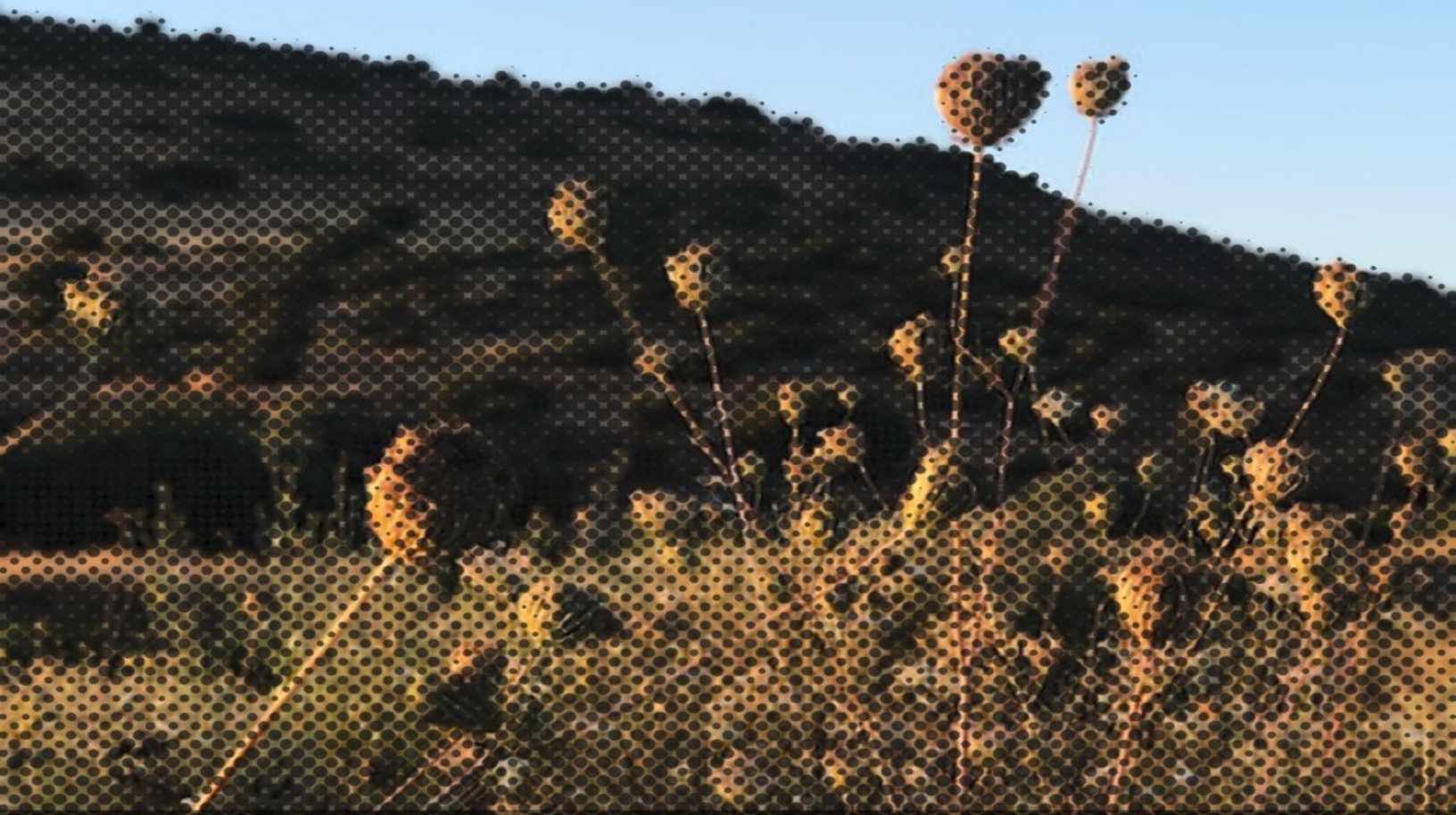


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***Greek Lands  
and Letters***

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Allinson**

# **Greek Lands and Letters**



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# PREFACE

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The purpose of this book is to interpret Greek lands by literature, and Greek literature by local associations and the physical environment. Those who possess an intimate acquaintance with Greek or who have the good fortune to stay long in Greece will be able to draw upon their own resources. Many travellers, however, must curtail their visit to a few weeks or months, and it is hoped that to them this book may prove useful as a companion in travel, while to a wider range of readers it may prove suggestive in appraising what is most vital in our "Hellenic heritage."

To keep within reasonable bounds it has seemed necessary to limit our survey to those portions of the mainland of Greece and those islands, immediately adjacent in the Gulf of Ægina, which may be easily visited during a short stay in Athens as headquarters. But the visitor cannot be too strongly urged to avail himself of opportunities to visit the remoter islands and the shores of Asia Minor, which are so beautiful a part of the Greek world and have played so brilliant a rôle in Greek history and literature.

In quoting or summarizing the literature the limitations of space are obvious. Selections have been made which to us seemed most fairly to interpret the countries and sites. It is hoped that these will not only prove representative when taken together but will recall much that has perforce been omitted.

Purely learned treatises in Greek have not been cited except by way of illustration. The historical geographer

Strabo, of the time of Augustus, has offered suggestive material; and Pausanias, of the second century of our era, the pious and often charming writer of the "Guidebook to Greece," has, as was inevitable, been the cicerone in many places.

History it has seemed proper to use chiefly to explain the literature, or, especially in the case of Herodotus and Thucydides, as itself part of the noblest prose literature. But in different chapters emphasis has been laid, to some extent, upon different elements, such as myth and legend, prehistoric tradition, the history of certain epochs in classic times, the demands of religion, the growth of the artistic impulse or the bloom of the Attic period. By this means we have hoped, without too much repetition, to suggest a fairly adequate outline of the different factors in Greek civilization. The introductory chapter is intended to provide the essential background for the others.

Forms of art other than literature are only incidentally touched upon. Archæological information or discussion, except as illustration, is precluded by the purpose of the book, which deals with the literature and the land as being permanent possessions that are not essentially modified by the successive data of archæology, necessarily shifting from month to month.

In translating Greek authors it has seemed best, as a rule, to offer new versions, rendering the thought as literally as is consistent with our idiom or, in the case of poetry, with the exigencies of English verse. The anapæstic dimeters and, in the dialogue parts of the drama, the six-stress iambic verse have been retained; less uniformly the elegiac

couplet; and, occasionally only, the heroic hexameter. Elsewhere poetry has been usually turned by rhymed verse or by rhythmic prose.

Some existing translations or paraphrases have been used, for which credit has been given in the text or the footnotes. Moreover, in most of the citations from Pausanias Mr. Frazer's admirable translation has been used without explicit mention, and for this we make acknowledgment here. In translating Pindar many turns of expression have been taken from the beautiful translation of Ernest Myers, although, when they are not expressly credited, the versions have been rewritten. While it is hoped that full credit has thus been given wherever it is due, there are doubtless expressions here and there remaining in the memory from numerous commentators on Greek authors that form a common stock in trade for the translator.

In transliterating Greek names we have followed, as a rule, familiar English usage.

Among many books of reference there are a few to which we are especially indebted. We have used constantly Mr. J. G. Frazer's "Commentary on Pausanias," which includes a wealth of outside references, as, for example, citations from other travellers beginning with Dicæarchus, the entertaining geographer of the fourth century b. c. We are also indebted to Curtius's "History of Greece" and Tozer's "Geography of Greece"; Dr. W. Judeich's "Topographie von Athen" (especially for Piræus); Professor Ernest Gardner's "Ancient Athens," which should be in the hands of every visitor to Athens; and Miss J. E. Harrison's "Primitive Athens." Professor J. B. Bury's "History of Greece" has been

constantly suggestive. On modern Greece Schmidt's "Das Volksleben der Neugriechen" and Sir Rennell Rodd's "Customs and Lore of Modern Greece" have furnished definite material.

Among the numerous editions of Greek authors necessarily consulted we are under special obligations to Professor Gildersleeve's "Pindar, the Olympian and Pythian Odes," and to Professor Smyth's "Melic Poets." Certain quotations in the text, not provided for in the footnotes, are acknowledged in the Appendix, in which are also given, for the sake of comparison, exact references to the Greek.

Our personal thanks are due to Professor J. Irving Manatt, of Brown University, for valuable suggestions and criticism of several chapters, and to Professor Walter G. Everett for his discussion of the section on Greek philosophy. We are also especially indebted to Professor Herbert Richard Cross of Washington University, St. Louis, for placing at our disposal his water-color sketch of the Propylæa, from which the frontispiece is taken, and to Professors C. B. Gulick and G. H. Chase of Harvard University for assistance in obtaining the impression of the coin upon the cover of this book.

F. G. A.

A. C. E. A.

Providence, October, 1909.





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Nike of Samothrace, reproduced on the front cover, is from a coin in the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.

GREEK LANDS AND LETTERS



GREEK LANDS AND LETTERS

# CHAPTER I INTRODUCTORY: THE WIDESPREAD LAND OF HELLAS

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“Greek literature is read by almost all nations.”

Cicero, *Pro Archia*.

Cicero, at one time studying Greek oratory in Rhodes, at another speaking Greek as the language best adapted to a Sicilian audience, suggests with sufficient definiteness the eastern and western boundaries of ancient Hellas. Leaving out of consideration more remote colonies, we may content ourselves with including in the Greater Greece of antiquity all the Mediterranean lands and waters from Sicily and Lower Italy, in the west, to Cyprus and the coast of Asia Minor, in the east. The Riviera, or seaboard of the eastern side of the Ægean, is sharply differentiated from the continuous highlands of the interior, which suggest, a short distance inland, a boundary line between Europe and Asia. For a maritime people like the Greeks this was a barrier more effectual than the highway of the Bosphorus. In the early historic times, when the sun rose over these mountains of Asia Minor he left behind him the Oriental and looked down at once upon the Cis-montane Greeks, and it was upon Greeks that he was still shining when his setting splendour lit up the Bay of Naples—the “New-town” of that day—or the ancient Cumæ and the heights of Anacapri or

the islands of the Sirens and the golden brown columns of Poseidon's temple at Pæstum.

The seaboard, too, of Macedonia and Thrace belonged to Greece by reason of their water-front on the Ægean. And to the south, the encroachments of the Greeks upon the preserves of the Nile-god were so extensive for centuries before the time of Alexander that we need not wonder either at Egyptian reminiscences in Greek art or at the increasing evidences of Hellenic life in Egypt.

The Greeks, compared with the hoary antiquity of the Egyptians, are late comers. The essential difference, however, is not a matter of centuries or millennia. The Egyptians, perhaps because the details are foreshortened by the vast distance, seem to possess a chronology, but no real history. There were revolutions, rather than evolution. The Greeks were young, too, individually as well as chronologically. From Homer down through the classic period we hear "the everlasting wonder-song of youth." Plato makes an Egyptian priest say to the Athenian law-giver: "O Solon, Solon, you Hellenes are ever children; no Hellene is ever old!" We find the Greeks of the historic period on the intellectual watershed between antiquity and the modern world. From data now well established we may push back their life far beyond recorded chronology, and, if we anticipate even by a little the nucleus of the Homeric poems, we possess a practically unbroken continuity of their history and language for three thousand years down to the present day. Greek history is often confined within perfectly arbitrary dates. In reality, the death of Alexander in 323 B. C., the closing of the schools of philosophy in 529 A. D., and

the fall of Constantinople in 1453 A. D. only break its course into convenient chapters.

The Greek language is itself one of the greatest creations of Greek art. Discarding some superfluities, retained or over-emphasized by others of our common Indo-European family, the Greeks developed an instrument for the expression of thought unsurpassed, if not unequalled, among any other people. "The whole language resembles the body of an artistically trained athlete, in which every muscle is called into full play, where there is no trace of flaccid tumidity, and all is power and life." The "common dialect" already dominated the eastern Mediterranean before the Romans took physical possession. Its direct legatee is the modern Greek, that had sprung up in lusty independence some three centuries before the Turks put an end to senile Byzantium and its crabbed ecclesiastical speech.

Of creative literature the same unbroken continuity cannot be predicated. The early literature, beginning with Homer, extends through the first quarter of the fifth century B. C. It includes the great epic poetry, the elegiac and iambic, the beginnings of philosophy, and seven of the ten greatest lyric poets. No fact in Greek literature is more conspicuous than the shortness and the richness of the next period, which may be conveniently called the "Attic," although some of the greatest writers came from outside of Attica—from Bœotia, from the islands, from beyond the Ægean, or from Sicily. Within this brief period of only 183 years, if we close it with the death of Menander in 292 B. C., all the additional types of the literature either culminated or originated.

The next period of 150 years, commonly known as the Alexandrian period, has within its early limits the name of Theocritus, whose quality entitles him to rank with the writers of the Classic period, as does that of his two legatees, Bion and Moschus, and also Herodas, whose writings, recovered in the fortunate year 1891, have now made him a part of the Greek Classics. But in the Alexandrian period, and in the Græco-Roman period from 146 B. C. to 529 A. D., the great names are, as a rule, not so great, and they are spread over a long time. Few of them, except Lucian in the second century of our era, and Plutarch immediately preceding him, successfully compete for a prominent place as writers of pure literature.

With a few exceptions, the great original work in Greek literature had been done before the death of Menander. The Greek anthology, however, must not be ignored. It ranges over more than one thousand years and leaves no century in all that time without at least some minor representative of great beauty. Like a cord twisted of dull strands and golden, it binds together the Attic age with the whole of the subsequent time down to the year 550 of our era, the golden strand reappearing sufficiently often to assure us of its continuity. The next nine centuries of Byzantine Greek, ecclesiastical and profane, are little known to most classical scholars. The contributions of the modern Greek, before and since the days of Byron, are significant, and the friends of the new kingdom await with cordial expectation the rise of new writers to give to the lore of the peasant and the struggles of the patriot a worthy literary form. Of the lacunæ in the literature, in spite of the continuity of the

language, Professor Hatzidakis of Athens has well said: "The Greek language is as little to be blamed for this as could be the marble quarries of Mount Pentelicus, because in those times no one fashioned from them a Hermes of Praxiteles or a Venus of Melos."

A glance at the map will show how accessible was the mainland of Greece, upon the east and south, to seafaring visitors from across the Ægean, who would naturally find here their first landing-places. Except for the great gash of the Corinthian Gulf, the western coast is indented only with smaller, though good, harbours, while the whole southern and eastern seaboard from Messenia in the southwest to Thrace is a ragged fringe of promontories, large and small, welcoming into the interior the waters that suggested sea-business of war and commerce.

But this interlacing of land and water, that brought the insinuating "call of the sea," was not the only factor that predetermined the character of the Greek cantons. The Greeks were mountaineers as well as mariners. One is, indeed, almost tempted to speak of Greece as consisting of only mountains and *marina*. There are of course some relatively large plains, notably the fertile granary of Thessaly, but the general impression of the land from any bird's-eye view is a succession of lofty ridges, peaks, and spurs. Only by many shiftings of the place of outlook do these partially resolve themselves into ranges continuous in certain general directions, though with many sharp angles and curves and buttressed by uncompromising cross ridges. These mountain barriers make clear the history of the Greek peoples, both how they combined temporarily to resist



foreign invasion and, above all, why they developed and cherished in tiny cantons their characteristic individualism, which has been by turns a bane and a blessing.

Thessaly and Mount Olympus to the north belong geographically to the Kingdom of Greece. On either side of Thessaly irregular mountain chains run southward and preserve a general connection through Central Greece and Attica, and, despite the submerging water, may be identified as reappearing in the islands far out in the Ægean. Olympus on the northeast—hardly interrupted by the river Peneius, which has rent its way through the precipitous cañon known as the “Vale” of Tempe—is continued along the east coast by Mount Ossa and Mount Pelion. Then across the narrow entrance to the Pagasæan and Malian gulfs the system is continued by the sharp dorsal fins of the island of Eubœa, that stretches like a sea-monster along the shores of Locris, Bœotia, and Attica, to reappear at intervals far to the southeast in the islands Andros, Tenos, Myconos, Delos, Naxos, Amorgos, and Astypalæa. On the west of Thessaly the great Pindus ridge, descending through the centre of northern Greece, details on the rugged system of peaks and ranges which fill central Greece southward to the Gulf of Corinth and which in general run from west to east. One of these ranges, called the Othrys Mountains, bounds the Thessalian countries on the south and ends at the Gulf of Pagasæ. Another, Mount Cæta, is continued by the high mountains that shut off Thermopylæ to the north and runs on as the boundary between Locris and Bœotia. Still another range, running out of the central complex, has its culmination in Parnassus, 8070 feet high, and is continued,

though more interrupted and with a more irregular course, by Mount Helicon in Bœotia and the frontier hills of Attica, from Helicon to Parnes, and bends around into the massive ridge of Mount Pentelicus, from whose summit the spectator can see the prolongation in the islands of Ceos, Cythnos, Seriphos, and others beyond.

The narrow neck that divides the Corinthian from the Saronic Gulf and connects Attica and Bœotia with the Peloponnesus, lifts up among its rugged hills in Megara the picturesque twin peaks of the Kerata. South of the isthmus itself, with its narrow plain and the deep cutting necessary for the canal, rises the splendid acropolis of Acrocorinth, keeping guard at the entrance to the "Island of Pelops."

The Peloponnesus, or Morea, is a rugged complex of mountains that by turns shut out and admit the sea. Of its four irregular peninsulas, jutting out southward in the Argolis and in Laconia and Messenia, each has its mountain system; the more broken hills in the Argolid plain; the ridge of Parnon to the east of the plain of Lacedæmon; the imposing barrier of Taygetus between Sparta and Messenia. In Messenia itself are fertile plains. One is in the midland, as the name Messenia originally implied, among offshoots of the Arcadian Lycæus; while the great mountain fortress of Ithome, 2600 feet high, where crops could be reared and an army supported, towering above the hills and plains of central Messenia, looks down on another larger plain, almost tropical in its products, that stretches southward to the gulf.

The centre and west of the Peloponnesus is a mass of peaks and mountain ridges tangled up at abrupt angles but

bounded on the north by a formidable chain, generally parallel with the Gulf of Corinth and dominated by Erymanthus and Cyllene to the west and east respectively. Around and against this chain great mountains are piled up like petrified billows. In this part of Greece plains few but important are interspersed, as at Megalopolis or Olympia. Along the northwest coast there is the wider sea-margin of "Hollow" Elis, while along the Corinthian Gulf Ægialus, the "coast-land," seems often little more than a grudging *marina* subjacent to the foothills of Erymanthus and Cyllene.

From north to south, from east to west the Greek landscape lends itself to panoramic views. Lucian in his "Charon" makes Hermes seat himself on one of the twin peaks of Parnassus and Charon upon the other. With eyes anointed with Homeric eye-salve, the Ferryman, on his furlough from the under-world, is able to see not only the Greater Greece outspread around him,—from Asia Minor to Sicily, from the Danube to Crete,—but to look off beyond to the Orient and to Egypt. These wide outlooks are enhanced by the distinctness of the sky-line, everywhere an important factor. "The hard limestone of which the mountains are composed is apt to break away, and thus produces those sharply-cut outlines which stand out so clearly against the transparent sky of Greece."

So large a troupe of actors played their parts in Greek history that the imagination demands a roomy stage. But the country is small. Were it not for the mountain barriers, the scale of distances would seem trivial. It is, for example, only some thirty miles in an air line from Thermopylæ to the Gulf of Corinth. Even on the leisurely and winding Piræus,

Athens, and Peloponnesus Railway, it is only one day's ride from Athens via the Isthmus down to Kalamata on the Bay of Messenia. The degrees of latitude that include the mainland of Central and Southern Greece span in the west only the Lipari Islands and Sicily; the thirty-eighth parallel that passes south of Palermo and the straits of Messina runs a little north of Athens; while the thirty-seventh parallel, running just south of Syracuse, passes still farther south of Kalamata and Sparta.

Not only is the mainland of Greece contained in narrow geographical limits, but the Ægean itself is almost an inland lake enclosed within neighbouring coasts. In clear weather the sailor, without adventuring upon open sea, might pass from mainland to mainland as he watched from his advancing prow another island lift above the horizon before losing sight of the harbour left astern. In Greek literature there is no more striking reminder of the contiguity of the Asian coast to Greece proper than the well-known passage in the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus describing the swift telegraphy of the beacon signals that brought to Argos the news of the capture of Troy. The ten years' absence of Agamemnon's host tends to an instinctive extension of the distance, if the imagination is not checked by the actual scale of miles. Troy seems farther from Argos than the Holy Land from the homes of the Crusaders.

Beacon telegraphy is a time-honored device. Many bright beacons doubtless blazed before Agamemnon, as well as since his time. Commentators have been at pains to justify by modern experiments with beacon fires on lofty heights the severest strain upon our optic nerves which Æschylus

makes in the case of the light that leaped from Mount Athos to the high ridges of Eubœa. The distance is more than 100 miles, but, bearing in mind that the Eubœan mountain is some 4000 feet high and Athos more than 6000, we need not apply for any special license for our poet's imagination. The devious course of the fire signals from Eubœa to Argos is one of the best illustrations of the jagged surface that Greece lifts skywards. As one stands on Mount Pentelicus and looks across to Eubœa, the intervening arm of the sea is hemmed in for the eye into narrow inland lakes. And Æschylus, sufficiently, though not officiously, realistic, makes the firelight zigzag irregularly to dodge the interfering ridges till it falls upon the palace roof at Argos,—not at Mycenæ, as is the not infrequent misrepresentation of the Æschylean story.

Clytemnestra, to the chorus asking who could have brought the news so quickly, replies:—

“Hephæstus, on from Ida sending brilliant gleam,  
And hither beacon beacon sped with courier flame.  
First Ida to the Hermæan crag of Lemnos sent,  
Then from the island was received the mighty flame  
By Athos, Zeus's mount, as third: this over-passed—  
So that it skimmed the sea's broad back,—the torch's might,  
A joyous traveller, the pine's gold gleam, sun-like,  
To watching Mount Macistus brought its flashing news.  
Macistus then, delaying not, nor foolishly  
Foredone with sleep, as messenger pass'd on his share.  
The beacon's gleam unto Euripus flowing far  
Then came and signal to Messapium's pickets made.  
They too gave back a flame and ever onward sent  
The news by lighting up a heap of heather gray.  
The Torch then, strong to run, nor dimm'd as yet, leap'd on  
Like radiant moon across Asopus and his plain

And came unto Cithæron's crags, awaking there  
A new relay of courier flame: nor did the guard  
Disown the far-escorted light, but escort flame  
In turn made soar aloft into the ether high.  
Then over Lake Gorgopis smote the gleam and came  
Unto Mount Ægiplanctus urging that the flame  
Ordain'd should fail not. Lighting with ungrudging strength  
They send a mighty beard of fire. O'er the height  
That overlooks the Saronic Gulf it onward flared,  
Until, when it had reach'd the Arachnæan steep,  
It lighted on the outposts neighbour to our town;  
Then on this roof of the Atreidæ falls this light,  
The long-descended grandchild of the Idæan flame!"

From the very smallness of Greece results the overcrowding of associations that almost oppress the spectator standing at one or another place of vantage. But if his historic horizon is as clearly defined as the physical he will come back to the sea-level with a clearer understanding of the interdependence between the scene and the action of the great dramas here enacted. The country is not only a background but a cause for the literature. Neither can be fully understood without the other.

It must not be assumed from the smallness of the land that the spurs to the imagination of the Greeks were few. On the contrary, within their narrow borders, nature was prodigal of her inspiration. In the few miles from Thessaly to the Messenian Gulf are offered a variety of climate and an alternation of products well-nigh unparalleled for such a limited area. The warm air of the sea penetrating into sheltered valleys favours an almost tropical vegetation, while the lofty mountain ridges offer almost an Alpine climate. In Attica, in early spring, snow may occasionally be

seen sprinkled on Hymettus and glistening white on Mount Pentelicus, while oranges hang on the trees in Athens. Taygetus in the south maybe a snow-covered mountain even as late as May while in the Messenian plain below grows the palm and, more rarely, the edible date. In the Argolis are groves of lemons and oranges, and in Naxos, in the same latitude as Sparta, the tender lime ripens in the gardens. The gray-green olive is familiar throughout Central and Southern Greece. If we extend the survey farther north, the beeches of the Pindus range, west of Thessaly, are surrounded by the vegetation rather of northern Europe; in the interior of Thessaly the olive tree does not flourish; the northern shores of the Ægean have the climate of Central Germany, while Mount Athos, whose marble walls jut far out into the Ægean and rise 6400 feet above the sea, offers on its slopes nearly all species of European trees in succession.

The different parts of Greece offer a varying development in literature. In this particular some districts, like Acarnania, Ætolia, and Achæa, though possessed of great natural beauty, are negligible. Arcadia, though itself unproductive, inspired poetry; others, also, like Phocis, Locris, and Messenia, are inevitably drawn into the associations of literature and history. In Epirus we find at Dodona the first known sanctuary of Zeus, the supreme god of the Greeks. In Thessaly the earliest Greeks, or Achæans, may have first forged in the fire of their young imagination the tempered steel of the hexameter. Here was the home of Achilles, and here, perhaps, we must look for the kernel of the Iliad. Here most fitly, close to Olympus where dwelt the immortals, could the sons of men be “near-gods.”

From the north and northwest successive waves of population descended into lower Greece to conquer, merge with, or become subject to the previous comers. But prehistoric peoples, whether alien or Greek, like the Eteo-Cretans, the Pelasgi, the Minyæ, the Leleges, the Hellenes, the Achæans, and even great movements like the Dorian and Ionian migrations, are all foreshortened on a scenic background, as equidistant to the Greeks of the classic periods as is the vault of heaven to the eyes of children. One star, indeed, differed from another. The Dorian, for example, was of the first magnitude. But the relations of apparent magnitude and real distance were ignored or naïvely confused in the fanciful constellations of myth and saga, distant yet ever present, bending around them to their explored horizon. Heroic figures impalpable but real as the gods themselves intervened continually, controlling decisions, shaping policies, or determining disputed boundaries among even the most intellectual of the Greeks. Royalty, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny alike must reckon with personified tradition.

When we emerge into the light of more authentic records it is well, in the confusing maze of inter-cantonal contentions, to focus the mind, for the purpose of appreciating the literature, upon certain broader relations and more clearly defined epochs in Greek history, like the so-called "Age of the Despots" within the seventh and sixth centuries, the Persian wars, and the conflicts between Attica as a pivot and the Peloponnese, Thebes, and Macedon.

It might be expected from the variety of natural charm offered by Hellenic lands, from Ilium to Sicily, from Mount



Olympus to Crete, that the Greeks would show in their literature a pervasive love of nature. This was, in fact, the case. The modern eye has not been the first to discover the beauty of form and colour in the Greek flowers and birds, mountains, sky and sea. Modern critics, ignoring all historical perspective and assuming as a procrustean standard the one-sided and sophisticated attitude that has played a leading rôle in modern literature, announced as axiomatic that ancient Greek poets had no feeling for nature and found no pleasure in looking at the beauties of a landscape. This superficial idea still keeps cropping up, although thoughtful readers of Greek literature have long since pointed out the necessity both of a chronological analysis of the literature and of a more inclusive statement of the various forms in which a sentiment for the natural world is evinced.<sup>[1]</sup> It is a far cry from Homer to Theocritus, and, as might well be expected in a range of six centuries and more, new elements appear from time to time, due both to changing conditions of life and civilization and also to the personal equation.

A naïve feeling for nature is uppermost in the descriptive comparisons and similes of Homer and, generally speaking, in the myth-making of the Greeks. The concrete embodiment of natural phenomena and objects in some Nature-divinity often obviated the necessity for elaborate description and summarized their conceptions as if by an algebraic formula. The mystical element was not lacking, but by this myth-making process it became objective and real. The sympathetic feeling for nature becomes more and more apparent in lyric poetry and the drama until in

Euripides there emerges, almost suddenly, the “modern” romanticism. In the Hellenistic and imperial times, finally, the sentimental element is natural to men who turn to the country for relief from the stress of life in a city. One generalization for the classic periods may be safely made. Although the Greeks from Homer to Euripides thought of the world as the environment of man, yet they stopped short of a sentimental self-analysis. Charles Eliot Norton, more than thirty years ago, pointed out that the expression of a sentiment like Wordsworth’s—

“To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears”—

is foreign to the clear-eyed Hellene, reared amongst the distinct outlines of his mountains and from the cradle to the grave at home upon the blue and windswept Ægean. Certainly this is true until the speculative questionings of the Ionic philosophers had time to react upon literature. As the Greeks accepted their pedigrees from the gods and heroes, so they accepted their environment of beauty. They were not unlike the child, content to betray by a stray word or caress his unanalyzed admiration for his mother’s face.

Emphasis has often been laid, and rightly, upon the keen sensitiveness of the Greeks to beauty of form in sculpture, architecture, and literature. It is urged that they made this sense of form and proportion so paramount that they were blind to the beauty of colouring and indifferent to the prodigal variety of Nature’s compositions. It may be readily admitted that this is a vital distinction between the ancient and modern attitudes. Both the craving for perfection of form and the preference given to man before nature come out in the preëminent development of sculpture by the

Greeks. Their admiration of the beauty of the human form, unlike the sensitive shrinking of moderns, was extended even to the lifeless body. Æschylus speaks of the warriors who have found graves before Troy as still "fair of form."

But a prevailing tendency does not necessarily exclude other elements. However meagre the vocabulary of the Greeks in sharp distinction of shades of colour, their love for a bright colour-scheme is shown not only by the brilliancy of their clothing and their use of colouring in statuary and architecture,—for even in these mere form was not enough,—but in unnumbered expressions like Alcman's "sea-purple bird of the springtime."

A few of the more obvious passages, illustrating the Greek attitude toward nature, are here given in general historic sequence. Others will be found in the subsequent chapters in connection with particular landscapes. Very often such references are casual and subordinate to some controlling idea, but they none the less reflect habitual observation. Even when we speak of Homeric "tags," like the "saffron-robed" or "rosy-fingered," or of Sappho's "golden-sandalled" Dawn, as "standing epithets," we are implying that these epithets made a general appeal. The naïve insertions in Homer of comparisons drawn from birds and beasts, from night and storm and other familiar elements of nature, would seem like an intrusive delay of the story did they not carry with them the conviction that both poet and hearers alike were well content to linger by the way and observe the objects of daily life indoors and out. Thus in the *Odyssey*:—

“The lion mountain-bred, with eyes agleam, fares onward in the rain and wind to fall upon the oxen or the sheep or wilding deer.”

Or, again:—

“Hermes sped along the waves like sea-mew hunting fish in awesome hollows of the sea unharvested and wetting his thick plumage in the brine.”

One of the longer and best known comparisons is the description in the Iliad of the Trojan encampment by night:—

“Now they with hearts exultant through the livelong night sat by the space that bridged the moat of war, their watch-fires multitudinous alight. And just as in the sky the stars around the radiant moon shine clear; when windless is the air; when all the peaks stand out, the lofty forelands and the glades; when breaketh open from the sky the ether infinite and all the stars are seen and make the shepherds glad at heart—so manifold appeared the watch-fires kindled by the Trojan men in front of Ilios betwixt the streams of Xanthus and the ships. So then a thousand fires burned upon the plain and fifty warriors by the side of each were seated in the blazing fire’s gleam the while the horses by the chariots stood and champed white barley and the spelt and waited for the throned Dawn.”

Sappho’s fragments are redolent of flowers; her woven verse, a “rich-red chlamys” in the sunshine, has a silver sheen in the moonlight. We hear the full-throated passion of “the herald of the spring, the nightingale”; the breeze moves the apple boughs, the wind shakes the oak trees. Her allusions to “the hyacinths, darkening the ground, when trampled under foot of shepherds”; the “fine, soft bloom of

grass, trodden by the tender feet of Cretan women as they dance"; or the "golden pulse growing on the shore,"—all these seem inevitable to one who has seen the acres of bright flowers that carpet the islands or the nearby littoral of the Asian coast. Her comparison of a bridegroom to "a supple sapling" recalls how Nausicaä, vigorous, tall, and straight as the modern athletic maiden, is likened by Odysseus to the "young shaft of a palm tree" that he had once seen "springing up in Delos by Apollo's altar." In her Lesbian orchards the sweet quince-apple is still left hanging "solitary on the topmost bough, upon its very end"; and there is heard "cool murmuring through apple boughs while slumber floateth down from quivering leaves." Nor need we attribute Sappho's love of natural beauty wholly to her passionate woman's nature. All the gentler emotions springing from an habitual observation of nature recur in poets of the sterner sex. "The Graces," she says, "turn their faces from those who wear no garlands." And at banquets wreaths were an essential also for masculine full-dress. Pindar, in describing Elysian happiness, leads up to the climax of the companionship with the great and noble dead by telling how "round the islands of the Blest the ocean breezes blow and flowers of gold are blooming: some from the land on trees of splendour and some the water feedeth; with wreaths whereof they twine their heads and hands."<sup>[2]</sup> Against the green background passes Evadne with her silver pitcher and her girdle of rich crimson woof, and her child is seen "hidden in the rushes of the thicket unexplored, his tender flesh all steeped in golden and deep purple light from pansy flowers."

To follow through the poetry of the Greeks the unfailing delight in the radiance of the moon would be to follow her diurnal course as she passes over Greek lands from east to west. The full moon looked down on all the Olympian festivals and Pindar's pages are illuminated with her glittering argentry. The Lesbian nights inspire Sappho as did all things beautiful.

"The clustering stars about the radiant moon avert their faces bright and hide, what time her orb is rounded to the full and touches earth with silver."

Wordsworth could take this thought from Sappho: "The moon doth with delight look round her when the heavens are bare," but the Lesbian certainly did not finish the fragment by lamenting that "there has passed away a glory from the earth."

The night and the day alike claimed the attention of the poets and the interchange of dusk and dawn appealed to the sculptor also. In the east gable of the Parthenon the horses of the Sun and of the Moon were at either end. Nature's sleep is a favourite topic. Alcman's description is unusual only for its detail:—

"Sleep the peaks and mountain clefts;  
Forelands and the torrents' rifts;  
All the creeping things are sleeping,  
Cherished in the black earth's keeping;  
Mountain-ranging beast and bee;  
Fish in depths of the purple sea;  
Wide-winged birds their pinions droop—  
Sleep now all the feathered troop."

Goethe, in his well-known paraphrase,—  
"Ueber allen Gipfeln  
Ist Ruh,"—