

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Speak your enemy fair: but when

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

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

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

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

"Ah, cruel poverty, why dost thou plant

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But in spite of the peace and prosperity that

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

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

CHAPTER VII

THE TYRANTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Above, Chap. VI, p. 135.

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Thucydides, I, 13.

² Herodotus, II, 167.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Herodotus, V, 92.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Herodotus, I, 64.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Herodotus, I, 59.

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

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

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

¹ Thucydides, I, 13.

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

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

¹ Herodotus, IV, 152.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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