class;

. . . . A mere trader, looking out  
For freight and watching o'er the wares that form  
The cargo.\*

The institution, however, is not yet either regular, pure or complete. There are no fixed localities or epochs for the games. They are celebrated as the opportunity offers, on the death of a hero or in honor of a stranger. Many of the exercises which serve to increase vigor and agility are unknown in them; on the other hand, they add exercises with weapons,

---

\* The Odyssey, translated by W. C. Bryant.

the duel even to blood, and practise with the bow and pike. It is only in the following period, as with the orchestral system and lyric pœsy, that we see them develope, take root and assume the final shape and importance with which we are familiar. The signal was given by the Dorians, a new population of pure Greek race, who, issuing from the mountains, invaded the Peloponnesus, and, like the Neustrian Franks, introduced their tactics, imposed their rule and renewed the national life with their intact spirit. They were rude and energetic men bearing some resemblance to the mediæval Swiss; not so lively as and much less brilliant than the Ionians; possessing a fondness for tradition, a sentiment of reverence, the instinct of discipline, a calm, virile, and elevated spirit, and whose genius showed its imprint in the rigid severity of their worship, as in the heroic and moral character of their gods. The principal section, that of the Spartans, established itself in Laconia amidst the ancient inhabitants either subdued or under servile dominion; nine thousand families of proud and hard masters in a city without walls, to keep obedient one hundred and twenty thousand farmers



and two hundred thousand slaves, constituted an army immovably encamped amidst enemies ten times more numerous.

On this leading trait all the others depend. The regime, prescribed by the situation, gradually became fixed, and, towards the epoch of the restoration of the Olympic games, it was complete. Individual interests and caprices had disappeared before the idea of public safety. The discipline is that of a regiment threatened with constant danger. The Spartan is forbidden to trade, to follow any pursuit, to alienate his land, and to increase its rent; he is to think of nothing but of being a soldier. If he travels, he may use the horse, slave and provisions of his neighbor; service among comrades is a matter of right, while proprietorship is not strict. The newborn child is brought before a council of elders, and if it is too feeble or deformed, it is put to death; none but sound men are admitted into the army, in which all, from the cradle, are conscripts. An old man past begetting children selects a young man whom he takes to his home, because each household must furnish recruits. Perfect men interchange

wives in order to be better friends; in a camp there is no scrupulousness about family matters, many things being held in common. People eat together in squads, like a mess which has its own regulations and in which each furnishes a part in money or its equivalent. Military duty takes precedence of every thing. It is a reproach to linger at home; barrack life is superior to domestic life. A young bridegroom seeks his wife in secret and passes the day as usual in the drilling-school or on the parade-ground. Children, for the same reason, are military pupils (*agelai*), brought up in common, and, after seven years of age, distributed into companies. In relation to them every perfected adult is an elder, an officer (*Paidonomos*), and can punish them without paternal interference. Barefoot, clothed with a single garment, and with the same dress in winter as in summer, they march through the streets, silently and with downcast eyes, like so many youthful conscripts to the recruiting-station. Costume is a uniform, and habits, like the gait, are prescribed. The young sleep on a heap of rushes, bathe daily in the cool waters of the Eurotas. eat little and fast, and

live worse in the city than in the camp, because the future soldier must be hardened. Divided into troops of a hundred, each under a young chief, they fight together with fists and feet, which is the apprenticeship for war. If they wish to add any thing to their ordinarily meagre diet, they must steal it from the dwellings or the farms: a soldier must know how to keep himself alive by marauding. Now and then they are let loose in ambush on the highways, and, at evening, they kill belated Helots: a sight of blood is a good thing, and it is well to get the hand in early.

As to the arts, these consist of those suitable for an army. The Dorians brought along with them a special type of music, the Dorian mode, the only one, perhaps, whose origin is purely Grecian.\* It is of a grave, manly, elevated character, very simple and even harsh, admirable for inspiring patience and energy. It is not left to individual caprice; the law prohibits the introduction of the variations, enervations and fancies of the foreign style; it is a public

---

\* Plato, in the "Theages," says, speaking of the good man who discourses on virtue, "In the wonderful harmony of action and speech we recognize the Dorian mode the only one which is truly Greek."

and moral institution; as with the drum and the bugle-call in our regiments, it regulates marches and parades; there are hereditary flute-players similar to the bagpipers of the Scottish clans.\* The dance itself is a drill or a procession. Boys, after five years of age, are instructed in the *Pyrrhica*, a pantomime of armed combatants, who imitate manœuvres of defense and attack, every attitude taken and every movement made with a view to strike, ward off, draw back, spring forward, stoop, bend the bow and launch the pike. There is another named "anapale," in which young boys simulate wrestling and the *pancratium*. There are others for young men; others for young girls, in which there is violent jumping, "leaps of the stag," and headlong races where, "like colts and with streaming hair, they make the dust fly."† The principal ones, however, are the *gymnopædia*, grand reviews, in which the whole nation figures distributed in choruses. That of the old men sang, "Once were we young men filled with strength;" that of the young men responded, "We of to-day are thus endowed;

---

\* See the "Fair Maid of Perth," by Walter Scott; and the combat of the Clan Clhele and Clan Chattan

† Aristophanes.

let him who is so disposed make trial of us ;” that of the children added ; “ And we, at some future day, will be still more valiant.”\* All, from infancy, had learnt and rehearsed the step, the evolutions, the tone and the action ; nowhere did choral poesy form vaster and better regulated *ensembles*. If nowadays we would find a spectacle very remotely resembling this, but still analogous, St. Cyr, with its parades and drills and, still better, the military gymnastic school, where soldiers learn to sing in chorus, might perhaps, suffice.

There is nothing surprising in a city of this kind

\*

CHORUS OF OLD MEN.

We are old and feeble now ;  
 Feeble hands to age belong ;  
 But when o'er our youthful brow  
 Fell the dark hair, we were strong.

CHORUS OF YOUNG MEN.

Though your youthful strength departs  
 With your children it endures ;  
 In our arms and in our hearts  
 Lives the valor that was yours.

CHORUS OF BOYS.

We shall soon that strength attain ;  
 Deeds like yours shall make us known,  
 And the glory we shall gain  
 Haply may surpass your own.

BRYANT: translated from the Greek.

organizing and perfecting gymnastics. At the cost of his life a Spartan had to be equal to ten Helots; as he was hoplite and foot-soldier and had to fight man to man, in line and resolutely, a perfect education consisted of that which formed the most agile and most robust gladiator. In order to obtain this it began previous to birth; quite the opposite of other Greeks the Spartans not only prepared the male but likewise the female, in order that the child which inherited both bloods should receive courage and vigor from his mother as well as from his father.\* Girls have their gymnasia and are exercised like boys, nude or in a short tunic, in running, leaping, and throwing the discus and lance; they have their own choruses; they figure in the gymnopædia along with the men. Aristophanes, with a tinge of Athenian raillery, admires their fresh carnation, their blooming health and their somewhat brutal vigor.† The law, moreover, fixes the age of marriages, and allots the most favorable time and circumstances for generating good progeny. There is some chance for parents of

---

\* Xenophon, *The Lacedæmonian Republic*.

† The part of Lampito in the "*Lysistrata*."

this description producing strong and handsome children; it is the system of horse-trainers, and is fully carried out, since all defective products are rejected.—As soon as the infant begins to walk they not only harden and *train* it, but again they methodically render it supple and powerful; Xenophon says that they alone among the Greeks exercised equally all parts of the body, the neck, the arms, the shoulders, the legs and, not merely in youth but throughout life and every day, and in camp twice a day. The effect of this discipline is soon apparent. “The Spartans,” says Xenophon, “are the healthiest of all the Greeks, and among them are found the finest men and the handsomest women in Greece.” They overcame the Messenians who fought with the disorder and impetuosity of Homeric times; they became the moderators and chiefs of Greece, and at the time of the Median wars their ascendancy was so well established that, not only on land but at sea, when they had scarcely any vessels, all the Greeks, and even the Athenians, received generals from them without a murmur.

When a people becomes first in statesmanship

and in war its neighbors closely or remotely imitate the institutions that have given it the supremacy. The Greeks gradually borrow from the Spartans, and, in general, from the Dorians, the important characteristics of their habits, regime and art; the Dorian harmony, the exalted choral poesy, many of the ceremonies of the dance, the style of architecture, the simpler and more manly dress, the more rigid military discipline, the complete nudity of the athlete, gymnastics worked up into a system. Many of the terms of military art, of music and of the palestra, are of Doric origin or belong to the Dorian dialect. Already in the ninth century (B.C.) the growing importance of gymnastics had shown itself in the restoration of games, which had been interrupted, while innumerable facts show, evidently, that they annually became more popular. Those of Olympia in 776 serve as an era and a chronological starting-point for a series of years. During the two subsequent centuries those of Pytho, of the Corinthian Isthmus and of Nemea are established. They are at first confined to the simple race of the stadium; to this is added in succession the double race of



the stadium, wrestling, the pentathlon, pugilism, the chariot race, the pancratium and the horse race; and next, for children, the foot race, wrestling, the pancratium, boxing, and other games, in all twenty-four exercises. Lacedemonian customs overcome Homeric traditions; the victor no longer obtains some prized object but a simple crown of leaves; he ceases to wear the ancient girdle, and, at the fourteenth Olympiad, strips himself entirely. The names of the victors show that they come from all parts of Greece, from Magna Græcia, the islands and the most distant colonies. Henceforth there is no city without its gymnasium; it is one of the signs by which we recognize a Grecian town.\* The first one at Athens dates from about the year 700. Under Solon there were already three large public gymnasia and a number of smaller ones. The youth of sixteen or eighteen years passed his hours there as in a *lycée* of day-scholars arranged, not for the culture of the mind, but for the perfect development of the body. The study of grammar and music seems indeed to have ceased in order that the young

---

\* An expression by Pausanias,

man might enter a higher and more special class. The gymnasium consisted of a great square with porticoes and avenues of plane-trees, generally near a fountain or a stream, and decorated with numerous statues of gods and crowned athletes. It had its master, its monitors, its special tutors and its fête in honor of Hermes; the pupils had a playspell in the intervals between the exercises; citizens visited it when they pleased; there were numerous seats around the race course; people came there to promenade and to look at the young folks; it was a place for gossip; philosophy was born there at a later period. In this school, which resulted in a steady competition, emulation led to excesses and prodigies; men were seen exercising there their whole life. The laws of the Games required those who entered the arena to swear that they had exercised at least ten consecutive months without interruption and with the greatest care. But the men do much more than this; the impulse lasts for entire years and even into maturity; they follow a regimen; they eat a great deal and at certain hours; they harden their muscles by using the strigil and cold water; they

abstain from pleasures and excitements; they condemn themselves to continence. Some among them renew the exploits of fabulous heroes. Milo, it is said, bore a bull on his shoulders, and seizing the rear of a harnessed chariot, stopped its advance. An inscription placed beneath the statue of Phayllos, the Crotonian, stated that he leaped across a space fifty-five feet in width and cast the discus, weighing eight pounds, ninety-five feet. Among Pindar's athletes there are some who are giants.

You will observe that, in the Greek civilization, these admirable bodies are not rarities, so many products of luxury, and, as nowadays, useless poppies in a field of grain; on the contrary, we must liken them to the tallest stems of a magnificent harvest. They are a necessity of the State and a demand of society. The Hercules I have cited were not merely for parade purposes. Milo led his fellow-citizens to combat, and Phayllos was the chief of the Crotonians who came to aid the Greeks against the Medes. A general of those days was not a strategist with a map and spy-glass occupying an elevation; he fought, pike in hand, at the

head of his forces, body to body, and as a soldier. Miltiades, Aristides, Pericles, and at a much later period, even Agesilaus, Pelopidas and Pyrrhus use their arms, and not merely their intellect, to strike, parry and assault, on foot and on horseback, in the thickest of the fight; Epaminondas, a statesman and philosopher, being mortally wounded, consoles himself like a simple hoplite for having saved his shield. A victor at the penthalon, Aratus, and the last Grecian leader, found his advantage in his agility and strength on scaling walls and in surprises. Alexander, at the Granicus, charged like a hussar and was the first to spring, like a tumbler, into a city of the Oxydracae. A bodily and personal mode of warfare like this requires the first citizens, and even princes, to be complete athletes. Add to the exigencies of danger the stimulants of festivals. Ceremonies, like battles, demanded trained bodies; no one could figure in the choruses without having passed through the gymnasia. I have stated how the poet Sophocles danced the pæan naked after the victory of Salamis; at the end of the fourth century the same customs still subsisted. Alexander, on

reaching the Troad, threw aside his clothes that he and his companions might honor Achilles by racing around the pillar which marked the hero's grave. A little farther on, at Phasélis, on seeing a statue of the philosopher Theodectes in the public square, he returned after his repast to dance around it and cover it with crowns. To provide for tastes and necessities of this sort, the gymnasium was the only school. It resembles the academies of our later centuries, to which all young nobles resorted to learn fencing, dancing and riding. Free citizens were the nobles of antiquity; there was, consequently, no free citizen who had not frequented the gymnasium; on this condition only could a man be well educated; otherwise he sank to the class of tradesmen and people of a low origin. Plato, Chrysippus and the poet Timocreon were at one time athletes; Pythagoras passed for having taken the prize for boxing; Euripides was crowned as an athlete at the Eleusinian games. Cleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon, entertaining the suitors of his daughter, provided them with an exercising ground, "in order that," says Herodotus, "he might test their race and education." The body,

in fine, preserved to the end the traces of its gymnastic or servile education; it could be appreciated at a glance, through its bearing, gait, action and mode of dress, the same as, formerly, the gentleman, polished and ennobled by the academies, could be distinguished from the rustic clown or the impoverished laborer.

Even when nude and motionless, the body testified to its exercise by the beauty of its forms. The skin, embrowned and rendered firm by the sun, oil, dust, the strigil and cold baths, did not seem uncovered; it was accustomed to the air; one felt on looking at it that it was in its element; it certainly did not shiver or present a mottled or goose-skin aspect; it was a healthy tissue, of a beautiful tone, indicative of a free and vigorous existence. Agesilaus, to encourage his soldiers, one day caused his Persian prisoners to be stripped; at the sight of their soft white skin the Greeks broke into a laugh and marched onward, full of contempt for their enemies. The muscles were rendered strong and supple; nothing was neglected; the diverse parts of the body balanced each other; the upper section of the arm, which is

now so meagre, and the stiff and poorly-furnished omoplates were filled out and formed a pendant in proportion with the hips and thighs; the masters, like veritable artists, exercised the body so that it might not only possess vigor, resistance and speed, but likewise symmetry and elegance. The "Dying Gaul,"\* which belongs to the Pergamenian school, shows, on comparing it with the statues of athletes, the distance which separates a rude from a cultivated body; on the one hand, there is the hair scattered in coarse meshes like a mane, a peasant's feet and hands, a thick skin, inflexible muscles, sharp elbows, swollen veins, angular contours, and harsh lines—nothing but the animal body of a robust savage; on the other hand, all the forms ennobled; at first the heel flabby and weak,† now enclosed in a clean oval; at first the foot too much displayed and betraying its simian origin, now arched and more elastic for the leap; at first the knee-pan articulations and entire skeleton prominent, now half effaced and simply in-

---

\* The author thus designates the statue commonly known under the title of the "Dying Gladiator." Tr.

† See the small bronze archaic Apollo in the Louvre, also the Ægine-tan statues.

dicated; at first the line of the shoulders horizontal and hard, now inclining and softened—everywhere the harmony of parts which continue and flow into each other, the youth and freshness of a fluid existence as natural and as simple as that of a tree or a flower. Numerous passages could be pointed out in “Menexenus,” the “Rivals” and the “Charmides” of Plato, which seize some one of these postures on the wing; a young man thus reared uses his limbs well and naturally; he knows how to bend his body, stand erect, rest with his shoulder against a column, and, in all these attitudes, remain as beautiful as a statue; the same as a gentleman, before the Revolution, had, when bowing, taking snuff or listening, the cavalier grace and ease observable in old portraits and in engravings. It was not the courtier, however, that was apparent in the ways, action and pose of the Greek, but the man of the palæstra. Plato depicts him as hereditary gymnastics fashioned him among a select race: “Charmides, I think that you ought to excel others in all good qualities; for, if I am not mistaken, there is no one present who could easily point out ten Athenian houses, the alliance of which was



likely to produce a better or nobler son than the two from which you are sprung. There is your father's house, which is descended from Critias, the son of Dropidas, whose family has been commemorated in the panegyrical verses of Anacreon, Solon, and many other poets as famous for beauty and virtue and all other high fortune: and your mother's house is equally distinguished; for your maternal uncle Pylilampes, never met with his equal in Persia at the court of the great king or on the whole continent in all the places to which he went as ambassador, for stature and beauty; that whole family is not a whit inferior to the other. Having such ancestry you ought to be first in all things, and as far as I can see, sweet son of Glaucon, your outward form is no dishonor to them."\*

In this scene, which takes us back much farther than its date, even to the best period of the nude form, all is precious and significant. We find in it the traditions of the blood, the result of education, the popular and universal taste for beauty, all the original sources of perfect sculpture. Homer had

---

\* The Dialogues of Plato, "Charmides," translated by Jowett.

mentioned Achilles and Nereus as the most beautiful among the Greeks assembled against Troy; Herodotus named Callierates, the Spartan, as the handsomest of the Greeks in arms against Mardonius. All the fêtes of the gods and all great ceremonies brought together competitors in beauty. The finest old men of Athens were selected to carry branches in the Panathenaic procession, and the handsomest men at Elis to bear the offerings to the goddess. At Sparta, in the gymnopædia, the generals and prominent men whose figure and external nobility were not sufficiently marked were consigned to the lower ranks in the choral defile. The Lacedæmonians, according to Theophrastus, imposed a fine on their king, Archidamus, because he married a woman of short stature, pretending that she would give them kinglets and not kings. Pausanias found competitions of beauty in Arcadia in which women were rivals, and which had lasted for nine centuries. A Persian, related to Xerxes, and a grandee of his army, dying at Achantus, the inhabitants sacrificed to him as a hero. The Segestans had erected a small temple over the grave of Philip, a Crotonian

refugee among them and a victor in the Olympic games, the most beautiful Greek of his day, and to whom during the lifetime of Herodotus, sacrifices were still offered. Such is the sentiment which education had nourished and which in its turn, reacting thereon, made the formation of beauty its end. The race, certainly, was a fine one, but it was rendered still finer through system; will had improved nature, and the statuary set about finishing what nature, even cultivated, only half completed.

We have thus seen during two centuries the two institutions which form the human body, the orchestral and gymnastic systems, born, developed, and diffused around the centres of their origin; spreading throughout the Greek world, furnishing the instruments of war, the decorations of worship, the era of chronology; presenting corporeal perfection as the principal aim of human life and pushing admiration of completed form even to vice.\* Slowly, by degrees and at intervals, the art which fashions the statue of metal, wood, ivory or marble, accompanies

---

\* Grecian vice, unknown in the time of Homer, begins, according to all appearances, with the institution of gymnasia. See Becker, "Charicles" (Excursus).

the education which fashions<sup>\*</sup> the living statue. It does not progress at the same pace; although contemporary, it remains for these two centuries inferior and simply imitative. The Greeks were concerned about truth before they were concerned about copying it; they were interested in veritable bodies before being interested in simulated bodies; they devoted themselves to forming a chorus before attempting to sculpture a chorister. The physical or moral model always precedes the work which represents it; but it is only slightly in advance; it is necessary that it be still present in all memories the moment that the work is done. Art is an expanded and harmonious echo; it acquires its fulness and completeness when the life, of which it is the echo, begins to decline. Such is the case with Greek statuary; it becomes adult just at the moment the lyric age ends—in the period of fifty years following the battle of Salamis, when, along with prose, the drama and the first researches in philosophy, a new culture begins. We see art suddenly passing from exact imitation to beautiful invention. Aristocles, the Æginetan sculptors, Onatas, Canachus, Pythagoras

of Rhegium, Calamis and Ageladas still closely copied the real form as Verocchio, Pollaiolo, Ghirlandajo, Fra Filippo and Perugino himself; but in the hands of their pupils, Myro, Polycleitus and Phidias the ideal form is set free as in the hands of Leonardo, Michael Angelo and Raphael.

## III.

It is not merely men, the most beautiful of all, that Greek statuary has produced; it has likewise produced gods, and, in the united judgment of antiquity, its gods were its masterpieces. To the profound sentiment of corporeal and athletic perfection was added, with the public and with the masters, an original religious sentiment, a conception of the world now lost, a peculiar mode of apprehending, venerating and adoring natural and divine powers. One must figure to himself this particular class of emotions and kind of faith if one would penetrate a little deeper into the soul and genius of Polycleitus, Agoracritus or of Phidias.

It is sufficient to read Herodotus\* to see how lively faith still was in the first half of the fifth century. Not only is Herodotus pious, so devout even as

---

\* Herodotus was still living at the epoch of the Peloponnesian war. He alludes to it in Book VII. 137, and in Book IX. 73.

not to presume to give utterance to certain sacred names, or reveal certain legends, but again the entire nation brings to its worship the impassioned and grandiose seriousness simultaneously expressed in the poetry of Æschylus and Pindar. The gods are living and present; they speak; they have been seen like the Virgin and the saints in the thirteenth century.—The heralds of Xerxes having been slain by the Spartans, the entrails of the victims become unfavorable, because the murder offended the dead Talthybios, Agamemnon's glorious herald, whom the Spartans worshipped. In order to appease him two rich and noble citizens go to Asia and offer themselves to Xerxes.—On the arrival of the Persians the cities consult the oracle; the Athenians are ordered to summon their son-in-law to their aid; they remember that Boreas carried off Orythia, the daughter of Erectheus, their first ancestor, and they erect a chapel to him near the Ilyssus. At Delphi the god declares that he will defend himself; thunder-bolts fall on the barbarians, rocks fall and crush them, whilst from the temple of Pallas Pronea issue voices and war-cries, and two heroes of the country of superhu-

man stature, Phylacos and Autoonos, succeed in putting the terrified Persians to flight.—Before the battle of Salamis the Athenians import from Ægeria the statues of the Æacides to combat with them. During the fight some travellers near Eleusis see a great cloud of dust and hear the voice of the mystical Iacchus approaching to aid the Grecians. After the battle they offer the gods, as first-fruits, three captive ships; one of them is for Ajax, while they deduct from the booty the money required for a statue of him twelve cubits high at Delphi.—I should never stop if I were to enumerate all the evidences of public piety; it was still fervid among the people fifty years later. “Diopceithes,” says Plutarch, “passed a law directing those who did not recognize the existence of the gods or who put forth new doctrines on celestial phenomena to be denounced.” Aspasia, Anaxagoras, and Euripides were annoyed or accused, Alcibiades condemned to death, and Socrates put to death for the assumed or established crime of impiety; popular indignation proved terrible against those who had counterfeited or violated the mysteries of Hermes. We see unquestionably in these details,



along with the persistency of the antique faith, the advent of free thought; there was around Pericles, as around Lorenzo de Medici, a small cluster of philosophers and dialecticians; Phidias, like Michael Angelo at a later period, was admitted among them. But in both epochs, legend and tradition filled and had supreme control of the imagination and conduct. When the echo of philosophic discourse reached the soul filled with picturesque forms and made it vibrate, it was to aggrandize and purify divine forms. The new wisdom did not destroy religion; she interpreted it, she brought it back to its foundation, to the poetic sentiment of natural forces. The grandiose conceptions of early physicists left the world as animated and rendered it more august. It is owing, perhaps, to Phidias having heard Anaxagoras discourse on the *νοῦς* that he conceived his Jupiter, his Pallas, his heavenly Venus, and completed, as the Greeks said, the majesty of the gods.

In order to possess the sentiment of the divine it is necessary to be capable of distinguishing, through the precise form of the legendary god, the great, permanent and general forces of which it is the issue.

One remains a cold and prejudiced idolater if, beyond the personal form, he does not detect, in a sort of half-light, the physical or moral power of which the figure is the symbol. This was still perceptible in the time of Cimon and Pericles. Studies in comparative mythology have recently shown that Grecian myths, related to Sanscrit myths, originally expressed the play of natural forces only, and that language had gradually formed divinities from the diversity, fecundity and beauty of physical elements and phenomena. Polytheism, fundamentally, is the sentiment of animated, immortal and creative nature, and this sentiment lasts for eternity. The divine impregnated all things: these were invoked; often in *Æschylus* and *Sophocles* do we see man addressing the elements as if they were sacred beings with whom he is associated to conduct the great chorus of life. *Philoctetes*, on his departure, salutes "ye watery nymphs of the meadows, and thou manly roar of ocean dashing onwards. Farewell, thou sea-girt plain of *Lemnos*, and waft me safely with fair voyage thither, whither mighty fate conveys me."\*

---

\* The Tragedies of *Sophocles*: Oxford translation.

Prometheus, bound to his crag, calls on all the mighty beings who people space:—"O divine æther and ye swift-winged breezes, and ye fountains of rivers, and countless dimpling of the waves of the deep; and thou Earth, mother of all,—and to the all-seeing orb of the Sun, I appeal! Look upon me what treatment I, a God, am enduring at the hand of the Gods!"\*

The spectators simply let lyric emotion lead them on in order to obtain primitive metaphors, which, without being conscious of it, were the germs of their faith. "The serene sky," says Aphrodite, in one of the lost pieces of Æschylus, "delights to embrace the Earth, and Love espouses her; the rain which falls from the life-giving Sky fecundates the Earth who then brings forth for mortals pasturage for cattle and the corn of Demeter." To comprehend this language we have only to leave behind us our artificial towns and formal culture. The solitary wanderer among mountains or by the seaside who surrenders himself wholly to the aspects of an intact nature soon holds communion with her; she

---

\* Æschylus: translated by Buckley. Bohn's Classical Library.

becomes animated for him like a physiognomy; mountains, threatening and motionless, become bald-headed giants or crouching monsters; the waves which toss and gleam become laughing and playful creatures; the grand silent pines resemble serious virgins; and on contemplating the radiant blue southern sea, adorned as if for a festival, wearing the universal smile of which Æschylus speaks, he is at once led, in expressing the voluptuous beauty whose infinity penetrates and surrounds him, to name that goddess born of sea-foam who, rising above the waves, comes to ravish the hearts of mortals and of gods.

When a people is conscious of the divine life of natural objects it has no trouble in distinguishing the natural origin of divine personages. In the golden centuries of statuary this underlying condition of things still peered out beneath the human and definite figure by which legend translated it. Certain divinities, especially those of running streams, mountains and forests, have always remained transparent. The naïad or the oread was simply a young girl like her we see seated on a rock in the

metopes of Olympia,\*—at least the figurative and sculptural imagination so expressed it: but in giving it a name people detected the mysterious gravity of the calm forest or the coolness of the spouting fountain. In Homer, whose poems formed the Bible of the Greek, the shipwrecked Ulysses, after swimming a couple of days,

. . . . . Had reached the mouth  
Of a soft flowing river. . . . .  
. . . . . He felt  
The current's flow and thus devoutly prayed;  
"Hear me, oh sovereign power, whoe'er thou art,  
To thee, the long desired, I come. I seek  
Escape from Neptune's threatenings on the sea;  
. . . . . To thy stream I come  
And to thy knees from many a hardship past  
Oh thou that here art ruler, I declare  
Myself thy suppliant. Be thou merciful."  
He ceased; the river stayed his current, checked  
The billows, *smoothed them to a calm*, and gave  
The swimmer a safe landing at his mouth!

It is evident that the divinity here is not a bearded personage concealed in a cavern, but the flowing river itself, the great tranquil and hospitable current. Likewise the river, angered at Achilles:

---

\* In the Louvre.



being, always active, by turns supporter and destroyer, and with countless forms and aspects; an inexhaustible and regular flow gives him an idea of a calm and virile existence but majestic and superhuman. In ages of decadence, in statues like those of the Tiber and the Nile, ancient sculptors still remembered the primitive impressions, the large torso, the attitude of repose, the vague gaze of the statue, showing that, through the human form, they were always mindful of and expressing the magnificent, uniform and indifferent expansion of the mighty current.

At other times the name disclosed the nature of the god. Hestia signifies the hearthstone; the goddess never could be wholly separated from the sacred flame which served as the nucleus of domestic life. Demeter signifies the mother earth; ritualistic epithets call her a divinity of darkness, of the profound and subterranean, the nurse of the young, the bearer of fruits, the verdant. The sun, in Homer, is another god than Apollo, the moral personage being confounded in him with physical light. Numerous other divinities, "Horae," the Seasons, "Dice," Justice, "Nemesis," Repression, bear their sense

along with their name into the soul of the worshipper. I will cite but one of these, "Eros," Love, to show how the Greek, intellectually free and acute, united in the same emotion the worship of a divine personage and the divination of a natural force. "Love," says Sophocles, "invincible in strife; Love, who overcomest all powers and fortunes, thou dwellest on the delicate cheeks of the young maiden; and thou crossest the sea and entereth rustic cabins, and there are none among the immortals nor among passing men that can escape thee." A little later, in the hands of the convivialists of the *Symposiun*, the nature of the god varies according to diverse interpretations of the title. For some, since love signifies sympathy and concord, Love is the most universal of the gods, and, as Hesiod has it, the author of order and harmony in the world. According to others he is the youngest of the gods, for age excludes love: he is the most delicate for he moves and rests on hearts, the tenderest objects and only on those which are tender; he is of a subtle, fluid essence, because he enters into souls and leaves them without their being aware of it; he has the tint of a flower



because he lives among perfumes and flowers. According to others, finally, Love being desire and, therefore, the lack of something, is the child of Poverty—meagre, slovenly and barefoot, sleeping in beautiful starlight, athirst for beauty and therefore bold, active, industrious, persevering and a philosopher. The myth revives of itself and passes through more than a dozen forms in the hands of Plato.—In the hands of Aristophanes we see the clouds becoming, for a moment, almost counterpart divinities; and if, in the *Theogony* of Hesiod, we follow the half considered, half involuntary confusion which he establishes between divine personages and physical elements;\* if we remark that he enumerates “thirty thousand guardian gods of the nursing earth;” if we remember that Thales, the first physicist and the first philosopher said every thing is born of water, and, at the same time, that every thing is full of gods, we can comprehend the profound sentiment which then sustained Greek religion; the sublime emotion, the admiration, the veneration with which

---

\* See especially the generation of diverse gods in the *Theogony*. His mind throughout floats between cosmology and mythology.

the Greek divined the infinite forces of animated nature under the images of his divinities.

All, indeed, were not incorporated with objects to the same extent. Some there were, and they were the most popular, which the more energetic labor of legend had detached and erected into distinct personages. The Greek Olympus may be likened to an olive tree towards the end of the summer. The fruit, according to the height and position of the branches, is more or less advanced; some of it, scarcely formed, is little else than a swollen pistil and belongs strictly to the tree; some again, already ripe, is still fast to the branch; some, finally, is thoroughly matured and fallen, and it requires no little attention to recognize the peduncle which bore it. So, the Greek Olympus, according to the degree of transformation which humanizes natural forces, presents, in its different stages, divinities in which physical character prevails over personal configuration; others in which the two phases are equal; others, at length, in which the god, become human, is only attached by a few threads, one thread only being sometimes visible, to the elementary phenomenon from which it issues. To this,

nevertheless, it is attached. Zeus, who in the *Iliad* is the head of an imperious family, and in "Prometheus" an usurping and tyrannical king, ever remains, in many points, what he was at first, a rainy and thunder-striking sky: consecrated epithets and ancient locutions indicate his original nature; the streams "flow from him," "Zeus rains." In Crete his name signifies day; Ennius, at Rome, will tell you later that he is that "sublime, glowing brightness which all invoke under the name of Jupiter." We see in Aristophanes that for the peasantry, rural people, simple minded and somewhat antique, he is always Him who "waters the ground and causes the growth of the corn." On being told by a sophist that there is no Zeus, they are surprised and demand who it is that bursts forth in flashes of lightning or descends in the showers? He struck down the Titans, the monster Typhoes with a hundred dragons' heads, the black exhalations which, born of the earth, interlace like serpents and invade the celestial canopy. He dwells on mountain summits touching the heavens, where clouds gather, and from which the thunder descends; he is the Zeus of Olympus,

the Zeus of Ithome, the Zeus of Hymettus. Like all the gods he is, in substance, multiple, connected with various places in which man's heart is most sensible of his presence, with diverse cities and even diverse families, which, having embraced him within their horizons, appropriated him to themselves and sacrificed to him. "I conjure thee," says Tecmessa, "by the Zeus of thy hearthstone." To form an exact impression of the religious sentiment of a Greek we must imagine a valley, a coast, the whole primitive landscape in which a people fixed itself; it is not the firmament in general, nor the universal earth which it appreciates as divine beings, but its own firmament with its own horizon of undulating mountains, the soil it inhabits, the woods and the flowing streams in the midst of which it lives; it has its own Zeus, its own Poseidon, its own Hera, its own Apollo the same as its own woodland and water nymphs. At Rome, in a religion which had better preserved the primitive spirit, Camillus said; "There is not a place in this city that is not impregnated with religion and which is not inhabited by some divinity." "I do not fear the gods of your country, for I owe them nothing,"

says one of the characters of *Æschylus*. Properly speaking, the god is local;\* he is, through his origin, the country itself; hence it is that in the eyes of the Greek his city is sacred, his divinities being one with that city. When, on his return, he hails it, it is not, as with *Tancred*, a poetic compliment; he is not merely glad, like a modern, again to see familiar objects and to return to his home; his beach, his mountains, the walled enclosure harboring his countrymen, the highway with its tombs preserving the bones and manes of its hero-founders, all that surrounds it is for him a species of temple. "Argos, and ye its native gods," says *Agamemnon*, "I first salute thee, ye who have aided me in my return and in the vengeance I have taken of the city of *Priam*!" The closer we examine it the more do we find their sentiment earnest, their religion justifiable, their worship well-founded; only later, in times of frivolity and decline, did they become idolatrous. "If we represent the gods by human figures," they said, "it is because no other form is more beautiful." But beyond the expressive form, they saw floating, as in a dream, the

---

\* "*La Cité Antique*," by *Fustel de Coulanges*.

universal powers which govern the soul and the universe.

Let us follow one of their processions, that of the great Panathenæa, and try to define the thoughts and emotions of an Athenian who, taking part in the solemn cortege, came to visit his gods. It was held at the beginning of the month of September. For three days the whole city witnessed the games, first, at the Odeon, the pompous orchestral series, the recitation of Homer's poems, competitions for voice, cithern and flute, choruses of nude youths dancing the pyrrhica, and others, clothed, forming a cyclic chorus; next, in the stadium, every exercise of the naked body—wrestling, boxing, the pancrätium and the pentathlon for men and for children; the simple and double race for naked and armed men; the foot-race with flambeaux; the race with horses and the chariot race with two and four horses in the ordinary chariot and that of war with two men, one of whom jumping down, followed alongside running and then remounted at a bound. Pindar says that "the gods were the friends of games," and that they could not be better honored than by such spectacles.—On the

fourth day the procession occurred of which the Parthenon frieze has preserved the image; at the head marched the pontiffs, aged men selected among the handsomest, virgins of noble families, the deputations of allied cities with offerings, then the bearers of chased gold and silver vases and utensils, athletes on foot or on horseback or on their chariots, a long line of sacrificers and their victims, and finally the people in their festal attire. The sacred galley was put in motion bearing on its mast the peplus or veil for the statue of Pallas which young girls, supported in the Erectheion, had embroidered. Setting out from the Ceramicus it marched to Elêusis,\* making the circuit of the temple, passed along the northern and eastern sides of the Acropolis and halted near the Areopagus. There the veil was taken down to be borne to the goddess, while the cortege mounted the immense marble flight of steps, one hundred feet long by seventy wide, leading to the Propylæa and the vestibule of the Acropolis. Like the corner of ancient Pisa in which the Cathedral, the Leaning Tower, the Campo-Santo and the Baptistery are crowded togeth-

---

\* Beule, "L'Acropole d'Athènes."

er, this abrupt plateau, wholly devoted to the gods, disappeared under sacred monuments, temples, chapels, colossi and statues; but with its four hundred feet of elevation it commanded the entire country; between the columns and angles of the edifices, in profile against the sky, the Athenians could embrace the half of their Attica—a circle of barren mountains scorched by the summer sun, the sparkling sea framed in by the dull prominence of its coasts, all the grand eternal existences in which the gods were rooted; Pentelica with its altars and the distant statue of Pallas Athena; Hymettus and Anchesmus where the colossal effigies of Zeus still marked the primitive relationship between lofty summits and the thunder-riven sky.

They bore the veil onward to the Erechtheum, the most imposing of their temples, a veritable shrine where the palladium, fallen from heaven, was kept, the tomb of Cecrops and the sacred olive, the parent of all the rest. There, the whole legend, all its ceremonies and all its divine names, exalted the mind with a vague and grandiose souvenir of the early struggles and first steps taken in human civili-



zation; man, in the half-light of the myth, obtained a glimpse of the antique and fecund strife of water, earth and fire; the earth emerging from the waters, becoming productive, overspread with kindly plants and nutritive grains and trees, growing in population and getting humanized in the hands of secret powers, who contend with savage elements and gradually, athwart their chaos, establish the ascendancy of mind. Cecrops, the founder, is symbolized by a creature of the same name as his own, the grasshopper (Kerkops), which was believed to be born of the earth, an Athenian insect if he was of it, a melodious and meagre inhabitant of the arid hills, and of which old Athenians bore the image in their hair. Alongside of him, the first inventor, Triptolemus, the thresher of grain, had Dysaules, the double furrow, for his father and Gordys, barley, for his daughter. Still more significant was the legend of Erectheus, the great ancestor. Among the crudities of an infantile imagination, which naïvely and oddly expresses his birth, his name, signifying the fertile soil, the name of his daughters pure Air, the Dew and the Rain, manifest the idea of the dry earth fe-

cundated by nocturnal humidity. Numerous details of the worship serve to demonstrate its sense. Maidens who embroidered the veil are called Arphores, the bearers of dew; they are symbols of the dew which they go for at night in a cave near the temple of Aphrodite. Thallo, the season of flowers, and Karpo, the season of fruits, honored near by, are, again, names of agricultural gods. The sense of all these expressive titles is buried in the Athenian mind; he feels in them, contained by them and indistinct, the history of his race; satisfied that the manes of his founders and ancestors continued to live around the tomb, extending their protection over those who honored their graves, he supplied them with cakes, honey and wine, and, depositing his offerings, embraced in one look, behind and before him, the long prosperity of his city and hopefully associated its future with its past.

On leaving the ancient sanctuary where the primitive Pallas sat beneath the same roof as Erechtheus he saw, almost facing him, the new temple built by Ictinus in which she dwelt alone, and where every thing declared her glory. What she was in early

days he scarcely felt; her physical origin had vanished under the development of her moral personality; but enthusiasm is of searching insight, and fragments of legends, hallowed attributes and traditional epithets led the mind towards the remote sources from which she had issued. She was known to be the daughter of Zeus, the thunder-striking sky, and born of him alone; she had sprung from his brow amidst lightning and the tumult of the elements; Helios had stood still, the Earth and Olympus had trembled, the sea had arisen, a golden shower and luminous rays had overspread the Earth. Primeval men probably had first worshipped, under her name, the serenity of the illuminated atmosphere; they had prostrated themselves on their knees before this sudden virginal brightness, possessed with the invigorating coolness which follows the storm; they had compared her to a young, energetic\* girl, and had named her Pallas. But in this Attica, where the glory and transparency of the immaculate ether are purer than elsewhere, she had become Athenæ, the Athenian. Another of her earliest surnames, Tritogeneia, born of water, also re-

---

\* The primitive meaning, probably, of the word Pallas.

minded them that she was born of celestial rains or made them imagine the luminous reflections of the waves. Other traces of her origin were the color of her sea-green eyes and the choice of her bird, the owl, whose eyeballs at night are clairvoyant lights. Her figure, by degrees, had become distinct and her history expanded. Her convulsive birth had made of her an armed and terrible warrior, the companion of Zeus in his conflicts with the rebellious Titans. As virgin and pure light she had gradually become thought and intelligence, and she was called industrious because she had invented the arts; the rider because she had bridled the horse; the benefactor because she removed maladies. Her good deeds and her victories were all figured on the walls, and the eyes which, from the façade of the temple, were directed to the immense landscape, embraced simultaneously the two moments of religion, one explained by the other and united in the soul through the sublime sensation of perfect beauty. To the south, on the horizon, they gazed on the infinite sea, Poseidon, who embraces and shakes the earth, the azure god whose arms encircle the coast and the isles, and, with-

out turning the eye, they beheld him again under the western crown of the Parthenon, erect and turbulent, rearing his muscular torso and powerful nude body with the indignant air of an angered god, whilst behind him Amphitrite, the almost naked Aphrodite on the knees of Thalassa, Latona with her two children, Leucothea, Halirrhethius and Eurytus disclosed in the waving inflection of their infantile or feminine forms, the grace and play, the freedom and eternal smile of the sea. On the same marble front Pallas, victorious, subdued the horses which Poseidon, with a blow of his trident caused to spring from the ground, driving them towards the divinities of the soil, to Cecrops the founder, to their first ancestor Erechtheus, the man of the earth, to his three daughters who moisten the parched ground, to Callirhoe the beautiful fountain and to Ilissus the shaded rivulet; the eye had only to turn downward after having contemplated their images to discern them in real significance beneath the plateau.

But Pallas herself radiated throughout the entire space. There was no need of reflection or of science, it needed only the eyes and heart of a poet or an artist

to arrive at the affinity of the goddess with natural objects, to feel her present in the splendor of the bright atmosphere, in the glow of the agile light, in the purity of that delicate atmosphere to which the Athenians attributed the vivacity of their invention and their genius; she herself was the genius of the territory, the spirit itself of the nation; it was her benefactions, her inspiration, her work which they beheld everywhere displayed as far as the eye could see; in the olive groves and on the diapered slopes of tillage, in the three harbors swarming with arsenals and crowded with vessels, in the long and strong walls by which the city joined the sea; in the beautiful city itself, which, with its temples, its gymnasias, its Pnyx, all its rebuilt monuments and its recent habitations, covered the back and declivities of the hills and which through its arts, its industries, its festivals, its invention, its indefatigable courage, becoming the "school of Greece," spread its empire over the sea and its ascendancy over the entire nation.

At this moment the gates of the Parthenon might open and display among offerings, vases,

crowns, armor, casques, and silver masks, the colossal effigy, the Protectress, the Virgin, the Victorious, erect and motionless, her lance resting against her shoulder, her buckler standing by her side, holding a Victory of ivory and gold in her right hand, the golden ægis on her breast, a narrow casque of gold on her head, in a grand gold robe of diverse tints; her face, feet, hands and arms relieving against the splendor of her weapons and drapery with the warm and vital whiteness of ivory; her clear eyes of precious stones gleaming with fixed brilliancy in the semi-obscurity of the painted cella. In imagining her serene and sublime expression, Phidias, certainly, had conceived a power which surpassed every human standard—one of those universal forces which direct the course of things, the active intelligence which, at Athens, was the soul of the country. He heeded, perhaps, in his breast, the reverberating echo of the new physical system and philosophy which, still confounding spirit and matter, considered thought as “the purest and most subtle of substances,” a sort of ether everywhere diffused to produce and maintain the order of the uni-

verse;\* in his mind was thus formed a still higher conception than that of the people; his Pallas surpassed that of Ægina, already so grave, in all the majesty of the things of eternity.

Through a long circuit, and in gradually approximating circles, we have traced the original sources of the statue, and we have now reached the vacant space, still recognizable, where its pedestal formerly stood, and from which its august form has disappeared.

---

\* According to the text of Anaxagoras, Phidias had listened to Anaxagoras in the house of Pericles the same as Michael Angelo listened to the Platonists of the Renaissance in the domicile of Lorenzo de Medici.

THE END.



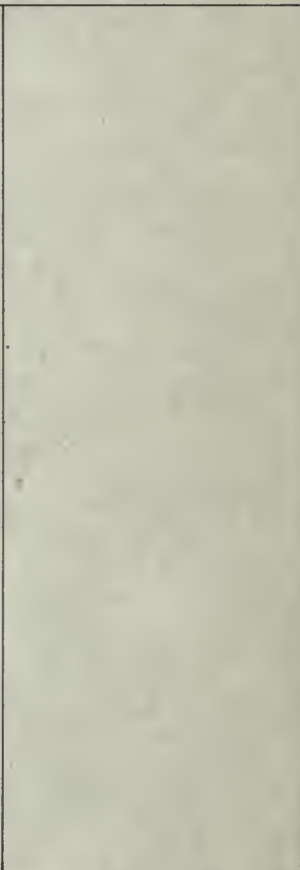




THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS  
530 N. Dearborn St. Chicago, Ill. 60610  
1980

University of California  
SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY  
405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024-1388  
Return this material to the library  
from which it was borrowed.

---



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



**A** 000 156 078 8

Univer  
Sou  
Li