

## I. GEOGRAPHY, ETHNOLOGY, FAUNA AND FLORA.

### I. 1. GEOGRAPHY.

I. THE development of the Hellenic race, and the influence which it has exercised on mankind at large, were greatly affected by the position of the land which the Greeks inhabited, and by its peculiar characteristics. Greece was the most central country in the ancient world, or at least enjoyed more than any other the advantages which such a situation affords; for though in reality Egypt and Syria were more central, owing to their lying in closer proximity to the meeting-point of the three great continents, yet there were insuperable difficulties to prevent either of them from undertaking the part which was performed by Greece. The harbourless shore of Palestine precluded its inhabitants from holding communication by sea with other countries; and in the case of Tyre, which formed a marked exception to this rule, the narrow commercial policy which prevailed in that state was an effectual bar to hinder her from promoting human advancement on a large scale. Egypt, again, from being confined within the Nile valley, and being dependent on that river for her existence, was too self-centred to be desirous either of adopting ideas from abroad, or of imparting to others her long accumulated stores of knowledge. But Greece, while it lay on the threshold of Europe relatively to the eastern countries, was from its conformation eminently a receptive country. It occupied somewhat the same position in antiquity which England holds at the present day, as being the point of communication between the old world and the new, so that whatever ideas passed from the one to the other passed through it, and were liable to be modified by its influence. And the numerous bays and harbours which are found on its eastern coasts provided an easy access to traders from that quarter, while the islands of the Aegean, and especially the long line of Crete, facilitated their approach. On the other hand, Italy and Greece may be described as standing back to back to each other, for the outlets of the former of these countries are towards the west, and the eastern shores of the Adriatic are singularly destitute of good harbours. In consequence of this there was at first little intercourse between them,

so that the nationalities which inhabited them were developed independently of each other, and it was not until Greek culture had reached its maturity that Italy was largely affected by it.

2. Few countries in the world possess characteristics so strongly marked as those of Greece. Its coast is indented in an extraordinary manner with numerous inlets, both large and small, so that its length is out of all proportion to the area of the country.

General characteristics.

This peculiarity becomes more striking as the land advances farther towards the south, for the shores of Epeirus and Thessaly present for the most part an unbroken outline, except where the land-locked Pagasaean gulf penetrates into the last-named district. To the southward of those provinces a waist is formed, where the Ambracian and Maliac gulfs approach each other from opposite sides; and from that point onward the coast becomes more varied, especially where it skirts the Euboic sea and the Corinthian gulf, until the Isthmus of Corinth is reached. There the peninsular formation of Greece is still more conspicuous, and its variety of outline culminates in the Peloponnese, which is pierced by the Messenian, the Laconian, and the Argolic gulfs. The mountains of Greece, also, which ramify through the whole country, and form a part of every view, are peculiar in their character. Though none of these rise above 8,000 feet—with the single exception of Olympus, which nearly reaches 10,000—yet their general elevation is very considerable, and many of them are covered with snow for several months of the year. As many as twenty-five are over 3,000 feet in height, and seven of these, among which are included the famous names of Parnassus, Taygetus, Cyllene and Erymanthus, are between 7,000 and 8,000 feet. These mountains are nowhere irregularly jumbled together, but are carefully grouped and delicately articulated, so that they possess the features to which the term 'classical' is usually applied. The hard limestone of which they are composed breaks in such a manner as to produce sharp outlines, and from the same cause their buttresses are subdivided into clearly cut ridges. The rivers, owing to the shortness of their courses, which prevents them from attaining any considerable volume, are nowhere navigable except for boats, and it is only the larger streams, such as the Peneus, the Spercheus and the Alpheus, which have a perennial supply of water. The remainder are torrents, which are only filled after violent storms, or during the winter season, and for the rest of the year display a white stony bed. The lakes also are a remarkable feature, for they all without exception have no outlet for their waters, except such as is provided by subterranean passages. Notable instances are found in the Copaic lake in Boeotia, and in those of Pheneus and Stymphalus in Arcadia. This phenomenon arises from the conformation of the inland basins, which are so hemmed in by mountains that no aperture is left for the escape of the water. The result is that, when the subterranean passage, or *catavothra*, is choked, as often happens, the level of the lake rises; but when the obstacle which closed it is

removed, it falls, and sometimes the lake for a time disappears altogether. These changes, as might be expected, gave birth to numerous myths. The plains are in some cases upland levels, such as that of Mantinea, and sometimes maritime plains, like those of Athens and Argos, which are hemmed in on three sides by lofty mountains, and on the fourth are open to the sea. The variety of elevation which is illustrated by these instances is a characteristic of the whole of Greece, and had a marked influence on its climate. While the southern sun provided the element of genial warmth, the presence of the mountains and uplands furnished an inexhaustible supply of fresh breezes, and the temperature was everywhere rendered equable by the proximity of the sea. One more peculiarity remains to be noticed in the liability of the country to shocks of earthquake. This is explained by the circumstance that Greece lies close to a centre of volcanic agency, the exact locality of which is the island of Thera (Santorin). That volcano was famous in antiquity on account of the great eruption of 197 B.C., which Strabo has described, and it has been in activity within fifty years from the present time. On the mainland of Greece the mountain of Methana, on the coast of Argolis opposite Aegina, was formed by an eruption in 282 B.C. The occurrence of earthquakes is frequently mentioned in Greek history, and they seem in some measure to account for the disappearance of the monuments of antiquity throughout the country, many of which owing to their massive construction would otherwise in all probability have survived to our days.

3. Northern Greece is divided in two parts by the mountain chain of **Scardus and Pindus**, which forms a well-marked backbone, as it traverses the country from north to south, half-way between the Adriatic and the Aegean. The districts by which it is flanked on either side form a strong contrast to each other, for while Macedonia and Thessaly present extensive plains with rich alluvial soil, the lands towards the west—Illyricum, Epeirus, and Acarnania—are occupied by a confused mass of rugged mountains, diverging in different directions. The range of Scardus rises far away towards the north, and separates Upper Macedonia from Illyricum, extending as far south as Lyncestis; at this point Pindus commences, and when it reaches the north-west angle of Thessaly, it rises conspicuously in Mount Lacmon. This is an important position, because the principal rivers and mountains of northern Greece radiate from it. Here are the sources of the Aous, the Arachthus, and the Achelous, which flow towards the western sea, and those of the Peneus, and in part also those of the Haliacmon, which enter the Thermaic gulf. Here also the Ceraunian mountains diverge towards the west, until they reach the Adriatic at the Acroceraunian promontory, while on the eastern side the Cambunian chain is the connecting link between Pindus and the mighty mass of Olympus. That mountain forms a bastion, by which the approaches to Greece are guarded at the north-eastern angle; and from it proceed, following the sea-coast, first the two other Mountains of the

Northern  
Greece.

Giants, Ossa and Pelion, together with the peninsula of Magnesia, and afterwards the line of summits which runs through Euboea, and is continued in the islands of Andros and Tenos, and others of the northern Cyclades. Again, at the southern termination of Pindus, near the head-waters of the Spercheus, and intermediate between the Maliac and Ambracian gulfs, stands the commanding summit of Tymphrestus, and from this the range of Othrys separates at right angles, overlooking the Maliac gulf, and extending as far as the straits of Artemisium and the entrance of the Pagasaeon gulf.

4. **Macedonia**, though it cannot properly be called a Hellenic land, since its inhabitants were not reckoned as belonging to that race, yet calls for notice, both because of its importance as commanding the entrance to Greece from the north, and because it was the birthplace of the great monarchy, which was destined to subjugate that country. Its determining feature is the river Axius (Vardar), which divides it in two parts, flowing from north to south; for whereas its western portion is chiefly occupied by elevated plains, deeply sunk among the mountains, of which the plain of Pelagonia is the most important, on the eastern side the ground stretches away towards Thrace, and partakes of the wild and irregular character of that region. In this direction at an early period the boundary of the two countries was the Strymon; at a later time Macedonia extended its limits as far as the Nestus. Between those two rivers, in the interior, lay Mount Orbelus, and this was connected with Scardus by a lower range, which separates from that chain in the neighbourhood of Lyncestis. The ancient capital, Edessa, stood at the point where the passes from that district enter Lower Macedonia, and its position was worthy of the nursery of a great kingdom, for it is one of the most striking in Greece. It occupied a table of rock, which falls in front of it in steep precipices; and over these the river Lydias, which traverses the city by several channels, falls in numerous cascades. The later capital, Pella, was built on low ground nearer to the sea, on a site which had neither strength nor salubrity to recommend it. Thessalonica, the chief city under the Romans, was finely situated at the head of the Thermaic gulf, where it commanded the trade with the interior of the country; it was also the terminus of the western half of the Egnatian Way, which, starting from Dyrrhachium on the Adriatic, connected the two seas, and for many centuries formed the main line of communication between Rome and her eastern provinces. The coast, which extends from Thessalonica to the foot of Mount Olympus, was bordered by a rich plain, which is watered by the Axius, the Lydias, and the Haliaemon; and the northern slopes of that mountain, and also those which descend from its flanks towards the sea, formed Pieria, the home of the Muses before their worship was transferred to Helicon. Here the town of Pydna was situated, in the neighbourhood of which Perseus, the last king of Macedonia, was defeated by the Romans. The mountains which bounded this region on the west, extending northward from Olympus, were called the Bermian chain.

5. The peninsula of **Chalcidice**, which projects from the coast of Macedonia into the north of the Aegean, bears a striking resemblance to the Peloponnese from the three promontories in which it ends; and even in the shape of its mountains and its vegetation it seems to belong rather to southern than to northern Greece. It is not unnatural, therefore, that from an early time it should have been fringed with Greek colonies; these, as its name implies, were planted chiefly by settlers from Chalcis in Euboea. The easternmost of its three projections, which was called Acte, is joined to the continent by an isthmus about a mile and a half broad, where the remains of Xerxes' canal are still visible. From this point it extends for about 40 miles, until at its extremity it throws up the vast conical peak of Athos, which is 6,400 feet in height. This mountain, owing to its great elevation and its solitary position, has at all times been dangerous to navigators from its liability to attract storms, as the Persians discovered when the fleet of Mardonius was wrecked on its coasts. The central peninsula of the three, Sithonia, though mountainous, is less so than Acte, while the third, Pallene, is comparatively level. Near the end of Sithonia the town of Torone was situated, and close to the isthmus of Pallene, which is narrower than that of Athos, being only half a mile wide, lay the important Corinthian colony of Potidaea. At no great distance from it, at the head of the Toronaic gulf, was Olynthus. On the land side of the isthmus of Acte the city of Acanthus was situated, and at some distance to the north of it, at the point where the Strymon issues from the lake Prasias or Cercinitis, stood Amphipolis, with the port of Eion at the mouth of that river.

6. **Thessaly** was a semi-Hellenic country in respect of its population, and in its geography it partially resembled the districts which were occupied by the Hellenes. Its inhabitants, though more closely related to the Greeks than were the Macedonians, were not of the pure Hellenic stock; and the land, though it presents a definite organisation, which is not to be found farther north, is neither maritime nor mountainous to the same degree as southern Greece. Its vast plain is the most extensive that is found in the whole peninsula, and by the Greeks it was believed originally to have been a lake, until an escape was provided for its waters by the formation of the ravine of Tempe between Olympus and Ossa, which was created by a stroke of the trident of Poseidon the earth-shaker. It is enclosed by well-marked mountain barriers: on the north by the Cambunian range, on the west by Pindus, on the south by Othrys, and towards the sea by Ossa and Pelion, which form a continuous chain—'mingling their roots with one another,' as Herodotus says—while Olympus rises to the northward of Ossa, and completes the line of circuit. These mountains formed the outworks of the defences of Greece, but they could be traversed by passes at various points. The most famous of these was **Tempe**, which, while it deserved the character of a beautiful and romantic vale which the poets have attributed to it, was at the same time a difficult and easily defensible passage. It is a winding chasm, about four miles

and a half in length, flanked on either side by precipices of grey limestone, which rise in places to a height of from 500 to 1000 feet; but the features of the scene are everywhere softened by the copious stream of the Peneus which winds between, and by the luxuriant vegetation which accompanies it, and the glades that at intervals open out at the foot of the cliffs. The pass of Tempe, however, was of less importance than at first sight it appears to be, because it could be turned by another pass on the western side of Olympus from Petra in Pieria, which entered the Thessalian plain to the northward of Larissa; it was by this that Xerxes approached, and when the Greeks discovered the existence of this passage, they gave up all thoughts of defending Tempe. Again, towards the north-west, a pass led over Mount Lacmon from Epeirus, and followed the upper valley of the Peneus to Aeginium; by this route Caesar entered Thessaly before the battle of Pharsalia. Another, by means of which there was communication with the Ambracian gulf, passed over the Pindus chain to the southward of this, and descended into the plain at Gomphi. Finally, the great southern pass was that of Coela, which crosses Mount Othrys from the Maliac gulf nearly opposite Thermopylae; the importance of the town of Pharsalus arose from its guarding the approaches to it on the northern side. The whole of the wide area of Thessaly was drained by the **Peneus**. This river, after it has entered the plain at its north-west angle, describes an arc towards the south, and in this part receives the waters of a number of tributaries—the Enipeus, the Apidanus, the Onochonus and the Pamisus; the country which was drained by these was called Upper Thessaly, as being farther removed from the sea, while Lower Thessaly was the region between this and the slopes of Ossa and Pelion; they were separated from one another by a range of hills, which runs northward from Othrys in the direction of Larissa. After passing that city, and before reaching Tempe, the river at certain seasons of the year overflows the lower lands towards the south, and its inundations form the lake Nessonis; and, when that is full, they again escape, and pour themselves into the lake of Boebe. That lake has no outlet for its waters, for a watershed interposes between it and the Pagasaeon gulf.

Politically, Thessaly was divided into four districts, Hestiaeotis, Thessaliois, Pelasgiotis, and Phthiotis. Of these, Hestiaeotis occupied the north-western portion, with Tricca for its chief city, while Thessaliois lay to the south-west. In the eastern portion of the latter of these, where the level ground runs up into an angle of the mountains, and is intersected by the stream of the Enipeus, was the plain of Pharsalia. Pelasgiotis was the eastern section, and contained the powerful cities of Larissa, Crannon and Pherae. Phthiotis, which occupied a position apart from the rest, in the south-eastern corner of the country, was a region of great importance in the heroic age, for Thucydides tells us that it was the original home of the Hellenic race, and from it the great Achilles was sprung. The Pagasaeon gulf, also, on which it bordered, was celebrated in early story in



connexion with the expedition of the Argonauts, for the pinewood of which the Argo was built was cut on the neighbouring slopes of Pelion, and the towns of Pagasae and Aphetæ, which stood at the head and at the mouth of the gulf respectively, were regarded as the places where the vessel was constructed and from which it started on its voyage. The town of Iolcos, which was famous in the same connexion, lay under Mount Pelion, to the eastward of Pagasae; and close to it at a later period the city of Demetrias was founded by Demetrius Poliorcetes. This stronghold, which was of great importance as commanding the approach to Thessaly from this side, was called by Philip V of Macedon one of the three fetters of Greece, Chalcis and Corinth being the other two. The tribes which occupied the outlying portions of Thessaly were the Perrhaebi in the extreme north, the Magnetes along the range of Ossa and Pelion, and the Dolopes and Dryopes about the southern extremity of Pindus.

The history of Thessaly was influenced in a marked manner by its natural features. It was the temptation which the richness of its soil offered to invaders that induced the Thessalians to leave their home in Epeirus, and to expel from their early seats, first the Boeotians, and afterwards the Dorians, thus initiating the most important movements of the tribes to the southward of them. These broad acres also tended to foster aristocracy as the form of government, for they were in the possession of a few powerful families, such as the Aleuadae of Larissa and the Scopadae of Crannon, and were tilled for them by a serf population. And, as plains are specially suitable for the breeding of horses, the arm in which the Thessalians were strong in war was their cavalry, while the heavy-armed infantry, which in the rest of Greece was composed of the middle class, and was associated with free institutions, was excluded.

7. To the westward of Macedonia and Thessaly lay Illyricum and Epeirus, regions of bleak irregular mountains and upland valleys. The line of separation between them was formed by the Ceraunian chain, and **Illyricum**, which lay to the northward of it, was watered by several rivers, of which the Aous was the most important. At intervals along the coast were plains of some extent, and the exports which they afforded were the chief source of the prosperity of the neighbouring Greek colonies of Epidamnus (Dyrrhachium) and Apollonia. To the southward **Epeirus** extended as far as the Ambracian gulf, but the absence of harbours along its shores caused it to be for the most part an unknown land to the Greeks; indeed, its name Epeirus, or the Continent, implies that it was only known to them through the medium of the outlying islands. It comprised three regions: in the north-west Chaonia, which extended as far south as the river Thyamis; towards the east the inland district of Molottis; and to the south Thesprotia. Through Molottis flowed the chief river of the country, the Arachthus, which followed a course due south from its source in Mount Lacmon to the Ambracian gulf. Westward of this, in a valley of its own, lay the extensive lake Pambotis (Lake of Joannina), to

the south of which, at some little distance off, was the famous oracle of Dodona, the site of which has been recently discovered. It was probably the migration of the Thessalians from these parts which spread through the Greek world the renown of this oracle, and also that of the river Acheron, which flows through Thesprotia. The awe inspired by the deep and dark ravines, which that stream traverses in one part of its course, seems to have been the cause of its being associated with the infernal regions. At the point where it issues from these a large swamp called the Acherusian marsh is formed. To the north of the Ambracian gulf, within a bend of the Arachthus, the city of Ambracia was situated, and near its eastern coast that of Amphilocheian Argos; but the most famous place in that neighbourhood was Actium, the scene of the great defeat of Antony and Cleopatra by Augustus, which commands the mouth of the narrow strait by which that gulf is entered.

8. The mountains of central Greece start from Mount Tymphrestus, which, as we have seen, marks the termination of the chain of Pindus. To the south-west diverge the irregular Aetolian ranges; while to the east the well-marked line of Oeta runs parallel to Othrys on the southern side of the valley of the Spercheus and the Maliac gulf, after which it is continued under different names along the coast of northern Locris and Boeotia, until it reaches Attica, and after throwing up the pyramid of Pentelicus sinks into the sea at Sunium. Beyond this point it rises again in the western Cyclades—Ceos, Cythnos, Seriphos and Siphnos. But the most lineal descendants of the main chain of northern Greece are those which take an intermediate course between the other two, and first as Parnassus and Helicon pass through Boeotia, and then as Cithaeron and Parnes separate the latter of those countries from Attica. Finally, an offshoot from Cithaeron runs off to the southward, and forms the important mountain of Geranea, which blocks the approach to the Isthmus.

9. The districts which occupied the extreme west of this part of the country, Acarnania and Aetolia, exercised but little influence on the history of Greece. The most marked feature of **Acarnania** is the river Achelous (Aspropotamo), which on account of its abundant stream was famous in early Greek mythology. Owing to the amount of alluvium that it brought down, some of the Echinades islands, which lay off its mouth, were attached to the mainland; and the marshes which were formed at this point were the cause of the strength of the fortress of Oeniadae, which was situated about 10 miles from the coast. The chief town of Acarnania, Stratus, was built in a rich plain in the centre of the district on the right bank of that river. **Aetolia** also was intersected by a considerable stream, the Evenus, and between this and the Achelous lay an extensive lake, called Trichonis.

10. The district of **Malis** was situated between Mount Oeta and the south-western angle of the Maliac gulf. It was a small territory, but



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