

## CHAPTER I.

### PREHISTORIC REMAINS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION.

Τοῖς δ' ἦν χάλκεα μὲν τεύχεα, χάλκεοι δέ τε οἴκοι,  
 χάλκῳ δ' εἰργάζοντο· μέλας δ' οὔκ ἔσκε σίδηρος.

Hesiod, *W. & D.* 150—1.

AT Mycenae in 1876 Dr Schliemann lifted the corner of the veil which had so long enshrouded the elder age of Hellas. Year by year ever since that veil has been further withdrawn, and now we are privileged to gaze on more than the shadowy outline of a far back age. The picture is still incomplete, but it is already possible to trace the salient features. Can we by comparing it with portraits of certain peoples who have dwelt in and reigned at Mycenae—portraits preserved for us elsewhere—identify it as that of any race previously known? The object of this inquiry is to make such an attempt.

The archaeologists on their side have given but scant heed to the literary traditions, whilst the classical scholars have treated the archaeological facts with even less respect than they frequently show for the statements of the ancient writers. In the following pages I have attempted however imperfectly to examine at the same time the monumental and literary data, and to test the trustworthiness of each class of evidence by the other.

The name 'Mycenean' is now applied to a whole class of monuments—buildings, sepulchres, ornaments, weapons, pottery, engraved stones—which resemble more or less closely those found at Mycenae. I think I am right when I say that archaeologists are unanimous in considering them the outcome

## 2 PEEHISTORIC REMAINS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION.

of one and the same civilization, and the product of one and the same race.

These remains are not confined to the Peloponnesus, nor to the mainland of Hellas. They are found in many widely distant spots. For instance, certain engraved stones, some bean-like in shape, some glandular, have been so frequently found in the Greek islands as to be known as 'Island gems.' Such stones have been found in Crete in considerable numbers; and Mr A. J. Evans' recent brilliant discoveries in Crete, and his masterly paper on 'Primitive Pictographs,' have riveted more closely than ever the attention of scholars not only to such gems, but to the whole area of Mycenaean antiquities. Let us now enumerate the different regions in which Mycenaean remains have been found.

### ARGOLIS.

**Mycenae** is our natural starting point with its Cyclopean walls and gateway, the shaft graves of the Acropolis with their rich contents of gold ornaments, gold cups, bronze weapons, and pottery; the beehive tombs, eight in number, of the lower city, and the sixty-one quadrangular rock-hewn graves, with their contents<sup>1</sup>: there have also been found the remains of a pre-historic palace similar to those at Tiryns and on the Acropolis at Athens.

The circuit walls of the citadel remain in their entire extent (though not at their original height), except for a short distance on the precipitous slope to the *Chavos* ravine. In thickness they vary from 10 to 23 feet, the average being about 16 feet. In height they vary from 13 to 35 feet. They follow the natural sinuosities of the rock, but in places on the north and south-east sides the wall seems to have been as much as 45 feet thick. It is thought that here there were galleries or casemates in the thickness of the wall, like those still to be seen in the walls of Tiryns. Such a gallery does

<sup>1</sup> Schliemann, *Mycenae and Tiryns*, 1878; Tsountas and Manatt, *The Mycenaean Age*, 1897.

PREHISTORIC REMAINS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION. 3

exist at Mycenae in the wall at the north-east corner for a length of 16 feet.

Three different styles of masonry have been noticed in the construction of the walls. (1) The greater part of the wall is built in the manner termed Cyclopean, which we shall see is that of the walls of Tiryns: roughly hewn blocks of grey hard limestone are reared upon each other without any attempt at regular courses or order; the bonding was effected by smaller stones and clay. (2) Large portions of the wall consist of perfectly horizontal ashlar masonry: the stones are carefully hewn oblong rectangular blocks, disposed in regular horizontal courses with careful variation in the vertical joints. (3) Other portions of the wall consist of finely jointed polygonal masonry.

Archaeologists are fairly agreed in considering the last style as the latest of the three, for it is not known in any building of the Mycenaean age except at Mycenae itself, where it is found in the outward bulge of the wall south of the Lions' Gate, at the so-called tower on the south-west, and at the north-east corner of the wall. Dr Adler points out that the closely jointed polygonal masonry "belongs everywhere to a comparatively late period, and has no connection with the so-called Cyclopean constructions." It is found frequently in Greek walls from the seventh to the third century B.C.

At Mycenae this kind of wall (the best and most costly) seems to have only been employed when places damaged by slips had to be repaired or renewed.

The second style (ashlar courses) is usually held, though not universally, to be later than the true Cyclopean. It is found in the towers at the two gates and in the passages which lead up to them, from which it has been inferred by some that the Lions' Gate is more recent than the bulk of the walls, and that it was part of a later extension of the citadel in this direction. Others hold that it was used to give additional strength to the more exposed portions of the wall.

Ingress and egress were afforded by two gateways. The principal gate, the renowned Lions' Gate, is on the western side of the Acropolis, near its north corner. The postern gate is on the northern side. Both gateways are so placed that an

#### 4 PREHISTORIC REMAINS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION.

enemy approaching them would have to pass between two walls, and would thus have been exposed to a terrible cross-fire. The famous gate stands at right angles to the wall of the fortress and is approached by a passage 50 feet long and about 30 feet wide formed by the wall and another exterior wall, which runs almost parallel to it, and forms a part of a quadrangular tower built to cover the entrance. The opening of the gate is 10 feet 8 inches high, its width at the top is 9 feet 6 inches, at the bottom 10 feet 3 inches. The lintel and threshold are each formed of a single huge block. "Over the lintel of the gate is a triangular gap in the masonry of the wall, formed by an oblique approximation of the side courses of stone. The object of this was to keep off the pressure of the superincumbent wall from the flat lintel." The aperture is filled with a single triangular slab of whitish grey anhydrite limestone. On this are carved in relief two lions which face each other, their front paws resting on two bases or altars placed beside each other. The heads are missing, and were made of separate pieces attached to the bodies by bolts, which probably fitted into holes still visible in the necks. The heads must have faced the spectator. A round pillar of a peculiar kind stands between the lions on a plinth resting directly over the joint of the two altarlike bases, and it increases in thickness slightly towards the top, and is surmounted by a capital ending with a sort of abacus or plinth. Over the abacus are four round discs in a row, and over them is another plinth or abacus.

This heraldic group of lions (or lionesses) has many parallels in engraved gems; on one (from the Lower City) two lions are represented in a posture closely resembling that of the lions over the gate<sup>1</sup>, on another two griffins are shown standing on either side of a column; it is found in Lycian architecture, and Prof. W. M. Ramsay<sup>2</sup> has proved that the device of the rampant lions is a common feature of rock-cut tombs in Phrygia.

<sup>1</sup> Frazer's *Pausanias*, III. pp. 102—3. Perrot and Chipiez, *Histoire de l'Art dans l'Antiquité*, VI. Pl. XVI. No. 20, cf. No. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* VI. 801, Fig. 374.

PREHISTORIC REMAINS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION. 5

The postern gate is formed of three great stones, two upright, the third as lintel.

Inside the great gate Dr Schliemann found a circle of upright stone slabs enclosing five of the six famous graves, the remaining one being found a little later. The diameter of this circle is 87 feet, the enclosure is formed by two concentric circles of stone slabs, standing: the circles are about three feet apart and were joined by cross slabs laid on the tops of the upright stones, being morticed into the latter. The stone circles incline inwards. This Schliemann took for the Agora, and the flat-topped stone circles for benches. Tsountas<sup>1</sup> on the other hand thinks that the stone circle formed a retaining wall to keep together the earth heaped over the graves to form a barrow. The graves are shafts hewn in the rock. Over them was a vast mass of earth which Schliemann removed. In it were a number of tombstones and a small round altar with a well-like opening in the middle, "which doubtless had been used for sacrificing to the dead." There were ten tombstones, of which five were plain, but five were adorned with rude sculptures in low relief, consisting of spiral ornaments and scenes from the chase and from war.

The space to be treated is laid off into two equal parts. The upper and larger compartment is filled in with a spiral decoration; the lower with a figure subject.

On three stones is carved a man driving a chariot with four-spoked wheels; on one of them the charioteer is being assailed by a man on foot, armed with a long spear; on another a man with an uplifted sword is at the horse's head (Fig. 1). On another of them, beneath the chariot scene, is a lion hunting an ibex (?).

In the graves were 19 human bodies in all. From the contents of the graves Prof. Schuchhardt<sup>2</sup> holds that all the bodies in Graves I. and III., and two of the five in Grave IV., were those of women. The dead seem to have been buried in a half sitting posture with head propped up and with the legs

<sup>1</sup> Tsountas and Manatt, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Schliemann's *Excavations*, p. 215. (Eng. trans.)

## 6 PREHISTORIC REMAINS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION.

doubled up under the thighs. From the fact that portions of skin and flesh still adhered to the bones when discovered Helbig acutely infers that the bodies had been embalmed<sup>1</sup>.



FIG. 1. Grave-stone, Mycenae.

It is clear that the bodies were not cremated but buried, for though ashes were found in the graves, they are probably those of sacrifices<sup>2</sup>. Schliemann's assumption that the bodies had been burned is disproved by the fact that all the grave-gear is quite uninjured by fire. That sacrifices were offered

<sup>1</sup> *Das homerische Epos*, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Frazer, *op. cit.*, III. p. 107. Cf. his note on *Paus.* x. 4, 10.

PREHISTORIC REMAINS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION. 7

to the dead was proved by the quantity of bones of oxen, goats, swine and deer found over the graves. Nay, the skulls and bones of men or women lying in disorder in the earth suggest that human victims were offered. "The round altar which stood exactly over the middle of the fourth grave was doubtless used in these sacrifices." Down its funnel the blood was poured into the grave.

In the graves were found those rich stores of ornaments and other equipment of the dead so well known to all archaeologists.

*Gold.* There were seven gold masks, which covered the faces of five men and two children. These masks were clearly



FIG. 2. Gold Mask, Mycenae.

portraits (Fig. 2). A gold mask representing the head of a lion was discovered in Grave IV., but this is held by Schuchhardt to be the centre ornament of a shield. A large silver head of an ox, with horns of gold, admirably modelled, was found in the same grave; it has a large rosette of gold on its forehead. In this grave likewise were 56 small gold ox heads, each with a double-headed axe between the horns. The jewellery included golden diadems, armlets, shoulder-belts, sword-belts,

## 8 PREHISTORIC REMAINS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION.

pendants, crosses, rings, spirals, pins, buttons, beads, little figures, and the like. There were two pairs of gold balances.

The diadems are adorned with rosettes in *repoussé* work and concentric circles, or protuberant knobs or bosses. The pendants and bracelets are adorned with bosses and rosettes in *repoussé* work like the diadems. The crosses were mostly made in the shape of laurel leaves meeting at right angles and adorned with bosses. The diadems and pendants are believed to have been worn only by women. The crosses which were found only in Graves I. and III. were also probably worn by



FIG. 3. Gold Button, Mycenae.

women, as were the 701 discs of gold found in the latter grave; some of them were above, some under the skeleton, whence it is inferred that they were fastened on the garment worn by the dead. They are thick, round plates of gold, on which are decorations in *repoussé* work in fourteen different designs—spirals, flowers, cuttle fish (Fig. 3), butterflies (Fig. 4), palm leaves (Fig. 5), etc.

In Grave III. was a number of small figures (possibly fastened on the dresses of women); some of these represent





FIG. 4. Gold Button, Mycenae.



FIG. 5. Gold Button, Mycenae.

## 10 PREHISTORIC REMAINS AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION.

a nude female figure with hand clasped over her breast, on her head a dove rests, and in at least one case a dove is flying away from each arm. There are two figures of a woman seated with her arms folded on her breast and clad in a skirt adorned with points and stripes. Again there are pairs of animals facing each other like heraldic supporters; there are two stags crouching and confronted, a pair of cat-like creatures resting against a palm tree, pairs of swans, pairs of eagles. Single animals on the other hand are frequent, such as foxes, jackals, sphinxes, and one example of a flying griffon<sup>1</sup>.

Again, there are miniature representations of temple-fronts which show three doors and a pinnacle in the middle, and two lower pinnacles at the sides, on which perch two doves. There were great numbers of golden buttons adorned with various combinations of circles and spirals, as many as 340 being found in Grave V. alone. It has been thought that these buttons were the ornaments of sword sheaths.

There was a vast multitude of other golden objects, such as hairpins, ribbons, axes, rings, flowers, cuttlefish, the dragon-pommel and part of the gold sheath of a sceptre, and a second smaller sceptre-sheath, and Grave IV. was strewn with golden leaves, of which more than half a pound were collected.

There were golden grasshoppers hung from gold chains, 51 gold ornaments (Grave IV.) embossed with cuttlefish, butterflies, hippocamps and sphinxes, gold wheels and tubes, and two pairs of gold scales.

The kneebone of one man was still encircled by the gold clasp "that had fastened on the greave" (?).

Many of the gold objects were made of such thin material that they could not have been used in actual life, and it has therefore been inferred that they were made specially for the dead. This is notably the case with the gold breastplates and baldrics.

There were many vessels of gold, no less than ten being found in Grave IV. (the richest in treasure); most of the cups have a single handle riveted on, and have either no foot or

<sup>1</sup> Schliemann, *op. cit.*, p. 319; Tsountas and Manatt, p. 88; Frazer, *op. cit.*, III, 110.