

Chapter Five - Hellas

A. The Revolt Of Ionia

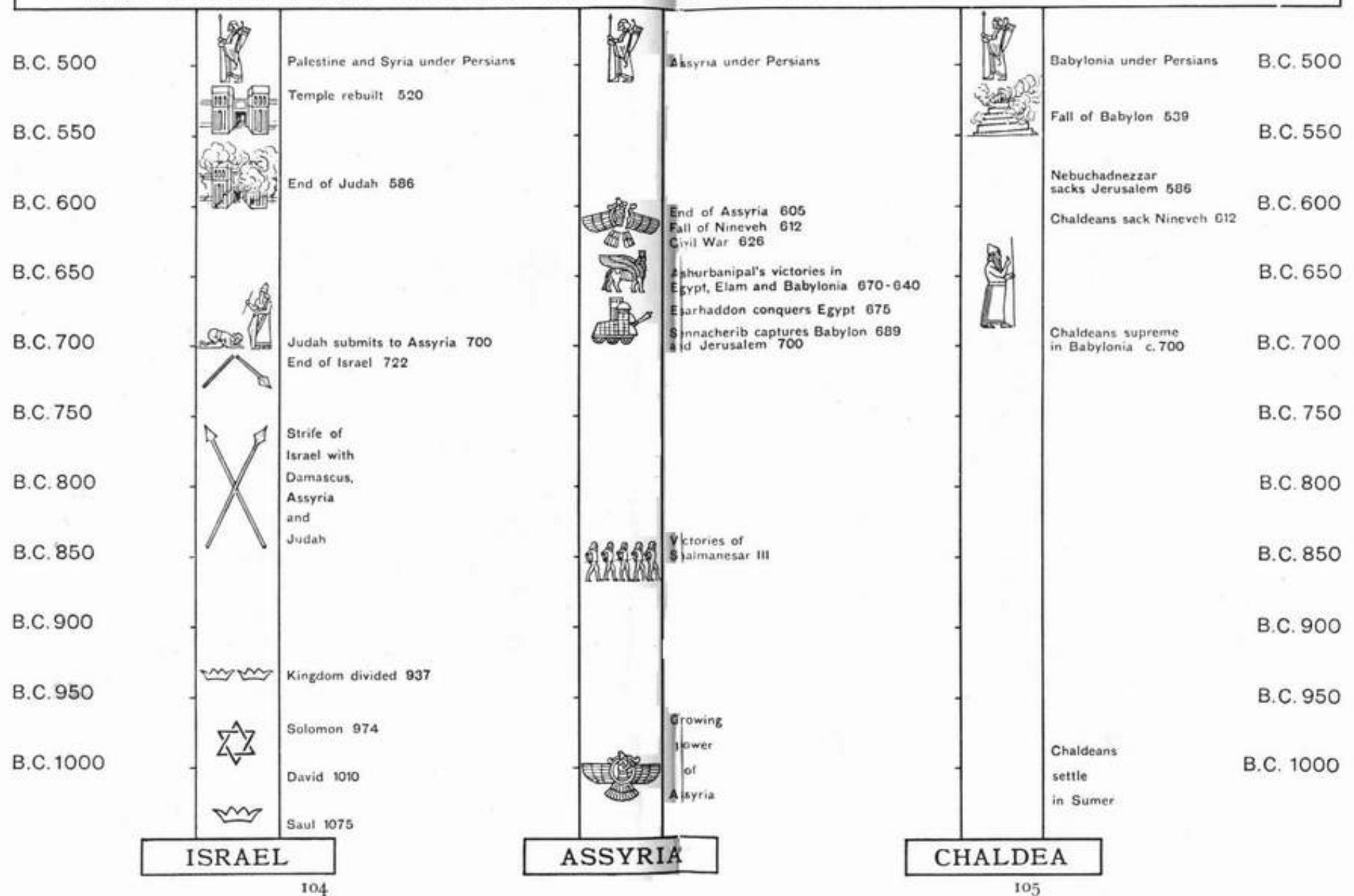
Let us look more closely at the vast empire which the Persians had acquired within a generation. As we have said, it lasted for two hundred years, and it gave millions of people better government than the world had hitherto seen. It took one of the greatest conquerors in the history of the world, Alexander the Great, to overthrow it. It is therefore entitled to a certain amount of respect.

The subject races of the empire were expected to pay a certain sum in taxation each year, to send recruits to the army, and, of course, to recognise "the Great King" as their master. If they carried out these duties, they were left pretty much to themselves, though naturally the heads of the government in each province were Persians. The whole empire was divided into twenty natural districts. These were known as satrapies, and the governor, usually of noble birth, was called the satrap. There was nobody above him but the king himself. But he was helped (or, if too ambitious, hindered!) by a royal secretary, who read the king's orders before passing them to the satrap. There was also an inspector who went from province to province. His duties are explained by his title, "The King's Eye." The king had a luxurious pleasure palace at Persepolis in Persia. For the conquest of Lydia and Babylonia had put an end to the old Persian simplicity, when it had been enough for a young noble to learn how "to ride, shoot, and tell the truth." But a monarch who personally directed such an empire was an extremely busy man. So he was usually at the ancient Elamite capital, Susa. If it grew too hot there he would go up into the cool of the mountains at Ecbatana, the Median capital, and a cold winter would find him at Babylon.



Courtyard Of The Palace Of Darius The First At Susa - Notice the wall decoration.

TIME DIAGRAM FOR THE RISE AND FALL OF ISRAEL, ASSYRIA AND CHALDEA.



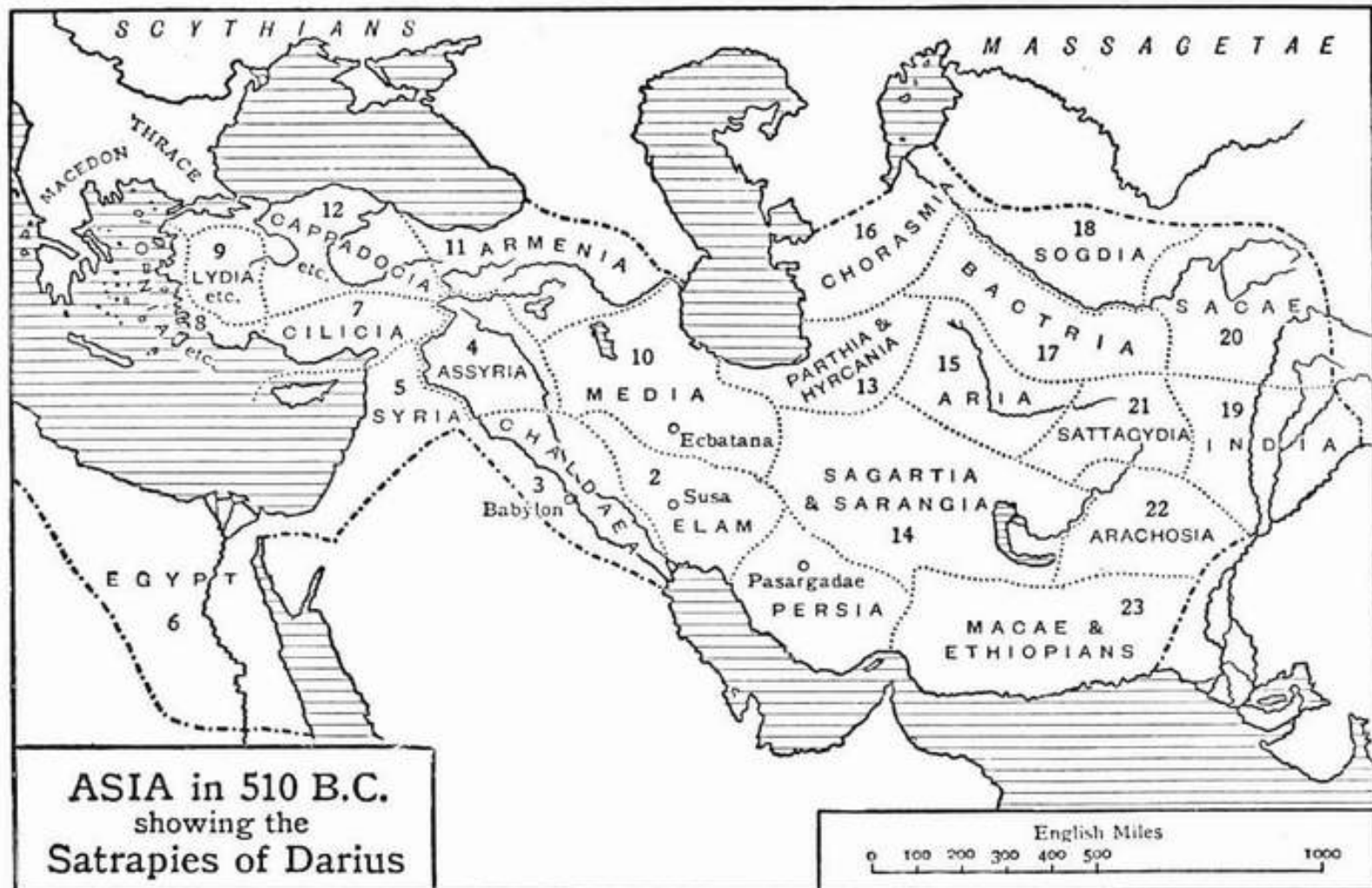
Time Diagram For The Rise And Fall Of Israel, Assyria And Chaldea

It would have been impossible for the king to move about so much and keep in touch with his satraps if the Persians had not developed the best means of communication that had yet been known. Good roads linked the far-flung provinces with Susa, along which were hostels about every thirteen miles. At

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each was a troop of mounted couriers ready to ride at any hour of the day or night with the king's despatches. "Neither snow, rain, fire nor the approach of night," says the Greek historian, Herodotus, "prevents these messengers from fulfilling their allotted course." Ordinary travellers and traders too got the benefit of these roads and hostels, though they were liable to be searched by the king's men. It is said that it took an ordinary traveller ninety days to travel from Sardis to Susa, but a royal despatch would cover the distance in less than a week. Bridges were built over the larger rivers and ferries arranged for the smaller ones. At wide intervals there were barracks for the royal garrisons. There were not many of these, for the empire did not depend so much on force, but their position was very carefully chosen.

There are no great temple buildings to describe, for the chief religion of the Persians did not require them. They followed a great teacher named Zoroaster, and believed that the world was the scene of a long struggle between the spirit of good, "The Right," and the spirit of evil, "The Lie." In the distant future the Right was bound to triumph. Meanwhile, every person ought to enrol himself as a supporter of the Right. Otherwise he was considered a supporter of the Lie. Fire-worship was connected with this religion. "Parsees" simply means "Persians."

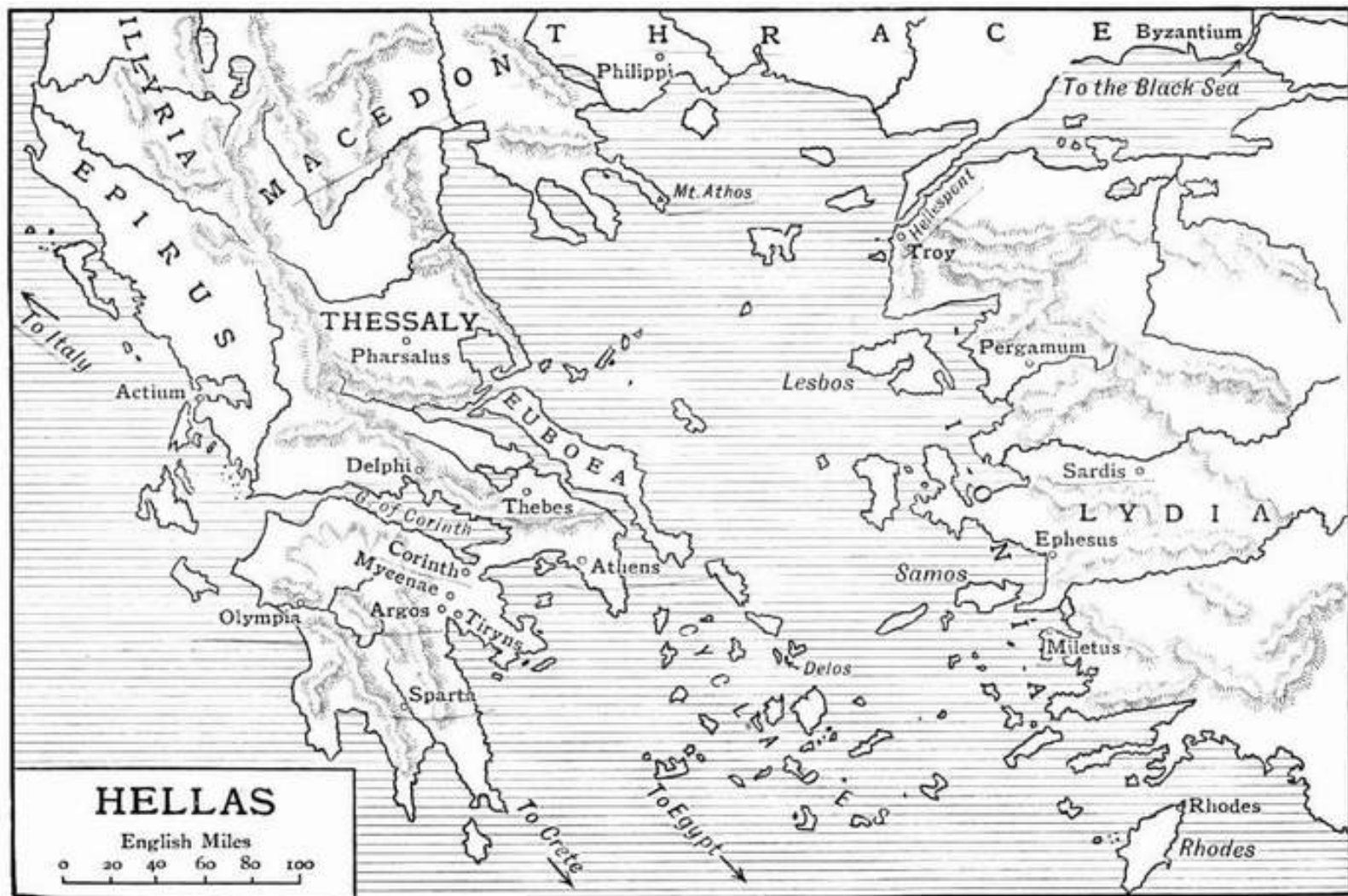


Map - The Persian Empire

In 516 B.C. Darius crossed the Dardanelles, and, pushing inland through Thrace, crossed the Danube and compelled the Scythians and other fierce raiding tribes to submit. We do not really know yet why Darius carried out this big invasion of Europe, the first of its kind in History. It gave him control of all the north side of the Sea of Marmora, but it was not a great success. And it encouraged his discontented Greek subjects of Ionia, which comprised the west coast of Asia Minor and the islands off it, to rebel against him. The Greeks here were annoyed partly because their trade was in a bad way, owing, as they thought, to Persian interference, and partly because the Persians allowed "tyrants" to rule in the Greek cities of Ionia after the Greeks on the other side of the Aegean had abolished them. To understand what a "tyrant" was, we must leave Darius for some time and turn to the history of Greece.

B. The Cities Of The Hellenes

We have already noticed how, somewhere round about 1200 BC., fierce tribes began to push slowly southwards and south-east down the Balkan peninsula and destroy or weaken the old civilised states near the east end of the Mediterranean. One large group or series of tribes, united by similarity of dialects, religion and race, after a very long and confused struggle, occupied not only what we now call the mainland of Greece, but also the islands of the Aegean and the west coast of Asia Minor. We must always bear in mind the two latter divisions also, because Greek life and the Greek spirit were just as vigorous there as on the mainland. In fact, for the earliest period of Greek history, they are the most important parts of "Greece." They were nearer to the old civilisations, and their flourishing Bronze Age cities, though captured and no doubt sacked, were not utterly destroyed. As had happened before in the Fertile Crescent, the tribes of fighting shepherds settled down in old-established cities. (The story of the siege of Troy by "Achaean" chieftains who now ruled the ancient cities of eastern Greece probably belongs to this period.)



Map - Hellas

The northern invaders and the old Aegean stock must have intermarried. And thus arose in time a new and fine race, whom we know as the ancient Greeks. They called themselves Hellenes, and when they thought of the Greek world as one, they called it Hellas.

For Hellas never really became a single, united country, even in the last stages of its history, when it was conquered by great military empires. The Greek always thought of himself as an active citizen of some particular city-state, which was usually quite free and independent. He felt at times a certain kinship with the Greeks in other cities, but his supreme and, in fact, his only loyalty was to his own city. Its fate and government lay in his own and his fellow-citizens' hands. He might hate and fight another Greek city not many miles away more fiercely than he fought and hated the Persians. This strong and eternal jealousy between the Greek city-states, which affected the history of Hellas, was chiefly due to geography.

Greece is not a large or a rich land. Most of it consists of mountains which, though not very high, are steep, and make travel slow and difficult. (Even today you would not find it altogether a comfortable business to tour the interior of Greece.) The soil is thin and there are great masses of rock everywhere, often beautifully coloured and delightful to look at, but not much use for food crops. The old civilisations we have read about depended on great level stretches of fertile soil, which fed large populations, easily united. Only here and there in Greece were there stretches of fertile soil, in river valleys, for corn- and cattle-raising. In most places the climate and the ground were suitable only for gnarled and twisted little olive trees with grey leaves, or vines that produced the sweetest of wine-grapes. So there could be only a limited number of cities in Greece, with a limited population, in the few fertile valleys or where the rocky coast bent to form a deep, convenient harbour. Nor was communication between the cities by sea always as easy as it may seem from the map.



Gathering Olives In Ancient Greece

For there are many promontories on the mainland coast, haunted by dangerous winds and treacherous currents. So the men who lived two valleys or three headlands away from your little province, or in the next island that was a blue smudge on the horizon, though they were Greeks, were sometimes strangers and rivals, and perhaps your bitterest foes.

The same jealousy displayed itself within the city. Class and party feelings were fierce. In most cities there would be a powerful minority who wanted

the government to be in the hands of a few nobly-born and wealthy men. Their opponents would be the mass of citizens who wanted power to be more widely spread, for most Greeks were intelligent, independent and ambitious enough to want a share in their city's government. So there was a long-drawn-out struggle between Aristocracy (Power for the Best People) and Democracy (Power for the Common People). According to legends, there were kings in the cities in the early days. But these had long ago been abolished, except in the old-fashioned warrior-state of the south, Sparta, where there were two kings at once to lead the army, even in historic times. After the kings, the cities had been ruled by noble families. Where this rule had been harsh and selfish, a revolution often took place which resulted in a "tyrant" being appointed.

This word has come to mean a harsh despot. But at first among the Greeks it simply meant a dictator who suddenly arose to supreme power in his city by crushing the nobles with the help of armed followers and the consent of the humbler citizens. At first the "tyrant" might be very popular in his city. The poorer people would be relieved of some of their burdens. And the city would often be adorned and improved by the tyrant and made a more pleasant place to live in. He might build new temples and greatly improve the old harbour, lay out a fine boulevard or encourage sculptors, poets, musicians, philosophers. But very few men can exercise supreme power without being spoiled by it. The fear of a fall from power as sudden as his rise, made the tyrant suspicious of all, and he and his armed followers came to be hated. Between 600 and 500 B.C. was the period of the tyrants in most Greek cities, and you will remember that one of the grievances of the Ionian Greeks against their Persian overlords was that they were compelled to have tyrants (who, of course, were friends of the satraps), when other Greek states had abolished them (p.108).

After the age of tyrants, the nobles never regained their privileged position in politics, though their private influence was still strong. By this time there was a class of wealthy men who were not of noble birth, but who agreed with the nobles in wishing to keep the governing power in the hands of the "upper classes." The opponents of the democrats were now called "oligarchs," i.e. those who believed in "Rule by the Few." After the period of the tyrants some sort of balance was worked out between democracy and oligarchy, the more old-fashioned and agricultural states tending towards the latter, the enterprising, commercial cities having a bias towards democracy. But always in the Greek cities there was in the background the possibility of a fierce, if brief, civil war, in which the leaders would not hesitate to plot with the leaders of a similar party in another town, or even, later on in Greek history, to get help from the Persians. These lines from an early poet, who was on the losing side in a revolution, give us some idea of the bitterness that arose between men who jostled daily in the narrow streets and accused one another face to face at the Assembly in the market-square:

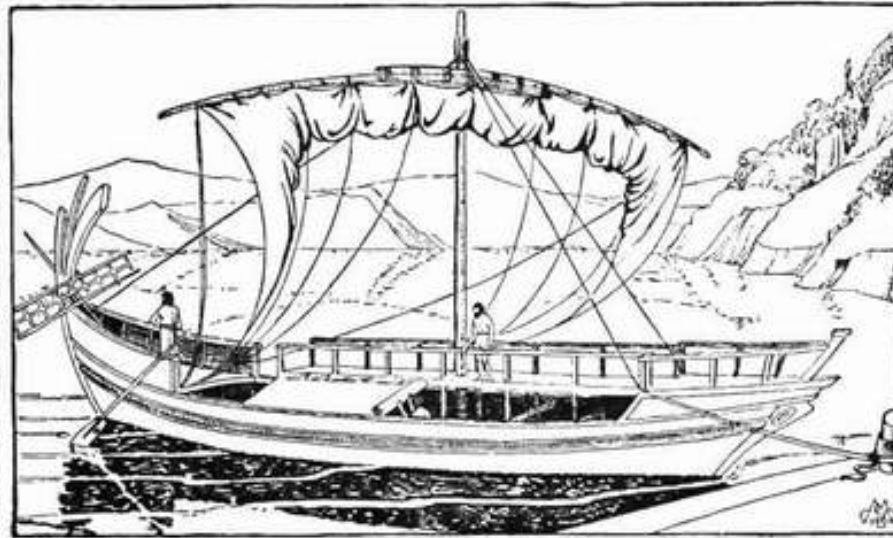
*"Unchanged the walls, but, ah, how changed the folk!
The Base, who knew erstwhile nor law nor right,
But dwelled like deer, with goatskin for a cloak,
Are now ennobled; and, Oh sorry plight!
The nobles are made base in all men's sight!"*

We can see, then, that in their earlier days the Greek cities had to face the problem of limited space and food supply, growing population, and fierce party strife. One way in which they solved it was to send out "colonies," just as an over-crowded hive of bees throws off a swarm to settle elsewhere. Greek traders were successfully competing against the Phoenicians (p. 85) and carrying all over the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea their excellent olive oil (in universal demand as a food and for lighting), their strong, sweet wines, pottery made from island clays, tastefully designed and decorated, and fine woollen goods manufactured in the coast towns of Asia Minor from the fleeces of sheep bred on the hills of the interior.

They brought back metal ores and goods, corn and dried fish. The very useful invention of coinage was spread by them in the form chiefly of artistic silver coins, each city of course having its own design, and the ancient method of barter declined. The early Greek merchant-ships had a high, curved

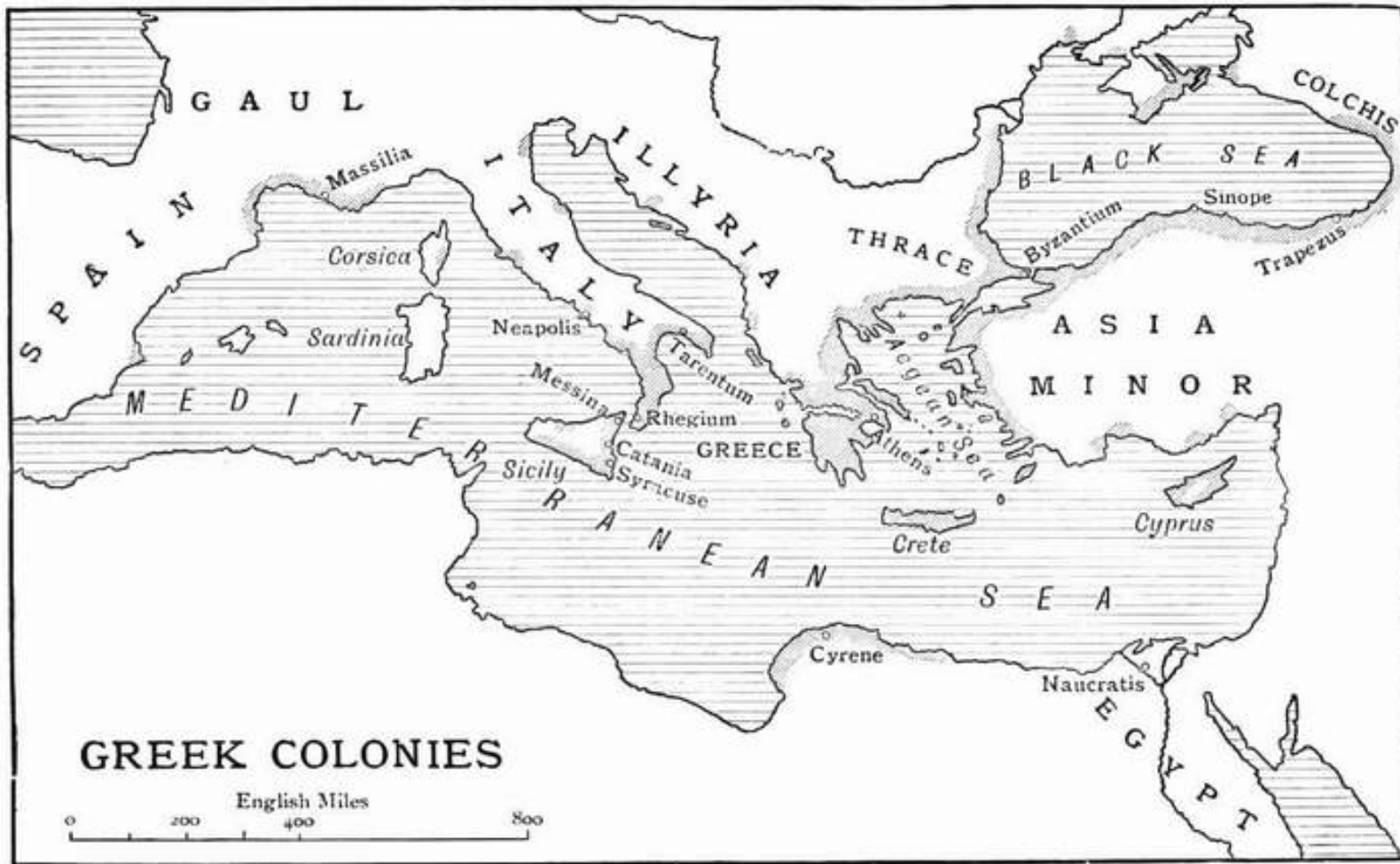
stern, like all ancient vessels, but the bows went straight down or even sloped backward, and contained the hole for the anchor cable to slide through. A gangway ladder was slung across the top of the stern and a little distance along the side was mounted the large paddle for steering. As a rule there was not a complete deck, but a platform at either end, joined by a passage with railings along the centre of the ship. There was only one mast, secured by two fore-stays and a back-stay. Across the mast was slung the yard, composed of two slightly curved poles lashed together, and from it hung the broad rectangular sail. This was composed of about eight vertical strips, with rings along the seams through which ran the ropes for reefing or letting out the sail. (For a vivid picture of the trade-rivalry between Greeks and Phoenicians, read the last two stanzas of Arnold's poem "The Scholar Gipsy").

Greek traders no doubt brought back information as to favourable sites for new cities, wherever there were good harbours or fertile areas not already occupied. After solemn ceremonies the emigrants departed from the mother-city to found far-off a new city of their own, which might or might not remain on friendly terms with their old home, but was, in any case, completely independent of it. Some went to the shores of the Black Sea and the waterways connecting it with the Mediterranean, whence came metal ores, corn and great quantities of dried or salted fish. The legend of Jason and the Golden Fleece is perhaps an echo of the first visit of Greeks to the remote eastern shore of the Black Sea.



Greek Merchant Ship - From a Black-figure Vase at the British Museum.

There were two colonies on the north coast of Africa, one at the mouth of the Nile, Naucratis, and one on the great bulge due south of Greece, Cyrene. There were so many Greek colonies in south Italy that it came to be known by the Greeks and the Romans as "Great Greece," and the Greek cities of east Sicily were among the most renowned in the whole Greek world. That the sites of the Greek colonies were well chosen is proved by the fact that many of them are useful harbours to-day, and some are still of first-rate importance.



Map - Greek Colonies

Among these are Sinope, Trebizond and Constantinople [Istanbul] in the Black Sea area; Taranto, Reggio and Naples in south Italy; Messina, Catania and Syracuse on the east coast of Sicily; and Marseilles, which, by way of the Rhone valley, was their gateway to north-western Europe. Most of the colonies were founded roughly between 700 and 600 B.C.

C. The Persian Wars And After

It is high time now to return to the story of the revolt of the Ionian cities against their Persian overlords and the "tyrants" whom the latter supported. Not all the Greek cities of the Asian coast joined, by any means. There were actually just a few in the central district led by the proud city of Miletus. They appealed for help to the Hellenes of the mainland across the Aegean Sea. Only two cities answered their appeal, Athens, and Eretria, a small town on the inner coast of the large island of Euboea. They believed themselves to belong to the same great division of Greek tribes as the Ionians, and they sent

twenty ships and some soldiers. The rebels marched inland to the rich and important city of Sardis, once the capital of the kingdom of Lydia (p.99). While they were there, the city was destroyed by fire. The Athenians then returned home (498 B.C.). Although the rebel Ionians were not backed by the cities of Greece, they held out for five years, until at last Miletus was captured. Even then the Persians were wise enough not to restore the tyrants in Ionia. But that was not the end of it. After he heard of the burning of Sardis, king Darius ordered a slave to say to him three times whenever he dined, "Sire, remember the Athenians." Apart from his keen desire to punish the impudent intruders, Darius had made up his mind that the Persian empire would not be safe at its western end unless it included Greece.

So he tightened his grip on the big half-Greek provinces of Thrace and Macedon and sent a large army along their coasts which was to turn south and conquer Greece, while a fleet was to keep pace with it and supply it with stores. The fleet was wrecked off the dangerous promontory of Mount Athos, one of the three prongs sticking out of the northern coast, and this expedition was abandoned (492 B.C.).

In 490 the Persians decided to try again. Heralds were sent round to all the cities in Greece to demand "earth and water," the Persian symbols of submission, and in most cases they got it. But Athens and Sparta refused. That summer a fleet sailed from the island of Samos with a Persian army on board, looped south, and swept through the group of islands to the south-east of Greece which the Greeks called the Cyclades, because they seemed, from the holy island of Delos where Apollo was born and worshipped, to lie round in a circle. The Persians spared that island, but seized the rest. Then they sailed up the channel between Attica (the little province round Athens) and the long island of Euboea, till they reached Eretria. They burned the unlucky town and killed or carried off most of its inhabitants, thanks to traitors.

Was it to be the turn of the Athenians now? They despatched a runner to Sparta to ask for help. He covered the hundred miles in two days. The Spartans, owing to religious superstition, replied that they dared not march till the moon had been full. Yet the Persians were already about twenty-live miles from Athens. With anxious hearts the citizens put on the heavy armour of the "hoplite" (the standard Greek infantry soldier). There were greaves to fit round the calves, padded bronze plates that were fastened either by straps at the back below the knee and above the ankle, or kept in place simply by the springiness of the curved metal. Then came the sleeveless leather jacket, with straps hanging down all round to protect the bare thighs. If this did not already have small bronze plates sewn on to it, two large bronze plates were fitted on to the chest and back and strapped together at the sides. Rounded pieces were fastened over the shoulders. Over the right shoulder and across the body came the sword-belt, and the two-foot sword in its sheath rested against the left thigh.



A Hoplite

Now the padded helmet with its cheek-pieces, nasal, eye-holes and great crest of dyed horse-hair was fitted on, tilted well back to keep the face free till the hour of battle. Last of all they took their shields and spears, the four-foot, round shield, made of a wooden frame, bronze-rimmed, with several thicknesses of leather stretched across. The left arm was slipped through the curved piece of wood that fitted across the centre at the back till the elbow took the weight of the shield, and the fingers gripped the leather loop near the rim. The spear was seven feet long, the shaft of wood, the long blade and head of steel.

News came that the Persians were camping on the coast of Attica close to their ships, near the village of Marathon, and guiding them was the ex-tyrant whom the Athenians had expelled a few years before. But among the Athenian officers was one who knew something about Persian methods of fighting. He persuaded, the general to go and meet the Persians at Marathon. Nine thousand Athenian hoplites marched over the hills till they came in sight of the plain and bay of Marathon. There was the Persian camp, and the sea was dotted with ships, hundreds of them. For days the Athenians watched, from a well-chosen position which commanded both the inland road to Athens along which they had come and also the coast road.

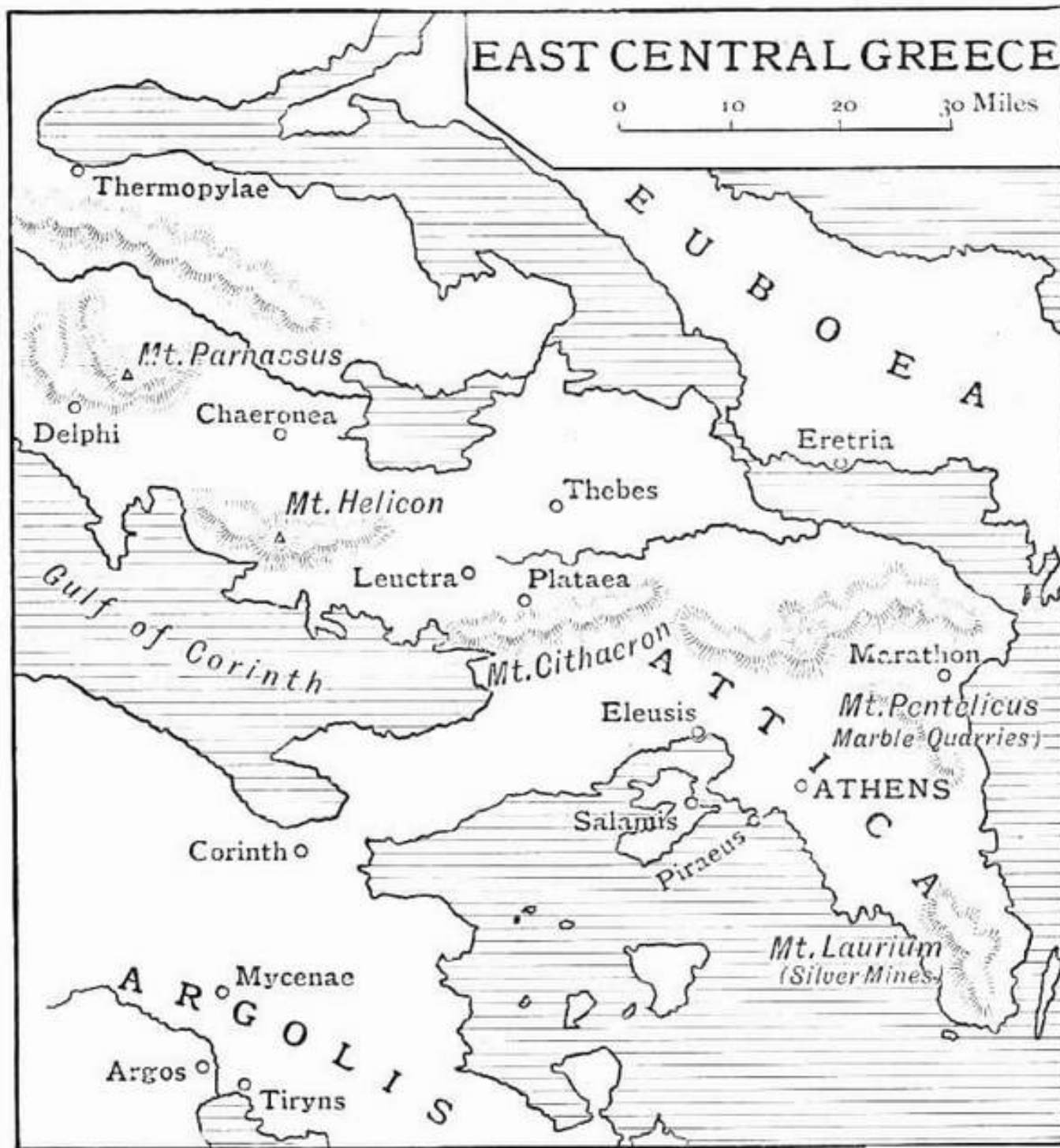
A thousand more hoplites joined them from their gallant and friendly little neighbour, the city of Plataea. At last the Persians were seen to be filing across the plain southwards, obviously making for the coast road to Athens. The Greeks came down from the hills on to the plain to stop them. There were twenty thousand Persians, but they had not brought their cavalry with them, rather a mistake on their part. The showers of arrows from Persian bows did not do as much damage as usual, thanks to Greek armour. The hoplites advanced at a trot and their spears played havoc in the Persian ranks, for the latter, in their long-sleeved jackets of thin mail, and trousers, had little else to protect them but their wicker shields. The two wings of the Persian

army were easily driven back, but the centre resisted for a time. Then the Greek wings faced inwards and the Persian centre, attacked on three sides, collapsed. There was a wild stampede for the boats. And the famous battle of Marathon was over.

But the danger to Athens was not yet over. The Persian survivors were taken on board and their fleet moved south to attack Athens by sea. The hoplites hurried homeward, and as they reached the outskirts of their city, they saw the Persian fleet at anchor off the harbour. But soon it disappeared. The prompt return of the Athenians and the news that the Spartans were at last on their way was too discouraging (490 B.C.).

Let us think for a moment why the victory of the Greeks was important for the history of civilisation. From what you have read on pp. 99-106 you know that the Persians were not ignorant barbarians. Their rule was mild compared with that of the Assyrians. Large masses of people were better ruled than they had ever been before. But these masses had as little control over their own fate as a herd of cattle. The will of the Great King and his satraps was the law, just as it is the farmer who decides what field the herd shall graze in and when it shall go to slaughter. But the Greeks stood for a system under which citizens in their Assembly voted on important questions put before them by the magistrates of the Council whom they had elected. They were the first people in History who insisted that government must be by consent of the governed. And this bold independence had a good deal to do with all that wonderful progress they made in art, literature, science and philosophy, which we are to read about later in the section called "The Greek Spirit."

Darius had other troubles to deal with now, including a revolt in Egypt. So he left the Greeks alone, and died not long after. But his successor, Xerxes, renewed the fight. He collected a huge army and navy, with the firm resolve of conquering the whole of Greece. This army was too big to be shipped across the Aegean, so the previous plan was to be repeated, of marching along the coast of Thrace and Macedon, with the fleet sailing close by. But first the army would have to cross the Hellespont, the strait between Asia Minor and Thrace that to-day we call the Dardanelles. The first pair of bridges that Xerxes built was swept away by a storm. So he beheaded the unlucky bridge-builders, inflicted three hundred lashes on the turbulent waters of the strait, and appointed a new staff of engineers. You may be sure they took care to build solidly.



Map - East Central Greece

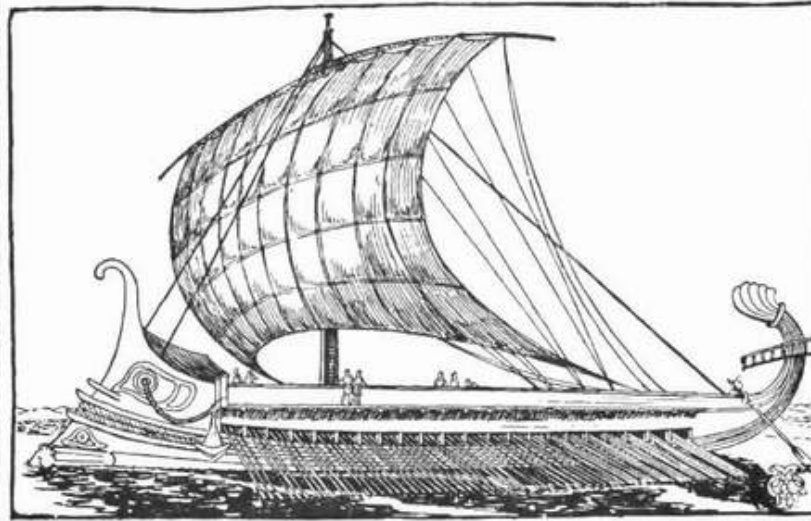
First of all two separate lines of ships were securely moored across the strait. Then along each line six thick cables were fastened. Over these planks were laid, and fastened down with another set of six cables. Above these came the roadway made of wood and earth, with railings at each side. About three hundred thousand men were hustled over the bridges under the lash, and two days passed before the last man was over. To save the fleet the dangerous voyage round stormy Mount Athos (p.118), a canal had previously been cut through the upper end of the promontory.

Meanwhile the Greek cities had been sufficiently alarmed to send delegates to a general conference. Even now, however, they could not entirely overcome their jealousy of one another. The states of southern Greece, led by Sparta, would have been quite ready to leave northern Greece to its fate, if they had not badly wanted the help of the strong Athenian navy. And the Athenians insisted on a stand being made against the Persians somewhere in the north. At about the level of the northern end of the island of Euboea, the main road from northern Greece went close beside the sea along a cliff. This passage was called Thermopylae, "The Pass of the Hot Springs."

The conference grudgingly decided to send seven thousand men to hold the pass, led by Leonidas, war-king of Sparta. Of course they had many more hoplites to dispose of than this, but they said the rest would follow "later." Leonidas took six thousand men to guard the west end of the pass, which the Persians were approaching, while the other thousand were sent to guard a secret track which curved up the steep mountain side above the pass and so provided another route for active men. For two days the Persians attacked the west end of the pass, and lost so many men that "Xerxes leapt thrice from his throne in agony" as he watched. Then they found out about the steep track and sent their finest troops, "the Immortals," along it. The Greeks who should have held the track bolted to the mountain top, and the Immortals worked their way along the mountain side towards the other end of the pass. When Leonidas got to know what was happening he sent most of his army to guard the other end of the pass against the Immortals, while he himself stayed with his three hundred picked Spartans at the west end, and there he was killed. We do not know for certain what happened to the main body of Greeks at the east end of the pass, but we do know that the Immortals got into the pass. The Greek survivors from either end made a last stand on a little hill in the centre of the pass by an old wall, and one after another they fell (480 B.C.).

The Greek fleet watching off the coast retreated and the Persian army and navy advanced on Athens. The conference decided to build a wall across the Isthmus of Corinth, the narrow neck of land joining north and south Greece, and to keep the allied army behind. This, of course, meant that Athens was doomed. Most of the population was taken away to the neighbouring islands before the Persians arrived. A handful of brave men remained to hold the Acropolis, the great, diamond-shaped rock that rises above the city—its citadel and the site of its chief temples. After a time the Persians captured the Acropolis and set it on fire, and the old ex-tyrant (p.120) returned with them at last for a short time to his native city. The conference of Greek allies wanted the Greek fleet to retire to the isthmus, too, and angry debates took place. The Athenians and the inhabitants of the neighbouring islands naturally refused to abandon their families to the Persians, and as they formed more than half the Greek fleet, the southern Greeks had to give way and very unwillingly agreed to a sea-fight close to the islands.

The man who caused this battle to be fought was a wise Athenian named Themistocles, who a few years before had persuaded the Athenians to build up a large fighting navy. A rich vein of silver had been found on property belonging to Athens, and he had prevailed upon his fellow citizens to spend the profits from the silver mine on a navy, a new harbour (the Piraeus), and fortified walls joining the city to the harbour. The standard Greek warship of this period was a "trireme." This word means "Three-Oar." Now old-fashioned books will tell you that a trireme was a ship with three banks of oars. But modern ship-designers say that such a vessel is impossible. We know that sometimes "quinqueremes" were built, and, according to the old idea, that ought to mean a vessel with five banks of oars, and that is surely ridiculous!



Greek Trireme

More probable explanations are that there were three men to each oar, or that groups of three men, with an oar each, sat together on a slanting bench, so that there was a little interval between their oars. (1) In between the two rows of short benches that ran along either side of a trireme was a narrow gangway, along which walked the boatswain and his piper, giving the time of the stroke to the oarsmen. (Those of you who are interested in ship designs might also like to know that the trireme was about a hundred and forty-five feet long, fifteen feet broad and drew four to five feet of water.) The trireme also had a large mast and sail of similar rig to the merchantman, but these were stowed away during battle.

Note: [1] The most recent theory is that the rowers sat in groups of three, one man being immediately above the second, while the third man sat slightly above and 'outboard' of the upper man, in a gallery projecting from the ship's side

It had the same arrangement of anchor, steering-paddle, and gangway ladder fitting on the stern. But the prow swept forward so as to form a strong ram below water level. The idea was to bear down at full speed and ram your opponent hard amidships. Besides throwing his oarsmen on that side into panic and confusion, you hoped to tear a big hole in his side. Then you promptly back-watered and left the sea to do the rest. That was a real sailors' way of fighting. Of course, if you had a lot of marines on board, you could turn it into a land-lubberly affair of coming alongside and boarding your enemy, amid a glorious confusion of snapped oars, your own having been shipped in time.

Even at the last minute, the southern Greeks talked of bringing the fleet south, and in desperation Themistocles sent a secret message to Xerxes to say that the Greek navy was so afraid of the Persians that it was going to slip away, and that Xerxes would do well to attack at once. His advice was taken. A

few miles west of Athens is the bay of Eleusis, and the Greek fleet was in it. The mouth of this bay is almost closed by the island of Salamis. Xerxes sent his Egyptian fleet to close the farther exit. His Ionian fleet, probably not too loyal, was to guard the exit nearer to Athens; while in front of the Ionians the Phoenicians, on whom he most relied, attacked the Greek fleet in this nearer channel. But the Persian vessels were so numerous that in the narrow channel they fouled each other, and the Greeks crashed through them and won the first renowned sea-fight in History (480 B.C.). The poet Byron, who helped the modern Greeks to win their liberty from eastern tyrants, describes it thus—

*"A king sate on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations:—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set, where were they?"*



The Straits Of Salamis - Seen from the north-west coast of Atticca in the foreground.

2. the village of Salamis;

5, the entrance to the Piraeus.

Xerxes himself now returned home, afraid that his bridges might be destroyed in another revolt of the Ionian cities. But he left a good general behind with a large army. Next spring the Persians again invaded Attica, and drove the Athenians once more to their close neighbours in the islands. But soon there was, at last, a really good muster of the Greek allies, and the Spartan king-general had thirty thousand hoplites under him. A long-drawn-out battle took place among the mountains near Plataea, the gallant little city some thirty miles north-west of Athens which had helped at Marathon and at Salamis.

The Persians were well led, and their arrows did a good deal of damage. The Athenians failed to take up their proper position, and only the fine

discipline of the Spartans saved the day. At last the Persian general was killed, his men ran away to their strong camp, but the Greeks stormed it and slaughtered them (479 B.C.). The Persians never again invaded Greece. They were soon driven from Thrace, and a large Greek fleet won the straits back. Soon there was another revolt of the Ionian cities. And the Persians were satisfied with playing on the jealousies which soon sprang up again, to prevent a really serious counter-attack of the Greeks against Asia Minor.

As you may imagine, the adventurous and enterprising spirit of the Athenians was roused to the utmost by the victories over the Persians, and in the next fifty years Athens reached the summit of its glory. "O rich and renowned and with violets crowned, O Athens, the envied of nations!"—so a playwright of this period begins one of his choruses. An alliance of Athens with numerous island and sea-coast towns, to maintain a large navy against Persia, was gradually turned into an Athenian sea-empire, for many of the states preferred to send money instead of triremes. But the Athenians saw to it that they themselves kept up a strong navy, and began to treat the weaker states as if they were subjects, and the money contributions as a tax, which had to be paid regularly at Athens, where it was spent exactly as the Athenians pleased.



The West End Of The Acropolis At Athens - Showing the Propylaea in the centre, the statue of Athene to the left of it and the Parthenon on the right.

Military colonies of poor Athenian citizens were planted where they could watch the "allies" and guard the vital corn-route to the Black Sea. The "Long Walls" (p.124) connecting Athens with the harbours of the Piraeus were completed.

The Persians had destroyed the temples on the Acropolis. The Athenians took the opportunity to rebuild on a magnificent scale with fine white marble which they could obtain from a neighbouring mountain. The most striking features were first, the elaborate pillared gateway at the west end, the only approachable end, of the rock. This they called the Propylaea or Porch. Passing through this, one looked straight at a gigantic bronze statue of the goddess "Athene Our Champion," and the Athenian sailor homeward bound strained his eyes for the far-off flash of her helmet and spear-top in the sun. To the right of this lay the new "Temple of Athene the Maiden" which we know as the Parthenon, the finest building the Greeks ever erected.

Like all Greek temples, it was quite simple in design. It was oblong in shape, with a double row of pillars at either end, a single row down either side and a shallow-gabled roof. Its beauty consisted in its elegant proportions, marvellous craftsmanship, and its sculptured decorations, and of these we shall have more to say later. At one end of the Parthenon was the chapel of the goddess, and in it stood another huge statue of Athene, made of wood covered with gold (for the clothing) and ivory (for the skin). The goddess stood smiling in majesty, with a great three-crested helmet on her head and a golden robe over her body. Her right hand held a golden statute of Victory and her left hand rested on her shield. By her coiled a huge sacred snake. It was the masterpiece of the great sculptor, Phidias.

During this period Athens was practically ruled by one man, the wise, dignified Pericles. For thirty years (460-430 B.C.) he was annually re-elected as chief magistrate. His eloquence and bold imagination enabled him to dominate the Assembly of citizens and to win steady support for his ambition, to make "Athens the school of Hellas." As Athens grew more imperial abroad, she became more democratic at home.



Pericles

Under the rule of Pericles a large proportion of citizens found some sort of paid public employment, as magistrates, councilors (five hundred strong), jurymen (of whom several hundred were required), oarsmen and sailors (two hundred for each trireme), and as regular soldiers. And rich citizens thought themselves lucky if a year went by without their being called upon to undertake some very expensive public duty—to equip, man, and take personal charge of a trireme (the city provided the hull), to pay all the expenses of an embassy to a distant city or temple, or to train the chorus for a play in the public theatre. Most appointments, including the highest, were filled by the very democratic method of drawing lots. It says much for the intelligence of the Athenians that such a system worked.

The pride and progress of the Athenians was looked on with jealous eyes by the Spartans, who were strongly contrasted with them in every way. They

believed themselves to be descended from a different branch of the old invaders (p.108), the Dorians, who had hardly intermarried with the Bronze Age Greeks, but had enslaved and degraded them and wiped out their civilisation. So that the Spartans retained more of the fierce warrior-spirit of their ancestors, but lacked the quick wits, enterprise and love of beauty that the more mixed blood of the other Greeks produced.

A good Spartan never wearied his slow brain with philosophy, politics or poetry. He left all that sort of thing to those "smart" Athenians. As for commerce, he believed, like the more backward squires of eighteenth-century England, that "Trade was the ruin of a nation." The Spartans' whole duty and aim in life was simple, to be the finest soldiers in the world—you had to be perfectly "fit," and hard as nails, to handle your spear, sword and shield like an expert, to know your place in the line and keep it unto death, to obey orders whatever they were, and keep your mouth shut. They did not bother to put a wall round their city, just an overgrown village which lay by the river Eurotas in a warm, fertile valley in far-southern Greece. They trusted to their own valour and renown, and to the ring of high mountains round them. And their confidence was justified. For Sparta was never captured during the centuries of Greek history you are reading of here.



The Valley Of Eurotas, near Sparta

Quite early in his life it was made clear to a Spartan that he lived, not for himself or his family, but for his city. At the age of seven he was taken away from home and brought up at a sort of army school. He was pretty sure to be a healthy boy because sickly babies were just put out on the mountains to die! There was no room in Sparta for weaklings. The boys were under strict discipline, but no doubt most of them enjoyed the open-air life with its adventure and comradeship. Even the drill and marching might be fun if you did it to the music of fifes and sang stirring war-songs. And then for practice in scouting, you would sometimes be sent to steal your food from the farms, which were all worked by Helots or serfs, the old population whom the Spartans had conquered.

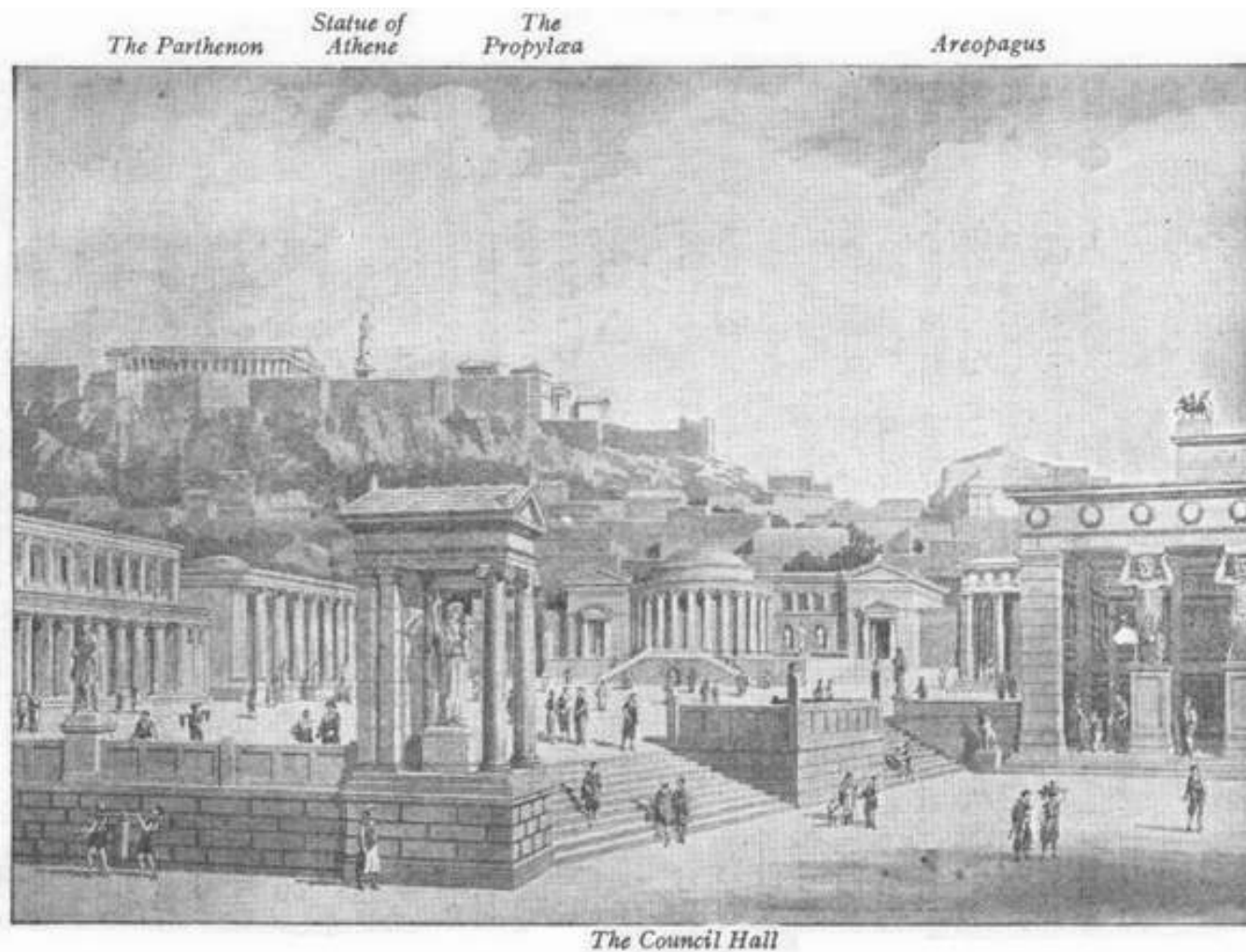
There was no disgrace about this stealing for food, unless you were caught, and your captain, whom you were specially anxious to please, called you a clumsy idiot in front of all your friends. You may have heard the story of the boy who brought back a young fox and hid it in his tunic. He did not want anyone to know about it, and he let it bite him to death rather than reveal his secret.

The older boys were sometimes put on a sort of secret service duty to spy on the Helots, who greatly outnumbered the Spartans and hated them. Any Helot who showed too bold and independent a spirit was liable to disappear mysteriously. Even when a young Spartan married, it was some time before he was allowed to set up a home of his own, and even then, he was expected to take the main meal of the day in the barracks along with the other men in his "platoon." Women in Sparta had more freedom and appeared much more often in public than women in other Greek cities. For they too were expected to keep themselves fit and develop a martial spirit, so as to become worthy wives and mothers of the world's finest soldiers. It was a true Spartan mother who, when her son was going off to the war, handed him his shield and said as her only words of farewell, "Come back with this or on it,"

The Spartans' jealousy of Athens was encouraged by Corinth, the rich trading city on the narrow neck of land that joins north and south Greece. Many traders, taking goods by sea from one side of Greece to the other, preferred to unload on one side of the isthmus and reload on to another ship on the other side only a small distance away, rather than make the dangerous voyage round the promontories of the south coast. Corinth was the chief business rival of Athens and was friendly with Sparta, as were many other cities of southern and central Greece, anxious to curry favour with the Spartans and determined not to become subjects of Athens. There was a revolt against Athens among subject cities to the north-east on the Black Sea corn-route. Corinth and Sparta helped the rebels. The Athenians, in their pride of empire, took up the challenge, and a long, dreary war followed (431-404 B.C.).

Pericles decided not to take the big risk of fighting a pitched battle against the Spartans and their allies. He brought into Athens all the people, from the outlying villages and let the Spartans do their worst. It was not much use the Spartans besieging Athens, for, thanks to the Long Walls (p.130), food and other stores could be imported through the Piraeus as long as the Athenian navy ruled the waves. And though Sparta was helped by Corinth and other naval allies, none of them was strong enough to challenge the sea-power of Athens. So the Spartan league attacked the scattered Athenian garrisons and allies, hoping to tempt Pericles into sending out a large relief force.

If he had been in charge of the war for a number of years, the result would have been different. But in the second year of the war, 'owing to overcrowding in Athens, a great plague broke out and Pericles died of it (429 B.C.). Not long before his death he delivered a funeral speech over the Athenians who were killed in the first year of the war.



In the version of this speech which has come down to us in the pages of the great Athenian historian, Thucydides, we get an idea of the Athenian spirit at its best. Let us take a passage here and there, and remember that it is getting on for two thousand four hundred years ago since these words were spoken.



Athene Mourning Fallen Athenians - She is wearing the Dorian chiton

"Our city is thrown open to the world, and we never expel a foreigner or prevent him from seeing or learning anything. And in the matter of education, while our enemies from early youth are always undergoing laborious exercises in order to make them brave, we live comfortably and yet are just as ready to face the perils which they face. We do not suffer in advance, but when the hour comes, we can be as brave as those who never allow themselves to rest; and so our city is just as admirable in peace as in war. For we are lovers of the beautiful, yet simple in our tastes. We improve our minds, but we are none the less manly. We use wealth, not for talk or vulgar show, but when there is a real use for it. To admit poverty is no disgrace among us; the real disgrace is in doing nothing to avoid it. ... Such is the city for whose sake these men nobly fought and died; they could not bear the thought that she might be taken from them; and every one of us who survive should gladly toil on her behalf."

Years went by without any decisive battle in this struggle between sea-power and land-power. The most prominent Athenian in the later stages of the war was Alcibiades. As a young man of wealth, fashion and noble birth he had done many wild and foolish things. But he had a keen brain and a fine imagination, and he might have led the Athenians to final victory. In 415 B.C. he persuaded the Athenians to answer the appeal of certain cities of Sicily and attack the important and wealthy city of Syracuse, one of the chief allies of Sparta and Corinth. The finest expedition that had ever left a Greek city

was ready to leave the Piraeus with a hundred and thirty-four triremes and hundreds of transport vessels when, one night, someone defaced the statues of the god Hermes which stood at many street corners in Athens. This caused a terrible scandal, especially as Alcibiades was accused of being responsible. He wanted to be tried at once, but as he was one of the three commanders of the expedition, he had to sail with it. No sooner had it reached Syracuse than the Athenians recalled Alcibiades for trial. It was a very stupid thing to do. He escaped on his way back, and, thirsting for revenge, when he later heard that he and his kinsmen had been condemned to death, he went to Sparta, where they were glad to have him.

Of the two other commanders with the expedition to Syracuse, one was a first-rate soldier, but he was killed early on. The only commander then left was slow and over-cautious, and had been against the expedition from the start. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that it ended in ghastly failure. The naval allies of Sparta made great efforts and badly damaged the Athenian fleet. On the advice of Alcibiades the Spartans sent one of their best officers out to Syracuse, and by his energy he destroyed the elaborate siege-works by which the Athenians hoped to starve out the great port. At last the Athenian commander decided to retreat from Syracuse to some friendly port whence he could take his men back to Athens. If he had done this suddenly, he might have brought it off. But an eclipse of the moon, which in the ancient world was regarded with superstitious awe, took place on the very night when the retreat should have started. The Athenians waited a few days. The Syracusans got to know of the retreat, followed the doomed invaders and massacred them by a river, into which the thirst-maddened Athenians had plunged in frantic disorder. Those who survived were brutally ill-treated, till sooner or later death brought merciful release from the prison-quarries of Syracuse.

Even this terrible disaster did not daunt the Athenians. They fought on grimly for another ten years, and towards the end the scene of the chief fighting was off the coasts of Asia Minor and the Dardanelles, for now the Black Sea corn-route was being threatened by the enemies of Athens, helped by the Persians.



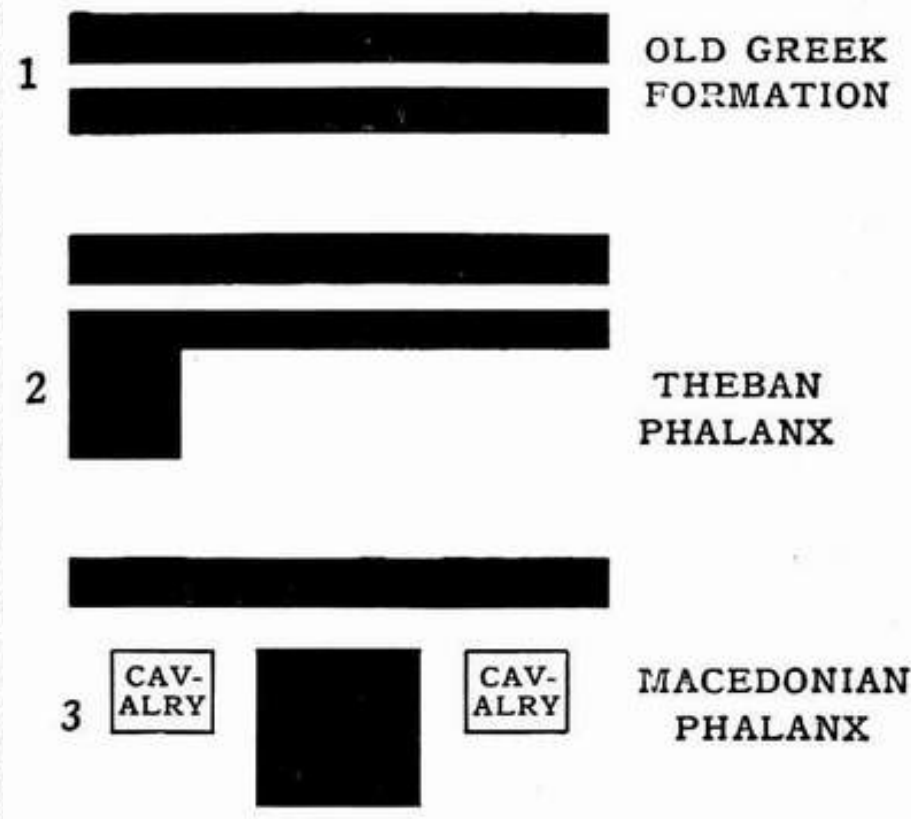
Coin Of Syracuse, C. 410 B.C. - Head of Arethusa, amid Dolphins.

The Athenians let Alcibiades come back, for he had helped them to victory in this district by sending valuable information. As a character in a play put it, "They love, they hate, they cannot do without him." But he was blamed when one of his friends lost a battle, and he retired to a castle of his on the Dardanelles. One night it was set on fire, and as he ran out, mysterious enemies stabbed him to death. The end of the fighting came when a hundred and sixty Athenian triremes in the straits were easily captured in a sudden raid, while the crews were on shore. It is hard to believe that there was no treachery behind this. Peace was made in 404 B.C. on condition that the Athenians pulled down their Long Walls and gave all subjects back their freedom.

The war had lasted so long that, when it was over, many Greeks could not settle down again, and became professional soldiers, willing to fight for anyone who would pay them. The most famous exploit of these wandering soldiers of fortune was the Retreat of the Ten Thousand, led by an Athenian officer, Xenophon. Those of you who learn Greek later are fairly sure to read his book about "The Great Trek." Cyrus, the brother of the king of Persia, thought that he himself would make a better ruler. So he hired a large army to drive his brother from the throne, and the backbone of this army was ten thousand hoplites from the various cities of Greece. A battle took place near the river Euphrates about twenty miles north of Babylon, and though the king's army was defeated, Cyrus was slain. The satrap asked the leaders of the Greeks to meet him and discuss terms of peace. They agreed, and were all massacred. Well might the Ten Thousand feel nervous, in the heart of the Persian empire, without leaders or any idea of what they were to do next.

Then Xenophon, who was serving as an ordinary soldier, felt that, as a man of education and intelligence, he ought to undertake the responsibility of getting the men out of this unpleasant situation. He decided not to march back westwards because there would have been many Persian garrisons to deal with. So he took them north, first across the hot, sandy wastes by the Tigris, then up past the ruins of Nineveh through the heights where the Tigris and Euphrates have their sources, into the snow and ice of the Armenian mountains in winter, harassed by fierce mountain tribes who ambushed them in narrow passes and dropped great boulders on them. At last they climbed a hill, and the first men on top raised a glad cry, "Thalassa," "the Sea." Though it was the Black Sea, they were soon in a Greek port, Trebizond, and that was all they asked (400 B.C.).

Of course, for a time, the Spartans were popular, and no one could or wanted to dispute their claim to be the masters of Greece. The Athenians had lost their empire but had not lost that which made them really great, and some of their finest thinkers and artists flourished after 400 B.C. Soon the Spartans showed themselves to be just heavy-fisted bullies and were hated more than the Athenians had ever been. Even their prowess as soldiers was sharply challenged by Thebes (do not confuse it with the Egyptian city), an old town about thirty-five miles north-west of Athens, the centre of a district renowned for its sturdy but stupid yokels. For a short time the Thebans found a great leader, Epaminondas, whose friend drove out the Spartan garrison from Thebes. When the Spartan army came for revenge, he defeated it severely and afterwards led his men several times into southern Greece, invading Spartan territory, to the astonishment of all Greece. He was the inventor of a new battle-formation. Hitherto Greek armies had formed up for battle in a long, narrow oblong. Epaminondas decided to thicken the left wing of his oblong even if the rest of it had to be thinner. He relied on the thick end to bend the enemy's right wing back at once further and further till it broke off. This was the beginning of the "phalanx," an arrangement which the Macedonians improved further still (see p. 144). He also compelled the large provinces to the north, Thessaly and Macedon, where the inhabitants were not purely Greek, to treat Thebes with respect. And among the hostages he took from them, who had to live at Thebes, was a young Macedonian prince, Philip, of whom we shall hear a good deal soon.



How The Phalanx Developed

About 350 B.C., then, the Greek cities were played out, as regards politics. Jealousies within the cities and between the cities had been too strong to prevent any one city from uniting the whole of Greece, as Rome later united the whole of Italy. And in ancient times the Greeks never did become a united nation. The Macedonians and the Romans conquered Greece, as we shall read, but it still remained a land of city-states. We can well afford to leave its politics alone for a time and note that Greek sculpture and literature were still of the finest at the period we have reached, and that men were less fanatical about their city and their social class.

There was a more tolerant spirit about, and the most thoughtful men realised that women and slaves and even "barbarians" were human beings, capable of deep feeling and entitled to some consideration. It was also realised that, unless they were very annoying, it was much more sensible to trade with your neighbours, whether they were Greeks, Persians or western folk, than set their town on fire and so lose customers. For this was an age when commerce greatly expanded, and Greek products were common not only in the coastal areas of the "colonies" (p.114), but further inland still in Italy, France and Spain, and among the nomad Scythians to the north of the Black Sea. We still have many of the fine silver coins of this period, Athenian "owls," Corinthian "ships," and the valuable golden coins of Asia Minor.

We have now come to the last division of Greek history that we are going to deal with at present, the rise of the military empire of Macedon under two

great rulers, Philip and his son Alexander. The two kings before them had already worked hard to weld the tribes and cities of Macedon into a compact and united country, and Philip completed the task. He realised that a country which means to progress must have access to the sea and so he conquered the cities on the coast of Macedon, although the Athenians claimed control of them. He knew the Greeks regarded his country as half barbarian, so he set himself to make it as Greek as possible. He insisted on those around him using the pure Greek language of the Athenians, and Greek writers or artists exiled from their own city would find a ready welcome at his court. He appointed the great philosopher, Aristotle, to be his son's tutor.



Coin Of Athens, 5th Century, B.C. - Owl And Olive Spray.

Above all, he made the Macedonian army the most efficient in the world. The phalanx now formed a solid block, bristling with twenty-foot spears, which attacked the centre of the enemy's line. A nimble foe might have surrounded this rather clumsy formation, but it was guarded on either side by masses of heavy cavalry who charged and drove off the enemy's wings opposite them. Then the cavalry wheeled inwards on either side, attacking in flanks and rear the exposed centre of the enemy, already badly shaken by the massive thrust of the phalanx on its front. If cities had to be besieged Philip had a siege-train of the latest engines.

Satisfied with the size, strength and wealth of Macedon, Philip began to think of Greece. When he was a hostage of Epaminondas (p.142), he had learned all he could about Greek politics and righting methods. He knew that the Greeks, divided by jealousy, could not stand up to him for long. Yet he did not want simply to crush them by brute force, for he respected them (especially the Athenians), and wanted them to respect him and accept him as their natural leader. So he offered to lead the Greeks in a great campaign to put an end, once and for all, to the Persian menace. Persia was still a rich, strong and flourishing empire with a large navy, and there were at this time rulers in Persia who thought that Greece ought to be and could be conquered.

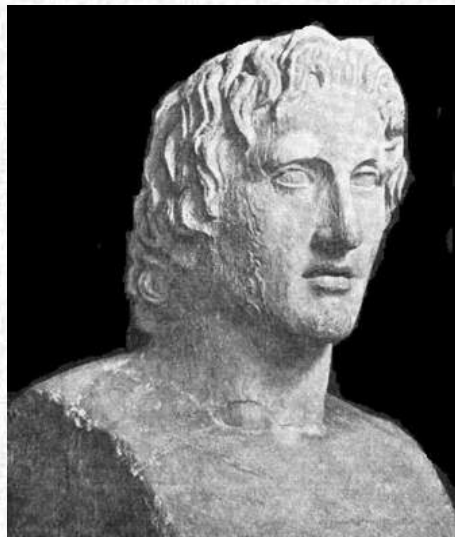
Of course, most of the Greeks "saw through" Philip and his bright ideas, and looked on him as a much greater menace to their liberty than the Great King. The Athenian orator, Demosthenes, whose speeches are considered models of the most perfect Greek prose, was never weary of warning his fellow-citizens, and the rest of Greece, against Philip's real ambitions. Yet some Greeks preferred to trust Philip. Two religious quarrels broke out at this time among groups of Greek cities, and Philip in each case was invited to interfere. The second time, Thebes and Athens grew alarmed and made an alliance against him. He utterly defeated them at the battle of Chaeronea, north-west of Thebes (338 B.C.). After that no Greek city felt like challenging him. Sparta refused to help him, and although he threatened to attack it, he never did. He called a conference of all Greece to meet at Corinth and help

him to plan the war against Persia. While the preparations were going on, he returned to his capital, Pella, and was stabbed to death at his daughter's wedding. He had recently divorced his first wife, Alexander's mother, and married again, and no doubt she had planned the murder.

Alexander was a handsome, athletic young man of twenty when he succeeded his father, and he had already shown, helping his father, that he was a splendid soldier. But the Macedonians and Greeks would not believe he was just as much their master as his father had been. Revolts broke out everywhere, encouraged by Thebes. He promptly suppressed them, and a second conference at Corinth meekly invited him to lead the Greeks against the Persians. Then he disappeared far up north beyond the Danube, no doubt to make sure the tribes there did not attack Macedon in his absence. Thebes again revolted. He came back and just blotted the city out, enslaving those inhabitants who were not massacred. And Thebes was not the only city he caused to disappear from the face of the earth.

In 334 B.C. he crossed the Hellespont with about thirty thousand infantry, of whom twelve thousand were Macedonians, and five thousand heavy cavalry (Thessalians and Macedonians), as well as his siege-train. He soon met the first Persian army at the river Granicus and completely defeated it. There was little to stop him now in Asia Minor and he moved south-east across it. At the temple of Gordium they showed him a chariot to the pole of which the yoke was fastened by a complicated knot. There was a prophecy that whoever undid it would be the master of Asia. After fumbling about with it in vain, he drew his sword and cut it, and so gave us the proverbial phrase.

At the south-eastern corner of Asia Minor, where it joins Syria, another large Persian army tried to bar his way at Issus, led by the king himself, Darius III. It was utterly defeated (333 B.C.), and Darius fled to Susa, leaving his mother, wife and children at Alexander's mercy. He treated them kindly.



Alexander The Great

Rejecting Darius's offer of all west of the Euphrates, he swung south into Syria, and met with no opposition except from the Phoenician city of Tyre. It was on an island about a mile from the coast, and, relying on its sea-power, had made its own terms with previous conquerors and proposed to do the same now. Here was a chance for Alexander's engineers to show what they could do.



Darius Fleeing from Alexander. - This fine mosaic was transferred from a house in Alexandria to a house in Pompeii.

They built an embankment from the mainland to the town (it is still there), and brought their giant catapults and battering-rams along it, while the ships Alexander had managed to collect from his allies and subjects surrounded the island, each with some sort of engine on board. After seven months of wild fighting, Tyre was captured and wiped out, and so the Persians lost their most important naval depot.

Gaza, once the stronghold of the Philistines, also made an obstinate defence under its Persian governor, but it was captured in 332 B.C., and Alexander pushed on westwards into Egypt. It had never been loyal to the Persians, and Alexander was welcomed in its ancient capital, Memphis, where his fleet rejoined him. He sailed with it to the western mouth of the Nile and there founded a new port for communication with Greece and to take the place of Tyre. It was a great success, for it soon became one of the finest cities of the ancient world and it is to-day still a place of importance—Alexandria. From there Alexander made a long desert march westward to the temple of Amen, and its famous oracle, to be officially recognised as king of Egypt. The tactful priests told him what he had been suspecting for some time, that not Philip, but the greatest of the gods was his real father!

Having now made sure that no large Persian army or navy would threaten him from the rear if he marched into the heart of Asia, he returned to Syria and passing through Jerusalem, Samaria and Damascus, struck across the Euphrates and Tigris (331 B.C.). Not far eastward from the ruins of Nineveh, in a great plain between Gaugamela and Arbela, Darius with an enormous army faced him again, and after a furious struggle was again defeated and fled. A long march to the south brought Alexander to Babylon, where he was welcomed. Turning eastward he came to Susa, another of the Persian capitals, where in the treasure house he found the statues of two Athenians who had killed a tyrant. Xerxes had taken them with him when he sacked Athens (p.124), and now they were sent back there. The next stage in his march was his entry into Persepolis, the capital of the original Persia, where, during the

drunken revels, the luxurious palace was set on fire.

There was still another of the Persian capitals to be visited, Ecbatana, and Alexander was all the more anxious to visit it as he had heard Darius was there, and he could not rest until he had the Persian king in his power. When he reached the old capital of the Medes, he found that Darius had retreated towards the Caspian Sea. After paying off most of his Greek soldiers, he hurried north-east in a wild pursuit of the king, which ended with Alexander and a small troop of the hardest riders in his army finding the body of the Great King, just recently stabbed to death by the Persian generals. It was left for a wandering Macedonian soldier to give the dying monarch a cup of water just before Alexander arrived. It is said that Alexander threw his own cloak over the fallen king and sent him honourably to his mother to be buried with his ancestors in Persepolis (330 B.C.).

From this time Alexander regarded himself as the king of Persia, and showed it often by his dress, court-ceremonial and the favour which he displayed to the best Persian satraps, who were reinstated in their posts, to the disgust of the Macedonians. They would not believe that he was out to reconcile the East and the West, and sneered at him for aping an oriental sultan and putting soft "barbarians" on a level with the hardy conquerors of the world.

We need not follow Alexander in too great detail during his astonishing tour of conquest in the remote eastern provinces of the Persian empire, in most of which he established cities named after himself. In 329 and 328 B.C. he was in what we should call Afghanistan and Turkestan. In 327 he crossed the upper Indus and its tributaries, and fought, defeated and re-instated the first of the Indian princes. His Macedonians refused to go any further, and we can hardly blame them. So he came down the Indus, and while a fleet sailed westward from its mouth to the Euphrates, he marched through what we call Baluchistan and southern Persia in 326 B.C. back to Persepolis, and through Susa and Ecbatana in 325 B.C. back to Babylon, which he proposed to make the capital of his empire.

As you may well imagine, there was a tremendous amount of business awaiting him there. He had upset the old organisation of a vast empire and had done little yet to devise a new one, simply keeping things going by appointing temporary governors, Macedonians, Persians and local men. He began to train the Persians in the latest Macedonian fighting methods, including the use of catapults in battle. He married a Persian wife and got most of his generals and many of his men to do the same, celebrating all the intermarriages at one great feast. He began to prepare a fresh expedition, to conquer Arabia and establish a sea-route to India. And suddenly, after a hard bout of drinking (a weakness in which he resembled his father), he fell into a violent fever. As he lay dying, 323 B.C., every Macedonian soldier in his army passed by his bed, one by one, to give him a last salute.

This present age of ours is not as ready as previous ages were, blindly to admire men who once made a stir, and to call them "great." Alexander is often referred to as "the Great," but recently people have asked "Why?" And we ought to think over this question a little. Was he just a man-killer on a big scale, or was the fighting a necessary step towards a great improvement in the lives of forty million people? That Alexander was in many ways a very interesting and romantic person cannot be doubted. Handsome, athletic, wonderfully hardy, he was the best soldier in his own army. His training and his handling of the army were both first-rate. But he was more than a fine general and a born leader of adventurers. It is true some think that his tour of conquest was a stupendous wild-goose chase, that Alexander did not know himself what he was really after. It is also true that at times he was stupidly reckless, mad with rage, absurdly conceited, or blind drunk.

And yet it is quite likely that he had in his mind schemes for greatly raising the level of civilisation over the huge area he conquered, helped by loyal governors without distinction of race. He was an explorer as well as a conqueror, and there were scientists on his staff to help him to get much sounder ideas of the geography of the East than anyone had had before. There were Phoenician traders with him, too, and we may be sure that he discussed with them the old idea of a through trade route from the far East to the far West (p.85). If he had lived another twenty or even another ten years, the history of

the Ancient World might have had a different ending altogether.

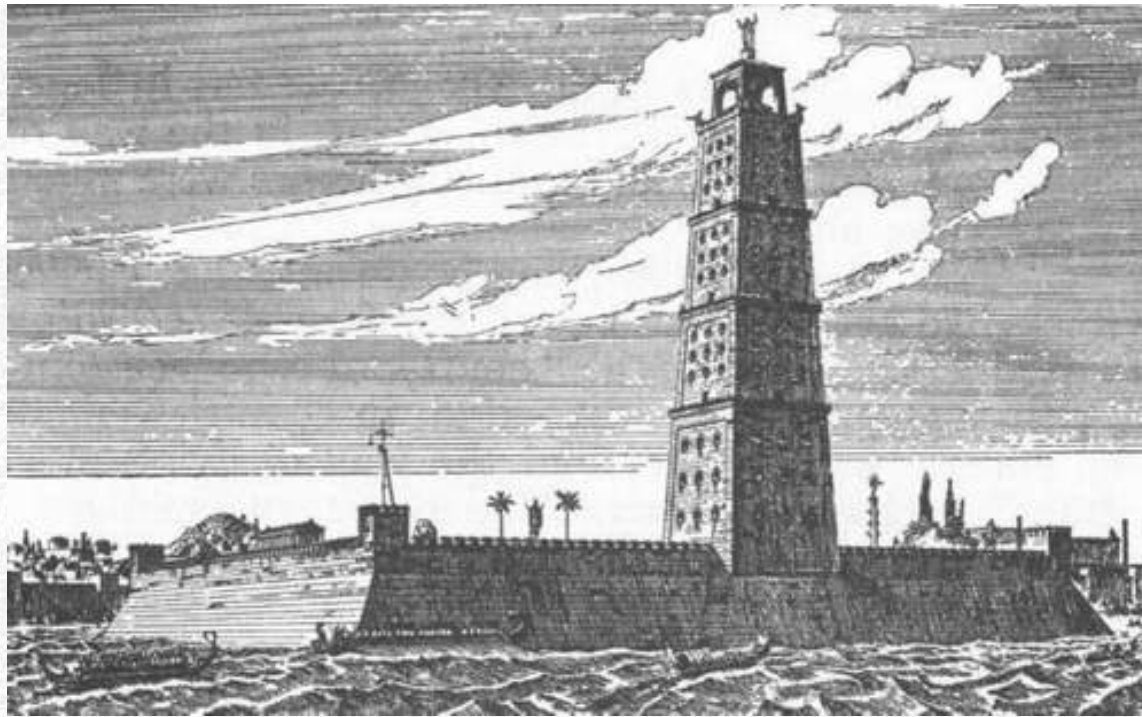
As it was, his Macedonian generals divided his empire among them, and their descendants became kings. And throughout all the western provinces, though the Greek language and Greek names lasted for centuries, especially among the educated classes, the local way of living was hardly changed.

Exercises

1. What great modern Post Office building has inscribed on its front the words about the Persian couriers given on p.106?
2. Draw a hoplite, a trireme (with a section amidships), and a plan of the Acropolis at Athens, placing the improvements of Pericles.
3. What is our name for Iskanderiya (Egypt)? How do you explain the names Iskanderun (Syria), Iskander-uneh (Palestine), Iskander or Kandahar (Afghanistan), Lake Iskander (Turkestan)?
4. Why was the New Testament written in Greek? Why is there Greek on the Rosetta Stone?



Remains Of A Greek Theatre And Gymnasium At Babylon. - A striking proof of Alexander the Great's success.



The Lighthouse At Alexandria

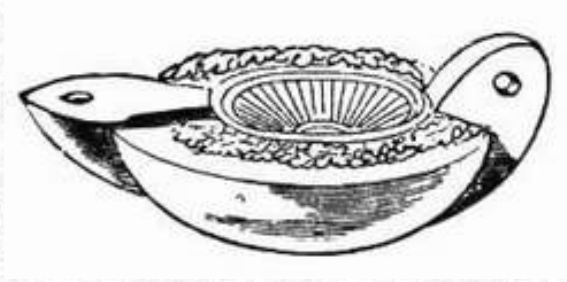
D. The Greek Spirit

We shall hardly mention the history of the Greeks or the Macedonians any more in this book, if history is just a matter of wars and politics. Yet this section about the Greeks is the most important of all. It is probably the most important section in the whole book.

For about two hundred years after the death of Alexander (that is, until the Romans conquered these lands), in the new or improved cities of Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt that sprang up under his influence, Greek sculptors, builders, philosophers and scientists were doing work which was still first-rate. For instance, those Greek statues with which you are most familiar nearly all date from this period. There were great universities and libraries at Alexandria, at Pergamum in north-western Asia Minor and on the island of Rhodes off its south-western coast. The new towns of this wider Greek world enjoyed a far better "lay-out" than those of earlier Greece. They represent the first widespread attempts at what we call nowadays town-planning. They had fine "civic centres," that is, well-planned groups of public buildings; there were parks, the streets ran in long, straight lines, with great improvements in the way of paving and sanitation, and ordinary houses were much more comfortable.

The ordinary dwelling-house of the earlier Greeks had not been particularly comfortable according to our ideas. It was of the "courtyard type" customary throughout the ancient world, in countries where the climate was warmer and the way of living altogether simpler than ours. The house, of one storey as a rule, presented blank walls on the outside, except for the entrances, for there were no outer windows, and, in fact, no glazed windows anywhere such as we are used to. A short passage led from the entrance to the courtyard, round which the rooms were grouped. For most of the year the household worked

and played in the courtyard.



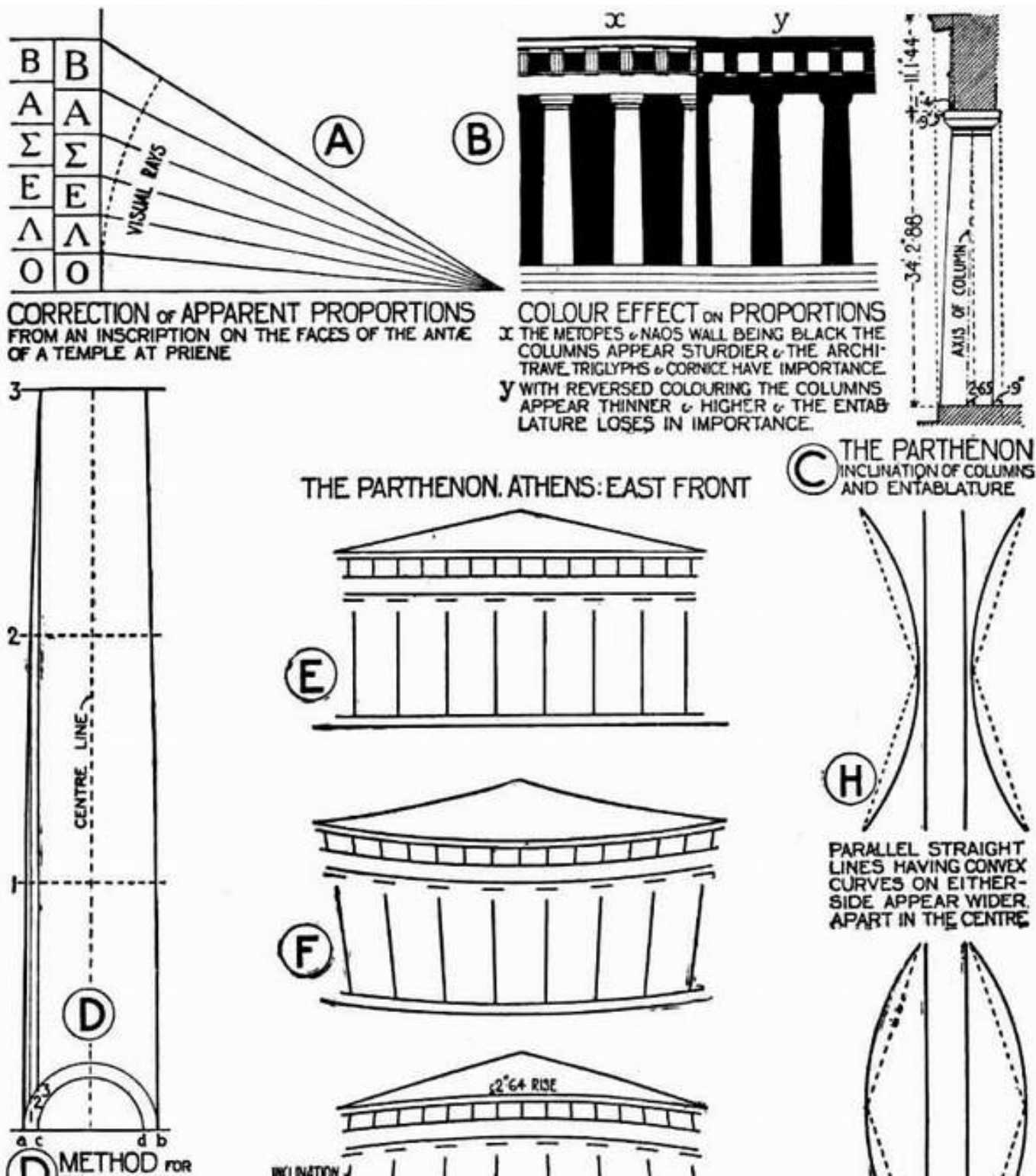
A Greek Lamp - It was filled with oil through a hole in the centre of the depression in the top. The wick came out of the front hole.

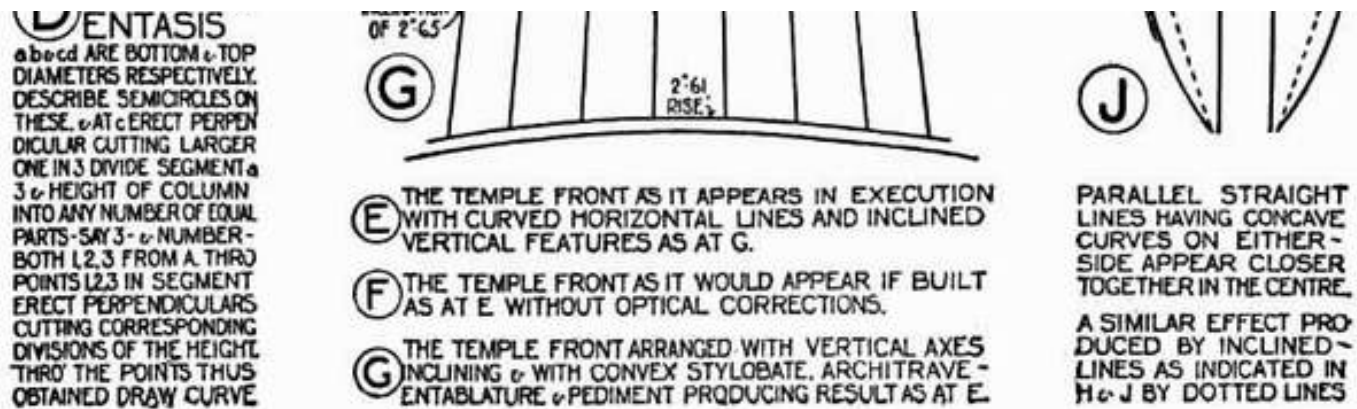
The rooms were for sleeping in and for use mainly during the three wet months of the year. Curtains, more often than wooden doors, covered the entrances to the rooms, and light was admitted either through the open doorway or through an opening in the wall above it. There was no fire-place, nothing of the water and drainage system we are used to, and when it was dark, the only lighting available was from torches or simple little lamps burning coarse olive oil. There was little furniture; one or two small, low tables, hardly any chairs, and low wooden couches for bedsteads or for use at feasts—none of the soft upholstery and bedding with which we are pampered! If there was a kitchen, it was a simple affair, because Greek food was usually quite plain—vegetables, fish, olive oil, fruit and wine. The Greeks, living so much out of doors in a (usually) mild climate and eating such food, obviously did not require as elaborate a dwelling or as much household gear as we do. But their furniture and pottery, in spite of its simplicity, was usually of elegant design and tastefully decorated.

The temples and other public buildings in our last period of Greek history were larger and more elaborate than those, say, of Pericles' life-time. You can get some idea of their size from the remains in the British Museum. But the artists and craftsmen of Asia Minor and the islands, who flourished between 300 and 200 B.C., though their work was on a bigger scale, never excelled the satisfying proportions, the excellent taste and workmanship of the Parthenon. Let us take another look at that fitting symbol of Athenian pride. We have already described its general design on p.130. By comparison with the finest cathedrals of the Middle Ages, the building of a Greek temple may seem to you to be an easy matter. It looks quite a simple arrangement of straight lines and plain columns. If the lines of the steps were really dead straight, they would seem to you to sink in the middle.

Actually there is a very slight upward curve in them. The pillars too look straight enough. Yet, in fact, there is a slight bulge at the centre of each, which enables them to bear a heavier weight and also gives an illusion of perfect straightness. There are other examples of fine craftsmanship like this throughout the building. The pillars, six feet in diameter, show that the Parthenon is in the Doric style, the simplest and usually the most elegant type of Greek building. They come straight down on to the pavement without any sort of pedestal, the edges between the flutings are quite sharp, and there is only a simple rounded stone joining the top of the column to the square tile underneath the roof edge. In the Ionic and Corinthian styles, which became more fashionable later, the column rests on some sort of pedestal, there is an interval between the flutings, and the top is decorated with a "ram's-horn" design in the Ionic style, and in the Corinthian with an elaborate arrangement based on acanthus leaves.

OPTICAL CORRECTIONS IN ARCHITECTURE





Architecture Diagrams

Phidias himself is said to have planned the decoration of the upper surfaces of the outside of the Parthenon. The gable roof provided a triangular surface high up at either end of the temple. One of these showed Athene with the Sun-God, the Moon Goddess and the Fates. The other showed the contest of Athene with Poseidon, god of the Sea, for the possession of Attica. All round the outside, in the space between the tops of the pillars and the edge of the roof, was shown the battle of the Centaurs (half horses, half men) with the savage tribe of Lapithae which broke out at a wedding feast in their native Thessaly, when all had had too much to drink. In this subject there is the suggestion of the Greek contempt for brutishness and any serious loss of self-control. On the corresponding place inside the pillars, that is at the top of the actual temple walls, was another long series of sculptures showing the solemn religious procession which every four years carried a new robe (stretched on a ship's yard-arm) to the Parthenon for the great statue of Athene. There are the elders, maidens, various officials, those who carried the holy utensils for the sacrifices, the sheep, the musicians, the robe-carriers and, perhaps the finest section of all, the Athenian cavalry, handsome young men in short cloaks, riding their fiery steeds with graceful ease. You can actually see most of these in the original at the British Museum, together with models of the Parthenon.

Nobody surpassed, or is ever likely to surpass, the Greeks in portraying in marble or bronze the utmost grace, beauty or dignity that the human figure can attain. The world has agreed to accept their statues of gods, goddesses, and athletes as ideals of male and female beauty. There are other things that sculpture can express, such as personality, character and emotion. Greek artists were not so much interested in these. Their best work was done in moulding physical perfection, and they were unwilling to distort the face by any strong emotion.



Young Men Of The Athenian Cavalry. - From the Parthenon frieze of the Panathenaic procession

After the time of Phidias, the best-known Greek sculptor was Praxiteles. The picture shows his famous statue of the god Hermes playing with the infant Dionysus, who became the wine god. The arm which has been lost probably dangled a bunch of grapes.



Hermes With The Infant Dionysus - Cast Of The Marble Statue By Praxiteles.

This is one of the very few original statues by the great masters which are still left to us. Though the figure is supposed to be a god, you can see that it is really some perfectly proportioned young athlete.

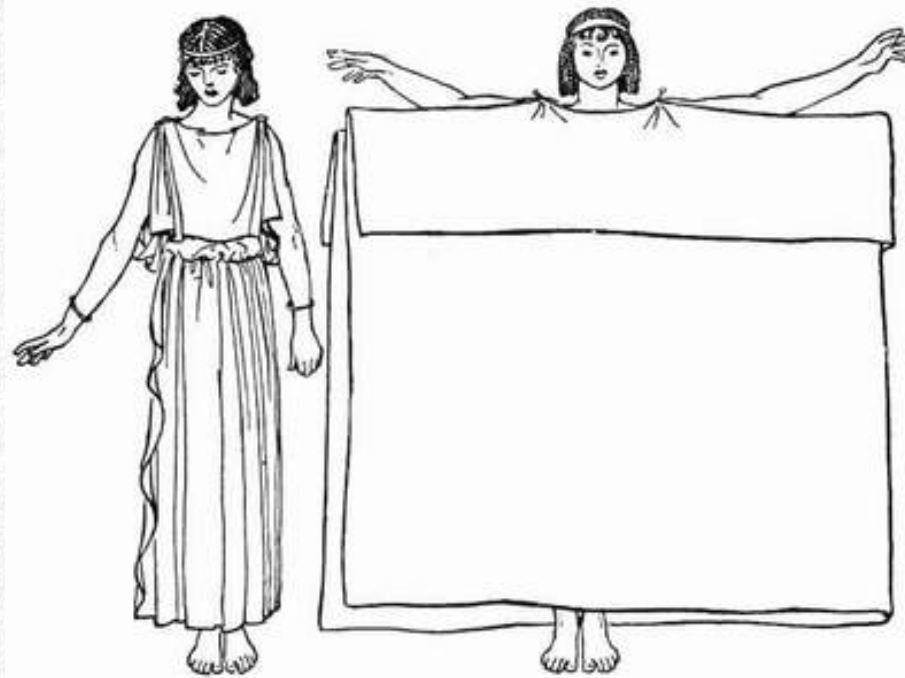
The best Greek sculpture is equally wonderful whether it shows the figure quite nude or clothed in the gracefully simple styles worthy of Hellas. The Greeks were so proud of their healthy bodies that they thought nothing of exercising in public quite naked.



Artemis, Goddess Of The Chase - She is wearing the Dorian chiton deeply pouched at the girdle. Her cloak is wound round her.

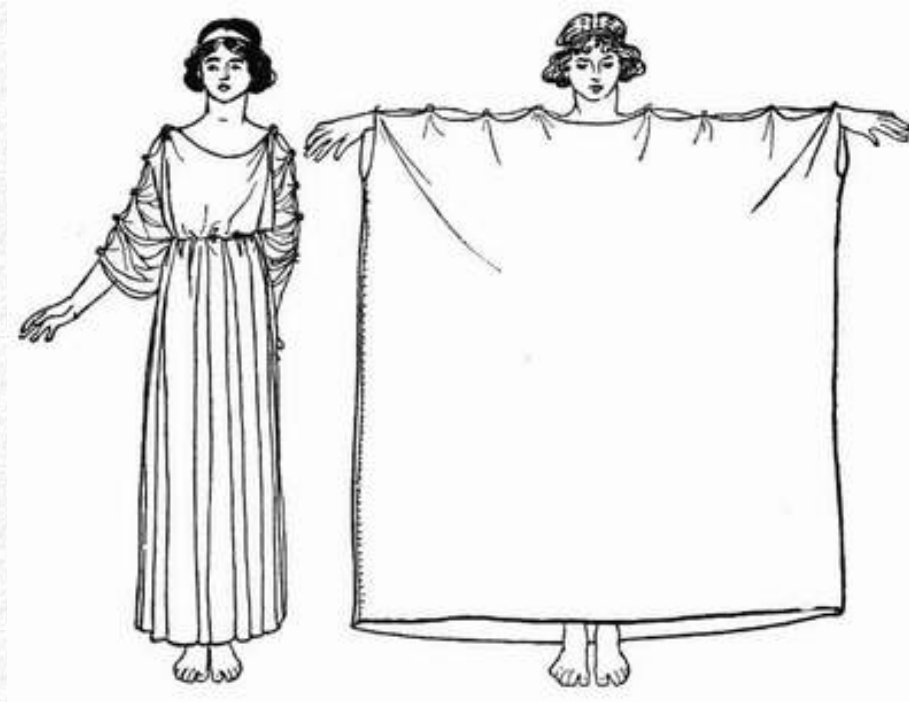
In fact, our word "gymnasium" means the place for training where you don't wear anything. At Sparta this applied to women too. Under these conditions it was not difficult for sculptors to find glorious specimens of manhood or womanhood for models. One of the most striking things about Greek sculpture is the marvelously skilful way in which the most delicate folds of clothing were reproduced in marble or bronze.

These folds may seem to you from statues to be very elaborate, but actually the design of women's dress was quite simple. The main garment was a long tunic called the chiton (pronounced "kytone").



The Dorian Chiton

There were two styles of this, the Dorian and the Ionian, these names corresponding to the two main tribal divisions of the Greeks. If you girls can borrow the rather large pieces of material required, and some safety-pins, you can easily make these garments yourself. For the Dorian style you want a piece five feet wide and seven or eight feet long. (It was usually made of very fine wool.) Hold it the short side up and turn down about a foot at the top. Now fold it vertically in the middle, the overlap outwards, and bring the open edges together. Get in between the two surfaces and bring your arms above the level of the shoulders. Now get someone to pin the back and front together over your shoulders. Your arms will remain bare. The part that you turned down gives an extra thickness on the upper part of the body, back and front. Tie a girdle round the waist and pouch the garment over it. Artemis, the hunting goddess (= Diana), in the picture is wearing the Dorian chiton drawn up high, by means of the girdle, for running.



The Ionian Chiton

Athene (on p.137) is wearing it full length. For the other style, the Ionian, the material must not be so wide, as there is no overlap. The width required is your length from shoulder to ankle. Fold it vertically in two, as before, and get in the middle. This time you will have to cut a hole in the closed side near the top, and sew up the open side from the bottom upwards, till only a similar hole is left on that side too, for this is going to be a sleeved gown. Then get the back and front pinned together over your outstretched arms with four or five pins on either side. Draw the garment in at the waist with a girdle, pouch it over the girdle, and you are now wearing the Ionian chiton. This was usually made of fine linen.

Out of doors and in winter women usually wore in addition a sort of wrap known as a himation. It was in the form of a horizontal oblong, worn in various ways. One of the commonest was over both shoulders and perhaps the head as well, with the spare length thrown over the left shoulder to hang down the back. The Athenian lady in the picture is wearing it this way. Sandals were usually worn out of doors. Clothes were often coloured, and if white, usually had a decorated edge. Men wore a short-sleeved tunic of varying length, or just the himation, or both. For hunting and riding they wore instead of the himation a short cloak fastened on one shoulder with a brooch, a broad-brimmed hat and high boots.

The admiration of the Greeks for bodily perfection is shown by the tremendous popularity of the great athletic festivals, especially the one held every four years at Olympia, in the north-west of the great peninsula that forms southern Greece.



Athenian Lady, About 400 B.C. - Notice the graceful folds of the himation, worn over the head.

To win a first prize there was a sure way to become the hero of your city and a celebrity of Hellas. The Greeks reckoned their dates according to Olympiads, the first of which they estimated to have taken place as long ago as 776 B.C. according to our system. Thousands of visitors came, even from the most distant cities of Hellas, wending their way over dusty summer roads to camp or lodge near an out-of-the-way temple of Zeus, the greatest of the Greek gods. At this time more than any other, Greeks felt that they were all Hellenes and one nation, for warfare ceased once the sacred heralds came round to the cities to give notice of the games, as it was a religious festival too.

Competitors had to come early to Olympia, and after proving to the judges that they were of genuine Greek birth on both sides, they were put through a period of official "training." The games lasted five days and took place on a plain between two rivers, at the very foot of a thickly-wooded hill, watched by the wildly excited spectators from great embankments. The first day the chariot and horse races took place, very expensive forms of sport in which only the rich could afford to compete. Then in a separate enclosure, a little over two hundred yards long, were held various foot races. Our word "stadium" is taken from the Greek word for this distance.

For races of more than one lap there were posts at either end round which the competitors would have to turn. There was a two-lap "hoplites' race," to be run in full armour with shield. All contests were sharply watched by stern judges armed with long forked rods with which they did not hesitate to lash anyone who fouled or cheated, besides fining him heavily later. The other events were the long jump, throwing the discus, throwing the javelin,

wrestling (three falls a win), and boxing (head blows only, with fists wrapped in leather straps). These five events were grouped together so that one could win a prize on the whole competition as well as in separate events. Later, a brutal and un-Greek event was added, which we should call "all-in" wrestling. Anything was allowed except biting or gouging your opponent's eyes out. The prize you won at the games was simply a wreath of wild olive-leaves which would wither before you returned home. But your city would gladly give you a much more valuable souvenir, as well as honour you with privileges perhaps for the rest of your life.

Greek temples have been mentioned several times in this chapter. What of the gods and goddesses for whom they were built? Was the Greek religion worthy of the Greek spirit at its best? No, we must confess that it was not. The gods were thought of vaguely as living "in heaven," but sometimes visiting their most famous temples or other haunts such as certain mountains. It is obvious that their origin lies in the worship of various natural forces and the oldest arts. You may have heard their Latin names already, so we will give them after the Greek names. Zeus (Jupiter) was the god of the sky and the ruler of the other deities. His wife was Hera (Juno), the queen of heaven. Apollo was the god of the Sun, of music and of archery. His sister was Artemis (Diana), goddess of hunting. Poseidon (Neptune) was the god of the sea, Ares (Mars) the god of war, Hephaestus (Vulcan) the god of fire and metal work, Hermes (Mercury) was the heavenly messenger. Pluto was the god of the underworld, Athene (Minerva) was the goddess of wisdom, Aphrodite (Venus) of love and beauty, Demeter (Ceres) of corn. No doubt you have heard the story of how Persephone, Demeter's daughter, was carried off by Pluto to the underworld to be his queen. After a long search Demeter found her daughter and got permission from Pluto for Persephone to live with her for six months of each year. Learned men tell us that this story arose out of the wonder and gratitude of the ancient world at the mystery of the Seed, its disappearance into the ground and its reappearance as a plant months later.

Besides these, "heroes" were worshipped, mighty men of divine birth who wrought great deeds for the benefit of mankind. The best-known of these is Herakles (Hercules). And then there were nymphs and other spirits of the woodland, the river, mountain and sea, of whom one might suddenly catch a glimpse in some very lonely place before they vanished into a tree, a rock or a wave. The best that can be said of this side of Greek religion was that it was harmless, and that there was no cruelty or terror behind it. The worshipper prayed simply and made some kind of offering. In Greece, as throughout the ancient world, domestic animals and birds were killed as sacrifices to gods, because of a very old belief in the magic power of blood.



Hermes, Eurydice, And Orpheus

Some of the Greeks, however, had deeper religious feelings and were not satisfied with the vague belief that after death, men in the underworld lived as ghosts a shadowy imitation of their life on earth. There were sects which taught doctrines of atonement for sin, which would earn the worshipper a blissful union after death with various deities. Such beliefs and practices were known as "mysteries," and many slaves, as well as women, took part in them. They were connected, some with the worship of Demeter and Persephone, who naturally would have special knowledge of the underworld, some with Orpheus, the magic musician. You perhaps have already heard the story of how his young wife, Eurydice, died of a snake-bite. Orpheus found his way down to the underworld and through the terrors that guarded it, to the throne of Pluto and Persephone. Even they were softened by his sad music, and allowed him to take Eurydice back, escorted by Hermes, on condition that Orpheus did not look back at her till they reached the world above. At the file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/sodindo/Desktop/(History)_The_Ancient_World_by_Tenen_(html-text-pic)/05.htm (42 of 55) [6/19/2002 3:36:53 PM]

very exit of Hades, his yearning for Eurydice overwhelmed him. He turned to look at her—and lost her for ever.

An even wilder sort of worship of the same "mystic" kind was connected with Dionysus (Bacchus), the god of wine. The worshippers met on mountains at night by torchlight. They wore deerskins and garlands of vine leaves and carried wands of ivy. To the noise of cymbals and flutes they danced, ever more and more wildly, and tore to pieces the animals of sacrifice. One after another they went into a mad frenzy, which they looked on as a union with Dionysus, till they fell in utter exhaustion.

A special feature of Greek religion was the habit of consulting the gods, especially Zeus, about the future. At certain special places it was thought to be possible to obtain prophecies from the gods through their human mouthpieces. The most famous of these "oracles," as such places were called, was that of Apollo at Delphi (near the centre of the northern coast of the Gulf of Corinth). Here the god was supposed to answer questions through the mouth of his priestess when she went into a holy frenzy. The oracle of Delphi was famous throughout the ancient world. Croesus, king of Lydia, consulted it when the Persians were threatening him (p. 99). He was told that if he crossed the Halys, he would destroy a great kingdom. Taking this to be an encouragement, he attacked the Persians and did destroy a great kingdom—but it was his own. For the oracle often gave a reply that might be taken more than one way.

Such a religious system may not lead you to think more highly of the Greeks. And indeed it would not be right for you to get the impression that the Greeks as a whole were a race of "supermen." Even the Athenian Assembly made some cruel and stupid decisions. It was the large number of exceptional men whom the Greeks, a small nation, produced, which is the glory of Hellas. Sometimes these men were honoured, sometimes, if their ideas were very unusual, they were persecuted. The ordinary Athenian, if he could afford it, was quite content for his sons to have the education which the Greeks called "music and gymnastic."



Athenian Memorial Of Marathon On The Road To Delphi

The words meant rather more then than they do now. The boys went to private schools. There was no such thing as public education, such as we are used to, in the ancient world, or at any other time, until about sixty years ago. The small Athenian, with his himation wrapped neatly round his shoulders and arms, was expected to walk to and from school modestly and quietly, escorted by a slave called "the pedagogue" (a word which really means "boy-keeper"), who waited in the school. The boys were taught writing, for which they used tablets (*) of soft wax and a sharp-pointed piece of wood, and simple arithmetic, first using a ball-frame. They learned to read, and when they could do that, they were expected to learn whole books (that is, scrolls or "volumes") of poetry off by heart, particularly Homer and plays (see p.179).

Note: [*] But for lengthy writings the Greeks and Romans used reed pens, ink and paper.

At the same school they were taught to sing and play the lyre and perhaps the flute as well. Every well-educated Athenian was expected to be able to sing a song at a dinner-party and accompany himself, if necessary, on the lyre.



An Athenian School

All this part of education came under the heading of "music." "Gymnastic" meant every sort of physical training, and here again we must remember that it was only the sons of the richer Athenians who could get this. It included practice in the athletics of the Games, and such accomplishments as swimming and riding. Later on came instruction in the use of weapons. When a young Athenian became eighteen, he was solemnly registered as a citizen and began two years' service as a soldier, receiving full military training and doing patrol duty, if there was peace.



Young Soldiers On Patrol Duty - Showing riding costume

Our own word "school" comes from a Greek word meaning "leisure." And the reason why a good many Greeks had leisure to cultivate their minds and bodies was that they were supported by the labour of a large slave population. We need not go into detail about the lives of these slaves. As elsewhere, if they worked in the house or in a workshop and had a kind master or mistress, their lot would not be too hard. If they worked on farms, or in mines or quarries, their life was one of drudgery, with wretched food and quarters. Most slaves came from the backward parts of northern Greece such as Thrace and Macedon, from the more barbarous parts of Asia Minor and from the Black Sea district. The policemen at Athens, city-slaves, were Scythian bowmen.

Many, of course, were born slaves, others were prisoners of war or had simply been kidnapped by slave dealers, for the slave trade was an important industry throughout the ancient world. Aristotle, the philosopher and scientist, defended slavery, and others used the weak and silly argument that some men were "naturally" slaves. But there were more enlightened Greeks who frankly admitted that the fact that one man was free and another a slave was just a matter of luck, and that some slaves were better men than their masters.

This brings us to one of the finest features of the Greek spirit at its best, the ability to free the mind from prejudice, whether arising from custom, social class, religion or race, and to view the problems of life and human fellowship with cool, clear yet kindly minds. How few people even to-day are capable of doing that! Some of the best of the Greeks thought hard and long in order to answer the question "What is Virtue?" They were not satisfied with the answers of ordinary religion and custom. And in discussing this very difficult problem they were willing to accept the rule laid down by one of them, "Let us follow the argument, whithersoever it leads." Very few of us would be willing to do that when our own pet beliefs were being challenged.

The person who did more than anyone else to produce this spirit among the Athenians, and many others since, was a flat-nosed, long-bearded little man called Socrates. He had a family to keep and no slaves to work for him, as his wife often pointed out, but he spent most of his time wandering round the squares and gymnasiums and talking to young Athenians. He would ask them some simple question, but before he had finished with them, there would have been a long and hard discussion, consisting mainly of artful questions by Socrates, and answers from the young men which came less and less promptly. Socrates said that he never taught anything and never wrote anything. He just wanted to ask a few questions, he said. Most of what we know about his methods, we guess from the works of his disciple Plato, who differed from him in many ways, but made him the chief figure in his Dialogues or supposed conversations between Socrates and various young Athenians.

These bright young men must have thought the little philosopher very odd at first, but they grew extremely fond of him. Xenophon was one, and even Alcibiades was proud to claim him for a friend. Nor was Socrates just a talker. He showed in more than one campaign that he was a first-rate soldier, cool and fearless in battle, and indifferent to hardship. And his moral courage was just as great. Of course, many Athenians disliked Socrates, for it is not pleasant to have your firmest beliefs challenged and made to seem rather silly. Many fathers were shocked when their sons came home and said they did not believe in the gods any more, or even asked what right fathers had to order their sons about! It was also an unfortunate coincidence that some of the young men who most admired Socrates came to a bad end, and others were enemies of democracy.

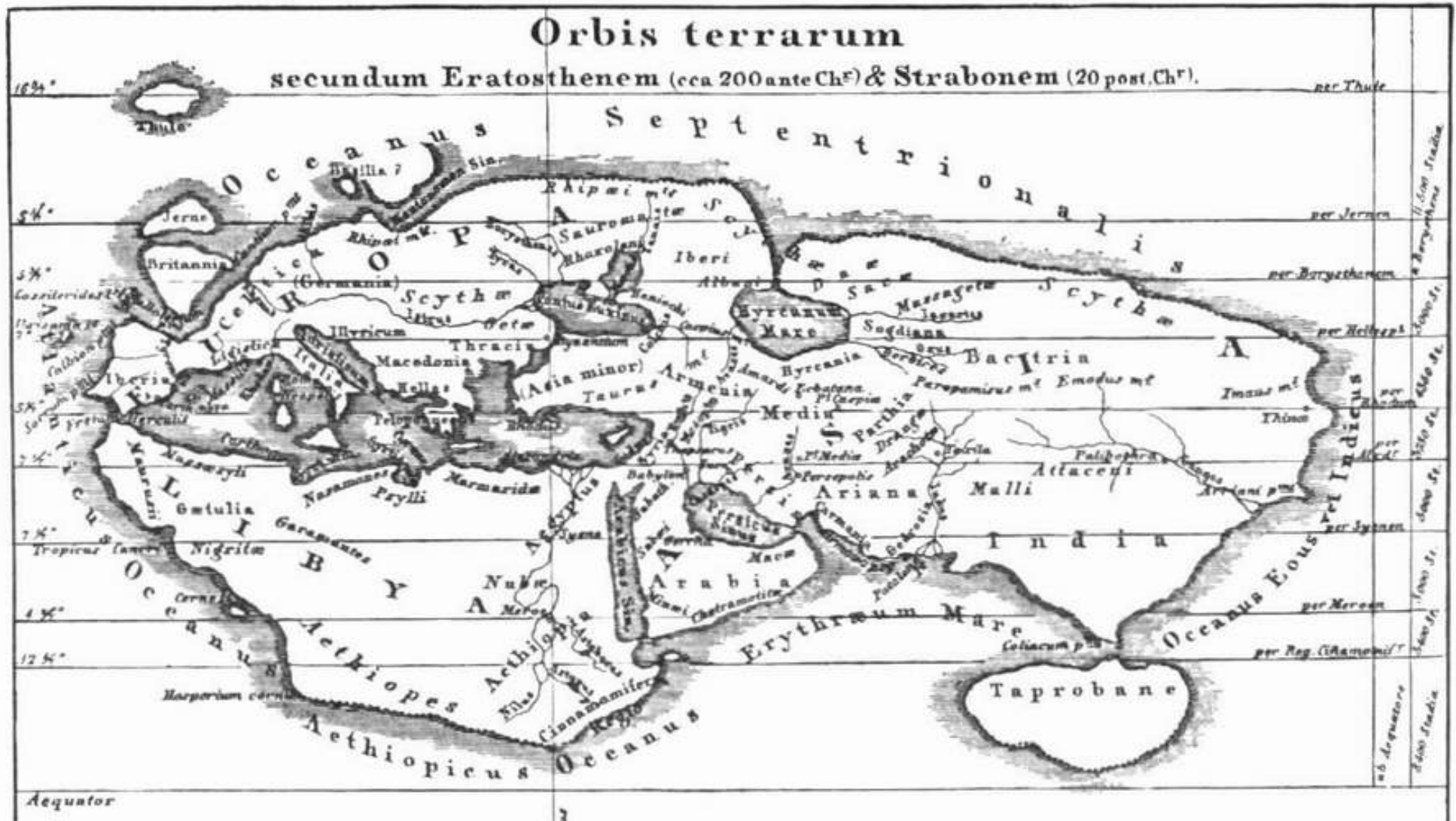
We need only remember Alcibiades himself. You will not be greatly surprised, then, to hear that when he was nearly seventy years old, Socrates was brought to trial for corrupting the youth of Athens, and for not believing in the deities of Athens. He was found guilty, but the jury did not want to punish him severely. However, he went on to exasperate them by claiming free keep by the city for his services to it, instead of accepting a fine. He was sentenced to death, and although he might easily have escaped, refused to do so and drank the official cup of poison, after calmly discussing the immortality of the soul (399 B.C.).

Unlike Socrates, Plato was of noble birth, a wealthy man and very well educated. He became a follower of Socrates when he was twenty, and after his teacher's execution he travelled in Egypt, Sicily and the Greek towns of south Italy, and returned at last to Athens and opened a college that became famous. It has given us the word "Academy," for it was established in a park just outside Athens, sacred to a local "hero," Academus. Apart from his works about Socrates, Plato, in perfect Greek, wrote a good deal about the Perfect State. Since his day, others have written their Utopias, or visions of an ideal commonwealth, and, like Plato's, each scheme has been limited by the ideas of the age in which it was written. So, Plato could not get beyond the city-state. But the great value of his writing was that it made men realise that they themselves were responsible for the conditions in which they lived, and that these could be improved by careful planning. Plato died in 347 B.C.

Aristotle was a Macedonian and his father was doctor to King Philip's father. He came to Athens and was a student at Plato's Academy. After Plato's death he left Athens and was for a time tutor to Prince Alexander, as we have already seen. When Alexander became king, Aristotle went back to Athens, where he was so respected that the city gave him, for use as a college, a gymnasium called by a name which you probably think of as that of a theatre, the Lyceum. Aristotle studied and taught every branch of knowledge—all kinds of philosophy, all systems of politics, all departments of science. He was unwilling to theorise, unlike many people before and after him, until he had collected much accurate information. He and his students recorded an immense number of facts. To give his study of politics a foundation of fact, his students analysed a hundred and fifty-eight systems of government. To increase his knowledge of "natural history," a phrase of his which we have adopted, there were at one time a thousand men in Greece and Asia collecting information about plants and animals. And Alexander during his conquests sent him cases of specimens. Many of you who are reading this book may, in a few years' time, know more physics, chemistry or biology than Aristotle ever knew. But the vast and accurate knowledge of these subjects which we possess to-day is the result of methods similar to those of Aristotle, long and patient firsthand study of specimens and observation of

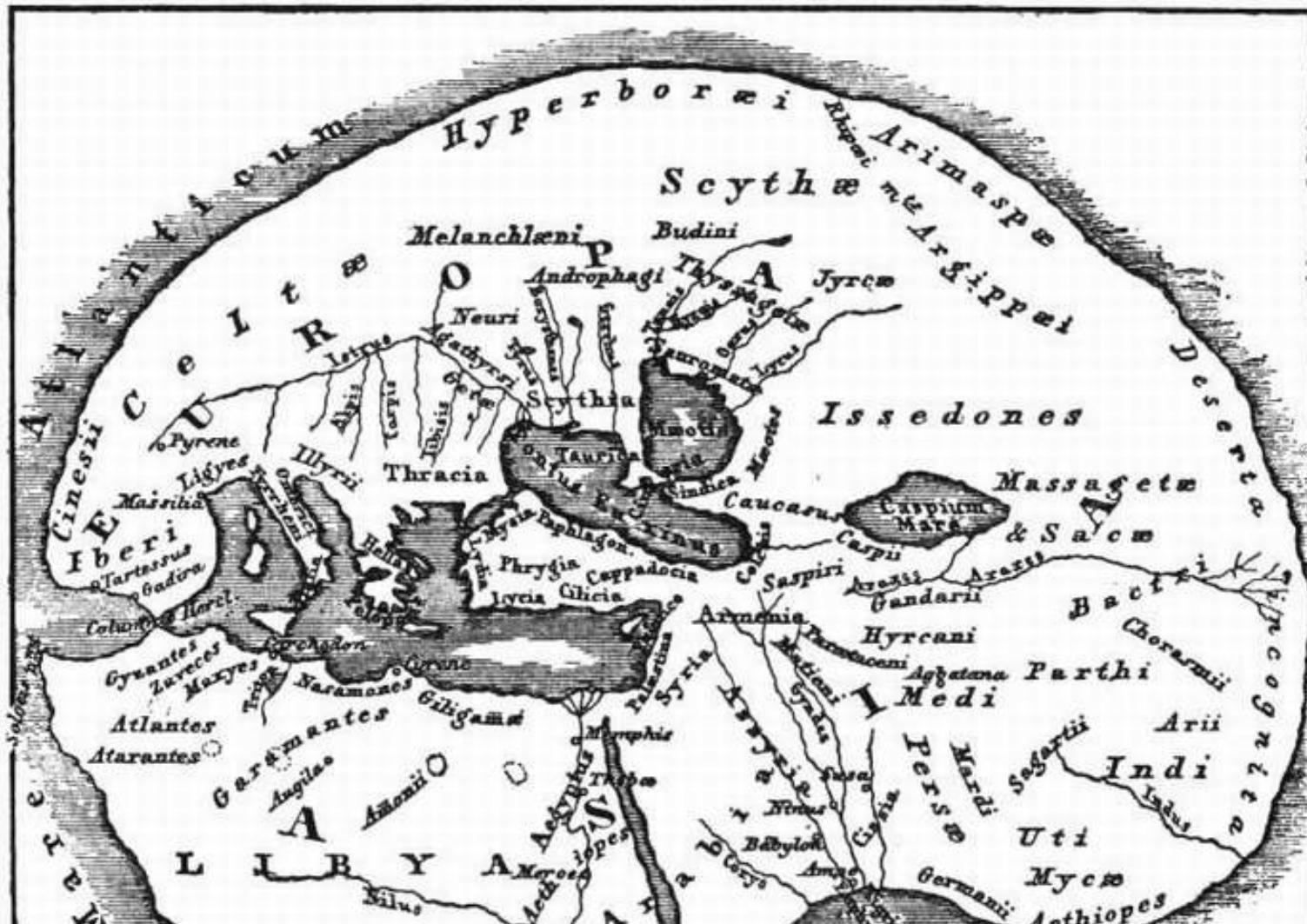
facts.

But before and after Aristotle there were very clever Greeks who studied Nature and made important discoveries or brilliant guesses, though they did not organise the study of science as well as he did. They taught that the movements of the heavenly bodies were controlled by laws of mechanics, that the sun and the moon were huge globes, "perhaps as big as southern Greece," that all matter was composed of tiny atoms which attracted and repelled one another. One of them laid down the principle which in recent times has been called "the survival of the fittest." The names of some of the Greek scientists who lived after the time of Alexander you may know already. One was Euclid, another was Archimedes. (About the latter there are many interesting stories.) They were both connected with the university of Alexandria, which has already been mentioned. It was there that the first steam-engine was made, and though the invention was not followed up, this age devised quite a number of powerful and ingenious machines worked by levers, cranks, screws, cogwheels and pulleys.



Map - Map Of The World According To Eratosthenes With Slight Corrections Made By The Romans

It was also at Alexandria that the first attempt was made to catalogue all the stars. (An astronomer of this age discovered that all the planets, including the earth, revolved round the sun, but nobody would believe him.) There was a great college for doctors there, too, where the first serious attempts to study the working of the human body were made. The Macedonian ruler of Egypt, Ptolemy, sent condemned criminals there to be experimented on. Great progress was made in geography, too.





Map - Map Of The World According To Herodotus About 440 B.C.

Eratosthenes, by measuring the difference between the height of the sun at noon in Alexandria and at the First Cataract of the Nile, five hundred miles away, calculated the diameter of the earth to be 7850 miles. He also drew a very fair map of the world as then known, the first map to be based on lines of latitude and longitude. To the far north-west it showed two large islands, Britain and Ireland, and beyond them still another, probably Iceland.

The link between the geographers and historians of Greece is Herodotus. In his early life he was connected with a town in Asia Minor where he took an active part in resisting the tyrant. Apart from visiting most of the Greek cities on both sides of the Aegean Sea, he travelled in Asia Minor, Persia, Syria and Egypt. Finally he settled down in a Greek city in southern Italy, and there wrote a history of the wars between the Greeks and the Persians. It is written in a free and easy style which enabled him to tell many interesting stories which have nothing to do with the wars, and to describe the wonders he had seen in his travels. Some of these are of course exaggerated; but as we find out more and more about the ancient world, and there is much still to be explored and studied, we realise that in many cases where he was under suspicion, Herodotus was telling the truth after all.

The other Greek historian of great renown was Thucydides. He was a rich Athenian who, during the great war between the Athenians and the Spartans, was in command of a small squadron of triremes off the coast of Thrace. He neglected his duty there and in disgrace went into exile for twenty years. That is about all we know of his own life. During his exile he wrote a history of the war which had brought about his own ruin. Up to recent years there were very few histories indeed, at whatever period they were written, which were so scrupulously fair, and in which the facts had been so carefully checked.

The excellent style of these two histories, the first so natural and lively, the latter so dignified, has secured for them an honoured place in the great treasury of Greek literature. The Greeks were a race of artists, if by that word we mean people who can create or appreciate beauty. They showed it in their language and literature, as much as in anything else, particularly in that form of Greek which the Athenians used. A gracious and musical language, used by a race of vivid imagination, keen wits and passionate feelings—and the result naturally was delicate poetry, stately tragedies, lively comedies and powerful oratory.

It is impossible here to give a full catalogue of Greek writers. We shall deal only with the few whose names, if not their works, you are sure to come across in time. Among the Greeks, as elsewhere, poetry came earlier than prose. Greek literature made a splendid beginning in Ionia with two long poems, said to have been written by the blind poet, Homer. The Iliad (Ilium = Troy) deals with some episodes in the ten years' siege of Troy by early

Greek chieftains. The Odyssey tells of the ten years' wanderings of one of these chieftains on his way home after Troy had fallen. They are written in a long, rolling rhythm which suggests, even as it describes, waves breaking on rocky shores and breezes sweeping through the pines on a mountain side. After Homer come the song-poets of the islands, who wrote most musically in the intervals of their stirring, adventurous lives. The greatest of these, perhaps, was a poetess, Sappho, considered by some as the greatest of all women who ever wrote poetry.

It was at Athens that the finest plays were written, whether tragedies or comedies. The word "tragedy" means "goat-song," and plays probably arose out of the songs and recitations with which Dionysus, the wine god, was honoured when the goat was sacrificed to him, for goats were altogether too fond of nibbling young vine-shoots. The more serious songs and recitations developed into drama, the merry ones into comedy. There were three great writers of tragedy at Athens. The earliest of these, Aeschylus, who fought at Marathon, Salamis and Plataea, is said to have done much to put plays into the shape which later became familiar, and to have decided a number of points as to how the plays were to be produced on the stage. In the next generation came Sophocles, who, as a handsome boy of sixteen, had already won prizes both for "music" and "gymnastic." There was keen rivalry between him and Aeschylus at the drama competitions which were regularly held at Athens.



Sophocles

He is wearing the himation only. By him is a case of his works.

Aeschylus is said to have been so annoyed when Sophocles once won the first prize which he himself had expected, that he retired to Sicily. When Sophocles was old, his son, anxious to get control of the family property, brought him to court, asserting that his father was growing silly with age and was not fit to be in charge of the household. At the inquiry Sophocles simply read out a chorus from his latest play, not yet produced, and the judges dismissed the case. Another of his plays so pleased the Athenians that they made him one of the generals for a campaign.

The third and latest of the three, Euripides, is to many modern readers the most interesting. His plays have the usual form, with the speeches and dialogues in the same sort of iambic line that we find in Shakespeare. There are the usual musical recitations by the chorus. His plots are similar to those of the other tragedy writers—that is, old legends of the gods, "heroes" and ancient princes of Greece. But every now and then he puts into the mouths of his characters the most advanced ideas, which must have shocked the more old-fashioned among his listeners. Even though his plays were part of a religious festival, he questions the wisdom of the gods in them. He voices the grievances of the silent classes, the women and slaves. As was to be expected from a close friend of Socrates, he is constantly doubting beliefs which the "plain man" thought to be beyond all doubt.

The best-known writer of comedies is Aristophanes. He had strong opinions about the fashions and politics of his age, and he merrily mocked all he disliked with the freedom of a privileged jester. He often poked fun at Pericles and Socrates and their advanced ideas. His work has a fine swing about it, and now and then his choruses have gleams of poetic beauty. About a hundred years later came the comedies of Menander. They dealt rather with the private life of the Athenians, the troubled course of true love and the sly tricks of slaves. His works were closely copied by Latin playwrights and have been widely imitated.

All these plays were acted in the open air. Near the south-eastern corner of the Acropolis, directly below the Parthenon, was a great semicircular enclosure called the theatre of Dionysus, and it was as part of the wine god's festival that plays were acted, day after day. There were stone seats in the lower part of the theatre, but the upper part was simply the grassy slope of the hill. On the diameter of the semi-circle, at the middle, an open space was left for the chorus. This space was called the "orchestra," which really means the dancing-place. In front of it was an oblong platform, the actual stage, and a low oblong building at the back of it with entrances on the stage.

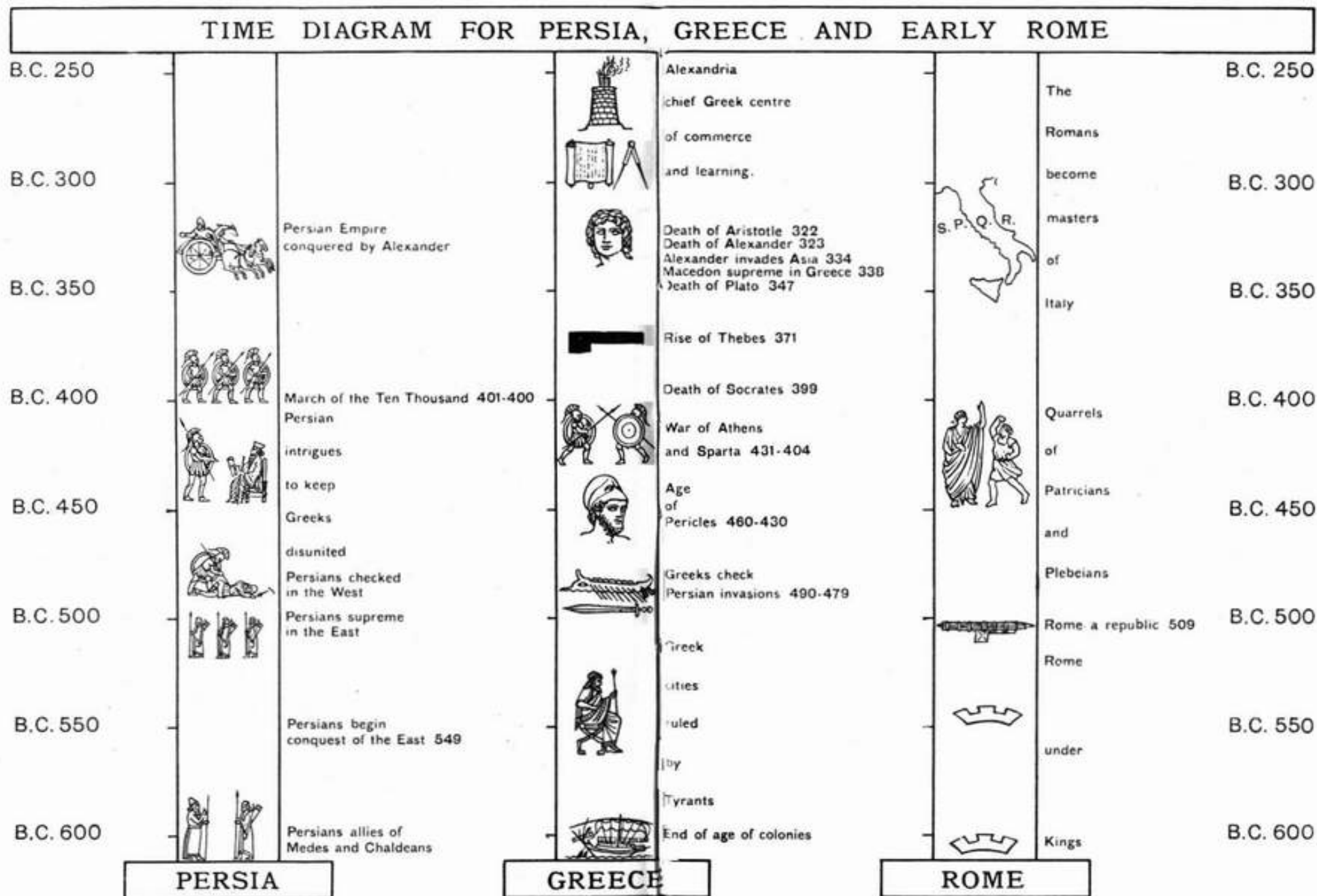
There was very little in the way of stage scenery, just a simple setting to represent the front of a temple or palace. In most Greek tragedies all the action takes place on the same spot and is supposed to occur within twenty-four hours. No violence was acted on the stage itself before the spectators. If someone, for instance, had to be murdered, it was always done behind the scenes. The site of a Greek theatre had to be very carefully chosen so that the actors might be heard by the farthest spectators. You would not like to make a speech, say, from the centre of a football ground to ten thousand spectators on the stands. So the actors wore elaborate masks which must have functioned as amplifiers. It did not matter that the expressions of their own faces were not visible, as these could not have been very distinctly seen by most of the spectators in any case. To increase their height and bulk, they also wore high-heeled boots (buskins), and padded clothes.

There was a small charge for admission to the theatre, but if you were poor you could get a free ticket. You may be sure that every part of the great slope was packed with citizens, rich and poor alike, with their wives and children. Sharp eyes and ears are intent on the stage, and not a syllable nor a gesture is missed. A messenger has just finished telling the tale of a great disaster to the stricken Prince. The Chorus (p.181) and their flute-player, pacing with measured tread round the orchestra, begin a dirge. Above there is a bright blue sky, in the distance the faint but never-ending chirrup of cicadas. A

breeze rocks the slim cypresses. This is a fitting time and place to take our last view of the Hellenes.



A Modern View Of The Acropolis Of Athens - From the south-east, showing ruins of Parthenon and, on the left slope, approximate site of theatre.



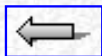
Time Diagram for Persia, Greece and Early Rome.

Exercises

1. Would you rather have been an Athenian or a Spartan?
2. The columns of the Parthenon are not quite parallel to each other and the corner columns are thicker than the others. Why?
3. Look at the pictures and statues of clothed Greeks in this book and elsewhere and decide what garments they are wearing.
4. In the pictures of a Greek school on p.170 what four subjects are being taught? Who are the men with long sticks?
5. What stories are told about Archimedes? What discoveries did he make?
6. Who was called "the father of History" and who "the master of those who know"?



The Alban Hills - Seen across the Roman plain.



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