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Theodor Mommsen
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BOOK FIRST.



THE PERIOD ANTERIOR

TO

THE ABOLITION OF THE MONARCHY.

*Τὰ παλαιότερα σαφῶς μὲν εὐρεῖν διὰ χρόνου πλῆθος ἀδύνατα ἦν· ἐκ δὲ
τεικμηρίων ἂν ἐπὶ μακρότατον σκοποῦντι μοι πιστεῦσαι ξυμβαίνει οὐ μεγάλα
νομίζω γενέσθαι, οὔτε κατὰ τοὺς πολέμους οὔτε ἐς τὰ ἄλλα.*

THUCYDIDES.

B

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Mediterranean Sea with its various branches, penetrating far into the great Continent, forms the largest gulf^{Ancient histo.y.} of the ocean, and, alternately narrowed by islands or projections of the land and expanding to considerable breadth, at once separates and connects the three divisions of the Old World. The shores of this inland sea were in ancient times peopled by various nations, belonging in an ethnographical and philological point of view to different races, but constituting in their historical aspect one whole. This historic whole has been usually, but not very appropriately, entitled the history of the ancient world. It is in reality the history of civilization among the Mediterranean nations; and as it passes before us in its successive stages, it presents four great phases of development,—the history of the Coptic or Egyptian stock dwelling on the southern shore, the history of the Aramæan or Syrian nation, which occupied the east coast and extended into the interior of Asia as far as the Euphrates and Tigris, and the histories of the twin-peoples, the Hellenes and Italians, who received as their heritage the countries bordering on its European shores. Each of these histories was in its earlier stages connected with other regions and with other cycles of historical evolution, but each soon entered on its own peculiar career. The surrounding nations of alien or even of kindred extraction,—the Berbers and Negroes of Africa, the Arabs, Persians, and Indians of Asia, the Celts and Germans of Europe,—came into manifold contact with the peoples inhabiting the borders of the Mediterranean, but they neither imparted unto them nor received from them any in-

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fluences of really decisive effect upon their respective destinies. So far, therefore, as cycles of culture admit of demarcation at all, we may regard that cycle as an unity which has its culminating points denoted by the names Thebes, Carthage, Athens, and Rome. The four nations represented by these names, after each of them had attained in a path of its own a peculiar and noble civilization, mingled with one another in the most varied relations of reciprocal intercourse, and skilfully elaborated and richly developed all the elements of human nature. At length their cycle was accomplished. New peoples who hitherto had only laved the territories of the states of the Mediterranean, as waves lave the beach, overflowed both its shores, severed the history of its south coast from that of the north, and transferred the centre of civilization from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Ocean. The distinction between ancient and modern history, therefore, is no mere accident, nor yet a mere matter of chronological convenience. What is called modern history is in reality the formation of a new cycle of culture, connected at several epochs of its development with the perishing or perished civilization of the Mediterranean states, as that was connected with the primitive civilization of the Indo-Germanic stock, but destined, like that earlier cycle, to traverse an orbit of its own. It too is destined to experience in full measure vicissitudes of national weal and woe, periods of growth, of full vigour, and of age, the blessedness of creative effort, in religion, polity, and art, the comfort of enjoying the material and intellectual acquisitions it has won, perhaps also, some day, the decay of productive power in the satiety of contentment with the goal attained. But that goal too will only be temporary: the grandest system of civilization has its orbit, and may complete its course; but not so the human race, to which, even when it seems to have attained its goal, the old task is ever set anew with a wider range and with a deeper meaning.

Italy.

Our aim is to exhibit the last act of this great historical drama, to relate the ancient history of the central peninsula projecting from the northern continent into the Mediterranean. It is formed by the mountain-system of the Apennines branching off in a southerly direction from the western Alps. The Apennines take in the first instance a south-easterly course between the broader gulf of the

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Mediterranean on the west, and the narrow one on the east ; and in the close vicinity of the latter they attain their greatest elevation, which, however, scarce reaches the line of perpetual snow, in the Abruzzi. From the Abruzzi the chain continues in a southerly direction, at first undivided and of considerable height ; after a depression which forms a hill-country, it splits into a somewhat flattened succession of heights towards the south-east, and a more rugged chain towards the south, and in both directions terminates in the formation of narrow peninsulas.

The flat country on the north, extending between the Alps and the Apennines as far down as the Abruzzi, does not belong, geographically, nor until a very late period, even historically, to the southern land of mountain and hill, the Italy whose history is here to engage our attention. It was not till the seventh century of the city, that the coast-district from Sinigaglia to Rimini, and not till the eighth, that the basin of the Po became incorporated with Italy. The ancient boundary of Italy on the north was not the Alps, but the Apennines. This mountain-system nowhere rises abruptly into a precipitous chain, but, spreading broadly over the land and enclosing many valleys and tablelands connected by easy passes, presents conditions which well adapt it to become the settlement of man. Still more suitable in this respect are the adjacent slopes and the coast districts on the east, south, and west. On the east coast the plain of Apulia, shut in towards the north by the mountain-block of the Abruzzi, and only broken by the steep isolated ridge of Garganus, stretches in an uniform level with but a scanty development of coast and stream. On the south coast, between the two peninsulas in which the Apennines terminate, extensive lowlands, poorly provided with harbours, but well watered and fertile, adjoin the hill-country of the interior. The west coast presents a far-stretching domain, intersected by considerable streams, in particular by the Tiber, shaped by the action of the waves and of the once numerous volcanoes into manifold variety of hill and valley, harbour and island, and forming, in the regions of Etruria, Latium, and Campania, the very flower of the land of Italy. South of Campania, the land in front of the mountains gradually diminishes, and the Tyrrhenian Sea almost washes their base. Moreover, the island of Sicily adjoins Italy, as the Pelopon-

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nesus adjoins Greece, the largest and fairest isle of the Mediterranean, having a mountainous and partly desert interior, but girt, especially on the east and south, by a broad belt of the finest coast-land, mainly the result of volcanic action. Geographically the Sicilian mountains are a continuation of the Apennines, hardly interrupted by the narrow "rent" ('Ρήγιον) of the straits; and in its historical relations Sicily was in earlier times quite as decidedly a part of Italy as the Peloponnesus was of Greece,—an arena for the struggles of the same races, and the seat of a similar superior civilization.

The Italian peninsula resembles the Grecian in the temperate climate and wholesome air that prevail on its hills of moderate height, and on the whole, also, in its valleys and plains. In development of coast it is inferior; it wants, in particular, the island-studded sea which made the Hellenes a seafaring nation. On the other hand, Italy excels its neighbour in the rich alluvial plains, and the fertile and grassy mountain-slopes, which are requisite for agriculture and the rearing of cattle. Like Greece, it is a noble land, calling forth and rewarding the energies of man, providing for restless adventure paths to distant lands, and for quiet exertion modes of peaceful gain at home.

But, while the Grecian peninsula turns towards the east, the Italian turns towards the west. As the coasts of Epirus and Acarnania had but a subordinate importance in the case of Hellas, so had the Apulian and Messapian coasts in that of Italy; and, while the regions on which the historical development of Greece has been mainly dependent—Attica and Macedonia—look to the east, Etruria, Latium, and Campania look to the west. In this way the two peninsulas, such close neighbours and almost sisters, stand, as it were, averted from each other. Although the naked eye can discern from Otranto the Acroceraunian mountains, the Italians and Hellenes came into earlier and closer contact on every other pathway rather than on the nearest across the Adriatic Sea. In their case too, as has happened so often, the historical vocation of the nations was pre-figured in the relations of the ground which they occupied; the two great stocks, on which the civilization of the ancient world grew, threw their shadow as well as their seed, the one towards the east, the other towards the west.

Italian history.

We intend here to relate the history of Italy, not

simply the history of the city of Rome. Although, in the formal sense of political law, it was the civic community of Rome which gained the sovereignty first of Italy, then of the world, such a view cannot be held to express the higher and real meaning of history. What has been called the subjugation of Italy by the Romans appears rather, when viewed in its true light, as the consolidation into an united state of the whole Italian stock—a stock of which the Romans were the most powerful branch, but still were only a branch.

The history of Italy falls into two main divisions, (1) its internal history down to its union under the leadership of the Latin stock, and (2) the history of its sovereignty over the world. Under the first section, which will occupy the first two books, we shall have to set forth the settlement of the Italian stock in the peninsula; the imperilling of its national and political existence, and its partial subjugation, by nations of other descent and older civilization, Greeks and Etruscans; the rebellion of the Italians against the strangers, and the annihilation or subjection of the latter, finally, the struggles between the two chief Italian stocks, the Latins and the Samnites, for the hegemony of the peninsula, and the victory of the Latins at the end of the 4th century before the birth of Christ—or of the 5th century of the city. The second section opens with the Punic wars; and embraces the rapid extension of the dominion of Rome up to and beyond the natural boundaries of Italy, the long *status quo* of the imperial period, and the collapse of the mighty empire. These events will be narrated in the third and following books.

CHAPTER II.

THE EARLIEST MIGRATIONS INTO ITALY.

Primitive
 races of
 Italy.

WE have no information, not even a tradition, concerning the first migration of the human race into Italy. It was the universal belief of antiquity that in Italy, as well as elsewhere, the first population had sprung from the soil. We leave it to the province of the naturalist to decide the question of the origin of different races, and of the influence of climate in producing their diversities. In a historical point of view it is neither possible, nor is it of any importance, to determine whether the oldest recorded population of a country were autochthones or immigrants. But it is incumbent on the historical inquirer to bring to light the successive strata of population in the country of which he treats, in order to trace, from as remote an epoch as possible, the gradual progress of civilization to more perfect forms, and the suppression of races less capable of, or less advanced in, culture by nations of higher standing.

Italy is singularly poor in memorials of the primitive period, and presents in this respect a remarkable contrast to other fields of civilization. The results of Germanic antiquarian research lead to the conclusion that in England, France, the North of Germany and Scandinavia, before the settlement of the Indo-Germans in those lands, there must have dwelt, or rather roamed, a people, perhaps of Mongolian race, gaining their subsistence by hunting and fishing, making their implements of stone, clay, or bones, adorning themselves with the teeth of animals and with amber, but unacquainted with agriculture and the use of the metals. In India, in like manner, the Indo-Germanic settlers were preceded by a dark-coloured population less susceptible of culture. But in Italy we neither meet with fragments of a

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supplanted nation, such as the Finns and Lapps in the Celto-Germanic domain and the black tribes in the Indian mountains; nor have any remains of an extinct primitive people been hitherto pointed out there, such as appear to be revealed in the peculiarly-formed skeletons, the places of assembling, and the burial mounds of what is called the stone-period of Germanic antiquity. Nothing has hitherto been brought to light to warrant the supposition that mankind existed in Italy at a period anterior to the knowledge of agriculture and of the smelting of the metals; and if the human race ever within the bounds of Italy really occupied the level of that primitive stage of culture which we are accustomed to call the savage state, every trace of such a fact has disappeared.

Individual tribes, or in other words, races or stocks, are the constituent elements of the earliest history. Among the stocks which in later times we meet with in Italy, the immigration of some, of the Hellenes for instance, and the denationalization of others, such as the Bruttians and the inhabitants of the Sabine territory, are historically attested. Setting aside both these classes, there remain a number of stocks whose wanderings can no longer be traced by means of historical testimony, but only by *à priori* inference, and whose nationality cannot be shown to have undergone any radical change from external causes. To establish the national individuality of these is the first aim of our inquiry. In such an inquiry had we nothing to fall back upon but the chaotic mass of names of tribes and the confusion of what professes to be historical tradition, the task might well be abandoned as hopeless. The conventionally-received tradition, which assumes the name of history, is composed of a few serviceable notices by civilized travellers and a mass of mostly worthless legends, which frequently have been combined with little discrimination of the true character either of legend or of history. But there is another source of tradition to which we may resort, and which yields information fragmentary but authentic; we mean the indigenous languages of the stocks settled in Italy from time immemorial. These languages, which have grown with the growth of the peoples themselves, have had the stamp of their process of growth impressed upon them too deeply to be wholly effaced by subsequent civilization. One only of the Italian languages is known to us completely; but the

remains which have been preserved of several of the others are sufficient to afford a basis for historical inquiry regarding the existence, and the degrees, of family relationship among the several languages and peoples.

In this way philological research teaches us to distinguish three primitive Italian stocks, the Iapygian, the Etruscan, and that which we shall call the Italian. The last is divided into two main branches,—the Latin branch, and that to which the dialects of the Umbri, Marsi, Volsci, and Samnites belong.

Iapygians.

As to the Iapygian stock, we have but little information. At the south-eastern extremity of Italy, in the Messapian or Calabrian peninsula, inscriptions in a peculiar extinct language* have been found in considerable numbers; undoubtedly remains of the dialect of the Iapygians, who are very distinctly pronounced by tradition also to have been different from the Latin and Samnite stocks. Statements deserving of credit and numerous indications lead to the conclusion that the same language and the same stock were indigenous also in Apulia. What we at present know of this people suffices to show clearly that they were distinct from the other Italians, but does not suffice to determine what position should be assigned to them and to their language in the history of the human race. The inscriptions have not yet been, and it is scarcely to be expected that they ever will be, deciphered. The genitive forms, *aihi* and *ihi*, corresponding to the Sanscrit *asya* and the Greek *οιο*, appear to indicate that the dialect belongs to the Indo-Germanic family. Other indications, such as the use of the aspirated consonants and the avoiding of the letters *m* and *t* as terminal sounds, show that this Iapygian dialect was essentially different from the Italian, and corresponded in some respects to the Greek dialects. The supposition of an especially close affinity between the Iapygian nation and the Hellenes finds further support in the frequent occurrence of the names of Greek divinities in the inscriptions, and in the surprising facility with which that people became Hellenized, presenting a striking contrast to the shyness in this respect of the other Italian nations.

350 B. C.

Apulia, which in the time of Timæus (400 v. c.), was still described as a barbarous land, had in the sixth century of

* Some of the epitaphs may give us an idea of its sound; as *θεοτορας αρταιαιηι βενμαρριηινο* and *δαζιηονας πλατορριηι βολλιηι*.

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INTO ITALY.

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the city become a province thoroughly Greek, while no direct colonization from Greece had taken place; and even among the ruder stock of the Messapii there are various indications of a similar tendency. With the recognition of such a general family relationship or elective affinity between the Iapygians and Hellenes (a recognition, however, which by no means goes so far as to warrant our taking the Iapygian language to be a rude dialect of Greek); investigation must rest content, at least in the mean time, until some more definite and better assured result be attainable.* The lack of information, however, is not much felt; for this race, already on the decline at the period when our history begins, comes before us only when it is giving way and disappearing. The character of the Iapygian people, little capable of resistance, easily merging into other nationalities, agrees well with the hypothesis, to which their geographical position adds probability, that they were the oldest immigrants, or the historical autochthones of Italy. There can be no doubt that all the primitive migrations of nations took place by land, especially such as were directed towards Italy, the coast of which was accessible by sea only to skilful sailors, and, on that account, was still in Homer's time wholly unknown to the Hellenes. But if the earlier settlers came over the Apennines, then, as the geologist infers the origin of mountains from their stratification, the historical inquirer may hazard the conjecture that the stocks pushed furthest towards the south were the oldest inhabitants of Italy; and it is just at its extreme south-eastern verge that we meet with the Iapygian nation.

The middle of the peninsula was inhabited, as far back Italians as reliable tradition reaches, by two peoples, or rather two branches of the same people, whose position in the Indo-Germanic family admits of being determined with

* The hypothesis has been put forward of an affinity between the Iapygian language and the modern Albanian, based, however, on points of linguistic comparison that are but little satisfactory in any case, and least of all where a fact of such importance is involved. Should that relationship be confirmed, and should the Albanians on the other hand (a race also Indo-Germanic, and homogeneous with the Hellenic and Italian races) be really a remnant of that Heleno-Barbaric nationality, traces of which occur throughout all Greece and especially in the northern provinces, the nation that preceded the Hellenes would be demonstrated as identical with that which preceded the Italians. Still the inference would not immediately follow that the Iapygian immigration to Italy had taken place across the Adriatic Sea.